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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, October 19, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, October 19, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1000)

[*English*]

COMMISSIONER OF OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

The Speaker: I have the honour, pursuant to section 66 of the Official Languages Act, to lay upon the table the annual report of the Commissioner of Official Languages covering the period from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(f), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

* * *

[*English*]

TLICHO LAND CLAIMS AND SELF-GOVERNMENT ACT

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-14, an act to give effect to a land claims and self-government agreement among the Tlicho, the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, to make related amendments to the Mackenzie Valley Resource Management Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34, I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports of the Canadian Branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie. The first report is on the 30th annual meeting of the APF, held in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, from July 4 to 7, 2004. The

second report is on the meeting of the Cooperation and Development Committee, held from May 24 to 27, 2004, in Marrakesh, Morocco.

* * *

•(1005)

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CONSTITUTION ACT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I present a petition in which the petitioners state that the federal government has abandoned rural communities under the weight of urban socialism and government regulations, and that since the Government of Canada has enforced gun control, animal control, unnecessary pollution or waste control for farmland, bush and forest control, only by amending the Canadian Constitution to include property rights will the legal means exist to protect and defend individuals from government interference and injustice and solve the democratic deficit that has been created by the federal government.

CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another petition to present today, this one from citizens of Mount Brydges, Delaware, Strathroy and Melbourne, Ontario. Like others I have presented and will continue to present regularly in the House of Commons, in this petition these citizens wish to draw attention to the fact that on-base housing for our military families serves a valuable purpose by allowing families to live in a military community.

The petitioners note that the housing accommodations provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency are in many instances substandard to acceptable living conditions and that the families of Canadian Forces soldiers living in accommodation provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency have seen dramatic increases in their rents. Therefore, they call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases for accommodation provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency until such time as the Government of Canada makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing provided for our nation's military families.

*The Address***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS IN MOBILE EQUIPMENT (AIRCRAFT EQUIPMENT) ACT

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-4, an act to implement the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment and the Protocol to the Convention on International Interests in Mobile Equipment on Matters Specific to Aircraft Equipment, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties concerning Bill C-4, an act to implement the convention on the international interests in mobile equipment and the protocol to the convention on international interests in mobile equipment on matters specific to aircraft equipment. It is listed on today's order paper and I believe you would find that you have consent for the following motion. I move:

That the motion for second reading of Bill C-4 be deemed carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Transport.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*English*]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from October 18 consideration of the motion for an Address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, as amended.

Hon. Ken Dryden (Minister of Social Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to note that I am sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Brampton South.

I rise today for my maiden speech in this House. I am very honoured to be here.

What is the Canada that is reflected in this Speech from the Throne? We are a challenging place. Our northern climate and our sheer size, east to west and south to north, are difficult for railroad, for telecommunications and even for government policy to bridge.

We are not so powerful or so strong as to control our world around us or to even pretend to. We need always to adapt and learn, to be humble and respectful, resourceful and alert.

• (1010)

[*Translation*]

In our thousands of communities we know that most things cannot be done alone.

[*English*]

We have to work with others together: be flexible, find accommodation, discuss, work out and compromise. Rigid ideologies do not work for us. In many ways, we have had to make it up as we go along.

In Canada, we live a “find a way” existence. We are a “find a way” people. It is reflected in our habits, attitudes and personality. In the way we look at the world and interact with it. In our culture and sport. In our expressions as a people.

In my other life, I played hockey. Hockey is a game beyond control. We practise it, we make our plans, a coach puts those plans on a board for all to see, the puck drops, and everything goes haywire.

[*Translation*]

Those who play hockey best, the teams that win, do not agonize at the loss of perfection when the chaos begins.

[*English*]

They accept what they have, gather up the pieces and put them together as fast and as well as they can. They find a way. Different from football's calculations and baseball's order, hockey is a find a way game.

I have the extreme privilege of representing York Centre. In the western part of the riding there are many Italian Canadians. They came to Toronto in the early 1950s with little formal education, unable to speak English, with no money and no family or friends ahead of them established to ease their way.

The women came to stitch the clothes that Canadians would wear, the men to build the thousands of new suburban homes that would make the city. They also built homes for themselves. They put in front gardens with lots of flowers and green lawns. They put in back gardens lush with vegetables, fruit trees and vines. They raised their families. They did it with hard work and pride and are still there today. As new immigrants, as parents of young families, they had to find a way and they did. Now, as older people, they are doing the same.

The Address

In the eastern part of York Centre is a large Jewish population. Some are older. Many were raised in the riding and have returned to buy their own homes and to raise their own families. Their ancestors came mostly from Poland and from other parts of eastern Europe. Most arrived first in Montreal, some came directly to Toronto. Again, they spoke no English and had no money. Again, they had to find a way and they did.

Now in the northeast of the riding is a large and growing Russian speaking population. They began arriving in Toronto after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Many are young adults with young families. Many have their aging parents with them. They are well educated with energy and expectation. In their new northern climate in the southern Ontario landscape, they feel at home. They are beginning to find their way. For Peruvians, Bolivians, Guatemalans and Filipinos, York Centre is a find a way riding.

I also have the extreme privilege of representing the Department of Social Development as its minister. As Canadians, we have certain understandings about what it is to be Canadian, what we expect of ourselves and for ourselves, what we expect of and for others.

[*Translation*]

As Canadians we expect a chance and a second chance. We expect the opportunity of a full, rich, rewarding life.

[*English*]

For some that does not happen easily because of illness or accident, disability, poverty, age; because of personal or family circumstance; because of something that puts us behind when the race begins or somewhere along its way. At the Department of Social Development it is our job to see the gaps between those understandings we have as Canadians, and what is, and, with others, to do something about it.

We have a responsibility for seniors, to ensure their pensions are enough to underpin the basics of a life and to ensure that those pensions will be there next year, 10 years and 50 years from now when they and when we need them.

What else? We are living longer, healthier lives. We are living longer as seniors. We will live almost one-quarter of our lives after retirement, after our families are grown. What will our lives be like? Where will we find our new purpose? Through this age of great vulnerability, physical, financial and psychological, how can we help seniors find a way?

We have a responsibility for people with disabilities. Once they were kept out of sight. Their disability was allowed to define them, never in their minds of course. They are people who have a disability. They want to live as persons, fully, completely, at school, at work, at play, in their moment to moment lives. How can we help them find a way?

We are responsible for voluntary organizations. In our communities, big and small, everywhere, they do remarkable things. They engage as volunteers more than 6.5 million people. They employ more than 2 million people. They put the equivalent of \$71 billion annually into our economy. They meet community needs of a range

and depth that governments, companies and individuals cannot do. However, as a society, there is still more we want to do. How can we help them find a way?

We also are responsible for the government's new child care program. Seven out of ten women with children under the age of six are in the workforce. Child care has become the way we live. It is a national understanding, a national expectation. It is time that we understand it that way, think about it that way and approach it that way.

• (1015)

[*Translation*]

It is time for a national early learning and child care system.

[*English*]

It is time because, in the way in which we live, in what we want and need for our children for the future, the Canadian people have said that it is time.

We have a long way to go. It is a big task. As we have learned through our history, we cannot do it alone.

[*Translation*]

We have to work together with others, with the provinces and territories and with our other partners.

[*English*]

We have to be flexible, find accommodation, discuss, work out, compromise. Rigid ideologies do not work for us. In some ways we will need to make it up as we go along, but we know where we are going.

We are like where we were a little more than a century ago in education, where we were 40 years ago in health. We live in many different circumstances across the country. In big cities, in small towns and villages, we are at different stages. We can offer different things but each of us can see the future.

We know our final destination. It is time to get on with it, to get at it. We do not know all the ways of how we are going to get there but we do know we will find a way. The Department of Social Development is a find a way portfolio.

In last June's election, we laid out a platform and we were given a mandate by the Canadian people to govern. Now we have reaffirmed that platform in the Speech from the Throne. No matter the complications and difficulties of a minority government, the Canadian people expect us to fulfill that mandate, to govern. They expect us to find a way and we will.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to throw water on the member's speech or be a Tretiak with my question but I will proceed with my question notwithstanding my concerns that this is his first speech in the House.

The Address

I am concerned about the national child care program. We have a lot of fiscal challenges. We have a rapidly aging population. There will be huge problems. We are not even close to addressing the problems in the military. There are many other challenges.

Would the minister set out what he has in mind for a national child care plan? Would he also explain how that will be financed and how much the price tag for that program will be?

•(1020)

Hon. Ken Dryden: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my remarks, the Canadian people have essentially said that it is time. With seven out of ten women with children under the age of six in the workplace, what we need is to find a way for our children to develop as effectively as they can in order to face the future.

The commitment that we have made as a government is for \$5 billion over five years and that is a commitment we will keep.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and give my first comments here, other than a standing order.

I was of course a major Habs fan and so it is good to see the hon. member's face here. However I have to say that I have some problems with the concept of a national child care system.

My wife and I are proud home educators. My wife stays home predominantly and cares for our children. We both participate in educating our children and we are pleased to do so. We are one of the rare ones though who are allowed to do that by virtue of my job and we have a pretty good income.

I have a lot of problems accepting that somehow Canadians have said that it is time for a national child care system. First, the Liberals were elected on a plurality, not a majority, and not every vote for them was a vote for child care and early childhood education. I think it is presumptuous to suggest that somehow there is a mandate for this, that we have said that it is time.

Second, I have to say that examining the current Canadian reality, where this government has an extreme appetite for growth in spending every single year, that Canadians have lost the real choice for one parent to stay home or for both parents to work fewer hours and not fall behind. That is the reality we face. We do not have a real choice.

Hon. Ken Dryden: Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, in his experience as a home educator, it is his choice. He made the decision on how best to could educate his child.

At the same time, we have an existing system of education. Not everybody is in his same position and not everybody believes in the same way that he believes. Where seven out of ten women with children under the age of six are in the workplace, the challenge is to find a way to best develop our children for the future. As the choice is there for the member in the education system, the choice would be there for others in terms of a child care system.

Mr. Navdeep Bains (Mississauga—Brampton South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Social Development for sharing his time with me today.

As the newly elected member of Parliament for Mississauga—Brampton South, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on becoming the Deputy Speaker in this 38th Parliament.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my family, friends, and more importantly, the constituents of Mississauga—Brampton South. I consider myself fortunate and privileged to be a member of Parliament. I look forward to representing the needs and interests of my constituents in Mississauga—Brampton South.

Before I begin to express my views on the Speech from the Throne, I would like to express my condolences to the family and friends of Canadian navy Lieutenant Chris Saunders. This tragic event reminds us that we can never forget, or underestimate, how fortunate we are to have such fine men and women that serve to protect this great country of ours.

Over the last few weeks I have had the opportunity to speak to my constituents regarding the content of the Speech from the Throne. Through these discussions, the overall consensus is that the Speech from the Throne provides a well rounded perspective on both domestic and international issues. Today I intend to touch upon a few key underlining themes in the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to comment on the economic strategy that will continue to fuel and strengthen this economy. However, before I dissect the Speech from the Throne, it is important that we recognize the success of the Canadian economy over the past 10 years. During the past 10 years the government has generated over three million jobs and during the same period it has balanced the budget for seven consecutive years. This is the first time this has happened since Confederation.

These are remarkable achievements and pride points for all Canadians. Not only did we create jobs and balance the budget, but because of our sound fiscal management we will receive an ongoing savings on interest payments of approximately \$3 billion per year. What does that mean? It means we will pay less for fewer hard-earned taxpayer dollars on financing the debt and more money on other key areas such as health care, our children, our cities and our seniors.

Aside from sound fiscal management, the government will be more transparent and accountable. Accountability begins by conducting an extensive expenditure review that will shift funds from areas of lower priorities to areas of higher priorities. Also, the government has laid down the foundation for developing a workplace skill strategy that recognizes the importance of accelerating the process of foreign credentials.

It is important to note that there are thousands of individuals living in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South who have sound foreign education and experience. I believe these individuals, coupled with the local talent, will be the engine for the strong knowledge economy of the 21st century.

The Address

During the campaign I met many parents who had young children. These parents were concerned about saving money for their children's tuition fees. I am especially pleased with the learning bond which will assist many low income earning families in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South. I agree with the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development when he stated, "These measures will help families to turn their dreams of their children's education into real savings".

I am also pleased to see that the government recognizes the importance of increasing trade and investment in the country. I believe that in order to increase trade and investment it is vital that we have more reliable access to U.S. markets. We need to work aggressively to resolve issues such as softwood lumber and BSE.

I would like to turn my focus to health care. I know that our health care system is a cherished national social program and that is why I consider September 15, 2004 a historic date. On September 15, our leader, the right hon. Prime Minister, along with the health ministers, established a framework for a 10 year plan that will strengthen our health care system.

I believe that at the core of this plan are the patients who will benefit from the evidence based benchmarks with clear targets that will ultimately drive change and provide the much needed reform in the system. The deal also provides funding that has met the Romanow gap and provides more accountability in reform that represents key commitments that were made during the election campaign.

I also agree with the component in the Speech from the Throne indicating that the government plans to take a more proactive approach in addressing and promoting healthy living. This is very important because we need to have a pre-emptive approach that tackles such problems as obesity that has been on the rise in the past few years.

• (1025)

We have a rich past that has been built upon the hard work and sacrifices of so many Canadians who are now retired. We must not forget their hard work and contributions. The government is doing the right thing by increasing the guaranteed income supplement for Canada's least well off seniors. Next time when I visit the senior citizens in my riding, I can tell them that we have not forgotten their hard work and that we will continue to support them during their retirement.

We have a rich and proud past, but we must look at building a strong and vibrant future. How do we do that? By investing in our children through the national system of early learning and child care. The government gets it. It is not only the smart thing to do, it is the right thing to do. The government has demonstrated the ability to create a program that will benefit thousands of families.

Our future is also based on investing in our cities and communities. The anchor for our new deal for cities and communities is a portion of the federal gas tax over the next five years. This, coupled with the GST rebate, will provide sustainable funding that will go into projects like transit, roads, clean water and sewers.

This is an important initiative because it is ridiculous that people across the country, especially individuals, families and friends that I know in my riding of Mississauga—Brampton South, spend hours a day travelling to and from work.

It is the quality of life of Canadians that has made us the envy of world. The government understands the importance of spending time with family and friends. That is why the speech outlines the cities and communities agenda as a key priority.

Another important issue I would like to touch upon is our role of pride and influence in the world. We are defined as a nation of peacekeepers and we have a proud tradition. We did the right thing by increasing our regular forces by approximately 5,000 troops and our reserves by 3,000 which will further our cause in promoting peacekeeping missions around the world.

It is clearly apparent that our identity as a nation has been defined through our peacekeeping efforts in such nations as Afghanistan and Bosnia. This is how we want to define ourselves going forward.

I agree with our Prime Minister that we do have a responsibility to protect. By increasing our troops and reserves I have no doubt that we will be among the leading nations when it comes to protecting human rights and civil liberties.

It is our diversity and our ability to demand and provide equality of opportunity for all individuals that forms the cornerstone of our values as a nation.

Today I have outlined some key areas that were touched upon by the Speech from the Throne. We have a strong plan for the economy. We are the defenders of health care. We are addressing the quality of life issue with our cities and communities agenda. We are investing in our children and in our seniors.

In conclusion, I have full confidence in my colleagues and the Prime Minister in serving the interests of the people of this great nation and I expect the same commitment from the opposition.

• (1030)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating my hon. colleague on his first speech in the House. I say well done.

However, I want to take exception with the part of his speech where it would appear as though he was bragging somewhat about the commitment made by the Liberal Party of Canada in the last election campaign to increase the Canadian Forces by some 5,000 troops. It is pretty well known by all Canadians at this point in time that over the last decade the government has been solely responsible for decimating the ranks of our armed forces.

We need only look at the sad situation as it pertains to equipment, such as the rusted out Iltis jeeps to transport our troops on the ground. I know that equipment is slowly being replaced, but it took years and years. There is the fact that our airmen are still flying in 40-year-old helicopters that consistently fall out of the skies and now of course there is the problem with our submarine fleet.

The Address

I believe it is well known and should be known even to the new member in the House of Commons that the Liberal Party of Canada made a big issue in the last election campaign of lying to Canadians—that is the fact of the matter—in its advertisements when it said that the Conservative Party of Canada was advocating that we buy aircraft carriers. I think all of us remember the images of its TV ads that showed nuclear aircraft carriers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Part of the Conservative platform, when it came to refurbishing and rebuilding our military in this country so that it could return to its proud heritage, was the commitment to build a new class of ships, hybrid carriers. They are a cargo ship capable of carrying troops and equipment with a flight deck on top for helicopters. They would be more akin to a freighter with a flight deck. Yet the Liberal Party of Canada perpetrated this great deception on the Canadian people that the Conservatives were advocating building nuclear aircraft carriers. It was simply ridiculous and I want to take the opportunity to set the record straight.

I would ask the hon. member to set the record straight as well. Instead of standing up and pretending that his party is going to rebuild the Canadian Forces with this commitment of 5,000 troops, why does he not tell Canadians the real story?

• (1035)

Mr. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I clearly demonstrated in my comments earlier that we have made a commitment to the military of 5,000 troops and 3,000 reserves. What one must recognize is that we have identified key priorities that Canadians have suggested to us over the past few years that have to do with making sound investments in the economy and ensuring that we improve the quality of life in cities as well as in terms of our health care system.

I have clearly demonstrated that and the Speech from the Throne also outlined a key plan for that. We have a well rounded perspective and the hon. member must recognize that there are more priorities that Canadians have identified. We have made sound investments in the military and in other areas as well.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, another new member, on his first speech in the House. I know the anticipation involved in that as I look forward to that later this morning myself.

My question for the member is with regard to his comments around the Canada learning bond and his pride in that new program. I recognize that it does offer some assistance to families and encouraging families to save for the education of their children is a good thing. However, it does not seem that it does very much for the current crisis in post-secondary education, particularly the student debt load and the ever increasing cost of tuition.

Could he recommend a program that would get to those issues immediately, as the government seems intent to do, and not put off the whole question of post-secondary education and student debt for many years down the road?

Mr. Navdeep Bains: Mr. Speaker, I would like to again acknowledge that I share that pride for a reason. I believe we have a partnership with families to ensure that we make sound investment into the education of our children.

I agree that there are concerns with student loans and that the students bear a great deal of debt today. However, we must also acknowledge that the government has made sound investments in providing a long term strategy for families to invest in the children's savings. That was clearly demonstrated in the Speech from the Throne. That is what I was making my remark toward.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time today.

It is with a great sense of pride and honour that I rise in the House today to respond to the throne speech on behalf of the people in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul in Manitoba. This is my inaugural address and I want to begin by congratulating the Speaker on the re-election in this assembly and to congratulate as well those other members who were elected to represent their constituents. It is my hope that we will each justify the faith and confidence that our constituents have shown in us. I also want to congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your appointment to the bench and it is a great honour to have you sitting there as well.

I am honoured to serve my constituents. I am here today because the Leader of the Opposition has proven to be a very capable, intelligent person with a vision for Canada. He renews the Canadian spirit and rekindles my faith in the political future and the well-being of our nation.

I would like to say how special I feel about my very special riding of Kildonan. I want to acquaint members with it because the Speech from the Throne impacts the people I serve. It is a place where families live, work and grow together. The beauty of the countryside is reflected in East and West St. Paul. The sense of community touches anyone who lives there.

For example, the people of West St. Paul had a vision to build a brand new recreation centre. They raised thousands of dollars toward that dream. They did not wait around for someone else to do it for them. They got busy and made it happen.

I celebrated Canada Day with them this year and enjoyed the friendly atmosphere that surrounded the event. The family fun days are amazing in East St. Paul. Hundreds of people showed up to make the event a success. I stood all day handing out tickets and candies to young and old alike. It seemed like the day went by in a moment, and that moment was filled with much fun and more memories.

A short while ago, our gateway community centre was host to two socials for local people who needed community and financial support. They had both developed cancer, unfortunately, and the whole community was out to see that they had the support they needed. That is an example of true community spirit. That is what Kildonan—St. Paul is like. I was never more proud to be the member of Parliament than when I rolled up my sleeves and worked alongside these dedicated people, my people of Kildonan—St. Paul.

It is the same community spirit at what is known as 1010 Sinclair. This is a well known and well respected home for residents who need support. It is a place on which people can count.

The Address

The Seven Oaks hospital is our local hospital and has become a pillar of our community. The wellness centre attached to it attracts people from all over the city of Winnipeg, and I know of the care and dedication of the medical staff there, the doctors, the nurses and the administration.

My constituents do not ask a lot. They just want commitments made to them by the government to be real and honest. However, as the throne speech was read, I had an uneasy sense that I was watching a rerun of an old television series, one in which the plot had become predictable, the outcome a foregone conclusion and so familiar that viewers could recite the words with the actors. It is unfortunate that the present minority government opted not to take better advantage of the opportunity to address the concerns voiced by Canadians and lay out an agenda with substance for this 38th parliamentary session.

There was an air of expectation in the homes of families across our great country. They wanted the newly elected minority government to stand by its election promises and provide substantial programs, policies and funding in critical areas of concern, areas like health care, the BSE crisis, the military, justice issues, victim rights issues and the much needed infrastructure concerns.

● (1040)

In Kildonan—St. Paul the recent Liberal announcement boasting about Winnipeg becoming the home of the National Centre for Disease Control is in need of a reality check. This grand description implies that a lot will be happening in our capital city.

The present government led our residents to believe that many new jobs and many new opportunities would be created for the people living there. Far from increasing Winnipeg's job market, this new entity instead will spread the jobs all across the country. The same holds true with the virology lab announcement. It will not provide the jobs for Winnipeggers that were promised by the government in the last election.

As I said earlier, my constituents want these government announcements to be real and honest. They want new jobs in Winnipeg, not recycled press releases with grand promises of things to come, camouflaged by spin that permeates the reality of what actually will be provided.

Parliament can work for the good of all Canadians. This was demonstrated yesterday in these halls when all members of the House voted unanimously for amendments to the Speech from the Throne. Canadians are encouraged by the fact this has happened, but we still have much to do. I hope that members opposite will grow to show respect for our neighbours to the south. They have families just like our families. Our neighbours to the south have been friends for a lot of years.

Over the years, we as Canadians have had much pride in the bond we have with the U.S.A. and pride in the open border between our two countries. Now things have changed. I believe the problem is not one mad cow. The problem lies with the careless use of public words that crumbled the trust between our two countries. This issue has to be addressed. I would encourage members opposite to promote respectful interaction between our two countries at all times. Friends do that. Our international trade depends on it.

In closing, I would like to make a comment regarding our Canadian military. Now that our military has made the front pages of our newspapers, under regrettable circumstances, perhaps the government once and for all will work toward ensuring increased funding is made available to it. These fine men and women in our military work under extremely difficult conditions. Their duties will not diminish, rather they will increase in the future.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me this time in the House of Commons to put a few comments on the record. I am hopeful about the future of our country and I am very proud to serve on this side of the House.

● (1045)

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate you on your new job. In my former life I was the speaker of the Ontario legislature, having been elected on October 19, 1999. This is indeed a very interesting day for me.

First, I would like to commend the member for her comments about her riding. I have been to Manitoba, but I have not had the pleasure of visiting her riding. The way she described it, it sounds extremely beautiful. I hope some day to be able to visit.

I do not want to be too harsh on my colleague since it is her first speech in this wonderful place, but I do take exception in saying that it was not what we promised in the election. The member is probably not as familiar with our platform, called "Moving Canada Forward", as I am. She probably did not read it to the same extent I did. If she were to compare our platform to the throne speech, she would find it to be very similar. In fact it is almost identical. That was one of the things for which I pushed. I would encourage the member to take a look at both of them and compare them because, with all due respect, saying they are not the same is empty rhetoric. They are very close.

I want to talk a bit about the Americans and the situation about which my colleague talked. I spent six years playing pro hockey in the United States. I attended Michigan State University on a scholarship. I know very well the extent of co-operation between Canada and the U.S..

In what ways does the member believe the government has not co-operated with the U.S.? Co-operation has been very strong between the two governments. She talked a bit about some comments that were made, but the government, cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister have been very strong in saying that we need to work with our colleagues in the U.S.. Some comments made by some members do not do justice to nor reflect the true intentions of our government. What specifically does she think cabinet ministers and the Prime Minister have done? I think they have been very supportive. The member is quite wrong in saying that we have not been co-operative with the Americans.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments. It is a well known fact that the public comments made from the benches across the House of Commons caused a lot of bad feeling. The result of some of those comments were far reaching into the U.S. and across our country.

The Address

With all due respect, I was a former member of the Manitoba legislature. My dad ran for the Liberals years ago. I have read everything from cover to cover. I am quite aware of all the Liberal promises. The rhetoric, the promises, the media spin and the amount of finance support that is being put into press releases and grandiose announcements absolutely stymies and amazes me.

For instance, during the last election grand amounts of money were promised for our wonderful human rights museum. In actual fact, suddenly that money cannot be found. It was only a phantom promise, even though very strong residents of our city of Winnipeg came forward strongly and said that the promises were made.

In the U.S. or in any part of the world all of us have to show great respect when we deal at an international level or at any level. When people are sworn at and when public things are said in a derogatory manner, consequences result. Members opposite did not have many consequences when that occurred.

● (1050)

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have mixed feelings as I stand to speak on the government address in reply to the throne speech. On the one hand, it is of course an honour to speak on behalf of the people of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry. On the other hand, the speech from the throne offers very little to speak about that has not already been spoken about far too much. It is basically a regurgitation of the same old rhetoric and the vague, unkept promises that have been included in every Liberal throne speech for the last 11 years. Incredibly, the government even had the gall to talk about fiscal discipline, after overseeing a decade of the worst spending scandals this country has ever seen.

We have experienced the HRDC scandal, the 100,000% cost overrun for the useless gun registry, the sponsorship scandal and the unaccountable spending of millions of dollars on Liberal patronage appointees. All this waste took place while our Prime Minister was gutting health care and the military, the two most important fundamental responsibilities of government.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister delights in saying that he has balanced the budget, but anyone can balance a budget by raising taxes and cutting basic services, as he has done. Neither talent nor vision is needed. On the other hand, balancing a budget in a well thought out and responsible manner while contributing to Canadians' quality of life takes real leadership.

[*English*]

Let me give members an example of this government's misplaced priorities that is especially relevant to my riding. The government has done almost nothing to help rural Canadians cope with the devastating circumstances beyond their control, such as drought, floods and BSE. Remember the AIDA program? It failed to deliver. The CAIS program is no better, and the government's response to the BSE crisis is virtually non-existent. Yet the government happily throws good money after bad into a program forcing rural Canadians to register firearms.

Finally, having taken their property rights away and watching their livelihoods die, all the government can offer rural Canadians is better

Internet access. I suppose if they have the Internet, farmers will be able to advertise the sale of their farms and look for work in the city.

That is where things are headed as long as the government fails to support our agricultural sector. It is ironic that the government is so fond of talking about high speed communications for rural Canada, when its response to the BSE crisis has been so slow.

In the throne speech the government calls broadband communication one of the fundamentals of rural economic development. What about agriculture? When will the government realize that agriculture is the very essence of our rural economy?

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

The government has become so arrogant that it thinks it understands the needs and priorities of rural Canada better than rural Canada does itself. Farmers are not alone in being treated in such a paternalistic and ill-advised way by the Liberals. Some of the measures proposed in the Speech from the Throne indicate that families are getting the same treatment.

[*English*]

Rather than enabling all families to make the child care choices that work best for them, the government continues to promise funding for only those families who choose to put their children in day care facilities. There is no mention of any incentive or assistance for parents who choose to stay home to care for their children. There is nothing for those whose children require special care.

Every family has different circumstances and the government should enable families to make the choices that best meet their own needs. This government loves to pay lip service to diversity, yet its cookie-cutter approach toward child care disrespects the diversity of families and removes their freedom of choice.

[*Translation*]

The approach to the provinces comes from that same paternalistic attitude. The throne speech is filled with fine phrases about respecting regional diversity in Canada, but this government will nevertheless continue to interfere as much as ever in areas of provincial and municipal jurisdiction.

There are good reasons for Canada being a federal state. Where government policy relating to regional interests is concerned, the provinces are the ones in the best position to make decisions.

[*English*]

Just as individuals and families should be able to make their own choices with respect to things like child care, provinces should be able to make decisions in areas such as municipal infrastructure, skills training, education, and other areas that, according to both the Constitution and common sense, are provincial matters.

The Address

This government is so busy making policy where it should not that it has failed to make policy where it should. The most obvious example is national defence. The throne speech started with a very appropriate tribute to our men and women in uniform, but I suspect that most of our military personnel and their families and, for that matter, most Canadians will find the tribute more than a little hypocritical coming from this government. The Liberals have mismanaged and neglected our military almost to the point of collapse.

The government has not even reviewed its defence policy in more than a decade. I am talking about the decade since the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, unprecedented nuclear proliferation and regional instability. None of these things have been taken into account in the government's defence policy.

Our military has been systematically dismantled since the Liberals came to power, thanks to this government. The Canadian Forces have no rapid reaction force. Thanks to this government, Canadians paid half a billion dollars not to buy helicopters for the navy, and now we will pay again to buy the cheapest helicopter instead of the best.

This government oversaw the demise of Canada's last submarine fleet, and the replacements, like those for the Sea Kings, are the cheapest instead of the best. The government is eliminating the army's tank force. Our military cannot move its own heavy equipment overseas, either by sea or by air. One of our four destroyers is in mothballs because there is not enough money to put it to sea.

Only the dedication, discipline and quality of our military personnel have allowed them to perform their duties so well up to this point. Our men and women in uniform deserve the safest and most effective equipment available. They deserve our respect and appreciation. The government has asked them to do too much with too little for too long. It must stop.

One of the commitments the government made in the throne speech was to build consensus when it comes to setting the nation's objectives. There is already a consensus in Canada that the military needs better equipment and more funding, but so far there is no evidence that the Liberals are interested in that consensus.

The same is true in many other areas. Canadians of all political persuasions know and agree that there is a need to strengthen our democracy. The official opposition of the House and the governments of all the provinces would almost certainly agree that the people of each province should elect the senators who are supposed to represent them. I suspect that there would also be broad consensus on establishing fixed election dates so that government cannot reserve democracy for an opportune time.

There is also a broad consensus in Canada about criminal justice issues. I think a large majority of Canadians and members of the House would agree that our children should be protected by raising the age of sexual consent from 14 to 16.

If the government really wants to act on the basis of consensus, it should start where the consensus already exists. The government has made no attempt to build consensus on anything it has done so far in

its mandate. As Treasury Board critic for the official opposition, I listened with great interest as the Treasury Board president tried to make it sound like the government had consulted stakeholders and the opposition on Bill C-11, which deals with disclosures of wrongdoing by public servants. I know I was never consulted. Opposition critics were told of the changes made to the bill a few days before it was tabled, but we were certainly never consulted during the drafting of the bill and it shows.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

The government most definitely did not consult the opposition parties on the throne speech. Even if some of us over here will have to vote in favour of its adoption in order to enable the government to continue, this is an unbelievable show of arrogance on its part.

[*English*]

Let me say in closing that I had hoped this throne speech would herald a Parliament built on cooperation and common sense. This is what a minority government situation calls for. But I was disappointed. The throne speech shows no effort to build bridges and no innovation in the areas that matter to Canadians. That is what the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition is meant to fix, and I sincerely hope that it passes with the support of my hon. colleagues opposite.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, may I express to the hon. member congratulations on his victory and welcome him to the House of Commons.

He said a few things that I find quite amusing. He said that anybody can balance a budget if taxes are raised. His former leader, Brian Mulroney, raised all kinds of taxes from 1984 to 1993 and never once balanced the budget.

I am not defending the Liberal government in any way but I do have a question for the member. The previous speaker for the Conservative Party talked about the vision of their leader. I think she was talking about the same leader who was standing in the House in the last Parliament and talking about Iraq having weapons of mass destruction and nuclear capability at any minute. I believe those were the words.

When she talks about the rhetoric from a particular member of Parliament on the Liberal side, she is absolutely correct. That type of language and that type of talk about our closest friends, the Americans, is not acceptable. I agree with her, but at the same time, the Leader of the Opposition should also watch the rhetoric that comes from that side as well.

The Address

My question for the member is more on the agricultural side. As he knows, the dairy and poultry farmers are coming to Ottawa very soon to lobby all members of Parliament and discuss with them the question of marketing boards. There was a time when the Alliance Party was against marketing boards and I am not quite sure what the position is now. I would like to give him the opportunity to tell us what he thinks or what his party's view is, if it is possible, and to discuss the aspect of the marketing boards that protect our poultry and dairy farmers and other farmers as well.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the hon. member was in the chamber when our party's leader addressed the emergency debate—and I must say there were very few people in the House from the other side in that emergency debate—and we debated the BSE crisis long into the night. I think our Leader of the Opposition made his position very clear in that he was a strong supporter of supply management, as I am.

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier the Minister of Social Development had a chance to speak and talked a bit about the new child care program that he is pushing. I had some concerns about that and I would like to ask the member a question in a minute. We have a multi-billion dollar program beginning and a number of us have great concerns about it. We would like to see people make a choice as to what they do with their tax money, how they support their children, how they find day care, and whether they need it or not.

I have a bigger concern and it is about the rural areas. We see billions of dollars going into these programs, often into building facilities, administrations and bureaucracies, and the rural areas are usually left out. I know that the member is an advocate for rural areas and rural development. I would like his thoughts on whether he feels that a national day care program will treat rural areas fairly or if once again they will probably be left out in this government's treatment of rural areas.

• (1105)

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the government's position on child care will do very little for people in urban areas and even less for people in rural areas. The whole point of this, the problem, the imperfection from the beginning, is that it does not give parents an option as to what to do with the care of their children.

As members know, children are our most valued resource in this country. We have to make sure that they are brought up with the care and the nurturing they deserve. If parents choose to look after their own children, I think they should be encouraged to do that. I would strongly suggest that amendments be made to the bill so that we do in fact encourage families to raise their children as they see fit, because the best stewards of our young people are of course their parents.

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the Minister of the Environment.

Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you on your appointment. It speaks well for your ability to be conciliatory with all parties in the House as well as the respect you have earned over the years. I am sure we will all benefit from your expertise and wise judgment.

I rise today as the member of Parliament for Ottawa—Orléans to address the House in response to the throne speech. It is an honour for me to represent the people of Ottawa—Orléans. I am grateful to them for the confidence they have shown in electing me to represent them in Parliament. I would like to assure them once again here today that I will represent their interests to the best of my ability. It is quite an honour for an Ottawa Valley boy to take part in this glorious assembly.

[*Translation*]

It is with both pride and humility that I accept the honour of representing the people of Ottawa—Orléans in the House of Commons. I will try my best to listen to them attentively and promote their interests in this House and with this government.

I began my career in Orléans 30 years ago. Thanks to my first job, I came to know and appreciate the community and the area of Ottawa—Orléans, to which I now wish to devote my energy and efforts.

[*English*]

I would like to start by paying tribute to this great community of Ottawa—Orléans. As many would say, it is the best kept secret in Ottawa.

[*Translation*]

I take this opportunity to invite all members of the House of Commons to visit. It is about 20 minutes away from here, and I would certainly be pleased to welcome you with warmth and friendship.

[*English*]

The riding of Ottawa—Orléans is made up of a collection of small and large communities in Ottawa's most eastern sector. Our population is highly educated and qualified as well as culturally and linguistically diverse, which makes it very representative of the whole of Canada. It is also a community where the quality of life is second to none. We have a vibrant arts community and our citizens are renowned for their charitable leadership and community involvement.

More than 100 years ago, the village of Orléans saw the construction of its first hotel, its first post office and its first school. This village and surrounding borough now has a population of over 100,000 people. Since the early to mid-1980s, Orléans has been one of the fastest growing communities in Canada and all signs indicate that this trend will continue.

This means that Ottawa—Orléans not only has many needs as a community but is ready to assume its rightful place in the national capital region and at the federal level. I am therefore very pleased that the government is committed to forging a new deal with cities and communities. This is more important than ever for the inhabitants of Ottawa—Orléans living, working and raising families.

Our communities are vital to Ottawa's economic, social and cultural viability. The challenges our cities and communities must face are now so numerous, and at times overwhelming, that it is beyond the capacity of local governments to act alone.

The Address

That is why the new deal focuses on striking more productive relationships among all three levels of government and community groups as well as the private and the not for profit sectors, relationships that will lead to local solutions for local problems. These relationships will have fiscal benefits for all communities.

Since 1993 our government has contributed over \$12 billion in infrastructure funding, which in turn has leveraged over \$30 billion from all partners. I am delighted that my colleague, the Minister of State for Infrastructure and Communities, will lead the federal efforts to secure this new deal.

In Ottawa—Orléans, we immediately got down to work. The day after the election I began organizing the first of two economic summits, bringing together all elected public officials. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my provincial counterpart, Phil McNeely, Mayor Bob Chiarelli, and the four city councillors, Rainer Bloess, Herb Kreling, Rob Jellett and Michel Bellemare, who have all committed to begin this strategic economic development for Ottawa—Orléans. We have already identified 11 concrete projects for Ottawa—Orléans.

I pledged to my constituents that I would place Ottawa—Orléans on the federal radar and I intend to deliver.

●(1110)

[*Translation*]

I am pleased to have this opportunity to talk about the Speech from the Throne, because it is a faithful reflection of our election promises, both nationally and locally, and especially for the young families of Ottawa—Orléans.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Social Development, our government, along with all the partners involved from the various communities and the provinces, will prepare a national plan for preschool learning and child care, based on the key requirements identified by parents and child care experts—quality, universality, accessibility and development.

I am particularly proud of our commitment to help Canada's children. As a trained educator, I am pleased to support the government in this file and offer my expertise. The announcement in the throne speech that \$5 billion will be allocated over five years to early learning and child care is truly good news for Canadian families. We must, however, respect the diversity of our population and the self-determination of our communities.

[*English*]

One of our government's key commitments was health care. In less than three months after the election, we have already met that commitment through our agreement with the provinces. This past September's historic agreement on health care will ensure that appropriate services are accessible and wait times will be significantly reduced for all Canadians no matter where they live and their income level. This agreement is part of our 10 year action plan to aggressively address health care in Canada.

[*Translation*]

All this was accomplished under the leadership of our Prime Minister who did a fine job delivering the goods. I had the privilege

of taking part in this negotiation with the provinces and territories and to see the birth of this new evolving federalism.

This agreement is especially historic because our government obtained the signature of all the provincial and territorial premiers in order to ensure fair and stable funding for health within well-defined parameters and an accountability framework. This was possible because the governments recognized that that is what every Canadian wanted.

[*English*]

The government is very committed to health care because it is the one social policy Canadians constantly identified as their number one priority. In our 10 year health care plan, \$41.2 billion will go to the provinces. However the government has ensured that the provinces and territories will produce information on outcomes so that Canadians can be assured their money is being spent where it should be, securing for them, their families and community the best access to the best health care possible.

[*Translation*]

I am also very proud to be part of this government for its work with official languages. It has always shown a strong commitment to Canada's linguistic duality. It has just reiterated its support to the francophone and Acadian communities in the Speech from the Throne.

Our government will make sure the official languages action plan is applied and will continue to promote the vitality of official language minority communities across the country and not, as some would suggest, only those communities where the numbers justify it.

Allow me also to take this opportunity to acknowledge the invaluable contribution and extraordinary work of Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier, who has always been a great defender of the rights of Franco-Ontarians and francophones outside Quebec.

I want to pay tribute to this citizen of Ottawa, who has had an exceptional career in the House of Commons and in the Senate. In addition to his work as an MP and a senator, and his involvement in the community, he was the Chair of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie from 1997 to 1999. He is a role model for all Canadians. Senator Gauthier, we will miss you when you retire at the end of the month. We thank you for everything you have done for francophone and Acadian communities across Canada.

●(1115)

[*English*]

I strongly believe that the Speech from the Throne truly conveys a message of hope to all Canadians for a better and stronger Canada, for safer and healthier communities, for more effective partnerships and respect for the diversity of our people. In my humble opinion, it reflects the priorities expressed to me by my constituents in Ottawa—Orléans, and I am proud, as their representative, to lend it my full support.

The Address

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to congratulate the member on his recent election and welcome him to the House.

My question concerns the whole area of the economic summits and the meetings the member organized. I would ask him to elaborate on how these meetings came about, how they are structured, what is on the agenda and what the member intends to accomplish. I think it is an excellent idea and I congratulate the member. Could he take this opportunity to elaborate a little more on this initiative?

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important venture. Because of its fast growth, Ottawa—Orléans had lagged in infrastructure and services. Even in the election campaign, we agreed among all elected officials and soon to be elected officials that as soon as the election was over we would establish a full-fledged partnership between all levels of government.

We had the economic summit three weeks ago and so far we have concretized our partnership to include myself, my provincial counterpart, the mayor of Ottawa and four city councillors.

What we are trying to accomplish is in the grey area because often enough in a municipality like ours there was blame on one or the other level of government for not bringing the solution to the issues we were facing.

Right now we are working collectively to identify what the priorities are for the social economic development of our area. We have already identified 11 concrete projects that range from ensuring a more balanced federal presence in the riding to a cultural facility for our riding, along with sporting facilities. Eleven concrete projects will be chaired by community members who will report to the committee.

It is action driven and action oriented. Already we are seeing concrete results from the project. I am very proud of it.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member on his speech this morning.

Earlier we heard from the minister responsible for child care who described the government's commitment to a national child care program. He said that his ministry was a find a way ministry.

I find it interesting given that the government has made the commitment to a national child care program for many years. It has probably been 11 years since it was first proposed by the government. It seems as though the ministry may have been a little lost on the road to child care over those years.

What does the member from Orléans see as being different in terms of the commitment to child care this time around? Is it something we will actually see happen from the government now?

• (1120)

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do as a government is not necessarily to have a one size fits all model. I do not think that would ever work in Canada. There are differences among communities.

We are trying to work directly with the provinces in their respective development of child care programs to ensure universality and, for those want a child care program for their children, to have access to a very reasonable fee for that type of program.

Yes, we are looking at other models, one being the model in Quebec which has put in place an excellent program that could possibly be used elsewhere in the country.

We will have to remember that even within a specific province there might be several models that can be explored. I, being the former assistant deputy minister of education of Ontario, know of some specific models in Ontario. The reason this program, I am sure, will be concretized within the next few years is because of the open access to different models that could answer the specific needs of specific communities.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the support given to me for the fourth consecutive time by the electors of Saint-Laurent-Cartierville, and thanks also to the trust that the Prime Minister has placed in me, I am very proud and privileged to be responsible for the environment just as this issue is becoming more crucial than ever in terms of improving our quality of life. It is at this moment that the links ever more clearly joining the environment with economic competitiveness have the effect of changing the global economy; those nations that succeed in reconciling the environment and the economy will enjoy immense economic advantages; Canada must assert itself as a leader in the new industrial revolution, that of the sustainable economy, as it has done in all previous industrial revolutions.

To help Canada succeed in the sustainable economy, the Speech from the Throne gives us some powerful tools. In fact, no fewer than 13 initiatives were mentioned there, 13 levers that will help us both to make our environment healthier and to make our economy stronger. Allow me, Mr. Speaker, to comment briefly on each of them.

[English]

I would call it the 13 levers speech. If I take too long I will speed up near the end. It is not my fault if the throne speech is full of good initiatives. Yes, it is my fault.

[Translation]

First, the Government will work with its partners to build sustainable development systematically into decision making. This is the most important of our 13 undertakings and it means that we are dealing not only with 13 separate measures but also with an overall plan. The environment must be at the heart of our collective decision-making, both private and public.

We have to bring together around a single table governments, industry and NGOs in order to make the best decisions and select the best processes for both the quality of our environment and the competitiveness of our economy.

The Address

Second, the government will work with the private sector to improve the commercialization of the best new environmental technologies. Major investments funded out of the proceeds of the sale of the government's Petro-Canada shares will support the development and deployment of these technologies.

Technological innovations must be used to their full potential. Not only our environment but also our economy will benefit from this and we shall at the same time strengthen the environmental technology industries. There are too many good ideas that simply aren't successfully crossing the final hurdle of commercialization.

At the same time we need to invest in next-generation technologies, such as fuel cells and "smart systems" for energy in the home, as well as technologies to help key industries such as oil sands, mining, forestry, and aluminum production be as efficient and environmentally sustainable as possible.

• (1125)

[*English*]

Third, the government will consolidate federal environmental assessments and will work with the provinces and territories toward a unified and more effective assessment process for Canada. This is part of the more effective decision making process that we must develop, especially within the federal government.

Each year the Government of Canada undertakes environmental assessments for projects that represent billions of dollars of potential investment. It is important to consolidate the federal assessment process in order to ensure that proponents do not face undue delay or administrative dysfunctions in that these assessments are consistently applied and always of a quality that protects the health of Canadians and our environment.

[*Translation*]

Fourth, by 2006, the government will implement a new Green Procurement Policy to govern its purchases. The federal government is the largest employer in Canada and also has an immense purchasing power. It has to lead by example in ensuring that its buildings and fleet of vehicles are as environment—and climate-friendly as possible, and that its procurement has the lowest possible impact on the environment.

This will help bring the most advanced environmental technologies onto the market and, over time, the federal treasury will benefit from the savings that more energy-efficient buildings and vehicles generate.

I intend to work closely with the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and the President of the Treasury Board to green government operations. To achieve our goal, we are developing a government-wide performance management framework and common performance measures.

[*English*]

Fifth, the government will introduce legislation that will strengthen the focus on the ecological integrity of Canada's national parks. The ecological integrity of our national parks is important to the health of Canadians and is part of our national identity. Canada's parks are important for sustainable tourism, community revitalization and partnership with aboriginal people.

The Government of Canada has a responsibility to ensure that these special places, our national parks and historical sites, are protected for the use and enjoyment of future generations, and will continue to contribute to vibrant communities and local economies.

Sixth, the government will place increased focus on energy. In the past, Canada has shown that it can transform impossible energy dreams into reality. When the oil sands of the Athabasca were discovered in the 1960s, no technology existed to exploit them and the economics were simply crazy.

It took decades of dedication, and especially sustained federal support of \$40 billion in various fiscal incentives and tax breaks, to eventually transform this impossible project into a thriving industry that will provide enormous amounts of both energy and wealth to the country for decades to come.

Yes, Canada is rich in sources of energy of fossil origin, particularly natural gas, oil and coal. We will need them for quite a while. We have to learn to produce them in a much cleaner way and to use them responsibly in a way that does not harm the climate.

Canada also has great potential in generating power from wind, the sun, from geothermal and biomass. What Canada needs now is an energy strategy including a renewable energy strategy. The government will work with the provinces, industry, NGOs and consumers to develop a clean renewable energy strategy that provides a framework for further investments in hydro developments and transmission, cogeneration, wind and other emerging renewable energy forms.

[*Translation*]

Seventh, the government will support wind-power production, stimulated by a quadrupling of the Wind Power Production Incentive.

In the last decade, wind power has made tremendous progress in some countries. Canada has enormous potential. This government is determined to make Canada a world leader in wind power production, as just one step towards being a leader in other renewable energy sources.

• (1130)

[*English*]

Eighth, the government will refine and implement a national plan for climate change in partnership with provincial and territorial governments and other stakeholders. When Canada ratified Kyoto in 2002, it also adopted a first version of its plan. As stated in the plan itself, the plan was by necessity a work in progress that would evolve over time. We now need to refine our plan in order to make it more effective.

The Address

[Translation]

I see that my speaking time is almost up, so I shall be brief.

[English]

Ninth, the government will work with the United States and agencies like the International Joint Commission on issues such as air, water and invasive species.

Tenth, the government will bring forward the next generation of its Great Lakes and St. Lawrence programs.

Eleventh, the government will move forward on its ocean action plan.

Twelfth, through the new deal for Canada's cities and communities, the government will enable municipalities to make long term financial commitments needed to help contain urban sprawl and to invest in new sustainable infrastructure projects.

The thirteenth point is about our sustainable strategy for the north. The government will develop a comprehensive strategy for the north.

The Prime Minister has recommitted to make this plan work for all Canadians.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was elected in 2000. What I predominantly heard during the last term, over and over again, was about the Kyoto protocol, how it was so necessary and how we had to get into it. I was on the industry committee, and we tried to find out what the plan was and how much that plan would cost.

Pretty soon it will be 2005. It will have been almost five years. Surely by this stage of the ball game we should know what that plan is, and every Canadian should be able to see the details of the plan. We should also have an idea of how much it is going to cost.

I am challenging the Minister of the Environment not to give me a speech on some other topic but to address those two points. Where can I find the plan for implementing the Kyoto protocol in Canada and how much is the plan going to cost Canadian taxpayers?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, the plan has been public since 2002. It has cost the Government of Canada \$3.6 billion up to now. Most of the spending would have been necessary anyway in order to address other issues like smog or other issues that are health associated.

We also need to take into account what the cost would be to do nothing. For Alberta or Saskatchewan there may be a big danger relating to accessibility of water. We have seen the result in the north and the member for Western Arctic may testify to that. We need to act as well to lower costs if we do not act.

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the minister. In particular, he has been talking about environmental costs. I am interested in how Kyoto and the environmental plan, when they come forward, will impact a couple of areas of transportation and agriculture.

One thing that has been noted by the fertilizer industry of Canada, as Kyoto goes forward, is that the demand for natural gas will rise considerably, leading to a point where it will no longer be

economical for fertilizer plants to use Canadian natural gas, thus killing off the fertilizer industry.

My first question is, has the government researched how much farmers will face in increased fertilizer costs? How much will this add to the bottom line. I am sure the minister knows that farmers are already suffering. They have intense international competition and this will continue to drive up their costs. I wonder if the government has thought of that.

I also wonder if the government was aware that many pollution devices for engines, automobiles and tractors take energy to run. They clean out the pollutants that actually cause smog, but they cause more fuel to be burned in the process, thus creating more carbon dioxide. My follow up question is, has the government thought through that reducing carbon dioxide emissions from these vehicles, tractors and so forth, would actually increase the smog?

• (1135)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, on the first point, it is obvious that climate change has terrible consequences on agriculture. We need to work together to ensure that our agriculture will be sustainable. We do not need to do anything that would not be reasonable.

On the second point, the continent is moving on the automotive industry. California is as big as Canada regarding population and the GDP. We need to work in our own way, and the Minister of Natural Resources is having negotiations with the automotive industry to be sure that Canada will have the capacity to have a healthy industry in this sector, but one that will respect the environment and move ahead regarding our climate change objectives.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I was wondering, since we have the minister with us today, if we could extend this debate for five more minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there agreement?

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate responding to the Speech from the Throne. I will be sharing my time with the member for Burnaby—Douglas.

I want to again thank my constituents for the honour of being here. I want to thank my family for their understanding and support through all of this. I also want to thank my campaign co-managers, Dennis Young and Anna Rae Fishman, for without them this would not be happening either.

I come from a riding that faces challenges very similar to those faced by other municipalities right across the country. The government has talked about making cities a priority. The test for me is how well the quality of life has improved in Hamilton.

Hamilton Centre encompasses downtown Hamilton. It includes not just our precious downtown but also our waterfront, and some of the very wealthiest people in Hamilton, including some of the oldest, established families, some of whom have friends on the other side of the House.

The Address

People in Hamilton Centre, like other Canadians, are facing some of the greatest challenges one could ever imagine, the least of which are the number of new Canadians coming in and the needs they have in terms of wanting to lay down their roots, and wanting to raise their families and participate fully in their communities.

Quite frankly, that is not an option for us. That is not a luxury whether we deal with the issue or not. Our economy will not grow without an immigration program that works. If our economy does not grow, it will stagnate, and we will continue to fall behind.

We need to take this issue very seriously. People in downtown Hamilton are trying. The city council is doing the best it can. Infrastructure problems, the lack of affordable housing, and the lack of assistance from the two senior levels of government have left Hamilton city council, like most other city councils across Canada, completely hamstrung in terms of knowing what the pressures are but just not having the money to do anything about them.

I had the honour of attending a world forum on cities. That forum recognized the fact that cities are playing a bigger role within their provinces, within their states and within their countries. One of the workshops was on the whole issue of cities and how they could impact the international agenda. What is happening in Canada is not happening in isolation. The question is, is Canada responding in an adequate fashion or not?

For some of us middle age folk it is hard to appreciate that in some areas of progressiveness Canada is falling way behind our neighbours to the south. We always used to take somewhat smug pride in the fact that our environmental laws were a bit better, that our minimum wage was always a little higher, that our health and safety was a bit better, and that we invested more in communities than our American neighbours. A lot of that does not stand anymore because of the right wing tilt of the Liberals and those provincial governments that have bought into those arguments.

I see one of the members across the way throwing his head back and laughing. When we reach the point where the minimum wage is higher in the United States of America than it is in Ontario then something has gone horribly wrong.

Promises are not good enough. This throne speech document is just promises. The difficulty for a lot of us on this side of the House is the fact that we have heard all of these promises before. The government has said that cities are its priority and yet in the Speech from the Throne it says, "Shelter is the foundation upon which healthy communities and individual dignity are built". Those are great words. That is a great promise. What is the reality? The reality is that the Liberal government has cut the last existing federal housing program.

• (1140)

Quite frankly, we are one of the few developed nations that does not have a comprehensive national housing strategy. How can the opposition members and Canadians be expected to have faith that the government means it this time? Perhaps that is what should have been put in the bill in a few places, that the government really means it this time, wink, wink, nudge, nudge.

The difficulty for the New Democrats in looking at the Liberal throne speech is not that the government is going in the wrong

direction necessarily in so many areas. In many of the areas we do agree. However, it is always only words. When it comes to action or money the government goes in a completely different direction, let alone the fact that in the areas where it is going in the right direction it is a halfhearted measure. There does not seem to be the same kind of commitment.

If the government really cared about housing, why did it spend the last four years prior to this Parliament spending \$100 billion on tax cuts? The government says that health is a priority, cities are a priority, housing is a priority, education is a priority. They are words, just like in the throne speech. In reality \$100 billion of cold hard cash went out in tax cuts. Let me say that the vast majority of people in my riding of Hamilton Centre did not see their fair share of that \$100 billion.

We have to understand what the priorities are. It is in the track record. There is talk about a child care program, but we have been here before many times, at least back to the 1993 Speech from the Throne.

If we really want to push the issue of Liberal promises, why is the GST still in effect? I remember all the promises made by the former prime minister, but it is still the same party, in order to go from that side of the House to this side of the House. I should say that side of the House; it is awkward sitting over here. In order to go from the opposition benches to the government benches one of the big things was the GST, and guess what? We still have the GST. We do not have a comprehensive and adequate housing strategy, but we still have the GST.

If health care is such a big priority, why over the tenure of the current Prime Minister as minister of finance did he cut \$25 billion from health care? If it is an absolute priority, why did he become the first finance minister, to the best of my knowledge, that has ever cut \$25 billion from health care? If that is how priorities are treated, then the Liberals have a funny way of governing.

An hon. member: What about the \$41 billion they put back in?

Mr. David Christopherson: A member asks about the \$41 billion put back in.

If health care is so important and if it needs that kind of money, why was \$100 billion put into tax cuts instead of health care? Why was there \$100 billion in tax cuts instead of affordable housing? Why was there \$100 billion in tax cuts instead of investment in necessary infrastructure, roads and sewers for our cities? Let us follow the money and that will tell us what the priorities are, not the words. Let us see where the money goes.

I want to spend a moment talking about an issue that is incredibly important to steelworkers in Hamilton and across Canada, and quite frankly, workers right across the nation in all different kinds of industries. That is the whole matter of the CCAA, the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act. That law says that in a bankruptcy the banks will get their money first, insurance companies will get their money first, major suppliers will get their money first, and who is last? The workers' pensions are last.

The Address

The current government House leader made a lot of commitments to Tony DePaulo, who was the NDP candidate against him in the last election, especially in the dying days of the election. He said that he and his government care about steelworkers and that they care about protecting the rights of pensioners. The proof will be in the pudding. We want to see some changes to that law. The banks should not be ahead of pensioners who have worked their entire lives and deserve the dignity and the safety of a pension plan that they have worked so hard for.

● (1145)

There is a whole host of issues on which we will hold the government's feet to the fire. There were a lot of promises made. Words are not good enough. In a minority government we can actually do something about it. I intend to use my precious vote to do everything I can to force the government to bring about the kind of quality of life that all Canadians deserve, and not just words.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his remarks the member for Hamilton Centre talked of a number of things and about following the money. If we follow the money, then \$41 billion for health care tells us something.

The member talked about the steelworkers in Hamilton. There has been a lot of news lately about the difficulties faced by Stelco. A recent report said that GM and DaimlerChrysler were looking to pull away their contracts from Stelco, which could be the last straw.

I have always been fascinated contrasting Stelco with Dofasco. Dofasco talks about its assets being its people.

Could the member talk about what it is that is causing the difference between the results that Dofasco achieves, which seem to be very good, and the results that Stelco achieves? Are there management problems? Are there different labour agreements? Is it a different type of business strategy that it has implemented?

I wonder if the member could comment on that because it is of great concern to many Canadians.

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, on the member's opening remark about the \$41 billion, if health care is so important and such a crisis and a priority, why was it not done before? Why did the government make the \$100 billion in tax cuts before making the investment in health care? That is the wrong priority as far as the NDP is concerned.

I do not know the member yet and I guess over time I will know the answer to the question. I would hope that he is not attempting some kind of comparison that because Stelco has a union is the reason it is having some of these problems as opposed to Dofasco that does not. I would hope that the member would understand that they produce different kinds of steel.

The management at Dofasco has been very wise. It has always taken the steelworkers' collective agreement and historically has always added 2¢ to 5¢ an hour, just a little bit more, and has made sure that everything is the same. As long as the workers are treated with the same kind of dignity as are the workers over at Stelco, and they get the same kind of benefits and wages, it is easy to make the argument that they may not need a union in that place. However,

they also know that their union really is the steelworkers' union because that is who is bargaining for them.

When there are strikes at Stelco, some of the greatest donations come from the steelworkers at Dofasco because they know that indirectly that is their union fighting for their benefits.

Do I think there is a management problem? On the front page of the *Hamilton Spectator* a few weeks ago, management acknowledged that it made mistakes.

We can deal with how we got here as one issue. When we talk about the CCAA and changes to the Bankruptcy Act, that is about today and tomorrow. It is about protecting those very workers about whom the hon. member cares, as does everyone else here.

● (1150)

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a comment and then a question for the member. I do not know if the member knows it, but in Saskatchewan we too have steelworkers. IPSCO in Regina is a steel producer.

One of the things noted in a newspaper article in the *Regina Leader-Post* some years ago was that at that time the possible implementation of the Kyoto accord could increase the cost for electricity 25% for IPSCO thus killing off steelworkers' jobs in Regina and of course steelworkers' jobs all across the country.

How does the member bring together his party's support for the Kyoto accord, which according to the steel industry will kill steelworkers' jobs? How does he bring that together with his professed support for the steelworkers in his riding?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I noted that the member was paying attention and I appreciate that very much. I might also say that I have connections to Saskatchewan. My dad was born in Saskatchewan, so I have a real affinity for that province.

I do not think the member's question is one that reflects the reality. Some of the strongest environmentalists in Canada are steelworkers. It is the steelworkers' union.

Playing this bogeyman about jobs versus the environment is what got us into this mess. If we do not break the cycle in some fashion or other, all we are going to do is hand our children and our grandchildren an even more precarious world.

I understand the pragmatic approach about the need for jobs today versus the future, tomorrow. It is unseen; it is uncertain. It is not like the job that is needed to pay the bills that are on the kitchen table today. Fair enough. However, at the rate we are going, what we are doing is choosing jobs over our grandchildren's health.

We are a rich enough, smart enough, tough enough nation. The steelworkers believe this. The member should not shake his head and say no. The steelworkers believe that we can maintain the jobs that we need and deserve in this nation as well as save the environment. To do otherwise means that the member is willing to pollute the bodies of future Canadians to save jobs today.

The Address

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to make my first speech in the House in this debate on the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to thank my supporters in Burnaby—Douglas for expressing their confidence in me. I would also like to assure those folks who supported other candidates that I am always willing to listen to their concerns and that they will always have access to the services of my office.

I would also like to pay tribute to the candidates who stood in Burnaby—Douglas in the last election: Bill Cunningham, George Drazenovic, Shawn Hunsdale, Adam Desaulniers, Frank Cerminara and Hanne Gidora. It is an honour for me to represent a riding that has such a strong NDP tradition. The first leader of the NDP, Tommy Douglas, represented the area through the 1960s as the MP for Burnaby—Coquitlam. To say that Tommy Douglas was a hero of mine would be an incredible understatement.

I also want to pay tribute to my predecessor, Svend Robinson. I worked with Svend for 18 years, briefly here in Ottawa but mostly in his constituency office. Everyone here knows of the difficulties that Svend faced last spring which led to his decision not to seek re-election.

Svend Robinson has a proud record of service to Burnaby, British Columbia and Canada through his more than 25 years as a member of Parliament. Svend was known for his service to his constituents and as an outspoken member who was not afraid to take on controversial issues. He was Canada's first openly gay member of Parliament. He was a tireless defender of human rights here in Canada and around the world and a prominent advocate for the environment.

Svend Robinson's voice will be missed here in the chamber. Like Svend's many friends from coast to coast to coast and, indeed, around the world, I know that he will continue his justice seeking work in new and exciting ways in the coming months.

I want to focus on the Speech from the Throne. I know that child care is an important issue for many families in my riding. Child care is not a luxury issue for the people of my riding. It is an issue of daily importance that has an impact on the development of the children of our community and on the pocketbooks of families.

The people of Burnaby—Douglas have anticipated a national child care program for many years, and rightly so since Liberal governments have promised it for at least 11 years. The throne speech mentions child care but does not give any details. I know that a throne speech is intended to paint broad strokes of the government's plan but I remain disappointed that specifics were avoided when it came to a national child care program.

The time for a high quality, universal, accessible, affordable and inclusive national child care program is now. In fact the time was yesterday but because the government has refused to budget we still have to press for what is urgently required.

Burnaby—Douglas is home to two fine institutions of post-secondary education: Simon Fraser University and the British Columbia Institute of Technology. Many people in my riding see post-secondary education as a key priority. We are still reeling from

the huge cuts made in transfer payments for education. Students and their families are reeling from ever increasing tuition fees and students face a huge debt load as they graduate. When I look to the Speech from the Throne for measures to address that situation, I find nothing. This is a terrible oversight.

Like most cities, Burnaby has a significant infrastructure and public transit needs. The Speech from the Throne mentions the federal gas tax but promises only a "portion" for our cities. This backs away from the far more specific promise made by the Prime Minister during the election campaign.

On the environment, the government's program is also disappointing. Canada's record on the environment is terrible. We are now one of the worst of the OECD countries when it comes to pollution and greenhouse gases. We need a plan and a timetable to meet our Kyoto accord obligations. Climate change is an urgent reality on our planet, not some far off theoretical notion.

Poverty is an issue across the country. In Burnaby almost 27% of people live below the low income cut-off lines. Child poverty has increased in Canada despite Parliament's commitment in 1989 to end it by the year 2000. We need significant measures, such as an affordable housing program, to address the distribution of wealth in Canada.

I am glad the Speech from the Throne recognized the need for electoral reform. New Democrats will be pursuing proportional representation as a high priority. We want to ensure that the House reflects the human diversity of Canada and the full spectrum of political ideas found in Canadian society. We will be pressing for public hearings on national missile defence and star wars to give Canadians a chance to fully participate in this crucial decision.

I was pleased to be asked by the leader of the NDP to take on critic responsibilities in the areas of citizenship and immigration, Canadian human rights and western economic diversification.

● (1155)

Wearing that hat, I note that the Speech from the Throne contains yet another promise to address the issue of foreign credentials. This has been an issue for decades, if not longer. Why does Canada continue to deny the calling and waste of talent and dedication of those who were trained overseas? I hope the government will proceed on this issue with some urgency.

As I speak this week, Canadian churches and other organizations are calling on the government to address its refugee policies. This summer the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration criticized churches for allowing people, on the verge of deportation after failed refugee claims, to take sanctuary.

The Address

However there is a far more pressing issue than the small number of people in sanctuary in Canada, although each of their cases deserves careful review by the minister. The fact remains that there is no significant fact based appeal on the merits of a case available for refugee claimants in Canada. This is despite the fact that such an appeal was mandated by the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act passed by Parliament in 2002. The government must implement the refugee appeal division for this injustice to be undone.

We need to attend to the private refugee sponsorship program, a program that was largely responsible for Canada being recognized by the United Nations for its assistance to refugees. Delays in processing applications for this program are leaving refugees in danger and potential sponsors frustrated.

We need to address the huge number of undocumented people resident in Canada. These people form an easily exploited underclass and we must find ways to regularize their status. Canadian workers are increasingly worried that the government is willing to allow foreign workers into this country to do work that they are ready, able and available to do. This practice must be stopped.

On the human rights front, the government must answer for its use of the special security certificate procedure, which has denied a fair hearing to at least five people in Canada and which threatens to remove them from this country and potentially return them to torture and persecution. Many Canadians face racial profiling at borders or when they travel; blatant discrimination based only on the colour of their skin or their ethnic, national or religious origins. This practice is unacceptable.

Transgendered and transsexual Canadians face huge challenges in our society. We need human rights legislation that offers protection from discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. As a gay man, I would urge the government to end its appeal of survivor benefits for same sex partners. The House must finally deal with the question of gay and lesbian marriage. The government must have the courage of its new-found convictions in support of equal marriage and introduce legislation immediately.

Those are only some of the issues I hope to pursue. They were part of the NDP platform in the recent election. They remain part of our commitment to Canadians and are key to my commitment to the people of Burnaby—Douglas.

I often quote J.S. Woodsworth, the first leader of the CCF, when he said:

We are thankful for these and all the good things of life.

We recognize that they come to us through the efforts of our brothers and sisters the world over.

What we desire for ourselves we wish for all.

To this end may we take our share in the world's work and the world's struggles.

We do indeed have much to be thankful for as citizens and residents of Canada. In our increasingly interconnected world, much of what we do here directly affects people around the world. Their actions similarly affect us. It becomes harder and harder to justify selfish concerns as it becomes clearer that our greed is directly related to others' poverty, that our indifference can sentence brothers and sisters to lives of incredible difficulty and sometimes even death.

I also have always been moved by Svend Robinson's assertion, when he was asked at the time of the death of Sue Rodriguez, what the highest duty of a member of Parliament should be. Svend responded that "the highest duty of a member of Parliament is to love". I know Svend did not have in mind a romanticized notion of love but a love that drives us to act justly to better the lives of those around us, honour their full humanity and live with care on this planet.

I feel those challenges and those words very acutely. I look forward to the day when we in this place hear a Speech from the Throne that is written from a perspective of love that seeks justice and that truly seeks to accord to others that which we desire for ourselves. I do not think we are there yet but I live in that hope.

● (1200)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to ask the member for Burnaby—Douglas, who just made his first speech in the House, and a very fine one, if he could address, in a little more detail than was possible in his speech, a serious issue that he raised which was the whole issue of the proper appeal process for refugee claimants.

I know that it sent shock waves throughout the entire Canadian families that have been concerned about this issue to have the previous minister make some completely ill-founded statement to the effect that refugee claimants already enjoy, I think the number given was 20 different opportunities for appeal before they face deportation from this country. Of course no such thing is true. As the member has accurately indicated, there is now in law a requirement for such a full, proper appeal process to happen that the government has chosen or seen fit not to proclaim.

I wonder if the member could give us a little bit more insight into what the implications are to help underscore the urgency for getting that full, proper appeal process in place.

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, I think we were all shocked and surprised by the comments made by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration this past summer when she criticized Canadian churches for offering sanctuary to individuals who faced immediate deportation because of failed refugee claims.

Canadians who enter into a sanctuary arrangement with a failed claimant do so after very careful consideration. It is not something that is undertaken lightly or cavalierly. People understand the kind of statement they are making when they take that kind of action.

It was rather a surprise to all of us that the minister should choose to focus on that particular issue, especially when the numbers are so small. There are probably six congregations across the country that are offering sanctuary to people.

The minister said at that time that there were probably 20 routes of appeal. Actually I think the number has gone up. I think she now claims that there are 42 different kinds of appeal. That comes as a surprise to almost everyone working in the field of refugee claims and working with refugee claimants.

The Address

The fact is there is no appeal based on the merits of a case. People cannot raise the facts of their refugee claim in any appeal process here in Canada. This fact has caused criticism from international organizations and almost every refugee serving organization in Canada.

The law that was passed here in 2002 addresses that, which is why the minister needs to implement that law without further delay.

• (1205)

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to join with my colleague from Halifax in congratulating my friend from Burnaby—Douglas. Those are words that I think will stand the test of time. I would not be surprised if they were quoted back to the House in many years to come.

The member touched on the issue of new Canadians, and I raised that issue in my comments too. I wonder if he would expound a little on what he the NDP caucus is hoping we can do in this minority government to make things easier for foreign trained professionals to get out from behind the wheel of a cab, which is honourable work, but we need doctors more than we need cab drivers. They need to be doing the work they were trained to do. What does he think needs to be done to see those kinds of changes and how do we go about it?

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the member for Hamilton Centre on his speech and the very passionate way he brought the concerns of his constituents to the House this morning.

On the question of foreign credentials, I have met with a number of people in my constituency who are in exactly that situation. I met with a doctor who was a refugee from Iran. She went to India where she trained as a doctor and eventually made her way to Canada. However in the 20 years she has been here she has never worked as a doctor, which is her chosen field. She is working in nursing administration but even that job is disappearing from underneath her. Her suggestion was to ensure that there were residency placements for people from other countries who did their training overseas. The competition for residency placements for doctors in Canada is very vigorous and she felt that one way we could go was to ensure that those people who needed those kinds of residencies had particular places designated for them in the process.

I also met with an engineer who also has not worked in his field as a professional engineer. He has worked as a consultant but not in his exact field over the years. He too believes that we need to work more closely with the professional associations to make sure that there are real opportunities developed for these people when they come to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

I am very proud to deliver my maiden speech today in this House as the member for Madawaska—Restigouche. Allow me first to thank the people of this New Brunswick riding for electing me on June 28. It is a golden opportunity. Being elected to represent a region and its citizens is quite a privilege.

This privilege is not a given. We are at the service of people whose interests we must represent to the best of our knowledge. It is not up to any of us to decide in this House whether we will keep our position or not. It is up to the voters to decide whether we will be elected from one election to the next. That is the privilege of democracy.

• (1210)

[*English*]

I am really proud to be standing here today as the member of Parliament for Madawaska—Restigouche in New Brunswick. I would like to thank the population of my riding for the confidence they showed in me in the last election. It is clearly a privilege to be standing here, and I will definitely do my best to represent the people of Madawaska—Restigouche.

[*Translation*]

I hope throughout my mandate to contribute as much as possible to the debates in this House, but also to be able to introduce new ideas.

Over the past few months since I was elected, I have had the opportunity to tour my riding many times. I have met with the provincial and municipal elected representatives, citizens who are very involved in the community, and businesspeople who want to contribute to the success of the beautiful region of Madawaska—Restigouche. One of the things that struck me the most was the dedication of the public to ensuring the success of our communities.

I have gone to festivals, galas and cultural activities where I have met many volunteers who contribute to the success of a broad range of events and to the vitality of their town, village or community.

Today in this House, I want to recognize all the volunteers who contribute to a cause, an event or an organization. Without volunteerism, our communities would not be able to provide certain services or activities. By further contributing to the dynamism and creativity of our communities, we will be giving a much needed helping hand to the thousands of volunteers who, through their volunteerism, contribute to the growth of every community.

The Speech from the Throne expresses the wish to enable our cities and communities to serve their populations well. In February, hon. members will recall, this government reimbursed Canadian municipalities for their entire goods and services tax payments. This was extremely well received by the municipalities, as it enabled them to deliver more services to their populations.

In this Speech from the Throne, the government commits to making available a portion of the federal gas tax to the municipalities. This reimbursement, which will grow over the next five years, will enable municipalities to make the long-term financial commitments needed to finance sustainable infrastructure projects. As we know, municipalities provide such indispensable services as drinking water. Through this initiative, the Canadian government is helping to lighten the burden on our municipalities.

The Address

We must never lose sight of the contribution made by those who came before us in the work force. They have helped build this magnificent country and so every effort must be made to show them as much respect as possible. The desire to enable our seniors to continue to enjoy a full and challenging life, particularly through the New Horizons program, is set out clearly in the Speech from the Throne. As well, it is important that they be able to benefit from the support of family members when they need them most

As hon. members know, the family is one of this government's priorities. Young families need support in order to enjoy quality of life. It is therefore very important to adopt a truly national system of early learning and child care. This will provide young families with more flexibility, and their children with real opportunities to learn.

For young families like the ones in my riding, a national early learning and child care system is a priority. Progress is needed and people to bring it about. This government wants to make things better for its citizens, and this is something of which we all must be proud.

The Speech from the Throne, which opened this 38th Parliament, is a clear illustration of the government's desire to follow up on its commitments to the people of Canada. Whether the economy, health, our children, our seniors, Aboriginal people, cities and communities, the environment, or our international role, the Speech from the Throne represents a total program for Canadians.

[English]

The environment is an important issue for all Canadians and does not make an exception in Atlantic Canada. Surely the development of our economy is important, but should never be put before the respect of our environment in our priorities.

The Speech from the Throne clearly shows the commitment of the government to ensure respect of our environment. We are committed to respect our commitment regarding the Kyoto accord on climate change.

[Translation]

The situation of seasonal workers is of great concern to the population of Madawaska—Restigouche. I am happy to see that the Speech from the Throne emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the employment insurance system meets the needs of Canadian workers.

These days, we must constantly improve ourselves because everything that relates to society or the economy changes so rapidly that we must ensure the necessary changes are made quickly, so that the families in our areas can have the quality of life they deserve.

• (1215)

[English]

The population of Madawaska—Restigouche, and from all over Atlantic Canada, are proud people. They not only wish that their region can maximize its development, but they also want to contribute to that development. Regional development is a means to ensure that Atlantic Canada can be a part of the world economy.

[Translation]

This means that the tools for regional development are very important to the people of Atlantic Canada. Funds such as the Atlantic Innovation Fund are important regional development tools and I congratulate the government on giving them particular attention in the throne speech.

[English]

Like all Canadians, people from Atlantic Canada want a strong and growing economy. They want a government that balances its books, pays down debt and has a plan to build an even stronger globally competitive and sustainable economy. The vitality of our economy largely depends on our small and medium businesses. Those businesses are definitely leading the way in tomorrow's economy by their strong leadership and precise management.

It is clear that many sensational ideas emerge from small and medium enterprise. The economy of Atlantic Canada largely depends on the success of its small and medium enterprises and their future development. Therefore, it is getting more important to make the capital required by our small and medium businesses available. The plan to ensure venture capital for early stage businesses is good news for the growing number of entrepreneurs in Atlantic Canada starting new enterprises and needing capital to take their good ideas to market.

[Translation]

Health continues to be an issue of primary importance for the Canadian people, as it should. The federal-provincial conference on health care was an opportunity to negotiate a 10-year agreement worth \$41 billion. I would like to recognize both the remarkable effort the government has made in the negotiations leading to this agreement, and the cooperation of the provinces and territories toward improving the quality of life of our people.

For the region of Atlantic Canada, this means an additional transfer of \$2.5 billion over the next 10 years, in addition to a share in the \$5.5 billion allocated through the wait times reduction fund.

This new agreement means a lot for a riding like Madawaska—Restigouche, with its aging population and recent serious cuts in certain services. I dare to hope that this agreement will bring a breath of fresh air to the current situation in my riding with respect to health care. Many people have blamed the federal government for problems with health care. Today we can be proud; we have shown that we want to improve the level of health care services provided to all Canadians.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the importance of our role as parliamentarians in ensuring that our constituents enjoy an improved quality of life. I also want to point out the remarkable work of this government which is presenting a vision in its throne speech that will make it possible to achieve tangible results for all Canadians.

The Address

[English]

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister on the Speech from the Throne. In its broad outlines were our government's three major priorities. However, this throne speech is just the latest marker along a path toward a greater vision.

It is a vision that entails the establishment of a social charter; a social charter as part of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Once attained, such a charter will be an example of what a society can make possible, the castle on the hill, which once built, the rest of the world can turn to for inspiration.

Each throne speech and each government that this Prime Minister has been a part of has set itself difficult targets and markers. In 1993, having inherited a dangerous downward fiscal spiral, the then finance minister set as fiscal goals the attainment of which many were rightly skeptical about. However, due to the hard work and sacrifices of all Canadians, 11 years later, each target has been achieved.

The Liberal government's fiscal responsibility was a rebuke of the policy of stacking more and more debt on to future generations, and a realization that we will only be able to dream greater dreams for Canada in the future by governing responsibly in the present.

When transitions occur there is no point in time that one can look back and definitively say this is when it began. However, I believe that in the future when the vision of a social charter becomes our reality this throne speech and the resulting debates and legislation will be that starting point. This minority government and all of us in this House will be seen as the first builders of the castle on the hill.

During this transitional period our minority government still acknowledges the fiscal challenges of our recent past and its lingering debt effects. However, having now put a firm fiscal foundation in place, we can recommence building upon the social programs enacted by governments, including minority governments of the 1960s and 1970s.

This mirrors what 70% of Canadians told us through the ballot box in this June's election. Seventy percent of Canadians voted in favour of socially progressive platforms, and we intend to deliver. Canada has an extensive social safety net. Unfortunately, many Canadians still slip through its holes. This throne speech spoke of not just weaving a tighter social safety net, but of putting in place social programs which would be the beginnings of a new social construct that would provide equal life opportunities and quality of life for all Canadians.

For example, to give all our youth the aforementioned equal life opportunities, universal daycare based on the QUAD principle, qualitative, universal, accessible and development daycare will provide an equal start to all children, ensuring that those of this generation will have a lesser need of social safety nets.

Our education bonds are a signal, a start in addressing the fiscal burdens that act as a barrier to entry which can overwhelm those wishing to enter post-secondary institutions.

The fiscal foundation is in place and we are now constructing the pillars. Education, medicare and shelter are the pillars on which the

construct of a social charter will be built. It is a vision that is a continuation of a dream from the 1960s and 1970s. This throne speech has the potential to act as a catalyst to return us to a dream which the fiscal uncertainties of the 1980s and 1990s forced us temporarily to set aside.

During the election campaign my constituents in Etobicoke Centre would often ask, "Is this vision affordable?" I would reply, yes. Let us afford ourselves the opportunity to dream a greater dream. It may take us a generation to build, but let us plan for it. Let us set the time lines and begin the construction.

When the voters and I met in May and June, we also spoke of local needs and a local vision. We spoke of the communities in our urban environments. Our local vision for Etobicoke Centre and the GTA was one of ribbons of blue and green, parklands along Etobicoke's and the GTA's waterways, connecting our communities and connecting us to a beautiful new waterfront.

I hope to use the National Capital Commission's parklands along waterways as an example of how we can improve the quality of life of all of Etobicoke Centre's and Canada's communities.

● (1220)

Finally, I would like to thank the citizens of Etobicoke Centre for showing their confidence in me and for entrusting me to be a conduit for their personal hopes and societal dreams. It is a role in life's journey that few are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to fulfill.

I look forward to working with my House colleagues, perhaps against the odds of minority governance. When people ask, "When did the new beginning start?", they will be able to pick the date of this government and say, "These were the men and women who put in place the first pieces of a social charter which became a part of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms". They will say, "They were the builders of a new Canada, of that castle on the hill".

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his speech, but I and many other Canadians have concerns about the promises being made and the apparent optimism for change and improvement. The government is talking, for example, of funding for housing and the homeless and the effect that will have, when the reality is that last winter we were moving equipment out of fire halls for a few square feet of floor space for the needy.

We are talking about funding for the military when the reality is that we have second-hand equipment, second-hand subs, antique Iltises, old ancient Hercules, 40 year old Sea Kings and promises for world trouble spots that establishing order is the first priority. The reality is that we have seen the disasters in Grenada and Haiti and the very real need for security in those areas and the lack of any efforts being made in those areas. As well, we have the other realities of the billions of dollars wasted on the gun registry and the ad scam.

The Address

So the question for the hon. member is, after 11 years of opportunity to do something in these areas, what Canadians are wondering is how is it going to be any different now.

• (1225)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for referring to me as an optimist. Yes, I am optimistic, and that is one of the reasons that I ran for election, unlike some of the members on the opposing benches who are quite pessimistic about our future. One of the reasons we can be optimistic about the future is those 11 years the member mentioned, years of markers set and achieved.

As I said in my speech, we have put the foundations in place so that we can be optimistic about the future. I said in my speech that we have a great social safety net in Canada, but people do slip through its holes. We intend to address those issues.

The member also mentioned the military. I did not speak to military issues in my speech because my primary concern is a social charter. That is what I spoke to. However, I thank the member once again for referring to me as an optimist.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his maiden speech to the House. Certainly he is a proud representative from Etobicoke Centre. I liked his comments on the social charter, particularly when he referred to housing. I wonder if the member could elaborate on that point.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj: In fact, Mr. Speaker, I used slightly different terminology. I did not just say housing; I said “shelter” because I see housing as just a component of shelter. Yes, as both members mentioned, we need to address the issue of housing. We need to address it in a much better way than we have over the past decade.

However, in regard to why I use the term shelter, perhaps this is the easiest way to explain what I mean. Some two decades ago, I had the opportunity to backpack through the Austrian Alps. It was fascinating, because in those mountains one finds communal sheds. They are there because sometimes travellers in the mountains may be caught by an unexpected storm and they can go to those shelters to find sanctuary.

In many people's lives at some point in time, there are unexpected storms. There can be situations of substance abuse, of abuse within a family context, or sometimes just unexpected occurrences like economic downturns. People require a place where they can turn to for shelter. The concept I refer to as shelter is a place in every community that people can turn to, whether it is for the actual physical shelter or also to find the human warmth and professional shelter they may require in those stormy circumstances they find themselves in.

• (1230)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and respond to the throne speech on behalf of the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands, who have given me the honour of representing them here in the House of Commons.

I am going to address a number of areas in the throne speech, starting with some of the areas in which the government is lacking or is failing to address. I am also going to talk about some of its broken promises. I also want to talk about the direction that the Conservative

Party will take and some of the amendments put forward by the Leader of the Opposition, which have recently been agreed to by all members in the House. I am also going to talk a bit about some of the more specific areas that I want to see addressed in this Parliament for the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands.

As we move forward in this 38th Parliament, though, we need to ensure that the promises that are made are kept. I will admit that we heard promises being made during the last campaign, but I have heard promises since before I was elected, going all the way back to 1993 when the government was first elected, including scrapping the GST. There is always a long litany of promises made in order to get elected, but they are never followed through on by the government. Hopefully we are going to see that cycle come to an end with this minority Parliament. I hope the Liberals will start keeping some of their promises as opposed to recycling them every four years.

I said I would start by talking a bit about some of the things that were missing. I have to say that, bar none, the single biggest issue in the past election campaign for the people of Saanich—Gulf Islands was accountability, along with honesty and integrity. There was not a place I went to in the last election where people were not telling me of their incredible frustration at how their tax dollars were being spent, and spent not just unwisely but used for political gain. A lot of people called it outright theft or they called it corruption. People were really angry. They were angry at all politicians in general. They were frustrated at seeing hundreds of millions of dollars of public money, of which the government is the caretaker, the trustee, the guardian, given off to supporters of the Liberal Party. If there was one issue that resonated right through the campaign, that was it.

Of course in my time here as a member of Parliament, I have seen scandal after scandal in one department or another, whether it be the sponsorship program, the HRDC scandal, or \$2 billion given to the gun registry. There is a long list. There was hardly a mention of this, if at all, in the throne speech. I think the Prime Minister needs to address this. He needs to assure us that it is never going to happen again. I am not convinced he is capable of doing it and maybe that is why it is absent from the throne speech.

My old boss once said to me that silence is consent. If we do not deal with something, if we do not talk about it, we are actually consenting to it. I wonder if that is why the Prime Minister has been so silent on this issue. Of course we hear more information coming out at the inquiry into the sponsorship program showing that the Prime Minister actually had involvement in it. His office knew of it. He was looking at this. I am very troubled by that.

An hon. member: Come on now.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Members on the opposite side obviously do not like this information coming out, but it is coming out from an independent inquiry. This information is not coming out from members of the Conservative Party or members of the opposition. This information is coming out of an independent inquiry. Of course they do not like it, so they make some noise.

The Address

The other area that is terribly troubling is with regard to the position we have been put in on our relationship with the United States. The throne speech indicated that we need to appeal to “shared values” and “mutual respect”, and I could not agree more. The United States is our greatest friend and our greatest neighbour. Eighty-six per cent of our trade is with the United States, with \$1.5 billion a day of two-way trade between the United States and Canada.

● (1235)

The relationship here is absolutely critical. Unfortunately, in the last 10 years we have seen this relationship not just deteriorate but disintegrate because of comments made by members of the Prime Minister's Office, which have been repeated numerous times. I will not go there, but there have been very degrading remarks made about our friends south of the border, the Americans.

We have had some pretty tough times. True friends can disagree with one another, but they have to do it in a respectful way. That has not been the case in the past and, unfortunately, we as a nation have suffered tremendously on numerous issues: from mad cow to softwood lumber, a number of trade issues, and probably more important the relationship between Americans and Canadians in general.

I travel to the U.S. a few times a year and some of the comments I hear are incredibly troubling. Unfortunately, our government did not do anything to correct this. It did not do anything to make it better. Instead, it poured gasoline on the fire. It fanned the flames. Sadly, it is happening even today.

Even in this Parliament there have been very disgraceful comments made. Americans were referred to as idiots. I want to emphasize that silence is consent. The fact that these issues are not dealt with is extremely troubling. Those are some very serious concerns I have. Hopefully the government will take them seriously and address them.

In other areas, the government has promised a defence and foreign policy review. I do not know how many times we have had reviews in the House. We need to get into an action plan. Some of the most impressive retired military people in the country live in my riding, from the army, the air force and the navy, very high ranking officials. There is a wealth of knowledge. I speak to them and a lot of them question the government's long term direction for international defence policy. I think there is a lot more that we can do.

When the government releases its comprehensive international policy statement on defence and foreign affairs, I hope that it is not another endless recycled promise. I hope that our senior military people and commanders can plan for the future and know the resources they are going to get. Unfortunately, in the past we have not seen that.

There are a couple of other areas that I think are really important to talk about once we get past the money that goes to political friends and we get into some of the unnecessary programs. One is the gun registry. There is not one person who I speak to that says this is a good thing. Nobody wants to see anyone in Canada walking the streets with guns. People never have and I suggest they never will. It is not the Canadian way. A \$2 billion database is not the answer. It is

absurd. Prior to the gun registry people could not walk around with guns in Canada, nor should they be able to.

There are a few points I want to address on our amendments to the throne speech. One is the EI fund, some \$45 billion. I am glad the government has accepted this amendment and I hope that it will heed it and not just use it for its own purposes. It is critically important that we reduce taxes for low and modest income families. There are seniors living in my riding who are below the poverty line and paying taxes. That is simply not acceptable.

We need electoral reform. Hopefully these will not be broken promises and the government will follow through. It supported these amendments and we expect to see action.

Specifically, in Saanich—Gulf Islands there are a couple of issues that are critically important. One is the missing persons DNA database. I put forward Bill C-441 in the last Parliament. I know I had the support of the former solicitor general, the member from Prince Edward Island. Hopefully the government will look at bringing this in. This is not a cost item but something that is very important and we need to look at.

● (1240)

I hope the Prime Minister comes through on another promise he made during the election. I was there with former employees of JDS. People were caught in a devastating tax situation and were paying hundreds of thousands of dollars in taxes for a phantom income that never existed. The Prime Minister promised them that he had told someone to take care of it. Hopefully it does get taken care of in this calendar year and that something is done.

I look forward to making this minority Parliament work. Canadians sent us here and expect all parties to make it work. I will do my part to ensure that it happens.

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was compelled by the argument of the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that silence is consent. I cannot sit here and be silent when I heard some of the inaccuracies and exaggerations that he made in his remarks.

I find the member's comments strange. The government has said it is going to get to the bottom of the sponsorship scandal. It set up the Gomery inquiry and day by day we get questions in the House because of the testimony of one witness. I know the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is a lawyer. Is that the way that he would conduct a review of the proceedings in a trial if it was that way? Would he pick up the testimony one day without listening to the cross examination? Would he not look at the whole spectrum and see how it would unfold?

I think it is an aberration of justice. I am sure that the member realizes that the only reason it is done is to score political points. It is quite disgraceful, frankly. We should let the inquiry do its work and wait for the outcome. We all want to get to the bottom of it.

The Address

In terms of Canada-U.S. relations, I find it strangely ironic that last week we had U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge here in Ottawa. This week we have U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft visiting us. I am not sure that the relations with the United States are as strained as the member opposite would predict.

I, too, share his concern about comments that come from whatever source and attack our relationship or make some derogatory comments about our partner and neighbour, the United States.

The other night I chatted with the U.S. ambassador. The reality is that they do not lose a lot of sleep over those kind of comments because they look to where they came from. They wish of course that the comments were not made, but I do not think it is a deal breaking type of issue.

On the gun registry, the cost of \$2 billion is totally exaggerated. It makes a nice round number that the media and opposition parties like to throw out. In fact, it is nowhere approaching that kind of figure. Would the member realize that right now the gun registry is getting about 20,000 inquiries per week from police officers? Does he know that the Association of Chiefs of Police is saying that it is a good tool, that it is helpful, especially with domestic violence situations?

How can he argue that, at a cost of \$25 million a year and a total program cost of \$80 million a year, it is not a good thing if it helps to save the lives of Canadians?

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, let me begin with the Gomery inquiry. Absolutely, we are listening to the witnesses. The information that we have seen come out on this file over the last year is all corroborating what we knew in the past.

It is important for Canadians to understand exactly what went on. There will be more witnesses coming forward. Of course, the members opposite do not like it because it makes them look very bad, but it is a very troubling file. I do not think it is responsible to minimize it and I look forward to the whole inquiry coming out. As information comes out, I think it is critically important that we talk about it. It is critically important that Canadians know exactly what went on.

With respect to Canada-U.S. relations, the member said representatives from the U.S. administration are here visiting. We have had that forever and we will continue to have that forever. They are going to come up to visit, but the member cannot deny the fact that our relationship has been damaged. To say they are just oversights, we do not really pay a lot of attention to those, is minimizing something that I think is very serious.

This has been an enormous issue in British Columbia. Every person who I talk to knows about the damaged relationship between Canada and the United States. Has it had an impact on us? Yes it has, in British Columbia on the softwood lumber file. I believe if we did not have such damaged relations we would have made a lot more progress on the BSE.

There is absolutely no question that the administration in Washington has not looked favourably on the administration here, and for good reason for some of the stuff that has gone on.

I think the member opposite is minimizing some of these things. I do not think we should, but hopefully these are tough lessons learned for us and they will not happen again in the future. It is critically important for the future of our country.

• (1245)

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with humility and pride that rise today to speak in this venerable institution. I do so fully cognizant of the enormous responsibility entrusted to me on behalf of the wonderful citizens of Prince Edward—Hastings. I am honoured to represent their views and look forward to meeting my responsibility in an honest and positive manner.

Before I begin my maiden address, I want to congratulate my neighbour, the member for Kingston and the Islands, on his re-election. I know I speak for all members when I say I can trust him to facilitate debate and not stifle opinion, to temper our emotions but certainly not our passions. The choice of the Deputy Speaker also leaves little doubt of the high regard of the House for the member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon. Of course, I extend the same confidence to the present Chair occupant.

As is customary practice, I wish to take a few moments to sing the praises of my riding. Prince Edward—Hastings is steeped in the history of our nation. Originally settled by United Empire Loyalists, it has been a home to Prime Minister Sir Mackenzie Bowell and authors Farley Mowat and Susanna Moodie. It is headquarters for the storied Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment. During the second world war the plowboys, as they were affectionately known, due to the large number of farmhands on the muster roll, fought off the Italian Peninsula before seeing action in the liberation of The Netherlands. This is but a small slice of the history of this proud and accomplished regiment.

I have been fortunate to work and travel across this great land of Canada. With all consideration to the respective opinions of my colleagues, it is my considered objective belief that this part of southern Ontario bordering on the sandy beaches of the south to the distinctive rugged beauty of the Canadian Shield in the north is unexcelled.

I am proud of the rolling farmland, the quaint shops, the expanding wineries, the beauty of the northern lakes and highlands, and into Belleville, a veritable gem of a small city. This Quinte city offers a wide variety of economic opportunity including the offices and manufacturing plants of many national and international companies.

Prince Edward—Hastings is indeed renowned for its quality of life. I spent most of my life working in and enjoying the attributes of this riding. To be able to give back to my community as a member of Parliament is truly a great honour.

It was more than 30 years ago when my riding member of Parliament of the day, Mr. Jack Ellis, said something in his maiden speech that is as relevant today as it was then. Speaking of the riding, he said "I am concerned that the bureaucracy of the government is at best totally unaware that this part of Canada exists". Well, listening to this throne speech and the debate surrounding it, I know just how Jack felt.

The Address

The throne speech speaks little to the issues that are of great concern to the people of Prince Edward—Hastings. I was hopeful that the government would move decisively to address concerns of Canadians in need. Regretfully, I was disappointed to hear a rehashing of recycled promises and of vague generalities totally void of detail. The timetable for implementation not only is far beyond its mandate, but is totally insensitive to the harsh imminent realities many of our citizens are facing.

In particular, I met with many of our agricultural producers who are in dire straits. Multi-generation farms are being forced out of business. Not only are we losing a basic industry but we are doing so with indifference to the tremendous human suffering as a result of an historic loss of life, the family farm.

We pleaded with the government to recall Parliament before October to deal with the issue of BSE. It did not. We offered a plan last February and even held a joint news conference with the opposition parties to help the government solve the crisis. These offers were rebuked. When Parliament was finally recalled I, like most Canadians, expected the issue to be a major initiative for the government. Regretfully, BSE and agriculture were given brief reference in the Speech from the Throne.

Simply stated, the government approach is too little, too late. Even within the confines of the emergency debate on BSE, I found the government attitude once again to be sadly indifferent. I say to hon. members in the House that this is just not a numbers game; it is real people with real pain.

Many farmers are waiting for their CAISP cash advances for 2003, so one can imagine how long last month's promises will take to reach the farm gates, if ever. Frankly, I am deeply concerned that the government is unaware of the fact that promises do not pay the bills for these folks. One could not help but wonder how members of the government would feel if their remuneration was subject to the same delayed timeframe.

• (1250)

Just as the throne speech barely mentions agriculture, it glosses over the abhorrent conditions of our military. Just days ago we stood here together united in grief to remember the life of Lieutenant Chris Saunders who lost his life while fighting the fire aboard HMCS *Chicoutimi*. I offer my sincerest condolences to his family and pray that this type of event never happens again.

Just over two years ago the chair of the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence visited 8 Wing, CFB Trenton, Canada's largest air transportation base. In his report he outlined a shocking neglect of the base by the Liberal government of the day. In the most damning indictment of the government, the Senator spoke of the condition of the Hercules C-130, the backbone of our peacekeeping and disaster relief assistance program. "If you look at the age of the fleet," he said, "what we are seeing here will soon become the Sea Kings next year".

In last week's *Toronto Sun*, senior analyst Howie Marsh of the Canadian Defence Association said, "Soon we should start to see the Hercules try to take off and their wings fall off". How are we to have a role of pride and influence in this world, as the throne speech promises, when our military is on the verge of complete collapse?

How are we to have a role of pride and influence in the community of nations when our government has mishandled the defence file in regard to botched helicopter deals, defective submarine purchases and obsolete military equipment? What comfort does the throne speech give to those who fly the Hercules or to my constituents who live underneath their flight paths?

There are many other concerns which I need to briefly address at this time.

In Prince Edward—Hastings thousands of jobs are dependent upon the service and hospitality business. In the ridings of hon. members across the country hundreds of thousands of jobs depend upon the success of our domestic and international tourism market. Yet not even a word of reference was given in the throne speech to an industry that attracts well over 20 million visitors per year. Sadly, the government has jeopardized the tourism industry by extending insult to our biggest market, our neighbour to the south. A more positive, mature approach would help to create a more welcoming environment.

Accountability and integrity are the cornerstones of a civil society. Accountability is not wasting \$2 billion on an ineffective gun registry. Accountability is not wasting hundreds of millions of dollars in sponsorship scandals. Accountability is not wasting \$500 million in penalties for cancelling helicopter deals. Accountability is understanding that this is real money we are talking about, money from hard-working Canadians. Imagine the positive effect it would have if it were spent on real priorities.

Sadly, Canadians today see their government subject to numerous investigations: the political investigations of the public accounts committee; the criminal investigations, numerous ones, of the RCMP; and the legal investigations of the Gomery inquiry. They are suspect. When their government knowingly keeps information from the public accounts committee prior to the election and yet miraculously millions of pages of information are forwarded to the Gomery inquiry after the election, no wonder cynicism reigns supreme in the public.

In closing, I would like to address an area of concern upon which I hope to have a positive impact during my time here as an MP. I believe that we as members have not just a commitment but a vital responsibility to restore public confidence in the institution of governments. We must reverse the declining role of voter participation in our electoral process. However, democracy will only succeed if people have faith in the system. I challenge my colleagues here today to expand their vision for Canada. Perhaps if we take more time to consider the grander consequence of our actions, not just simply the optics of the polls, but the overall impact on democracy as a whole, we can begin to win back the respect of Canadians. We should all remember the words of M. Russell Ballard who stated, "It may not always be easy, convenient, or politically correct to stand for truth and right, but it is the right thing to do. Always".

The Address

•(1255)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings on his maiden speech.

In his talk he mentioned that he was formerly part of the hospitality industry. Could he explain to us aspects of the throne speech which were missing or which he would like to have seen that would help this sector that has suffered greatly from the impact of SARS, West Nile virus and, of course, the negative comments we hear from the government side?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, I have spent over 30 years in the hospitality business, working as an active operator. I also have been involved in many organizations and fraternal groups that are directly involved. As well I have taught hospitality in some of our local and provincial institutions. In so doing one comes in contact with people who are in this business on a daily basis. Over this past while particularly, I have personally, in concert with many of my colleagues, watched the decline in the tourism market. It was not just SARS related; it was an attitudinal difference.

I have travelled as well to other parts of the world, particularly into the U.S. I have seen an attitude that used to be warm and welcome, now one of suspicion and hostility. There is nothing wrong with standing up for our country, our beliefs and our method of operation of business, but it should be done in a different manner. A manner of courtesy and respect carries a lot more weight than one of arrogance and indifference.

We have seen to much of that out of the present government. I certainly hope that if one build bridges, one builds a country, a nation and international respect. We used to have that and we were so proud of it. I am very disappointed with what has taken place in this last half a dozen years.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member on his election to the House of Commons. I look forward to debating him on all kinds of issues.

Every chance I get, I like to remind the Conservatives that when they were in government from 1984 to 1993 the cuts to the military were already starting. They cut bases in the military. They cut the number of people in the armed forces. All Mr. Chrétien and the Liberals did when they came into power in 1993 was reform the former Conservative Party policies. They increased the cuts to the military tremendously. I am glad to hear the member stand up for the military. He talked about Prince Edward—Hastings and the people who liberated Holland. That is where I was born. Probably some people in his riding liberated my mom and dad, for which we are forever grateful and thankful.

One of the issues I have with him is our relationship with the United States. As members know, we have had NAFTA challenge after NAFTA challenge, time and time again. The United States seems to think it can keep Canada on the ropes when it comes to BSE and softwood lumber. If the member were prime minister, what would he do to resolve the issues, sooner rather than later, of softwood lumber and BSE?

Mr. Daryl Kramp: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I might even be directly responsible for the member being here. My father served, and served

well, in Holland in the second world war. Perhaps his activities were involved. I was not even a glimmer or a thought at that time, so I could not verify that issue.

With regard to the military, I suppose we could all go back 10, 15, 20 and 30 years and shed blame on who said what or why should we do which. The fact remains that we have to deal with the realities of now. We have to deal with the realities of tomorrow.

When I take a look, I can go back and say that the hon. member's party has been almost dedicated to eliminating the military on many occasions. I am not particularly happy with that frame. Perhaps now we are around to a different line of thinking. If we are, I would certainly welcome some good communication back and forth.

However, I believe we can communicate well on a friendly basis and we can exchange ideas and articulate positions if we have a level of communication established. However, if there is no level of communication established because there is no respect for another position, then nothing gets accomplished.

I respect the member's position and I hope the respects mine, but we have to carry that forward to our international partners. We cannot do it by sticking a finger in our eye and saying that we now want to talk.

•(1300)

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, may I start by congratulating you on your position and all your fellow Speakers, as well as all my colleagues in the House who have returned and those newly elected.

I would like to thank my family for the support they have given me over the past 11 years while representing the Kitchener—Waterloo riding as the member of Parliament.

As I stand to speak in the 38th Parliament of our country, I cannot help but think of the many constituents I have, and every member has, to represent here. I want to thank them for placing their trust in me, as I am sure is the same with every other member who occupies this place.

If I think back 11 years, when we were first elected to government, one of the biggest problems we had in the country was the level of the national debt and a deficit of \$42 billion. At the time, with the exception of Italy, we had a debt load that was the second highest in the G-7. Italy had the highest debt load.

This coming year we will end up having the lowest debt load. We have eliminated the \$42 billion deficit and we have started making substantial payments on the national debt, which to me is a real pay off to the hard work of Canadians. It means that Canadians no longer have the biggest expenditure that we make as a nation, and that is interest payments to finance that debt.

The riding I represent really points to the excellence of our post-secondary institutions. It also points to the need to continue to support our post-secondary institutions. My riding is home of the University of Waterloo which began in 1957. In 1957 the population of Waterloo was something like 15,000 people. The university grew and so did the city. The population of the city of Waterloo is now over 100,000 people.

The Address

We are also blessed with Wilfrid Laurier University, as well as a campus of Conestoga College. Therefore, when I talk about the new and emerging economy, my community is at the forefront of the new economy.

We have other industries besides educational industry in my riding. Many of them have grown from the universities. We are a leader in the area of insurance, having the home offices of Manufacturer's Life and Sun Life of Canada. We have a chamber of commerce. We have a high tech association of industries known as Communitech. We also have Canada's technology triangle which encompasses the Waterloo region.

When we saw that we were making headway with getting the fiscal order of the country in shape, one of the first things we did was start investing in research and development to assist emerging Canadian knowledge based companies that were coming into their own and developing in Canada. We made sure that these companies could grow in Canada and become world leaders.

In my community, in particular, we have many of these companies. One of the smaller companies is Micohealth, which involves new technology information to deal with health problems such as diabetes. It is an emerging company. As well we have Mitra and Agfa which are leading providers of imaging information systems for health care enterprises. Also, DALSA Corporation has digital imaging technology. Dspfactory is in audio processing and is responsible for the best in hearing aids, which more and more of us will be needing or are using now.

• (1305)

We are home to Raytheon Canada which does radar installation at airports around the world and has invented over the surface radar for maritime surveillance. We also have Sybase for managing unwired enterprises, as well as Open Text, which is the world's largest search engine for corporations. It is like Yahoo, but its clientele are corporations. Of course many members in the chamber are familiar with Research in Motion, which makes the world famous Black-Berries that many of the members have.

What is so wonderful about those companies is that they are the payoff that we get for investing in research and development. I think that is something very wonderful.

On October 1, I, along with one of the principals of those companies, Mr. Mike Lazaridis, attended the opening of Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, a research centre for pure physics. Mr. Lazaridis, who came to this country in 1966 as a six year old Greek refugee from Turkey, personally donated \$100 million to have this institute started.

The Prime Minister, who was at the opening, talked about the importance of knowledge. He said "Sovereignty in the future will depend on the capacity of a country to demonstrate to the world that its brainpower, its ability to look into the future, is as great if not greater than the others. I think Perimeter Institute stands for the kind of Canada we want to build".

When Mr. Lazaridis made that \$100 million donation to the research institute, it was the single largest donation to a research facility.

The throne speech talks about modernizing the Citizenship Act that we have as Canadians. First let me say that this is a promise that I hope we will discharge, and I hope we will discharge it with another component of the throne speech which talks about the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because this is of great importance to Canadians, particularly those Canadians who were not born in Canada.

I came here in 1957 following the Hungarian revolution, which will be celebrating its 48th anniversary on October 23 of this year. I adopted Canada and Canada adopted me. I have really been blessed to be part of this country. However the reality is that under the current Citizenship Act my rights to my citizenship are not covered in legislation that respects the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly section 7. I look forward to working with the government to make this happen. I am very pleased that I am the chair of the citizenship and immigration committee.

When I look around this chamber, we have 39 members who were not born in this country, which is really wonderful because it is a real testament to this country as to how a person can come here as an immigrant or refugee and be elected to this chamber. Of the 39 members, 23 countries are represented.

I look forward to working with members from all sides of the House, particularly on the issue of citizenship because it is an issue around which we should not have partisanship. We all recognize the importance of immigration to Canada. We are either immigrants or we are descendants of immigrants. I really look forward to this 38th Parliament.

• (1310)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, being the chair of the citizenship and immigration committee, I have a specific question for the member. In Halifax we have the case of Sanja Pecelj, a woman from Kosovo who came to Canada and had to seek sanctuary in a church. After 400 or more days she left the church but the government still was not moving on her case so she ended up going to Mexico in order to reapply to enter Canada.

She had a job lined up, she is fluently bilingual and she would have been a great asset to the country, but we made her and others like her across the country go through hoops and unbelievable hurdles in order to achieve their goal of coming to Canada as a bona fide and legal immigrant.

Is the member aware of that case? Will his committee, which is obviously a master of its own destiny, be looking into situations such as hers in order to reduce the efforts of that heavy burden of Canada's immigration laws when it comes to someone of her particular stature?

The Address

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, probably one of the most challenging aspects of our job as members of Parliament is to deal with those kinds of cases, as well as visa cases. Certainly the committee will be looking at how to improve the situation and how we can modernize the whole process of immigration. We want to meet the goals that we as a country must meet in terms of our targets for a number of new immigrants, particularly because of the decline of our birthrate in this country and the demographics.

Future workforces will depend more and more on new immigrants coming to this country and becoming part of the Canadian family.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the late Pierre Elliott Trudeau had a vision for our country that every citizen would be treated equally. At a young age, it was the idealism of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms that encouraged me along the path that has brought me here to the House.

Could the member for Kitchener—Waterloo tell us how our process of denaturalization and deportation undermine our Charter of Rights and Freedoms?

Hon. Andrew Telegdi: Mr. Speaker, I was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in 2000 when we were dealing with the Canadian Citizenship Act. I resigned over that issue because to me it did not respect section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is the legal section of the charter.

Basically the legal section of the charter outlines that if someone is charged with an offence or charged with having committed fraud that there is a very specific way that the government has to proceed.

Unfortunately, the current Citizenship Act does not respect section 7 of the charter.

Justice Robert Reilly, a Superior Court justice ruled in January of this year that section 7 of the charter must apply to citizenship and citizenship revocations.

I really look forward to bringing a new Citizenship Act in compliance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

• (1315)

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise in the House today to comment on the throne speech and my home riding of Kenora. I thank my colleague for sharing his time with me today.

First let me thank the voters of the Kenora riding for entrusting me with this great privilege of serving their interests. It is with great honour that I undertake this important task.

As some may know, the riding of Kenora is vast. It consists of close to 80 communities spread over 300,000 square kilometres. This riding is the largest in Ontario and the eighth largest in Canada. Add to this the fact that most of the riding does not have road access, one can begin to see some of the challenges that we face.

We have a habit in northern Ontario of turning challenges into opportunities. Our communities come together in hard times and we pull through difficult challenges with a renewed sense of accomplishment. This is a testament to the strength and commitment of the people of the riding.

Let me tell the House a little more about the uniqueness of the Kenora riding. We have 38 first nation communities that make up more than 50% of our population. When I travel to these areas I am always amazed by their pride and wisdom. They believe in the government and they believe we can make things happen for their communities.

The difficulties that these Canadians face each day would be hard for many of us to understand. These are small, isolated towns hundreds of kilometres from most of the services that we all take for granted. Most have nursing stations and schools but lack proper facilities. Housing is overcrowded and underfunded. The rates of diabetes, fetal alcohol syndrome, HIV and suicide are alarming. This is not acceptable in our Canada.

However, we have made progress. Last month the Prime Minister and aboriginal leaders from across the country met to establish priorities in order to effectively address the needs of all aboriginal communities. We have earmarked \$700 million which will provide for greater health care and other initiatives in these communities.

For years aboriginal communities have advocated the need for assistance that was driven by the communities themselves, citing the effectiveness of these types of programs. I have witnessed the success of these programs. For example, the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation in Sioux Lookout, along with the support of the provincial and federal governments, are working together to establish a health care centre designed to fit the needs of their communities. I applaud their efforts and diligence to have this project succeed. I also applaud the federal government for realizing the importance and value of this integrated approach. This refocus in the way we provide services represents a new chapter for our country.

Yes, there is opportunity in the Kenora riding. Literally hundreds of thousands of square kilometres in northwestern Ontario are undiscovered. This is an area dotted with aboriginal communities that are awaiting the day for resource sharing agreements that will allow development to move forward. They want to be an active part of Canadian society.

With cultural sensitivity and cooperation from all levels of government, we can accomplish this task. When we open up our great north in the Kenora riding with sound environmental practices and sensitivity to all our citizens, we will become a major economic force. The opportunity for all natural resource based companies will be incredible. Local employment opportunities will rise and the standard of living will also rise. All communities will benefit as we bring our part of Canada into the mainstream of Canadian life.

The Address

Many of our communities, like Sioux Narrows, Ear Falls and Sioux Lookout, are great places to live. They enjoy nature at its best, but all would benefit from more development. Areas like Pickle Lake have survived for decades with only the benefit of short term mining operations for gold and other minerals, but it is essential to encourage more stable development in our area. In Red Lake we have the richest gold mines in the world. Right now this community is benefiting from a mining boom as new shafts are being sunk. New technology has created great interest in this area and worldwide expertise is being employed to make plans for more gold production.

Along the Trans-Canada Highway we have communities like Ignace, Dryden, Machin, all self-sufficient in their own way but all eager to see opportunity and development move forward. Our largest centre is the city of Kenora situated on the majestic Lake of the Woods. This is truly one of the great lakes in Canada and is shared everyday by thousands of tourists and residents alike.

● (1320)

In my riding of Kenora there are thriving pulp and paper mills, sawmills, agriculture, mines, a dynamic tourism industry and many more opportunities that are dependent upon our environment. Over the past few years we have faced challenges with regard to the natural resources sector.

The acknowledgement in the throne speech of the particular challenge that the northern region faces within the national economy makes me hopeful. Furthermore, the development of the first ever comprehensive strategy for the north is an exciting step forward for our region.

The people of Kenora take great pride in their environment. We are connected to our environment. The protection of our surroundings is paramount. The throne speech outlined environmental protection as a priority while maintaining our place in a worldwide economy.

The greatest priority of our riding, however, has to be health care. With the great distances we face between communities, the small populations and extreme weather conditions, accessibility to proper health care is important for all our citizens. It is a challenge for our riding.

It is important to realize the unique circumstances in the riding of Kenora. The shortage of doctors and nurses is alarming. The delivery of essential health care procedures is not always available. We need to look at innovative solutions that will positively impact health care in the north. For example, telehealth, long distance medicine and video conference capabilities can put the experts of the world in touch with our communities. Kenora has just received its first CT scanner and along with the PACTS system, we can see the benefits for our citizens.

The throne speech means that Canadians who live in the north can get access to the best diagnosis. For everyone to live to their full potential and enjoy all that this great country has to offer, we must make health care our first concern. The 10 year plan that has been agreed to by the federal government and the provinces addresses this concern. We hope that this will be the change that we have been waiting for.

In the riding of Kenora we believe in the throne speech. We believe it is a step forward for our communities. We believe it is a step forward for Canada.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the new member for Kenora, a beautiful riding, and welcome him to the House of Commons. I also wish him well.

He talked about development for his riding. When one represents a riding as diverse and as rural as his, who could not agree to having economic opportunities so that youth in his area will not have to go somewhere else. We in Atlantic Canada know that problem all too well.

We on this side of the House have been pushing for a long time for a proper shipbuilding policy. We were quite pleased to hear the Minister of Transport talk about the need to assist Bombardier and Canadair in the development of aerospace technology and the aircraft industry. We in the New Democratic Party agree with that. It is a good idea to use Canadian tax dollars to keep Canadians employed and competitive.

The problem in Canada is that the government does not apply that same ethic to a shipbuilding policy. New military vessels are needed. Coast Guard vessels need to be replaced. The lakers on the Great Lakes need to be replaced. The ferries on both coasts need to be replaced. All of that work could be done right here in Canada.

In 2001 the then industry minister, Brian Tobin, had a task force made up of industry and labour and invited it to go across the country to develop a shipbuilding policy. That task force produced a very good report, "Breaking Through", one which we on this side of the House support. The problem is the Liberals put it on a shelf and have kept it there.

If the Liberals are going to apply that type of strategy to the aerospace industry, would my colleague not think it prudent that they also apply that same ethic and same standard to a shipbuilding policy as well?

Mr. Roger Valley: Mr. Speaker, it is true that in northern Ontario we can do pretty well anything but I am not sure we can build the ships that he is talking about. We are kind of landlocked.

We believe in development. We believe there is a place for government in development. We have to look at all plans and all aspects and do what is best for the people of Canada. I would be proud to be a part of that operation.

● (1325)

Hon. Joe Comuzzi (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to compliment the member for Kenora on his maiden speech. He was very accurate when he explained his territory and the area it represents so well. It is in the centre of Canada and it is truly, during the summertime in particular, a real tourist attraction, as are the winter activities. He comes from one of the largest, nicest and most scenic areas in all of Canada.

The Address

I was interested in his remarks with respect to long distance health care. Having visited with the member, I wonder if he would expand on what it is that long distance medicine is able to do in an area like Kenora which has 10,000 people. How does it facilitate our medical system to offer diagnostic services in all the small regions of the area that he represents?

Mr. Roger Valley: Mr. Speaker, this technology has really opened up the north for us. Every community is brought into the mainstream of Canadian health care with the imaging that can be provided these days with the cameras. An image of a patient in Muskrat Dam or Webequie can be sent to Kenora to get opinions from doctors in Kenora. The imaging can be easily transferred to Timmins or any other centre in the world that has this technology. Not only are people able to get first opinions and second opinions, but they can get whatever it takes to provide the proper diagnosis for that individual who is hundreds of miles away from the nearest health care facility. A decision can be made whether to treat the injury in the community where the patient resides or whether to remove the patient from that community.

This is a step forward. The people of the north are used to this technology and they want to use it. It is up to us as a government to make sure they have more access to it.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be speaking in this assembly for my maiden speech. I want to thank all of the voters of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre for the trust they placed in me in sending me to this very honoured assembly. It is a matter of great pride knowing that I will be speaking on behalf of my constituents at every opportunity in this assembly.

The riding of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre is like many in Saskatchewan. It is comprised of a split between the urban portion and rural portion of the province. In my particular case it is about 65% urban encompassing the northwest quadrant of Regina, and 35% in the rural portions of the riding. In typical Saskatchewan flavour we have a number of unique communities named for some reason that I am not familiar with. There are communities like Tugaske, Marquis, Eyebrow, Bethune, Craik, Nokomis, Davidson, Regina Beach, Lumsden and Craven.

The one thing that I found during the most recent election campaign was that regardless of where I campaigned, whether it was in the rural portion of the riding or whether it was in the urban portion of the riding, three issues consistently came to my attention. These three main issues were ones that we heard whether it be from a housewife in Regina or a farmer in the rural portions of the province. One thing that all of our voters had told me explicitly was that when I got to Ottawa, I was to make sure that I did not forget these issues because they were the ones they thought I had to take to the government to pressure it into changing its attitude, approach and way it dealt with these issues.

The first issue is one of government accountability. Prior to the election, we all heard and we were all brought into the light of what was happening with the sponsorship scandal. This was probably more of a lightning rod for discontent with most of the people in my riding. It typified the approach the government has had over the last 10 or 12 years when dealing with taxpayers' dollars.

The sponsorship scandal was something that enraged people in Saskatchewan and particularly in Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre. They felt it was nothing but another example of a government that did not respect taxpayers' dollars, and felt it could do whatever it wished with our money. The people in my riding said to me in no uncertain terms to make sure I got to the bottom of this.

Well, we have heard many things from the Prime Minister and the government in relation to the sponsorship scandal. The most startling in my mind were the comments made by the Prime Minister prior to the election after the sponsorship scandal came to public light through the Auditor General's report. The Prime Minister of the country said, number one, "I am mad as hell" and number two, that we would not have an election until we got to the bottom of this scandal.

What happened? Not only did we not get to the bottom of it, but the Prime Minister called an election in the middle of testimony before the public accounts committee. There were over 70 witnesses left, yet the Prime Minister deemed it necessary to call an election when there were too many unanswered questions. Those questions have yet to be answered but we are finding out more and more about the sponsorship scandal.

That exemplifies the problem with the government. It speaks to a government that does not care about its taxpayer. It speaks to a government that wishes to hide more than divulge. It speaks to a government that is corrupt. I think history will show that the government, in the 37th Parliament at least, was the most corrupt in all parliaments in Canadian history.

We have to do something about government accountability, yet in the throne speech there was no mention of it. There was no mention of taking steps to curtail the abuse of taxpayers' dollars. That is just tragic because before the election, everyone in this assembly knows that had there been a vote in January or February, prior to the release of the Auditor General's report, prior to the discussion about the sponsorship scandal, if we believe the polls, we would be looking at a government that would have had perhaps 250 Liberal members and the rest of the seats divided among the other three opposition parties.

What happened? What happened is the people of this great country of ours finally started to understand what it was like to have a government that did not respect them. They became very angry about this and it was reflected in the results of the last election.

● (1330)

However, it is not just what was discovered before the election, but what we have discovered since. Since that time, with respect to the sponsorship scandal we are starting to get more information from the Gomery inquiry, information that is extremely troubling because, number one, it is starting to point the finger at the Prime Minister's Office. We have found out only in the last 10 days to two weeks, according to witnesses testifying at the Gomery inquiry, that someone from the Prime Minister's Office made a phone call to the sponsorship's administration branch back in 1999, inquiring on the status of a grant application.

The Address

The grant application of course came from a very well known Liberal supporter. Lo and behold, after that phone call there was a grant awarded to this very group. This is not to suggest that the Prime Minister had any undue influence on the granting of that particular request, but it does speak to the fact that our Prime Minister, it appears, had once again misled the public. Prior to the election he said he really had no knowledge of what was happening in the sponsorship scandal, or at least with the events surrounding the sponsorship scandal, yet it appears that he must have, because one of his aides made inquiries.

The recipient of this money was a well known Liberal who eventually, two, three or four years later, hosted a major fundraising event for the Prime Minister following his successful leadership campaign. This does not sit well for anyone in my constituency, because again it erodes the confidence in this government. It reinforces the belief that this government is one that is corrupt. It reinforces the belief that this government does not care for taxpayers' dollars. This is something that I was told in no uncertain terms: to come to Ottawa and at every opportunity speak out against this flagrant abuse and the lack of respect for the taxpayer.

However, it is not only in the sponsorship scandal that we have seen these examples of government abuse. We have seen it every day in this House since we reassembled. We have seen an example where the former heritage minister spent \$55,000 of taxpayers' money flying during the election campaign to the Banff film festival to deliver a highly partisan speech. Clearly that is against election laws, yet there has been nothing done about it. What makes matters worse is that this same individual, while defeated in the general election, is now the principal secretary to the current Prime Minister. All that says is that this government not only condones the actions of individuals like that, but rewards them after the fact.

I raised questions in this assembly over the last two weeks about a different couple of ministers who, it appears, again contravened election laws by bringing paid ministerial staff into their home ridings during the election for what appears to be nothing more than electioneering work or campaign work. That is against the law. Yet again, the members opposite have no idea of what was done wrong. The minister of heritage, whom I questioned, was totally dumbfounded and said, "I reported all the expenses. It is on my web page. What is the problem?" The problem is that they have to start respecting taxpayers' rights and this government has no idea of how to do that.

Second, if I may use a sports analogy for a minute, if anything typifies the TSN highlight of the night when it comes to taxpayers' abuse, it is the gun registry. There is no one in my riding who has anything good to say about the national gun registry. The interesting thing is that most urban women, who are not firearm owners, are as upset as anyone because they see the flagrant abuse of taxpayers' dollars. Over \$2 billion has been spent on this program to date. Even though the government states that it will be capped at \$25 million a year from here on in, we know that is also a false and misleading statement. It will be closer to \$100 million on a go-forward basis, for what I can only categorize as a total waste of taxpayers' money.

● (1335)

Finally, the last thing people told me was for me to come here to Ottawa and make sure the government understands the serious crisis we have in agriculture. This throne speech had one word about agriculture, one word and nothing else. Precious little. We must make the government understand that agriculture is a Canadian priority and has to be treated as such.

I have just been reminded, and I should have dealt with this at the outset of my address, that I am pleased to be splitting my time with the hon. member for Dufferin—Caledon.

Finally, let me just say this. With all the examples I have given, whether it be abuse of taxpayers' dollars, disrespect for the taxpayers, the national gun registry or a lack of respect for Canadian agriculture and agricultural producers, I am a believer in one thing. I truly believe that every Canadian, or at least the vast majority of Canadians, understands the difference between right and wrong. And I am a firm believer that the members of this assembly absolutely know the difference between right and wrong. If we do nothing else but simply this, that is, enact legislation in this coming parliamentary session that is the right thing to do, then perhaps history will record that the 38th Parliament will go down in history as being one of the most respected parliamentary sessions in history.

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, regarding accountability, the fact that this government called an inquiry I think shows the Prime Minister's commitment. He moved very quickly to call the inquiry, and a public inquiry.

My good friend from Dufferin—Caledon, who served with me in Ontario, will be speaking next. He will remember that in Ontario we had two incidents. One was the Walkerton situation and the other was the Ipperwash situation. At the time I was speaker and I watched while the opposition asked two successive premiers to call public inquiries on those two issues. They did not do it. Eventually it was done on Walkerton and when the new government came in it did so for Ipperwash. That contrasts with the leadership of this Prime Minister, who moved very quickly, right away. He said it did not matter who was involved, whether or not it was anybody within the Liberal Party. He called the inquiry.

I contrast that with the situation of Ipperwash in Ontario. I will not get into details, but there were allegations that the premier's staff was involved. This Prime Minister Minister moved very quickly and said, "We are going to get to the bottom of this". That, sir, is accountability.

The Address

I would ask the hon. member to comment on that as well as the balanced budget. There have been seven straight balanced budgets. Again, my friend from Dufferin—Caledon, who also served in the Ontario legislature, will remember that the government of the day left a \$5.7 billion deficit. Serving as speaker, every day I heard the opposition say to the government that it had a \$4.5 billion deficit. The minister of finance said there was no deficit. After the election there was a deficit of \$5.7 billion.

In terms of accountability, this government moved very quickly on the Gomery inquiry and I think the Prime Minister should be commended for that. Second, how does the hon. member account for the fact that this Prime Minister, when he was Minister of Finance, cleaned up a mess, quite frankly, of \$40 billion left by the previous government?

• (1340)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Number one, Mr. Speaker, let us deal with accountability. It appears to me that again this is typical of the Liberal response. Rather than taking responsibility for their own actions, they first try to deflect it by saying, “Yes, but we are not as bad as those guys”. That is what they have been doing historically: they do not take account of and responsibility for their own actions.

But let us talk about accountability. While the hon. member says this Prime Minister should be applauded for his quick and decisive actions, again, let us go back to what the Prime Minister's words were prior to the election. He said, “I'm as mad as hell and I will not call an election until we get to the bottom of this”.

What have we seen? We have not got to the bottom of this and yet we have had an election. Why is that? It is for one very simple reason, in my view: because the Prime Minister knows that some of the information coming out of Gomery is going to implicate members opposite and is going to be extremely embarrassing and politically damaging to the government of the day. He did not want to have that happen and then call an election, because he would have risked losing even more seats than he did.

Is that something to be applauded? Is that accountable? I do not think so. There is an old saying in politics, “I say what I do and I do what I say”. If the Prime Minister lived by that credo, perhaps then I could stand up here and say that I applaud the Prime Minister. He said one thing and did another and that is not something to be applauded or rewarded.

With respect to the seven straight balanced budgets, I would like to point out one thing. We have also had a series of over-surplus projections. Well, let me rephrase that. We have two finance ministers, both the current and sitting Prime Minister and the current finance minister, who since 1997 or 1998 have been under-projecting the budget surplus. So yes, while it is great to stand on that side of the House and say, “Is it not wonderful to have had seven consecutive balanced budgets?”, we have also had a situation wherein the government and the two finance ministers in question have been misleading the public, again purposefully in my view, about what the true budget surplus situation is.

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has been examining the budgets for the last several years and it has always come in with its projections far closer to the actual budget surplus than the government has. It has access to the same information the

government does, and perhaps even less information, yet it is able to do this and this year it was almost spot on.

Why is that? Because the government wants to play fast and loose with taxpayers' dollars. It projects a \$1 billion or \$2 billion surplus at the end of the year. It is usually \$6 billion or \$7 billion above that, so it can use the money for what it wants, and it does not consult with the Canadian people. That is not being accountable. That is not something to be applauded. I think the government has to be held to account for both its financial management and the accountability it has lacked over the past 10 or 12 years.

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what a pleasure and an honour it is for me to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

I would like to thank the constituents in my riding, the new riding of Dufferin—Caledon, for the trust that they have placed in me to deliver their message to the House of Commons. I will endeavour to serve my constituents to the best of my ability, always aware of my responsibility to them.

Dufferin—Caledon is a diverse riding combining rural, urban and suburban communities. Dufferin County is made up of the five townships of Amaranth, East Garafraxa, East Luther-Grand Valley, Melancthon and Mulmur, and the three towns of Mono, Orangeville and Shelburne.

Caledon is a geographically large town in the region of Peel. It is basically the northern geographic half of the region of Peel. It is made up of a number of smaller communities including Bolton, which is the largest, Caledon East, Inglewood, Palgrave, Cheltenham and Alton, to name but a few.

Dufferin—Caledon has outstanding and diverse geographical characteristics, such as the Niagara Escarpment and the Oak Ridges Moraine. The headwaters of four of southern Ontario's river systems have their origins in Dufferin—Caledon: the Grand River, the Humber River, the Nottawasaga River and the Credit River. Rich agricultural croplands allow for a diversity of crops, including potatoes, corn, soybeans and barley. The lands support a variety of livestock such as beef and dairy cattle, hogs, chickens, sheep, goats and horses.

The Hills of Headwaters Tourism Association markets the treasures of the riding as being just outside Toronto's back door. These include downhill and cross-country skiing, world class golfing, the Bruce Trail for hiking pleasures, hunting in our forests and fishing in our rivers.

The industrial sector of Dufferin—Caledon encompasses manufacturers of components for the Canadian automotive industry; a thriving plastics and manufacturing sector, including the manufacturing of sophisticated, state of the art injection moulding equipment; and a large number of small and medium size manufacturing companies in the larger centres of the riding.

The Address

The throne speech is proof of William Shakespeare's observation that there is nothing new under the sun. When does the government get beyond its old promises and begin to envision a country with a government that leads its citizens and takes its rightful place as a leader in the international community? How many times must we sit through a Speech from the Throne only to hear the latest reiteration of the same old promises? With the passage of time, the lustre comes off these same old promises. Yesterday's vision belongs to yesterday. A promise of a health care plan for a generation suddenly shrinks to a health care plan for a decade.

Canadians had an opportunity to make their voices heard this past June. They chose to elect a minority government which would reduce the amount of power that any one party had in the hope that it would result in the introduction of some new ideas and a fresh vision that would move Canada in a forward direction.

New ideas are not what Canadians are getting with the throne speech. It is left to opposition members like me to report back to our constituents and explain why the government has so little interest in the challenges facing the rural constituencies of Canada.

As I mentioned in my opening remarks, Dufferin—Caledon consists of many farms and many farm families who have been farming for generations, although there are not as many as 10 years ago. Like the rest of the country today, we have fewer farmers doing more, but for how much longer?

Farmers in my riding talk about their concerns for their industry. They are increasingly telling me that for the first time in the history of their family business they are losing equity. They are worried about the future of their livelihood and the country's future ability to feed itself. With the average age of farm operators in the riding of Dufferin—Caledon now being 52, an age when they should be planning for retirement, they are left wondering if there will be anything left to retire on.

• (1345)

Canada was founded on the principles of agriculture. It is one of the four main industries on which our country was built. The recent throne speech promised nothing but a few words on the recognition of the importance of reliable access to U.S. markets. At least there was no speculation that the border would be opened sooner rather than later.

International borders were shut down due to one cow that carried BSE. It is 16 months later and the borders are no closer to being opened than they were months ago. How can we believe that anything will be done given the lack of prominence provided to BSE in the throne speech?

BSE is given a few words in one paragraph in the speech, and the government is asking Canadians to trust that it will be building on successful smart borders initiatives and on measures to develop a more sophisticated and informed relationship involving business and government officials in the United States. My constituents can take little comfort from this tepid mention masquerading as a plan or a strategy to get the border with the U.S. open. It is neither.

Given the fact that my riding of Dufferin—Caledon is situated at the source of four southern Ontario river systems and significant

aquifers, the natural environment of the riding requires an informed and dedicated stewardship.

I am disappointed to see that the environmental portion of the speech is a collection of promises made in earlier years with delivery dates in 2005, or start-up dates in 2006 and 2008 or at some other distant date in the future. When it comes to an environmental plan, Canadians deserve more than platitudes and a promise of some vague action some time in the future. Our environment requires action now.

Having outlined solutions to all of the challenges facing the government in areas traditionally recognized as being matters of federal responsibility, the throne speech proceeds to offer solutions for some areas in the provincial domain with a new deal for cities and communities, and the often talked about national child care program.

In government circles this is probably what passes for thinking outside the box. Given that municipalities exist at the pleasure of the provinces, surely any new deal should rightfully be orchestrated by them.

Last month I met with the warden of Dufferin Country, his worship Keith Thompson. The purpose of Warden Thompson's meeting was to advise me of the county's needs for a continuing and significant infrastructure investment by all levels of government, municipal, provincial and federal.

The warden pointed out that the rural municipalities' need for investment in roads and bridges, and water and sewage upgrades was outstripping their ability to keep up. He told me that one of the local townships had closed a road because it could not afford to replace a bridge that was no longer serviceable. In the small community of Marsville, residents now face the extraordinary situation of having annual water bills that exceed their yearly property tax bills. These are just two examples of the need for traditional infrastructure programs in rural Canada.

Canada's rural communities are much more than a rich resource of natural resources and our cultural heritage. Some 40% of Canada's exports and 24% of our country's gross domestic product are generated by rural Canada. Investment by governments in rural communities make good business sense in that 40% of all of Canada's exports are generated by rural Canada. This is an impressive contribution to the prosperity of our country.

Rural Canada's ability to continue to make contributions at this level is very much in question, which brings me to the second reason for Warden Thompson's visit. The warden reminded me that the great disadvantage of rural communities is the digital divide that separates rural and northern communities from our neighbours.

S. O. 31

•(1350)

In the 2001 Speech from the Throne, a commitment was made by the Liberal government of the day to work with the private sector to achieve the goal of making broadband access to citizens, public institutions and all communities in Canada by 2005. That has not happened and I do not see any sign in the last throne speech that it is going to happen. The throne speech reminds me of Samuel Beckett's play, *Waiting for Godot*.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Dufferin—Caledon on his first speech in the House.

I noticed in his speech there was a passing reference to the environment and his concerns about environmental protection. I want to ask him what his commitment to the Kyoto accord is. I think most experts agree that we need to address Kyoto and the issue of greenhouse gases. Certainly in a recent report the OECD has condemned Canada's record on dealing with those issues.

I am not sure that his party is committed in that respect and I would like his response to that.

•(1355)

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, that is an issue with which many of us had to deal during the past election. It is a concern that all of us have with respect to our environment.

With respect to Kyoto, absolutely nothing has happened. It is said that Kyoto is the answer, and parts of it may be. We are prepared to take action on this side of the House with respect to smog, water and general pollution, but the government is not. The government says it is going to support Kyoto. The Russians came out with something the other day and said that they were going to follow it. They all jumped up and said that they are all for it.

What has happened? Absolutely nothing has happened. The Conservatives are prepared to take action to deal with all of the environmental problems that I suggested.

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, adding on to the question of the hon. member from the New Democratic Party, he raised the issue about the Kyoto protocol. I would like the member to expand on that.

My recollection is that during the election the member's party indicated there was no support from the Conservative Party with regard to the continuing efforts and involvement in the Kyoto protocol. At this time the member is pointing his finger at us on this side of the House. Perhaps he would like to go further. There is condemnation on us, but there was a position taken quite to the contrary, and I do not know if it was by the member personally or the party. Would the member wish to comment on that?

I have a supplemental question on rural issues, too.

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, I can only say that I have been waiting for a response from the government as to how it is going to deal with this. How is it going to deal with smog and the environment?

The government says it is going to support Kyoto, that it signed the agreement and it is going to reduce all of the environmental

problems in this country and around the world. When is it going to do something? When is it going to take action?

The answer is it does not seem that the government is going to do anything. It keeps saying that it is going to do this and it is going to do that. It is no different from the throne speech. For heaven's sake, do something.

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental question is that the hon. member addressed the elements about the rural and agricultural issues, about which he is very clearly concerned. He referenced the minimal words in the Speech from the Throne. It is very clear that our government is working very productively. We are working with the various ministries and communities.

Is his concern the fact that it was only mentioned in what he considers a minuscule way in the throne speech or are there some concerns about the issues and approaches being taken by the government?

Mr. David Tilson: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member was listening because that was the major crunch of what I was trying to tell the House.

I will deal with two issues. The first one is the BSE issue. I do not know how many members over there represent rural communities, but we have a serious problem in this country with respect to beef. Farmers are calling me and telling me they are using their equity to feed their animals and perhaps that can be done if they can see the end of the tunnel. However, the farmers cannot see the end of the tunnel. This is a serious problem.

I now have people asking if they can get tax relief when they are forced to sell their farms? That is how desperate it is getting. To simply mention it without a concrete plan is absolutely inexcusable.

This is why I made the reference considering what the agricultural community has provided and will provide in the future. Surely to goodness the government can be a little more respectful to the farmers who keep this country going. Surely we have not become one big urban city where we are going to put all our ideas into the big cities.

With respect to other issues in rural Canada, I talked about infrastructure. I mentioned specifically one township where a bridge could not be fixed. The township does not have any money to fix the bridge. What does it do? It closes the road.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

•(1400)

[English]

SHARON NELSON

Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the passing of Sharon Nelson, née O'Donoghue, of the Village of Keene in the Township of Otonabee-South Monaghan, Ontario.

Sharon, a most vibrant person, was wife of Dave, mother of Stephanie and Jason, and grandmother of Syndey. She died of cancer. Sharon was dedicated to her family and to the Village of Keene. She was very active in the Lioness of Keene for more than 20 years. She had a 100% attendance record, was twice president, and she served the club and the community selflessly.

She was the local representative of the city county disaster trust fund, responsible for the care and relief of victims of fires and other disasters. An artist in her own right as a member of the Kawartha Guild of Folk Painters, she was particularly active in the "Keene on Keene" beautification committee.

Sharon will be greatly missed. I extend condolences on behalf of the House to Dave, her children and their families, and to her extended family.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is something terribly wrong in Canada and the government is not moving to address the issue.

Thousands of people have been affected with hepatitis C from tainted blood and are refused compensation. The government drew an arbitrary line in the sand to determine who would get compensated and who would not.

Now those who did not get compensated have a miserable, painful existence through no fault of their own. They will experience severe fatigue, swelling of the liver, nausea and weight loss, and these are just the physical symptoms. These victims also experience mental anguish and frustration over the way they have been ignored by the government for so long.

As Canadians we are a compassionate people by nature. I find it troubling that some of our own citizens needlessly suffer when there is a way to mitigate their misery.

I urge the government to provide these victims with access to the compensation fund. Stop playing politics with people's lives. The government must compensate these hepatitis C victims. It is the right thing to do.

* * *

[Translation]

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition mixes with a curious group of people. We know he likes to form alliances, like the one he just formed with the sovereignists that almost derailed the work of this House.

Now he is negotiating another alliance with the Action démocratique du Québec. If his party were in power, he would probably have already granted Quebec independence without further ado. We understand that the Leader of the Opposition is feeling the heat of not having a single MP from his party elected in Quebec. This is no doubt a reflection of his profound ignorance of Quebec.

S. O. 31

Allow me to clarify his most recent flirtation. Action démocratique du Québec has a grand total of five members in the National Assembly and therefore does not even have official party status.

Birds of a feather stick together. The Leader of the Opposition has at least three things in common with Mr. Dumont: general unpopularity in Quebec, an extremely ambiguous attitude toward the Constitution, and a penchant for two-tier health care.

* * *

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this morning Dr. Dyane Adam, the Commissioner of Official Languages, tabled her fifth annual report in which she expresses her concern that restructuring at Air Canada has slowed, if not reversed, the progress made by the airline with respect to official languages, as she had mentioned in her last report.

The Commissioner says she is continuing to work actively with Transport Canada authorities so that Air Canada, regardless of the result of restructuring, will always be governed by the Official Languages Act.

The Bloc Québécois shares the commissioner's concerns and will ensure that the Minister of Transport takes the appropriate legislative measures in order to protect the language rights of the public and the airline's employees, whatever the company's eventual structure.

* * *

• (1405)
[English]

DRYDEN REGIONAL TRAINING AND CULTURAL CENTRE

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the opening of the Dryden Regional Training and Cultural Centre. This project is an amazing achievement for the community of Dryden. Through hard work and cooperation the centre will be opening tomorrow to provide services that are in great need in our community.

I would especially like to recognize the organizations that came together and worked tirelessly to see this project come to fruition: the Keewatin-Patricia District School Board, Confederation College, the City of Dryden, the Dryden Entertainment Series and the Keewaytinook Okimakanac First Nations with the assistance of the federal government.

I commend all these organizations for this initiative that will no doubt have a tremendous impact on our community. Individuals like Geordi Kakepetum, Dave McLeod and Bill Dawes were inspirations for all involved in the community.

Congratulations.

* * *

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. Paul Forseth (New Westminster—Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have heard the throne speech. Where are the big ideas to inspire a nation? Where is the vision to elevate this country to new levels of citizen involvement?

S. O. 31

My former high school teacher and political mentor, Mr. Morrison McVea in New Westminster, still warms to the vision of a more democratic Canada. Some day Canada might become mature enough to have a full participatory democracy. These are concepts that he has worked for since the earliest days of his teaching career and for which he had special, brief hope during the reform party days of this chamber.

Mrs. Dorothy Tompson at 88 years, in New Westminster, British Columbia watches the parliamentary channel and hopes for a full accountable democracy for the next generation.

Canada needs a springtime of ideas as democracy should not be a distant season.

In view of the collaborative vote yesterday, we will help the Liberals in their winter of discontent with empowering possibilities of a Conservative springtime of ideas.

* * *

RAMADAN

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House for the first time and I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family and the wonderful people of Mississauga—Streetsville, and the hundreds of volunteers and others who worked so tirelessly and selflessly to make it possible for me to be here today. I intend to work hard to keep their trust.

I would also like to take this opportunity, on behalf of all members in the House from all parties, to extend our warmest greetings to over 600,000 Muslims in Canada celebrating the holy month of Ramadan.

May their prayers for happiness, prosperity, health and peace in the world be fulfilled. God bless us all. God bless Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]**RELIZON CANADA**

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the 2004 competition for the Grands Prix québécois de la qualité, the Drummondville branch plant of Relizon Canada received an honourable mention in the major manufacturer or branch plant of a major manufacturer category.

This honour from the Mouvement québécois de la qualité, in conjunction with the ministère du Développement économique et régional et de la Recherche, is in recognition of the plant's strong focus on quality.

The jury based its decision on such points as the high degree of customer satisfaction, the company's quick order processing times and the professionalism, talent and commitment of its employees.

The purpose of the Grands Prix québécois de la qualité is, I would point out, to recognize private and public sector businesses and organizations that have achieved the highest quality standards in all their spheres of activity.

[*English*]**THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac there is a unique and natural treasure. The Meduxnekeag Nature Preserve is home to old growth hardwood forests, and rare plants and flowers. The guardians of this amazing resource are the dedicated members of the Meduxnekeag River Association.

The Meduxnekeag River Association is committed to preserving the untouched splendour of this valuable resource. The importance of the association's work was recently recognized by the New Brunswick government which presented the association with an environmental leadership award.

The Appalachian hardwood forests in the Meduxnekeag Nature Preserve had almost disappeared after 200 years of industrial growth. The Meduxnekeag River Association has worked tirelessly to raise funds and increase awareness to ensure that this natural gem remains for generations to come.

Congratulations to the Meduxnekeag River Association and its supporters for giving the residents of Tobique—Mactaquac a chance to experience this unique gift of nature.

* * *

● (1410)

TRANS-CANADA HIGHWAY

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his letter last month to the Mayor of Salmon Arm the present minister of highways stated:

—highway segments that comprise the Trans-Canada Highway, with the exception of components in the national parks, are within the jurisdiction of the Province of British Columbia. The province is responsible for the design, construction, and financing of the Trans-Canada Highway within its provincial boundaries.

It is not fair that Canada's national highway should be a provincial responsibility except in national parks. Despite the billions of dollars flowing into federal coffers from fuel taxes, much of the Trans-Canada Highway from Chase in my riding to the Alberta border remains a killer highway where hundreds have been killed or injured since the Liberals took office in 1993. Think of the suffering as well as the health care costs a safe highway could prevent.

When will the government accept full responsibility for funding Canada's national highway and make it safe for the travelling public?

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as most people know, when one door closes in life, another one usually opens, but it is odd that the Conservatives and their leader would take this motto to the extreme.

On Friday the Leader of the Opposition decided to slam the door on traditional Canadian federalism while thrusting open the door to a constitutional debate, which no one in Canada wants to see. That party has also closed the door on accountability to the Canadian people. That party not only wants to weaken the federal government, but wants to devolve power to unaccountable, unelected institutions that will speak for Canada.

The speech has confirmed that the Conservatives will continually close doors to opportunities that Canadians want while continuing to flirt with reopening constitutional debates, not for the good of the nation but only for the good of the party.

With policies like this, the Conservatives opened the door that leads down the path of their predecessors: the Reform, the Progressive Conservative and the Alliance Parties.

* * *

SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is Small Business Week, an opportunity to reflect on that part of the economy closest to our communities, whose health and viability is a measure of the health and strength of those communities. Small businesses reflect the cultural mosaic and distinct character of each and every community. They have personalities. They have local faces.

More women now own and work in small businesses than ever before, contributing more than \$18 billion to the Canadian economy every year. Women are running more than 700,000 small businesses across the country, roughly 30% of the total. They are bringing a new strength, a new way of doing business, one that is focused more deeply on making their communities work for all.

Yet like all women in the paid labour force, they face greater demands and reap fewer rewards than their male counterparts. Many are juggling work and family responsibilities with few benefits and little security.

New Democrats have called for a strategy to strengthen the environment for small business, and today call for a renewed effort to bolster support for the women who own and work in small businesses across Canada.

* * *

RAMADAN

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Muslims around the world are celebrating the holy month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the ninth month of the Muslim calendar. The month of Ramadan celebrates when the Holy Qur'an "was sent down from heaven".

The fast of Ramadan lasts an entire month. It is a time when Muslims concentrate on their faith and spend time with their families and communities.

During Ramadan, strict restraints are placed on the daily lives of Muslims. They are not allowed to eat or drink during the daylight hours. At sundown the fast is broken with a prayer and a meal called *iftar*. After the meal Muslims spend time visiting with family and friends. The fast is resumed the next morning.

S. O. 31

Ramadan is a time to focus on family and faith. I hope all Canadians take time to experience and learn more about the Islamic faith. On behalf of the official opposition, I would like to wish all my Muslim brothers and sisters a very successful Ramadan and a joyful celebration of Eid.

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[*Translation*]

EYE HEALTH MONTH

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during this, Eye Health Month, I am pleased to have this opportunity to draw hon. members' attention to the important work of the Fondation des maladies de l'oeil. This not for profit organization collects funds with the help of numerous volunteers for research on diseases of the eye.

The organization's mission is three fold: to prevent eye disease and blindness; to promote an interest in research; and to inform and educate the public.

Over 250,000 Quebeckers have vision problems that cannot be corrected with eyeglasses, and this is why research into cornea disease and transplants is so important. There are many degenerative diseases that affect vision: glaucoma retinal degeneration, which is linked to ageing and diabetes; and amblyopia. Three people in a thousand, in fact, are considered legally blind.

My congratulations to those behind the foundation, its volunteers, and the research teams working so hard to find treatments or cures for diseases of the eye.

* * *

● (1415)

[*English*]

NATIONAL CO-OP WEEK

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year cooperatives and credit unions celebrate National Co-op Week. This year Co-op Week is being held from October 17 to 23. This year's theme is "Youth: The Future of Cooperation". The theme recognizes the fact that our young people will be our leaders of tomorrow.

For many decades the Saskatchewan Cooperative Youth Program has been in the forefront in developing leadership among young people.

Milton Friedman, the world famous economist, has stated that voluntary cooperation, that is individuals working together for their own betterment, is the backbone of a free market economy.

The cooperative movement has contributed much to the Canadian economy, and in so doing has improved the quality of life for all Canadians. I know that all members will want to offer the Canadian cooperative movement our congratulations for so many accomplishments.

*Oral Questions***SMALL BUSINESS WEEK**

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 2004 marks the 25th anniversary of Small Business Week, from October 17 to 23.

In 2001 the Royal Bank of Canada, Canada Post and the Economic Developers Association of Canada proclaimed the Brampton Small Business Enterprise Centre to be “the best economic development program in Canada”.

Sandra Hames is councillor for wards 7 and 8 in the city of Brampton. She is also chairman of the city's economic development committee.

Councillor Hames is visiting the House of Commons today. I would like to join my fellow MPs in honouring her and the city of Brampton for their efforts at promoting small business in our community.

● (1420)

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): No, Mr. Speaker, the question is why the Prime Minister thinks he can use Gomery as a cover for answering his own questions. He should be accountable for his own behaviour in the House of Commons.

The Prime Minister said on February 12, at the mad as hell press conference, “It's very important for public confidence that as Prime Minister I be clear about the degree of my knowledge of this matter”.

Who made the call from his office to Alfonso Gagliano? Tell us now.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We will have a little order in the House. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services, a very popular minister, is rising to answer the question and we will want to hear the minister's answer.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find the question curious, coming from the Leader of the Opposition. When his party called for the Gomery commission, the Prime Minister responded with a full judicial inquiry. We are cooperating, not prejudging that inquiry. In fact, on September 8, the Leader of the Opposition is quoted in the *Hamilton Spectator* as saying “I think [Gomery] is the best chance at getting some answers”. We in this party agree with him. That is why we are cooperating, not prejudging the work of a judicial inquiry.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I support Gomery, and I still want the Prime Minister to answer questions in this House about his own behaviour.

Let me go over the facts again. Serge Savard, a friend of the Prime Minister and political fundraiser, raised \$1 million. The Prime Minister's Office made calls to get \$1.25 million for his company from the sponsorship program, a company with close ties to his right-hand man, Francis Fox and to André Ouellet, and by the way, whose son was a Liberal candidate. When will the Prime Minister get up and answer these questions directly? Who made the call?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I still cannot understand why the Leader of the Opposition does not understand the importance of respecting the independence of a judicial inquiry. Further, the Leader of the Opposition has some questions to answer as to why he equivocates about defending Canadian institutions like Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but is all too fast to embrace Belgian institutions. That hon. member, if he does not answer those questions, is the Belgian waffler of the House of Commons.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no amount of rhetoric is going to avoid what is obvious and that is the Prime Minister refusing to answer questions on his own conduct. I will say why I think the Prime Minister does not want to answer about who made these calls. I think the Prime Minister made these calls himself.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the election, the Prime Minister said that he did not know anything about the conduct of the sponsorship program. It turns out he knew enough for his office to phone Alfonso Gagliano and secure \$1.25 million for a company with connections to his own political fundraiser, Serge Savard.

Who in the Prime Minister's Office made these calls?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all questions having to deal with this issue are very important. That is why the government set up the Gomery commission, which is in the process of dealing with them. The hon. member knows that all these questions will be answered at that time.

This is a very serious thing and I appreciate the hon. member's question, but also, I spent a lot of this morning studying the Belgian constitution. I thought that is what the hon. member might have asked me about.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is not good enough. This Prime Minister is supposed to stand in the House and answer questions on his own conduct and do it today, not months from now at the public inquiry.

No going to the junior guy. This is a job for the guy at the top. Is the Prime Minister saying that he does not know or that he will not tell us? Who made the calls from his own office?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister set up a judicial inquiry into this matter. This Prime Minister takes this issue very seriously. The question is why would the Leader of the Opposition not allow the judicial inquiry to get at this matter? Let it deal with it. That is where the answer lies. That is the way this thing should be handled and it should not be a question of base partisan politics by the Leader of the Opposition.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

The office of the Prime Minister called Alfonso Gagliano to ensure that the sponsorships would be given to his friends.

Who made that call?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, the Prime Minister was aware of the sponsorship program. All members of Parliament were aware of the sponsorship program. In fact, I have a letter here from the member for South Shore to the minister of the day seeking funds for a project in his riding from the sponsorship program. Ridings from all parties, including my riding, and I was in the Progressive Conservative Party, the party that no longer exists, but the fact is we received funding in my riding from the sponsorship program.

I do not understand why he will not allow Gomery to do his work.

* * *

[Translation]

AIR CANADA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, prior to the election, when the Bloc Québécois called upon the government to take action to ensure that Air Canada, when restructured, would continue to provide services in French, the Liberals replied in the House that there was no need to amend the legislation. The Commissioner of Official Languages still has had no guarantee from Transport Canada and she told us so today.

Since these are real worries, is the government going to enact a law to ensure that the new Air Canada and all its subsidiaries will be subject to the Official Languages Act as Dyane Adam is asking?

• (1425)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we did not wait for the report by the Commissioner of Official Languages. As soon as we saw the new structure for Air Canada during the—

An hon. member: What about WestJet?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, could you get that bad-mannered character to be quiet?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport has the floor. I am sure he can continue despite the other comments.

Order, please.

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, we have decided—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Jean Lapierre: We know they are not interested in the French language and not interested in Quebec issues either.

The leader of the Bloc Québécois has a legitimate question. Yes, we want the Official Languages Act to be respected in Air Canada's new structure because we want to maintain the status quo for the protection of both official languages.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that is a very welcome change, because the former Minister of Transport, now the House leader, told us there was no need to change the law when we submitted the same structures to him as has just seen the current minister.

When we talk about changing the law, do we mean Air Canada and all its subsidiaries providing service in French, and not only that, but also keeping the headquarters as it is, with the maintenance services and the 2,000 jobs in Montreal? We mean the whole package, not just a part.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in effect, the new structure of Air Canada makes it necessary for us to look at each element to make sure that the protection provided under the Official Languages Act throughout the entire structure will be respected, even regarding the headquarters and facilities. The legislative protection that existed in the past will be there in the new legislation.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister must know that the restructuring of Air Canada is a source of very serious concern, particularly in the Montreal area, where the company is headquartered, but things could change considerably following this potential restructuring.

What assurances can the Minister of Transport give us that not only will the company's headquarters remain in Montreal but that it will not become another empty shell, its workforce and decision making power having been decentralized to subsidiaries outside Montreal?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think that the hon. member is right to be concerned about a new structure that could change the situation. That is why we are currently reviewing every detail of this new structure, to ensure that vested rights are respected and that the effective headquarters remain in Montreal.

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. Minister of Transport is prepared to ensure that the maintenance centre remains in Montreal, can he give us the assurance that it will be one as big as the current one, which provides some 2,000 jobs, so that we do not end up with five people left at this centre, while all the others are located outside Montreal?

What assurances can he give us?

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I imagine that the hon. member realizes that Air Canada is a private company. I have no intention of taking over the administration of the company and saying that x number of jobs, a minimum level of jobs, have to be guaranteed. No minimum level or increment was ever guaranteed.

It could be 3,000 workers. But we really have to trust the management of a private company. We can impose certain legal obligations, but we cannot run the company in their place. It is, after all, a private company.

Oral Questions

[English]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learn that up to \$50,000 in so-called fringe benefits were paid to former corporate lobbyists who are now working in the Prime Minister's Office. In fact, while still on the corporate payroll, one of these individuals was earning up to \$91 an hour from the government at the same time, working apparently on the forest file.

Can the Prime Minister tell the tens of thousands of workers who have been thrown out of work and who used to earn \$19 an hour why she was worth so much money?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone knows, this was funding by the department to FPAC, an independent group, and the decisions as to how they spent their money were determined by them. This is an industry that employs 250,000 Canadians. It is an \$11 billion industry with \$7 billion of that going to the United States. It is an industry which is absolutely critical to our future. This is why we will continue to fight the softwood issue.

• (1430)

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Prime Minister's Office is becoming a halfway house for recovering corporate lobbyists, and that's the truth of the matter.

The fact is that some of Canada's biggest polluters and biggest privatizers have made their way right inside the heart of the Prime Minister's Office and are now shaping public policy. Canadians do not appreciate that. They do not like government being run that way. Maybe the Prime Minister's campaign could be run that way, but the Government of Canada should not be.

Will the Prime Minister support, immediately, legislation that provides for a cooling off period for lobbyists coming into the government?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this was an industry-led effort. An audit was done and it was determined that the funds were spent in accordance with the agreement that was made with FPAC.

* * *

[Translation]

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before the election, the Prime Minister told whoever wanted to listen that anyone knowing something about the scandal should speak out against it or resign. It seems that the Prime Minister's own entourage did not hear his message very clearly.

In light of recent revelations, will the Prime Minister admit that he himself knew perfectly well what was going on in Mr. Gagliano's office?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very important to respect the independence of the Gomery commission. We should not prejudice its work. I am looking forward to its report, but we must wait.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the shipping magnate, not the fridge magnet.

Material tabled at the Gomery commission was denied to the public accounts committee. The pre-election Prime Minister said, "the government will ensure that every single piece of information and every fact on this matter are made public as quickly as possible".

The Gomery commission received the Bourgon memo, the Calcott complaint, the strategy to strengthen the Liberal Party in Quebec, documentation linking the Prime Minister's Office to the sponsorship scandal, all information withheld from the public commission. Why did the Prime Minister hide under his desk and not disclose this before the election?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is, the Prime Minister commissioned Gomery to do his work and gave Gomery a strong mandate and significant resources to complete the work. The only reason that hon. member can actually ask questions about today's testimony or yesterday's testimony or any testimony is the fact that our Prime Minister set up Gomery to do the right thing and get to the truth.

We in this party and in this government understand the importance of judicial independence and to support Justice Gomery and not to interfere with his work.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, setting up Gomery does not preclude this Prime Minister from standing up and telling the truth like he told Canadians he would do before the election.

Before the election the Prime Minister said he was going to reveal all. He was going to tell everybody everything that he knew, but now we have the lame excuse coming from the public works minister, saying that because the public accounts committee did not ask the right questions, that information was not forthcoming before the election campaign. That just does not cut it.

When is the Prime Minister going to be a leader and stand up and tell the truth?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the government has responded to and will continue to respond to all information requests both from the public accounts committee and from Justice Gomery's commission, commensurate with each body's authority and consistent with the laws of the land.

The fact is that this cooperation is one reason why the Information Commissioner has lauded our Prime Minister and has lauded the government for its openness and transparency with all the information.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, talk about drinking the Kool-Aid, I cannot believe how completely this minister has fallen in behind the Prime Minister. The truth is that this is a question that only the Prime Minister can answer. The Prime Minister made a commitment before the election campaign saying that he would leave no stone unturned and he would reveal all. This is his chance.

Can he tell us why exactly he did not tell us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what he knew and when he knew it until well after the election campaign? In fact, he is not even telling us the truth today. Why?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1435)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat would not want to suggest that the Prime Minister has not said something. I do not know what the hon. member for Medicine Hat was referring to, but he knows that all hon. members tell the truth and there is no need to suggest otherwise. I am not going to ask him to rephrase his question. We will deal with it after question period and he will want to withdraw and contemplate in the meantime what he is doing.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has acted significantly, first of all, to end the sponsorship issue and, beyond that, to move swiftly with the Gomery commission to get to the truth. That is why the Information Commissioner says that there are early and positive signs that this government will be sufficiently self-confident, courageous and honest to beat the secrecy addiction to which other governments typically fall victim.

We are acting on this side of the House, in this party. We are not afraid of the truth and we would urge similar courage in that party.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, the government indicates that it will pursue its efforts to open the U.S. border to Canadian beef and resolve the mad cow crisis. Far from reopening, the U.S. border is once again being closed, this time to Quebec and Canadian pork producers.

What does the government intend to do so that pork producers do not quickly find themselves in the same difficult situation as cattle producers?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in anticipation that there may be a problem, I met with my provincial colleagues a month ago. We had some very in-depth discussions about this issue. I will be meeting again with relevant ministers on Friday to continue the discussion on the types of actions we may want to contemplate. In addition to that, I will be meeting with representatives from the industry next week and we will also be having a discussion about the appropriate measures that we ought to be taking.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is time for action, not empty rhetoric. As regards this specific issue, the Minister of International Trade cannot even rise to tell us what type of actions he can take regarding the pork issue.

Will the government admit that swift and energetic action must immediately be taken and that the Prime Minister himself should meet with the President of the United States immediately after the

Oral Questions

American election, to ask him to put an end to this protectionist attitude of our neighbours in all areas?

[English]

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most important issue in this respect is to make sure that we assist the producers in the challenges they face. As the Minister of Agriculture, I am very much committed to ensuring that takes place. Part of the strategic approach, of course, is to deal with the issues the Americans have brought forward. We do not believe they are justified and we will certainly, within the power and purview of the federal government, take the appropriate action.

* * *

[Translation]

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the Americans continue to hurt our trade in connection with softwood lumber, mad cow disease, and now pork, the Government of Canada is doing nothing and showing its lack of backbone in the matter of textiles.

How can the Government of Canada justify not even applying the provisions available under the WTO and refusing to put any measures in place to protect the textile industry, by imposing temporary limits on the importation of fibres already being produced in Canada?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as everyone is aware, we have already given the industry over \$50 million to help it solve its problems. Obviously, protective measures can still be put in place against Chinese imports.

Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ): Mr. Speaker, all too often, the textiles that compete with our products come from countries where child labour is exploited.

Will the government admit that, if Canada were today a signatory to the fundamental conventions of the International Labour Organization, it could at least intervene to get these countries to cease these practices and thus provide our textile industry with somewhat better protection against this disguised dumping?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very important point. I met yesterday with the Retail Council of Canada. It has adopted standards to ensure that issues such as child labour are dealt with and that Canadian importers do not bring those materials into Canada. If that is being done, we certainly want to know about it because we do not want the products of child labour in our country.

*Oral Questions***GOVERNMENT GRANTS**

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the leadership hustings, the Prime Minister vowed “We will put an end to cronyism”, which brings us to a certain \$17 million grant to an industry group, which, it just so happens, hired a senior member of the Prime Minister's transition team to head its government relations, Ruth Thorkelson. The money from the grant was used to pay her an additional \$15,000 on top of her regular salary.

Is it not true that she succeeded in getting the \$17 million grant because she was so close to the Prime Minister?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the hon. member, that is utter nonsense. The reason FPAC was funded is that softwood lumber is so important to all Canadians: 250,000 jobs, an \$11 billion industry. We are going to support that industry and we will continue to.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, other valued industry groups are not so lucky in the grant department, are they?

The Prime Minister is sending the alarming message that one's best bet to get a government grant is to hire Liberal cronies and reward them handsomely for their Liberal connections. Canadians call that cronyism and it destroys fairness.

Why is the Prime Minister playing the same old cronyism game after he absolutely promised that he would clean things up?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, FPAC is the primary voice for the forest products industry in Canada. We are supporting the forest products industry and we will continue to do so.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier this year the Prime Minister said that anyone who knows anything that could help shed light on the sponsorship scandal should come forward and not be compelled to do so as they will. We have learned that somebody from his office called Gagliano's office to secure \$1.2 million in financing and the man who controls that company raised \$1 million for the Prime Minister's leadership campaign.

He can run but he cannot hide. Will the Prime Minister tell us who in his office made that call, or did he make that call?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would not be responsible of us to comment on the day by day, play by play testimony in front of an independent judicial inquiry because today's testimony could be contradicted by next week's testimony. It will only be when Justice Gomery tables his whole report that Canadians will have the truth on the sponsorship issue.

We are looking forward to that report. I would urge the hon. member, if he has information, to submit it to Justice Gomery, because his party has intervenor status at those hearings.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following is what the minister said about his boss last year:

He is hesitant, timid, risk-adverse...he runs from a debate, he does not want to take a stand on anything...That is how shallow he really is.

How true he was. I guess that explains why the Prime Minister will not stand in his place.

The Prime Minister said “There had to be political direction. I don't know who it was”. Now we do know. It came from the Prime Minister or it came from his office. Which was it? Was he complicit or was he incompetent? Who gave the political direction from his office?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can understand why those people are so bitter over there. They have not had a good line since I left.

The fact is I am proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with the Prime Minister as he works to improve openness and transparency of government and cooperate with an independent judicial inquiry that he himself set up because he is not afraid of the truth. Our party and our government are not afraid of the truth. I would urge similar courage over there.

* * *

● (1445)

PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the President of the Treasury Board.

Residents in Ottawa—Orléans have expressed their concern to me about the delays of reaching an agreement with the Public Service Alliance Commission. I understand that we have reached tentative agreements.

Could the minister tell the House why it is taking so long to ratify these agreements?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the public servants who worked so hard to get us to this point. They worked into the Thanksgiving weekend and today they are preparing the documents necessary to distribute to all of the members of PSAC so they can have all the information before they participate in this vote.

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[*Translation*]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the Commissioner of Official Languages tabled her annual report. She said that the Liberal government was slow in implementing the action plan for official languages. This is a five-year plan, and we have already lost a year. We have to ask ourselves whether this government truly respects the Official Languages Act.

Oral Questions

My question is for the Minister responsible for Official Languages. When will the government seriously take steps to implement its action plan?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for Official Languages, Minister responsible for Democratic Reform and Associate Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is very serious about implementing the action plan for official languages. The Speech from the Throne, moreover, is proof of the government's willingness to fully implement the action plan. This action plan has been in place for a year and a half. Many departments have implemented it admirably, but others still have some more work to do. I look forward to tomorrow, when we vote on the Speech from the Throne, to hear every member in this House give their support to the action plan. The House can be sure that the government will implement it.

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[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is reported that the U.K. has reached a deal with George Bush to place interceptor missiles on British soil.

It is time the government stopped pretending that participation in BMD will cost us nothing and will not involve missiles on Canadian soil.

Before any decision is made to participate in Bush's missile madness, will the government assure Canadians that they will have their say through cross-country hearings and that no vote will take place in Parliament until after those public hearings have been held?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the committee will decide what it decides to do in terms of the hearings. I will not begin to run the committees of Parliament. It will be up to the committee to decide. We have committed to a discussion and now a vote in Parliament, so there will be an opportunity to do this.

We have a responsibility as a government to pursue the dialogue with the Americans. We are talking here about the security of our continent. We will not disengage from this most important dialogue on the fundamental issue of the defence of North America.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, underfunding by the Liberals has left defence in dire straits. There are not enough people to do the jobs, equipment is rusting out, airplanes do not fly and trucks do not move. It takes 10 years to get used submarines in service.

Will the minister explain why the government is investing less in the military today than it did 10 years ago?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I pointed out in the House last week, some \$10 billion of new money has been invested in the military since 1999. Commitments have been made under the instructions of the Prime Minister of some \$7 billion for important equipment purchases, including new maritime helicopters, sea-going ships, a mobile gun and other important equipment.

The House and the committee will have an opportunity to review our defence review. As members of the House, we will have an opportunity to review this, but the army, the navy and the air force are being equipped by the government to do the job we ask them to do.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the severe consequences of chronic underfunding is the decay of the defence infrastructure. The prime example is married quarters. There are thousands across the country, the bulk of which are over 50 years old. A very large number are substandard, needing immediate refurbishment or replacement.

Will the Minister of National Defence confirm that he will invest what it takes to ensure that sailors, soldiers and aviators do not live in slums?

• (1450)

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many of our servicemen and women choose to live on base because they wish to live on base. They are not living in a slum. I think that is an inaccurate statement. We are providing housing to our personnel. We seek at all times to improve the quality of that housing and will continue to do that.

Let us not exaggerate things in the House to make it look as if our military personnel are living in slums. It is inaccurate, it is not fair to them and it is not fair to our country.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 1, 2001, the current Minister of Public Works told the House "I do not think there is a better example of a case where public policy was sacrificed on the altar of political expediency than the case of the cancellation of the EH-101 helicopter contract". He sharply attacked the Liberals' handling of the file saying that it "smacks of partisan politics and Machiavellian manoeuvring at the expense of our brave men and women in uniform", one of those good lines he was talking about.

Yesterday he told the House that "an open and fair procurement policy has been put in place". We are talking about the same file, the same member and the same issue. What happened?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the deputy leader of that party called the leader ill-informed and antagonistic.

If we really look at it, the most important priority here is to ensure that the brave men and women in the Canadian Forces have the helicopters they need.

This Prime Minister has responded. We have had a fair procurement process. I am pleased to say that the best possible helicopter was selected for the best possible value for the Canadian taxpayer.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, and that helicopter will arrive in 2010, just in time for the Vancouver Olympics. Thank you very little, Mr. Speaker.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Something else the Minister of Public Works said about a colleague is, “Now that he is well muzzled and wearing Liberal glasses, everything looks rosy.” So the minister is selling the procurement policy as transparent and fair.

Is the minister politicking or is he simply blinded and muzzled by his new Liberal master?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered those types of questions but it gives me an opportunity to talk about some of the very positive changes that are occurring in Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

We have an ethics and integrity package that has been rated by the Conference Board of Canada as the best practice model for both the private sector and the public sector. Beyond that, we are putting in place changes to our procurement processes, IT strategies, as well as ensuring, on a day to day basis, whether in real estate or procurement, that Canadians have the best possible services and the Canadian taxpayers have the best possible value for their money.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment has declared that he did not see any purpose in holding a debate to determine whether Canada can achieve its Kyoto objectives.

When the minister states that we must utilize best practices, are we to understand that he intends to continue making concessions to the oil, natural gas and coal industries, as in the past?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker. What I am saying is that we must take action, using the best methods to obtain the best results. That said, Canada is very lucky to have oil, coal and many other natural resources underground.

Six per cent of our GDP comes from oil. If we are able to increase equalization payments in a few weeks, it will be thanks in large part to the oil-rich soil of Alberta.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has become a promoter for the oil industry. That is what he is saying today. The only plan the government has implemented so far is polluter paid, by making considerable financial concessions to the oil industry.

Is that not the real reason the minister refuses to hold a debate—because he does not want to enforce the polluter pays principle? That is the reality.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): No, Mr. Speaker. In fact, I am very eager to act. I have never been afraid of debate; I am ready to debate this if the hon. member wants to. It is action that interests me primarily.

As for the oil industry, of course, like all the others, it must make an effort. I am just glad to be sharing a country with Alberta. This arrangement helps Quebecers pay for better environmental policies.

* * *

● (1455)

[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it appears that the government has another case of “surplusitis”.

Yesterday the Minister of Health said he is looking at sending our surplus of flu vaccine to the United States. Then, in the same interview, he said there is no need to talk to the Americans about it.

When the minister stops flip flopping like he did last week on the hepatitis C compensation, could he tell the House how big the surplus of flu vaccine is and how many doses he has promised to send to the United States?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I cannot accept the concern that the member exudes about public health care when his party unduly muckrakes about the Gomery inquiry every day.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The Minister of Health has the floor. All members will want to hear his answer.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, I would have happily answered the question earlier, in the first few minutes of question period. I will try to do so now.

We said to the Americans that our first priority is to deal with the safety of Canadians and the availability of the flu vaccine for Canadians. If there is an ability on our part to share flu vaccine with the Americans, we will do so.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that answer makes me sick. I think the minister could use the vaccine.

If I know the government, I would not doubt that it is trying to put this surplus against the debt. However, the final decision on sharing publicly purchased vaccine is up to the provinces.

Has the minister talked to the provinces about their surplus, or is this just another foray into provincial jurisdiction by the government?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the supplies of vaccine are purchased by the federal government in a bulk fashion and then they are handed over to the provinces. They administer them. We said very clearly that if there was a surplus in Canada beyond our needs, we would be happy to share it with our neighbours.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The topic of refugees comes up regularly in the media, and the public is wondering about the future of our refugee protection system.

Could the minister tell this House what she intends to do to meet the challenges of that situation, which concern the whole country? Could she also indicate what this government will do to strike a balance between the protection of genuine refugees under the definition of the Geneva convention and those who abuse our system?

[English]

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my government's intention to consult with Canadians, refugee advocates, and other interested parties on how we can better meet the challenges that are facing our government.

Canada is well known as a world leader on human interventions. We will deal with the challenges that are facing us. It is time for us to have a system that more appropriately deals with the needs and the realities of the 21st century while at the same time ensuring that we protect those most vulnerable and persecuted across the world.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister stated many times that no stone would be left unturned to get to the bottom of the sponsorship scandal. Now we find that millions of stones were left unturned. Ten million pages of information were hidden and kept out of the election debate.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Why did he mislead Parliament and the public by failing to deliver the documents to the public accounts committee before the election?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the government has responded to all requests for information from both the public accounts committee and the Gomery commission. We have and will continue to respond, commensurate with the legal authority of each and consistent with the laws of the land.

● (1500)

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would be nice if the government would deliver all the documents because it did withhold documents from the public accounts committee.

The documents were asked for by the public accounts committee before the election. The government deliberately withheld the documents before the election and from the election debate.

My question for the Prime Minister is clear. Is his commitment today any better than the commitment that he made before the election?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is just plain wrong in making those allegations.

The Prime Minister acted swiftly to end the sponsorship program and decisively to go forward with the Gomery commission. He ensured that Justice Gomery had the resources he needed to fulfill his important mandate.

I cannot understand why the hon. member is making those allegations that are false when in fact we have cooperated fully with Justice Gomery and with the public accounts committee, and we will continue to do so.

* * *

[Translation]

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES CANADA

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the correctional officers have been without a collective agreement since June 1, 2002. Currently at the conciliation stage, the bargaining process has stalled because, in September, after three sessions, the conciliator announced that he would not be available again until November.

In light of this rather odd situation, could the President of the Treasury Board tell us what positive steps he intends to take to ensure that a collective agreement is negotiated with the correctional officers as soon as possible?

As we all know, these officers have a dangerous job which generates high levels of stress, which in turn requires—

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

[English]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue. We have been, as hon. members know, at the table with many groups. We have most of the arrangements with PSAC signed. We are working now with CSN to help it understand how the federal system works. It is new to some of these negotiations.

Our officials are engaged and we will do everything we can, as we always do, to find the best possible solution for our employees.

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[Translation]

HAITI

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Just as Canada, along with the international community, is giving its support to the interim government in Haiti in its reconstruction process, there is a significant increase in violence in Port-au-Prince. It seems obvious that, from a security point of view, the situation has deteriorated.

How is Canada reacting to this and, more specifically, what is it telling all those who are currently working to help in Gonaïves and the surrounding region?

The Address

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Bourassa for his question and, of course, for his keen interest in this issue.

Canada strongly condemns these acts of extreme violence, which are carried out by armed groups, primarily the *chimères*. During my visit to Haiti, I reiterated our determination to remain present in the long term and to play a key role in the international stabilization and reconstruction efforts in that country.

Public safety is essential to restoring the democratic process in Haiti. Again, we will be very active in the development and reconstruction efforts, including through the wonderful work of CIDA, the Canadian International Development Agency.

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[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of Dr. Jane Goodall, renowned primatologist and conservationist. Her four decades of research and her efforts to protect chimpanzees and other animals in their African habitat have created a greater awareness and understanding of the relationship between humans and animals.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[Translation]

The Speaker: I also want to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Percy Mockler, Minister of Intergovernmental and International Relations, Minister responsible for Service New Brunswick, and Minister responsible for the Culture and Sport Secretariat.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

• (1505)

[English]

The Speaker: During Question Period the hon. member for Medicine Hat suggested that the Prime Minister was not telling the truth. I note that on March 20, 1960, a ruling was made by the Speaker at the time that that expression was unparliamentary. I would ask the hon. member for Medicine Hat to withdraw his statement at once.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask that you review the context in which I made that remark. I want to argue that I was not questioning the veracity of what the Prime Minister said. I questioned the fact that he would not get up and answer questions.

The Speaker: It may be that is what the member says he intended, but the words he used did not suggest that the Prime Minister was not standing up and answering. I would ask the hon. member to withdraw the words at once.

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, if you insist, I absolutely withdraw those remarks.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member. I understand that the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert has a question of privilege.

PRIVILEGE

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. John Williams (Edmonton—St. Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a question of privilege. During my question in question period today, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services responded by saying that my allegations were false regarding the fact that they did not deliver the documents to the public accounts committee.

The public accounts committee passed a motion asking for cabinet documents to be delivered to the public accounts committee. The Government of Canada failed to deliver these documents citing privileges of the former prime minister. We are still awaiting these documents. Therefore, as to the allegation by the minister that my accusation was false, I say his accusation is false and I would ask him to withdraw the statement.

The Speaker: I am prepared to hear the minister, although I think that we are getting into a debate. Members sometimes disagree with the statements made in preambles to questions and with the answers that are given. It is not for the Chair to decide on the veracity of the statements that hon. members make. Indeed sometimes there is disagreement even about what those statements mean, if one can imagine such a thing.

Perhaps the Minister of Public Works and Government Services wishes to add some additional clarification, although if we are getting into a debate, it will be brief.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has cooperated fully with both the public accounts committee and the Gomery commission and will continue to respond to all information requests commensurate with the authority of each and consistent with the laws of the land.

I think the hon. member was mistaken in the House during question period. I believe if he checks the blues and the facts, he will probably agree with me in that assessment.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Relevant to this, Mr. Speaker, you will also recall that the minister at that time made the point that it was a false statement that was made. Is that not similar to saying that he told a non-truth?

The Speaker: He said there was a false allegation. There is a difference between a false statement and an allegation. Sometimes allegations are made up. They are alleged. They are not statements. There is a subtle difference. We have had false allegations in the House because they are sometimes disproved by other members' statements. Statements are one thing, allegations are another. We will leave it at that.

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[English]

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, as amended.

The Address

Mr. Russ Powers (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with another member.

I am proud to stand in this historic chamber and address my esteemed colleagues as well as my constituents who have shown their confidence in me by electing me to this Parliament. I am overwhelmed to have the opportunity to take my place with colleagues of such diverse accomplishments; from academics to physicians, to musicians, to CEOs, to representatives of the agriculture and fishery sectors.

We all have one thing in common. We believe that Canada is the most wonderful country in the world, a country where diversity of background and respect for differences shape the engine that drives our economy and the dynamic that maintains our uniqueness, our independence and our steadfastness even while competing interests try to erode these very qualities that are so essential to the ways we define ourselves as Canadians.

Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale is a reconfigured riding. It is a microcosm of all the lifestyles embodied in the Canadian landscape. Ancaster is a suburban area of substantial farms, gracious properties and stately homes. Flamborough comprises a rich diversity of quaint towns and hamlets with varied agricultural products, including beef, dairy and farm produce. Westdale is a suburb of the city of Hamilton with a true sense of community. Dundas, my hometown, is a charming and historic community with many preserved heritage buildings and a distinct and lively business and retail core. It is the area that I represented on various municipal councils for almost 20 years.

There are distinct historical connections between my riding and the House. The Hon. Thomas Bain of the former Wentworth North riding was a Speaker of the House of Commons at the turn of the 20th century. The tricorne hats that you, Mr. Speaker, and your counterpart in the other place wear, are made by John McMicking of Dundas.

The Valley City Manufacturing Company, formerly known as Valley City Seating Company, designed and constructed all the MPs' desks, with the exception of those in the front row, as well as several of the speakers' chairs. Some of the furnishings in the parliamentary dining room were also made by the same firm.

My riding is home to the world renowned McMaster University, famous for its medical school, teaching hospitals and research centres. It was my employer for over 25 years. My riding is also home to Redeemer University College, the first faith-based college or school in Canada to be granted university status.

Vast areas of protected green space include the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Hamilton and Halton conservation areas, hills, ravines and hiking trails, terrain which is very unusual in an urban environment.

A truly distinctive feature is that Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale is significantly impacted by four major modes of transport, namely the John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport, our Great Lakes port in Hamilton harbour, the 400 series of highways and national railways.

Notwithstanding the pride I take in being the first federal representative of this new riding, I am using this opportunity to communicate with my constituents both my appreciation and my blueprint outlining how I plan to represent them. I hope to confirm their confidence in sending me to represent them as their member of Parliament.

To date I have been appointed to two standing committees and two caucus committees. The Standing Committee on the Status of Women will likely be addressing matters of violence against women, workplace equity and human rights.

Women comprise more than half of our population and the majority is now in the labour force. Whether women are working outside the home because of financial need, which is most often the case, or to practise a profession that they have invested both time and money in acquiring, it is incumbent upon us as the committee responsible for the status of women to ensure that we devise the necessary measures to achieve equity in compensation. It is incumbent upon us to create support systems that facilitate full participation of women in the marketplace, the professions and political life.

• (1510)

My government has already embarked on a program to ensure that we achieve those goals as outlined in the Speech from the Throne. We have created a Minister of Social Development and a minister of state responsible for seniors, caregivers and persons with disabilities. We will develop a national child care program so that all women who wish to work or need to work outside the home will have access to superior support services for their children, their elderly ailing family members, or their disabled dependants.

There will be choices. For the first time in our history we are developing a network of services that will structure the environment to enhance the quality of life for the primary caregivers in our society. These are my priorities and they are my government's priorities.

My other standing committee is government operations and estimates. This committee is the oversight mechanism for all federal government expenditures and for quality control in the public service. I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to participate in the review of how the various government departments spend the taxpayers' money. I am keen to share this information with my constituents as it becomes available.

I also participate in the Liberal caucus committee on cities and communities, an area of special interest for me. In my previous life I was a member of Dundas town, Hamilton-Wentworth regional, and Hamilton city councils. I was fortunate to be re-elected seven times. Throughout my long service at the municipal level, I have had many opportunities to access various aspects about the problems and the solutions.

I am happy to say that my government's commitment to infrastructure and social structure is both timely and essential. The largest portion of Canadian life is organized in tandem with municipal life, hence maintenance enhancement of vital elements such as transit, roads, clean water and sewers are the lifeblood of dynamic and thriving urban, suburban and rural environments.

The Address

Targeting cities and communities for upkeep and refurbishment can be the driver for many related outcomes, such as civic pride, which in turn can lead to higher levels of education and employment and lower levels of crime and ennui.

I eagerly anticipate the opportunity to contribute to the cities and communities portfolio and in particular my own area of expertise, water quality, which I have travelled afar to share with citizens in such places as the Czech Republic, Japan, Africa and Central America.

The discussion of water, both quality and availability, leads me to another area of interest both to me and to my government. I am pleased that the new Minister of the Environment has mapped out a blueprint prioritizing sustainable development that is both forward looking on the environment preservation front and also essential for Canada to stay competitive in the manufacturing and export sectors. This will be an exciting agenda, one which I believe will galvanize Canadians and lead us to focus on a broad scale on how we can achieve superior results by applying a lighter footprint on our natural environment.

We will also be honouring our commitment to the Kyoto accord. Hence we will be working together with our European and now our Russian partners to ensure these goals are met. At the same time there will remain various purely environmental issues, such as the dumping of toxic waste in our offshore waters, ensuring drinking water free of contaminants and perhaps embarking aggressively on an inventory of our water sources, both above and below ground level. I eagerly anticipate leading the charge on that front as soon as the opportunity presents itself.

I will close with a final expression to my constituents and my colleagues in this House on both sides of the floor. I have come here with the intention of representing my constituents and working in the spirit of cooperation to prove that a minority government can indeed work to the betterment of everyone.

• (1515)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I compliment my colleague across the way on his speech.

My colleague mentioned the importance of water purification and how he was looking forward to seeing the follow through on that. In Ontario we have a new regulation, 170-03, which is requiring businesses in rural areas to put, for example, chlorine into their wells, which have already shown to be pure based on water tests. There is a concern not only with introducing a known hazardous chemical into an already pure water system, but down the way something called trihalomethane which we know is carcinogenic is formed.

Given that the federal government does have a national plan to reduce the use of chlorine in Canada, what is it that the member plans to direct his government to do to ensure that the province is not forcing business owners to contaminate their own water and septic systems?

• (1520)

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, back in 1987, a previous government introduced the Canadian water bill and in it

provided some assistance toward the development of a national strategy for water. Unfortunately, shortly thereafter it was outdated. Clearly, in concert with all sides of the government, we will work together to ensure that the new information, whether it is contamination or the introduction of unnecessary chemicals, will be worked out.

I had the opportunity to actively participate in a founding meeting of the Canadian Water Council. The concern that the hon. member raises was raised there. A speaker from the federal government was there. We are aggressively working on looking at all the contributions to our water supply, whether they are natural or engineered.

I ask the hon. member to be assured that discussions in the environmental and sustainable development committee will deal with that, and very quickly the government will introduce legislation that will work hand in hand with the provinces and territories to address her concern.

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to what my colleague had to say. We greatly appreciate having the member here, with his background and interest in water.

Could he broaden his interest a little? We are big supporters of Kyoto. There have been two big changes in Kyoto. One is that Russia has signed on, which will help the hemisphere in a most extraordinary way. As a result of that, Kyoto is now in force. He also knows that all the things to do with the atmosphere and water on the earth's surface are all inter-related.

I would like to hear his thoughts on how we can move to strengthen what we are doing with respect to Kyoto and perhaps, in particular, with respect to the way the atmosphere affects water and water pollution.

Mr. Russ Powers: Mr. Speaker, the willingness of a number of world countries to agree to actively participate in Kyoto is very essential. Unless there is a willingness of partners to come together, it will not happen.

Along with the member and all of us in the House, we are very pleased that Russia has chosen to participate. Whatever the reason is, it will be an aggressive participant in the program.

Because there is an ever-increasing number of participants in the program, one thing we have to do is step back and reflate in order to determine in what priority the elements of the Kyoto accord should be played out. I think it is virtually impossible to do them all at once. There are things that we can do internally in Canada with water. Whether it is offshore or in creeks or in streams, pollution particulate matter migrates and knows nothing at all about boundaries, whether it is intercontinental boundaries. I know in my area a lot of the pollution does not migrate out of the immediate Ontario area. It migrates up out of the Tennessee valley and the industrialized areas of Ohio into our area, and affects us that way.

We need to step back over a brief period of time and determine where the interests and concerns are of all the participants in Kyoto, then work ahead. We have a wonderful opportunity, with a buy in by Russia, to be part of Kyoto to bring some other major players into it.

The Address

I am encouraged that when we talk about this a year from now, we will be a long way on to the implementation.

• (1525)

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to congratulate you on your position as Speaker. As you know, we were friends in my former life. I was the Speaker of the Ontario Legislature for four years. In fact, I reflected this morning that it was October 19, 1999 when I was elected Speaker. Being the small world that it is, it was the member for Dufferin—Caledon who was my opponent in the that election. It was a very close race. I apparently won it 52 to 50 with one abstention. My good friend from Dufferin—Caledon is now here, and the two members for the NDP, the member for Hamilton West and the member for Sault Ste. Marie, who were also deputy speakers in the Ontario Legislature.

I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, you will have the full cooperation from the new members from the Ontario Legislature because we know what you go through in your position.

I very quickly want to thank all the fine people of Halton for electing me. As I mentioned, I was the speaker and I was the provincial member for Oakville for 13 years. This is the first time I have been elected as a federal member for the new riding is now Halton. I want to thank the good people of Halton for their support.

I am honoured and feel privileged to serve the people of Halton and will work to try to improve the standard of living and quality of life of the people of my riding and indeed all of Canada.

I represent that fine area with portions that are urban as well as rural. I have a portion of Oakville, a portion of Burlington that I share with my colleague from Oakville and Burlington, as well as Milton and other communities. It is a beautiful part of Ontario and I am pleased to represent the people here in the House.

I want to ensure that our community has some local solutions to the problem. My vision is to have a community in which our publicly funded universally available health care system both provides exemplary care and exemplifies our national framework.

I very briefly want to talk a little about the throne speech. Of all the things I am pleased about with the throne speech, is that a lot of it is what we talked about in the election campaign. Often politicians of all political stripes at all levels are accused of not doing what they say they are going to do in the election campaign. If one were to take the “Moving Forward” document that was the platform during the election campaign and compare it with the throne speech, I think one would find that it is very similar. I am extremely pleased about that aspect.

One of the very important issues in my riding is health care. The government has committed \$41.2 billion to go to the provinces, starting with \$3 billion this year and next year to close what is known as the Romanow gap. As well \$500 million in Canada health transfer payments for the fiscal year 2005-06 will mean enhanced home care service and catastrophic drug coverage. This will bring the total transfers from health to the provinces and territories from about \$16.5 billion in 2005 to about \$24 billion, and I am extremely pleased about that.

During the election campaign I had the opportunity, along with the Prime Minister and my colleagues, my good friends the member for Oakville and the member for Burlington, to meet with people from Cancer Care Ontario. About 35 people meet with us. They talked about some of the waiting lists they had experienced in the Ontario area because of cancer line-ups of people who were unable to receive treatment. It was indeed moving to hear the stories first-hand from some of the people, like Elizabeth Carmichael whom I know. They talked about what the government should do. I was particularly pleased with the comment by the Prime Minister who said that he would tackle the issue of waiting lists similar to the way he did the deficit.

I think it is very clear that when the Prime Minister says that he will do something, he does it. When he was minister of finance, he took the deficit of about \$40 billion and along with the fine people in the House and fine people across the country he was able to reduce the deficit and get us to a position where we can now put money back in. I firmly believe the money should go back in to health care. As we begin to age, not only the baby boomers but everyone, it is important that we put money back into the system.

• (1530)

I want to talk about a couple of issues in health care that are extremely important. One is to reduce the waiting times for patients in areas dealing with the heart, cancer, joint replacement and sight restoration. That is extremely important to people in my area. It will also mean more doctors and nurses and other health care professionals.

In my former life as an MPP I was always arguing for more money from the federal government to assist the province. I am pleased this has happened and a major commitment has been made. I thanked the Minister of Health last night in our private discussion. Obviously, as the Minister of Health he is responsible, but the Prime Minister deserves a lot of credit. Conservative premiers, Liberal premiers and New Democratic premiers all signed their names to the accord. We finally reached an agreement. That is a tribute not only to the federal government, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health, but to all the premiers by showing that this federation can work in cooperation. It is sometimes not easy, but with a lot of hard work and a lot of goodwill it does succeed.

This will also mean expanded home care which is important to many of us who have aging families as well as ourselves who are approaching the baby boomer years. Some younger members have a long way to go, but some of us in the baby boomer years will need health care. I am particularly pleased with regard to health care and what it will mean to Canadians.

The Address

It is extremely important that we were able to get the commitment for people in all areas. The CMA, nurses, health care professionals all said that this was a good deal. In fact the leader of the official opposition said that it was a deal he would have signed, which was a good thing for him to say rather than always criticizing. A lot of hard work by a lot of people of all political stripes ensured it was done. It will be extremely important to have good health care for the people we represent.

I am also pleased that a new deal for communities has been included. In North Oakville, North Burlington and in Milton there is a real increase in the number of new homes being built. Infrastructure money is needed. There is great leadership from the regional chair Joyce Savoline as well as the mayor of Milton, Gord Krantz, Ann Mulvale in Oakville and Rob MacIsaac in Burlington. They need some assistance in terms of infrastructure, particularly in high growth urban areas. I am pleased that a commitment has been made to put money back into that area. I spent a bit of time dealing with all of the municipal leaders over the last 13 years, and they need some help with some of that money. I am pleased we recognized that, and a new deal is being put together for cities.

We have a great responsibility in this fine place to work on behalf of our constituents and I plan on doing that.

I would be very remiss if I did not thank my family, my wife, Teresa, and my three children Lindsay, Makenzie and Gavin. They spent a lot of time on the election campaign. My wife is probably more politically astute in this place than anybody else. I have said to her on occasion that she probably should be the person in here rather than me. Maybe at some point in time that will happen.

I also want to thank my mother for her support. There may be days when she is the only person who turns on the television and watches when I speak, but I know she will always be there. Thanks also to my brother who helped out in the various campaigns.

I am looking forward to working with all the fine people of Halton and all members here. I also am looking forward to working with the Table and with you, Mr. Speaker.

Thanks again to my family. It is indeed an honour and a privilege to be here. I honestly believe that together we will build a better, a safer and a more prosperous Canada that will provide maximum opportunity for all its citizens.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague opposite on his maiden speech. I have just a couple of questions.

He mentioned the funding for taking care of our seniors while we cannot be there for them. He mentioned his private conversations with the minister on this type of funding. I am wondering whether or not they discussed how they would allocate funds to nursing homes, for example, that have beds open but no funding going toward ensuring that a senior can actually occupy the bed.

The other issue was the hon. member's contentment over the new deal for cities and the funding going to the urban centres. We know that money is being generated in part by the excise taxes charged on gasoline.

I am wondering if he could explain to me how he would justify to our rural constituents how the money can be taken from them when they are forced to use private vehicles and pay the excise taxes. There is no public transit in the rural areas. Could he explain how the government can take the money they are paying on top of the price of gasoline and funnel it toward the cities?

● (1535)

Mr. Gary Carr: Mr. Speaker, on the member's comments, we may get to know each other a little better as we go along. In fact, we have had the pleasure of spending some time together.

Very quickly on the funding issue, I think it is very important. The minister and the Prime Minister said when the agreement came out that the federal government puts money in, but there needs to be flexibility by the provinces to make those decisions.

I will give examples. The hon. member mentioned home care. There may be certain provinces that are very good in terms of their home care programs. There may be others that are not quite up to that level. There may be others that are very strong in cancer care.

What I firmly believe in—and it is what this deal does—is giving money to the provinces and allowing the flexibility for them to make the decision. So if the priority in Ontario is home care, Ontario can put the money into home care. If its priority on the waiting lists happens to be cancer care, it can put the money there. I am a firm believer in giving the opportunity to the provinces to make those decisions. That is the way I see it working.

Having said that, the government also needs to ensure that there are benchmarks and indicators. I believe this needs to be done so we know exactly how the money is being spent and whether or not it is a good idea. Is Ontario doing well in cancer care? Is Ontario doing well in home care? There needs to be flexibility, with the federal government setting indicators and benchmarks. That is how I see it working.

To sum up, the answer to the hon. member's question is that there needs to be flexibility for the provinces to make those decisions. I firmly believe the district health councils will be of further assistance to the provinces in making those decisions. In the hon. member's area there may be a need that is a little different from the needs in my area. I think there needs to be the flexibility.

With regard to the cities and communities, I agree. Cities may decide to use it for transit in the larger areas. My area has both urban and rural areas, a combination, and I think there should be flexibility. I can tell the member without telling tales out of school that in speaking to a lot of rural members, I know they are very committed on this side and I am sure on all sides of the House to ensuring that the rural communities receive their fair share as well. I am sure all members will do that.

The Address

It will be difficult. Because of the amount of money, there will be different tensions and fighting between the different municipalities in my own area. We have a situation where the region says it should get the money and decide it. The local communities of Oakville, Burlington and Milton say the money should be given to their areas because they know better. There will be some tensions in those areas, but I am confident that at the end of the day we will come up with a solution and a compromise will work.

I will also say this very clearly, having watched our own caucus, although I have not seen the other caucuses quite as much yet. The members from the rural areas in our caucus will be continuing to fight for the people in the areas they represent, just like the people in the larger cities. Together, I think we will come up with a solution. I look forward to working with the member, because at the end of the day all communities need to benefit, both cities and communities, rural and urban.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle.

It is a great honour for me to rise in this place at the beginning of my third term to express my heartfelt gratitude to the constituents of Calgary Southeast, who elected me again, with 72% of the vote, to represent them here. It is a humbling mandate and I hope that I can fulfill the expectations of my constituents.

It is perhaps the greatest honour a Canadian can have, I believe, to be elected by one's fellow citizens to stand in this place and participate in the highest forum of democracy in our land. The former leader of the Conservative Party, John Diefenbaker, once said, and his close friend John Turner often echoed him, that next to the pastoral ministry of faith this is the highest calling. It is something that we must all recall from time to time, this special responsibility we have.

A debate on the motion in reply to the Speech from the Throne is a special opportunity for members to address first principles. That is what I intend to do.

I believe that perhaps the most succinct and compelling statement of the appropriate role of government in Canadian society was made by Father Athol Murray, the founder of a school in Saskatchewan, Notre Dame College in Wilcox, where I grew up. A great Canadian folk hero, he once said that the aim of government should be to provide for "freest human action under the natural law". Those are words and a concept not often uttered in this place: freedom, liberty, "freest human action under the natural law".

When I read the throne speech, what I see is a smothering vision of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present government that has grown far beyond what was ever conceived of in the original constitutional order of this country, a government which proposes a program for every conceivable electoral interest group and which sees no proper limits for the size of government and its imposition on and restriction of human freedom.

Economic freedom is expressed by the degree to which individuals are able to retain and use according to their own priorities the fruits of their labours. But under this and previous governments, the average Canadian family continues to pay nearly 50% of its annual income in taxes to all three levels of government.

That is to say that from an economic point of view Canadian families are only half-free and, in a certain sense, half their economic choices are captive to the decisions that we as political leaders take.

I think that is a disordered priority. I think that this Parliament and any Canadian government which respects human freedom should leave a much broader ambit to economic freedom by allowing people to make their own economic decisions by keeping more of what they earn to reflect their own priorities.

How is this applied? One of the principal engagements the government makes in this throne speech is to reiterate for the umpteenth time its I think deeply troubling commitment to establish a national program for child care.

I can tell members that I have been a member of Parliament for seven years and before that was involved in public life. I stand to be corrected, but in that time I do not recall hearing from a single constituent or Canadian voter pleading for the federal government to establish a national child care program. But in that time I have heard from literally thousands of constituents and other Canadians asking for tax relief, particularly tax relief for families with children, families that are struggling under a crushing tax burden to do what is best by their kids and to make the right choices to raise their children.

● (1540)

It disturbs me deeply when I hear the new Minister of Social Development refer to the choice made by millions of Canadian parents to raise young children at home as an obsolete model of custodial child care that is 50 years old.

I find deeply disturbing that kind of dismissive approach toward at-home parenting, which laces the throne speech, and I can tell hon. members that my constituents do as well. It is of course true that the vast majority of couples with children, even young children, have both parents in the workforce today. It is equally true that the vast majority of those families would choose to have a full time dad or mom at home if they could make it work financially, if they had the economic freedom to make the choice they believe is best for their children.

However, this government, reflecting a political philosophy which has become dominant in much of western civilization, has decided that it knows better than parents how to make economic choices and child-rearing choices for children. That is why, for instance, the government opposes the policy recommended by my party to allow for a \$3,000 per child tax deduction, which exists in other developed western democracies.

It would be a tax deduction that would say to parents they could use the \$3,000 per child economic break to decide whether to pay for third-party day care out of the home or give up a secondary income and have one of the parents stay at home. That is what I mean by economic liberty, which builds a stronger nation by allowing people to make choices that are best for them. But this government thinks it knows better than parents, which is why it chooses to create a multi-billion dollar program that will be funded in part from the taxes that come from the second parents in those homes with young children, parents who are in the workforce, away from their kids, in order to pay the tax bill.

The Address

In 1962 the average Canadian family paid a total tax bill of roughly 28% of its income. That is now up to 46%. In other words, the second parent in many of the homes that I represent is now working to pay for the incremental tax burden, which families were not facing 40 years ago. That, I think, is a profound violation of economic freedom and the right of parents to choose. That is a fundamental issue for me.

My time is limited and I also want to say I am distressed that in the throne speech the government spends very little time addressing the principal responsibility of a federal government, which is of course the protection of our national sovereignty and national security.

There are pages upon pages of areas detailed in the throne speech whereby the federal government would encroach upon areas of constitutional jurisdiction reserved for the provinces, but there is virtually no vision about how the country can rebuild its role in the world, a role which is best expressed by our investment in our military, which of course represents in a concrete way our ability to project our values abroad.

Under this government, Canada has the second lowest defence expenditure in NATO, at less than half the NATO average. This is a country which, in the words of former Deputy Prime Minister John Manley, is willing to sit around the table of world decision makers but gets up and goes to the washroom when the bill comes due.

I think we have a moral obligation to make the investments that are necessary and to stand by our allies, as we have done so proudly in the past in this country, so we can be true to our heritage as a country that does not shirk its international responsibilities. If we are true to our values, then I believe the government should fundamentally change its priorities to, as I say, expand economic liberty and restore pride in our military and our role in the world.

• (1545)

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue of child care is not child minding. It is about early development, early education and early learning. Surely the hon. member is not suggesting that elementary school is no longer acceptable and that we should now shut down the public school system?

All of the research shows that education must start early if we want to give children an equal opportunity in this country, all kids at all times. Early education is very fundamental to the development of the child.

We are the only western country that starts as late as we do. We call it early learning and care. It is combined. It deals with two things: first, the issue of early learning which is fundamental to the children of this country; and, second, it addresses the issue of parents who are working.

The hon. member says that we should give families tax cuts and a choice. With respect, a \$1,000 tax cut for someone who is making a modest to medium income will not make one bit of difference.

My constituents of Beaches—East York made it very clear to me that they want early learning child care assistance. Many of them are

paying \$1,500 a month per child. That is tantamount to a large mortgage or more. There is a tremendous amount of stress on families. Many children have no access to child care and the parents are obliged to work.

Tax cuts provide no choice at all. First, they do not provide child care for the children who need it. Second, they provide no developmental early learning programs for all children, regardless of whether the parent is at home looking after the child or not. Early learning is fundamental for all children.

As I said, we are starting late as it is with elementary school. We should start earlier. In most western countries, three years of age is when children start early education programs full time. We are really sticking our heads in the sand. We are not addressing the real fundamental issues of early learning and care for children in our society, both in terms of assisting parents and in ensuring that every child has the best possible start in life.

I would like the hon. member to respond to that because his solution does not do it.

• (1550)

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's honesty in allowing her radical ideology to show. Essentially what she is saying is that the state must intervene to take kids out of the home as early as possible to teach them in a way that parents cannot do themselves. She said that it should be at age three. Why not age two? How early does she want to go?

What I hear in that comment is the shrill ideology of a radical point of view which says that the state and the institutions of the state know better how to educate children than parents themselves. I, and I believe the vast majority of Canadian parents, believe that the first and best school is at home and that the first and best teachers are parents and not the state.

She said that \$1,000 was not enough. We proposed a \$3,000 tax credit per child per family. For a family with three young children, that would mean \$9,000 per year. That is considerable.

However I agree with her on one point. That is not enough. That is why we need to restrain things like this multibillion dollar child care boondoggle, which will simply increase the tax burden on families that are trying to raise their kids at home or who would like to have the choice to do so.

I find it profoundly offensive that the member is anti-choice. She is not willing to allow parents to make the right choices for their families, for their kids and for their values. I believe in parents having the right to choose what is best by their kids. If parents want to pay for out of family day care so they can be raised in the early childhood learning out of home environment that the member loves, then they should have the right to do that. I fully honour and respect that right. However if parents think they can do a better job raising young kids at home, then, by golly, we should give them that choice. It is called freedom.

The Address

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to take a few moments to again thank the voters of Regina—Qu'Appelle for choosing me as their representative in this 38th Parliament.

When I was young and just starting to become interested in the public affairs of this country, I remember watching the first throne speech of the newly elected Liberal government in 1993. That was an historic election. The make-up of this House had been dramatically altered. A new government, two new parties and dozens of new members came to that Parliament. The throne speech that was read at that time contained a litany of promises.

We heard about how the Liberals were going to improve our social safety net. We heard a promise about a national child care program, even back then. We heard a promise about fiscal responsibility and an end to patronage. Therefore I was quite surprised a few weeks ago when I stood in the other place and listened to Her Excellency read almost the exact same speech with the exact same litany of promises.

I thought that since the current Prime Minister was in such a rush to take over the reins of power that he would have had at least a distinct plan from the past administration, but, sadly, I was mistaken. The Prime Minister could not wait to take over the reins of power. He could barely stand the numerous delays that were placed in front of him as he ushered his predecessor out the door.

Now Canadians certainly were not complaining about the former prime minister being forced into early retirement. They were, however, hopeful that the new Prime Minister would lead a government with some sort of integrity. Prior to this past election campaign, the Prime Minister stated that he would view his term in office a failure if western alienation was not addressed. He made numerous promises throughout the campaign about fixing that problem. He indicated that he would be open to appointing senators who had actually been elected, not just appointing his own cronies.

Subsequent to that statement, he then called elected senators from provinces “provincial patronage”. How could he call someone being duly elected by the people of a province, patronage? He also indicated that he would allow Parliament greater scrutiny over appointments to the judiciary and other important posts. However we have seen what that has turned into. The minister explains his decision and Parliament has no opportunity to review that before the appointment is actually made.

Time and again the government has backpedalled from any notion of improving the state of Canadian democracy.

One of the recycled promises in the throne speech was a general statement about improving the economy. We in Saskatchewan know the debilitating effects of having a government that stifles entrepreneurship, that mishandles taxpayer money and that places the goal of a political party ahead of the needs of the people of that province.

Therefore it is fitting that the leader of the NDP has spent the past few weeks desperately trying to prop up the Liberal government. Why should we be surprised? During the election campaign he came to Regina and held up the provincial NDP government as a model for the federal party. He certainly is following that model, because he is propping up a government that also stifles entrepreneurship, that

mishandles taxpayer money and that places the goal of the party ahead of the good of the nation. After all, we have all heard the joke that a New Democrat is just a Liberal in a hurry.

Saskatchewan has seen generations of its young people leave for opportunities elsewhere, opportunities that should be available to them at home, and yet, thanks to over a decade of a socialist, backward and incompetent government, those opportunities just are not there.

That is why I am so concerned to see the NDP on that side of the House working so hard to keep the Liberal government in power. Adding a little NDP to the Liberal government is a little bit like adding water to a grease fire. The government is certainly socialist enough without having the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth propping it up.

My colleagues have all made excellent points in their responses to this throne speech. I would like to touch on just a couple of issues.

The throne speech made it quite clear that the Liberals still do not understand that there are certain limits to the scope of government. The government knows no bounds except, of course, for the bounds of decency and accountability. The government does not acknowledge that there could possibly be areas that do not fall under its jurisdiction. It continually interferes in areas of provincial responsibilities. It uses the threat of the removal of transfer payments to keep the provinces in the box that it creates. It sets up all the rules and does not let the provinces find new ways of handling the problems that they face.

A government program for any problem, no matter what the cost, no matter what the fallout, that is the motto of the Liberals.

I believe there are certain natural limits to the scope of government, that some problems need to be addressed by individual Canadians or communities or grassroots organizations.

● (1555)

We need a government that recognizes its own limits. We have seen the creation of dozens of new ministries over the past decade as the Liberals keep on expanding their interference in the lives of Canadians.

Another troubling sign in the throne speech is the lack of attention to agriculture. At a time when so much of Canada, not just in the west but all over Canada, is in the middle of an agricultural crisis there is not one mention of that in the throne speech.

Farmers have been hit by frost. They face rising input costs and have to compete against global subsidies. Farmers need a system that works. The CAIS program is not working. The government keeps using it to deliver funds when problems come up. It keeps pointing to all of the money it throws at it and all the increased attention it gives to it but it is just not working. Farmers know it is not working. The only person who does not know that the CAIS program is not working is the Minister of Agriculture and the rest of the people in the government.

The Address

Those who do qualify for payments under the CAIS program receive them late and often when they do arrive the payments themselves are not adequate. The government needs to address this problem and it needs to address it quickly.

I am not sure the government understands that farmers are facing foreclosure. That is what they are up against. They are coming pretty much to the end of the line in many cases. It is becoming more and more possible that they will have to leave the land on which their ancestors started their families.

The Conservative Party has proposed numerous solutions to the various crises that are hitting our farmers. The government has ignored all of them and we are still debating in the House while farmers out there are booking their auction sales.

The government is famous for announcing spending to help agriculture. It comes up with billions and hundreds of millions there. There are lots of announcements but no dollars actually being distributed. In fact, in some cases, for the recent announcements, the forms have not even been printed. There is no mechanism for getting the dollars out there. We keep hearing the government popping up and saying that it has put \$1.5 billion into that or a few hundred million into that, but the actual dollars have not gone to anyone who actually needs it.

It is not just two sword lengths that separate the government from this party. It is an ideological chasm. We on this side of the House believe that government is a means. The Liberals believe that it is an end. Their only goal is to become government. They do not care how they get there and, as we have seen, nor do they much care how they govern. They have truly created the nanny state. From cradle to grave the government is there every step of the way. They do not recognize that anything could possibly be accomplished without a government program, a government grant or a government ministry to help it along the way.

I believe that government has natural limits and that it is dangerous when a political party starts to ignore those limits. It should not interfere in the lives of hard-working and honest Canadians. It should not put up impediments on business and try to alter the make-up of the nation just to ensure its political survival.

Let us have a government that respects the rights of individuals. Let us have a government that respects the right of Canadians to go about their lives unmolested by excessive government interference. Let us have a government that protects and promotes families, that allows them to keep enough of their own income to make their own choices about important social questions such as child care.

As my hon. colleague made very clear, the government's child care program will just not work. Why does the government not trust Canadians to make their own choices about child care? Why does it have to create something that universally plugs everyone into the same solution? Why can we not let parents make their own choice, not "Here's your government day care. That is where you're sending your kids", but "Here's more disposable income. Make your choice. Find out what works best for you and go ahead and do it".

Instead of thinking about its own political future, let us have a government that would actually makes people's lives better. Let us think about what is fair.

• (1600)

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was quite happy to hear the member mention entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. It is something I know a little about having spent some 22 years as a small business entrepreneur.

What was devastating for entrepreneurship was the progressively increasing interest rates that small business people had to face as a result of growing debt loads and growing deficits during the previous Mulroney government. It was something that did not get written about a lot in newspapers because the devastation that small business and entrepreneurs faced was not something that hit the front pages.

Does the member understand the connection between increasing deficits, increasing debt and high interest rates, and what that did to entrepreneurship and small business people in Canada during the Mulroney years?

• (1605)

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, there were many years that saw debt. We all know about the Trudeau years. We could play this game. Over the past decade we have had Liberal members bringing up ancient history. It has been about 12 years since the Mulroney government and Liberals will not take ownership for the problems they have created and the burdens they have placed on entrepreneurs.

The NDP in Saskatchewan is a perfect example of rising debt loads and excessive burdens, and problems created for entrepreneurs and small businesses.

We have had a finance minister who has increased the amount of taxes collected from small businesses and from ordinary Canadians. That is what this windfall is, that has not been talked about. It is not that the government has been so fiscally responsible or has trimmed spending in areas or eliminated waste. It is that Canadians are working harder. Small businesses are making more money and the government is reaping those extra revenues, and claiming it is so great at balancing the budget and eliminating debt. However, we all know the truth. It has been done on the backs of those small businesses and entrepreneurs.

We need the government to let businesses keep more of their own dollars. It should let entrepreneurs and businesses expand their companies, and get out of excessive regulations and excessive taxation to pay for increased spending in a myriad of different areas.

Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij: Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons that small businesses are able to pay taxes is because during the present regime they have been able to generate profits.

My business is a perfect example of that situation. We went through a very difficult period and because of the fiscal responsibility of our government, we were able to turn things around, as were thousands of small businesses. Small businesses, if they are profitable, do not mind paying their fair share of taxes.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, I think the key word there is a fair portion of taxes.

The Address

Did I hear the member say that this government has a record of fiscal responsibility? Does \$2 billion on a gun registry count as fiscal responsibility? Is that responsible spending? Are the taxes that are collected to pay for that fair? Do Canadians and do small business owners mind? Is the hon. member saying they do not mind when they write their cheques to Revenue Canada and see billions go to a gun registry, the sponsorship programs and the HRDC boondoggle? Are those examples of Liberal fiscal responsibility?

I do not think so. I do not think Canadians are happy to pay taxes when, as the hon. member mentioned, the burden has gone up to 48%. Yes, businesses are able to make profits and the government makes a profit because it collects excessive amounts of dollars from businesses and ordinary Canadians. And then it goes into these wasteful programs.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and I cannot help but believe that he is going to have a very difficult time following the record of his predecessor, the Hon. Lorne Nystrom. I hear him spewing the policies about telling everyone they are on their own and telling them they can sink or swim on their own. He says we should not worry about having modern, accountable government programs to back up our medicare system, our post-secondary education system, our environmental remediation, our child care needs and so on.

I want to ask a very specific question because I think it is important we talk about small business and the burden on small business, and what it takes for small businesses to thrive. Does he not recognize that small businesses, more than any other businesses, very much need the support that comes from a comprehensive health care system, from decent pharmacare programs and from comprehensive child care?

These are all things that many large businesses can negotiate in group plans and so on, but small businesses desperately need their families to have those kinds of supports because they cannot provide those kinds of benefits through private means, certainly not efficiently or effectively.

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Mr. Speaker, unlike my predecessor I have actually worked in a small business prior to getting into politics. I have had experience working in that sort of realm.

It is always interesting listening to members from that party talk about small business. Saskatchewan has had first hand evidence of how an NDP government treated small businesses. Where are all of them? All of the traffic has been going out of Saskatchewan ever since the NDP government took power in that province.

NDP supporters in Saskatchewan have called for boycotts on small businesses. They have told people not to go to small businesses but rather boycott them because they did not fit in with NDP policies. I always find it very interesting listening to anyone on that side speak about small businesses.

We believe that the government does have to play a role in ensuring that people do not fall through the cracks. Individual Canadians should have the tools and resources they need to make their own choices in their lives.

● (1610)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre. First of all, I would like to congratulate you on your appointment.

The riding of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor is not only rich in heritage but also rich in its people. Being in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, our cultural heritage dates back over some 500 years. In that 500 years we have cultivated a place that is so distinct that people from the world just marvel when they arrive. I am very proud to say that I am part of that rich cultural heritage.

The Speech from the Throne brought up several points to me that I felt were very endearing toward Newfoundlanders and ones that they accepted, which is why in the last election five out of seven seats went to the Liberal Party. For me one of the big issues that came out was health care. The federal government was able to reach a historic and truly significant deal that works to achieve better health care for Canadians. What is great about this deal is that it is a 10 year commitment to stable funding for the people who need it the most. I am very proud to say that I supported that and the people of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor supported me on that as well.

I have a very rural riding. It consists of over 100 communities and the biggest community is a little over 10,000 people. For us primary health care and emergency services are a vital issue. The money that we are now seeing promised to the smaller communities will go a long way toward better health care, reducing our wait times and also toward something that is very vital to my province which is home care.

I campaigned on home care because to me that is in essence where we are going to be in the future. When we talk about home care, there is a tremendous amount of respect for our home care workers and now we are ready to back them up. I am very proud of that.

Regional economic development in my province has been very strategic in the past few years through an agency known as ACOA. The Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency has been a tremendous vehicle for regional economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially over the past three or four years. In that time we have managed to build something that is a true testament to what our cultural heritage is that I talked about earlier.

We are now celebrating our history in Bonavista and Port Union. ACOA has gone a long way in investing in this, to help support the people who want to invite the rest of the world to come and see what it is that we have to offer, and I am very proud of that. This past weekend I was in a town called Port Union which has a group called the Coaker Foundation. The town is celebrating the fact that Port Union is the only town in Canada built by a union from the vision of a man named Sir William Coaker. He built the town for his workers. He owned the company, but truly believed in the workers of his town. I am very proud to be a part of a riding that truly believes in that.

The Address

I truly appreciate the rightful respect that the throne speech gives to our municipalities. This is very important. In this past election, it was brought to my attention that only 8¢ out of the dollar goes back to municipalities. This does not give municipalities, large or small, the right to manoeuvre. It does not give them a lot of ability to plan. Now, finally, we have a government that truly respects the responsibility of a local government. I am extremely happy to be a part of that government.

This past weekend I was in Bonavista and I spoke to a town council. Council members spoke passionately about where they are going and where they want to be in the future. There is a town called Elliston and the mayor of that town told me that, “we know where we are going to be in the next four or five years and your government believes in that, and I believe in you”. That is one of the major reasons why we were successful and why I was successful in my riding.

● (1615)

I would also like to talk about communities in this sense. One of the things I said time and time again during the campaign was that as a member of Parliament I do not lead the parade down the street; I support the parade ahead of me. As members of Parliament, that is what we do. To me, local government is the most important government in one's life. As supporters of that, with this initiative and the gas tax we have put a commitment behind it. Just recently, rebates on the GST provided our communities a tremendous infusion of cash, which allowed them the manoeuvrability to make long term commitments. We are about to go even further.

The throne speech, under the environment, talks about protecting our fish stocks that straddle the 200 mile limit. Let me quote from the speech. These are words that were very endearing to me:

The Government will... move forward on its Ocean Action Plan by maximizing the use and development of oceans technology, establishing a network of marine protected areas, implementing integrated management plans, and enhancing the enforcement of rules governing oceans and fisheries, including rules governing straddling stocks.

Recently during a conversation between the Prime Minister and the leader of France, this very issue came up, which shows the commitment our Prime Minister has toward this issue, the conservation of a fish stock. More than that, it is the conservation of our future, so that our children can partake in an industry that we have been partaking of for the last 500 years.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I humbly stand before you today in this hon. chamber for the very first time to say that I am committed to the greatest resource that our province has shown to the world, and that is our children. Out-migration of our youth continues to be our greatest challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador. I want to give our youth the option to stay if they choose to do so and I believe the government believes in that, in regional economic development and sustainable living that will finally give our children the right to stay in Newfoundland and to make a living for them and their children if they choose to do so.

The government understands that our policies will help pave the way so that Newfoundland and Labrador will become the shining jewel of the north Atlantic.

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been some five weeks now since the health accord was reached between the Prime Minister and the provincial and territorial leaders. The hon. member alluded to health care.

I would like to ask the hon. member if he has received feedback from his constituents with respect to the 10 year health accord. If so, what type of feedback has he received?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, the feedback has been tremendous. It became the most important issue during the campaign. It also became the most important issue for me personally, on two levels. First, it is stable funding. Many in the health care sector approached me during the campaign and said they liked the idea that they were getting stable funding. Recently, because of the deal that was signed, once again they are saying that we have done what we said we were going to do. We set this out in the throne speech, we set it out in our campaign, and now we are going through with it.

The other issue was of course home care. There has been tremendous feedback about home care and how we plan to be sincere about this particular topic. As I mentioned during my speech, yes, we give respect to our patients, but also we give respect to our health care workers. To me, that is a tremendous goal.

● (1620)

Ms. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by congratulating you, as have my colleagues, on your appointment to the Speaker's chair. You bring skill and indeed honour to the position. I congratulate you.

On June 28, the citizens of Winnipeg South Centre made the decision to once again have me represent them in this Parliament. I want to offer my very sincere thanks to the community for giving me the honour, for giving me the privilege, and for showing me their support once again.

Today I want to comment on the throne speech and I would like to focus my remarks on our commitment to the nation's cities. One may ask, how important is this? Canada's urban centres of more than 10,000 are now home to 80% of our population. I believe that the vitality of our cities and communities is critical to our advancement as a nation. That is why this government stated that we are committed to building communities and cities that balance economic opportunity, social well-being and environmental conservation.

This is not a new issue. If I can refer to another time and another country, perhaps John Kennedy said it best over 40 years ago in 1963 when he proposed a cabinet level urban affairs department. At that time he said, “We will neglect our cities at our peril, for in neglecting them we neglect the nation”. I believe this statement is as true today as it was those many years ago.

That is why we have stated clearly that it is now time for transformative partnerships. The Prime Minister himself raised this issue in the House just last week when he spoke of the new deal for cities. He said:

This is an issue that needed to be brought to the national table. Canada's communities, large and urban, rural and small, face very different challenges and require very different solutions.

The Address

It is time for a new level of cooperative responsibility among federal, provincial and municipal governments. Our citizens deserve nothing less. Indeed, they expect nothing less. It is time for new legislation and new initiatives. It is time for a new agenda for a rapidly urbanizing population.

This new deal for cities calls for close cooperation and collaboration among the three levels of government. It respects Canada's division of constitutional powers and indeed will increase strength through the energy of the partnerships. Equally important, the speech also calls for cooperation among the private sector, the not for profit sector and the governments.

I am not speaking about anything radically new. In my own community of Winnipeg, we have three singular examples of how all levels of government and the private and the not for profit sectors have been working together in producing unique signature projects. Let me briefly outline each of these in order to illustrate.

Members will remember in the fall of 1996 the Red River Basin was wetter than normal. We had near record snowfalls and heavy precipitation in the spring. The result, of course, was the flood of 1997. As the flood waters moved northward from the United States, cities, towns and rural residents teamed with the largest deployment of Canadian troops to battle the flood waters. The Winnipeg floodway, an excavated channel constructed in the 1960s—some call it a ditch—moved the flood waters around Winnipeg and saved the city from devastation. Over 100,000 people were evacuated during the flood and the economic damage in the two countries approached nearly \$5 billion U.S.

Winnipeg survived by inches from a catastrophe of historic proportions. Both countries realized something had to be done. One of the recommendations that came forward from the report "Living With the Red", prepared by the International Joint Commission, was this one:

Public safety requires that the city, the province and Canadian federal government focus immediate attention on designing and implementing measures to further protect Winnipeg.

• (1625)

The Winnipeg floodway authority, supported by all three levels of government, will commence construction next summer of a wider, deeper and longer floodway channel around the city of Winnipeg. The three levels of government and the private sector worked together to address a critical and sustainable infrastructure need. The cooperative approach is working.

Another important initiative for my community is the urban development agreement for Winnipeg. Like the City of Vancouver, Winnipeg has a new, multi-faceted, tripartite agreement to better serve the citizens of the city. This new agreement is singular because it follows from a strong tradition of the three levels of government working together for over 20 years of tripartite cooperation in Winnipeg.

From 1981 to 2001, Canada, Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg have been partners in tri-level agreements that built on Winnipeg's strengths and addressed the challenging issues of downtown and neighbourhood revitalization, immigrant resettlement, affordable housing, early childhood development, and support to fledgling entrepreneurs.

This was done through two Winnipeg core area initiative agreements followed by the Winnipeg development agreement, all models that are now being studied worldwide.

Today Winnipeg is experiencing a growing aboriginal population, coupled with the continuing out-migration of young people, an aging workforce, a deteriorating infrastructure and an inner city population challenged by poverty. Today's response to these challenges is the urban development agreement, supported by the urban aboriginal strategy. It consists of four components, all interrelated and targeted to advance Winnipeg's development and Winnipeg's renewal.

All levels of government and many departments of each jurisdiction worked together to produce this agreement. The four core components are illustrative of what a cooperative approach can produce.

The first component is about aboriginal participation. Through the urban aboriginal strategy, Winnipeg's aboriginal communities will take a lead role in identifying social and economic programs to respond to the rapid growth of the city's aboriginal community.

The second component is based upon sustainable neighbourhoods. A cooperative, grassroots approach will assist communities, especially those in the inner core, to restore local areas through initiatives in housing and education.

The third component is downtown renewal. Again, this cooperative approach with all levels of government, private stakeholders and not for profit agencies is working toward the rebuilding of a vibrant, exciting downtown that will encourage and support downtown living, business, and entertainment and cultural activities. Our new multi-use downtown arena, scheduled to open in just a few weeks, is but another example.

I have much to tell you of, Mr. Speaker, but you are telling me that my time is limited. I want to speak of the national lab in Winnipeg. I want to speak of the Canadian museum for human rights, potentially one of the most exciting projects under development in Winnipeg, a project that brings communities together and showcases Canada's commitment to human rights around the world.

There is much ground to cover, but we are making progress. There are many fundamentals of this kind of redevelopment in cities and communities. We need leadership with vision. We need community organizations that are looking and working forward. That is why the speech addresses the not for profit corporations act.

We need long term plans. We need information and the ability to communicate and, quite clearly, we need resources, but the agenda is about more than just asking for funds. It is about being strategic and collaborative. It is about ensuring sustainable funding. It is about innovation. Obviously no one level of government has all the means to carry forward on its own.

The Address

In closing, I would say the Speech from the Throne as it relates to the cities agenda provides new opportunities. It is a time to move forward with an integrated approach to improving the quality of life for citizens today and in the future. If we choose to neglect our cities now, we will rightfully be accused of neglecting our nation.

•(1630)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to what my colleague from Winnipeg had to say. She covered a great deal of ground.

First of all, I am delighted that progress is still being made to deal with the flood problems in Winnipeg. As hon. members know, there were serious floods in Peterborough this year. We are also looking at infrastructure to deal with them in the long term.

One of the things that I am pleased about in the Speech from the Throne is the commitment to aboriginal people and not just in words. Serious efforts are now being made to work with the first nations and Inuit people of Canada to improve their situation.

The hon. member mentioned the urban aboriginal population in Winnipeg. One of the things we are trying to do now, as I understand it, is to work with the first nations themselves and work with the reserves, but at the same time reaching out to the increasingly large aboriginal population.

I know this involves the federal government working with community colleges, the universities which have special native studies programs, aboriginal training institutes and so on. I would be grateful to hear my colleague's thoughts about how we are progressing with regard to helping urban aboriginal people in Canada.

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises an important issue and an important matter for the City of Winnipeg.

As we note in the Speech from the Throne the dollars allocated to the urban aboriginal strategy have been doubled. It is a complex issue. There are many jurisdictional issues that relate to aboriginal people living in the urban setting. As government, it is incumbent upon us to reduce some of the barriers that are in place. It is equally important that aboriginal peoples in the inner city take responsibility for the decision-making as to how the needs of their communities will be met.

It is most important for governments to work together. The jurisdictional barriers that frequently face aboriginal people in the cities are huge and need to be addressed.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I was in the provincial government of Manitoba, the federal Liberal government cut off the funding for health care for first nations people in Winnipeg. All off-reserve natives had previously been under the care of the federal government and the funding was cut off, and simply dumped onto the provincial government in a very short order. That created tremendous hardships in a place like Winnipeg.

I grew up in Winnipeg and I know what some of the concerns are. What I saw consistently when I was in the provincial government was a failure by this government to address that kind of concern.

I also saw the collapse of the reserve system in many places because it had not been getting the proper support from the federal government. I then saw the phenomena of native people leaving first nations communities in droves and going to Winnipeg. The federal government, of course, having cut off the province from any assistance, left the province in an incredibly difficult situation.

I am wondering whether the government will re-examine the idea that it, too, is responsible for first nations people, not just in the first nation community, not just on the reserve, but constitutionally. It is responsible for first nations people in our urban centres, even though they are not in first nations communities any more.

Does this member take the position that the Government of Canada is only responsible for first nations people who have chosen to stay on the reserve, in very deplorable conditions might I add?

•(1635)

Ms. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, this member has taken the position for a long time, and has spoken out in many forums and on virtually every opportunity that the matter of aboriginal people living in the urban setting must be addressed by all levels of government.

I stated in response to an earlier question that there are frequently jurisdictional barriers in place. However, I want to point out to the member that during program review, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada was the only department not affected by program review. That is very important. I would also point out that the new health accord has allocated another \$700 million to aboriginal health.

However, the member raises an important issue. There are jurisdictional barriers and a lack of congruency between governments in meeting the needs of aboriginal people. It is incumbent upon us at all jurisdictions of government to look at a cooperative and collaborative approach. No one can do it alone any more. It is important that we work together with aboriginal communities to make a difference in the lives of so many people that we all know.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Municipalities; the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas, Employment Insurance. As a result of the technical problems yesterday with the simultaneous interpretation, the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas will have additional time on the same subject.

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is the usual practice in rising in reply to a throne speech to say a few words about our riding and what we will be focusing on in this session.

I have had numerous opportunities to speak in this House, but this is my first time as the member for Saint-Maurice, which if I remember correctly was represented for 42 years by a Liberal MP who was the Prime Minister of Canada for many years.

The Address

So it took a heck of a lot of courage to decide to run as the representative of Saint-Maurice. I must say I was helped by a population that had had enough and wanted a change, along with the rest of the population of Quebec.

There are 54 of us here for the Bloc Québécois. It is a source of great pride for us to be such a large group. The Liberals over there had predicted that we were going to disappear off the map. We have not, and Quebec is better represented here than it has ever been, and I do not think we are likely to disappear any time soon.

In the riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, the people are of course used to inviting a Prime Minister to their various events, and now they will just get a regular MP. I have told Mrs. Landry, the mayor of Shawinigan—I take this opportunity to greet her—that we would definitely have a different approach. I am not going to turn up with my pockets full of money; however, I will be present and I will look after every file. I may not have pockets full of money, but if I do turn up with something substantial, it will not always be for the benefit of the same people in the riding.

A few million dollars, or a few hundred million, may be a good thing, but less of a good thing when one sees how it is distributed. I have never been able to handle patronage, even as a member of a majority government, on the René Lévesque team from 1976 to 1985. He was as allergic as I am to patronage, so I never learned how to do it.

I work with my constituents regardless of their politics. That is how I intend to work in the riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, and the people there will notice a big difference as a result.

I have forgotten to say that I am splitting my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

That is how it happened. If I succeeded in getting myself elected in this riding, it was, because, as I said earlier, I had help from many people. I would like to thank everyone who supported me; some of them had to travel a long way to do so.

I do not have any family in Mauricie, so when I became a candidate I could not count on hundreds of sure votes. Still, I have relatives near Montreal, in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Knowing that it would probably be the last time I ran—because at a certain age, you have to pull back—my family members made the trip to support me, and I salute them. It was a great help to me.

Of course, there were the people in the riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain, from the Parti Québécois and the two provincial members, Mr. Pinard and the member from Champlain in the National Assembly. Everyone worked together, and we had a very successful campaign. I am proud of my team and thank them very much.

The riding of Saint-Maurice—Champlain is immense. As an indication, during the campaign I travelled over 13,000 kms. Comparing my riding to that of Trois-Rivières, for example, or to the ridings in Montreal where one can walk all around them in a day, or maybe half a day. It is difficult to imagine but my riding covers thousands of kilometres.

● (1640)

For example, if the riding of Champlain were 4,000 km larger, it would be the size of Switzerland. In addition to being large, there are people living pretty well everywhere. So it means a lot of travelling.

The first nations aboriginal population is quite significant. The Attikamek are located 125 km from La Tuque, which is quite far from the river. Going from Trois-Rivières to visit the Attikamek in Weymontachie, you are not always guaranteed of reaching your destination. These people have the same needs, however.

If I want to visit people in Parent, I am not always guaranteed of getting there. Two weeks ago, on Thanksgiving Day, I had to go to Weymontachie. Unfortunately, after a three-hour flight, we noticed we could not land and we had to go back to Trois-Rivières.

That is how we work in such a riding. That is the difference between a prime minister and a regular MP who has the time to make several attempts to go back and see the people. These remote and vast ridings should receive a little special attention. I cannot administer this riding the same way a smaller riding is administered.

There are, across Canada, ridings that are even bigger than mine, still, we deserve special attention. For example, we need budgets to help provide services to the entire population since everyone has the same rights.

Parent is 250 km from La Tuque. The only link the municipality of Parent has to other municipalities—the town of La Tuque in particular—is a dirt road and an airport with a dirt runway. Imagine what it is like to be stranded in Parent, when you have an emergency and you cannot leave in inclement weather because planes cannot land. Pilots can only make visual landings.

That gives you some idea of how complex things are in a riding as large as mine. But the constituents do have to be served. I hope that the Minister of Transport, to whom I have spoken about the situation in the municipality of Parent, will take its isolation into consideration. They have refused to pave a landing strip in Parent, and I find that unacceptable. They refused because it did not comply with the standards. Of course, if the criterion for paving it is that the runway has to be near a major centre, then we will be out of luck. These are the kinds of things that I will be focussing on in my riding.

I would also like to say a few words about another issue that has been dear to my heart for some time, that of seniors. This is one of the things that brought me back to politics. I want to try to do more for seniors.

The government promises in the throne speech to increase and adjust the guaranteed income supplement. This is pretty unbelievable, as well as somewhat scandalous in my opinion. Some \$3.2 billion have been stolen from seniors. This is the same government that stole \$3.2 billion from them by depriving many of them of the guaranteed income supplement.

If the throne speech had even mentioned paying seniors what they are owed, I would accept an increase to the GIS. Indeed, we will put a lot of energy into demanding it. They must get this money back. Then the throne speech will be able to boast of adjusting the supplement.

The Address

I will have an opportunity to address the issues in my riding on other occasions. I would have liked, for instance, to have touched on softwood lumber, which is a major issue where I come from. The ministers never wanted to do what we suggested in order to save jobs. Unfortunately, when we win the war, there will be no more soldiers left. The plants will all have shut down. There are several other similar issues in Saint-Maurice—Champlain, and I will have the pleasure of discussing them again.

• (1645)

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the remarks of my colleague, the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain. He is extremely involved in his riding. He did a lot for seniors by bringing to light the scandal involving the guaranteed income supplement program. This program was announced in secret. If I am not mistaken, it was available for a limited time, only on the Internet site. Seniors would have difficulty accessing it. It was not what could be called marketing. I appreciated my colleague's remarks.

I have to say, quite humbly, that I used his work in the latest election campaign in speaking of the dignity of older persons. The member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain helped craft the Bloc Québécois' platform on seniors. Mr. Gagnon excels in speaking of dignity and the respect of dignity, a talent we can bank on. This issue is an important one for most people.

As regards my question—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I would simply point out that, as you already know, you must not refer to members of the House of Commons by name, but rather by riding.

Mr. Christian Simard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can now consider the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain a friend. I apologize for my transgression. It will be my first and last time, I hope.

I would like to hear the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain on the almost systematic infringements contained in the throne speech. I heard the member opposite speak earlier of Winnipeg, her riding. She spoke of the flowery throne speech. She referred to communities, municipalities, housing, child care, all of which are under Quebec's jurisdiction. The throne speech seems to be full of these references

I wanted to know whether the member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain, from his viewpoint and with his vast experience, thinks it is right for the government to appear more interested in what is not within its jurisdiction and to be unable to handle what is.

• (1650)

Mr. Marcel Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

I would just like to correct one little fact. The information on the guaranteed income supplement was not available only on the Internet, but not enough effort was made to find the people that were hard to find. That meant that a great many older people, including the most vulnerable, did not have access, because they did not know they were entitled. One of the people I met was a woman who had

lived all her old age with \$6,000 per year. When she died at age 88, she was owed \$90,000. That gives you an idea.

I am always shocked to hear the federal government make promises in fields of provincial jurisdiction. During the election my opponent told me they were fed up with fighting. I told him that we were, too. It is very simple not to get into a fight: let the federal government stay home and look after its own affairs.

Here are some examples of fields that are actually under federal jurisdiction: pollution in the St. Lawrence River, whose banks are being destroyed; or pollution caused by the Canadian Army in Lac Saint-Pierre where there are some 300,000 artillery shells, 10,000 in dangerous condition. These come under federal jurisdiction.

Then there is the problem of fisheries. My colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou has talked about that. We are emptying the oceans. Someone said that we need to pay down the debt so as not to leave it for our children. I agree. On the other hand we will be leaving them such pollution that whole countries will be devastated. We are emptying the oceans. Oceans come under federal jurisdiction. Why not each take care of our own affairs and put money into provincial jurisdictions so that the provinces can manage their own issues?

We were talking about health, a field that is the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces. We were talking about education; the same applies. Let us each take care of our own affairs and there will be no fights.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. As you know, the Bloc Québécois proposed an amendment to the amendment and the Conservative Party of Canada proposed an amendment and both were unanimously adopted by the House. Therefore, the Speech from the Throne has the unanimous approval of this House.

I am very proud of the amendment by the Bloc Québécois. I am going to read it now, because it will clarify the rest of my statement.

and we ask Your Excellency's advisors to ensure that all measures brought forward to implement the Speech from the Throne, including those referred to above, fully respect the provinces' areas of jurisdiction and that the financial pressures some call the fiscal imbalance be alleviated.

This amendment to the amendment is very important. Like my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou, I was listening to the hon. Liberal member making his speech and other Liberal colleagues in this House boasting about the new deal for municipalities and saying they must be helped.

I have been a witness to all that has happened with Quebec's municipalities, because I was active for years in the municipal arena. I was president of the Union des municipalités du Québec from 1997 to 2000 and I had been active in that organization for 10 years before that. I have seen what the stress and fiscal imbalance caused by the federal government did to Quebec's municipalities.

The Address

Beginning when the current Prime Minister became Minister of Finance, the Government of Quebec had to impose two major reforms on municipalities because of cuts in the transfer payments to provinces. For those working in the municipal domain, the first was the Ryan reform, which cost the cities and towns of Quebec \$250 million, and then there was the Trudel reform.

I will say this and I will name the ministers—one was Liberal and the other from the PQ—but the premiers and ministers of municipal affairs were not exactly happy when they went to ask the cities for more money.

With the Ryan reform, the vast majority of roads that had been maintained by the province became the responsibility of municipalities in Quebec. This means that cities had to maintain additional infrastructures. All the municipalities had to help pay the bill for the Quebec provincial police. Over time, costs increased for each community. In fact, so much pressure was exerted to have the QPP and other police forces provide increasingly more services to cities, that some of them did away with their police force, turned to the QPP and paid the bill.

With the Trudel reform, something unprecedented in North America occurred. Cities wrote cheques to the Quebec government to help it pay off its debts. Such is the reality. Later on, a tax deal, negotiated by Lucien Bouchard, gave a bit of money back to the cities. But the fact remains that, ever since the current Prime Minister took over the Department of Finance, Quebec cities have only received bills.

Why? Because cities come under the jurisdiction of the provinces, as provided under the Canadian Constitution. Of course, when the federal government cuts in health transfers and in transfers to the provinces, the latter have no choice but to tell cities, “Look, we also have to cut”.

So, Quebec reduced services to cities and school boards. This led to a school tax increase and, for many, to a municipal tax increase. Everyone had to assume their share of the burden.

I find it appalling that Liberal members, including the Prime Minister, would come and tell us today that they will help the cities. It is the Prime Minister who put them in dire straits. He has to use the technique that he employed at the time. If he made cuts in transfers to the provinces, which in turn had to make cuts to their transfers to cities, then he must give money back to the provinces. This is what we are saying. The Liberals want to help cities? Then let them give money to the provinces, and the provinces will help the cities.

Take my word. There is not a single provincial minister or premier who does not like to have his picture taken with the mayor of a municipality, whether small, medium or large, while he is handing out a cheque and offering his help to buy equipment and maintain infrastructures.

Unfortunately, when the current Prime Minister was the finance minister, many years ago, he cut transfers to the provinces, and the cities have not been investing in infrastructure. They have not had the money. Any money they had went to helping the province soften the impact of the cuts to health, transfers to the provinces, social services and so on. That is what we have had to deal with.

Almost 12 years later, we have impoverished cities that have not invested in infrastructure because they have had to help the provinces deal with the federal cuts. And now the federal government wants to tour Canada and give money directly to the cities.

● (1655)

I lay some of the blame on my former mayor colleagues and the city councillors who buy into this, saying, “The federal government is going to give us money.” In any event, it is not the federal government that adopts policies for the cities, it is the provinces that adopt policies for water, sewers, waterworks, and transportation. Everything is under provincial jurisdiction. Anything municipal is under provincial jurisdiction. Such is the reality.

Consequently, the provinces need help. They need more money in order to help the cities. That was the meaning of the Bloc Québécois amendment to the amendment—to respect the jurisdictions entrusted to each government by the Canadian Constitution. Municipal governments come under the authority of the provinces, which have their own jurisdictions. Often cities are a good example. Once the federal government has made a mess, it wants to help directly. We see this with many organizations. It is prepared to go to the universities and hospitals and help them directly with money it took away from the provinces. That is what it has done. In an attempt to give itself some capital, it cut provincial transfers. Such is the reality.

When the Prime Minister was the Minister of Finance, the feds. were footing 25% of the health bill, and then the figure was cut to 12.5%. Now they are in the process of raising it, and everyone is calling for a return to 25%. But doing that is bringing it back to the level the federal government was paying when the Prime Minister was in finance. That is the reality. In the meantime, people in the provinces absorbed all these sums. Cuts could not be made at all levels, so everyone in Quebec society had to make an effort, the cities and the school boards too. Today, of course they are getting some help.

We feel that a new deal with the municipalities is indeed necessary. Each community, whether small, medium or large, will have to receive federal assistance, which will be transferred to the provinces under a nice agreement, respectful of the various jurisdictions, to provide funding to the municipalities. Yes, it is high time, because since the PM has been finance minister, the municipal level has been under some very considerable pressure. The municipalities have had to pay a pretty heavy price to help out the provinces.

The Address

Once again, that is one of the things that brought me here. I wanted, in a way, to follow the problem to its source. I did not go to the provincial level; that is not where it originated. The source of the problem is here, in this House. The Liberal members do not get it. It is as simple as that. They have never got it. That is, in fact, why there are fewer of them than last time I was here. The next time, there will likely be still fewer, because they just do not get it. Some will, of course, say that this is a kind of sickness. I would say that being Liberal is a sickness in itself. Of course the way out can still be seen. What the municipalities are experiencing is far from funny. All my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois can see that the municipalities in all regions of Quebec are most definitely in need of help.

I was pleased to accept my party leader's request to take the lead in the infrastructure and community file. Yes, it is time that the governments negotiated a deal with municipalities, but with the greatest respect for provincial jurisdiction. Therefore, it must truly be the province that obtains an agreement with the federal government in order to be able to help the cities, simply because the ones who pay the taxes, in the end, are the citizens. Whether it is for school boards, municipal, provincial or federal governments, the same taxpayer always pays. Therefore we must be able to agree.

Just now, I heard the hon. member for Saint-Maurice—Champlain say that we must make certain that this happens without quarrelling. That is true. My colleague was correct in saying that to his opponent. Yes, we are ready to do this, as long as each respects the other's jurisdiction. And that is not so difficult. The worst thing is that this country has a document that tells it what to do. Once again, the Liberal members cannot even read it. Therein lies the tragedy. That will always be the tragedy in this House: they cannot read the document they created for their country. Naturally, that causes problems for Quebec.

We, the men and women of Quebec who sit in the House of Commons, are here to defend the interests of Quebeckers, to prevent the others from doing whatever they want and from again pillaging the money from provincial coffers to build up a big treasure chest here at the federal level. What we want is just the opposite: take the big federal treasure chest and pay out where the needs are, that is, in the provinces and in the cities, for the well-being of all Quebeckers.

● (1700)

Mr. Réal Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I totally agree with my hon. colleague. As mayor of a small municipality for more than 20 years, I had to deal with chronic underfunding caused by federal cutbacks. At first, these cuts were shovelled into the provinces' backyards of course, such that they ended up piling up in the municipalities.

Cuts were made in many different areas. At one point, we thought we would be able to breathe easier thanks to the infrastructure program.

I had the opportunity to deal with a number of issues under the infrastructure program and I will have the chance to work with my hon. colleague on a very important issue for the municipalities.

Does he think that an eventual infrastructure program could not only be a cure for almost everything that ails the municipalities but

also be similar to what we had before? Does he think the program could be improved upon, and if so, in what areas?

● (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: I will allow the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel to reply, but first I will hear the Minister of Canadian Heritage on a point of order.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise to respond to a question of privilege raised in the House on Friday last by the hon. member for Calgary Southeast. The member claims that during oral question period on Thursday, October 14, I misled the House with my statements about the member's travel expenses.

I would submit that on that day I was referring to an article that appeared in the *National Post* on June 16, 2001. The facts reported in that article had already been cited by this House, on May 30, 2001, to be exact.

I am prepared to submit to this House, today, a copy of the article in question, in both official languages. If, during the heat of the debate in this chamber, my words were misunderstood, I want to apologize to the House and take the time to explain that my intention was only to discuss the issues raised in the article and not to attack anyone's integrity.

* * *

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her Speech at the opening of the session, as amended.

The Deputy Speaker: In response to a question put to him before the minister's remarks, the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to answer the question the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse asked me. As a former mayor of a municipality, he has lived through the whole tragedy of the federal cuts at the provincial level.

To address directly the question about the infrastructure program, there may well be such a program that would please every municipality, provided that all are eligible. The problem with Liberal members is that, once again, they want to play politics. It would be pretty simple to establish a stable, long-lasting program to ensure that the problems of each municipality are resolved.

The Address

Take for example the most recent program, in 2000. During the six weeks following the federal announcement of the program, 2,200 applications were made in Quebec alone, while there was enough funding for only 400. The same agreement provided that Quebec was in charge. It submitted projects which were selected on the basis of criteria negotiated by the two unions of municipalities in Quebec, with the participation of the federal government. Add a touch of politics, and you know what happened. When negative responses started to come in, the federal Liberal members told the mayors or councillors that, had they been the ones administering the program, the municipalities would have received the funding. That is what they said. They never dared to admit that the real problem was that there was not enough funding in the program.

What is required is a stable, ongoing program, not just for one year, like in 2000, but every year, to ensure that each community ultimately sees its project realized.

To do this will require hard work. My colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse is assigned to this portfolio with me. We will sit together on the committee, if ever a committee is formed. We have a good Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), but there is no committee. We do not know what committee will take this portfolio. Once again, it is Liberal logic: create a shiny new deal for the municipalities, but without a department to manage it and with no indication where we are going either.

However it works out, one thing is certain. We will be standing up for every community in Quebec, small, medium or large. We want Quebecers to have an infrastructure program for all communities in Quebec.

[*English*]

Mr. Brent St. Denis (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a riding in northern Ontario called Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing. It is a large rural riding that is 110 square kilometres. It is bigger than any of the countries in Europe, including France. It is a riding that is diverse. It has a very strong Francophone presence, particularly in the Highway 11 corridor in the northern part of the riding, which includes communities like Kapuskasing, Hearst, Fauquier, Moonbeam, Smooth Rock Falls, Mattice, Opasatika, Constance Lake Indian Reserve and Val Rita.

These are communities that I wish to welcome into the riding. With redistribution, I was the beneficiary of over 20,000 new constituents from the Highway 11 area. I am very happy to be here to represent them and to have had their support. I wish to thank not only the electors of the Highway 11 area, but the electors from across the entire riding for their continued confidence in me. I can assure them that I will continue to work hard on their behalf and continue to get out to the more than 50 communities in my riding, including over 20 first nation communities. There is no greater honour that I could imagine than to be a member of Parliament in the best democracy in the world and in the best country in the world.

That said, that does not come about without a lot of effort. I am proud that I have been a member of a government that for the last nearly 11 years has brought an excellent level and quality of governance to the country that we see in the numbers.

Let me take my few minutes here today to highlight some of the features of our recent throne speech, a throne speech that continues what for me has been the essential message of the government since 1993, when we were first elected. That message is we bring a balanced approach to governing the country. We are not slaves to the debt; however, we have put the country's finances back in the black. We have had seven surpluses in a row, and because of those surpluses, we have been able to pay down the national debt by over \$60 billion. We have a way to go yet, and I am not one who believes we should pay down the debt so fast that we suffer in other areas. The government has brought a very intelligent and considered approach to paying down the debt, while at the same time allowing, through our surpluses, for major investments in our social safety net. Primary among those is our health care system.

Before I say too much about health care, it has been forgotten by members opposite, and to remind all Canadians, that it was this government about five or six years ago that put the Canada pension plan back on a strong footing. We are the first and maybe the only industrialized nation whose national pension plan is on a secure footing. It is important to remind Canadians that they need not worry. The Canada pension plan will be there when they retire. It is actuarially sound, it is being managed well and it is being managed well because the government took steps some years ago to allow that to happen.

Our country is noted for its social safety net around the world. Why do people want to come to our country besides for the peace, tranquility and security that we can offer, the beautiful landscapes, trees and water? What we also can offer is a system of governance, a form of community management, whether it is national, provincial or local, that ultimately puts people first. Yes, there are errors and mistakes from time to time, but ultimately we have evolved a system of governance that really does put people first.

● (1710)

A hallmark of the government's record over the last 11 years has been in putting people first. We have done the best we can to show Canadians that we care about their priorities by not only balancing the books but having made significant major investments in health care. That was the number one issue in the past campaign. When we got past the fact that a balanced approach to governing the country was the underlying most important facet of governing the country, health care was then number one.

I heard it over and over again as I travelled more than 11,000 kilometres during the campaign, like many of my colleagues in the House, as you may have, Mr. Speaker, in your large rural riding in British Columbia. Those are hours travelled at night and during breakfast, lunch and dinner so that we had time to meet with people and do the things that we normally do during elections.

The Address

In travelling around my riding, I was reminded every day of how much my constituents valued health care. They were concerned about the three hour drive to a hospital, the long waiting times and whether they would even get to see a specialist and, if they did not get to see a specialist, would they have to drive home and return another day. They wanted to know what would happen to people who lived far away from a hospital and were sick. They wanted to know what would happen to them when they grew older. Some people wanted to be able to stay at home and not have to face the prospect of living in a nursing home earlier than needed.

Canadians have a lot of concerns about health care in spite of the fact that we have a system that is among the best and maybe even the best in the world in its universality, portability and the fact that it is publicly funded. It is a system where the Prime Minister could get the premiers of the territories and provinces together, as he did in September, and hammer out a deal, notwithstanding the begrudging acceptance of some measures by some of the premiers. The fact that the Prime Minister could sit around a table in public view and then, sometimes quietly with them in private, hammer out a deal that at the end of it all will further improve our system, is a testimony to the kind of country we have.

I am proud to be a part of a government that reflects the balanced approach that Canadians take, not only to their own lives but to the way that they think about their communities, neighbourhoods, regions and the country as a whole.

In having a balanced approach to governance, this includes, beyond health care, a number of other very important facets of our nation. That includes at the same time providing support for our children, whether it is early education, health initiatives or measures to support caregivers who, for one reason or another, must stay home to take care of a sick child or an elderly parent who needs their support.

We have not only taken measures in the past but in the throne speech we have even moved those yardsticks even further forward and will be increasing support for children in the early years and support for those who take care of sick family members. Not only has the government considered the needs of individuals and their families, the young and the old, through very significant tax cuts over the last many years, but we also have looked after our communities as a whole.

It was this government in 1995, after responding to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, that initiated the first Canada-provincial-territorial infrastructure program. I have over 50 communities in my riding that have not only appreciated the federal investment in their communities but now know that under our new deal for communities we will be placing on the table significant and stable funding for many years to come.

The funding will provide our mayors, reeves and first nation chiefs with the kind of confidence they need as community leaders to make the important plans to improve the roads, water and sewer systems, and community facilities that are needed to improve their communities and to ensure their future as communities is very strong.

● (1715)

I could easily go on for a couple of hours but I will end by thanking the citizens of my riding. I want to wish everyone here a wonderful fall and Godspeed as members travel to and from their ridings.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate you on your post. I also congratulate the member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskwasing who does indeed have a gorgeous riding.

He mentioned some excellent points concerning the economics of our country and the fact that we are consistently in a surplus position. He emphasized the fact that among the 26 OECD nations, our government has performed best over the last several years and has consistently put forth a surplus.

Some may be critical of that but I will reiterate the reasons for that. It gives us the stable base upon which we can invest in our communities, support our social programs and pay down the debt. By paying down the debt, we are actually reducing the payments that we have to pay which enables us as a country to have more resources and more money to do the things that we want to do for Canadians.

The hon. member has a massive riding, a good chunk of Canada. A good chunk of my province of British Columbia is rural too. Would he explain for the House some of the innovative economic diversification issues that have been employed in the north? Ontario has been a leader with the federal government in investments in economic development in rural areas. Could he also bring us up to date on some of the challenges and some of the solutions that have been put forth to deal with aboriginal communities which, tragically, are some of the neediest communities and which display some of the lowest socio-economic parameters that we have in our nation?

Could he articulate to the House some of the innovative things that are being done in northern Ontario on both of those issues?

● (1720)

Mr. Brent St. Denis: Mr. Speaker, we are glad the parliamentary secretary is over here with us. He raised an excellent point. There are those who would, foolishly I believe, criticize us for having a surplus. That surplus has allowed us not only to pay down the debt, we have saved interest money every year from that which we can then plow back into our social safety net and into economic development.

When I leave here I will be joining my northern Ontario caucus colleagues at our weekly meeting where we will discuss the challenges and the need for diversification in our region, which is not unlike other rural regions across the country, where we have experienced our young people going off to school and not always being able to come home right away.

A number of tremendous things have happened in northern Ontario. I will point to Sudbury, my neighbouring riding. It has become a world leader for research into mining technology. I would encourage everyone to investigate what is happening in Sudbury because it is tremendous.

The Address

In my own riding my 20-plus first nations are incredibly well led. Our programs should honour and respect the leadership that our first nation chiefs are providing. I had a delegation visit today, the chief of Zhiibaahaasing on Manitoulin Island and Chief Franklin Paibomsai from Whitefish River First Nation, two people who bring to their leadership roles a tremendous interest in the health of their communities, the ability of their communities to produce young people who will go off to post-secondary education and so on.

Fundamentally, the government has, to the best of its ability, demonstrated that it cares about the people of this country and its communities. At the end of it all it is not up to bureaucrats in Toronto, Ottawa or me for that matter to tell our communities what they should do when it comes to diversifying their economies. However, as my colleague has suggested, it is important that the Government of Canada be there to support our local leaders and the ideas that automatically percolate up from our communities.

Strong communities build on that strength. Successful communities breed further success not only for themselves but for their regions. We need a government like ours, one that believes in its communities and one that is prepared, as we committed in the election campaign, to put an additional \$2 billion back into economic development. I know my region in northern Ontario through FedNor will continue to work very hard to make sure that diversification and responding to local needs is priority number one.

• (1725)

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest these past days to what members have said. One of the interesting things about a Speech from the Throne is that it is, by its very nature, a sort of a blueprint of what the government intends to do and it gives all sorts of people an opportunity to show their talents. I think this is very useful.

I would like to speak to a couple of things, one quite briefly and one a little bit longer. The first one is the place for science in the Speech from the Throne. Many members have talked about the importance of research and development and the fact that since the budgets were balanced the federal government has put roughly \$13 billion into research and development. It has not done that out of charity or out of opportunism. I would stress the opportunism because some members often mention that. Thirteen billion dollars is not inconsiderable and it is not the sort of money that grabs votes. If a government is putting money into research and development it is a long term investment. We do not see the results for a long period of time.

However if we do not make investments this year, things will not happen in five or six years time. I would like to mention two small things, not the amounts of money that are involved.

First, I would like to applaud the reinforcement of the establishment of the office of the science advisor. As we all know, the federal government is a very large and, as members opposite will say, particularly cumbersome operation and, by its very nature, it is like that.

The federal government is not like a provincial government or a municipal government which can be quite focused. It really is quite diverse. In fact, because of that it does remarkable work in research

and science and virtually every federal department has a research capacity.

Many federal departments not only have their own research capacity, but they fund research in particular areas. I would mention, for example, the Department of Health. The Department of Health has scientists who are doing good research and it funds, through the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, research in all aspects of health all across the country: in the colleges, the universities, the institutes and so on.

I do not want to keep repeating examples but the Department of National Defence, which is often mentioned here, rarely do we hear members raising the fact that the Department of National Defence has people doing research into all sorts of things. I happen to know they do some research into snow, for the trafficability in snow and the movement of vehicles over snow. The department also funds research.

Having a research capacity is an important function of the federal government and the establishment of an office of the science advisor, with Mr. Arthur Carty, the former head of the National Research Council, as the first occupant of that position, is very important.

This was mentioned in the Speech from the Throne and reinforced. I understand the funding is flowing for that office. I think this office will, coordinate may be too strong a word, but it will become a point of first contact for all research in the federal government. It will help the federal departments, which tend to be quite isolated from each other, to work better in science together. It will also work with the provinces or the private sector, or whatever it is, in the areas of science. I think that is extremely important. I was not surprised by this. I knew it would be in the Speech from the Throne and I was glad it was there.

Another commitment in the Speech from the Throne is to the Canadian Academies of Science. A thousand people have probably just turned off their television sets because who is interested in the Canadian Academies of Science and what does it mean? What is it? By the way, there is no such thing at the moment. It is just a proposal.

• (1730)

All developed countries have something like an academy of science. The United States has one. Russia has one. France has one. They are different in each country, but I will use the one in the United States as an example.

The academy of science is a place where the different sciences come together in that nation. Among other things, it recognizes the best and the brightest. That is one of the things it does. It funds research in all the different areas. The people in the different areas of science talk to each other. In the United States it is a focus for thinking, research-minded people in that country. In addition to that, it is a resource for the government of the United States. I will give an actual example, although it occurred some time ago.

The Address

There was a problem with the pavement on the main interstate highways in the United States. A lot of money, as we all know, goes into highways. It turned out over a period of time that there were problems with the pavement that was being used and it became an epidemic. In different jurisdictions it was found there was something wrong with the highways.

The federal government of the day asked the academy of science to look into the problem. The academy of science said that it could put together a panel, that it could do this, that and the other thing, it could produce a report, send people out to test and it would cost a certain amount of money. The federal government gave the funds to this perfectly independent organization, not a federal organization, to conduct a study.

What it did was bring together not just the best U.S. scientists and engineers on highways, but people from all around the world. Those people came together, designed a study, determined what was wrong, gave the best advice they could to the federal government of the day in the United States and the problem was solved. By the way, it involved great expenditures of money. That is an example.

With the proposal in the Speech from the Throne, like the science advisor I mentioned, I believe we are getting near the top of a pyramid of things which have been done—I mentioned the \$13 billion before—over the last six or seven years for research and science in Canada. This move toward having an arm's length Canadian academy of sciences is a step we can take now. We could not have taken it seven or eight years ago when research was less strong in Canada.

The government's objective is that Canada by various measures be in the top five nations in the world. I have to say, having become a bit cynical, I think that means we are going to be fifth. We are not going to be fourth; I think we are going to be fifth by the year 2010 in research and development.

The government's objective, which has been the objective for two or three years, is not for fun. It is because our productivity depends increasingly on keeping on top of research and development in all the various fields. These two little things, which are not so little, although they are in financial terms compared with many items in the Speech from the Throne, are moving us toward that position.

I mentioned the year 2010. In various sciences and in various aspects of science, we are already in the top five. In genetics and astronomy, for example, we are already in the top five. As of this year, and I saw this very recently, we are now number one in the G-7 in terms of public funding of research and development. This is a remarkable thing.

I did not hear this mentioned in the election, but it is something which has already been done. We have moved from second last to first in publicly funded research and development. Following that, as I have mentioned, in the years to come we will see improvements in our standard of living and our quality of life resulting from that.

I appreciate everyone's patience in listening to me. I congratulate you, Mr. Speaker, on your new position. You look wonderful sitting in that seat.

● (1735)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems rather a contradiction that the Speech from the Throne would put such an emphasis on science, yet here in the House the role of the science, research and development minister has been withdrawn. That minister no longer reports to Parliament, and a science advisor who reports to the Prime Minister just is not acceptable. We need to have a science advisor who reports to all of Parliament. Taxpayers' dollars are being spent on this research. That research and what is coming out of it should be available to the public.

A problem that still has yet to be resolved is how, for example, a project like the Canadian neutron facility is still shuffled from one ministry to the next. A presentation is made to the industry committee. The minister decides as to whether or not it is worth funding. Then it is shuffled over to the ministry of natural resources. Then it goes to cabinet, and there is a shuffle and it has to go through all the ministries again. After seven years the project is still no further ahead and the cost continues to mount for this proposed project because of the indecision of government.

There was also mention of an academy of excellence. The concern that we have with these academies and foundations is that of transparency.

How will the member assure us that when money is allocated to these scientific projects, to the foundations, to the councils, to the academies of excellence, that they will report to us? Can he assure us that we will see exactly where the money is going and how it is being spent?

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that as my colleague began, I could understand where the question would go, which was accountability to Parliament for an institute or a particular project that the federal government is funding.

For the Canadian academy of sciences, first of all I think it should be totally transparent. Wherever it gets its resources, and I hope it gets it from many locations, the source of that funding will be clearly published. If it is private sector funding, provincial government funding, or an endowment from some foundation, I hope that is entirely public.

I would not have this Canadian academy of sciences responsible to Parliament in some other way. Its purpose is to focus science out there and to give governments of the day, not just the federal government because its services could be used by provincial or municipal governments, an independent body.

I deliberately described the example where there was a particular project that was funded in the United States, directed by the federal government. In that case, the money came from there but that academy did not have to give a favourable report in order to get future funding.

I would have to say to the member that while I understand the importance of reporting to Parliament for all sorts of things, in this field an arm's length independent body is extremely important.

The Address

With regard to the others, and she mentioned one example, I would be the last to say that things are perfect in the federal system. I mentioned \$13 billion. She has to be aware that the Canada Foundation for Innovation alone has been responsible for strengthening the research infrastructure in Canada to the point now where the brain drain, as we used to talk about it, particularly in larger science that needs equipment, has been reversed and it is coming back.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research, which as my colleague knows replaced the medical research council, is now I believe 13 institutes. For example, the Cancer Institute does cancer research and works with the cancer associations in all of our ridings doing good science but keeping in touch with the public. Its funding in the last four or five years has almost tripled. In other words, the money for medical research has gone up almost three times.

She mentioned the granting councils. The granting councils report regularly to the House. Their funding has more than doubled, and I hope that it doubles again. That is not to mention scholarships and a variety of other things the federal government has done.

• (1740)

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to rise today for the first time during debate in the House, although I did have the opportunity to participate in the BSE debate last week in committee of the whole.

My riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock is a rural riding located in central Ontario. The northern half is part of the Canadian Shield familiar to anyone from the Toronto area as cottage country. The southern half of my riding where the majority of my constituents live is agricultural.

My riding also includes Brock Township which is a part of Durham region. Part of my riding reaches into the GTA as well as large portions of Peterborough County essentially circling the city of Peterborough. I have one of the few ridings in Canada that actually reaches across three different area codes from 905 to 705 to 613.

I certainly appreciate the support that I had from my constituents in the election on June 28. Blue skies are back again was something I heard so many times this summer. My riding was the home of Leslie Frost who was the premier of Ontario for many years. There is a proud tradition of Conservative politicians from my riding.

When I ran in the election last spring, I identified half a dozen of my priorities, things that I wanted to pursue in this place as a member of Parliament.

The first priority is protecting family farms. For any of us who come from rural ridings, we recognize the enormous impact that the BSE crisis has had not only on farms but on many other rural communities. Many of us have been very disappointed in the response from the government over the past year and a half.

In my opinion, rather than dealing with BSE as an issue to be managed, the House and the government should have declared this a national crisis a long time ago. The management of that issue should have been elevated from the minister's office to the cabinet table with the Prime Minister himself taking a lead role in addressing that concern.

A second priority for me has been to attract more jobs into my rural constituency. This again is a familiar refrain. I listened with interest to my colleague from northern Ontario when he talked about some of the challenges in the north. I would like to remind him and all members that many of the challenges that exist in northern Ontario actually exist across rural Ontario in the south as well.

In my riding, improving connectivity, expanding access to broadband Internet is a major priority. That is something I have begun working with. I rose last week on a member's statement to thank the Minister of Agriculture who worked with me to get some funding for a program that exists in our part of the province.

The third interest that I have is in strengthening rural health care. It was quite easy for me to focus on this one in my riding. Trying to get more doctors into small communities is clearly the priority in this area. There are several doctor recruitment teams. Although health care is primarily a provincial jurisdiction, certainly the federal government can do more to increase the supply of doctors in Canada, particularly those who come from outside the country.

A fourth priority of mine is expanding seniors services. It is my understanding that my riding has the second highest percentage of seniors of all the ridings in Canada, following only Victoria out on the west coast. We have many seniors for two reasons.

First of all, I come from a very beautiful area. Many people who have owned cottages for years in Haliburton have since made their retirement homes in that area. The second reason we have such a high percentage of seniors is that many of our young people have had to move away. There are no jobs or opportunities in those rural communities that there are in cities. I would like to address that at some point in the future. I would like to be able to say that we no longer have the second highest percentage of seniors because we have repatriated many of our young people back to my area.

My fifth priority has to do with improving access to housing. This is an issue in communities, both large and small, across Canada. Earlier today reference was made to a lack of adequate housing stock on first nations. In many other small communities it is also a problem. I have many ideas in that area which I hope over the coming months and years I will have the opportunity to share with members in this place.

• (1745)

My final priority is focusing on children. As the father of two children under two years of age, I have a personal interest in this area. I sit on the human resources, skills development, social development and the status of persons with disabilities committee. I hope through that body I will have the opportunity to discuss and to make positive recommendations to improve programs and services for young families and for young people.

The Address

A second initiative I have launched in this area is called the capital experience. In a capital experience next week I will be bringing two students from each of seven high schools in my riding to Ottawa for three days to learn about career opportunities in public life.

I think many young people in rural communities are not aware of some of the different opportunities that exist in public life. Therefore, we will visit researchers at the Experimental Farm. We will be received by the Saudi Arabian Ambassador. We will come to this place on Tuesday so they can witness question period.

I urge all my colleagues to be on their best behaviour that day because I have told them that this is a respectful place where the serious business of Canada is conducted. I hope that all parties will heed that warning and avoid any sort of unparliamentary behaviour on that day.

Specifically, tonight I have the opportunity to speak on the Speech from the Throne. It is a historic occasion that for the first time there was substantive amendment to that speech. I was somewhat disappointed that the government in this minority Parliament did not make a greater effort to consult with opposition parties prior to the Speech from the Throne.

As the House knows, it is the Prime Minister's responsibility to demonstrate that he has the support of the House and that he has a working majority in this place. With 135 seats, the governing party cannot do it on its own. The Prime Minister should have made greater efforts to consult with the opposition parties prior to the speech last week.

It is also why I was so proud of the leader of my party when he put forward our amendments to that speech. As my leader made very clear, it was our attempt to put some meat on the bones. The Speech from the Throne was vague. I heard one of my colleagues a few minutes ago refer to it as a blueprint. The blueprints I have seen are quite precise and have more specific information on them. I would refer to the Speech from the Throne more as a rough sketch. We have made some progress in this place in the past 10 days to add some precision to that document to make it better and to make it work for all Canadians.

I will quickly touch on the different amendments that were put forward.

First, it is scandalous that the EI rates have been set so high that they generate a large surplus. This is essentially a job killing tax that the current Prime Minister, when he was the finance minister, made no effort to address. He himself has said at different times that taxes kill jobs. It is overdue that we bring the EI situation into balance.

Second, in terms of reducing the tax burden on lower income Canadians, I think we all recognize the challenge that lower income Canadians have faced and continue to face. That is a step in the right direction.

Third, the introduction of independent budgetary forecasting is a step in the right direction. I refuse to believe that it has been by accident for 10 years now that the government has misread the projected revenues and expenses in this place. I do not buy the slice theory. If you have ever seen me golf, Mr. Speaker, you would know I am an expert on slices. This does not bear any resemblance to a

slice. In fact I think it was a strategic and deliberate move on the part of the government. I hope that it addresses this.

On the fourth point, which is examining our electoral system, I am an older reformer. One of the reasons I joined the Reform Party in 1990 was to address the democratic deficit in this place. Someone once said that I was country before country was cool. I was talking about democratic deficits and changes more than 10 years ago.

Finally, a vote on ballistic missile defence is another step in that direction.

● (1750)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. gentleman on his victory and I welcome him to the House of Commons. My question for him is quite straightforward. Seeing that he is new, I will be gentle with him the first time.

The party of the Reform and the Conservatives have always talked about a triple-E Senate, an elected Senate. We in the NDP have always asked for an abolished Senate, completely eliminate it.

The 10 provinces and 3 territories do not have senates. For better or for worse, they seem to operate in a normal democratic fashion. They do not need a second chamber to do the business of government in the provinces or territories.

Why does the member think that we need an elected senate? Here is what will happen. We will have legislation from this House brought over to the other place, and those elected people, if indeed it is an elected Senate, will wrangle, fight, argue, delay and do all kinds of things, which will slow down the business of opposition and government for even longer.

I do not like the system they have in other place now. That is why people like myself think it should be abolished. I would like the members comments on that intervention.

Mr. Barry Devolin: Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of thoughts on the issue of Senate reform. First, imagine telling visiting students from eastern Europe or some other emerging democracy that fully one-quarter of our parliamentarians, as we enter the 21st century, were still appointed. It is outrageous that we have a Senate that is appointed by the Prime Minister. If we were describing the way our government works to people from many other countries, they would not think that was the hallmark of a modern democracy. The existence of an appointed Senate is an idea that has outlived its usefulness. If there are senators, they need to be elected.

Second, the question essentially is whether we ought to have a unicameral legislature with only a single House or whether we ought to follow the model that is used in most large federations where there is a lower House that is based on the principle of representation by population, which we largely have in the House with some modifications, and an upper chamber that is based on representation for the members in that federation.

My concern with getting rid of the Senate is that it would reduce the influence or the say that the smaller provinces have. The United States has a senate for that reason. Australia and many other countries, many other federations have the bicameral system.

The Address

It is time to move beyond an appointed Senate. I do not agree with the notion of abolishing the Senate and having a unicameral legislature in Canada. If we are to have a Senate, then it ought to be elected and we ought to have representation.

Ironically, what has filled the vacuum in the absence of a more legitimate and credible Senate is the first ministers conferences where they essentially represent provincial interests. I wish the premiers would stay in their provinces more and deal with their own issues. If we had an upper chamber, it would deal with provincial issues in this place.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his maiden speech. He spoke about bringing school kids to the House. Dr. Jane Goodall, the primatologist, was in the audience during question period. I was curious to know what she was thinking while she watched the antics of question period. I wondered whether she found our behaviour better or worse than the chimpanzees she has been studying since 1960 in Gombe, western Tanzania. It is all the opposition's fault. The member should know that.

Medical personnel in rural areas is a huge problem for the whole country. British Columbia has a physicians assistants program. We are now starting to model a very exciting program. The University of Washington in Washington State has an 80% success rate with providing physicians assistants in rural areas. Approximately 80% of its graduates stay in a rural area and they, under the guidance of physicians, are able to provide primary care in underserved areas. I offer that to the member as a point of interest. If he has any comments to make on the programs that Ontario is doing, which are very good, he might like to mention them in the House.

● (1755)

Mr. Barry Devolin: Mr. Speaker, I am interested in any new ideas that people bring forward in terms of doctor recruitment to increase the supply of doctors in our system. With all due respect, I personally hope we can move the health care debate on to a more rational level where we can look to countries around the world for good ideas. If and when people bring forward an idea from the United States, it should not be immediately shot down as American style health care. A good idea is a good idea and if it is being done in Washington State, then we should look at it.

Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think this is the first time I have spoken when you have sat in the chair, so my congratulations on your appointment.

I want to also congratulate the member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock on his maiden speech. I thought it was a very good one. I remember my maiden speech was many years ago, but I do not think I was as comfortable and obviously as relaxed as the member appeared to be. That maybe comes with a long association with the political process. It certainly demonstrates itself.

The throne speech response is one that I had a little difficulty formulating from the standpoint that there was not a whole bunch in the throne speech. I think we were all expecting there would be, simply because we had been through an election. We had a throne speech something like five months earlier. Therefore, we have had two throne speeches in a very short period of time from the same administration.

What I observed was observed by many. I called it an empty vessel. Here was a throne speech that could have delivered so much but delivered very little. The most surprising part about all of this is we have a new scenario. We have a minority government in this place. Three opposition parties were waiting to be consulted by the government on what some of the priorities might be and it simply did not happen. To say it happened, even to a small degree, is stretching it because it did not happen. That means the opposition moved amendments. It means we had what the media described as a potential crisis in the making, which was not the intent of the opposition. We actually ended up with more substance in a series of amendments to the throne speech than we had in the throne speech.

It is important that Canadians recognize the significance of all of this. We are at the front end of a Parliament. We were at the point where we had a government that was used to governing from a majority position that suddenly tried to use its old methodology, which was to declare that this would be a confidence motion. The fate of the government hinged upon supporting the government and defeating these amendments.

Guess what? Four hours later the government was negotiating. We now have a different hue and character to this place as a consequence. This is productive. However, the government still appears to be directionless except when it is dragged kicking and screaming, and that is the shame of it all.

The amendments to the throne speech, which have been adopted, are generally supported by the Canadian population and by all the opposition parties. We now understand that the Liberal Party supports them as well because it supported the amendment. Why there was no reference to any of this in the throne speech is beyond us. There was no content in the throne speech.

● (1800)

It is important for me to talk about my riding, just for a minute. My riding is the north half of Vancouver Island. It is also the adjacent mainland coast from Desolation Sound up to Rivers Inlet. Basically, I have about half of the British Columbia coastline in all its different configurations within my riding. I have a lot of marine issues.

We have a very big resource sector. It is a very scenic area with a big tourism sector and it is a very nice place to live. We have a big retirement sector and an economy that is diversifying itself quite a bit.

The face of the federal government on the west coast is not very evident. When it is evident, so very often decisions are made that are contrary to the wishes of the people. We have example after example of this.

Usually it emanates from either the Coast Guard, Department of Fisheries and Oceans which is the same thing, or more recently the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency. It can manifest itself in trade disputes, as in other parts of Canada with softwood lumber.

The Address

We have a very difficult time making the centralized governance of this country, the centralized bureaucracy, and even the regional bureaucracy in British Columbia sensitive to what they are doing to our communities through some of their actions, particularly when they have negative consequences.

There are some priority areas including our salmon enhancement programs. We need to maintain them. There is also the issue of light stations. It is a real litmus test for the government. If it is not going to support those, then it does not care about rural coastal British Columbia. It is plain and simple. It is doing everything it can now to signal that it does not care about that.

We have a lot of energy issues, as do other parts of the country. The west coast is blessed with some of the best wind regimes in the world. We are going to have a major wind farm in my riding that will probably add 150 wind turbines in one location. This will change the energy economics of Vancouver Island considerably. That is just a start.

We have an offshore oil and gas resource in British Columbia, upon which there is a federal moratorium, a moratorium it would not place on any other part of Canada, but we have one in British Columbia. We are expecting the Priddle report and the Brooks report later this month. When those come out, I do not want the government to drag its feet in terms of addressing the moratorium issue. There was no reference to any of that in the throne speech.

We have an east coast offshore oil and gas issue right now where the government is to deliver within one week the mechanism by which it is going to meet its election promise. It will return 100% of offshore resource revenue to the provinces of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia. We have no reference to that in the throne speech.

We have a major initiative by the government bureaucracy, from the Privy Council, on smart regulations that would do ever so much to assist the entire exercise of statutory and regulatory authority, to increase productivity and to increase the economy of Canada, and to get rid of a lot of the frustrations within industry. There was one small reference to that in the throne speech and that is it.

These are all things that need to be built on in a major way and we do not hear the government talking about it or addressing it.

● (1805)

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to speak on the Speech from the Throne, and particularly to thank the voters of Ottawa West for again giving me the great privilege of representing my community in this seat of our democracy.

It is a tremendous privilege to sit in this House. It is a tremendous privilege to work with people who come from all over the country, from different parties, and with different views of what is good for Canada and its future, but with a common interest in trying to make this a better country.

That is a very important attitude to have as we enter this new Parliament. Clearly it is a different Parliament than I have ever experienced. Quite frankly, I am somewhat excited and interested in

seeing how that changes the dynamic of how Parliament works and how we can work together across party lines to achieve some good things for our country.

Like many Canadians I come from an immigrant background. My father was an immigrant to this country. It was from him that I learned how lucky I am to be a Canadian. It was a fulfillment of his dreams when he came to this country that he finished up his career as master tailor for that great symbol of Canada, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Throughout my life I learned to appreciate the values this country stands for. When I walked into this House for the first time and often since, I have consciously focused on what I owe and what we all owe to the people who sat in this Chamber before us and what we owe to the generations to come after us.

Those who came before us have given us a country that the world envies. They have done it consciously by focusing on the future, on the good of the whole country, and not on narrow parochial interests. The decisions we make in this Parliament will create the future that our children and grandchildren will live with, and that future parliamentarians will have to build on.

That is the perspective I bring into this Chamber all the time. I am very proud to represent the people of Ottawa West—Nepean. It is a very diverse community. I know this kind of comment is more typical of a maiden speech, but I gave that speech 16 years ago. However, it is important to me to recall who I am here to represent.

I represent a very diverse community, many people of very low income, many new Canadians from all over the world, many people who are very wealthy, many people who work for the Government of Canada and many people who work for our high tech sector and at every possible job one can imagine in virtually any community in this country.

So when I look at something like the Speech from the Throne, I look for how it addresses the needs of the diversity of Canada, not if it addresses one particular economic stratum or one particular region of the country, but whether it looks at the range of needs and interests of this country, and looks at what is going to be good for the future.

Unlike some of the speeches I have heard this afternoon, I am one who believes in the role of government in society. I believe that government has a constructive and positive role to play in the life of its citizens and in creating a country. Our predecessors in this Chamber have done a wonderful job of that. We have to attempt to at least meet the standards they have set and hope that when we leave this place, we leave our country a little bit better than when we arrived.

● (1810)

Let me talk about some of my constituents and how I believe the Speech from the Throne and the plans of the government meet their needs.

The Address

I have either the second or third highest proportion of seniors of any riding in the country. Why I say one or the other is because the member for St. Catharines constantly debates with me that his riding has now surpassed Ottawa West—Nepean. In that way my riding represents a growing and emerging need of Canadian society. We are going to have to address a population that is increasingly over 65, out of the workforce, and has health care needs, needs for retirement income and a smaller working population to support those many needs.

In a way we have a reversal of what we had in the sixties when the baby boomers were hitting the high schools and they were our main focus in providing for their education and future. Now, those who made the sacrifices in those days are going to need more from their society than the younger people of today.

I am pleased that the Speech from the Throne focuses on the needs of seniors, particularly better health care and support for people who look after elderly relatives or neighbours in their own homes. I hear from my constituents about long waits for surgery, diagnoses of illnesses that may be very serious, and treatments, and the cost of drugs that people cannot afford to just stay alive.

I am pleased with the recent health accord. The commitments in the Speech from the Throne to move forward will in fact address those needs of reducing waiting times, ensuring quicker diagnoses, providing catastrophic drug coverage, helping with home care, and supporting caregivers in the home.

We must also look to our future by looking to our children. The Speech from the Throne takes some very important initiatives. Looking back a bit, I am very proud of the national child benefit which ensured that children in low or modest income families in Canada had greater support in the family financially than they did a few years ago.

I look at what we have done in one important area and that is to ensure that all children have a better chance at having more advanced education. This will become increasingly important for them to live full and fulfilling lives and to make a contribution to their country.

I am particularly proud of the learning bond which will be available to all low income children born as of a certain date earlier this year. Quite simply, there are families in this country who will never be able to afford to give their children a university or college education. This will allow all children to have nest eggs to use for their education when they reach that age. That will not only provide some of the financial resources they will need, but provide the encouragement for them to finish high school because they will know that there is a possibility of them going on and learning more.

Housing is very important to our families, to seniors and to children. I am proud of what the government is doing to ensure that there is more affordable housing in communities right across this country.

I mentioned that my constituency includes a large number of immigrants. I am pleased with some of the initiatives we are taking toward a quicker recognition of immigrant skills and professional qualifications so that an engineer can work as an engineer and not

remain unemployed or underemployed but make a contribution to this country.

• (1815)

I will mention two particular areas. Recently we all received a letter from the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers about the money it has had from the government to speed up the recognition of engineering credentials of new Canadians and to ensure that more opportunities are open for them to have jobs where they can use the skills they bring to this country.

We will be initiating a program for the quicker recognition of medical doctors from overseas so that they can contribute to solving our shortage of doctors and specialists in Canada and at the same time be living more fulfilling lives, practising the skills they have brought to this country.

One thing we have to look at as well, though, is what we do to keep Canadians healthier. One of the areas that I think is vitally important to focus on is what kind of natural environment our children and grandchildren will have to live in. Will they have clean air to breathe? Will they have clean water to drink? Will we have soils that are capable of producing a quality food supply?

Therefore, I am proud of the commitments that the Speech from the Throne makes to the environment, to alternative energy and to new environmental technologies. Not only will they help us in Canada solve some of our environmental problems, they will also allow us to contribute to solving the environmental problems of the world. That, by coincidence, is also going to be good for our economy. I have a philosophy about Canada: that we do well in this country by doing good for the world. One of the areas in which we can do that is by sharing our technology, keeping at the leading edge of technology and sharing that with the world when it is going to accomplish some greater good.

To close the circle, if we invest in the education of our children, it is both for their personal development and for the contribution they can make to society, but it is also good for the economy. At the same time, we invest in our universities and colleges through research, but in this Speech from the Throne we commit to going the extra step.

Too often in the past, excellent research has been done in Canada but it basically gets developed outside this country to produce jobs and benefits for somewhere else. That is okay, but I think the initiatives we are taking in the Speech from the Throne to commercialize our research, to actually bring some of that great research we do to market, and to provide the venture capital for small start-up companies that can do this, are very important initiatives.

The Address

I certainly know it is very important for a significant segment of my constituents, who have for a couple of years now been either unemployed or underemployed because of the downturn in the high tech sector. The ability for new companies and new ideas to get going offers the opportunity for them to look forward to new employment and to using their skills instead of going somewhere else for employment. There is a wonderful group in this city called the Ottawa Talent Initiative that is working on developing new opportunities for those high tech workers and providing support to their families.

It may not seem significant, and I know it is happening in communities across this country, but just in Ottawa we have approximately 17,000 people from that sector of the economy who have been unemployed for close to three years now. There are thousands more across the country. Those are talents we need to keep in our communities for the new opportunities in technology as they open up. If we do not have those skilled people, whether it is here or in Vancouver, Kitchener-Waterloo, Halifax or Saskatchewan, those new opportunities will not open up in Canada.

● (1820)

Therefore, right across this country it is in our interests to support keeping the skills of that sector current and strong, to work to ensure that the opportunities do open up for them to find employment, and to support their families as they go through this difficult time.

I would like to talk a bit more about cities and communities, but I am aware that I am running out of time. I would like to talk a little more about the importance of fiscal responsibility, because we cannot afford new initiatives if we are not careful with how we manage our fiscal situation. There is a very strong commitment to not go back into deficit financing, to continue paying off our debt and to continue ensuring that taxes remain reasonable for Canadians, but at the same time we cannot forget about investing in our future. That is what I have tried to talk about this evening.

What I think we need to have here as a perspective is this: will the decisions we take today, tomorrow, and in the next however long this 38th Parliament lasts give us a better country in 10 or 20 years? Will a child born today have greater opportunities 10 years from now? This, I think, is what we have to focus on, not just today's political squabbles and not just the short term pressures. We must have the courage to think beyond today and tomorrow and make sure that the next generation of people that sits in these seats will say that this 38th Parliament did good things for Canada and left them something to build on.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member as my neighbour. She represents the constituency directly north of mine and I know her to be a very devoted member of Parliament, committed to her community and to her country.

She remarked on the issue of health care today. I would like to ask her a question that is of particular concern to our respective communities. When she remarked on health care, it turned my attention to a hospital that is in her constituency but services all of the western part of my constituency. It is called the Queensway-Carleton Hospital.

I have met with the hospital board members in the past and they have explained to me their concerns. They are continually obliged to pay lease payments to a federal organization called the National Capital Commission. The fact that the National Capital Commission owns the land on which that hospital operates is a hindrance, an encumbrance, to the hospital's plans to expand, provide new services and possibly sublease to family doctors and other medical practitioners.

As a result, I have met with the head of the NCC to discuss the idea of transferring that land over to our community hospital. I have put forward a motion, Motion No. 135, which would accomplish just that. For the price of a dollar, the NCC would sell the property directly to the hospital, in the same way that two other hospitals in the Ottawa area have received their property from the City of Ottawa.

Given her government's professed commitment to health care, I am wondering whether she believes that the Liberal government will support this motion. Does she believe that the Liberal government will call upon the NCC, through the Treasury Board, to sell the land to our community hospital so that every dollar the hospital has at its disposal can be used for patient care and every square foot of property on which the hospital operates can be developed to expand the services that are available to our respective communities?

● (1825)

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the interest of the newly elected member for Nepean—Carleton in the hospital in my riding. Quite frankly, if he were that interested in helping out the hospital, he might not have cancelled two appointments with the National Capital Commission to discuss this very issue, choosing instead to speak to the media.

The land of which he speaks is the greenbelt around the national capital. It is something that the National Capital Commission holds in trust for the people of Canada as part of the planning of the capital. Much of it holds the Gatineau Park, the Mud Lake conservation area, and the Mer Bleu conservation area. The hospital has appreciated having that location for a very minimal amount for a lease of 40 years.

I personally think the NCC is not prepared to abandon what was bought in the national interest and has been kept in the national interest. I certainly am prepared to work with the National Capital Commission and the hospital to make sure that whatever arrangements for the extension of that lease when it ends in nine years are favourable to the hospital.

The member should ask his own colleagues whether they think a hospital in Ottawa should have preferential treatment over any other hospital in the rest of the country.

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the speech by the member for Ottawa West—Nepean. I heard her remark about her pride in the national child benefit.

Over the period that the national child benefit has been in place, child poverty has actually increased in Canada. A commitment was made in the House back in 1989 to eliminate child poverty by 2000 but in fact it has increased over that period. It does not seem like the most effective program. I would like her to comment on what can be done to address the issue of child poverty in Canada.

She also mentioned the Canada learning bond. I do agree that it is great to encourage families to save for their children's education but it seems to ignore the crisis in post-secondary education that we are facing right now with incredibly high student debt and high tuition fees. I do not see anything in the Speech from the Throne to address those important issues. I would like the member to comment on that as well.

Ms. Marlene Catterall: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the national child benefit. I think the member will concede that there are differing opinions about whether child poverty has lessened or has increased over the years. I am very proud of that benefit because it was an initiative that arose initially in my riding of Ottawa West—Nepean and eventually was adopted by the Liberal Party right across the country as its highest priority before it was put in the budget the following year.

Investing in our young people now, giving them an incentive to increase their education, to look forward to opportunities, is certainly one of the ways of reducing child poverty. It means that the next generation will be better educated, will have more opportunities and will be better able to provide for their own children.

As far as post-secondary education in general goes, the member knows that is primarily a provincial responsibility. With a little more time if the clock were not running out, I would list our investments in research, in millennium scholarships, in better tax treatment of student fees—

The Deputy Speaker: When the House resumes this debate, the member will have three and a half minutes left on questions and comments to further that list.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1830)

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by thanking you for allowing me to speak in the late show. My question is intended as a reminder of the one I asked of the minister on October 6 concerning the employment insurance fund.

My question is twofold. One aspect concerns the regulations, which are so restrictive that fewer and fewer unemployed workers qualify for EI benefits.

At the time, I also reminded the minister that no concern was shown for that in the throne speech; quite the contrary. The throne

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speech reflects something akin to a sense of satisfaction on the part of the government, when all it is saying is that it will check whether the EI fund still meets the needs of the workers.

The minister recognized that there was a problem, not only in Quebec but across the country. That is already something.

My question concerns the steps he intends to take to remedy the situation. This is not an easy situation, especially for those who are out of work.

Things have changed in recent years, especially since 1997. At the time, 75% of all contributors were eligible for EI benefits, compared to only 38% these days.

What this means is that the government has tightened up EI rules so much that fewer and fewer people are now eligible for EI benefits. This situation affects women and young Canadians particularly, since they are the ones with insecure or part time jobs.

I would like to get an answer on this from the government, the minister or the parliamentary secretary.

The second part of my question deals with the EI fund itself. A total of \$45 billion were taken out of the EI fund. It is in fact a disguised tax.

The minister told us that it was because we no longer have a separate EI account. But that does not explain why the government has taken money out of the EI surplus, money that should have been used to pay EI benefits to the unemployed. That surplus was used for other purposes, namely to pay off the debt or cover other expenditures, or simply went into the consolidated revenue account.

I would like to hear from the minister or his representative what their recommendation will be about the future use of EI money.

[English]

Hon. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise that the Speech from the Throne referred to the employment insurance program. It shows that the government is fully aware of all that has to be done to resolve the problems that affect not only Quebec, but all parts of the country. We have a long history of ensuring that the employment insurance program remains responsive to the needs of all Canadians.

Employment insurance continues to provide temporary income support to people who involuntarily leave their employment. For example, in 2002-03, 1.4 million people received \$8.2 billion in regular income benefits. According to the 2003 monitoring and assessment report, 88% of employed workers would have been eligible for EI benefits if they had lost their jobs with just cause.

Employment insurance helps Canadians re-enter the labour force. Nearly 640,000 participated in active employment measures and 220,000 returned to work.

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May I remind my colleague from Chambly—Borduas of all the changes the government has made to the employment insurance program so that it can continue meeting the needs of Canadians in a rapidly changing labour market. For example, the intensity rule was repealed because it did not help increase labour market participation. The clawback provision was amended, and now no longer applies to Canadians who seek temporary income support for the first time or who receive special benefits. As well, parents who re-enter the labour market after staying at home to take care of their young children can establish their eligibility for benefits by accumulating the same number of hours of employment as other workers.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development has indicated that among the OECD countries Canada has the second lowest long term unemployment rate.

As for the employment insurance account, I would like to remind my colleague that on the advice of the auditor general of that time, there has been no separate EI account in existence since 1986. That is even before you were elected to the House of Commons, Mr. Speaker. All surpluses and deficits are now part of the consolidated revenue fund. In fact we have been reducing premiums every year for 10 years. As a result, the premium rate dropped from \$3.07 in 1994 to \$1.98 in 2004, the lowest level since 1940. Our objective is to balance revenues and expenses, and we believe we will achieve that this year.

This government has understood what Canadians need and that is why we are proud of the improvements we have made and will continue to make in this important program.

• (1835)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the answer is clear. The hon. member has just confirmed that the surplus is used to balance revenues and expenses. What is not normal is that only a segment of the population, namely the unemployed, is asked to bear the brunt of this.

I would also remind the hon. member that he is providing the House only with absolute figures about the unemployed. Why does he not talk about the percentage of the unemployed who may now be eligible for EI benefits? Only 38% of all EI contributors are eligible for benefits, because the rules have become too restrictive. Such is the plight of the unemployed.

I would like the hon. member to elaborate on this instead of quoting figures that have nothing to do with the question I asked.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I am aware of my colleague's deep interest in this important subject. The objective is jobs rather than employment insurance, and he would agree with that. The employment insurance is there for temporary support.

With respect to jobs, in Quebec alone 50,100 jobs have been created this year so far. Since 1996, the year of the employment insurance reform, 563,000 jobs have been created, again, in Quebec alone.

In addition to the various changes the government has made, which I have mentioned, the member should recognize the

Government of Canada transfers some \$600 million each year to Quebec for active labour market programs to help workers, including older workers and younger workers, find and keep work. The annual transfer that this represents has increased considerably from \$427 million in 1996-97.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, my second intervention concerns the question I raised on October 14, regarding the leaders' debate.

At the second leaders' debate, the Prime Minister promised to correct the 910 hours of work requirement that young people must meet in order to collect EI benefits. In response to a question by the leader of the Bloc Québécois, the Prime Minister said that he would solve this problem and promised to do so.

As we speak, there is nothing to that effect in either the throne speech or the bills that have been introduced, despite the response the minister gave me on October 14. He is giving no indication as to how the problem will be solved.

I would like to hear this from the parliamentary secretary. What does the minister intend to do to eliminate this discrimination in terms of the requirement young people face? I indicated the percentages earlier. Eligibility for benefits stands at 38% for the working class as a whole. However, less than 30%—approximately 23% or 26% I think—of young people are eligible for EI benefits. Why? Because the government has imposed rules that deny them access gradually, despite the fact that they contribute.

Young people have the added requirement of 910 hours of work. I would like to hear the parliamentary secretary on this.

• (1840)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, again I compliment my colleague on his interest in this important topic. I have already mentioned that 88% of employed workers would have been eligible for EI benefits if they had lost their jobs with just cause. The member may not know that differences in eligibility range only four percentage points across the country, from 85.5% in Alberta the low, to 89.5% in New Brunswick.

Entrance requirements vary across regions to take into consideration the unemployment rate of the region concerned. As unemployment rates increase, entrance requirements ease and the duration of benefits increases to recognize the increased difficulty of finding work in the region concerned.

With regard to the entrance requirements for new entrants to the labour market, and the member seems to be suggesting that the EI program discriminates against youth and this could not be farther from the truth, the fact is the overwhelming majority of new entrants to the labour market are looking for work, not employment insurance.

That said, the member should also recognize that young people today have better opportunities to find and keep work than a generation ago. In fact the unemployment rate for youth between 15 and 24 is 4% lower today than it was 30 years ago.

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This reflects a few changes that have taken place in our economy and our labour market.

First, is the increased participation of young people between 15 and 24 in post-secondary education. We need look no further than the CEGEP system in Quebec for this. Since the beginning of the 1980s CEGEP enrolment in Quebec has been going steadily up.

Second, this decrease in youth unemployment also recognizes that we truly live in a learning culture. Canadians participate in post-secondary education activities more than any other citizenry in the world.

Notwithstanding this, I know the minister is interested in addressing any issues that the member has raised and indeed any Canadian with regard to the EI program. As all members know, the EI commission is mandated by the EI act to monitor and assess the EI program every year. Its report is tabled here in the House annually by the minister.

This government will continue to ensure that the employment insurance program remains responsive to the needs of all Canadians, particularly young Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary's answer is extremely shocking to the unemployed who genuinely need EI benefits. I take offence at the suggestion that it is somehow through their own fault that they find themselves out of work.

We are not talking about those who are not eligible, but rather those who are. The parliamentary secretary himself recognized that, under the EI rules, 88% of all those who contribute to the EI fund in order to have access to it should normally be eligible. But as we

speak, only 38% are eligible. That is what the parliamentary secretary is overlooking. That is the problem we need to deal with.

I repeat, less than 40% of unemployed workers have access to benefits. Between accessibility and actual access, there is a gap, a gap in which the government meddled by restricting the rules. And significant portions of the population are much poorer because of these rules.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the 910 hour entry requirement was introduced to reduce early dependence on employment insurance benefits. In a time when most jobs require a high level of education, too many young people were leaving school to take short term jobs. The new entrance requirement for employment insurance sought to break the cycle and encourage stronger labour force attachment.

The facts bear it out. Youth employment rose by 26,000 in September, mostly among older youth aged 20 to 24. The gain among youth was mainly in full time employment, over 40,000 of the places.

I know all members would agree that the youth of the country are best served by good educational opportunities that will build strong, satisfying careers.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 6:46 p.m.)

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