



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 136 • NUMBER 129 • 2nd SESSION • 36th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, October 16, 2000**

**Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, October 16, 2000

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1100)

[*English*]

## POINTS OF ORDER

MOTION NO. 425—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** I am now ready to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. member for Fraser Valley on June 14, 2000 concerning the placement under private members' business of a motion regarding the Senate's progress on Bill C-247, an act to amend the criminal code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and on the intervention made by the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford on October 5, 2000 on the same subject. I want to thank both members for their interventions.

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

I would also like to thank the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and the hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona for their contributions on this matter last June.

[*English*]

In his submission, the hon. member for Fraser Valley contended that his motion should be more appropriately considered under motions, under the rubric routine proceedings, a point echoed by the hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford. The member for Fraser Valley referred to an earlier question of privilege raised on September 16, 1996 concerning the failure of a committee to report a bill back to the House. He drew a parallel between the principles regarding the fate of that bill and the principles regarding Bill C-247, which is presently before the Senate. The member also

stated that his motion concerned the proprieties and authority of the House, which are normally dealt with under routine proceedings.

I have carefully examined both hon. members' arguments and, in my opinion, there are two aspects to this point of order. The first is whether a parallel can be drawn between proceedings in a House committee on a bill and proceedings in the Senate on a bill originating in the House of Commons. The hon. member for Fraser Valley made reference to my earlier ruling on Bill C-234 and I would like to repeat a part of that statement, which is contained in *Debates*, September 23, 1996 at page 4561.

Should a Member or a Minister be of the opinion that a committee charged with the review of a bill is defying the authority of the House, he or she may choose to bring it to the attention of the House by placing on notice a motion to require the committee to report by a certain date.

As hon. Members know, this can indeed be done under Government Orders or Private Members' Business, but such a notice of motion could also be placed under the rubric motions and be dealt with under Routine Proceedings.

I think that it is important to note that this ruling deals with an internal situation that lies clearly within the purview of the House. However, in a bicameral parliament such as ours, the two Houses share in the making of legislation. Each House is the master of its own proceedings. The rules of one House cannot also be applied to the other, nor can one House compel the other to conduct its work in a specific manner or according to a specific timetable. Accordingly, in my view the situation with regard to Bill C-247 is not analogous to the situation that was at issue with regard to Bill C-234 since the proprieties and authority of each House are completely independent one from the other.

The second aspect of this point of order concerns the proper rubric under which the hon. member's motion should appear on the order paper. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states at pages 390-91:

Different categories of business have developed over the years in response to the need to adapt to the organization of House business. . . . As a general rule, motions dealing with matters of substance or government policy are moved either by Ministers under Government Orders or private Members under Private Members' Business. . . . the Chair accepts certain motions put on notice by private Members for consideration under the rubric "Motions", such as motions of instruction to committees and for concurrence in committee reports. When private Members give written notice of other substantive matters, these motions are placed under "Private Members' Business" on the Order Paper.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

If a member or a minister wishes the House to express an opinion on any matter which falls outside the narrow scope of what is considered to be House Business, such motions should properly appear under Private Members' Business or Government Orders, as the case may be.

[English]

On that basis, I must rule that the motion under the name of the hon. member for Fraser Valley placed on the order paper under private members' business is indeed in its correct place and I thank him for having brought this matter to the attention of the House.

• (1110)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 11.10 a.m. the House will now proceed to private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FIREFIGHTERS' PENSIONS

**Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.)** moved:

That the government consider the advisability of increasing the pension accrual rate for firefighters to allow them to retire with adequate financial provisions for their retirement.

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canada's professional firefighters have a long and proud history of protecting the lives and property of their neighbours. For their selflessness and service to the public they rightly enjoy the respect and admiration of the Canadian people and the members of the House. I am confident that we all share the same image of the professional firefighter: a highly trained, courageous man or woman who assists us when emergencies arise.

The image is certainly accurate. I know first-hand the great job that our firefighters perform. I would imagine that members remember the date 1958. I remember it as a child of six years. At around 2 o'clock in the morning I remember my father crashing through the farmhouse telling all of us to get up, get dressed and get out of the house because the barn was on fire. The building that burned that night was a three story structure, 40' by 175', 21,000 square feet. I can remember the firefighters that night trying to save the barn and finally having to give up. They then tried to save our farmhouse, which they succeeded in doing. I remember them

hooking a tractor onto a huge propane tank beside the barn, disconnecting the tank and getting it away before it left a very large hole in the ground. They were successful.

I remember that the individuals who fought the fire that night took their lives in their hands on a number of different instances. It is something that has been branded on my mind and in my memory. I will carry with me as long as I live the memory of what happened that night.

Perhaps there are other members in the House who have also benefited from such bravery and professionalism during an emergency situation, or who have at least witnessed firefighters in action at the scene of a fire, an accident, a medical emergency or some other kind of emergency.

We owe the firefighters a debt of gratitude. There is no question about it. In the name of fairness and in the hopes of correcting a long-standing inequity, I rise today to share another image of the professional firefighter, one not so widely known but accurate nonetheless. I am talking about the individual firefighter who spends 30 years in a career that has one of the highest rates of on the job injury and illness, who faces the result of a career spent in the line of toxic substances, communicable diseases and a myriad of dangerous situations. It should be noted that while other Canadian workers have the right to refuse dangerous workplace situations, the professional firefighter does not enjoy the same right. Danger is an everyday reality for them. It is part of the job.

According to data collected by the International Association of Fire Fighters, which represents 17,000 professional firefighters and emergency medical personnel in Canada, firefighters experience the highest rate of job related injury and illness of any sector of the workforce. In 1997 almost one in three firefighters suffered an injury or illness in the line of duty, far exceeding and in fact tripling the rate of injury and illness experienced in other sectors such as mining, construction, manufacturing or agriculture. I am a farmer and I know the injury level in agriculture.

• (1115)

Several studies have showed a link between the occupation of firefighting, heart disease and certain types of cancer. This is as a result of a firefighter's exposure during the course of a career to toxic substances encountered while attacking blazes in chemical and industrial settings, a type of fire that is becoming more and more common in Canada.

We all remember too well the fire that raged for four days in July of 1997 at the Plastimet recycling facility in Hamilton, Ontario. More than 100 Hamilton firefighters were exposed to burning polyvinyls. They fought to save the city from this toxic inferno and were successful. However, the long term health effects on these firefighters may not be known for several years.

To give the House an example of that, I had a chance to talk to these firefighters last year when they were in Ottawa. Two of the

fire trucks that were involved in that blaze were aluminium. They were totalled by the chemicals. The trucks could not be repaired and they had to do away with them. The firefighters were exposed to those same chemicals.

In a past experience, a toxic fire at a Saskatoon landfill site in 1982 illustrated that the long term health effects are in fact a sad reality. Six of the 12 firefighters who fought that blaze are dead. Cancers have been diagnosed among those who survived.

To give another illustration, one month ago the International Association of Fire Fighters added the names of more than 50 firefighters from across North America to its memorial in Colorado Springs. All of them were firefighters who died in the line of duty during the previous 12 months. This is the highest number of names added to the memorial in a given year. It is another reason why I think it is appropriate that we deal with this motion today.

I remind the members that line of duty means the same as in the course of saving lives and properties of people in the communities.

Canada's Income Tax Act recognizes the dangerous nature of firefighting and deems firefighters to be members of a public safety occupation. This permits them to retire early at age 55, which has long been considered to be in the best interests of firefighters and the communities they serve.

However, there is a problem with the regulation in that it stops there. It permits firefighters to retire at age 55 but it does not contain any mechanism to allow them to make up for the retirement incomes they forfeit because of an early retirement. This is a definite inequity which has robbed many firefighters and their families of the right to retire with dignity and with financial security.

It is an inequity that the International Association of Fire Fighters has been raising with the Canadian government since the 1970s. This is too long. It is an inequity that our firefighters have endured long enough.

It is time to add concrete regulatory action to the respect and admiration we give our professional firefighters. As it stands, a firefighter retiring at the age of 55 with 30 years of accredited service will retire with 60% of his or her pre-retirement income according to the 2% annual accrual rate that he or she and other Canadians contribute to their registered pensions. This is just too low when the government identifies 70% of the pre-retirement income as a benchmark for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living in retirement.

For three years now a proposal has existed which would correct this injustice. It involves a very simple regulatory change to the Income Tax Act, something that can be done easily and without rewriting the legislation. It involves a regulatory increase in the yearly accrual rate for professional firefighters' registered pensions from the current 2% to 2.33% for the years of accredited service.

### *Private Members' Business*

• (1120)

Why 2.33%? This is the magic number for firefighters. With a 2.33% accrual rate, a firefighter who retires at age 55 after 30 years of service will achieve 70% of his or her pre-retirement income reaching that important benchmark for the quality of life in retirement. Again, this regulatory change can be done very easily and it would come at no cost to the Canadian government or the Canadian taxpayer. This is a win-win situation.

This is long overdue. It is a regulatory change. It is simply the first step in pension fairness for firefighters. It would allow the higher accrual rate to be negotiated and reflected in provincial pension plans. The final ingredient comes at the collective bargaining process at the local level. However, it starts here at the federal level.

Less than one year ago the Standing Committee on Finance released its report to the finance minister. In the report the committee, after listening to a compelling presentation from the International Association of Fire Fighters during its prebudget consultation exercise, acknowledged the inequity in firefighters' pensions and recommended that the finance minister consider taking action in correcting it.

Shortly afterwards, in April of this year, professional firefighters from across Canada descended on Parliament Hill during their annual lobbying conference. Of the 154 MPs who met with the firefighters, 101 of them, a full two-thirds, said that they supported an increase in the accrual rate for firefighters' registered pension plans in the name of fairness.

Support for this initiative and other methods of pension fairness for our nation's professional firefighters was voiced in the House in April echoing the growing chorus of support for this initiative. As it stands, there is no concrete action toward correcting this injustice. This is our opportunity to provide meaningful pension reform for Canada's heroes.

Let us not let it slip away. Let us take this opportunity to tell our professional firefighters and the people of Canada that we recognize the sacrifices that firefighters make in the course of their career. We are prepared to take action on their very legitimate concern about their right to retire with dignity and with security.

Firefighters are not asking to be put on a level above Canadian workers, they are asking to be treated the same. They are asking the government to enact a regulatory change under the Income Tax Act that will allow them to retire with the same standard of living as other working Canadians.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this private member's bill introduced by my colleague who just spoke.

*Private Members' Business*

This is a private member's bill designed to address a concern of a profession that meets with members of parliament each and every year on the Hill. I would say that this particular group does one of the best jobs on putting forward its concerns to members of parliament than any of the groups who we meet with from time to time. It prepares its briefs very well. It makes its issues clear and concise. It involves its grassroots members in the effort. It is not just professionals or paid lobbyist but real people in our communities who talk to us about their concerns. We appreciate the efforts they take to meet with us and to work with us on their concerns.

My colleague and others in the House who will speak, speak for all Canadians in expressing the appreciation that all of us feel for the work of firefighters. The job entails a great deal of danger and involves a great deal of physical and mental ability. There has to be a lot of not only physical strength and fitness but also good judgement, bravery and ability to meet challenges in an effective way in this profession. We believe that some of the finest members of our community are involved in the firefighting profession.

● (1125)

This is sometimes a profession that is not appreciated as much as it should be until some of us experience firsthand the need for the kind of rescue operations that firefighters offer when our homes, our businesses or our communities are touched by fire and by the danger which firefighters deal with each and every day.

Firefighters are deserving of the highest praise, gratitude and appreciation by Canadians and by members of our community. We want to give them that appreciation today. This bill gives us an opportunity to emphasize how much we appreciate and value the work of firefighters in our communities and in our cities.

In many of our rural communities, there are volunteer firefighters. They carry pagers and if there is a fire or a situation in the community that calls for their services they drop everything to respond. These volunteers sometimes leave some pretty important situations in order to help out other members of the community.

I heard a story about a volunteer firefighter who was at his daughter's graduation when his pager went off. He simply left to help other families and other members of the community even though his daughter was graduating that day.

Again, we want to express appreciation for volunteer firefighters across our nation, many of whom work hard in other jobs but are still willing to be on call all the time to assist their community and their fellow citizens. The concern for fellow citizens which is inherent in the firefighting occupation is something that is very praiseworthy and we want to acknowledge that today.

The firefighters have put forward, in the seven years that I have been in parliament, three major concerns each and every year.

One was that dangerous goods be tracked across the country so that when there was a fire involving trains or trucks transporting dangerous chemical, firefighters would have a very quick and easy way of ascertaining what chemicals might have been involved in a particular fire so they would know how to deal with the chemicals.

Second, they asked for the opportunity to find out, when they were contaminated by blood in an emergency situation, whether they were infected with a dangerous disease.

I am pleased to report that my colleague from Fraser Valley West put forward a private member's bill called the blood samples act that would allow firefighters to obtain an analysis of blood that they were contaminated with and which they felt may have infected them. This bill passed second reading in the House and is now in committee. We are hopeful that this blood samples act, brought forward by my colleague from Fraser Valley West, will pass all readings in the House, will be passed by the senate and become law so that firefighters will have the peace of mind they need knowing they can ascertain if they were infected inadvertently with a dangerous communicable disease. This was another step brought forward by a private member of the House to assist firefighters and to respond to their concerns.

The third issue that firefighters have consistently brought forward is the matter of the Canada pension plan and the changes that they are requesting. We have this motion today and I will read it:

That the government consider the advisability of increasing the pension accrual rate for firefighters to allow them to retire with adequate financial provisions for their retirement.

● (1130)

I think it is fair to say that the wording of the motion is a little bit tentative. Even if we pass the motion, the government would simply be considering the advisability of making these changes. The motion would not have the effect of actually making the changes. It is perhaps a small step. I do not fault the mover of the motion for the wording because I am sure that it was well considered.

I want to point out that even if the changes to the Canada pension plan, which we are being asked to consider, were put into place they would not really allow firefighters to retire with adequate financial provisions. The Canada pension plan is designed to replace about one-quarter of the retirement needs of working Canadians. Even changes that would increase the accrual rate for firefighters would provide only a very small portion of the pensions that they need.

If this matter was to go forward for consideration there would be three issues that would be debated before the House and in committee: first, the issue of fairness and equity; second, the issue of coherence of the pension plan; and third, the issue of the best

*Private Members' Business*

interests of firefighters or how any profession might best meet their retirement needs.

On the first issue of equity and fairness, many people have raised the fact that other professions must retire early, such as the military, or often retire early and become involved in stressful occupations within the public service. The question would be whether making special provisions for one profession would not lead to concerns about fairness and equity to other professions. I think that is an issue that needs to be considered and addressed.

The second issue would be that of whether the Canada pension plan, which is a pension plan for all Canadian workers, is the proper instrument of public policy to address specific concerns for specific groups that may access the plan. Of course the more a plan is tailored for different groups the more difficult it becomes to administer and the more costly. That also is something that experts will talk about.

The third concern is whether the Canada pension plan, which in the future will yield less than a 2% rate of return, is the instrument that firefighters, and particularly those entering the profession, would want to count on for retirement income. There is some concern, and we have raised this in the House, about the Canada pension plan and its long term viability.

Those are issues that we would be discussing if the motion is approved by the House. I want to say how much we appreciate the firefighters taking the trouble to put their issues forward to us so clearly. We are pleased with the work they do. We appreciate them and we are also pleased to consider their concerns today in this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this private member's motion, and congratulate the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey on his interesting proposal.

The purpose of his motion is to restore equity with respect to CPP premiums for the firefighters of Quebec and of Canada, who are so important to the life of this country. That is why it deserves our careful attention.

Under the existing Income Tax Act, the occupation of firefighter is one associated with public safety. Firefighters are therefore forced to retire when they reach the age of 60. Over the years, a number of commissions of inquiry in Quebec, as well as in Ontario and elsewhere in Canada, have suggested that the age of retirement be 55 because this is a high risk sector.

It is a high risk sector not just because of the sometimes fatal injuries that firefighters sustain, but because of the toxic substances to which they are exposed every day and which may cut short their lives.

• (1135)

Moreover, a study carried out in 1994 by the Ontario Industrial Disease Standards Panel stated that there was a link between firefighting and heart disease, as well as brain, lymphatic, colon, bladder and kidney cancer.

This is serious. The people in this profession are exposed daily to risks not found in other professions. In my riding in June 1998, the municipal fire chief of Acton Vale, Michel Daragon, died at the age of 55 while fighting an industrial fire. Firefighter Jacques Houle lost his life in the same incident. Eight firefighters were injured in the one fire, including Chief Daragon's son Mario, who was seriously injured. Serious head injuries were sustained by one firefighter, Réjean Messier.

In my riding, and elsewhere, these people are exposed every day to dangers that can result in fatal injuries. I should point out that just about everyone has a firefighter in the family. In my case it was a cousin, Gilles Archambault, father of two girls, who was faced daily with situations in which he could have been killed. He risked his life to save others.

This past weekend I saw a boyhood friend, Benoît Desjardins, a career firefighter with two young children, ages six and eight. He too puts his life on the line every day. They receive no pension contributions, despite the fact that they often have to take early retirement by age 60, at the latest, because this sort of job involves public safety.

What happens when these people start drawing their pensions at age 60? They have contributed to their pension plan during their life of active service at a maximum rate of 2% annually. At age 60 they are obliged to retire. In the period between 60 and 65, there are no contributions of 2% annually so these people can benefit from fair pension plans as other professions.

The public official who retires at age 60 can catch up between the ages of 60 and 65 by continuing to contribute to the Canada pension plan or Quebec's Régime des rentes. This is not the case for firefighters. Their active life, what is called credited service, lasts until age 60 at the latest. And so, their benefits are reduced because they are forced to leave their profession at age 60 and are unable between the ages of 60 and 65 to contribute to the public pension plan.

They may retire at 55, which is often the case. This is not really an old age, but it is a fairly advanced age for doing such a dangerous job and is as risky for the firefighter as it is for his colleagues. Some firefighters, for health reasons or things that have happened to them during their career, are forced to retire at 55. Things are even worse in this case, because between 55 and 60 they do not work and therefore do not contribute to their pension plan. In addition, they face the same prejudice all firefighters face, no contributions between ages 60 and 65. Therefore, they receive less pension income.

*Private Members' Business*

In the United States, many years ago, firefighting was recognized as being a high risk job. The value of this profession and the immeasurable contribution firefighters make have long been recognized. Pension contributions there are at the rate of 2.5% annually.

• (1140)

The firefighters association is asking us to restore annual authorized contributions to 2.3%. This is not much. In so doing, the government would restore fairness by treating firefighters like the members of the other professions relating to public security.

The time for fine rhetoric is over. The government must now take its responsibilities regarding this type of measure. In 1995, the Minister of Finance—with a hand on his heart or, more accurately, on his wallet, which is full of our money—sent a letter to the firefighters' association, in which he said:

I want to tell you that I am very aware of the daily pressures experienced by public safety officials and of the fact that, because of the burden that their profession represents, a large number of firefighters and police officers see their career cut short.

The time has come to follow up on that letter, sent by the Minister of Finance in 1995. We have here a concrete motion that seeks to partly correct the unfair treatment given to firefighters. It also ensures that firefighters are treated just like others public safety officials. Allowing early retirement at age 55 would make room for young people while avoiding—because this is a high risk profession—threats to the physical integrity of those 55 and over who are firefighters and of those whose lives they save, almost on a weekly basis.

The Bloc Quebecois will support this initiative.

[*English*]

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I also wish to begin my remarks by complimenting the sponsor of this motion for bringing forward what I believe is a very topical and timely issue as it relates to the health, safety and well-being of working people.

I also want to compliment the International Association of Fire Fighters for being visible and very active in trying to promote this particular issue for many years, both in the general public and in the House of Commons.

During their annual lobby, every MP on the Hill has probably been visited by members of the IAFF as they have come to our offices to ask for recognition of the issues that they feel are most important and front and centre for the members that they represent. I do not believe any organization has run a more effective lobby in terms of making members of parliament aware of the issues that this particular organization is advocating. The association should be complimented for the long, hard road that it has

followed to finally bring this issue to debate in the House of Commons.

It is generally agreed that firefighters enjoy a special status in the hearts and minds of Canadians. All Canadians recognize the inherent dangers of the job, the courage and the physical stress and duress that such an undertaking shows on working people. All of us recognize what a necessary and valuable position firefighters hold within our communities, whether they are rural or urban communities.

There is no other job in the world like firefighting. Every time the bell rings and every time someone is called out to their workplace they are faced with imminent danger. We can view many jobs as dangerous, whether it is logging, coal mining or the building trades that I come from, but no worker faces the day to day risk that firefighters face every day they go to work.

It is in recognition of that fact that we are sensing broad support in the House of Commons for this very reasonable amendment to the Income Tax Act. I regret that the motion was worded in such a soft way, as are most private member's motions. The motion does not particularly bind the government to leap into any particular action in the immediate future but it does give direction to the government to act in a certain way.

Specifically, the firefighters have come to us year after year in their annual lobby asking for just a few simple things. It is to their credit that they have rendered down the number of issues facing their members to a few achievable goals that they have been very persistent and consistent in putting across to us.

• (1145)

A number of those were itemized by previous speakers. One is the hazardous materials identification system firefighters are advocating that would go above and beyond the WHMI system that all other workers enjoy. WHMIS is the workplace hazardous materials identification system. It is based on the premise that all workers have the right both to know the chemical makeup of the materials they are handling and to refuse unsafe work.

Naturally, WHMIS fails firefighters. Firefighters do not have the right to refuse unsafe work. Everything they do would be categorized in any other conventional workplace as being inherently unsafe. Given the chemical soup that serves as a risk to workers these days in many manufacturing settings, firefighters are even more concerned. Unfortunately the ill effects of that chemical soup are even more obvious as manufacturing systems and processes become more elaborate and sophisticated.

One of the real and existing dangers pointed out by firefighters who have visited my office is that often it is not any one chemical that will harm them on exposure. It is the compounding effect of a



variety of chemicals reacting with one another in a person's system. For instance, chemical *A* is ingested at one fire and chemical *B* is ingested a year later. Those two go on to form chemical *C* within the firefighter's internal organs.

This is a terrible problem. Firefighters we call the walking wounded are walking the streets today. They are really ticking time bombs in terms of showing the ill effects of exposure to hazardous things.

One of the paramount things firefighters want addressed is a more sophisticated hazardous materials tracking system, specifically on the rail lines. That way, when a rail car overturns and creates a toxic plume, firefighters would have some way of knowing what was in the tanker car prior to rushing to the scene. They would not have to read the card on the side of the overturned tanker that may be burning.

The second issue always raised with us when firefighters come on their annual lobby is what we are dealing with today, the fact that the Income Tax Act recognizes the hazardous nature of the work by allowing early retirement at age 60 and even an optional window for early retirement at age 55. This is in recognition of the hazardous nature of the work and the fact that there is wear and tear on the bodies of firefighters just by the nature of that work. However, it fails to recognize something else. A firefighter opting for early retirement at age 55 pays a penalty for every month prior to the age of 60 and is thus forced to retire with an often inadequate pension.

Firefighters seek to achieve by this motion a change in the Income Tax Act to allow for pension benefits to be accrued at a higher rate than that of the average worker. When firefighters opt for early retirement they would do so at full pension. We think this is a reasonable proposal, and I am glad to see that all parties in the House seem to agree.

We should point out to the public that this is not an additional cost to the government. There is no immediate cost associated with this recognition. In fact, this would allow firefighters to sit down at the bargaining table with their employer and negotiate a higher premium contribution to their pension plan above and beyond the 2% allowed by law today.

It really is not a cost to the general public. It is not a cost to the government. It is not a cost to the taxpayer. If at the bargaining table firefighters were able to achieve that increase in contribution rates from their employer, they then would enjoy a maximum of 2.33% pension accrual rate.

We should notify the public that by the passage of this motion and the implementation of the recommendations of the motion we are not voting for a cost to the taxpayer. We are not talking about any increased cost in CPP or any other tax relief for firefighters. We are simply giving them the ability to negotiate a higher rate of contribution to their pension plans.

### *Private Members' Business*

• (1150)

We have many graphic examples of the unique nature of the day to day work and workplace of firefighters. A recent and horrifying example is the Plastimet fire in Hamilton, Ontario. It often comes to mind as a graphic illustration of the inherent hazards associated with this job. Given the number of fatal injuries from that fire and the many complications for the people working there, it would not be an exaggeration to say that Plastimet serves as the firefighter's Westray. On a per capita basis it was as severe and as extreme and it deserves our immediate attention.

This bill will give relief to one minor detail in terms of recognizing the special position that firefighters hold within our culture and communities, but it does not deal with many of the other issues often raised in this regard. I do not believe any job in the country should be considered a dangerous occupation. We have it within our means to make all workplaces safer if we address ourselves to that issue. No amount of compensation justifies a dangerous job.

We used to face that in my trade. They would give us danger pay for doing certain dangerous jobs. I do not really want another dollar an hour for putting my life at risk. I would rather we take that dollar an hour and put it toward research to make the job safer in the first place so that no one gets put into a dangerous situation.

Firefighters are unique in that when all other workers are running out of a burning building from a dangerous situation firefighters are running in. There is no easy solution to making the workplace safer for firefighters. There is more we can do with the co-operation of the union, their employers and government regulatory bodies.

The best we can do now for firefighters is to recognize the inherent danger of their workplace and to give them some satisfaction in terms of this issue and the other legitimate concerns they have brought before us, including the hazardous materials identification system for at least the rail system and the blood sample that was situation raised by other speakers.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a great sense of pride that I rise today to speak to the motion put forward by the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey.

In a previous life I had a substantial amount of experience working very closely with a municipal fire department. I can assure the House that I have nothing but respect for the men and women who put forward their lives to look after our constituents in their duty as firefighters.

I would also like to thank the member for Mississauga South who I know originally put forward this motion. It is a very important issue, one that will deal with the notion of increasing the contribution to pensions from 2% to 2.33%. However, before we

*Private Members' Business*

get into that, I think it is important to recognize as other speakers already have indicated that the profession of a firefighter is indeed unique among emergency services.

Firefighting has changed quite dramatically over the past number of years. This past weekend I had the opportunity to stand onstage for the 14th annual Manitoba firefighters conference. At that conference two things happened. First, there was a memorial at the emergency fire services college in Brandon in memory of the 38 firefighters in Manitoba who lost their lives over the last 100 years. I mention that simply to indicate that the profession itself is a very dangerous one. When a firefighter goes to work he or she does not know what will be encountered that day. It could be a life threatening occurrence.

• (1155)

The second thing that happened at the conference was a skit comparing firefighting of 100 years ago with firefighting of today. They used horse-drawn water brigades 100 years ago. They fought fires using different technology and different training. Today both the system and the profession have changed quite dramatically. We talked about the haz mats, the hazardous materials faced by firefighters.

My firefighters wear a number of hats. They are full-fledged paramedics who have to deal with ambulance calls and other situations either on the highway or in the community. They have to deal with search and rescue. They are responsible for search and rescue on our open waters and in other areas of Manitoba. We have firefighters in northern Manitoba, where forests go up quite regularly. The danger of fighting those fires is much more dramatic now than it was 100 years ago.

Everyone in the House is aware that firefighting remains a very dangerous profession. As compared with workers in the private sector, firefighters have twice the rate of job related fatalities. I simply go back to the 38 firefighters recognized in that memorial. More than 40% of all firefighters suffered job related injuries in 1997. That far exceeds the rate of injury for any other occupation. Firefighters are nearly six times more likely than the average private sector worker to suffer injuries on the job.

The right to refuse unsafe work does not practically exist for our firefighters. When people are running away from a burning building, firefighters are running in the opposite direction, directly into the inferno, to save property and to save lives.

I mention this because the profession is a unique profession. One of the other things I noticed when I was onstage at the 14th annual Manitoba fire conference was that through the fire college a number of very young, well trained and physically fit individuals in my community were prepared to go into the profession.

It is a very physically demanding job. Because of the demands placed on the individual it is not a job that has longevity. In the city

of Brandon we decided a number of years ago that the retirement age of a firefighter should be 55. Unfortunately the pension contributions that can be made do not allow my firefighters to retire at 55 with their full pensions. We do have people to take over from the firefighters who wish to retire at 55, but we have to make sure we can get those firefighters off the job and retired.

In order to do that, with respect to the motion before us, the International Association of Fire Fighters advocates that the finance minister increase the pension accrual rates from 2% to 2.33% for firefighters. This would allow them to retire with adequate financial provisions for their retirement.

In a letter to the Minister of Finance dated December 15, 1999, the IAFF urged the federal government to revisit the current provisions for professional firefighters. In the city of Brandon we have been prepared, through negotiations, to top up the retirement funds of firefighters to accommodate to a degree their request to retire at age 55. A regulatory change to the Income Tax Act would provide all firefighters with the opportunity to collectively bargain for a fair and equitable pension on retirement.

The regulatory change to the Canada Income Tax Act that the IAFF is advocating would allow Canada's firefighters to retire before the rigours of the job pose a threat to both the individuals and their fellow firefighters. The change would allow firefighters to make adequate pension contributions toward retirement.

The proposed regulatory change would be the crucial first step in this process, as firefighters would have to make the same change with their respective provincial pension legislation and then bargain the increased contribution with their employers. It is a critical first step that the federal government put into place the necessary legislative changes. The Canadian Police Association also strongly supports the position of firefighters on this issue.

• (1200)

Last year's report from the Standing Committee on Finance is clear in recommending an increase in the accrual rate from 2% to 2.33%. It has been almost a year since the report was tabled in the House. I urge all members of the House of Commons to support the motion and members on the government side to actually take action. The finance committee has already considered the motion. It is now time for the government to act.

It is a simple legislative change, as was mentioned earlier. I thank the member for Mississauga South. I also thank the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey for bringing it to the attention of the House. Now it is a matter of putting action in place.

The firefighters that represent us in our communities deserve no less. They put their lives on the line. They wish to be able to retire at a younger age because of the difficulties and danger of the job. It

*Private Members' Business*

is incumbent upon us to make it available to them. We will be supporting the motion put forward by the member.

**Mr. Rick Limoges (Windsor—St. Clair, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address private member's Motion No. 418. Yesterday I had the honour of attending a memorial service jointly carried out by padres of both the Detroit and Windsor fire departments wherein honour was brought to those who laid down their lives in the service of our community. It has been said that there is no greater love than the love displayed by laying down one's life in the service of others.

Specific provisions in the Income Tax Act are what we are talking about and the fact that firefighters are in a very different situation than most other people in our society. Most are required to retire early due to contract provisions and the physically strenuous nature of their occupation.

Earlier this year I was able to convene a meeting with senior members of the finance department, those people responsible for the calculations and for putting forth the provisions of the legislation once it is passed by the House, along with the executive of the firefighters association. At that meeting, along with the member for Essex, we were able to discuss for several hours provisions of the pension plan and the firefighters request for the 2.33% integrated plan.

We understand there is scope within the existing pension tax rules for plans covering firefighters to increase pension plan benefits. This was explained to members of the association along with me. We understand that a number of firefighter pension plans provide a 2% pension benefit that is integrated with Canada pension benefits. This means that these plans are not currently providing the maximum pension benefits permissible under the Income Tax Act. However, due to the vagaries of collective bargaining, it would be very difficult for firefighters across the country to be able to negotiate the full benefit they seek.

I understand that firefighters would like to be provided with a 2.33% pension benefit that is integrated with CPP. I understand that by maximizing the benefits under the current rules the plans could possibly provide an even larger pension benefit than could be obtained in the 2.33% integration, but as I said earlier it would be subject to unprecedented success in collective bargaining.

It is clear that firefighters provide a service to our community that is desperately needed and absolutely essential.

• (1205)

It is clear that firefighters provide a service to our communities that is desperately needed and absolutely essential. In my 14 years of experience in municipal council I had the opportunity of seeing

firsthand what some firefighters were doing and the dedication they brought to their jobs. We in Windsor are very proud of them.

Firefighters in Windsor were faced with a situation 15 years ago where there were very poor labour-management relations between the fire department and the city. They now enjoy an absolutely positive attitude and marvellous relationship. There can always be improvements, I suppose, but in talking to firefighters across the country it was brought to my attention that Windsor was a model others could only hope to follow.

Firefighters are out in the community doing the job of public relations and of increasing safety awareness in children and families. We are extremely proud that we have the type of relationship where everyone benefits.

It was explained to us yesterday during the memorial service that we do not take enough time to recognize and thank firefighters for the sacrifice they have made over the past century.

The motion speaks to the need for further consultation and consideration of the issue. It is paramount for firefighters and their families. I urge members of the House to support the motion before us.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we have a very short time and many members wish to speak to the motion, so I will keep my remarks to the point.

I have listened to the debate today but, more important, I have had an ongoing dialogue with the firefighters in my community of London, Ontario. They do honourable work all hours of the day and night. They do it with safety. They do it with integrity. They do it with our interest at heart.

We have an obligation to listen to their concerns. That is what many of my colleagues around the House on all sides and I have been doing. I believe a valid point is made here. I add my voice to the people supporting the motion.

I have been lobbying the finance minister. In short order we should be looking at the reality of bringing in a regulatory framework that would provide the needed change. I will not restate the statistics. We know them. I will allow someone else to speak at this point.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to the particular motion. I would like to make three specific points about it. It deals with the rights of firefighters or the consideration of whether firefighters should have a different accrual rate to their pension plans. They have to retire early because of health considerations, physical fitness considerations and other matters.

First, in my opinion firefighters have one of the most effective and most grassroots inclusive lobbying groups on Parliament Hill.

*Supply*

They do a great job of integrating both the parliamentary role of their associations and the grassroots back home. They do it as well as any other group in the country. I have told them that and I compliment them on that.

Second, I would like to put a plug in for my private member's motion on the blood samples act. It specifically targets firefighters and gives them protection against contamination from bodily fluids with which they may come in contact during the course of their duties.

Third, specifically the motion has to do with the accrual rate. It should be passed and sent to committee for consideration. Firefighters will have to work with other groups like the military, police officers and others that also face the same problem with the accrual rate. I will leave it at that.

• (1210)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

\* \* \*

**REPORT OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** I have the honour, pursuant to section 38 of the Access to Information Act, to lay upon the table the report of the information commissioner for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2000. This report is permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**SUPPLY**

ALLOTTED DAY—POVERTY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ)** moved:

That this House work to provide the means needed to fight poverty and violence against women as demanded by the World March of Women, particularly in the areas of income protection, health, international aid, violence and wage parity, so as to ensure a fairer distribution of wealth between women and men.

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to give you notice that the leader of the Bloc Québécois will be sharing the time allotted him with our colleague from Longueuil. All members of the Bloc Québécois will proceed in the same fashion.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, this motion comes at a rather particular juncture today, because the women are in Washington today. They were there yesterday as well. They marched in Ottawa as well, as they did in Montreal on Saturday, and in Quebec City on Friday and in all regions of Quebec and in all neighbourhoods of Montreal and in other regions in Canada. In fact, pretty well around the world. On Saturday, over 30,000 women demonstrated in Brussels. Tomorrow, all these women will be in New York.

The Bloc Québécois members are proud of the fact that this initiative originated in Quebec. It was the Fédération des femmes du Québec and its president, Françoise David, who had the idea and linked up with women around the world in order to blend the demands they were making of their respective governments and of international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund. Tomorrow they will be meeting Secretary General Kofi Annan at the United Nations.

Many people feel that the women's demands are nothing but wishful thinking and that, while we agree in theory, it is impossible in practice because we cannot afford it.

We in the Bloc Québécois have checked whether indeed we had the funds and the means to respond to the women's demands. Looking at the surplus in the hands of the Minister of Finance and the government—and it is important to say this today because we are apparently going to be having a mini-budget on Wednesday—it is up to \$165.8 billion according to our figures. Without taking the agreement with the provinces relating to the Canada social transfer into consideration, the figure comes to \$147.9 billion instead.

This represents a lot of money that can be used to meet the demands the women have made. This is not a debate about whether we have or do not have the means, it is a matter of whether we do or do not have the political desire to respond to the women's demands.

We have taken great care in calculating the surplus. For example, last year we stated that the figure would be \$11.5 billion while the Minister of Finance was announcing \$3 billion, knowing as well as we did that it would be far more. He did not want it known, in order to avoid a debate like the one we are having here today. In the end, the figure was \$12.3 billion. Looking at the Minister of Finance's five year forecasts, I see the figure is in the order of \$160.8 billion.

• (1215)

Taking the agreement out of the equation, as I said earlier, the figure comes to \$142 billion and a bit, which is about \$5 billion off the figure we had predicted. This opinion is shared by some of the leading economists as well. Last week, in a debate at the Conseil du Patronat, the same figure was reached with the same evaluations. It seems likely that this is what the Minister of Finance will be telling us on Wednesday.

Unfortunately, however, it is my impression that he will not reach the same conclusions as we on how to use these surplus funds. Women are asking, among other things, for a review of the whole employment insurance issue. If the federal government is currently enjoying surpluses, it is because it created them at the expense of the provinces.

It was the case with the Canada social transfer. The federal government finally recognized that it had taken money from the provinces, but even more so from the employment insurance fund, where it took more than \$30 billion from the poor and also from businesses. The result is that the employment insurance program has become a tax on employment, with over 60% of contributors being penalized, since they contribute but do not qualify for benefits once they are out of work.

The changes announced by the government regarding employment insurance have only a very marginal and temporary impact on seasonal workers. Does the government realize that over two thirds of women who contribute to the program do not qualify for benefits? This is blatant injustice and must be corrected. This is why the Bloc Québécois is saying that the government must reinvest \$25 billion in the employment insurance program, over a five year period.

As regards transfer payments for health, post-secondary education and income support, women are asking the government to invest, to take into account the fact that there are enormous needs in the health sector, that the provinces must provide services without having enough money, while the federal government does not have to provide such services, at least not much, but has the money to do so.

The federal government announced \$17.9 billion over five years. We believe that this amount must be indexed on the basis of the cost as it was in 1994, which would mean an additional \$10 billion, and that the federal government must put \$27 billion into the social transfer because it affects the health of families, and of men and women in an aging population.

Speaking of an aging population, one of the important demands being made by women—I will not go over all the demands because my colleagues will be doing so in the course of the day—has to do with old age security so that older women do not have to live in poverty.

Forty-two per cent of single women over 65 in Canada are living in poverty because many of them did not work outside the home; they worked in the home and this is work that is unpaid. Not that they worked any less, but they do not have a pension plan. These women are living under the poverty line. We must invest \$3 billion to ensure that those who raised children, who raised our families, who helped build the future, are not abandoned to unacceptable and appalling conditions.

### *Supply*

Despite what some say, when all these demands from women are factored in, there is certainly enough both for paying down the debt by \$21 billion over five years and for tax cuts. We know the Minister of Finance will be announcing \$58 billion in tax cuts with his plan to lower the capital gains tax from 66% to 50%, but the rate of taxation on employment income is 100% and low and middle income Canadians will not benefit.

What is needed are tax cuts and that is something that we can aim for, all the while balancing the budget and holding the line on the deficit. We do not want to go back to a deficit situation. In my view \$73.8 billion could be set aside for this. This is in no way incompatible with the duty—and I do consider it a duty—to invest in the social, economic, education and health fields.

• (1220)

As far as the \$73.8 billion allocated to the middle class is concerned, they are the ones who have borne the brunt of the deficit reduction, because they do not have enough money to take advantage of the wonderful tax loopholes that companies like Canada Steamship Lines can because it earns so much that it pays no taxes. The middle class has borne the brunt of it and must get some help.

When I speak of the middle class, I mean the many single mothers who cannot make ends meet because they have to pay income tax while the rich companies do not. This is social inequality and it is unacceptable.

For example, a family of four, two adults and two children, pays no income tax in Quebec if their total income is less than \$30,000. On the federal level that same family starts paying tax at the \$14,700 level. In most cases, women and children are the ones who suffer. Often women are raising children on their own.

That is why we must make an effort to respond to women's demands, while at the same time not neglecting to cut taxes for the low and middle income groups. We can afford to do so.

I will close on that point. It is not a matter of wishful thinking. This will be addressed in the election campaign. I do hope the government will settle this for us this week. The opposition would lose a point of argument but women would gain. I feel that is more important.

If the government does not settle this we will not hold our tongues. What is more, as Ms. David has said, women are determined to follow the candidates in this election and to let them know that there is a sizeable surplus, that there are priorities to be respected and that the wealthy friends of the party in power and the companies are not the only ones that vote.

*Supply*

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for speaking on this important issue of women's situations and quality of life.

I would like our leader to raise an issue of considerable urgency, that of public housing. I would like him to explain the dynamics of public housing.

Since 1993, the federal government has provided insufficient funding. Everyone knows that women, single parents and families living under the poverty line are having a hard time making ends meet and obtaining appropriate housing.

Therefore, this is a Bloc Québécois fight, and I would ask our leader to put this pressing matter to the public.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, negotiations have been taking place between the federal and Quebec governments regarding social housing. The federal government said it was withdrawing from social housing, but it has not given back the money that it has collected in taxes for social housing. It has not lowered taxes accordingly.

Quebec is quite prepared to sign an agreement and to take over that responsibility provided it has the means to fulfil its obligations. The Quebec government estimates that the province's needs for social housing account for 27% of Canada's overall needs, this with 24% of the country's population. However, Ottawa is only offering 18% of the money, which means there is a significant gap.

We must absolutely invest in that area because way too much money is being paid in rent by people. Some families spend up to 50% of their income on rent, while they should normally not allocate more than 25% of their income to that item.

• (1225)

Under the agreement with Quebec, this represents an amount of \$400 million. This means that for the whole country the government should invest \$1.5 billion. Based on our budget forecasts, we are anticipating new spending of \$18.5 billion, without any deficit. As for the government, it is anticipating at this point that new spending will total \$10.9 billion.

The amount of \$1.5 billion could easily be allocated to social housing if, again, there was a political will to do so. I know that women organizations estimate the amount to be \$2 billion over a five year period. At yesterday's meeting we agreed that our economists, both theirs and ours, would meet to determine whether it is \$1.5 billion or \$2 billion. It will then be a matter of reorganizing other requests, but there is enough flexibility with an amount of \$147.9 billion to settle this urgent problem. I fully agree with the hon. member for Québec that we must take action

regarding this issue. Again, this is something that could be corrected in the mini-budget if this government would listen to ordinary people, to the men and women who pay taxes in our society but who are not getting the services to which they are entitled.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on this opposition day motion to support women on the occasion of the World March of Women. Allow me to read the motion:

That this House work to provide the means needed to fight poverty and violence against women as demanded by the World March of Women, particularly in the areas of income protection, health, international aid, violence and wage parity, so as to ensure a fairer distribution of wealth between women and men.

This motion is quite clear, in my opinion. We all know the government can afford it and that its coffers are full. The government has the means to give women a positive answer. It has accumulated indecent surpluses while thousands of women live below the poverty line. Worse, the government rakes in the taxpayers' money while the provinces are the ones who provide front line services.

Is this renewed federalism? The money is all kept in Ottawa. The government pockets all the money it can and just before an election it scatters a little here and there. No thank you. It is time for things to change. Women want a change.

As status of women critic for the Bloc Québécois, I have a wish. I would like to see justice and fairness for all women. But today, Mr. Speaker, it is as a woman that I speak to you. There are still too few women in the House. I sincerely feel that during last week a great number of us have been walking through the streets of Quebec and the rest of the world to put forward our claims. I believe that week has left its mark on us all, women and men, on various levels. However, I am convinced that we will emerge from it transformed. Let us hope that, as they did not walk, members opposite listened.

It is with sadness that I must point out that, although we are in the year 2000, we still live in a patriarchal society. Much remains to be done so that women and men are equal and treated fairly.

Here, in the very best country in the world, what kind of record can the Liberal government show with regard to fair treatment? The government took more than 15 years to show respect to its own employees in the area of pay equity. We also know that it is the only government left in Canada without proactive legislation in that regard. This means female workers under federal jurisdiction have to lodge individual complaints of discrimination if they want to get pay equity. Such is the shining record of the federal government with regard to pay equity.

*Supply*

Even worse, the federal government refuses to extend the settlement to female employees of crown corporations and agencies who work under the same job classification system. It seems to me, from a strictly logical point of view, that if the court has ruled that the practices the treasury board used in the federal public service were discriminatory, these very same practices should not be tolerated in crown corporations and agencies. But no, the treasury board is still refusing to act. This is the kind of respect the government has for its own employees. Frankly, it seems so difficult for the government to get some money out when it is for women, while it seems to be so easy when it is for its friends.

• (1230)

Just for the information of hon. members and people who are watching us at home, here are the government's priorities: \$45 million for Canadian unity; \$90 million for the Canada Information Office; \$200 million for propaganda; \$15 million for the one million flags operation. This is where the priorities of this government are. This is a lot of money.

This is precisely the kind of mean-spirited behaviour that leads women to fight against poverty. This is one of the 2,000 good reasons for marching.

I would like to remind hon. members today where this wonderful idea of the world march came from.

In 1995 the march "Du pain et des roses" in Quebec was a great success. More than 850 women marched for 10 days to make several economic claims. That march led women from all over the world to aim for higher goals and to build world solidarity.

This year, in October 2000, the Fédération des femmes du Québec struck again by organizing the World March of Women, which brought together 4,200 groups from 157 countries and territories. In each of Quebec's regions, thousands of women joined the march. I did also and I know my colleague from Charlevoix and most of my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois did. I must admit this march was moving.

Back home in Longueuil on a bright Friday morning 400 women marched. Standing together they were so beautiful that for a moment I thought they were signalling that the time had come for a change.

Of course we all know that the purpose of the World March of Women is to end poverty and violence against women. This is a peaceful movement toward hope, equality, peace and democracy. This is a movement toward recognition of the rights of all women throughout the world.

The World March of Women underlines two main demands. The first one is the elimination of poverty and the fair sharing of the world's wealth between the rich and the poor, between men and

women. The second one is the elimination of violence against women.

The status of women is a key issue for the Bloc Québécois. This is why our party proposed various concrete measures over the years, beginning within the party itself.

At the last general convention of the Bloc Québécois, the party faithful supported the demands of the World March of Women. At their last general meeting, they renewed their support toward the demands of the World March of Women and invited party members to participate in the campaign promoting the signing of support cards.

Bloc Québécois members also worked in parliament, at the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, and asked that women's demands be examined on a priority basis, as early as this fall, so that women could have a political and parliamentary forum to voice their concerns and their demands.

We have also relentlessly urged the federal government to treat young people and women fairly within its employment insurance program.

On the 10th anniversary of the tragic massacre at the École Polytechnique, the leader of the Bloc Québécois asked the federal government to launch a public awareness campaign against violence. We are still waiting.

The Bloc Québécois also wanted to hear what the people had to say. We travelled throughout Quebec to criticize the government for its lack of investment in the fight against poverty. We have also made a solemn commitment to the public to demand that the federal government make the fight against poverty one of its priorities.

As in 1985, the Bloc Québécois is getting involved and takes part in this great show of solidarity. Whether it is to inform, to raise awareness or to mobilize public opinion, the Bloc Québécois wants above all to ensure that the federal government does everything it can to eliminate poverty and violence against women.

The Bloc Québécois is getting involved because we believe that the time for change is now. The Bloc Québécois is getting involved because 70% of the poor on this planet are women and because 1 out of 5 women in Canada is poor.

We are getting involved because 51% of women in Canada have been victims since their 16th birthday of at least one physical or sexual assault as defined in the criminal code. In Canada, women are still afraid to walk alone at night. In Canada, every week, one woman is killed by her spouse or former spouse.

• (1235)

Violence can be physical, sexual, verbal or psychological. What is clear is that violence is a reality for all women. That is why we

*Supply*

earnestly hope the federal government will create a \$50 million fund to fight violence against women, and that it will give the provinces the means to act in this area.

Another request the Bloc Québécois made here in the House concerns basic funding for women's organizations. Since the beginning of our mandate, we, members of the Bloc, have been requesting that the federal government earmark \$30 million. This represents two dollars for each woman and young girl in the country. The funding for women's groups has been reduced by 15% under the liberals, and it has also been reviewed.

I am convinced that the World March of Women will be one of the milestones of the new millennium. Let us hope that the federal government will finally act and take all necessary measures to eliminate poverty and violence against women. In this year 2000 some tangible changes are required; women have the right to equality.

The Bloc Québécois believes that society is made up of men and women and that it is through their complicity and solidarity that they will finally achieve an egalitarian society.

Before I conclude, I would like to table an amendment to this motion. I move:

That the motion be amended by adding after the words "That this House" the following: "immediately".

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** The amendment is admissible and the debate is now on the amendment.

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Longueuil for her excellent speech.

What struck me in the demands put forward by women's groups is something that could now become an issue during the election, that is, the core funding of organizations.

Since the government took office it has backed away from a commitment toward the women's groups that fight daily for the most deprived of women as well as for all the women of Quebec and Canada, groups that defend women's rights and speak out against poverty and violence against women and children.

I would like my colleague to speak in greater detail of how the government has backed away from this commitment since it took office. I would like her to tell us what solution the Bloc Québécois is proposing so that these women's groups can work without having to set up projects and that the money needed for the fight against poverty and violence is made available. This is a minimum. I would also like my colleague to tell us in detail about this core funding problem.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire:** Mr. Speaker, before answering the question asked by the hon. member for Drummond, I would like to

underline the work she is doing as a woman and a parliamentarian. I know she is appreciated by everyone in the House.

More precisely, to answer her question, funding of women's groups has been cut by 15% by the Liberals. It has also been reviewed, and it is another scandal. From now on, funding will be made on a project by project basis and not on the basis of the budget required.

• (1240)

As we all know, these groups need basic funding. They also need recognition and support, and we are still waiting for the government to do just that. What we members of the Bloc Québécois are proposing is basically the same thing as what women are asking in their world march, that is \$2 per woman and little girl or roughly \$30 billion.

According to the Minister of Finance, that is not economically viable, but he should be reminded that if we want real democracy we must give a real voice to everyone, especially the most vulnerable.

I hope the government will intervene and give money to women who are on the front lines and who are the first to offer their help to our women in Quebec and Canada.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the motion put forward by the leader of the Bloc Québécois regarding the World March of Women, an event that our government welcomes heartily.

[English]

The march is bringing together over 5,000 groups in 157 countries around the globe to tell governments and international institutions, such as the World Bank, the IMF and the United Nations, that we need to do a great deal more to end poverty among women.

[Translation]

I want to congratulate every group in our country that has played a major role in organizing this march, particularly the Fédération des femmes du Québec, which played a leading role in making this march a reality.

[English]

The Government of Canada shares the goals of the World March of Women 2000 and has been doing what it can to help make it a success. For example, on Wednesday the Canadian ambassador to the United Nations will host a meeting at the conclusion of the march to allow the women to present their resolutions to the secretary general of the United Nations.



*Supply*

I am also very proud of the fact that the federal government has been able to contribute \$700,000 to the international march and \$200,000 to the national march, for a total of \$900,000, in support of women speaking out on this issue.

The reason we support women is that in spite of the fact that we talk about tax cuts, flat taxes and debt reduction, there are still people in this country who live in poverty, and most tend to be women. We still have violence, which tends to be directed mostly at women. We believe NGOs and volunteer organizations play an important role in bringing this to the attention not only of the public but of governments.

We want to continue to ensure that governments in Canada and around the world focus on the issues of the march that these women are bringing to the fore. Our government agrees with the issues. We know there is more to be done both on the domestic front and on the international front, but we need to do this in a consistent and co-ordinated way.

We believe that this is an area in which we can work more closely with women and other equality seeking organizations to see that those goals are met in a way that will ensure that the day to day realities of women and their families are addressed.

Yesterday the Prime Minister met with representatives from the women's march. This is the first time in 15 years that a prime minister has met with women's organizations and spent almost an hour listening very clearly to the issues that were brought to his attention.

Meetings between representatives of the march and some of my cabinet colleagues will be taking place within the next few days to discuss the very specific issues that the women are bringing forward and some of the very specific solutions that they are bringing forward.

We fully support the approach taken by march organizers to initiate a constructive dialogue to get the priorities and the design right as we build for the future. In the last federal budget the government committed an additional \$20.5 million over five years to Status of Women Canada to develop and establish an agenda for gender equality. This agenda will expand on the 1995 federal plan for gender equality so that we can further advance the goal of gender equality in the 21st century. That means we will continue to develop gender based analysis which will take in the realities between men and women and how policies and legislation affect them. We will work horizontally to ensure that every single department does gender based analysis on every single piece of legislation and policy that it brings forward.

● (1245 )

All governments have a responsibility to take a lead in bringing about changes that affect the lives of women everywhere. This government believes that it is important for women to play their role to the fullest in the economic, social and political life of the

country. We want to give them the tools they need to be able to do that.

[*Translation*]

In 1996, 88% of domestic violence victims in Canada were women. A majority of the persons killed in a situation of domestic violence are women. It is sad to realize that violence remains largely unreported. This is mainly because women are too afraid to seek support from the outside or because they feel intimidated.

[*English*]

Action has already been taken in these areas. These are the building blocks. The actions the government has taken to date on violence against women are the building blocks upon which we hope to advance women's equality and to decrease violence against women, each year addressing those in accordance with the plan that we are going to develop with women.

With the shelter enhancement program, we have committed \$43 million to build and improve shelters for women, children and youth who are victims of family violence. Because we want to get at the root causes of family violence, we recently added \$7 million to an already over \$40 million initiative supported by seven departments in the government to deal with the family violence initiative.

The Minister of Justice has also put \$32.5 million toward a crime prevention strategy, \$32.5 million over five years. One of the core pieces in that puzzle, on which she is working with community groups, is to specifically address the issue of violence against women.

At the last meeting in August in Iqaluit, our Minister of Justice brought to the table, to the other justice ministers, a project to deal with advancing and improving legislation on peace bonds and against those who commit violence against women. That result will come up by the end of this year.

We know that to strengthen our response to the tragic reality of domestic violence, jurisdictions have to work together. We have to work with women to make this so.

There is an extremely important piece of the strategy in defeating and dealing with violence against women. We know that 88% of the people killed in domestic violence are women and about 75% of them are shot. We know that the gun control legislation brought out in 1996 is an absolutely key piece in decreasing the shooting of women, especially when we know they are shot with guns that happen to be in the house.

Spousal violence is a key factor underlying homelessness. Single women and families headed by women account for an increasing proportion of the homeless population. The government is taking action to address this problem. The 2000 budget confirmed a \$735 million strategy to combat homelessness.

*Supply*

A piece of that strategy is specific work with women's organizations, because we know that many women who are homeless are homeless because they are running away. They are the invisible homeless. They do not want to be found because they are running away from violent spouses and partners and they know that if they are found someone will take their children away from them. These women tend to move from place to place. Confidentiality is a key component. We are working specifically with women's organizations to address that confidentiality component.

We also know that a key component of homelessness is not only violence but women's inequality. The face of poverty in Canada and around the world is female. More than two-thirds of the world's population lives on as little as one American dollar a day. Poverty is still a reality in Canada. We accept that this is truth. In 1997, 13% of all Canadian children under the age of 18 lived in low income families headed by a single female parent. This figure represents 40% of all low income families. In 1998 60% of homeless runaway children aged 12 to 17 were female.

Actions that the government has taken are the building blocks. I want to stress that we are not going to do everything in one year. We are beginning with strong building blocks. The actions we have taken are building blocks upon which we will continue to build, working closely with NGOs and women's organizations.

• (1250)

Significant resources have been committed to assisting poor families with children. We know there is an additional \$2.5 billion a year for the Canada child tax benefit, which brings the annual investment of new money by the federal government to more than \$9 billion, to address the issue of low income and poor families, which we know are mostly headed by women.

There is the early childhood development agreement which, under the recently signed action plan for health, provides another \$2.2 billion to help ensure that all Canadian children get the best possible start in life.

We have made changes to the employment insurance program to extend maternity and parental leave from six months to a year to allow new mothers to spend more time with their newborn or newly adopted children. We know that one of the chief stresses on women today is balancing the paid work they do with their family responsibilities, because women still bear the disproportionate burden of caregiving in our society.

We know that further changes to EI, announced recently, will ensure that parents who leave the workforce to remain at home with young children will not be penalized the next time they find it necessary to apply for EI benefits. This is a positive step for women's equality since most of the parents who do remain at home with their children are women.

The government has also introduced several programs to assist aboriginal women whom we know suffer disproportionate discrimination and multiple barriers that prevent them from having access to some of the things that other Canadians take for granted. We are investing \$22.5 million annually, plus an additional \$100 million over four years on the aboriginal head start program for children living on and off reserves. We have created or improved 7,000 quality child care spaces under the Inuit and first nations child care program because that is a federal jurisdiction. We know that in many other areas in the provinces child care is a provincial jurisdiction.

The future in Canada can belong to women but they need an education to get them there. Enhanced support for students by increasing the amount of tax free income from bursaries, fellowships and scholarships, such as the \$2 billion Canadian millennium fund, will help women. It is direct assistance that the federal government is moving to this area.

We have heard questions asked about money from HRDC. That has been specifically used to forgive loans, especially for people who cannot afford to pay them, and we know that those persons tend to be women with dependants, women who are trying to get an education so that they can have a better chance of supporting their children with pride and dignity. The Canada studies grants for high need, post-secondary students with dependants, students with disabilities, high need, part time students and women pursuing doctoral studies is a grant program, not a loan.

I have been talking about actions we have taken for Canadian women but Canada has also taken a leadership role internationally in promoting gender equality and the diversity of women in a number of international fora such as the Francophonie, the United Nations, the Commonwealth and the Asia-Pacific because Canada has written the book on gender based analysis.

If we are to move forward and ensure that the steps we take will actually benefit women, we have to know the figures on the status of women at the moment. We have to be able to set clear strategies within each department so that looking at women's needs will not be only a ghettoized place in Status of Women Canada but so that at the end of the day we will be able to evaluate the strategies and see what worked, what did not work and what we need to do better.

We will continue to reach out to women as we do on our research policy, where many grassroots women's organizations in partnership with academia work on particular grants and particular research projects that help us to understand what are the next steps we need to take.

In terms of international assistance for the women of the world, let us not forget that Canada is part of 155 countries that are marching around the world. We have set aside an additional \$435

*Supply*

million for the international assistance envelope over the next three years. We have undertaken a \$2.8 billion five year plan to strengthen social development in developing countries.

I know that Canada is one of the few countries to call for an immediate moratorium on debt repayment for the world's heavily indebted nations. In fact Canada, has done that. We have forgiven the debt to the heavily indebted nations.

• (1255)

When the Prime Minister was in Okinawa recently and talked to the G-8, he talked about having every country raise the amount of foreign aid it gives and dedicating it especially to housing, to drinking water, to health issues and to literacy for the women of the world. As members know, my colleague, the minister responsible for international development, has recently doubled the percentage of money in her budget that she has been spending to specifically target those areas in which women around the world need more help.

We can assist women around the world not only with talk, with rhetoric, with gender based analysis and with instruments of government, but also by putting money into the areas where we know women need help: to be able to read and write, to be able to know that their children will not die because the water they drink is unsafe, to know that they have shelter and housing.

Our priorities as a government over the past few years reflect our commitment to a focus on areas where outcomes will improve the quality of life for women. Federal initiatives are helping to combat violence against women and to reduce poverty in Canada and around the world. We know we cannot achieve the ultimate goals where women are absolutely equal, where they fear violence no more and where they are no longer among the poorest in the world, in isolation. We know that we have to do this in partnership.

That is why the Prime Minister met with the women on the march. That is why we have supported the march financially, with a large and substantive amount. We believe that organizations and NGOs have a real role to play in moving the agenda forward, especially when we see political parties talking simply and only about taxes and debt and not even considering and understanding the needs of poor women. We have heard members across the House talk about how changes to EI will help women to be on greater welfare. The reality of women's lives does not factor in with our colleagues in the Alliance who do not seem to understand anything about the lives of real women.

We also think it is extremely important that women move into the political process where they can help make those kinds of decisions. We know that by having a lot of women in our caucus who consider this issue every single week we have managed to push an agenda toward looking at gender equality in all the areas

we talked about. Having women in political positions helps to move that agenda forward in a balanced way.

Our Prime Minister has done everything that he can to move women forward. We have the first female head of the Supreme Court Justices of Canada. We now have 31% women in the Senate, where the Prime Minister has been appointing women two to one. He has taken initiatives to name women in winnable ridings because we know that the nomination process has been difficult for women. It is because of this that we have the kind of government we have, one that has been paying attention to the issues of women.

The government understands that achieving gender equality not only enhances the economic, social and political participation of women, it benefits their families, their children and society as a whole. We have always recognized that economic and social progress go hand in hand. This is a government that knows this. This is something we are committed to.

We cannot have strong social programs without a strong economy and we cannot have a strong economy without the social supports that allow every individual to contribute to society and to have some kind of economic autonomy. This is a balanced approach. This is the approach of the government.

We believe that the dignity of all individuals is enhanced when everyone is treated fairly and equally. I want to stress that equality does not mean sameness. Equality means recognizing that different people and groups in society have different barriers to face, and we must have different strategies to address each one of those issues. That is something that I think our friends in the Alliance might be able to learn from us.

We continue to realize that diversity in the policies, plans and programs we put forward is completely important. To reach our goal we must work together in partnership. We must listen to non-government organizations and not treat them like special interest groups, as I know certain members across the way have been wont to describe women's organizations in the past.

I hope that every member of the House will agree with me that we must ensure as we move into the 21st century that no woman or girl is left behind as we move into this new millennium.

• (1300)

It is significant that 100 years ago, when we entered the last century, women could not vote, stand for public office or be appointed to the Senate. We were little more than the chattel of husbands in those days. We were pieces of furniture.

The past century has brought enormous change, but if we are to be competitive and strong the 51% of the population who are women must be allowed to play a very strong role in building the country and in playing a significant and equal part.

*Supply**[Translation]*

I am proud to be part of a government whose vision is based on a future where systemic discrimination against women will be something of the past, for the benefit of all Canadians and the future of our country.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to the remarks of the Secretary of State for the Status of Women, who is part of this government. We know that women feel concerned by the women's march and all the demands made by this great mobilization that started in Quebec and has spread to the whole world.

I doubt that the government is committed, and I urge the Secretary of State for the Status of Women to keep a watchful eye over the issues of real concern to women. I know she is very sensitive to all women's issues, but I am not convinced her government has made or will be able to make all the efforts wished for by various women's group in Quebec.

That is why the Bloc Québécois has put forward a \$45 billion strategy over the next five years for a real investment after what I would call seven years of social deficit incurred by the Liberal government as far as caring for citizens, for women and children, for the most destitute in our society, and for men too.

We have demands to pass on to the government. I am sorry, but this debate today concerns mainly women. The Bloc Québécois had the opportunity to meet some community agencies, which have to face tremendous challenges to promote fairness and balance in our society. What they are asking for is the reinstatement of core funding for community agencies. It is a well known fact that community organizations had to pick up the pieces.

The Secretary of State for the Status of Women talked about parental insurance. It is one thing to extend the period during which women can stay home with their children but how could they take advantage of the new insurance program if they are excluded from EI? I wonder if the minister could make specific requests to the government regarding the day care system, the financing of community help organizations, funds to combat violence and funding for social housing, where the government has disinvested.

Since 1993, there has been no new money to answer the needs of the population. I think that we are far from meeting the main objectives of the World March of Women in response to the great debate on the societal issue of poverty which affects women, children and men. I would ask the secretary of state to be more specific. It is not the first time that a Prime Minister meets with women's organizations, but it is the first time for the present Prime Minister. It is a bit sad to see that he waited six years after coming to power to finally sit down with women's groups.

*[English]*

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, I want to let the hon. member know that it was not \$25 million. We have contributed \$20.5 million over five years only to Status of Women Canada. We have also increased the money given to women over the last few years. We brought it up to more than \$40 million by adding another \$7 million to be able to deal with violence against women.

I have just talked about the money put into homelessness, much of which will be discussed with NG organizations. There will be discussions about their ability to find ways to deal with homelessness, transition homes and shelters in a confidential manner.

Much of the \$32.5 million per year for crime prevention will be dedicated to working with grassroots groups to look at prevention of violence against women. We are not just talking about the Status of Women Canada looking after women's issues but about how every department addresses women's equality.

• (1305 )

We are still committed to working with non-governmental organizations, as we said in the throne speech. We have an ad hoc group of ministers currently looking at how we work with NGOs and volunteer organizations. We are discussing with them how to improve their capacity. We are working with them before we even begin to develop public policy. They are at the table with us to develop that public policy so that it is implementable and effective.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the minister two questions that I think should demand fairly straightforward answers.

She mentioned in response that \$20.5 million over five years went to Status of Women Canada. How much government funding from her department went to the group REAL Women?

She also mentioned that the Prime Minister met yesterday with some of the representatives of the women's group. Why it is being reported today, then, that the leaders of NACSOW have said that seemed to be a complete waste of time?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, I do not have the exact figures, but I think over the last nine years we have funded REAL Women in projects it has brought to the table. It has in fact been doing very good work in dealing with the issue of unpaid work, something at which the government has been looking, the caregiving work women do for which they get no reimbursement.

We have funded REAL Women but we did not fund that group this year because it did not come forward with a project worth funding. We have not funded many other groups when their projects did not meet the criteria for funding.

The Prime Minister met with women because he is very supportive of the attention the World March and the women's march in this country is bringing to issues that he has consistently had to defend in the House.

Members of her party only talk about tax breaks and the wealth of individuals. The Prime Minister is on record as saying we have to deal with the issue of disadvantaged persons. That is the kind of balanced approach we are taking. That is why the Prime Minister met with them. The Prime Minister told them that he does not micromanage and that in their meetings with members of his cabinet that will take place over the next two days they will discuss the very specific issues in their 13 requests.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, listening to the minister responsible for the status of women reminds me of an old expression "one step forward and two steps backward".

I do not need to say how hopeful women were 20-25 years ago at the height of the women's movement. We were moving toward pay equity, dealing with violence against women, addressing the need for pensions and dealing with poverty. The list went on and on. Yet here we are today with thousands of women coming to Ottawa appealing to the government on the most basic demand, the most basic questions pertaining to economic and social security.

Today women are under stress more than ever before as they try to juggle work and family responsibilities. Women are finding it more and more difficult to meet all the demands on their time and to provide for themselves and their families.

My questions are threefold. The minister talks about the Prime Minister meeting with the organizers of the women's march. Is it better for the Prime Minister to meet and patronize women with words and spurn their concerns, or is it better not to meet at all?

Second, when it comes to the rhetoric of the minister around gender based analysis, why do we never see that translated into actual policies and programs? I can testify to the fact that when it comes to applying those words, as we had an opportunity to do in the health committee, it is Liberal members who stand and refuse to apply gender based analysis, refuse to even ensure parity on the governing councils for such basic areas as scientific and medical research.

On the most basic of matters where women are truly struggling, why does the government stand in the way each and every time? Whether we are talking about providing for national child care, national home care, national drug coverage or national housing programs, these issues really matter to women in terms of making a difference the government has done nothing. It has actually backpedalled and made the situation worse.

### *Supply*

• (1310)

Will the government reverse the agenda of privatization and deregulation and start to work in the best interest of women to ensure we finally achieve equality in this millennium?

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must not confuse rhetoric with fact. The issue of what gender based analysis has done is pretty clear. The changes in EI announced recently by the minister of HRDC show that gender based analysis has played a part.

Looking at the changes in the CPP, the government pushed very hard to ensure that the dropout provisions would be there for women so that they could drop in and out and not lose their pensionable earnings. The survivor benefits in the CPP are part of it. We talked about health. The whole new gender institute in CIHR is a huge piece. When the government came into power in 1993 it established five centres of excellence for women's health across the country.

I could go on and on about the initiatives taken when gender based analysis showed us the way to go. What the hon. member does not understand is that gender based analysis is about helping each department. She should look at each department and the changes that have been made, many of them in the budget when the Minister of Finance put forward a tax credit for women who are caregivers. That was a start.

Students with dependants was another start. Persons with dependants getting grants was a start. It all shows that we understand that women with dependants have a need for education and other issues. I could go on but I do not have the time.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the debate today as well. I noticed that my colleague talked about the fact that we have been trying very hard for 20 or 25 years, I think was the number she used, to advance some of the problems we have seen today. I would like to put on record that a full 35 years ago in the mid-sixties, my mother Joyce was a single parent. It was fairly rare back then, certainly in Vancouver in the sixties. I can remember being I think the only family in our school that had divorced parents. It is not that many years down the road and it seems almost strange if a student has two parents at home.

Government money is going into looking at these problems. They are endemic in society, but is just throwing money at them the ultimate solution?

The minister just took a shot across, saying that my party and I are only concerned about taxes and debt, that we do not understand the lives of real women out there. I have news for her. I know all too well on a personal basis the pain involved in growing up in a

*Supply*

single parent family in Vancouver, very close to where she lives right now. I have been very blessed by that. I would have given anything if my mom had been able to be a doctor or a professional person to raise her kids. She had no trade. She went out, got a job in a lamp store and raised five children single-handedly. I take my hat off to her.

There are thousands and probably millions of people out there in the very same position, but surely these things have been going on not just for 25 years but for 35 years. For the money the minister says she is putting in to rectify these problems, surely something else is missing in this equation. It is not just money for this group or money for that group, but something is wrong if the basic building block of the family is not a concern.

We put forward a tax friendly policy toward families because we truly think that families are discriminated against if, for instance, one parent chooses to stay home and raise the kids. That does not mean I advocate that one parent out of every family should stay home, but surely they should be given that choice.

The minister knows that under tax policy one needs a receipt for third party day care. What is the problem? If someone chooses to have one parent stay at home, why can that not be treated as some sort of tax break? We have been around the block on that. I know that the junior minister of finance got backed right into a corner some months ago about this very issue because it is indefensible.

If she says that all I do is rant about taxes, that is one way they could solve a whole lot of problems in a big hurry. Many of these things we are looking at and talking about today, and which the March of Women, address the whole idea of violence against women. However, there is violence against everyone in our society. Everyone of us here should abhor that. Surely we could make changes in the justice system.

• (1315)

I look at the youth justice bill for instance. The justice minister was sworn in I believe on August 3, 1997, but I am not sure of the exact date. She said the youth justice bill was going to be her number one concern. It is now October 2000 and I am terrified to think what concerns seven, eight and nine are.

The youth justice bill deals with women but it also deals with all kinds of problems. It deals with young men and women being perpetrators of crime and young men and women, older people and children being the victims of those crimes. What happened? She blamed the separatists and said they were holding it up in the House of Commons. This is a majority government. If something is as important as making sure that our justice system works well, surely to heaven we do not have to blame it on the Bloc just because it is doing a bit of filibustering in the House. If a government really

believes that then let it work through the House and through committee. For goodness sake in two parliamentary terms, one of which is coming evidently to a rapid end for no reason, why can we not get these things through and let justice be justice in the justice system and not under the guise of the Minister of State for Multiculturalism.

Justice and equality do not necessarily require further government intrusion. As I said earlier, we put more and more money into these programs and yet the minister claims that the incidence of violence and the incidence of women's shelters is going up at an alarming rate. It would seem to me that when she talks about the roots of violence or family domestic problems, we have to dig a little deeper to the root.

She talked about the gun control bill and that this really was going to help things because she said guns commit these crimes, and granted they do in violence against women. However, it is almost as if there is a myth across the way that nothing is going to happen or some of these dreadful things will not happen again. Even if a gun is registered, do government members think that a gun will not be used commit a crime?

Let us look at the roots of violence and why domestic violence happens. I know plenty about violence even though the minister would laugh and say that am just a Alliance member and know very little about it. I understand what family violence is about. I do not understand it totally but I understand that even if there is a gun in the house or a knife or a frying pan, if a male or female has it in his or her heart to commit violence, we know darn well it is going to happen. It does not matter if a gun is registered or if a longbow or a crossbow or a Henckels carving knife is used. If violence is in someone's heart, the person is going to commit violence. I really do not think gun control is going to answer the question.

Let us look at economic equality and women and work. Women are more often greatly affected as part of the sandwich generation. They have kids at home to look after. Many of us who are baby boomers are not only getting older but our parents are aging. Many of us look after our parents at home and that obviously takes up, in terms of unpaid work, huge amounts of responsibility for women.

I already mentioned family tax fairness and child care. Why would we discriminate against two parent families where one chooses to stay home? Who in the House would be able to defend such a policy where the government discriminates in the tax system against someone who chooses to stay at home.

Setting up the promised national child care fund is something that the group is looking for, starting with an immediate contribution of \$2 billion. When I talk about family and celebrating family as a priority, lots of people send their kids to day care and many times they have to. I do not think it should be a natural way of life

*Supply*

to assume that we are going to send our kids to day care as a matter of course. This motion certainly leads in that direction.

Let me talk about personal and business taxes. The minister talked about taxes. I wish she were here to hear this because it is a really good one. She needs to know that women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. That to me is a pretty significant and exciting development. Yet, I did not hear anything about it from the other side.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes:** I did S. O. 31s on that years ago.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Very good. I am glad to know that somebody over there has talked about how women are starting businesses at twice the rate of men. That is good news.

• (1320)

When we talk about taxes and how this will absolutely help, we want to lower business taxes. The minister and a couple of other members over there are rolling their eyes to indicate as if this would help. Lower business and payroll taxes would help a man or woman with a small business. I see that as good news and I am sure they do over there too. It is just the looks on their faces that does not have me convinced.

On planning for retirement, the official opposition has a plan to benefit all older Canadians, especially women. That is exciting to me. In 1997-98 women made up 52% of college enrolment and 55% of university enrolment. There is nothing wrong with that. It is certainly representative of what they represent in the population and it is absolutely wonderful to see that happening. The minister talked about some of the good things happening regarding student loans.

Let me wind down by talking about the manifesto of the March of Women 2000 and NAC have as their plank and platform. This actually is what we are voting on, not just the words of the Bloc motion.

First, of its feminist dozen, which is 13, is to restore federal funding to health care and enforce the rules against the privatization of our health care system, beginning with Alberta. I notice that at the Liberal convention this weekend people want to talk about two tier health care systems in Quebec. I will be interested to watch the health minister have a little fit like he did with the folks in Alberta. I also will mention for the listening audience that B.C. and Alberta pay health premiums, and I understand that no other province does. That is kind of interesting.

Second is to spend an additional 1% of the budget on social housing.

Third is to set up the promised national child care fund, starting with an immediate contribution of \$2 billion.

Fourth is to increase old age security payments to provide older women with a decent standard of living. That is an excellent idea. Women between the age of 55 and 65 who are widowed receive pitiful survivor benefits. It is a difficult 10 or 15 years that they have to spend.

Fifth is to use the surplus from the employment insurance fund to increase benefits, provide longer payment periods and improve access as well as improve maternity and family benefits. It is funny that the Liberals took all that away but now that we are on the eve of an election all of a sudden it comes forward. Maybe we should revive that old Barry McGuire song "The Eve of Destruction". It is not an eve of destruction but it is certainly an eve of an election.

Sixth is to first support women organizing for equality and democracy by allocating \$50 million to front line, independent, feminist, women controlled groups committed to ending violence against women such as women's centres, rape crisis centres and women's shelters. Yes, these are good ideas. However, what happens to men who are perpetrating violence or men who are victims of violence? We would all agree that we have some of in the country. Surely they would not just fall through the cracks. Second is to recognize and fund the three autonomous aboriginal women's organizations to ensure full participation in all significant public policy decisions, as well as provide adequate funding to aboriginal women's services, including shelters in all rural, remote and urban aboriginal communities. Third is to fund a national meeting of lesbians to discuss and prioritize areas for legislative and public policy reform. Fourth is to provide \$30 million in core funding for equality seeking women's organizations which represents only \$2 for every woman and girl child in Canada, our fair share. I am not sure what that is.

Seventh is to fund all consultations with a wide range of women's equality seeking organizations prior to all legislative reform of relevance to women's security and inequality rights beginning with the criminal code and to ensure access for women from marginalized communities.

Eighth is to implement progressive immigration reform to provide domestic workers with full immigration status on arrival, abolish the head tax on all immigrants and to include persecution on the basis of gender and sexual orientation as grounds for claiming refugee status.

Ninth is to contribute to the elimination of poverty around the world by supporting the cancellation of the debts of the 53 poorest countries and increasing Canada's international development aid to .07% of the gross national product. We are \$600 billion in debt. For every family of four either watching here or on television today that is an extra mortgage of \$75,000 on our debt. It cannot be forgiven. We owe that money and every single family of four in the country owes that percentage to our national debt. Surely we are in a pretty grave situation here too.

*Supply*

• (1325)

Tenth, of the feminist dozen 13 immediate demands to the federal government to end poverty and violence against women, is to adopt national standards which guarantee the right to welfare for everyone in need and ban workfare.

I always liked working. I am very glad and grateful, being raised by a single parent, that my mom did not have to use welfare. She worked in a lamp store and raised five kids by the scruff of the neck in downtown Vancouver in the sixties when such a thing certainly was not popular. She was very blessed that she did not have to go on welfare. She certainly did not think she had a right to it. She had the opportunity to get out, get a job and raise those kids. For her, welfare would have been something that she would have to fall back on if she needed to. I certainly do not think she thought that it was a right.

Eleventh is to recognize the ongoing exclusion of women with disabilities from economic, political and social life, and take the essential first step of ensuring and funding full access for women with disabilities to all consultations on issues of relevance to women. Yes, that it a good thing but are men with disabilities treated fairly in the workforce as well? Do we just eliminate them? There are great problems with all people with disabilities and we would be discriminatory if we just picked out one group of them and not the other.

Twelfth is to establish a national system of grants based on need not merit to enable access to post-secondary education and reduce student debt. As far as I know, we are the only national party in the country that has in our platform an income contingent student loan repayment plan. I have not seen that over there. I understand that the minister of HRD not long ago said "We lost \$245 million but shucks it was student loans."

These were taxpayers' dollars. They just disappeared? We have said pay the money back. If they have a job doing  $x$  when they are qualified to have a job doing  $y$  then surely they should pay back some of it out of the money they are making doing job  $x$ . Make it contingent upon their income. People would know that they would be paying back their loans, maybe at a lower rate. However, when they get a better job at least we know it would be paid back fully. Then we would not have the HRD minister saying that they lost the money and since it was more than six years ago they just wrote it off. I do not think that is fair to anyone.

Thirteenth is to adopt proactive pay equity legislation. I have always believed in equal pay for equal work. I am a high school teacher and worked just as hard as every male teacher in that school. How do we go to pay equity where we are talking about equal pay for work of equal value? How do we ever define that?

I would like to mention to the minister as I wind down now, that in my little school in Dewberry, Alberta we had some problem with

the boiler systems. One morning it was 45 below. Yes, the principal is number one in any school, but does anyone know who I went to see on that morning when the boilers were out? I went to see the janitor because I knew he was the only guy who could get those things going or get some propane tanks in there to blow heat down the hall. How do we ever determine what is work of equal value—

**Ms. Jean Augustine:** Equity is important then, is it not?

**Miss Deborah Grey:** I see I have touched a nerve. It is a funny thing. When we look at it, we must realize that these are the demands we are talking about and will be voting on maybe not later this afternoon but certainly tomorrow.

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member and I realize that she does not have a clue. She still does not get it. She does not understand the difference between the realities of men and women. I do not know what part she does not understand that 88% of persons who are killed in domestic violence are women. It is all about sameness. It is all about one size fits all.

The question I want to ask is on the issue of pay equity. Here is another prime example of how that party across the way does not even have a clue. Pay equity recognizes the fact that women have for a long time been caught in what we call the pink ghetto or in the low paying jobs in which the jobs were paid low because women did them. They are still being paid low wages because women are still doing them. It brings them up to scratch in terms of the value of the work that secretaries do, the value of the work that elementary school teachers do and puts it against the value of the work that men are doing.

• (1330)

Would the member explain to me why she does not seem to get it? I would like to know where she lives. She talks a lot of rhetoric, but I would like to ask her to explain to me what she knows about the historical pay equity problems, the pink ghetto, and the fact that women for so long have been underpaid because of the work they do. Could the member tell me what she thinks about that.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member says I just do not get it and do not understand the differences between men and women. Does that mean seven years of marriage have taught me nothing?

Let me assure the hon. member that I am well aware of the differences between men and women, and I say praise God. I was 41 when I was married the first time and I love having a husband. The hon. member can bet I understand the differences between men and women. I grew up in a family of four daughters. My husband is the eldest of five sons. I certainly do understand some of the intimate differences between men and women.



*Supply*

The hon. member talks about women being caught in the pink ghetto. She said I do not get it and she asked where I live. I live in Edmonton. I have seen some things all across the country, specifically in Vancouver, where family members still live.

The member laughs this off and talks about the pink ghetto and whatever else. Frankly, I do not find it very funny. The hon. member says I do not get the fact that women have been ghettoized and asks me to explain that.

The minister knows there are many reasons why women exit the workforce. She just talked about it with her CPP in and out plan. That is one of the reasons there are problems. That is one of the problems. Beyond that, many women choose to go into the humanities and other areas. They make conscious decisions about child raising and child rearing.

Just to label it off and make comments about the colour I am wearing today, I am not sure—

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** That has nothing to do with it.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, she says it has nothing to do with it. What does have something to do with it is the fact that when government money is being thrown at something and it really does not solve the problem, the government needs to go back to the table and say “wait a minute, maybe there are deeper root causes for some of these issues”.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as I sit here and listen to the Liberals and the Alliance on the issue of pay equity I just want to say a pox on both their houses. The concept of pay equity is well understood by those who have worked long and hard to advance this notion over the past 20 years. I do not understand how, in 2000, we are sitting here debating whether or not it has merit and can be applied.

Members of the Alliance sit in the Chamber and say no to pay equity, no to equal pay for work of equal value. The Liberals just refuse to apply the law. Goodness gracious, we sat here for 10 years while the government found every legal loophole it could to avoid paying its obligations and applying equal pay for work of equal value.

What is the difference? On the one hand we have a party that gives lip service and lots of rhetoric but refuses to do anything until it is pushed, dragging and screaming, to do something. On the other hand we have a party that just does not acknowledge the basic facts and the basic situation. It refuses to simply acknowledge that fundamental aspect of the pursuit of equality.

For the benefit of Alliance members I should point them back to some 15 years ago when the concept of equal pay for work of equal value was developed and implemented. It was implemented fully in

the province of Manitoba. It was implemented fully in Yukon. It was implemented in other provinces across the country. It works.

Would the member give some thought to the record of jurisdictions that have applied this concept, bring her policies up to date, and support the very important struggle we have as women in parliament and in the country to ensure full equality between women and men?

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, I would be interested to know if the government of Saskatchewan has brought in full pay equity. Maybe it is working on this before Roy leaves. I am not sure. This might be his last item of business.

I have been told that I do not know the difference between men and women and that I just do not get it. Now I have had a pox put on my house. This could be a long winter. However, I am looking forward to heading home to see my husband as soon as time permits.

• (1335)

Let me go back to the difference between equal pay for equal work and equal pay for work of equal value. How do we know the value of work? It seems to me all work is valuable. It seems the government is talking about the fact that only some work is valued. I think all work has value whether it is done by men, women or young people. I spoke at two or three schools last week and saw groups of young people. I think it will be exciting to have them in the workforce.

It is very difficult to see an ill defined policy like this one. I just gave probably the best life example of work of equal value. As much as I respected my principal, he was the last guy I wanted to see when it was -45°C and the boilers were not working. Somebody has to somehow arbitrarily put value on work A, work B or work C.

I see I have exorcised some of the members across the way. Before we move on to the next speakers, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say, let me reiterate very strongly that with more and more government money being distributed to various groups on various issues, the problem is only increasing.

We can talk about women's shelters, family violence, violence against women, women staying home with their children, or those of us with older parents. Many baby boomers are staying home with those people. Is it getting worse? It would seem so. The government just continues to put in more and more money and give the rhetoric that it has solved the problem.

The Prime Minister met with NACSOW. I was amused the minister said that I was ranting about the Prime Minister's meeting with the women's groups yesterday. It was not this member but the NACSOW people themselves who said the meeting was a colossal waste of time. I was not at that meeting. I was on an airplane.

*Supply*

When the people themselves say it is a waste of time, I think we need to realize that surely there are better ways to solve the problem than an increase in rhetoric and money and everything else.

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been listening very intently to the member. I think we want to establish for not only ourselves but all Canadians the position she is putting forward as an individual member and on behalf of her party.

I get the idea that she is saying one size fits all. Are we talking about equality and equality in the workplace? What is her party's position on dealing with equality in the workplace, on women gaining equality in the workplace? How would the member deal with visible minority women, aboriginal women and women with disabilities in the workplace?

**Miss Deborah Grey:** In two words, Mr. Speaker, equal opportunity. Regardless of whether it is based on gender or disability it should be equal opportunity for everyone.

The minister stands and says she defends these feminist dozen. I do not know how anyone, even a Liberal, could defend the fact that they say they want full funding access for women with disabilities. That is discriminatory. There are lots of women, lots of men and lots of young people with disabilities who need equal opportunity, period, in the workplace regardless of gender or disability.

That is not one size fits all. That is making sure we do not just separate out women with disabilities but include men with disabilities and say that we will hire on the basis of merit and merit alone. There would not be the discrimination that I see in this document.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I take great pleasure in participating in this debate. I will be sharing my time with the member for Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, the status of women spokesperson on behalf of the New Democratic Party.

As I reflect on the exchanges that have taken place between the spokespersons for the government party and the official opposition, it is little wonder that women in the country have become discouraged. They are tired, fed up with being dismissed, demeaned and basically pushed into the shadows by the party in government and the official opposition.

• (1340)

Is it worse to have an official opposition that does not even understand the concept of equality and justice, that does not even understand the notion of sisterhood and solidarity, that clearly embraces the Margaret Thatcher view of the world that there is no such thing as community or society but only individuals living as isolated islands in a society that does not care about them? Or, is it worse to have a government party that actually does understand

something about the magnitude of the problem, that cannot even make that excuse, but that does not use the power, the mandate and the resources it has at its disposal to do something to advance equality and justice on behalf of women? It is hard to know which is worse.

I want to leave that very depressing situation to focus on something very much more hopeful.

[*Translation*]

Yesterday a group of Canadian women held a huge rally here on Parliament Hill. I remember that six years ago Quebec women organized a solidarity march which focused on a very important and progressive symbol: bread and roses.

Today I want to congratulate Quebec women for having shown leadership in the great battle to fight violence against women, to fight poverty and to promote justice, solidarity and equality for women.

[*English*]

I am very proud of the leadership shown by the women of Quebec in this struggle. They have undertaken to turn what started out to be a modest and successful march in the province of Quebec which extended across Canada the next year into an international women's march against poverty and violence.

Yesterday, as I had the opportunity to mix and mingle and participate with those women, as did many of my New Democrat colleagues, I felt very hopeful. Despite all the discrimination women have suffered, despite all the reasons women have to feel discouraged, they celebrated yesterday. They celebrated with music, with humour, and with a reinforcement of the kind of solidarity and sisterhood they know will be necessary to move governments to act to eliminate poverty and violence against women in society.

It is not an accident that the women of the world who have come together have recognized that they have to work with one another and support one another to get governments to act. That is why we are privileged to have a democratic process that allows women an equal voice.

I was very encouraged to hear woman after woman, and not just those who had the opportunity to speak on behalf of others, speak very much from their own experiences, their own hearts. They will not take no for an answer. They have been waiting on the sidelines. They will use the democratic process available to them in the upcoming election to say enough is enough. They will not put up with a government that is sitting on a surplus, which is building to \$121 billion and beyond, and refusing to implement its commitments to women, to the people of Canada, in the 1993 election and again in 1997.

*Supply*

• (1345)

What were those commitments? A commitment to a national child care program, which still has not seen the light of day, and a commitment to a national home care program. Make no mistake about it, it is women who carry the double burden of the cutback in our health care system. The government brags that it has reinvested some money into health care. Wrong. It has not even brought health care funding up to the level that it was, for the name of heavens, under the Mulroney government when it took power in 1993.

There was a commitment to a pharmacare program that would ensure that elderly women would not be forced to choose between buying their groceries or filling their prescription for drugs given to them by their doctor. There was also a commitment to more adequate, affordable housing.

When the Liberals were in opposition they said that social housing was a disgrace and that more money needed to be invested in social housing. Does anyone know what their contribution has been to the women and children struggling with inadequate housing, struggling with the reality that more and more women and children are homeless on the streets in some parts of this country? We have some 5,000 children who are homeless and who have nowhere to go to bed at night except at an emergency shelter in the city of Toronto. Does anyone know what the federal Liberal contribution has been toward solving that problem and eliminating any national commitment to social housing? We are the only industrial nation in the world that does not have a national housing program.

Far from despair, I celebrate and I take hope from the fact that 50,000 women came together representing millions of other women to say "We will solve this problem. We will take charge of our own futures. We will use the democratic instruments that are available to us to ensure that we demand accountability from our governments and we make progress that will advance genuine equality and justice for ourselves and for our children".

I will conclude by once again saying how inspiring it has been to watch women come together to support one another in this struggle. This is not just a slogan. The women's movement, I am prepared to say, is the single most important movement happening in the world today. These women have come together and said "As long as one woman is a victim of violence, as long as one woman in this world is a victim of poverty, then we are all at risk of victimization". That is the meaning of the notion of sisterhood in solidarity.

[*Translation*]

"So, so, so, solidarity", that was the slogan. Many women, not only across Canada but literally all over the world, are working together to solve the issues of violence and poverty. I am very

proud to participate, along with my NDP colleagues, in this great battle, one we intend to win.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not as concerned with the speech we have just had as I am with the speech made by the member of the official opposition.

I do not think the official opposition understands pay equity and women's issues. I believe the member of the NDP and her caucus understand these issues very well.

What I have a problem with is talking about it, dealing with it, then voting for it and encouraging NDP governments to support those same positions. This seems to be where the rhetoric comes first and the reality is that we do not quite get there.

• (1350)

Let us talk about pay equity in Saskatchewan. That government says it cannot afford it but we cannot afford not to do it.

This is a serious issue. That member, who was the previous leader of that party, voted against gun control. Gun control was a woman's issue. I know there were members of that party who clearly understood the issue. My concerns come from wanting to have both the actions and the words on this issue on the same page, which I believe would actually unite us in many respects.

I respect a lot of the members in that caucus for their stances and their positions. They have been very supportive in many cases. However, I was disappointed with what happened when we voted on gun control. I would like that explained to the Canadian public.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, why does it not surprise me that Liberal members of the House absolutely never want to deal with their own record? What do they want to do? They want to ask me to account for a government at some other level in some province that is halfway across the country from where I spent my political years and active life so they can be satisfied that they do not have to do anything about pay equity.

Who can blame government members for not wanting to talk about the fact that some 17 years after pay equity legislation became the law of the land they were finally forced, because the courts would not let them get away with breaking the law any longer, to pay up. No wonder they do not want to talk about that issue.

What do members of that government have to say about the fact that it is now seven years later and we still do not have a national child care program? What do they have to say about the fact that poor women, visible minority women and the poorest, most discriminated women of all in this country, aboriginal women, are able to give more leadership in the fight for child care, for services to deal with domestic violence, for home care and for pharmacare

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than this whole government put together with all of the resources in Canada at its disposal. No wonder the members of the pathetic Liberal government do not want to give an accounting of their record over the last seven years.

**Mr. Lynn Myers (Parliamentary Secretary to Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can talk about the record of the government. I can talk about health care and the reinvestment in prenatal programs. I can talk about EI and the government's move in this area for women and their families. I can talk about equity. I can talk about all kinds of programs in terms of head start programs and children's programs.

I do not understand why the members of the NDP, and that leader in particular, want to take the high ground here when they would bankrupt the government with their spending spree. They have no concept of equality. They have no concept of equilibrium. What they would do is spend the whole pot on whatever they think is appropriate without being fiscally prudent.

The leader opposite should hang her head in shame knowing that she cannot bring about the balance necessary. I can defend the record of this government any day of the week and twice on Sundays because we have done the right thing. What they cannot get their heads around is having the fiscal responsibility necessary to govern.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, for seven straight years the government has used the excuse of the deficit for breaking practically every single promise that it made in two election campaigns that might have positively impacted on the suffering of women.

The hon. member should not talk to me about fiscal responsibility. The reality is that the jig is up. The government can no longer use the excuse of the deficit for continuing to turn its back on home care, on child care and on pharmacare, on the things that would really make a difference in the lives of women.

Yes, that member is correct. When it comes down to what we would do with the surplus, we would make no apology for the fact that we would overwhelmingly spend that surplus to deal with poverty, with violence, with homelessness and with the hunger of children.

• (1355)

If members opposite want a debate over whether the emphasis should be on driving more people to food banks, which is what Liberal policies are doing, or giving yet another freebie to the bankers, we will fight every time to give women and children what they need so they are not forced to depend upon food banks. Let us have a debate.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to the speech by the hon. Secretary of State for the Status

of Women, I could not help but notice how full it was of incredible contradictions.

The hon. secretary of state was saying that to eradicate poverty among women we would have to somehow reduce the capital gains tax for the wealthy; that to eliminate poverty among women we would have to give bankers another tax break; that to eliminate poverty among women we would have to change the EI system in a structure where still only 30% of unemployed women will qualify for EI.

I wonder if the hon. leader of the New Democratic Party could clarify some of the inherent contradictions in the attitudes held by the hon. secretary of state.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I can try to clarify but I sure will not make excuses for the Liberals. What is so astounding about this is that they do know better. They know that when a federal government eliminates its commitments to social housing it is bound to increase the number of homeless people and the number of people living in substandard housing.

The Liberals do understand that if they provide no leadership on child care they will have more and more families at risk and more and more children who do not have the benefit of affordable quality child care.

What makes this so pathetic is when one of those members stands up, as he just did, and says "Why are you not congratulating us for our head start program?" I have worked with the head start movement for 33 years. What the government knows is that the vast majority of Canadian children are being robbed of getting the kind of head start in life they need because the government has completely abandoned its commitments to universal affordable child care.

[Translation]

**The Speaker:** Since it is almost 2 p.m., we will now move on to Statements by Members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### JIM STONE

**Mr. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to Mr. Jim Stone, a constituent in my riding of Simcoe North, who recently donated his time and talent overseas in the service of the Canadian Executive Services Organization.

CESO is a non-profit, volunteer based organization which brings Canadian expertise to businesses, communities and organizations in Canada and abroad. Mr. Jim Stone volunteered in Lima, Peru where he used his expertise to advise on the management of the paper and textile industry. He also provided technical assistance and made recommendations on production quality and cost.

On behalf of all Canadians, I wish to congratulate Mr. Stone and the many highly skilled Canadian volunteers. It is because of the efforts of people like Mr. Stone that Canada enjoys a strong international reputation.

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### THE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, evidently the Prime Minister had to scour the countryside to find new cabinet material.

Is there no one over there whom he already trusts? Or maybe they are already so divided that he cannot build a cabinet out of wood, hay and stubble.

What about this one, Brian Tobin? Mr. Speaker, you know him. He is the guy who promised to serve a full term as the premier of Newfoundland. He said "I intend to put in a full day every day for the full term that I have been given". That was in the *Montreal Gazette* on February 10, 1999. What a short term it has been. It is another example I guess of how promises by Liberals at election time mean diddly-squat.

After 93's flip and 97's flop, Canadians will reject the Liberal government campaign of negativity and attacks in the year 2000. We will have no part of it. One strike, two strikes, three strikes, well, the government may be out. It is a new game and a new day in Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Réginald Bélair (Timmins—James Bay, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was very disappointed and outraged that the city of Toronto has approved a contract that would allow tonnes of Toronto's waste to be shipped to Kirkland Lake. The situation demonstrates a total lack of respect for the residents of the Timiskaming area and by extension the whole population of northern Ontario.

Will this decision create a precedent for similar projects in other larger centres in southern Ontario? Will the mine sites in the city of Timmins be targeted next?

How could the proponents ignore the reports completed many years ago warning of deep cracks in the bedrock of the Adams mine site? How could they ignore the pleas of thousands of protesters who only want to protect their environment, their health and their quality of life?

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There is no reason to use the citizens of northern Ontario as guinea pigs for the disposal of their waste. The problem was created in Toronto and should remain in Toronto.

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### FIJI

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on an issue of great concern to many citizens around the world.

On May 19, 2000 an anti-government demonstration was held by civilian rebels in Suva, the capital of Fiji. At that time, Prime Minister Mahendra Chaudhry and members of his government were taken hostage and a military government was established.

Following the release of the hostages and the toppling of the military government, Fiji fell into a period of anarchy in which an interim civilian government was undemocratically established. The interim government has announced that it will not hold elections for three years. It plans to rewrite the constitution of Fiji within one year in order to place further restrictions on the basis of racial origin.

I rise today to ask members of the House to support the commonwealth ministers' action group in its desire for free elections in Fiji as soon as possible and to ensure that a new constitution is written, free of restrictions on the basis of racial origin.

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[*Translation*]

### WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to rise in the House and announce that the World March of Women was a knockout success here in Canada.

Some 30,000 women, men and children took part in the march held on October 14 in Montreal, and approximately 20,000 people gathered here on Parliament Hill yesterday, October 15.

In addition, representatives of the Canadian Women's March Committee met yesterday with the Prime Minister for approximately three quarters of an hour. The Prime Minister reaffirmed our government's commitment in the fight to end poverty and violence against women.

I would point to the \$30.7 million set aside by the government to eliminate domestic violence and the \$20.5 million reinvested in the status of women.

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[*English*]

### YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

**Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a picture I cannot look at, this photograph of an 89

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year old Kelowna woman who was beaten savagely. Around each bewildered blue eye the bruises are red and painful. Her face is swollen and discoloured. She has suffered terribly. Her assailant was a 17 year old. It is disturbing.

It is disturbing to learn that this offender will not be tried in adult court as befits his crime but in youth court where the sentence will be much less severe.

Because of that there is no healing. The bruises are gone but not the fear, a fear that has spread and has robbed the people of my community of a sense of safety. Surely the justice minister can see that the Young Offenders Act is not an effective deterrent against youth violence but a weapon being used against our society.

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**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, violence can take on many forms. It can be physical, psychological and sexual. Although violence can affect everyone, violence against women, particularly physical violence against women, is a predominant reality. The UN estimates that around the world one-quarter of the female population is severely abused at home. Battery is the world's leading cause of injury among women aged 15 to 44.

A report about violence against women, a focus on women, from the UN in 1995, reports that because of custom two million girls experience genital mutilation every year. That works out to five young girls every minute.

• (1405)

In Canada in 1997, 88% of all spousal violence victims reported were women and 65% of those women reported more than two instances.

The World March of Women brings attention to an important area of concern for all members of society, of all genders. Women and men have to work together to get at these causes and get the solutions on the table.

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[Translation]

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN**

**Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I took part in last week's World March of Women.

My reason for doing so was quite simply that I think that we should all take an interest in this global event to fight against poverty and violence.

If we had watched women march with complete indifference and without feeling that we were in any way concerned, this extraordinary demonstration of solidarity would have been in vain.

I have a three and a half year old daughter and I hope that she will be able to grow up in a society where there will truly be equality of opportunity, in a society where she will never have to worry that she might end up living in poverty or suffer physical or psychological violence.

I would like her to be able to grow up in a sovereign Quebec, a Quebec that wants to change things, that will be allowed to build not just a prosperous society, but a society where I hope racism, sexism and violence will have no place.

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[English]

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN**

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, delegations from over 5,000 international women's groups from 157 countries will participate in the World March of Women in front of the United Nations building in New York. There, 200 of these women hope to meet with the heads of the security council, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and many of the other delegations.

The World March of Women was launched on March 8 of this year. Postcards were sent to various offices. We know that women rallied in Brussels. Canadian women came to Parliament Hill and went to other major cities across Canada, while the main focus, a rally in Washington D.C., took place over the weekend.

I rise to ask all hon. members to take the time to look at the platform, to look at the issues that these women have brought before us and to give consideration to the women—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

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**WORLD FOOD DAY**

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today is World Food Day. It is the day that Canadians are asked to focus on the goal of delivering adequate food to everyone in the world.

The United Nations has defined food security as existing when "all people, at all times, have safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs for an active and healthy life".

We have enough food in the world today to meet this goal. Tragically, because of war and political interference, millions of people are suffering from malnutrition. More must be done to get the food to the people who need it.

I need to end my statement by highlighting the difficult times facing our food suppliers, our Canadian farm families. Farm

families all across this country are being forced into bankruptcy by international interference in the market.

Their plight is being made worse today by the inept Liberal agriculture policies. Farmers are in an impossible squeeze. At the same time that the price they receive for their commodities is being forced down, their cost of production is being forced through the roof.

I call on the government to act today, on World Food Day, on food safety and also to support our farmers who are part of the solution to feeding the world's hungry.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Stan Keyes (Hamilton West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are watching developments in the Middle East with great alarm and dismay.

We are witnessing the worst violence seen in recent years, with casualties mounting on all sides. It appears that the prospects for a meaningful peace between Israelis and Palestinians may be in jeopardy.

All Canadians are holding their breath in the hope that today's emergency summit meeting in Egypt will bring an end to the violence and a return to the negotiating table.

Canada's role should not be to lay blame. Canada's role should not be to support inflammatory, lopsided resolutions. Canada's role should be to live up to our well earned reputation as a peacekeeper and an effective negotiator on the world stage.

We ask the people of the Middle East to exercise restraint and place reason over passion in their march toward peace.

Here in our own communities, we must also remember to hold true to the Canadian values of equality, tolerance and compassion.

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### WOMEN'S RIGHTS

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, 60,000 women and men took to the streets in this capital. Their aim was to demonstrate to the government that women's issues cannot and will not be ignored any longer.

• (1410)

They were demanding an end to poverty and violence against women, and support flooded in from across the country.

Thirteen immediate demands were presented to the Liberal government, such as: the restoration of federal funding to health care and the enforcement of the rules against the privatization of our health care system; an additional 1% of the budget to be spent on social housing; an immediate contribution of \$2 billion for the

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promised national child care fund; the supporting of women's organizing for equality and democracy through a variety of methods; the establishment of a national system of grants based on need, not merit; and the adoption of a proactive pay equity legislation.

We in the NDP wholeheartedly support these demands and will stand in solidarity with Canadian women to force the government to act upon this.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois salutes the courage, determination and solidarity with which the women of Quebec, of Canada and of the entire world are attacking the violence and poverty of which they are victims.

The impact of the March of Women will be a permanent one, for it sets out the parameters of our political action for a number of years to come.

The March of Women concerns all people, women, men and children, who are the victims of poverty and of violence. It also involves all those who are no longer able to tolerate the fact that one in five people lives below the poverty line.

With a surplus assessed at more than \$160 billion over the next five years, the Bloc calls upon the Prime Minister to acknowledge the wrongs his government's social policies have done to women and to get on side with our party's motion, investing the necessary funds over the next five years to meet the legitimate demands of the women of Quebec and of Canada.

\* \* \*

[English]

### YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am delighted to pay tribute to a special group of young men and women who have joined us on Parliament Hill today. They are the winners of this year's young entrepreneur awards.

The awards, which are sponsored by the Business Development Bank of Canada, are designed to honour Canada's most successful young entrepreneurs, 30 years old and younger. There are a total of 13 winners representing each province and territory. They provide an excellent example of what can be achieved through the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative approach in business. These men and women embody what it takes to succeed in today's fast moving world of commerce. In short, they represent the new generation of Canadian business leaders.

As such, I congratulate them and wish them continued success.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN**

**Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am please to rise to speak today on behalf of the women of the riding of Madawaska—Restigouche.

This past Sunday I took part in a very important march, a march to raise awareness of the problems women in this country and throughout the world are faced with. Women everywhere in Canada are coping with the problems of poverty and abuse.

Often the ones having to deal with poverty are single mothers with young children. The priority for this government, and for this parliament, should be to put an end to poverty for the women of Canada and women throughout the world, particularly those with young children.

I encourage all members of parliament to get involved. It is up to us to take action. I would like to congratulate Yvette Bourgouin for all of her efforts, as well as the Dames d'Acadie in my region.

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**WORLD FOOD DAY**

**Mr. Robert Bertrand (Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, October 16 is World Food Day.

This day draws attention to the creation of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Quebec City on October 16, 1945.

This year's theme in the celebration of world food day is a millennium free from hunger. At present, over 800 million people in the world, or 13% of the world's entire population, have no access to food.

In 1996, at the world food summit, Canada and 186 other countries made a commitment to halve the number of people who are underfed, by 2015. Canada's action plan for food safety comes out of this commitment.

However, despite Canada's vital contributions to world food safety, we cannot rest on our laurels.

Food security is a complex issue and has a variety of facets requiring the co-operation of—

**The Speaker:** The member for Vancouver Quadra.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE LATE DR. MICHAEL SMITH**

**Mr. Ted McWhinney (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, world renowned scientist Michael Smith died of leukemia on October 4, 2000 at the age of 68.

• (1415)

From England he came to the University of British Columbia in 1966 as a graduate researcher. His professional life was associated with UBC from that time onward.

In 1993 he was awarded the Nobel prize in chemistry for his research on DNA. A modest man, he gave away all of his Nobel prize moneys to scientific research and to the development of future scientific leaders.

His influence is apparent in several of the revolutionary ideas present in the last several federal budgets: the millennium scholarship fund, the 2000 chairs of research excellence and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, if you were approached by someone asking for \$5 million and you knew that the guy was under investigation for fraud and theft, you would probably be a little hesitant to hand over the cash, but not with this government, not in the Prime Minister's riding. It handed over five million more dollars to Mario Pépin in spite of an ongoing RCMP investigation for fraud and theft.

Why would the government give millions of taxpayer dollars to a suspected fraud artist?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with reference to the individual and the circumstances the hon. member is bringing to the House, there are RCMP investigations under way. She knows full well that it is inappropriate for me to comment on this further in the House.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, there was already an RCMP investigation under way and it would seem to me pretty highly appropriate not to give them five million more dollars while the investigation was going on.

Do not let the investigations discourage you, Mr. Speaker, if you want to get your hands on the public purse; in fact maybe just move to the Prime Minister's riding.

Mario Pépin and his Groupe Forces were under RCMP investigation already for fraud and theft, but the government thought nothing of handing him five million more dollars of taxpayer money.

I would like to know: Do all fraud suspects qualify for millions of dollars of taxpayer money, or just those who live in the Prime Minister's riding?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me say again that it would be inappropriate for me to comment on circumstances surrounding investigations.

The hon. member knows full well that it is inappropriate for me to comment upon it, as it is inappropriate for her to ask about it.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, let me just say again how highly inappropriate it is of the minister to okay funds of \$5 million to go to someone who is already under investigation. Talk about secrecy.

With a nudge and a wink, and may the Groupe Forces be with you, the Prime Minister handed five million more dollars to a suspected fraud artist, and now the minister says that she has to hide behind a cloak of secrecy. She cannot talk about it.

It was okay for her to okay a cheque. Why does residency in the Prime Minister's riding qualify even suspected fraud artists and thieves access to the public purse that she okays?

**The Speaker:** We are going a little further than we should be going. We would hope that the words used in our questions would be a bit more judicious. If the hon. Minister of Human Resources Development wants to address herself to the question, she may.

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the hon. member's question, first, she seems to be presuming guilt and I think that is highly inappropriate.

Second, I remind her that when it is clear that things are under investigation it is not only inappropriate for me to be commenting but it is inappropriate for her to be asking such questions.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we have heard answers from the minister and the government before. They say they cannot comment because there is a police investigation and blah, blah, blah. They keep going on like that but they could at least answer this.

While they were twiddling their thumbs and the police were doing their investigative work, doing the good work they are supposed to, why did the minister not at least ensure that no more money went to people who were already charged with theft and fraud?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again I would suggest the hon. member is presuming the outcome of an investigation.

Let us be clear. As I said on a number of occasions, the government takes very seriously the investments we make in communities right across the country, but if there is ever any evidence of misuse of Canadian tax dollars we send it to the appropriate authorities for investigation.

• (1420)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, eventually, in July 2000, Mr. Pépin was actually charged with fraud and theft. He had been investigated all spring.

We could ask ourselves why. Why would the government give another \$5 million grant, this time from Industry Canada, to a guy who has been charged with fraud and theft?

The better question is not why. The question is where. Where did it take place? It took place once again in the Prime Minister's riding. Why is it that whenever the Prime Minister's riding is involved, even if someone has been charged with theft and fraud, the money just keeps getting ladled out by the federal government?

**Mr. John Cannis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is just not listening. I think the minister not once, not twice, but three times has said repeatedly that with the situation and the position it is in it is inappropriate to answer. Hopefully they are professional enough to understand that.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the government is enjoying huge budget surpluses, including a surplus of over \$30 billion in the employment insurance fund, something which the Bloc Québécois has been condemning for months.

In the context of the World March of Women, is the government prepared to make a formal commitment and follow up on women's claims by ensuring that the surpluses in the employment insurance fund are used only for employment insurance purposes and that women will finally get what they deserve?

[English]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like many of my colleagues I am looking forward to meeting with those who are representing women on this very important march and looking forward to hearing directly from them about their demands.

I would say to the hon. member that he need not look too far for our record in support of Canadian women. First and foremost let us remember that since 1993 the unemployment levels for women working in the Canadian marketplace are the lowest they have been in 25 years.

*Oral Questions*

In addition we have made focused investment, not only using EI money but through the national child benefit that goes directly to low income earners.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, I met with the women's delegation. These women did not share the minister's opinion. They condemned the government for being driven by vote-seeking motives with its employment insurance reforms, on the eve of a general election. Two thirds of unemployed women do not qualify for benefits.

I am asking this government and particularly the Minister of Finance, who is about to lower the tax rate on capital gains for the wealthy, the following question: Could they not get moving and take concrete action to meet the needs of women, considering that two thirds of those who are unemployed and who paid premiums are not getting any benefits? There are no words to describe this situation.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, had the Bloc Quebecois leader listened to the minister, he would have heard her list a whole series of measures taken by the government, and the minister in particular, for the benefit of women.

Also, in other areas, including measures to improve employment, support for universities, help for single mothers and so on, the leader of the opposition will know that this government is fully aware of the plight of women.

\* \* \*

**TAXATION**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we know 75% of single parents are women, and they taxed federally even though they earn less than \$35,000 a year.

As the Bloc Quebecois is advocating and as we know that billions of dollars are accumulating monthly in his coffers, would the Minister of Finance agree to relieve these families of having to pay taxes after his mini budget is tabled?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no need to await the budget or the upcoming economic statement, one needs only look at the February budget to see that we substantially increased help to Canadian families.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, according to the National Council on Welfare, 42% of older women living alone are poor. This is totally immoral when the government is floating in billions of dollars in surplus.

Could the Minister of Finance simply promise right now in the House of Commons to respond to one of the demands of the world march of women and substantially increase old age security benefits? That is easy enough.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the women's cause is one that is very important to this government. This is why a number of ministers, including the Minister of Finance, intend to meet their representatives tomorrow. This will certainly be one of our topics of discussion.

\* \* \*

• (1425)

[*English*]

**WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, every day Canadian women are paying the price for Liberal choices. More and more women and children are forced to use food banks. More and more go without adequate child care. More and more live in substandard housing.

Yesterday 50,000 women, on behalf of millions across the country, came together and said that is not good enough. When will the government recognize that investing in women and children must take priority over investing in hotels and golf courses?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the hon. member of the investment that the government has made in support of Canadian women. First and foremost, let us look at the doubling of parental benefits from six months to twelve months.

Second, let us look at the \$2.5 billion that will be invested in the Canadian child tax credit which goes directly to low income families, many headed by women.

Let us look at the recent changes to employment insurance where we will not claw back from women who choose to stay home with their children. There are a number of investments specifically directed at Canadian women.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian women are not buying the government line. Women finally got to meet with the Prime Minister yesterday, and do we know what they said? They said it was a waste of time.

Women have been waiting for seven years for the Prime Minister to take them seriously, for the government to take action against poverty and violence. When will the government get beyond the publicity stunts and begin to address the real needs of women?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us continue on with the commitments

*Oral Questions*

of the Prime Minister and the government to women. Let us look at the Canada study grants where we recognize that single women want to go back to university, to study and to improve the livelihood of themselves and their children.

Let us look at our self-sufficiency project where we are offering earnings to ensure that women who take work have sufficient income to support their families.

Let us look at the changes to the Canada pension plan that look at the different work patterns women face in the workplace. There are more indications of our commitment to Canadian women.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister and it is about helicopters.

There are concerns that the bidding process has been rigged to rule out the EH-101. Last week that company formally asked the Government of Canada to “order complete documentary disclosure of all documents in the possession or control of the Department of National Defence or Public Works Canada” that are relevant to the matter in question.

The Deputy Prime Minister knows this file very well. Will he cause all those documents to be published this week and not let them be hidden?

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the statement of requirements put out by the Canadian forces, by the Department of National Defence, has been in fact adopted by the government. That is the basis on which we are proceeding with this procurement. It is an open and fair procurement.

We intend to follow that process to get the best helicopter to meet the operational requirements of the Canadian forces and to do it at the best price for taxpayers. That has always been our aim and throughout this process that will continue to be how we conduct ourselves.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a scandal that has already cost the lives of Canadian pilots. It is a scandal now in that the bidding process is regarded by at least two of the participants as being rigged.

There has been a formal request following the rules that the truth be told, the documents be published. Why does the Government of Canada continue to hide the facts of this issue? Why will it not tell the people of Canada and the Parliament of Canada the truth on the helicopter bidding process? Why will it not table the documents now?

● (1430)

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has started a very open and transparent process. As a matter of fact, we immediately issued a letter of interest so that everybody in the industry could comment.

We believe that our process is open and transparent. There is one firm that decided to ask the CITT for comments, and therefore we are waiting for the comments of CITT. We believe this is the right process to get the equipment for a very good price.

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**HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, today another of the HRD minister’s little secrets was exposed.

In January she denied our access request forced her to expose the billion dollar boondoggle. She claimed she came forward because she is committed to openness and transparency. Even as she spoke the words she was hiding a huge, costly mistake with CPP and OAS T4s.

How can Canadians trust a minister who talks openness and transparency but practises secrecy and cover up?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows the department has a legal obligation to ensure that Canadians have their T4 slips in their hands by the end of February.

This year we found an error on an information insert that was to accompany the mailing. The department took corrective action to ensure, first of all, that Canadians did get their T4 slips on time and, second, to make sure that no misinformation accompanied that mailing.

I sincerely regret that an error was made, but I can inform the House that the incident was fully reviewed to ensure that it would not happen again.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is too bad the minister did not see fit to come and inform the House a lot earlier about this mess.

In fact the information commissioner just released his report, which was a scathing indictment of the government’s tendency to secrecy and to cover up. It is entitled “Access—A Right Under Siege” and begins “Mayday—Mayday”. He says that the PCO ignored orders for full protection of records; failed to fully comply with orders; and in one case non-compliance persisted until after two federal court judges had ordered the PCO to comply; withheld records claimed to be privileged; and refused to answer questions under oath. Why is the government—

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member raised the Privy Council Office because the report in fact says that special mention and genuine praise for its accomplishments came despite a 67% increase in the number of requests, and that PCO devoted the energy and resources necessary to clear up a significant backlog of cases and established procedures and practices to prevent the delay problems from recurring in the future.

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[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, ten years ago Canada made a commitment to the UN to increase its international aid budget to 0.7% of its GDP.

Many countries have met this objective. Canada, however, has cut its budget, which was barely one-third of the objective it agreed to in 1990.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Given that 70% of those living in poverty on this planet are women, does the government intend to respond to the demand of the 2000 World March of Women and substantially increase its international aid budget?

[English]

**Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, in the last budget the government increased considerably the budget for CIDA both in terms of the baseline as well as increases for the next two years.

There were \$175 million put aside for the highly indebted poor nations as well. In addition I have just announced a redirection of moneys within the department for a total over five years of \$2.8 billion to assist in specific areas of poverty in countries to focus the programs more. We are doing a great job in the department. The government has in fact increased the budget.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, these are fine words, and sound much like what the Minister of Finance said at the IMF meeting on September 25.

But bilaterally, all the Minister of Finance managed to do was write off \$600,000 owed by Bangladesh.

On the occasion of the World March of Women, what is the Minister of Finance waiting for to follow up on the general statements he made in Prague with respect to debt relief for poor nations?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad that the member, on behalf of all Canadians, has raised this issue.

• (1435)

Canada went one step further. Canada suggested that all bilateral debts of heavily indebted nations should be forgiven. It was Canada that was a step ahead of the others. Canada showed leadership and will continue to do so.

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[English]

**REPORT OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in the information commissioner's annual report there is a section called "All Talk—No Action". The report says the government's palpable animosity toward the "right of access" is no more apparent than in the disconnect between talk and action in the matter of reform of the Access to Information Act. It would prefer to dole out information by grace and favour in well digested mouthfuls.

How can the government say it is committed to openness when the information commissioner has so thoroughly condemned the actions of the government?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the information commissioner did not point out in his report that the President of the Treasury Board and I announced a review of both the administration of existing legislation and a review of the substance of existing legislation in August.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the information commissioner has even provided some very telling examples. "An agent of the attorney general took the unprecedented position of impugning the constitutionality of the very legislation which the attorney general has the duty to defend".

How can the government defend its action when the information commissioner has so thoroughly condemned what the government does every day?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in fact the hon. member knows full well that what he is presenting in those comments is a biased and unbalanced perspective on the information commissioner's report.

As I have said, unfortunately the information commissioner does not inform Canadians that the President of the Treasury Board and I on behalf of the government have commenced a full review of the access to information legislation.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**SOCIAL HOUSING**

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, one of the key demands being made by the World March of Women concerns social housing.

Does the Minister of Finance plan to comply with the women's urgings that he immediately increase the overall budget share allocated to social housing? This is something I have already called for in the past, moreover.

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, we are negotiating with Quebec on the transfer of social housing, as we have with most of the provinces and territories of Canada.

Not long ago, we met in New Brunswick with all of Canada's housing ministers and agreed on a working plan. I am certain that we will be able to come up with some concrete results within a few months.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, social housing needs have nearly doubled in the past decade.

The problem is even more acute with women, because one in two tenant households has a woman as the main wage-earner.

I am calling upon the Minister of Finance to invest massively in the construction of new social housing units, which are very much needed, and to conclude as promptly as possible an agreement with Quebec providing it with its fair share of funding.

**Hon. Alfonso Gagliano (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that our present negotiations with Quebec are good ones.

If there has been a delay, the hon. member ought to be aware that there was a change at the head of the Société de l'habitation du Québec this summer. We therefore had to wait until the new person was in place, and have just resumed negotiations. As far as this part of her question is concerned, therefore, I believe she should inquire at the head office.

As far as the construction of affordable housing is concerned, as I just said, we are working in conjunction with all of the housing ministers across Canada to reach an equitable solution, because this is a problem that concerns all governments—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast.

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[English]

**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of

Canadian Heritage. Will the Minister of Canadian Heritage tell the House what is the protocol for the renaming of mountains or established geological sites in Canada?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the protocol is that there is a recommendation made to the Geographical Naming Board by both the Government of Canada and the government of Yukon, and the Geographical Naming Board has the ultimate decision.

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in a *Maclean's* magazine article of July 1, 1998, a panel of 27 Canadian historians named Sir William Logan as sixth among the most important Canadians in history, well ahead of any former prime minister.

• (1440)

Why would the government want to show such disrespect for this outstanding and distinguished Canadian by removing his name from Mount Logan?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no intention to disrespect anyone.

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[Translation]

**WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN**

**Mrs. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the context of the world march of women, groups of women have joined together to ask for the equivalent of \$2 per woman and girl as funding for their organizations.

The government, which is floating in billions of dollars in surpluses, has reached the hour of decision.

Will the Minister of Finance agree to give these women the basic funding they are asking for in support of their action?

[English]

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last budget \$20.5 million over five years was put into the Status of Women Canada budget to deal with the issue.

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**THE ECONOMY**

**Ms. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there has been a lot of speculation concerning the state of the Canadian economy and the strength of its growth. In fact there has been a lot of speculation that the Minister of Finance may actually be preparing a statement on the economic status of the country. We

*Oral Questions*

wonder when the Minister of Finance might deliver that to the House.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of announcing to this House that the economic statement, the budget update, will be presented here on Wednesday, October 18, following oral question period.

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[*English*]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty easy to get a standing ovation around here. All they have to do is send out a press release in question period like that.

I am looking forward to the financial statement from the Minister of Finance because I would like to know whether he will deliver on the much demanded gas tax relief that Canadians are looking for, or will he simply hand pick a small number of Canadians to send out a one time election cheque to? Does he really think Canadians are that gullible? Does he think that Canadians do not want real broad based gas tax relief?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might well ask that question of the government of Ontario, the government of Alberta or any other provincial government, governments which have had to deal with the particular issue.

I must say I am delighted the hon. member is looking forward to the statement on Wednesday. I think Canadians as well are looking forward to that statement.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, all Canadians can look forward to this week and next week is record high gas prices at the pump and a record high federal government tax take from their wallets, to the point where independent truckers are on the verge of losing their businesses. After all the hot air from the government about gas tax relief we are still seeing no relief.

Will the minister send out election goodie cheques, or will he deliver real tax relief to the people who need it now and are struggling to pay gas tax bills?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one must really wonder about the capacity of the hon. member day after day to put up crocodile tears.

He says that he is worried about working class Canadians, low income Canadians, moderate income Canadians, when in fact the centrepiece of his party's tax plan is still a flat tax that would essentially give millionaires \$130,000 in tax relief and virtually nothing to the middle class.

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**CANADIAN HERITAGE**

**Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the heritage minister has a very close relationship with the Prime Minister. Maybe she can get him to change his mind because the people of Kluane, Haines Junction, Yukon and Canada are really shocked at the Prime Minister changing the name of Mount Logan.

People have told me they do not mind a tribute and in fact they support a tribute to former Prime Minister Trudeau, but they do not like how this was done. They are opposed to it because they think it wrongs Yukoners, first nations and the Logan legacy.

Will the heritage minister make sure that Mount Logan stays Mount Logan and that the Prime Minister changes his mind?

● (1445)

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to thank the hon. member for Yukon who a few days ago expressed support for the suggestion by the Prime Minister.

I also want to thank the member for her personal input. I hope we can work together with interested parties, including the Government of the Yukon, the member and the first nations, to ensure that any move to change any name is respectful of all of the parties involved and does not disrespect the history or the name of any pioneer of Canada.

**Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have spoken clearly that I support a tribute. The Yukon also supports a tribute but it does not support this tribute. Maybe the aboriginal affairs minister has something to say because the umbrella final agreement for the Yukon, which was signed in 1993, clearly states that a traditional territory, if it is to be renamed, has to be done in consultation.

The Prime Minister's approach to this has been a failure. It has offended and affected first nations people. It has offended Canadians. It has probably seriously embarrassed the Trudeau family.

They should rethink this, do it properly and let Canadians choose a tribute.

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that when she stated her support for the renaming, she and a lot of other members were responding, in particular, to the support that people have for the recognition of a beloved former prime minister of Canada, Mr. Trudeau.

I think the message she is sending, and certainly the message being sent by Canadians, is that we have to ensure that in respecting Mr. Trudeau's memory we do not cause any difficulty for the history of Mount Logan. That is something that the Prime Minister has taken into account and is certainly something we will want to work on with her, with other members and with the government—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester.

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#### TRANSPORT CANADA

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, on September 18 I asked the Minister of Transport about a shell company that was established for the sole purpose of accessing \$3 million of taxpayers' money under the pretence of working on the Digby wharf.

Has the minister stopped the shell company from disbursing the next scheduled transfer of \$600,000, scheduled for October 27, until there is a complete accountability of every single dime of the \$3 million?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for bringing this to the attention of the House some weeks ago. As a result of his representations, we moved up the audit by Transport Canada on this particular wharf. It would be very premature to start making any further moves in the absence of the audit which will be completed very soon.

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am really glad the minister is reacting to the issues we bring up. We are giving him advance notice of one that is going to happen on October 27. He does not have to wait for us to bring it up until after it has happened. He knows it will happen.

On October 27, \$600,000 of taxpayers' money will be transferred from a non-profit society to a private company. Will he stop that payment until he knows where every single dime is going?

**Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has entered into an agreement with the society that is now in charge of that particular port. As such, we assume that the society is living by the agreement as made. If the audit shows to the contrary then obviously we will take

remedial action. However, we will wait for the audit report which should come very quickly.

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#### WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN

**Ms. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the World March of Women has drawn the attention of parliamentarians and Canadians alike to two critical issues that impact gender equality: poverty and violence against women.

My question is for the Secretary of State for the Status of Women. How is the government responding to the demands voiced by the women of this country?

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, gender equality and women's issues have been at the forefront of the commitment of the government since it came into power.

We have set out a clear set of infrastructure issues that deal with violence and the economic issues women face. Each year, in each budget and within each department, we have been building on that infrastructure.

We are looking forward to meeting with the women. The Prime Minister met with them yesterday and assured them that his individual ministers will discuss their individual issues with them. They will look at how we work with them to build upon the initiatives we have already taken and do the right thing to make sure—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

\* \* \*

#### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Justice Brockenshire brought down a damning judgment against the federal government, condemning the government for breaching its trusteeship related to the pensions it managed on behalf of the severely handicapped veterans. Canadians need to know as soon as possible if the government is going to honour the judge's decision? Will the minister now do the honourable thing and negotiate a settlement starting today?

● (1450)

**Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Veterans Affairs, I would respond to the hon. member by pointing out that the decision is currently being reviewed by the Department of Justice and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Within 30 days a decision will be made on whether or not an appeal will be made.

Canada prides itself in having some of the best programs for its veterans in the world. I know the minister wants to continue that practice.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**PARENTAL LEAVE**

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, two thirds of women who are currently unemployed have no hope of receiving employment insurance benefits. The government dares to say it is improving parental leave, when the majority of women will not even have access to it, contrary to Quebec's proposal.

My question is for the Minister of Human Resources Development. When will the government respond to women's demands for accessible and universal parental leave, which will leave no one out in the cold? When will it negotiate with Quebec to develop something like this?

[English]

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Indeed, Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member points out, we will have doubled parental leave benefits for Canadians, men and women, by the end of this year. At the same time, we will reduce the number of hours required for women to get these special benefits.

Again I point the hon. member to the changes in Bill C-44 which deal with the issues of clawback and others that specifically relate to the impact of employment insurance on women.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I want to commend the government for supporting the recent UN security council resolution 1322 on the tragic events in the Middle East, particularly the call for an impartial international inquiry into the violence in the territories illegally occupied by Israel since 1967.

In light of this, can the minister explain to the House why Canada shamefully abstained on the vote to call a special session of the UN commission on human rights on these tragic events? Why did Canada not support the call for a special session of the UN commission on human rights into the situation in the Middle East?

**Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure I speak for all members of the House in hoping very deeply that the summit, which is taking place today between the parties, will result in a step back from the violence and the killing and that we can begin to resume serious discussions on a peace process.

Canada has been very active in the last several days making calls to try to support that process. The Prime Minister called his counterparts in the Middle East, along with President Clinton. I spoke yesterday to Syrian and Lebanese representatives to talk

about the kidnapping of the Israeli soldiers and to see if we could have some return in those areas.

We met with the Israeli envoy today to talk particularly about how we can assist as Canadians in trying to restore peace. This is the important thing.

\* \* \*

**POVERTY**

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that everyone would recognize that the government has failed badly when we talk about women and children. There are more women and children living in poverty today than we have ever seen, especially since 1993.

Will the Minister of Finance recognize these women in crisis and introduce solutions in his upcoming budget so that we can put an end to the suffering and the unfairness that women and children are facing in this rich country? We should not have one woman or child living in the kind of poverty we are now seeing. Will the minister introduce something—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the situation in which many Canadians find themselves, despite the fact that our economy is very strong, is one that is obviously of great concern to all Canadians and certainly this government.

The hon. member must recognize that because of that, this government, in a recent federal-provincial agreement, put \$2.2 billion into early childhood development. After creating the national child tax benefit, this particular government has consistently increased it. The government has put money into prenatal nutrition and community welfare organizations and it will continue doing those kinds of things because we share—

● (1455)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia.

\* \* \*

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

The minister was in western Canada last week. In that regard, I would like to know whether she can provide the House with details of infrastructure agreements she signed on behalf of the federal government with the provincial governments of the four western provinces.

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to report that we signed agreements last week with the



Governments of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia under the infrastructure Canada program. The total value of the four agreements is \$1.6 billion.

The priority of investment will be the green infrastructure to improve the quality of air and water for our citizens. This is a very good example of all different levels of government working together for the benefit of Canadians.

\* \* \*

### FEDERAL ELECTION

**Mr. John Nunziata (York South—Weston, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is about to call an election, an election that nobody wants, not even his backbenchers.

This will be the third election in seven years. It is a cynical and arrogant move on the part of the Prime Minister. Why is the government calling an unnecessary election when it still has two years to run in the mandate it was given in 1997?

**Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend's question is purely speculative and hypothetical.

\* \* \*

### REPORT OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the information commissioner's report is very damning to the government. Especially troubling is a section that says:

The future careers in the public service of the Commissioner's staff have, in not so subtle terms, been threatened.

This development is inexcusably unprofessional and profoundly troubling. If members of the public service come to believe that it is career suicide to work, and to do a good job, for the Information Commissioner, the future viability and effectiveness of the Commissioner's office is in grave jeopardy.

Why is the government attacking—

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

[Translation]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, these are very serious allegations. It has always been a policy of this government to support the role of the information commissioner. It is very clear that if there are grounds for these allegations, we will act accordingly, but we will ask the commissioner to supply the relevant information.

### Oral Questions

#### PAY EQUITY

**Mrs. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the legislative provisions having to do with pay equity are still too timid and the way in which the legislation is now being applied is short-changing the majority of women.

My question is for the President of the Treasury Board. What is the government waiting for to abandon the judicial approach to pay equity and adopt proactive legislation that would speed up the resolution of disputes and force the parties, employees and employers alike, to sit down and negotiate pay equity in good faith?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that we have resolved the pay equity dispute involving all employees of the Public Service of Canada.

When this dispute was resolved, the Minister of Finance and myself announced that we would be reviewing the legislation specifically with a view to a much more proactive pay equity mechanism. We are most certainly going to follow up on this commitment.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a disaster unfolding right before our very eyes on the Canadian prairies. We are told by Statistics Canada that we have lost 22,000 farmers in the past year. In Saskatchewan alone we have lost 12% of our farmers and Manitoba has lost 15%.

The Liberal government has to bear responsibility for this disaster. Will the agriculture minister commit today to a doubling of support to Canadian farm families?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the last two years we have increased the support and the safety net to Canadian farms by 85%. We said that we will pledge to continue to support Canadian farmers in every way we can, both domestically and internationally, in trade talks. It will take the work of all of us, and a very diligent and strong effort, to do so. We will continue to do that on behalf of Canadian farmers.

\* \* \*

• (1500)

#### GUN REGISTRY

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, as costs skyrocket, the gun registry continues to be a cumbersome failure on the part of the government.

*Routine Proceedings*

Can the Minister of Justice provide absolute assurances that there has been no breach in the security of the gun registry databank? Such a breach would provide a government sponsored road map for criminals who choose to steal guns. Could she provide that assurance today?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first let me take the opportunity to say that more gun owners in this country continue to comply with the gun registry than ever before.

As we always knew, legitimate gun owners are committed to gun safety and to complying with the gun registry and licensing provisions.

Let me inform the hon. member that to the best of my knowledge there has been no security breach. I would appreciate hearing from the hon. member rather than having him raising fears and scare-mongering.

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill, if accepted, will be an opportunity to reduce the hazardous effects of cigarettes and introduce fire-safe cigarettes.

This issue was brought to my attention by Mr. Doug Lennox, a lawyer representing a Brampton family who tragically lost a three year old child and two teenagers in a fire that was attributable to careless smoking.

Like many Canadians, I had no idea that the tobacco industry for years has known how to make fire-safe cigarettes. This is what the bill is designed to do: it will bring to Canadians' attention the fact that fire-safe cigarettes can be manufactured. Literally thousands of Canadians lose their lives and there is literally millions of dollars worth of property damage to Canadian property on an annual basis as a result of careless smoking. Much of this can be reduced if not eliminated by having fire-safe cigarettes. That is the thrust of my bill.

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

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Derek Lee (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 10 petitions.

• (1505)

[English]

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with respect to statements by ministers. I am wondering if, given the volatility of the situation in the Middle East, we are going to hear a government statement in response to that situation.

**The Speaker:** That is not a point of order. That is a question. Perhaps the hon. House leader of the Conservative Party could approach his colleague to get that information privately.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, my point of order is in relation to the letter that I delivered to your office as to whether you would consider, under Standing Order 52, having an emergency debate.

**The Speaker:** That is not a point of order, as the hon. member knows. I will deal with those two things under applications for emergency debates.

\* \* \*

### HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS ACT

**Mr. John McKay (Scarborough East, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-506, an act to amend the Hazardous Products Act (fire-safe cigarettes).

### DEFENCE PRODUCTION ACT

**Hon. David M. Collenette (for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services)** moved that Bill S-25, an act to amend the Defence Production Act, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

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### AN ACT TO INCORPORATE THE WESTERN CANADA TELEPHONE COMPANY

**Hon. David M. Collenette (for the Minister of Industry)** moved that Bill S-26, an act to repeal an act to incorporate the Western Canada Telephone Company, be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

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### PETITIONS

#### KIDNEY RESEARCH

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present three petitions on the same topic. I will present them all together. The petitions deal with bioartificial kidney research.

The kidney was the first human organ to be replicated by a machine. Dialysis is the result of that replication. Research is now in progress to develop a bioartificial kidney which will one day be placed inside the human body. The researchers hope that just as the kidney was the first organ to be approximated by machine, the bioartificial kidney will be the first case of a fully functioning artificial replacement.

*Routine Proceedings*

● (1510)

I am glad to present these three petitions on behalf of the citizens of Peterborough who call upon parliament to work in support of the bioartificial kidney, which will one day eventually eliminate the need for both dialysis and transplantation for those suffering from kidney disease.

I thank Ken Sharp of Peterborough for his work on these petitions.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition which calls on the Parliament of Canada and the House of Commons to save the Canadian public health care system.

The petition is signed by hundreds of residents of my own constituency of Burnaby—Douglas and by other residents of British Columbia. It notes that the federal Liberals ignored the top priority of Canadians in the 2000 budget by giving only 2 cents for health care for every dollar spent on tax cuts.

It decries the small amount that the government has spent on health care, which has led to a shortage of nurses, hospital beds and emergency room spaces. It points out the concern about two tier American style health care and privatization being introduced by way of Alberta's bill 11. Finally, it notes that Canadians want immediate action to save public health care in Canada and to stop two tier American style health care cuts from coming to Canada.

I am tabling this on behalf of these petitioners who also call for a national home care program and a national program for prescription drugs.

## IMMIGRATION

**Mr. John Harvard (Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and pleasure to present a petition signed by hundreds of Manitobans who seek abolition of the \$975 right of landing fee for family class sponsorships.

These petitioners point out that immigrants contribute greatly to Canada's economy, that the right of landing fee is a burden to many families and that the fee is no longer applied against refugees.

Therefore, these petitioners call upon parliament to eliminate the landing fee for family class sponsorships.

[*Translation*]

## GASOLINE PRICING

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table four petitions today.

The first concerns the price of gas.

## TRANSGENIC PRODUCTS

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I also wish to table three other petitions containing 2,800 signatures. The petitioners call upon the government to make labelling of transgenic foods mandatory.

GMOs continue to be a hot topic and people are increasingly interested in knowing what they have on their plate.

[*English*]

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand and present some petitions pursuant to Standing Order 36.

The first petition is from people from the Kamloops and North Thompson Valleys. They point out their concerns with the existing health care system and are calling on parliament to do whatever is possible to stop for profit hospitals and restore proper federal funding for health care. They are particularly concerned about the necessary funding for home care and a national program for prescription drugs.

## FUEL TAXES

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on another topic, petitioners are concerned about the high price of fuels and are calling upon the Government of Canada to institute immediately a national highway priority whereby moneys from gas excise tax would go into the development and improvement of Canada's highway system.

## CHILD POVERTY

**Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition from Kamloops is very lengthy. The petitioners are concerned about the unacceptable level of child poverty in Canada. They are urging parliament to fulfil the promise of the 1989 House of Commons resolution to end child poverty by the year 2000.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Gar Knutson (Elgin—Middlesex—London, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of rural route mail couriers asking for the repeal of subsection 13(5). Such a repeal would allow the rural route mail couriers to unionize.

## HEALTH CARE

**Mr. Peter Mancini (Sydney—Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise, like my colleagues from Burnaby—Douglas and Kamloops, only from the other side of the country, from the citizens of Sydney—Victoria, and present to the House six petitions all dealing with the issue of health care and calling upon parliament to stop for profit hospitals and restore federal funding for health care.

*S. O. 52*

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of many Canadians who are very concerned about the broken Liberal promises. The Liberals in the last couple of elections promised national programs for home care and prescription drugs. They promised to adequately fund health care.

• (1515)

The petitioners are very unhappy with the Liberals for having choked health care to the point where they are asking parliament to stop now the fourth plank of the Liberal platform to privatize hospitals and to set up a two tier health care system.

They are asking for a restoration of federal funding. They are asking the federal government to immediately implement a national home care program and a national program for prescription drugs.

CRIME

**Mr. John Solomon (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my second and final petition is related to crime.

The criminal code has not been amended by the Liberal government to defend our defenceless citizens from crime. They are asking the House of Commons to amend the criminal code to prevent persons convicted of serious crimes from being released from custody pending the hearing of their appeal, except in exceptional circumstances. This is in response to the fact that they believe it is too easy for convicted people to get out of their five year sentences and so on.

FUEL PRICES

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful to present, under Standing Order 36, a large petition from residents in my riding who are very upset about the rising cost of energy, specifically gasoline, and the seemingly arbitrary way in which oil companies can change the price of gasoline.

These many thousands of citizens in my riding are calling upon the government to institute an energy price commission to oversee and regulate the price of gasoline, home heating fuel and diesel fuel so that they are not vulnerable to the shocks and fluctuations in energy prices.

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#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

#### REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

AGRICULTURE

**The Speaker:** I have two requests for emergency debates. They deal with basically the same subject. I will let hon. members make brief interventions.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my application for an emergency debate pursuant to the provisions of Standing Order 52 concerns the devastating financial and mental stress affecting farming communities across the country.

As was mentioned in question period, over the past year more than 21,500 farmers have left. They no longer exist in western Canada. They no longer farm the land. We also recognize from question period that there will be an economic statement issued by the Minister of Finance.

This emergency debate would make sure that the government recognizes the urgency and priority of agriculture and places it in the economic statement by the Minister of Finance. I do not think the government recognizes the real urgency and the stresses on farming communities in rural Canada, particularly rural western Canada.

I stand before you, Mr. Speaker, to ask that you allow us an opportunity to have this open debate later today or tomorrow so that we can put that urgency on the floor.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my application is also pursuant to Standing Order 52 and deals with agriculture.

Successive Conservative and Liberal governments have not been able to deal with the farm income crisis over their years in government. As a result I point out that for the last three years Canadian farm families have been struggling against foreign market interferences that have decimated our commodity prices.

The federal government has attempted to address falling farm incomes through such programs as AIDA, agriculture income disaster assistance. However these attempts have not addressed the needs of farm families. For example, only 42% of emergency funding promised in December 1998 has actually left the cabinet table in Ottawa and been delivered to farmers. That leaves an awful lot of money still sitting here.

The farm income crisis is being pushed to new levels of urgency because of escalating fuel costs. Energy costs make up a significant portion of farm input costs. For example, experts have estimated that a 10% increase in energy costs will cause a 6% decline in farm income.

*Routine Proceedings*

• (1520)

Farm families already in the grips of an income crisis will not be able to withstand this further. As a result I think we need to have another discussion with regard to the farm issue facing the country at this time.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for Brandon—Souris and the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake. Over the months and indeed years I have heard both these members and others from the other side of the House raise the matter of the problems faced by farmers in the west. However at this time I feel that the calls for an emergency debate do not meet our criteria.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The only problem with your decision is that I was talking in a Canadian context and you indicated western only. I would like it considered in the context of all of Canada.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps I should have been a little broader in my statement. I would include all of Canada. My decision would stand.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder whether there would be consent of the House for me to provide answers to questions that have been tabled in the House.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 40, 69, 78 and 96 could be made orders for returns, the returns would be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 40—**Ms. Wendy Lill:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government issued in the constituency of Dartmouth for each of the following fiscal years: (a) 1993-1994; (b) 1994-1995; (c) 1995-1996; (d) 1996-1997; (e) 1997-1998; (f) 1998-1999; and in each case, where applicable: (i) what was the department or agency responsible; (ii) what was the program under which the payment was made; (iii) what were the names of the recipients if they were groups or organizations; (iv) what was the monetary value of the payment made; and (v) what was the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

Return tabled.

Question No. 69—**Mr. Eric Lowther:**

Could the government provide a complete accounting of all Canadian taxpayer dollars transferred to, or in any way spent on, international organizations and agencies (including United Nations agencies and all other multilateral institutions) by any channel during the fiscal year 1998-99, listing clearly each item of expenditure by both the disbursing department and by the recipient organization or agency?

Return tabled.

Question No. 78—**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government issued in the constituency of Bras d'Or—Cape Breton for each of the following fiscal years: (a) 1993-1994, (b) 1994-1995, (c) 1995-1996, (d) 1996-1997, (e) 1997-1998, and (f) 1998-1999, and in each case, where applicable: (i) what was the department or agency responsible; (ii) what was the program under which the payment was made; (iii) what were the names of the recipients, if they were groups or organizations; (iv) what was the monetary value of the payment made; and (v) what was the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

Return tabled.

Question No. 96—**Mr. Gordon Earle:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the federal government issued in the constituency of Halifax West from June 2, 1998 to June 1, 1999 and, in each case where applicable: (a) the department or agency responsible; (b) the program under which the payment was made; (c) the names of the recipients, if they were groups or organizations; (d) the monetary value of the payment made; and (e) the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

Return tabled.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that answers to starred Questions Nos. 88 and 95 be made orders for returns. These returns will be tabled immediately.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 88—**Mr. Jim Pankiw:**

With respect to the Canada Foundation for Innovation and its Board of Directors, what has the government through Industry Canada determined to be: (a) the names of those organizations and/or persons represented on the Foundation's Board of Directors; (b) the criterion for being selected to the Board; and (c) the duration of service for Board members.

Return tabled.

Question No. 95—**Mr. Jim Pankiw:**

With respect to the Canada Research Chairs initiative: (a) what is the total number of applications received to date from each Canadian university; (b) what is the formula to be used for the granting of program money to Canadian universities; (c) what is the amount of money to be given to each university in the upcoming fiscal year; and (d) in each case, which granting council will award the money?

Return tabled.

**Mr. Derek Lee:** I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

*Supply*

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—POVERTY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The House resumed consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill (Bras d'Or—Cape Breton, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today, but I think it is very important that we also talk about what is happening across the country as we sit here. We have to look at the facts.

One in five Canadian children, or 1.3 million, live in poverty. That is up 25% since 1989. The fastest growing segment of the homeless population in Canada is families with children. Up to 40% of all food bank users are children under 18 years of age. The Canada child benefit, Canada's major tax transfer program for children, goes to only 36% of poor families. Those are the facts.

Yesterday was a momentous time for women across Canada and the world. The streets of the capital were filled with 50,000 men and women in a demonstration to make their demands known to the federal government.

What was the purpose of the march? What had inspired such a mass demonstration of anger toward the Liberal government? The march was for equality. The march was to stop violence against women. The march was to end poverty affecting women. It was an expression of anger at the Liberal government. Here we are, a supposedly civilized developed nation, and yet we still have to march in the streets to demand decent funding for health care. This is what Canada has come to. Yesterday 50,000 people shouted that it is time for a change.

In 1985 the UN announced that the target date for equality between men and women was the year 2000. We have two months left before the target date and it is terrifying to see how far we are from equality.

• (1525)

Wages for women are on average two-thirds those of their male equivalents. The glass ceiling in many professions is just as solid as

it was 30 years ago. Members should look around the House. Do we see equality?

One in six Canadian women is poor. This figure of one in six includes all types of women. Of those women living alone who are more than 65 years of age there is a poverty rate of 49%. Is this how the Liberal government wants to thank those women who have put so much into our country? As well, of women who head single parent families 56% are poor. Is this the environment the Liberal government wants our future generations to be raised in?

What does this mass poverty lead to? It leads to women staying in violent or abusive relationships. The financial cost of escaping is too great. It leads to fear of running away. We all know the federal government has not set aside resources and benefits to protect these women.

Should it really take 50,000 marchers to make the government give money to those who really need it? The demands of the World March of Women are vital to the development of our nation. We must restore federal funding to health care and prevent it from the awful prospect of privatization.

Over the lifetime of the Liberal government millions of dollars have been cut year after year. Acceptable health care is a crucial part of society. We must fight every day to restore it to acceptable levels. We must also continually demand that a two tier system of health care be prevented. Only recently Alberta made moves toward such a system. The nation was outraged.

Canadian women say health care funding must be restored now. The World March of Women also demands that an additional 1% of the budget must be spent on social housing. With increasing numbers of people being forced to sleep on the streets and rising numbers of women using women's shelters, increased federal spending on social housing is well overdue.

The federal government promised to contribute \$2 billion to the setting up of a national child care fund. This money is yet to materialize. Any working mother knows the difficulty of juggling a career and a family, and yet the government seems to be reluctant to support these women who need their help.

When will the Liberal government recognize that until women know that their children can be looked after they cannot go back to work? In many cases they cannot afford child care until they are earning a wage. This is an ongoing nightmare for many women across the country who are desperate to get back to work but are unable.

There are many more specific demands submitted by the World March of Women and it is time they were answered. Last month the government triumphantly announced its \$12 billion surplus. Now it is time to use it. How long can the government ignore the shouts of thousands of its citizens who say give the money to health care,

*Supply*

give the money to benefits, give the money to reduce student debt, promise to protect women from violence at home, and find ways to secure equality between men and women? It should open its eyes and recognize that these issues will not go away.

These are not just women's issues. These are the issues of Canadians. The NDP has been calling for many of these changes throughout this parliament. Health care and education have been two of our highest priorities. We will not give up the fight to protect and approve them.

The member for Halifax and I were on the Hill supporting the march. We were showing our desire to gain equality and end poverty and violence against women. Today the NDP women are on the inside of parliament shouting just as loudly for the same demands.

Yesterday's march was a triumph for the women of Canada. Now that momentum must be harnessed and pushed forward. The government cannot ignore the cries of 50,000 people with the support of thousands more around the country and the world. The message is loud and clear. It is time for change.

• (1530)

**Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Cape Breton for an excellent speech and for the work that she has done on behalf of not only the women of Canada but the important work that she has done in promoting equality, justice and solidarity with women globally.

I was very pleased to see that an important element of the women's march yesterday was a recognition that we are global citizens. When women are victims of violence or when women are victims of poverty around the world, that pain is pain we as Canadians must respond to as well. I salute the hon. member for leadership on this issue.

As a New Democrat I say that we are proud to stand in solidarity with the women who marched yesterday and to support the demands of the women's march.

Our leader, the hon. member for Halifax, spoke eloquently this morning about some of these demands, in particular challenging the failure of the Liberal government to take seriously a number of the specific concerns raised among the demands made by these women.

Because this is a day long debate and I think it is important that there be a broad range of issues covered, I want to refer to one element. That is the section in the women's march document which called for respect and promotion of the human rights of lesbians.

Too often when we speak of women as minorities, when we speak of aboriginal women, and when we speak of women with

disabilities, we forget another group of women still unfortunately face violence and still face discrimination. The section included in the march document points out that despite recent victories recognizing same sex couples, lesbians have not yet achieved legal equality. Because of hatred and prejudice, lesbian mothers can still lose custody of their children despite overwhelming proof that children in lesbian homes grow up healthy. Lesbians still do not have the right to bring partners to Canada under the Immigration Act. Lesbians of colour face a toxic mix of racial and homophobic prejudice.

The document points out the high suicide rate of young lesbians, which is indicative of the hatred and self-loathing experienced in a country that refuses to denounce homophobia and fosters hetero-sexist values and norms.

The document goes on to point out that internationally in many countries a woman who enjoys an intimate, physical relationship with another woman can be criminalized, jailed, slashed, flogged, harassed, shunned and sometimes even killed.

The document finally notes that women's right to sexual autonomy must be respected as well as their freedom to choose and celebrate their sexuality.

We as New Democrats support full equality for Canadian women and justice for Canadian women. I wanted to note particularly as well some of the challenges that face lesbians in Canada. We stand in solidarity with those women and we urge the government to respond to the very important demands made by the women's march in Canada.

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments. I think he makes a very valid point. When we are talking in the House about equality, as women have been talking across the country, that is just what we are talking about: equality for all women who are Canadian citizens.

Recently we have heard a lot of discussion from the other side of the House about values, about Liberal government values. As a Canadian citizen I have to say that we all should be standing here and holding our heads in shame when we look at the social deficit that has been caused at the hands of the Liberal government.

As a mother I cannot imagine knowing and dealing with, day after day, my children having to go to bed hungry. Women across Canada to their credit yesterday sent a clear message to the government. This is not about our asking for equality. This is about Canadian women from coast to coast to coast saying we want it and we want it now.

• (1535)

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the member gave a beautiful vox intellectus. I would like her to speak on the challenges of women in politics,

*Supply*

She experienced a bit of her ordeal through all this. There are challenges at every level including women who are in poverty and some who are not. We have a whole global problem when it comes to women in this advanced country. I believe that we have to look at all the issues. I would like the member to speak to that.

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. As she knows, being a mother, it is a struggle and it is tough being a mother and not having the ability to feed or clothe one's children.

What we have seen happen is a slash, burn and cut mentality from the Liberal government. Unfortunately women have carried the brunt of the Liberal cuts.

With respect to the member's question about whether it is difficult, as I said earlier in my speech, the government talks about equality, but when we sit in the Chamber do we have equality? Not yet. Will we? I believe so.

What is important about the women's world march is that it is not about asking any more. It is about Canadian women demanding. This will be something for which women will want an answer from every government member when they possibly go knocking on doors in two weeks.

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the comment of the hon. member. She mentioned that there is no equality in the House. Could she explain to me where the lack of equality for men and women in the House exists?

**Mrs. Michelle Dockrill:** Mr. Speaker, it is really simple. It is the number. All we have to do is look at how many men and how many women there are in the House of Commons.

Probably the member has some ideas about why that is so. We talk about equality. We hear the government talk about it all the time. If we as members are not committed to that equality when it comes to representing citizens, I am afraid that by the time my 11 year old daughter is old enough we still will not have that equality, if we do not have that commitment from the Liberal government.

**Mr. Mark Muike (West Nova, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Beauséjour—Petitcodiac.

It is with genuine sadness that I rise before the House to participate in the Bloc Québécois opposition day motion calling for an end to poverty and violence against women. It is also demanding equality in the workplace and better health care programs for all women throughout the country. I say genuine sadness because who would have thought that as we entered the 21st century women would still be victims of domestic violence?

Governments are quick to condemn these acts of violence yet they do very little to protect individuals against their abusers. What about discrimination in the workplace and the high prevalence of poverty found within our female population? For years women have been listening to governments promise to address these inequities in society, yet most cuts in government spending disproportionately affect women. Provincial cuts for women's shelters and housing programs force many women to remain with abusive partners.

• (1540)

A lack of subsidized child care spaces and reductions in education and retraining programs effectively prevent women from pursuing a better life for themselves and their children.

I wish I could say that I completely understand and appreciate the frustration women are feeling because of the lack of progress in addressing their serious concerns, but to say that I completely understand would be patronizing and completely false. Only those women who live in poverty or are victims of violence or discrimination in the workplace can truly understand the situation.

In 1995, at the fourth United Nations world conference on women in Beijing, Canada reaffirmed its commitment to a number of international United Nations agreements including the charter of the United Nations, the universal declaration of human rights, the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, the convention on the rights of the child, and the declaration on the elimination of violence against women.

Let us add to this impressive list the designation by the UN that the years 1997 to 2006 are to be known as the international decade for the eradication of poverty.

With the Canadian government being a signatory to all these agreements, why are Canadian women still being marginalized and in many instances treated like second class citizens? I will tell the House why. It is because the Liberal government is more interested in offering lip service than actually addressing the serious concerns facing women.

On Sunday our Prime Minister met with a delegation representing over 5,000 women who gathered on the Hill to protest the lack of government commitment toward addressing serious women's issues. In 1993, prior to being elected Prime Minister, the leader of the Liberal Party wrote a letter promising to abide by any decision rendered by the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal with regard to the outstanding issue of pay equity. This issue affected approximately 200,000 predominantly female workers in the public service.

This is the same individual, our Prime Minister, who fought tooth and nail to try to prevent these workers from getting the money they so rightly deserved. The Prime Minister reneged on his promise just as he did on the GST and free trade. Unfortunately for



*Supply*

women in Canada and around the world he is likely to renege on our international UN commitments as well.

In 1993 women working outside the home earned 72 cents for every dollar earned by men. This is totally unacceptable and serves only to magnify the disparity which exists in Canadian society. Already 60% of families headed by single women live below the poverty line. If this wage gap continues we can expect that the number of single women living in poverty will certainly increase.

What can we do to address poverty in the country? The PC caucus put together a task force on poverty last year that travelled extensively across the country to meet with Canadians to discuss the issues and try to come up with possible solutions to the problem. As a result of these extensive consultations, our party released a report in January entitled "It's Up To Us" which identifies a number of the problems associated with poverty and makes a number of recommendations on how some of these problems should be addressed.

Because the member for Shefford was instrumental in helping put this report together, I am confident that she will be able to convince her new party to adopt many of our measures.

What is the Liberal government doing to address domestic violence which continues to be perpetrated against women in society? The answer is very little. The tragic 1989 killing of 14 young women at École Polytechnique in Montreal shocked the nation and forced us all to look deeper into the roots of violence within our society.

• (1545)

Unfortunately, as so many people's memories of the event are waning, so is the Liberal government's commitment to finding ways to put an end to violence against women.

Statistics Canada reveals that at least 51% of all Canadian women have experienced at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16 and that sexual assaults account for almost one in ten violent crimes. This suggests to me that government policies are not working. We need more money for women shelters, community counselling, child protection, crisis lines and legal aid. We need better training for our enforcement agencies to handle domestic disputes. We need a justice system that is more in tune with the potential danger facing women by their partners.

As our Canadian women's lobby continues on to the world march in New York City, I can only hope that this Liberal government will take concrete measures in its expected mini-budget to address the immediate concerns of women's rights across the country.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I

am sure that the member will appreciate that all Canadians are very concerned about the issues that the member talked about, which were child poverty and domestic violence. Certainly there are a number of issues. However, I was very interested in the member's statements about the domestic violence angle and the solutions that he suggested which were more shelters, more crisis intervention and many things after the problem occurs.

Would the member not agree that there should be a balance between prevention and remediation and that part of the solution of domestic violence is trying to make sure that it does not happen in the first instance? The member will well know that family breakdown is terribly high in Canada. In fact 50% of married persons will break up before their children reach their 18th birthday. He will also know that common law couples will also have the breakdown in their relationship 50% more frequently than married persons.

The problem here, and I am sure the member would like to comment, is the reasons why families break down and the reasons why the children are the real victims of divorce and family breakdown. The fact is it is not a simple, linear excuse. It is a multiplicity of things. I believe the member would agree that strengthening the Canadian family and investing in the Canadian family, men, women and children, and not making it simply a women's issue but making it a societal issue, is the fundamental prerequisite to addressing the serious problem of domestic violence.

**Mr. Mark Muise:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member's question comes truly from the heart and I recognize that.

My colleague's question and comments were genuine. I would like him to be able to share some of those same sentiments with his caucus so that the government enacts legislation and policies that will help people in society. Also, his comment that this is family issue and not just a woman's issue touches on an important point.

Today's children who are poor are poor because their parents are poor. When we have a situation in the home where people do not have the resources to adequately clothe, nourish and house not just their children but their whole family, it leads to stresses that cause the types of things that we are discussing today. As my colleague says, what we are looking at is even broader than just the women's issue. It goes back to the fact that the government has reneged and has cut to the point where families are negatively impacted, hence negatively impacting women.

• (1550)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member also touched on the issue of child poverty. He mentioned some statistics about lone parent situations. I understand that about 14% of all families in Canada are in lone parent situations but they account for over 54% of all so-called children living in poverty. Of course, the member

*Supply*

will acknowledge that it is really families living in poverty. This again very clearly goes to the issue of family breakdown.

Would the member not agree that investing in the Canadian family and in our children, and making sure that children are raised in a healthy and well adjusted environment so that they can grow up to be healthy, well adjusted children as they move into adult life, is prevention versus remediation? I think the member gets the gist that my concern is not so much what to do when we have the problem. My concern is more with what are we doing to prevent the problem from occurring in the first place.

I do not say for a moment that we should legislate behaviour but I think we have to encourage healthy family life in Canada.

**Mr. Mark Muise:** Mr. Speaker, it is fine for my hon. colleague to say what he said. However, when I look at the cuts the Canadian people have suffered over the last seven years, a \$33 billion surplus in one year, and I see poverty and all the negative impact that it has on the Canadian population, I cannot stand here and accept what my colleague is trying to put across to the Canadian public.

The Canadian people deserve a part of the \$33 billion surplus. A good chunk of the surplus comes from the people who could least afford to pay it. They are single parents, those on fixed income, the poor and the elderly. That is not acceptable.

**Ms. Angela Vautour (Beauséjour—Petitcodiac, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the organizers for the marches across the country and the world. A world women's march does not happen overnight. We are talking about days and months of organization. As a woman member of parliament, I want to thank them for everything they are doing.

I was part of the organization when we organized the national women's march against poverty in 1995 or 1996. I helped co-ordinate the march in New Brunswick which certainly brought awareness. Pay equity was one of the big issues.

After several courts, the Liberals finally decided to pay what was owed to mostly women who were federal government workers. Maybe to the Liberals it did not seem very important but it recognized that there was an inequity within salaries of federal employees. What the mostly women and some men did with that money was reinvest it in their communities. It also helped a lot of them to catch up.

I want to also recognize the work that was done by the members of the Public Service Alliance of Canada. We have to thank them. We have to thank Nycole Turmel and the whole group who worked on this. Without their persistence and work I believe that women would not have won this very important justice that was owed to them.

Ten minutes is certainly not enough time to talk on all the issues but we have to touch on violence.

[*Translation*]

Violence against women is clearly unacceptable. There is certainly too much violence against women in this country.

Women's needs are not being met by our justice system. Too often women find themselves in dangerous situations. They ask the courts for help, but their spouse still manages to find them eventually, and we often see children who end up losing their mother.

● (1555)

Too often women live in shelters. This should not be happening. They should have the right to live in their own home, in their own environment, and feel safe. We must address this problem. Too many women live in fear and insecurity, afraid to leave the house or go to work, because they fear for their life.

Looking at the way the justice system works, it is obvious that the Liberal government has to do a lot better to correct the problem.

[*English*]

As my colleague mentioned a while ago, we certainly have to address the problem. Yes, I believe in prevention. I believe in a justice system. We need more prevention. We need prevention at home and, as mothers, we need to make sure that we address that with our children. We need a society that talks about it and recognizes it. We need governments that address the problem. That is how we are going to fix this.

We also need shelters and we need to put a lot more money into them. We have the rural communities which are always disadvantaged. Shelters for battered women are much needed in our rural communities. We always have to scrape and scrape to try to get enough funds to operate shelters which are safe homes for women and their kids. They are safe homes that allow those moms to get out of a situation. They can get some counselling. They can reflect on their situation. They can get safety for their children. Then after they have had a time to rest, to feel safe and secure they can make those decisions. Those shelters work.

I used one quite a few years ago and it worked. There was counselling. Children were safe and the women could think. Unless we have those shelters for women who need them, they cannot get out of the environment. They cannot think straight. It does not matter how much prevention there is we will never solve all the problems. However, we need the shelters and we need to reinvest in them. All levels of government need to co-operate and address that. If we do not then we are not facing up to the problem.

Most children living in poverty are female. We have to look at the changes to the EI.

*Supply*

[*Translation*]

The changes to the employment insurance program have affected seasonal workers, of course, but women in particular. Did the Liberal government recognize that when it brought in these changes? The Liberals said that the changes to the employment insurance program would primarily affect women. Now they want to make changes to maternity leave.

It is very nice to tell women that they will get a one year maternity leave, but how many women can afford to take advantage of it with 55% of their \$6 an hour salary? These women will spend a minimum amount of time at home with their children because they are forced to go back to work. They have no choice, because they cannot stay at home and live on 50% or 55%—the new amendments have not been adopted, and it looks like the government will not let them go through—of their salary. A woman cannot afford to stay at home with her children if she receives the equivalent of \$3 an hour. It is simply not possible.

It is very nice to announce that a woman will be able to stay at home for a whole year with her children, but that only applies to women who earn big salaries. Those who are at the bottom end of the income scale will not have access to maternity leave, because they will not be able to afford it. We must also take a look at the child care program.

[*English*]

Child care is a big problem in this country. In August I released my report. On page 31, I recommended that we look at child care, especially in rural Canada. There are serious problems when it comes to child care. It is too expensive. A lot of women are working in fish plants or in tourism and are earning low salaries. They cannot afford child care. So where are the children going? The children are going where the moms and parents can afford to send them. Are they getting the best care? I am not too sure that they are. Is it the parents' fault? No, it is not the parents' fault.

• (1600)

We have to address child care in this country. It is not right and it is not fair that only people making high incomes can afford child care.

I do believe that Quebec has a good example in child care at \$5 a day. We have to look at that. We have to look at it as a model and implement it across the country in different provinces where governments want it. I believe every provincial government should want an affordable child care program for parents. The children deserve it. If those governments do not care about the parents perhaps they should care about the children who are the ones suffering at the end of the day.

Let us look at breakfast programs. On the weekend I was talking to a director of a school of about 500 children. Two years ago he had to put in place a breakfast program, not twenty years ago but two years ago. He is feeding 20% of the kids in that school at least one meal a day, which is an awful shame. Why? Not because the parents are doing better, but because the parents are making less money and everything is going up. It may be gas, milk or bread, but everything is going up. Salaries are not going up. They are going down. Those are the issues that keep parents and children in poverty. That is not right.

How about part time workers? Who usually has a part time job? It is women. Which group was attacked most in the EI cuts? It was part time workers. They now pay into the fund but they cannot collect. Before when they used to pay they used to get at least a little bit but now they do not.

When the EI legislation was passed it was clear that women in particular were going to be targeted by it. The government passed it anyway. We need a system in place with policies that make sure there is not one group in particular being targeted. This Liberal government does not do that. The government speaks well today that it cares about women and poverty but I do not think it is really doing anything about it.

Violence and poverty among women has to be addressed. We are living in a very rich country. Every woman should feel safe in her home. Every child should have food in his stomach when he goes to school. Only by addressing poverty among parents can we ensure that. Single parents are usually women. This issue has to be addressed. Talking about it is not enough. We need sound policies that are going to address it once and for all.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my colleague's speech. I am very pleased to see that she will probably support the Bloc Québécois' motion.

It provides, and I quote:

That this House work to provide the means needed to fight poverty and violence against women as demanded by the World March of Women, particularly in the areas of income protection, health, international aid, violence and wage parity, so as to ensure a fairer distribution of wealth between women and men.

The member mentioned the \$5 day care program that Quebec has put in place and that is indeed an excellent program. Could she provide more information and tell us whether she shares the viewpoint of the Canadian women's march committee, the representatives of all Canadian women, which, concerning demands pertaining to issues under Quebec's jurisdiction, recognized that Quebec has the right to establish its own standards, programs and policies in these areas?

*Supply*

Could the member tell us whether she shares this viewpoint, the one of the women of Canada, which is ahead of everything the federal government has proposed? For many years, the federal government has considered that it alone could put forward such a vision. Should the Liberal government not in some specific way respond to the demands from Quebec to grant the parental leave that the government of Quebec has set up and which is part of a structured family policy, rather than limit itself to ensuring its visibility through the program it condemned, namely the parental leave program under the employment insurance program? It will leave people with low incomes in a state of poverty, thereby ensuring that it is simply unrealistic to take a year's leave.

**Ms. Angela Vautour:** Mr. Speaker, my answer is clear: I believe so. The government must consult the provinces. I believe Quebec has a formula that works.

• (1605)

It has proven that the \$5 dollar a day child care program works. There cannot be an immediate no simply because it is Quebec. It is clear that anything coming from Quebec triggers an immediate no from the Liberals. I am not saying that they should always say yes, but they should consider the situation in each province. There must be leadership. Provinces must be encouraged to participate with the federal government and the municipalities. The problem must be addressed. The maternity leave problem is a serious one.

Only high income women will be able to afford to stay at home with their children. The women who work for minimum wage in a variety of factories—there are plenty of women in my area who work year round for \$6.50 an hour—are certainly not going to stay home for a year with their children, not out of choice but for financial reasons.

The government must sit down with the provinces and find a workable formula. It should not do so with all provinces at the same time but rather one at a time, in order to solve the problems once and for all.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to write a monograph entitled “The Tragic Tolerance of Domestic Violence”. I would like to share with the member a couple of statistics.

In January 1998 a newsletter called “Common Sense and Domestic Violence” reported that only 25% of women in shelters actually go there to use the shelters as hostels. It also showed that 50% of cases of domestic violence involve alcohol use or misuse. It showed that 71% of domestic violent situations occur in non-marital relationships and that 30% of all abuse cases occur between the ages of 18 and 34.

I think the member will probably acknowledge, and maybe she could acknowledge, that this is not a simple societal problem we are dealing with and in fact only 15% of cases of domestic violence are ever reported to any authorities to break the cycle of violence. Would she not agree that encouraging women to step forward and report cases of violence is an important part of the solution as well as requiring mandatory counselling for all those convicted of domestic violence in order to prevent the reoccurrence?

**Ms. Angela Vautour:** Mr. Speaker, I do agree. I do not have the figures the hon. member mentioned. What I do know is that when women go to a shelter it means they need shelter.

We need to address the problem. When partners are convicted they need rehabilitation. We need to have programs out there, maybe before the partners are convicted. We do not have enough programs. There was a program at one point that was called the turn around program. The success rate was not very high but at least it was a beginning for men who wanted to work out their violence and their tempers.

Those programs cost money, but unless we have those programs, unless we invest in having these programs available to help these men who do not want to be violent any more, who want to control their violence and who want to have a normal life, these men do not have the resources to get themselves out of it. A lot of men who hit their women are not happy with themselves but they do not have the resources to get themselves out of it. We need to have resources available, not only for women but for men.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to address this Bloc Québécois motion. I am not only proud because the Bloc Québécois presented this motion, but because this extraordinary march of women in 2000 has its roots in a similar initiative by the Fédération des femmes du Québec in 1995, a march that all Quebecers remember and which was called the Bread and Roses March.

• (1610)

This women's movement is something extraordinary for all Quebecers and Canadians, for all those interested in organizing a movement to counterbalance the constant and rampant phenomenon whereby the rich are getting richer—it is true of countries and it is also true of the people living in these countries—and the poor are getting poorer, which is also a reality for countries as well as for the people living in them.

In a way it is just a start, but a very promising one, which was strongly felt in my riding, and perhaps also in yours, Mr. Speaker. In the riding of Mercier, women's groups, and two women's centres in particular, namely the Centre des femmes in Pointe-aux-Trembles and Info-Femmes in Tétéauville, mobilized and pre-

pared this great march of women, first in my riding and then here in Ottawa. A number of these women are currently in New York city to take part in the great international march. I am very proud of all the work that has been done.

However that is not the end of it. One only had to hear the replies provided today by the government to realize that the fight is far from being over. This mobilization—that is what this is—will ensure that issues as serious and as important as poverty among women and children and violence against women will no longer remain secret. The women who are the victims of such situations will no longer be isolated and basically led to believe that they are responsible for what is happening to them.

Even if the time available is extremely short, I would like to speak today to the international outlook of this march of women, which began in Quebec, became Canadian and is now an international event.

What are Canadian women calling for? They are calling for an international outlook. They are calling on Canada to get ready to meet the international aid objective of 0.7% of GDP, which could be called the nation's wealth. It makes sense to link international aid to wealth.

They also called on the government to reduce the debt of the 57 poorest nations. They are so right, because these debts are eating up what little revenue these small countries have leaving nothing for health and education.

The government's reaction to this should not be that everything it is doing is just fine. I would remind the House that it was in 1990 during a full recession that Canada made its commitment to the UN to meet an objective of 0.7% of GDP. At the time, Canada was contributing 0.48% of its GDP to international aid. It was already close to 0.7%.

Since then, its contribution has continued to slide. So much for the so-called "best country in the world". Right now, international aid stands at 0.25%, compared to the 0.48% it was at the time the commitment was made. How many years have we been enjoying this period of prosperity of which the government is so proud? Six years, seven years?

The situation is completely unacceptable and I am extremely grateful to women for adding their voices to those of all the people in Quebec and in Canada who think that Canada's position does not make sense.

It makes so little sense that in committee I asked the president of CIDA and the minister responsible for international cooperation what percentage of international aid comes back to Canada.

### *Supply*

• (1615)

The minister was somewhat taken aback. At first she said it was 30%. The president of CIDA had to step in to correct that statement by saying that it was 75%. Of all the international aid we provide, which is far from the objective set out by Canada in 1990, 75% comes back to Canada.

Everything we heard about helping underdeveloped countries to repay their debts, about helping poorer countries by providing international assistance, about targeting the hundreds of million dollars announced by the minister is nonsense.

We are very worried because it is in the poorest countries of the world, mostly in Africa, that the status of women is the most vulnerable in terms of health and violence.

What is even more horrible is that these women often have to face poverty and violence in countries that are fighting what seem to be endless wars, where the international community is reluctant to interfere because it fears that it may not be equal to the task. People have to realize that the international community has been extremely cautious. Unfortunately the troops the UN sent to Sierra Leone, for instance, became the laughing stock of the world, to make a long story short since my time is limited.

I want to quote a report that everyone ought to read, the Year 2000 Report of the United Nations Population Fund. The introduction begins as follows:

Gender inequality holds back the growth of individuals, the development of countries and the evolution of societies, to the disadvantage of both women and men.

It goes on:

The facts of gender inequality—the restrictions placed on women's choices, opportunities and participation—have direct and often malign consequences for women's health and education, and for their social and economic participation.

They added something that is extremely important and important here to this country too:

Yet until recent years, these restrictions have been considered either unimportant or non-existent, either accepted or ignored. The reality of women's lives has been invisible to men. This invisibility persists at all levels, from the family to the nation. Though they share the same space, women and men live in different worlds.

That is true here, improved to some extent in certain areas, but it is poignantly true in developing countries and in the poorest countries.

I am going to wait for the party opposite, on the eve of an election, to wake up and provide money instead of fancy words, wherever it wants to appear generous. Canada does not have the

*Supply*

situation under control by any means. Far from it. This is shameful in the field of international aid.

[*English*]

**Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Mercier for her perceptive comments and also for the motion that has come forward today.

I want to make a few comments rather than ask a question if I may have a minute or two to do so.

Our leader spoke this morning about the women's march and the women's demands.

• (1620)

A group from the women's march on poverty met with our caucus recently. When its representatives presented us with their demands I found that they fit like a hand in a glove with the kinds of things the New Democratic Party has been proposing.

We believe an election may be near. Each party is coming up with a platform, and we are as well. While I do not have all the details, I will go through some of their demands and indicate how closely they resemble some of our platform points.

They want to restore federal funding to health care. We have argued for that all along. They want to enforce rules against privatization of health care. We have fought that fight as well and agree with the women of Canada.

They want an additional 1% of the budget spent on social housing. The government has removed itself from social housing almost entirely and we have a crisis on our hands. The government has done virtually nothing during this crisis. We are with the women of Canada in saying that we must do something about social housing. We are proposing 25,000 units per year.

They want a promised national child care fund set up. The Liberals made that promise in 1993 and it still has not been acted on. I recently presented a petition in the House from parents and other members and friends of the Confederation Park Childcare Cooperative in my riding asking about that fund. They were talking about the fact that two-thirds of Canadian women work outside of the home. Not everyone has a situation whereby a family member can care for the children. In this economy, if we want to be productive and just, we must have such a program. We in the NDP are pushing for that.

They want old age security payments increased. We have fought the Liberal government's attempts to reduce old age security payments.

We have also supported the reduction of the head tax on immigrants. The women of Canada have asked for that.

Like my colleague from Mercier, we have also been calling for a restoration of our overseas development assistance to the target level of .7 of 1% of GNP. We are saying that we have to get to .35% immediately. In that, I agree with the women and with my colleague.

Finally, we have adopted the proactive pay equity legislation. The women of Canada are calling for that and we support them entirely.

I merely wish to state that the wishes, desires and demands brought forward by this group of women from Quebec and from all over Canada fit very closely with what the NDP has been advocating for years. Perhaps it is no accident. We have eight or nine women members in our caucus and they have had a great impact on bringing forward issues from the women of Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is most decidedly happy to have the NDP vote in favour of its motion. Indeed, what would make us really happy is to have the entire House support it.

This motion is an extension of the march of women, these women who have developed positions that we in the Bloc Québécois are extremely comfortable with because we have been fighting for these proposals for years in the House of Commons. We are very proud to see that the Regroupement canadien des femmes fully recognizes that the provinces are the ones to act in matters of provincial jurisdiction, as the president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec put it so forcefully.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member had a quote that I thought was interesting. She said that men and women live in different worlds. We have an organization, Men Against Violence Against Women, which was created because men had been shut out of the process.

Does the member agree that the issue of domestic violence is in fact not just a women's issue but a societal issue? If she does agree, would she not support all men and women getting together to work together on effective solutions for the issue of domestic violence?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Francine Lalonde:** This is an interesting question, Mr. Speaker, and I shall answer it in this way. The more one studies these questions the more one knows that the solution to violence toward women must be found in a context where there is no need for men to be violent.

*Supply*

The way to make it possible for men and women to be equal partners is to ensure that both can fulfil their total potential and then they will go on to be capable of a partnership of equals.

• (1625)

What we are finding more and more, and what some people have realized for a long time already, is that the couple must be based on a relationship of equality. As for help, the networks of men and women must be such that they create couples in which there can be an equal to equal relationship.

This is the case not only here but also in the poorer developing countries. I find the report so extraordinary because it states that the inequality between the sexes is considered a problem of the utmost urgency and is a priority for development. To quote the report, it is “a matter of urgency affecting both human rights and development priorities”.

Inequality must be brought out into the light and solutions sought, with women first of all, in order to manage to attain a level of equality so that within the couple, the woman can assert herself in situations relating to her fertility. There are millions—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but her time is up.

**Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on this opposition day on the World March of Women, I would like to welcome to the world my granddaughter Béatrice, who was born at midday.

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

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** My wish for her, her mother and her grandmother is that we may live in a world where increasing efforts will be made to eliminate poverty and violence, and that she, her grandmother and her mother may be able in their respective communities to establish themselves and live in the equality that is vital to their development.

I would like to reread the motion we introduced this morning because every word in it is important in my view:

That this House immediately work to provide the means needed to fight poverty and violence against women as demanded by the World March of Women, particularly in the areas of income protection, health, international aid, violence and wage parity, so as to ensure a fairer distribution of wealth between women and men.

As has been repeatedly pointed out today, the government is in a position and has the means to help women with their demands. The budget surpluses can be used to do much to improve the conditions in which women and, by extension, their children live.

The World March of Women, which brings together 5,000 groups of women from 159 countries, managed to get over three million signatures in support of its demands. These signatures are

cards that will be delivered to Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general.

This march has its roots in Quebec, where a group of organized women, of activists, came to the conclusion that many policies at all levels were not working and were harmful to women. Back then people probably did not think that the movement would spread to other countries, that these women would join forces with others to achieve the success that we are witnessing this week.

I took part in the march in my riding and felt solidarity between the men and women who participated. Colleagues, friends, fathers and even young men took part in the march. We could feel solidarity among us and, above, all dignity and pride in representing women who, after all, symbolize the perennial character of society and account for at least 52% of its members.

• (1630)

That march was necessary and it was a wake up call for many people. Wherever we are we must recognize that the poverty level is increasing.

In my area, an organization called La Table de la pauvreté conducted a survey. It found that in a riding which appears to be rich 25% of the families were living below the poverty line. I can assure members that living below the poverty line in a city is very difficult. It may be more difficult than in the country where people can sometimes manage to get by, which is not the case in cities.

In echoing what was said here this morning, I would like to talk about two groups in particular. The first one concerns aboriginal women and human rights.

Members may wonder why I am the one speaking about the human rights of aboriginal women. It is because I had the pleasure—and I say the pleasure because I discovered a lot of things with them—to study with a group of aboriginal women.

I would like to salute them today. I am thinking about Fernande St-Onge, Suzanne Achini, Germaine Pinette, Marie Jourdain and her sister, Angéline, who came from Maliotnam to study on the south shore, in La Pocatière, in my colleague's riding.

They came to the south shore because they wanted an education that would help them make things better in their society. It was not easy for them to attend a boarding school and be away from their people for a whole school year. But they did it and today they hold values that they share with us.

Those involved in the march of women are calling for a lot of things. To eliminate poverty and violence against women, they are asking the federal government to support the human rights of aboriginal women as well as the welfare of their children, their

*Supply*

family and their community and to respond to their concerns regarding housing, health, education, justice, territorial issues and resources.

They are also asking the government to make funding available to national and regional groups representing aboriginal women so as to ensure their full participation in discussions on self-government.

They are asking that all programs include a gender equality analysis. When we realize that the aboriginal peoples have a concept of equality governing their traditions, this demand appears totally justified.

They are asking for changes to the Indian Act to restore the traditional rights enjoyed by women in the transmission of native heritage.

They are asking for sufficient funding for aboriginal women's groups to enable them to set up halfway houses and other services in the communities.

Finally, they are calling for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, which includes a whole section on the equality of women.

The Bloc Québécois has already proposed a review of the rules of the dissolution of an aboriginal marriage, which discriminate against women by failing to recognize the right to equal division of matrimonial property. It also proposes a bill to rectify the situation given the government's inertia on the matter.

We support funding for aboriginal women's organizations, as requested.

I would also like to speak of another group of citizens for whom the march of women has made demands. They are calling for the implementation of a progressive immigration reform so that domestic workers receive immigrant status as soon as they arrive.

Domestic workers are all too often a source of cheap labour governed more by the terms of modern slavery than by positive immigration measures.

The Bloc Québécois proposes that the government tighten up the procedure for support of candidates for this program so they may be monitored by an immigration officer in order to prevent abuse.

• (1635)

We also want the immigration reform to call for the elimination of the head tax for all immigrants. We want this federal tax to be abolished because the federal government is taking no responsibility whatsoever, except in Quebec, I might add, for the integration of immigrants.

Another major recommendation concerning new immigrants would include persecution based on gender or sexual orientation as a specific reason justifying the granting of refugee status.

The 1951 United Nations convention relating to the status of refugees stipulates that:

As a result of events... and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion—

In 1993 the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that membership of a particular social group must include people who are afraid of being persecuted for other reasons such as gender or sexual orientation.

The Bloc Québécois wants the federal government to ensure that visa officers overseas interpret the definition of a refugee according to the court's ruling.

I have only one minute left, but I could keep going for hours. I just want to say that, as my hon. colleague pointed out, we are in favour of forgiving the debt of the 53 poorest countries of the world.

As agriculture critic for my party, I want to add that the farming industry could very easily help to feed the poor on this planet. The problem has nothing to do with production but rather with the fair distribution of our production.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member started off by saying that it would be nice to abolish poverty. That might be part of the problem. There seems to be a sense that somehow we can legislate it away.

The member will know from the prior debate that the statistics with regard to the lone parent situation is quite alarming. In fact 14% of all families in Canada are lone parent families but they account for over 54% of all children living in poverty.

With that as background, if the member is truly interested in finding constructive solutions to address the problem of child poverty, we will then have to deal with issues such as family break down. I hope the member would acknowledge that and comment on it.

Second, I would like to pose to the member another approach. If we cannot legislate behaviour, maybe the approach within programs at all levels of government should be to create an environment in which children are raised to develop good, sound social, moral and family values so that when they grow up and take their place in adult society they will make decisions that will make sure they do not end up in poverty or in situations where domestic violence occurs.

The idea is prevention, not remediation after we have the problem. I wonder if the member has some comments on those.



*Supply**[Translation]*

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I must say there are all manner of means for lessening the tensions that lead to major difficulties.

In reference to lessening tensions, since this morning I have been thinking that what we have been discussing is a series of steps that can be readily taken in relation to funding social housing, health, the aging population, and all that can be done to set up day care centres. These ought to be able to accommodate very young infants. All of this would improve the social climate in our society.

Very often, when one looks into social problems more thoroughly, one realizes that poverty is indeed very much what lies behind social problems.

• (1640)

I would say that the poverty in which people live is a natural source of conflict, so if part of the conflict can be eliminated through measures providing direct assistance to women, and when we are speaking of women then we are speaking of families, in order to provide them with more support and more of a chance to catch their breath, then probably there would be less tension within the family, which is what leads directly to violence.

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member would like to discuss child care so maybe I could pose to her the principle that the most important thing for a child is a secure and consistent attachment with an engaged committed adult.

I am not sure whether or not day care, as a simple solution, will necessarily provide that to all families. As a matter of fact, it appears to me that we have both the urban and rural and accessibility and affordability of child care may be an issue. Does the member not believe that families should have more choices so that they include such things as allowing families to be able to provide direct parental care? Right now more than 50% of families provide direct care. Does she not believe that maybe promoting simply a child care solution is somewhat simplistic and does not take into account the realities of the Canadian family?

*[Translation]*

**Ms. Hélène Alarie:** Mr. Speaker, of course, in a perfect world each child would be able to stay home with one parent or both. Unfortunately that is not the way things are. Because of that, I think we need a family policy that addresses the needs of both parents and children.

When we talk about \$5 a day day care, it is a very effective way of helping parents. When parents can do another kind of work during the day, they come home at night with an open mind ready to resume their child-rearing duties.

We must help families so that children can grow up in the best environment possible. We must be realistic, however. It is easy to say that the ideal situation would be this or that, but reality is different and we must find the means to address the major problems in our society.

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to ask for the unanimous consent of the House so that, notwithstanding the standing orders governing private members' business, we can have one more hour tonight, October 16, at the end of government orders, to allow debate on Bill C-213, dealing with shipbuilding, at report stage and, if necessary, at third reading stage. This bill is extremely important, and with all the rumours we hear about an upcoming election, it should be dealt with as soon as possible.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member said he would like one more hour. Does he mean tomorrow night or tonight, even though consideration of private members' business was this morning?

**Mr. Antoine Dubé:** Yes, but if there were unanimous consent—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I just wanted to clarify the request.

Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

*[English]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Peterborough, Infrastructure.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

I want to speak on the subject of violence against women and girls as a health issue of grave concern.

• (1645)

As women have marched across the country, not only in Canada but around the world, governments have had to concentrate on and remind themselves of the enormity and complexity of this problem, a problem that continues in Canada despite the efforts of organizations, governments and individuals to eliminate it.

When we speak about violence as a health issue, we include violence in all its forms, physical, sexual, psychological and spiritual, which then includes things like abuse, date rape, stalking, violence in the home and in the workplace, and violence by family members, acquaintances or persons in positions of trust.

*Supply*

There is no doubt that all forms of violence seriously impact on the health and well-being of women. Along with immediate and more physical impacts of physical and sexual violence, there are many other possible consequences, which would include the possibility of HIV-AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancies and permanent pain, injury and disability.

Violence against women and girls has serious psychological impacts. They can become withdrawn, have depression and low self-esteem, have eating disorders and self-destructive behaviours which I have seen evidenced in my own constituency office with people having to deal with these issues. They can have physical problems that are a consequence of poor mental health.

We do not have a simplistic viewpoint. There is a whole range of areas to be considered. These all have an impact on women's ability to empower themselves and to interact with their community, with their family and with society. In a sense they have this area of their lives where they feel powerless. I think that is wrong and it is very difficult to overcome.

Health is a function of much more than biology and health services. Health is also greatly affected and impacted by the social and economic factors. The social impacts of violence against women can include hours of lost work, lost income, loss of home and isolation. These can all worsen one's health.

In March of 1999 Health Canada released its "Women's Health Strategy" which had a significant component of the government's health agenda. There were 64 commitments in the strategy which were based on a health determinants approach. As part of the strategy, Health Canada undertook to integrate a gender based analysis. We have talked about that many times in the House. I think the fact that gender based analysis is integrated into the department's programs and policy development work will have an eventual impact on what we are trying to do.

Gender based violence is a risk factor that women face and has wide ranging consequences for not only health but for the health system. We had recent negotiations at the UN's special session of the general assembly. It has been commonly referred to as Beijing +5. It did address the violence issue as a health issue. States recognized that while some advances had been made in the provision of specialized health services for women and children, there was a lack of a co-ordinated multidisciplinary approach responding to violence. We need to include not only health systems but education systems, media, workplace knowledge as well as the justice system.

As a result of the Beijing +5 commitments, we have a view now of a more holistic approach to the issue of violence against women and girls, including marginalized women and girls. That would also then encompass those areas of provision for appropriate health care and services which on the whole are not well integrated in all our communities in Canada at the present.

However, in the health sector we need to do more than treat the impact of violence. This has been mentioned a number of times today. We need to encourage and engage in preventing violence before it starts, in all of our systems. Health care services should also recognize the symptoms of violence and provide support to women and girls.

We also know that we have marginalized women and girls in our society, often aboriginal women, immigrant and refugee women, lesbians, women with disabilities, older women, and women of minority, racial, ethnocultural and linguistic groups. They need services that are sensitive to their culture, their situation and their life experience. Unlike the reform alliance, one size does not fit all and cannot help all the people that need to be helped.

• (1650)

Along with those groups, women in isolated and rural communities also have difficulty accessing the services they require. Community groups and non-governmental organizations have been active in these areas and are to be commended for their work to date, which is essential to achieving the holistic system we are after, that holistic response to violence.

I will give a few examples. Through the Health Canada health transition fund, the University of Montreal completed a project to implement and evaluate the use of a screening tool in local community health service centres for the detection of women abuse. Recently in my home town, the London based task force on the health effects of women abuse released a report recommending that health care providers screen female patients for abuse. The Centre of Excellence for Women's Health has studied the relationship between health and violence among aboriginal women, the impact of violence on women's mental health and the provision of health services to women diagnosed with mental illnesses who are survivors of trauma and abuse.

Through family violence initiatives, Health Canada supports research related to health consequences of violence against women, particularly with a view to encouraging and educating the health care sector to respond more effectively to violence against women as a health issue. This includes guidelines for physicians who are dealing with women abuse and the criminal justice system, a handbook for health and social service providers and educators and children who are exposed to women abuse, and a handbook for health and social service professionals responding to abuse during pregnancy, a particularly vulnerable time.

The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence contains many resources that provide information to aid women, including women from these marginalized areas of our country and from minority groups. I hope that women and men will access these resources.

The government will continue to promote respect for the physical and psychological integrity of all individuals. Health and

well-being are necessary to women's full participation in society. Girls and women of all ages, I believe, cannot achieve any real equality until they are free from all forms of violence. I see around this House people who understand the issues, many in different parties but certainly on the government side of the House. We have to understand the problem while we work at the solution. Women and men, civil society, all governments and all members of the House must be engaged to eliminate violence.

I was very pleased on Sunday to come to Ottawa a day early to spend time with some of the people who came from London, Ontario to visit the Hill and participate peacefully in a demonstration that raises very significant issues for Canadians to understand, to take action on and to involve themselves in. The government has been working in its various departments to continue the work that has progressed since we have been here. I can only speak of the time since 1993, but this is not my first debate on these issues of violence against women. I hope that by the time the grandchild of the hon. member opposite, who just had a grandchild today, reaches the age where she or he can enter the House, it not be in a similar debate.

There are good people in the House and in the communities who believe this is an important area. The Alliance Party in particular demonstrated earlier today some misunderstanding of some of the basic theory that goes with some of the issues we talk about in the House and that we have to follow through with our policy and practice in our ridings.

There will not be a debate in the House on violence that I do not want to participate in because it is important to recognize it, not to hide behind the statistics that say everything is getting better. It is always important to stand up and say that there are still marginalized people, that we are still underserved in many ways and that resources, both human and monetary, have to go into these areas for progress to continue to be made. I believe that the government, with its gender analysis, will help integrate all those solutions into the policy development of the government.

• (1655 )

I thank the members of the House for participating in this worthwhile debate. I also thank the member from the opposition party who put forward this motion today.

**Mr. Philip Mayfield:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am aware that there is quite a list of speakers who would like to get involved in this debate. I was wondering if there would be unanimous consent for us to forgo questions and comments so that more speakers might be involved.

### *Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland):** Does the hon. member for Cariboo—Chilcotin have unanimous consent of the House.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Ms. Louise Hardy (Yukon, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the member from London can help me on this. I know she has worked hard on this issue and believes strongly in equality for women.

When it comes to women's issues or moving policy on women's issues it seems to be really difficult. When policy does get changed it gets changed so that it penalizes women, such as in the case of the EI program or moving forward with child care.

One area that has bothered me a lot is the area of the defence of provocation. This defence is used if a man is insulted or his honour is besmirched on the basis of an insult. We excuse the murder done to a woman because he was insulted. We are making excuses for anger when it comes to violence against women. It is in our laws. It is very symbolic. The law says that a man can react violently to what he perceives as a verbal insult. It is very discouraging to think that we cannot even make small changes like that.

There is another little thing I want to bring up, which is not little for the women involved. Everybody knows that Canada is a huge country with vast areas of isolated communities. The federal prenatal health program has just cut funding for women in Dawson City. They can no longer get any assistance to go to Whitehorse to give birth. They do not have a choice in this. They cannot stay in Dawson City to give birth. They have to spend at least two weeks in Whitehorse near the hospital but the funding to enable them to do that has been cut. Most of these women are not wealthy. They live on very fixed incomes and the accommodation is expensive. Why would something like that happen? It is just unbelievable.

I know the women members on the other side of the House are working hard to change things but why do we not have the changes that we need? Why do we have something like this? The amount of money we are talking about is only around \$7,000. It is such a minuscule amount compared to our full budget. Why was it cut? It has a drastic effect on the lives of women at a time when they need help to give birth in a place that is safe. They do not have any other choice.

**Mrs. Sue Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, I respect the hon. member opposite. I also know she works very hard because I have had the pleasure of working on committees with her.

First I will address the question that she raised with respect to the provocation defence and the criminal justice system. I am sure the hon. member is also aware that this defence has been used

*Supply*

successfully in the past with women who have been repeatedly attacked by their spouses in a situation where there was ongoing abuse.

That is one of the areas we have to look at when we make changes to the criminal justice system. On the one hand it is seen as an out, but in other circumstances there are real reasons it is used as a valid defence. I see a need to examine this area. I believe it is currently being examined in order to look at how we can better get at the goal without necessarily changing the exact section of the code she is referring to.

I also want to pay attention to the comments made earlier in her remarks about child care. I remember being part of a woman's caucus in 1993 when we on this side of the House had a minister who was very much prepared to go forward to the provinces with child care policies. There was no take-up from many of the provinces. That was at a time when there were deficits in a lot of the provinces.

• (1700)

Today, though, a child care agreement has recently been negotiated inside the health care agreement with the provinces and territories. Money would be available for those provinces to choose where they would put the resources and programs in relation to their populations. I believe in Ontario the dollar amount is \$800 million.

Some of those provinces may in fact choose to go with child care. I understand that B.C. and perhaps the member's area, although I am not certain of the latter, may go with increased child care. However, other provinces may very well choose to spend those extra resources in areas where the resources are most needed. I understand that where fetal alcohol syndrome is more of a problem some of the provinces are looking at increased spending in that area.

I understand my own province has not given any indication, and I know there is a dire need. The women's programs in my city could use more beds every night in our shelters.

I understand I am out of time. I thank the hon. member opposite. On the health care, I am sorry, but I will have to take that at another time.

**Ms. Jean Augustine (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in the debate on this opposition day motion.

I want to begin by saying that the Government of Canada supports the World March of Women. As a member of the women's Liberal caucus, I offer support to the women of Canada as they make their demands and look for ways and means to better the lives of all women. As chair of the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, I see this march as being an important initiative that demonstrates the increasing level

of global linkages being created by Canadian women, NGOs and other organizations.

Many of my constituents in Etobicoke—Lakeshore participated in this march for women. They too joined and they want the government to know that they are working to improve their lives and the lives of all women all across the country and the world.

I want to focus on the issue of family violence and take up from where the previous speaker, the hon. member for London West, left off. I will quote from a recent Canadian publication that is especially relevant to this world march. It states:

Violence against women knows no geographical, cultural or linguistic boundaries and it affects all women without regard to their level of income. For many women, poverty adds another dimension to the pain and suffering they experience as a result of violence. Poverty limits choices and access to the means to protect and free oneself from violence.

Much has been said here today, but I think one thing that is very clear to me and that was left with all of us is the fact that the Canadian Alliance has proved that it does not understand the issue of pay equity, which is a very important issue for women. As well, it believes in a one size fits all approach to equality. It should not speak to them about measures to address visible minority women, aboriginal women or women with disabilities. This is very sad. This march underscored the importance of those issues for women.

As well, I want the women in my riding and all women to know about the resources we have within the federal government to address the issue of family violence.

• (1705)

The quotes I mentioned earlier came from a document called "Breaking the Links between Poverty and Violence Against Women: A Resource Guide". I think that report adequately reflects the perspective of the government.

The Government of Canada is committed to both ensuring that women are safe in their workplaces, their homes and their family situations and to reducing the toll that violence takes on Canadians. We are also committed to finding solutions to such problems as poverty, which affects the health and well-being of all Canadians.

Health Canada has some responsibility here. It is the lead ministry in co-ordinating the family violence initiative. As part of this initiative the Government of Canada continues to help individual Canadians and communities increase awareness and develop more effective ways to prevent and respond to the problem.

What have we done? Let me take this opportunity to go through a number of initiatives. We have allocated \$7 million a year for a range of activities across seven federal departments and agencies, some of them very important, including Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, the Department of Justice, the RCMP, Statistics Canada and Status of Women Canada. The initiative entails collaboration with an addi-

tional six departments that are not funded through this initiative but act on the problem through their regular budgets.

The government has introduced a wide range of legislation, policies and programs dealing with violence. On this side of the House from time to time we draw attention to those programs and policy areas. They are managed through a variety of interdepartmental collaborative mechanisms, including, for example, the interdepartmental working group on family violence, the interdepartmental working group on crime prevention and community safety, and working groups dealing with related issues such as Canada's drug strategy.

There are other federal initiatives. The building healthy communities program provides crisis intervention services for aboriginal communities. Other initiatives deliver intervention and treatment programs to offenders in correctional institutions and other facilities. Those programs have an impact on family violence.

Through successive initiatives we have established a baseline of information on the nature and extent of family violence in Canada. We were able to share this with our international partners in this area. Research that is done in Canada is research that is up front and at the same time very progressive.

We have conducted research and provided data on such important areas as violence against women, children and older persons, and the utilization of transition houses and shelters. We have conducted ongoing research to evaluate the effectiveness of what we are doing and to address the gaps we have identified in the consultations we have had with the provinces, territories, frontline workers, and NGO and service agencies. We also provide research to policy makers and services providers to give them up to date information so that they can work on the ground and with communities to address family violence in the most effective way possible. We have the data. We have the research. We have the information.

As well as addressing this awareness and understanding of the problem, we see the issue of family violence addressed daily in the common media and in the multidisciplinary, multi-sectoral inter-governmental approaches to this very important issue.

• (1710)

Family violence is a long term problem that requires a long term collaborative response involving all sectors of Canadian society. I think all of us in the House recognize that this is not an easily solved problem. Frontline workers, community groups, members of the public, and all the others working together on this issue recognize the difficulties involved in dealing with family violence.

We also have had a special national campaign against violence. There are two phases. The Canadian Association of Broadcasters has been working with us in this regard. With \$1 million coming from Canadian Heritage, Health Canada, Justice Canada, Solicitor

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General, Status of Women and National Defence, the CAB has provided approximately \$20 million of airtime for a series of television and radio messages revolving around three themes: violence against women, violence against children and media literacy. We thus have partners in this endeavour.

Another example of partnership is an interdisciplinary project on family violence. It is a complicated issue. It is an issue that all of society has to deal with. The World March of Women highlighted the issue for us. The government is working assiduously with all departments and partners in this regard. We have provided handbooks. We are doing everything we can to ensure that the issue comes to the fore.

In conclusion, the government is cognizant of the issue. The women's march has highlighted it. We will continue to work. We will continue to provide the necessary resources to ensure that we fight violence against women and that families are safer places in which individuals can grow and develop.

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, as I total the 13 demands it seems to me they would probably cost about \$20 billion a year. These 13 demands are listed as immediate demands, so when these are paid for I presume there would be more demands.

It occurs to me, from my experience dealing with families and family counselling, that two of the greatest pressures in families that cause disruption, violence and loss are financial problems and loss of health by a member of the family.

Let us consider the amount of money Ottawa spends on interest payments. It is about three times what we spend on health care and education. We casually talk about this \$33 billion surplus. This money came from taxpayers. I have difficulty understanding many elements of this argument. Why are we taking money from families when this is one of the greatest causes of stress and violence in families? Why can the government not see that it should reduce the tax level and leave money in families?

Our party has suggested a \$10,000 tax exemption for any adult member who pays taxes and any adult dependant and \$3,000 for each child. That would mean a family of four would pay no taxes on the first \$26,000 of income. They would then pay at the rate of only 17%, except for the highest earners of over \$100,000 who would pay at 25%.

Does the hon. member consider that some of the fundamental problems causing the difficulties we are discussing are in fact promoted by the government and its own policies?

**Ms. Jean Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing how we can reduce any kind of discussion down to the issues of taxes and dollars and cents.

*Supply*

• (1715)

I spoke about the problem of violence against women and violence in families. It is a very difficult and complex issue. It is an issue we find all over the world in all classes in society and in all groups, racial, cultural, et cetera.

I spoke about what we are doing in Canada to address that issue, to bring it to the attention of the public, to work with partners and to ensure that Canada and Canadian women join with women across the world to resolve that problem.

The issue of taxes and putting more dollars in the pockets of individuals to resolve this is not the answer to violence. We know it happens in families who are millionaires. It happens to families who have big houses and who have lots of money in their banks and pockets. This is not a money issue.

I am not surprised that my colleague does not understand what this issue is all about.

**Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague across the way for her remarks. I want to focus on one point because time is limited.

The women's march talked about the lack of housing as being a major cause and perhaps the effect of poverty among women. Today on the Hill there was another related event. The Canadian Association of Food Banks held a news conference to talk about two studies it had released. There are now 707 food banks in Canada and 726,000 people using those food banks, which is an increase in the last year. Many of those people live in very poor housing. That is one of the problems.

It talked about the fact that while we have a minister for homelessness in Canada, we have a lack of a national housing strategy. I am now paraphrasing from the remarks in the study this morning. It also indicated that the minister in charge of CMHC announced further research and consultation but that that was really not what we needed. We need funds committed to a national strategy and targets for the creation of affordable housing. So there is a link between poverty, particularly women's poverty and the lack of affordable housing.

I wonder if my colleague could tell me how we might attack this problem? There has been a retraction by the federal government on this issue. I wonder if she could tell us how we might get ourselves into a position where we have a decent strategy for housing?

**Ms. Jean Augustine:** Mr. Speaker, as you know from my background, I spent six years as the chair of the Metro Toronto Housing Authority which houses 125,000 people in what is called rent geared to income.

I know the situation of the lack of affordability. I know the linkages and the connections. If the member would remember what we did fairly recently in the area of homelessness, those people who are on the street either through eviction, psychiatric and other kinds of problems, and the work we have been doing with communities to alleviate those issues.

The issue of affordability is one we have to tackle. Despite what we have in terms of CMHC and the present RRAP funding, et cetera, I have to admit that we have to work on the issue of affordability.

Let us all join together. The issue of affordable housing is very important. All of us in the House have to find some ways to take responsibility for that issue.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing mine with the member for Québec.

I am very happy to rise today to speak on this motion put forward by the Bloc, of which I am especially proud. Last week, along with a thousand women from my riding, I walked in Trois-Pistoles, Cabano, Pohénégamook, in some neighbourhoods in Saint-Éleuthère, Sully, Estcourt, Rivière-du-Loup, Saint-Pascal and La Pocatière.

• (1720)

I felt very at ease because many of the issues raised by the women had already been supported by the Bloc Québécois. The efforts made by the Bloc to improve EI were obviously considered very credible. The Bloc position on poverty, as explained by the hon. member for Québec throughout the province, also enjoys a lot of support.

I heard from a lot of people. For instance, after a speech I made at one of the demonstrations, a young mother told me "You talk about women and men living in poverty, but I would like you to talk about the children of these families who have to make due with what is put on the table". That stuck in my mind. That is why I am reminding the House today that the 13 demands these women made to the federal government would also help to eliminate child poverty. There are no poor children without poor parents and especially poor women.

I also saw a young woman who came to talk to me because someone had said in a speech that it was sad that, on the 8th of each month, some people did not have any money left from their welfare cheque to pay for current expenses. A young woman came to me and said "I still have money left from my welfare cheque on the 8th of each month, but every day I have to make sacrifices to make sure my children will have what they need so we can get through the

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month, and I will give you examples". She was very proud to tell me about the necessities she did without so that her children did not have to do without.

These are the testimonies I heard during a march where I felt a lot of enthusiasm. I would say I found in that march the first organized movement. All the men in Quebec, in Canada and, basically, in the world must be grateful to women for having taken the initiative to turn things around, to say that productivity and profit will no longer be the only things that matter, that other factors will have to be taken into account in developing policies.

And this was done by women from our own communities. They are real people who started marching from the Lower St. Lawrence area or from Matane on to La Pocatière, and then on to Montreal and Ottawa. This march reflects a reality. It was not a debate among intellectuals but concrete action which must be recognized. Those responsible deserve our thanks.

I also heard testimonies that did not necessarily relate to the issue of economic poverty. On that day there was much talk of domestic violence. One woman came to speak to us about the situation she had been through. This was a woman who did not necessarily have any financial problems, but she lived with a very controlling partner who subjected her to violence. This violence is something else we must fight against and eliminate from our society. When I listened to this woman speak, I was also listening as a father, because I have two daughters. I have a son and I want him to be able to grow up in a society in which we have done what is necessary to eliminate such behaviour.

Today, we are not living in a country with financial difficulties. We are living in a country which has resources, wealth. There is a major problem distributing this wealth. Today, I was expecting a much more open attitude from the government towards the demands that have been presented. I am very proud that the Bloc Québécois has brought this debate to the House.

Last week, on our tour, I said to the women "You know what you are doing today". When we had been walking for an hour, an hour and a half, and might have been a little tired, we said "What you are doing today will make it to the floor of the House of Commons and it is the Bloc Québécois that will take it there. The Leader of the Bloc Québécois has made a commitment to do this and if you listen to the debate on Monday, October 16, you will see that all your work has been for something, that the federal government will be called on this, and that there will be a vote". This vote will take place tomorrow.

I think that we on this side are doing our job. At this time, we take great pride as MPs and as politicians in showing that we are behind the people from our community, behind the people who want to see more social equity in our society. Personally speaking, this has been my greatest source of pride since becoming an MP, that we were able to provide support to the women organizers of this march and the men who were in solidarity with it.

Some of the 13 demands I find particularly of interest and of particular appropriateness to my riding, among them the ones relating to female seniors living below the poverty line.

• (1725)

The Bloc Québécois has a very concrete proposal that will affect not only older women living below the poverty line but also single men and couples, relating to providing these 506,000 people with \$1,180 more a year, to increase their income by 11.6%. This would be for those who are truly below the poverty line and who need the money to make ends meet.

There are examples in all of our regions, in the little parishes where older ladies are living in small rooms or apartments and having trouble getting by. The same thing happens in our cities, and sometimes also in rural areas. There are more and more women living alone. Women are living longer, but they have not had the opportunity to pay into a retirement plan. They have to rely on the Canada pension plan. The fact that the CPP has not been improved the way it should have been is hurting women the most. We have a concrete proposal that would meet the demands of women while dealing with elderly men who live alone and are similarly poor.

Needless to say, there is a crying need for social housing. The Bloc Québécois has raised this issue on numerous occasions. We are still doing it and will continue to do so. Statistics do not give the whole picture, we must stress the principle that people are entitled to decent, affordable housing.

When 25% or 30% of one's income goes to housing, there is enough left for other things. But when one has to spend 50% or 60% of one's monthly disposable income on housing, things go out of whack. Some people cannot afford food for the last week of the month. This in turn creates health problems, and problems across the whole system. I believe this is another concrete step the government should move on and take a different attitude from what we have been seeing here.

During that tour I discovered something. I discovered how women manage with next to nothing, often all they have is very little means and a lot of determination. This is why these women are first rate organizers, they have the right stuff to get something like the march of women off the ground. They are used to doing a lot with very little money, and they managed to do a lot with very little money. We have seen the demonstrations in Montreal and Ottawa, and we will see the one in New York.

I think the initiative taken by the women of Quebec five years ago in the bread and roses march, now repeated on the world stage, must be given real attention by all those involved in the distribution of wealth as elected representatives. This is the clearest and most specific message we have had on the fact that a society creating an enormous amount of wealth but unable to distribute it properly has no future.

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This applies to the incomes of seniors who live alone, public housing, funding for groups of women to enable them to help their colleagues, so that when there are groups of people with problems of self esteem they may be supported, so that in the case of domestic violence, women may have support to get out of it, in order to realize their full potential.

The last demand involves the whole issue of maternity leave. In Quebec, we have a parental leave program that meets needs, that is a full complement to the family policy of the Government of Quebec, and the federal government in an effort to ensure its own visibility is refusing to act on it. I find that totally unacceptable.

I will conclude by pointing out to the Liberal government that the demands made by Canadian women include recognition of Quebec's right to opt out to be able to fund these activities according to its own criteria. Canadian women, in my opinion, are 100 years ahead of the current Liberal government. They already recognize that Quebec is a distinct society. There are already existing models and the government should accept the model developed, it should allow Quebec to develop at a different pace from the rest of Canada, it should avoid coast to coast standards. This is an improvement compared to all the positions taken by the government in the past.

There is a strong movement, a movement that has drawn the attention of the Quebec government, the federal government and the international authorities. An effort must be made at all levels. There is room for additional effort by all levels of government or organizations.

• (1730)

Five or ten years from now, we must not be facing the same situation regarding child poverty and we must not come to the conclusion that, as parliamentarians, even though we were not there 10 years earlier, we did not do our job.

But the Bloc Québécois will definitely have done its job. We presented a motion on this issue, here in the House. There is now a debate and a vote will follow. Again, I say to all the women who took part in the World March of Women that the Bloc Québécois is very proud to have worked so that this vote can take place.

In conclusion, no more violence, no more poverty.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member will know that the Government of Canada spends about \$340 million a year on housing in Quebec, most of which supports the 140,000 low income families in Quebec.

As I understand it, and maybe the member can clarify it, Quebec's main concern is that it is not being offered its fair share of social housing assistance based on the current share of Canadians

with housing needs. Quebec, like other provinces, is being offered federal money to cover the cost of the shared national portfolio of social housing. In Quebec's case this is lower than a province's share of current housing needs. Quebec in fact is getting proportionately more of the current investment in social housing.

I also want to comment very briefly on the member's issue with regard to maternity and parental leave. It is an issue that is very important to me. It was Bill C-204 that brought it to the House and which was incorporated in the throne speech and budget 2000. I am pleased to say that it will be implemented on January 1, 2001 so that families can have up to one full year of maternity and parental leave to provide direct parental care to their children. Therefore it is in fact happening notwithstanding that the member said that it should happen.

I raise those issues for the member simply for his comment.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing I would like to point out is that this is not the federal government's money. It is taxpayers' money.

The federal government is not some Santa Claus who gives us presents. This is our money. The \$32 billion surplus in the EI fund did not come from the federal government. It came from employers and employees. It is this money that the federal government would like to hand out. This is unacceptable.

It is paternalistic of the federal government and Quebecers no longer want any part of it. It is an approach women no longer want. They no longer want to be treated by the Liberal government as though they were being given a gift. It is unacceptable.

As for social housing, original approaches are being developed in Quebec. There are ways of funding what we need. And the little boxes of the federal government have no place in it. It is a pity, and because we do not fit into your little boxes, we are not entitled to the money which is rightfully ours? I think that we must take another approach and make sure that we get adequate assistance.

With regard to maternity leave, I challenge the hon. member. If a woman now earning \$7 an hour gets 55% of her salary, that makes \$3.50 an hour. If she works 40 hours at \$3.50 an hour, she will wind up with \$150 to live on. Even if her maternity leave went on for ten years, there is nothing in it for her. What is needed is flexible maternity leave entitling people to an adequate amount for a certain number of weeks.

It is this demand from the women of Quebec and of Canada that the federal government is unable to satisfy.



[English]

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, responding to the member's concern about the affordability of housing, I would raise the issue of affordability for seniors' housing.

A lady who owns a very modest house on a very modest piece of property phoned me. She was in part dependent upon \$13,000 that she and her husband had managed to put in the bank while they were working. They had a little bit of extra income to go with their old age pension. When he died she did not have the money, because of the taxes she paid, to pay the taxes on her house.

The question I am raising is, would it not be better for those people who think it is so great for the government to collect money and then decide who to give it back to, to just leave the money in the hands of those people who are at the bottom end?

• (1735)

We have a policy in our party to take about 1.5 million people off the tax rolls. Would that not be preferable to taking the money away and then saying that there is not enough to give back so Canadians can pay their taxes?

[Translation]

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Mr. Speaker, we all want tax reductions, but the hon. member did not talk about the thousands of people who do not pay taxes and still do not have enough money to live a decent life. There are 506,000 senior Canadians who do not have enough money to meet their basic needs, including 359,000 single women over 65 and 82,000 single men over 65. Even with the best tax reduction possible, these people would not get a penny more, because they do not pay any taxes as it is. They do not have enough to live on. Most of them have worked all of their lives.

This is especially true of women who have worked 30 or 40 years at home, taking care of their children. Their husbands may have died or left them, and all they have left today is the basic pension. That is all they have to live on. A tax reduction does not mean a thing to them. A tax reduction will not solve everything. It is however part of the solution, because the federal government has too much money for its own needs. The wealth needs to be redistributed differently and that is the message sent by women.

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this debate on such an important issue, namely the status of women and their march against poverty, against exclusion, for solidarity, and all that synergy that concerns us as parliamentarians.

I have often spoken in the House about these things. I am thinking of poverty resulting from a scarce jobs, from a lack of the

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necessary resources to make ends meet or to improve one's quality of life.

The march of women is a way to fight against exclusion so there is no more suffering for children, so there is more equity between men and women and, above all, so there is no more psychological and material violence against women. Making a few changes in our justice system will not be enough. We need better social policies. We need this government to have social priorities. We have seen was the seven year social deficit of the Liberal government has wrought.

I toured Quebec with regard to the issue of poverty in April, May and June, before the summer recess, and I met the representatives of some 400 community organizations. They all told me they had difficulty meeting the urgent needs of people living below the poverty level, living on the minimum wage, unable to afford decent housing, unable to have a certain quality of life and to put enough food on the table for the children.

I say bravo to the march of women. Things have to change, the message has to be heard. I take pleasure in pointing out that the Bloc Québécois are the ones who initiated this debate with the motion by the hon. member for Longueuil, the opposition critic for women's issues. I congratulate her and I know that she is involved in a real struggle to get the MPs to grasp certain realities.

As a member of parliament, I feel a sense of involvement and I trust that the members on the government side will be able to bring a positive influence to bear on it as an election is looming. We know that this is the time to hand out the goodies, and we can only hope that some of the goodies will help improve the status of women. There is an urgent challenge to respond to the immediate and pressing needs of women and children, and men as well.

When a family is living below the poverty line, as my colleague for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques has said, often the husband puts pressure on the wife to make ends meet, to manage the family budget and be able to meet pressing family needs.

• (1740)

This world march of women has raised a great many issues and the Bloc Québécois has some concrete proposals: \$45 billion over five years.

As far as social housing is concerned, this is a battle that we have been engaged in since 1993. We all know that the federal government has backed away from its commitment to social housing. It is unacceptable that not another cent will go into social housing.

I put a question to the Minister of Public Works today. He replied that negotiations were being held and that there had been a deputy minister change in Quebec. There are negotiations going on in Quebec City, but there is also a reality in the field. Why did they change the deputy minister? I could perhaps say that they also took

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a while to attend to Quebec's needs to enable it to meet the people's public housing needs. The federal government offer on the table does not meet Quebec's needs.

We know what the government thinks about the situation of public housing in Quebec. It fails to meet the need and is inadequate for the population. We understand why Quebec does not want to sign this agreement, because once it signs, it will be forced to respond to the pressing need of the public. We have the support of groups wanting more public housing in Quebec. So we will come back to the response by the minister, who is a member of this Liberal government.

We are calling for a second investment in health care, an additional \$10 billion to correct the shortfall the provinces have faced since this government has been in power. This additional \$10 billion is essential to enable the provinces to meet the needs of an aging population, and women have a longer life expectancy than men.

We are also calling for financial assistance for home care. It is often women who end up taking over the care of sick grandparents or children. If there is not enough money in the health care budget, women will have to pick up after seven years of the Liberal government's social deficit.

We are calling for a fund for daycare and an end to the hide and seek with national child benefit. The government says it has invested over \$9 billion in this child benefit. I would point out to this government that it took \$720 million away from daycares and child care services. It was supposed to set up child care services.

Let us stop playing hide and seek with this money because the federal government said we could use it to help families. If there is not enough money to help families, to set up a true child care system in Quebec, the government should stop telling us that it is good, and invest more money so that we can have a real family policy including both a national child benefit and a child care system to help women go back to the labour market without having to pay an arm and a leg so that their children are taken care of during the day or at night while they are at work.

Again, we need \$2 billion to have a child care fund; this money should be turned over to the provinces, they would manage it. It is said that the only province that has initiated such a program is the province of Quebec. Hopefully Quebec's child care initiative will be taken into account.

With regard to old age security, we are asking for \$3 billion. We know that women live longer than men. The guaranteed income supplement should be increased by \$1,100 a year to help women 65 and over who often live in dire circumstances. Through the years, the purchasing power of the elderly gradually diminished.

We are asking for another \$50 million for various groups. Shelters helping victims of domestic violence are underfunded.

They need a place where they can provide women in need and their children with a safe place, emotional support, and counselling.

We are asking for \$30 million over five years to help community groups that promote equity and social justice, and help the community maintain some degree of social balance and peace.

• (1745)

Community organizations are at the forefront, helping these women, children and men, by providing food banks, clothing, help with the children's homework and educational services.

Since it came into office, the Liberal government has reduced by 15% the funding for these organizations. No additional help has been provided to help them meet their needs.

I am asking the government to do its homework and make some adjustments. Meanwhile, the Treasury Board is racking up a \$160 billion surplus. The finance minister is untying the purse strings with too much caution, and the people below the poverty line are hurting.

Some \$32 billion was taken out of the EI fund. Some very minor changes were made last week on the eve of an election. But we all know that some people will still not be eligible for EI.

The same thing goes for the Canada social transfer. Some \$17 billion worth of adjustments were made recently. That is not nearly good enough. We need better health care, because people living in poverty require more and more health care.

Sick people who have money can afford the medication they need, like aspirin or other such remedies not covered by pharmaceutical in Quebec. We all know that these people need money in their pockets.

People tell me that they are sick, that they have got the flu, but that the medication is not covered by a drug plan. These people need health services that are increasingly more effective and supportive.

Home care services are under provincial jurisdiction to adequately meet the needs of the public. The federal government should stop brandishing the maple leaf whenever it hands out \$1 million. There are channels of investment, such as the Canada social transfer for health, education and income security.

There are pressures at both the provincial and federal levels. When cuts are made to the Canada social transfer, it means that cuts are also made to the support that the provinces can provide to the public. Things must change.

But at the same time, the federal government still finds \$500 million to invest in various propaganda programs, such as the

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Canada information office, to promote Canadian unity. The government has no problem finding money for such programs.

I could have talked about child care services, but as my time is up, I will close my remarks by saying that I hope the government will hear this message and will be flexible enough to follow up on women's demands.

**Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to congratulate my colleague for her speech.

Usually, the Bloc Québécois strives to defend the interests of Quebec and of the whole world. What I am interested in is defending the interests of our respective regions.

The Bloc is always asking for massive transfers, like the transfer of funds with regard to employment insurance. We know what happened. In the area of health, there is more money available.

The federal government is giving money to the provinces for health and education through equalization payments and the social transfer. Equalization is a kind of transfer where the Government of Quebec can use the money as it sees fit. The federal government uses criteria such as the unemployment rate, the poverty index and the population.

Can my colleague tell me if the Government of Quebec has a system of equalization payments and social transfer to the regions that ensures fairness? According to the figures from the regional board in my area, I know that we are short \$75 million a year for health care. We can hardly provide health care services to our population.

I say there is nothing wrong with defending the interests of the whole world and the best interests of Quebec, but is there a way of knowing if we can defend the interests of our dying regions through provincial equalization?

• (1750)

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member who has crossed the floor. He has gone over to the other side to defend the Liberals' upcoming policies.

I can tell the member opposite that we come from the same region. We were born in the wonderful Saguenay region and I am very up on the problems there. He has told me that we are defending global interests, but we are also defending the interests of Quebec.

When I speak of being able to restore transfers to the provinces, it is so that they will be able to meet the needs of the public. When the federal government makes cuts, it follows that the provinces have problems.

Since the member opposite is used to crossing the floor of the House, perhaps he could take the debate to the right parliament, the one in Quebec City, and have things rectified.

I find it unacceptable that, when he was on this side of the House, he criticized the Liberal government with respect to the Canada social transfer but, now that he is part of that very government, he starts criticizing the way Quebec operates. I think he is speaking to the wrong audience.

I am here to defend the interests of the regions and of Quebec and I wonder what the hon. member is doing sitting over there. I believe the hon. gentleman is in the wrong parliament.

**Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this member here will stay put.

I listened carefully to what my colleague from the Bloc Québécois had to say. I also took part in the March of Women last Sunday.

I also participated in a study carried out by my party on poverty in Canada in general and among women in particular. We noticed that women's poverty mostly affects single mothers and their children. Very recently, the government introduced Bill C-44 to change the eligibility criteria for EI.

Does my hon. colleague for Québec, who sits on the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development, think these new changes will help women and families with young children qualify more easily for EI benefits?

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very easy question to answer.

The changes made were mere cosmetic changes. The Bloc Québécois expressed concern several times last week when the government announced the changes. They do not go far enough compared to all the money that was taken out of the EI fund.

The new changes will not help many women. A lot of them will still be excluded. Two out of three women do not go on maternity leave because they cannot qualify for parental leave; they are not eligible for EI benefits.

With only 55% of their income, these women will not be able to afford maternity leave. I am sorry we did not come up with more suggestions concerning, for instance, women who have seasonal jobs.

**Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Ottawa West—Nepean.

I am very pleased to rise in the House to talk about the World March of Women, a very important event for Canadian women and all Canadians.

*Supply*

Since March 8 of this year, many women from coast to coast have been working hard to make this march a memorable success. For more than seven months now, they have been organizing numerous activities at the local, regional and national level to make Canadians more aware of the cause of women.

• (1755)

For days, they have been marching hand in hand with their sisters from all over the world to fight poverty and violence against women.

And tomorrow, the World March of Women will culminate in New York, when women from more than one hundred countries will speak with one voice before the United Nations. As a matter of fact, it was in the Big Apple that women started making demands almost a century ago.

Armed only with their will, their courage and their determination, women took to the streets to speak out against their dangerous working conditions and their meager wages. These women rose above prejudice to make sure their message was heard.

Then other women throughout the world took up the torch in the name of justice and equity. Little by little, progress was made: the right to vote, respect of fundamental rights, massive entry into the labour force. Gradually, women took their place in society.

Here, in Canada, a country known as one of the most progressive countries, women also had to fight hard to acquire the status of a person, to have access to higher education or to have the right to vote. There is no doubt that their collective progress has been slow, too slow, and often very difficult.

We needed the work of pioneers like the Famous Five to give Canadian democracy its true meaning.

But today we can see the concrete results of that progress. Canadian women are present in all areas of our society. They travel in space, they push back the limits of science, they amass great wealth, and they are elected to our democratic assemblies.

Despite this considerable progress, however, the road to equality is long and obstacle-ridden. For example, Canadian women are still considerably under-represented in the rapidly developing areas of science. Far too many are still in insecure employment.

But there are other still more serious problems that remain with us. In 1997, 88% of the victims of spousal abuse in Canada were women, and 65% of these reported more than two incidents of violence. One victim in four has been involved in ten or so such incidents.

Our government is very much aware of these problems. Moreover, poverty and violence toward women are among its highest priorities. In the area of justice, we have stepped up our efforts in

recent years to eradicate violence toward women and children. Women cannot develop their full potential except within a society that is totally free of violence toward them.

In recent years we have made the necessary changes to make substantial improvements to the situation. We have passed appropriate and effective gun control legislation. We have amended the criminal code in order to bolster the provisions on high-risk offenders.

In 1999, we also passed three extremely important pieces of legislation. These have made it possible to provide more rights to the victims of violent acts, to promote the personal safety of women and children, and to ensure that the legal system provides a better response to the needs of abused women.

Despite this significant progress, we are firmly determined to continue our quest for a society in which everyone, men and women, may live in safety. That is why we have been working so hard to eradicate the evil at the root of it by fighting poverty vigorously, especially poverty among children. We are helping families to ensure that each child gets a good start in life.

The unanimous and historic agreement on health care concluded by the first ministers includes considerable investment in women's health and help in early childhood. We are continuing to increase our help to Canadian families through the national child benefit.

Between now and 2004, we expect to invest an additional \$2.5 billion annually in this initiative, which has been called the most innovative social measure in the country in the past generation. We are also investing more in public housing.

We are making available effective initiatives such as the Canada prenatal nutrition program, which gives considerable help to pregnant women in Canada. We have also decided to double the length of maternity and paternity leave to enable mothers and fathers to devote the necessary time to their family.

These actions merely form the basis of our fight against poverty and violence against women. More than ever, we have to do more. And so we will. Yesterday, the Prime Minister met the organizers of the march. He reiterated his support and that of the Government of Canada.

• (1800)

He reiterated our intention to work closely with all our partners to improve the status of women. However, our government is well aware that legislative measures alone will not ensure equality. They must absolutely be supported by effective and flexible policies that take into account the realities and diversities of women's lives.

In 1995, our government launched an action plan in order to advance our government's policy on equality. This plan, which includes the initiatives of 24 federal departments and agencies,

enables us to conduct comparative analyses between the two genders. This revolutionary approach allows us to accurately analyze the impact of each legislative measure and policy on women and men.

This new data helped us learn important lessons. First, it was imperative to approach the issue of gender equality from a new perspective. We can never eliminate the anatomical, physiological and psychological differences between men and women. Men and women will never communicate, make decisions or solve problems in the same way. To be sure, we are always striving to achieve equality, but we must do so while taking these differences into account, not by imposing uniformity.

In March 1999, the federal Minister of Health introduced, among other initiatives, the women's health strategy. This innovative strategy will allow us to not only target inequalities but, more importantly, to meet the specific needs of women when it comes to health.

We also took measures in the area of justice with our National Crime Prevention Strategy, and we are firmly determined to continue in that direction. We have not given up, far from it. Rather, we want to intensify our efforts. We know that our comparative analyses by gender can be improved.

We are working to design new tools and new methods to promote equality in all areas of our society. However, we are also aware that governments cannot do everything alone. In Canada, there are currently over 3,000 women's groups that are active.

Through its equal opportunities for women program, Status of Women Canada provides financial assistance and professional services to groups of women working at the regional, provincial and national levels for equality.

In 1998-99, we contributed \$8.2 million in funding to 267 projects and groups throughout the country. To advance a cause, ideas and a vision are needed, but much more is often needed as well, such things as determination, courage, tenacity and willingness.

For a number of days now, participants in the World March of Women have left the beaten path to take up just causes, values and ideas. The Government of Canada supports their efforts. We have invested close to \$1 billion in promoting the World March of Women nationally and internationally.

As we begin a new century and a new millennium, it is wonderful to see women throughout the world speaking with one voice. They are sending us a clear message that poverty and violence against women must be ended.

Today, I am sure that all members of the House will want to join with me in congratulating women on their efforts and sacrifices,

### *Supply*

which will help improve the status of women both at home and abroad.

We are going to work together to ensure that this historic march signals the beginning of a new era, an era which will see us step up our efforts to build a fairer and more equitable society, a society in which equality of the sexes will be not a noble objective but a daily reality.

[*English*]

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I was glad to hear the hon. member mention the famous five. These are women who were strong, sought independence and sought the independence of others. I am glad that we will be honouring these famous five. I thank him for that.

What I am concerned about is the continuing independence that people seek and are thwarted often by government policies. For example, our health care system leaves people who are waiting for heart surgery in line to the point where they die. In our health care system cancer patients do not get the diagnosis they need to save their lives. In our health care system contaminated blood was given to hepatitis C victims. After many years of struggle the lawyers have been paid, but the hepatitis C victims have never received anything from the government.

• (1805 )

These matters cause me great concern. I realize that nearly three times as much money is spent by Ottawa on interest on the national debt as on health care and education.

Another matter which concerns me is the violence perpetrated against women and others. For example, people are brought to justice and then turned loose before they are prepared to take responsibility.

David Bruce Jennings was out for a short time, reoffended, put back in again, and now he is out. He has never taken treatment. The police are telling everyone to be careful, that this guy is in the community. He has been told he cannot go near schools. He cannot be near kids under 16. He is not to go near parks, but he is out on the street. Why is that so?

David Trott asked not to be turned out because he knows he could not resist reoffending. When he was out he stole three different vehicles in three different days. Now he is in custody and they are assessing him to see if he is fit to stand trial.

Why is government policy not giving us a justice system that will protect women, children and families from these kinds of violent offenders?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member of the Canadian Alliance for his question. I will deal with his first point regarding health care.

*Supply*

Since 1996, the federal department of health has been setting up centers of excellence for women's health. We are talking about five focal points for multidisciplinary research financed over six years. By studying what determines women's health, they will help shape policies. Women's health is a very important issue.

Another issue that is very important is child poverty. Our government has been promoting policies to fight child poverty. It is important for every child to enjoy equal opportunity right from birth.

We have programs to help mothers even before the birth of their child. For single and low income families, the government of Canada has introduced benefits to help mothers and mostly children. We all know that when children are born, their brain is made up of billions of neurones that are not yet interconnected. Children need the right stimulation to make sure that when they start school, they are ready for it. If they are, they will experience less problems during their teens. They will not drop out and will have fewer run-ins with the law.

For us Liberals, policies are there to ensure that in the long run children will become good citizens.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I met with the representatives of 250 women from Peterborough who were on Parliament Hill yesterday. I was struck by the universality of the issues they mentioned, many of which my colleague has addressed: homelessness, poverty, and the disparity between rich and poor here and overseas. They also mentioned in particular education, higher education and access to higher education.

Could my colleague comment on what has been done in Quebec as compared with what has been done in Ontario to improve access to college and university for all students but particularly for women?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Patry:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to mention that at the end of the past millennium, instead of erecting statues to the glory of our Prime Minister or the Liberal government, this government decided to invest in our youth and provide them with grants to go to university or college.

In Quebec, 23,000 students have received bursaries from the federal government. This is important because it means we have faith in our country's future.

[*English*]

**Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I suddenly realized I only have five minutes so this will be a précis version of a number of the things I want to say.

• (1810)

[*Translation*]

First I want to congratulate the hon. member for Laurier—Saint-Marie for bringing forward this motion.

I also want to congratulate women everywhere in Canada, and especially the Fédération des femmes du Québec, who played a leadership role in holding the march of women in Canada and throughout the world and who are responsible for the truly extraordinary and impressive show given on Parliament Hill yesterday.

[*English*]

I have long believed that women will only have social and political equality when they have economic equality. I trust the House will indulge me as I talk a bit about some of the measures that have been taken to improve the economic status of women in our country.

I will refer to a number of measures in the budget for the year 2000-01. It is a budget that very much builds on steps begun in past budgets. It is a budget that has been made possible by the sacrifices of a lot of Canadians. Because women are among the lowest income Canadians, that means particularly by Canadian women.

However we see now that low and middle income earners in particular will benefit most from a number of measures in the last couple of budgets with reductions in their net personal income tax reaching an average of at least 18% annually. Again, the majority of those low and very moderate income earners are women and especially those with children.

We have also seen the reindexing of many tax measures which means that people at a lower income will now see their incomes rise without them becoming taxable or without increasing their tax burdens. It means that benefits such as the national child benefit and the GST credit for low income Canadians will also be indexed to inflation so that those benefits will not erode over time. For senior women it means that inflation will no longer compromise the real value of the age credit for old age security or the income level at which OAS begins to be reduced.

A number of measures with respect to business are of particular interest to women and their economic status as well. Women are now starting up four times as many small businesses, women under 30 compared with men under 30. They are increasingly involved in trade so a number of the tax measures and initiatives with respect to developing trade and with respect to reducing the tax burden of small businesses will therefore benefit a large number of women.

[*Translation*]

I truly see the irony in what I just said, which is that women will benefit from the measures announced in the budget because their income is lower than that of men in Canada.

*Adjournment Debate***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS***[English]*

I recognize very well that there is a great deal still to be done. The majority of those living in poverty in Canada are women. Ninety per cent of senior women on their own are living in poverty. That is a shameful statement to have to make about a country like ours.

The United Nations calls us the best country in the world in which to live, and we are, but women in this country only rank ninth in the world. I will not be satisfied, nor will the government, until we have taken more measures to improve the equality of women and to ensure they benefit to a greater extent from the opportunities that a growing and prospering economy which we have now offers them.

To those responsible for yesterday's march, I express my personal appreciation because it certainly lends support to public awareness of the need to improve the economic status of women and assist the efforts of all of us in the House who are working toward that end.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6.15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

• (1815)

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** At the request of the chief government whip, the vote on the amendment is deferred until tomorrow at the end of the time set aside for government orders.

*[English]*

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to follow up on my question to the minister with respect to the national infrastructure program for which funds were provided in the last federal budget. My question had to do with the situation of agreements between the provinces and the federal government and, in particular, with the lack of agreement for such an infrastructure program with the municipalities in the province of Ontario.

I have heard right up to today that agreements have now been signed for flexible infrastructure programs involving the provinces and the municipalities in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, even in Alberta and in all the maritime provinces. There is still no agreement with the province of Ontario.

The first national infrastructure program initiated by the government was an enormous success in the Peterborough riding. In both the city and the county, it was very well received. We had almost 100 projects. They were projects of all sorts, ranging from buildings to highways, bridges and things of that sort.

The key, I believe, to the success of that program was that in the end, subject to the approval of the province and the Government of Canada, the choice of infrastructure project was made by the municipality. It was the municipalities of Peterborough that defined what was important from the point of view of infrastructure for them at that time.

I understand the debate that is going on with the province of Ontario is one in which Ontario wants to dictate what is infrastructure. I have heard different rumours. It has been suggested that because of the tragedy of Walkerton the province of Ontario wants to stress sewer and water facilities. I have heard also that the province of Ontario wants to stress highways.

What I would like to say is, why should we, the upper levels of government, define what is important for the infrastructure of a township or city? Only that township or city has a sense of what is important for them.

For example, let us say we defined, as Ontario appears to want, that all the money should go to water projects. Let us say there is a municipality that has been consistently, right up to now, investing in water and sewer projects. Why should we penalize it in a national infrastructure program when its priority might be something else? It might be bridges or a building of some sort.

*Adjournment Debate*

• (1820)

Only the municipalities know what is important for infrastructure at this time. From here in Ottawa we cannot look across all the provinces to the thousands of municipalities and make judgments on what is important for each of them. The only way we can do it is to trust the municipal level of government, the local level of government, as we did in the first national infrastructure program and have the municipalities pick the projects, submit them to a panel of provincial and federal people which will have established criteria, and then move the projects along.

As I said, in Peterborough the last time that method worked extremely well for almost 100 projects. I could take the hon. members to any of those projects and they would agree with me that they were well worthwhile.

What we are looking for is a program that will improve the infrastructure of municipalities all the way across Canada. The municipalities have asked us again and again for this project. The federal government, the federal cabinet, our government, has agreed that this is a priority. The money was earmarked and ready to flow in our spring budget.

As I have mentioned, the majority of provinces in Canada have now signed on. I have read those agreements. There are particular emphases in different provinces but there are possibilities for infrastructure projects of all sorts.

I want to ask the minister the question again. Where do we stand with an infrastructure agreement in Ontario? Can we expect such a program soon?

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I want to compliment the hon. member for Peterborough who has worked so very tirelessly advocating on behalf of an infrastructure program in Canada. Certainly his success in bringing

in infrastructure programs for the benefit of his community is evidence of their importance to all Canadians.

The infrastructure Canada program was announced in the Speech from the Throne last fall. The Minister of Finance also allocated \$2.65 billion to the program in his February budget, with a pledge to have the program in place by the end of the year.

As the member pointed out, we now have agreements in eight jurisdictions. Agreements signed to date represent a total federal investment of some \$740 million. Combined with the contributions of our partners in other orders of government, the total investment climbs to \$2.2 billion.

This infrastructure program was designed in consultation with groups like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and with the provinces and territories which established the priorities. The majority of the projects will be submitted by the municipalities themselves. As the member for Peterborough has indicated, it has turned out to be a very successful approach to infrastructure programming.

The first priority is green municipal infrastructure, such as water and waste management treatment and solid waste management. Secondary priorities include: local transportation; infrastructure supporting culture, tourism and recreation; rural and remote telecommunications; high speed Internet access for local institutions; and affordable housing.

Negotiations between the Government of Canada and the remaining provinces, particularly Ontario, are continuing. We are very hopeful that we will reach agreements soon with all the remaining jurisdictions and, indeed, have them in place before the end of the year.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.24 p.m.)

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