



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, October 21, 2004

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 21, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

•(1000)

[*Translation*]

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker: have the honour to table the document entitled "Individual Members' Expenditures for the Fiscal Year 2003-04".

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[*English*]

CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the 2004 report of the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada on the 38th general election.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

USE OF ARRESTS

Hon. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 83.31 (3) of the Criminal Code, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2003 annual report on the use of arrests.

* * *

[*English*]

JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY GENERAL OF CANADA

Hon. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) it is my pleasure to table, in both official languages, the annual report concerning investigative hearings and recognisance with conditions, December 24, 2002 to December 23, 2003.

•(1005)

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association concerning its participation in the meeting of the OECD economic and development committee held in Paris, France, on July 7, 2004 and the third part of the 2004 regular session and the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe, held in Strasbourg, France, from June 21 to 25, 2004.

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[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the co-chair of the scrutiny of regulations joint committee, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on Scrutiny of Regulations.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the report later this day.

* * *

EXCISE TAX ACT

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-239, an act to amend the Excise Tax Act (literacy materials).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to introduce this private member's bill that seeks to eliminate the goods and services tax on materials used in literacy development.

As the House will know, today is Literacy Action Day, and those working to promote literacy are here on the Hill to meet with members of Parliament about the literacy challenges still facing the near 50% of Canadians who have difficulty working with words and numbers.

The bill is designed to complement existing measures and to remove an unnecessary barrier from individuals pursuing greater literacy. I hope all members will give the bill their serious consideration.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-420, an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill I rise to introduce is an act to amend the Food and Drugs Act. In the 37th Parliament the bill was known as Bill C-420 and was sponsored by the member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

The bill is about freedom of choice in personal health care. It is about changing antiquated clauses in the Food and Drugs Act which have had a perverse and adverse effect on the way we regulate natural food products.

In the last Parliament the bill passed second reading by a vote of 124-85 with support of members on all sides of the House.

I know the importance of the bill to Canadians who want access to safe, natural alternatives that help to build healthy bodies and reduce health costs. I know it is a matter of much interest to Canadians and I hope it will receive support from all sides of the House.

I have spoken to all parties and I would like to ask for unanimous consent to retain the designation of the bill as Bill C-420.

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

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to have the bill numbered Bill C-420?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1010)

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at this particular time I would like to rise on a point of order with regard to a petition that is on my desk. The petition contains the signatures of nearly 115,000 Canadians from coast to coast to coast requesting that the border be opened.

The petition was put together by two individuals from the town of Cochrane, Alberta. They worked hard at it. They vowed to bring 10,000 signatures to the House of Commons in October. Last week they appeared, not with 10,000, but with nearly 115,000 signatures. This is excellent hard work on behalf of these folks. The title of the petition is to open the border.

The only problem with the petition is that it has not been addressed properly to the House of Commons. It would just simply be to the House of Commons.

I think the intent is quite clear. I think here is our opportunity to show 115,000 people that their voice can be heard in this great place.

I would ask for unanimous consent that this petition be accepted.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the last Parliament I had the opportunity to represent my party on the

modernization of Parliament committee of all parties. The discussion at that time was not to turn away petitions made in good faith, and that latitude was given. I believe the report was adopted by the House and I certainly would support the introduction of that petition in the spirit of the changes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member for Wild Rose to present this petition?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Mr. Speaker, I thank the House. I would like to make sure that members understand that this is for the opening of the border for live beef with regard to the difficulties we have been having.

I thank the House for its support. I know that the two fellows who were responsible for putting this together will greatly appreciate it.

CANADIAN FORCES HOUSING AGENCY

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, given the debate we are about to undertake today, which has been brought forward by my party, the Conservative Party of Canada, drawing attention to the continued underfunding of our nation's military, the petition I am presenting today is particularly appropriate.

The petition has been signed by citizens of Milton, Ontario who wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that on base housing serves a valuable purpose by allowing our military families to live in a military community and have access to services to address their specific needs.

The petitioners further draw attention to the fact that the Canadian Forces Housing Agency has, in many instances provide substandard and continues to provide substandard living conditions for our military families. They also note that the Canadian Forces Housing Agency continues to impose dramatic increases in their rent for those houses.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately suspend any future rent increases for accommodations provided by the Canadian Forces Housing Agency until such time as the government makes substantive improvements to the living conditions of housing provided for our military families on base.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions this morning.

My first petition is with regard to a petition by a number of my constituents, pursuant to Standing Order 36, imploring the government to move rapidly to fund, in significant dollars, public transit in accordance with our industrial strategy with regard to a green car.

● (1015)

MISSILE DEFENCE

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition concerns the issue of missile defence.

The petition contains approximately 100 signatures asking the government to take a position opposing any involvement by this country in that, again pursuant to Standing Order 36.

MARIJUANA

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my final petition, pursuant to the same standing order, concerns the decriminalization of marijuana. The petition, which contains approximately 200 signatures, asks the government to move ahead with legislation in that regard.

* * *

[Translation]

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: Shall all questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's national defence policies are seriously out of date and funding has fallen dramatically short of what is needed to meet defence commitments, the combat capabilities of the Canadian Forces have been permitted to decay and the government is continuing this trend by proposing to raise a peacekeeping brigade at the expense of existing combat ready forces; and accordingly,

This House call on the government to commit to maintaining air, land and sea combat capability by ensuring that members of the forces are trained, equipped and supported for combat operations and peacekeeping, in order to enhance Canada's status and influence as a sovereign nation.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been consultations among all parties and I think you would find unanimous consent to allow the Leader of the Opposition to speak to the opposition motion first and for the sponsor of the motion to be allowed to speak later today.

The Speaker: The House has heard the proposal of the chief opposition whip. Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe you would find consent for the following order:

That at the conclusion of the present debate on the opposition motion, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, October 26, 2004.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Supply

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by noting that I will be splitting my time with our deputy leader, the member for Central Nova.

This is a very important issue. Members will recall that during the last election the Liberals tried to denigrate, ridicule and make fun of our very serious proposals to give our military men and women the resources and direction they need to fulfill their vital missions.

Since then, we have witnessed new and even more disturbing examples of the shameful neglect with which successive Liberal governments have treated our armed forces.

As we all know, we have recently had a national embarrassment and tragedy, which, I can assure members, our men and women in uniform do not find amusing or trivial, nor do a majority of Canadians who expect that their government can at the very least ensure the sovereignty of our country and the safety of our society.

[Translation]

The Liberals appear to believe that the world has not changed in the past 30 years, since they started cutting back on the role and resources of the armed forces. The Liberal Party has not changed, but the world situation has.

• (1020)

[English]

Canada and its allies face a new global reality, which includes threats of global terrorism, failing states, oppressive regimes and the proliferation of various classes of weapons.

The response of the federal Liberal government to a new security environment which requires vision and vigour has been indifference and incompetence.

In its 1994 defence white paper, this government made a series of critical assumptions. It forecasted a diminishing role for the Canadian military on the international stage. It assumed that the frequency and complexity of future military operations would be lower and their duration shorter.

All of these assumptions have been proven wrong—dangerously wrong—yet the government did not see fit and does not see fit to revisit this policy. While allied countries conducted thorough reviews of their defence policies after 9/11, the Liberal government stubbornly clung to a policy that was already outdated and had been outdated for several years.

[Translation]

Canada is a member of the G-8. Our country ranks second in the world in terms of area. Our system of democracy is respected worldwide. In the two world wars, the Korean war and the numerous peacekeeping operations, our country has earned the admiration and recognition of its allies and of all friends of freedom and democracy.

The sad reality, however, is that we are no longer considered a credible military power. The Liberal government has abdicated, not only its international responsibilities, but its obligations to our soldiers and our national security.

Supply

[English]

As a lack of policy guidance squandered time and resources, Canada's men and women in uniform have been sent on the widest array of missions imaginable, to every corner of the globe, often without a clear understanding of how their efforts were central to Canada's well-being or whether they had the equipment necessary to carry out their missions effectively.

Over the past 10 years, the federal government has dramatically reduced the capability of our armed forces but at the same time has multiplied its commitments and obligations. In the absence of adequate federal funding, the military has even been obliged to deduct funds from the capital portion of the defence budget in order to pay for basic operations. By 2003, the portion of the defence budget devoted to capital spending had shrunk to only 11.5%, a 50% drop from when this government took office in 1993.

Since it is capital spending that allows the renewal of military capabilities, the future of the military has been sacrificed to pay for its day to day existence. The Prime Minister has recently bragged about his announcements on defence equipment acquisition; however, according to DND's strategic capability investment plan, the Prime Minister's announcements fall short some \$20 billion or 75% short of the military's own 15 year defence equipment plan.

The Prime Minister, who likes to talk about everything as "a fix for a generation", says that he has responded to the crisis in national defence. In fact, the Prime Minister has only approved \$7 billion, or 25% of the military's own 15 year, \$27.5 billion plan that is loosely based on the government's own 1994 policy and recent operational lessons.

As a percentage of the size of our economy, Canada's defence spending, at 1.2% of GDP, ranks the among the lowest, the second lowest, I believe, of all our NATO allies. Not that long ago, from 1985-87 under a Progressive Conservative government, the Canadian defence budget accounted for 2.2% of Canadian GDP, nearly 50% more in relative terms than today.

We are even more worried by the myopic, clearly minimalist view of military policy that was recently adopted by the government in its discussion of the future role of the armed forces. The Liberal election platform advocated a narrow or niche roles for the military as a whole and there is now every indication that the Prime Minister is seeking to redefine the role of the Canadian Forces on the international stage as one of a mere constabulary operation.

The Conservative Party supports Canada's three long-standing and increasing inter-linked security goals: first, the security of Canada; second, the collaborative defence of North America; and finally, the promotion of peace and security on the international stage.

There is no question in my mind that Canada's military should be increased to at least 80,000 personnel to meet the increasing demands of this security environment.

That is why our motion today advocates a stronger, multi-role, combat capable force to improve Canada's international capacity. To secure the peace in a new security environment, Canada must have multi-role, combat capable forces configured for a full range of

military operations from humanitarian support to full combat operations in defence of our national interests.

Notwithstanding our history as one of the most peaceful nations on the face of the earth, the Liberals continue to forget the key lessons of that history, and it is that our identity, our freedoms, our democracy and our values were more often than not won by men and women who were prepared to stand in uniform and pay the ultimate sacrifice.

The world may change, but the nature of humanity has not changed. Today and in the future, our ability to sustain our values here at home and our ability to project those values in a dangerous world will continue to rest on having a strong military. Those are the facts of life, they are the facts of our history, and no sovereign nation can ever forget them.

• (1025)

Let me conclude by mentioning the men and women of our armed forces, who have held up now for decades and increasingly hold up remarkably well under difficult, unfair and extraordinarily dangerous circumstances. But their success is due only to professionalism and dedication. It is not due to the quality and direction of political leadership they have been receiving from this place. They have enjoyed numerous small successes. They have garnered international respect not because of the policies of the government, but despite them.

As we reflect upon the tragedies that have recently befallen at least one of our military families, we need to remind ourselves once again that the men and women in uniform who defend and protect us are always owed as the highest priority by their national Parliament and their national government our priority to defend and protect them.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments of the Leader of the Opposition. I want to reiterate a few facts. The fact is that this government recognizes the new global realities. That is why we have put together a four part, integrated plan, working with development and defence, working with aid and working with foreign affairs, in order to look at our new security challenges in a four part fashion.

Also with respect to the defence department, the Leader of the Opposition knows full well that a review of defence has been taking place. That review to reflect those new realities is going to come out very soon.

The Leader of the Opposition also mentions contributions to our military. He should know full well that we have committed to putting forth 5,000 new people on the sharp edge of our military, plus 3,000 new reserves. We have also contributed \$7 billion for new equipment. That is a start, and I submit to members that given our fiscal realities and our fiscal challenges it is a good start.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to put 80,000 people on the sharp edge. I would ask him this. Over what period of time does he want to put those 80,000 people on the sharp edge of our military and what is it going to cost the Canadian taxpayer to do that?

Hon. Stephen Harper: Madam Speaker, I can remember the day not so long ago when that member would have stood in his place and said exactly the opposite.

I will just say this, and it is the only answer worth giving. Our men and women are going to stand on the field of battle and be in the dangerous oceans facing death and injury. What they are looking for from their national Parliament is commitment to the values of integrity, commitment, dedication and standing by their team and fighting with them.

• (1030)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his opening remarks in this important debate. Yesterday I took the time to observe the representations of the military leadership before the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. One of the matters that seemed to come out was that they had talked about the acquisitions of a variety and range of military equipment as meeting the functionality requirements of DND and not necessarily meeting the “best possible”.

I raise this because the motion states that we will equip and support our forces for combat operations, but it does not seem to indicate the level. Is it “best possible” that Parliament would like to see instilled in the defence procurement practices or is meeting the functionality sufficient?

Hon. Stephen Harper: Madam Speaker, that is a complicated question and difficult to answer in a couple of minutes.

First of all, I do listen to some of this testimony. We can read what defence department officials are saying in their internal reports, and I think we understand the state of the military and our long range concern. I admire and understand the difficulty that senior military people have in their roles both as leaders of our military, who are trying to upgrade the military, but also as senior officers of the government who are obliged to, within reason, attempt to defend government policy.

Our view is clear. The Canadian military will never be the largest military in the world and it should not be the largest military. Except for the obviously high end nuclear, it should have a full range of capabilities. Those capabilities, I would say should not be necessarily cutting edge but should be top level capabilities. That is going to take time.

The member is aware that we have made proposals to increase the funding of our military immediately and over time to secure that kind of a defence capability, which is prepared to respond with our allies to a range of flexible and unknown situations in the future.

We can do it with mere functionality as a stop-gap measure, but I think we have to aim for better if we are to play a role in the defence of our own country and in the projection of our values abroad.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will begin by congratulating the Leader of the Opposition as well as the mover of the motion, the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills, who has great practical experience having served in the Canadian Forces himself. I know members present, and Canadians generally, will be listening with great interest to his remarks and the insights he will bring to the debate.

I want to pick up where my leader left off with respect to the position that the Canadian Forces play in the world today, and the capacity in which they are to carry that heavy burden and live up to

Supply

the expectation that we in this country still expect of those proud men and women.

A historic retrospect, as my leader referred to it, will tell us quickly that this nation really came into its own on the battlefields far from our own country. The blood that was shed on behalf of Canadians in defence of freedom and values should cause us all to pause and reflect very seriously on the danger and the peril these men and women face even today. That same threat exists and arguably has been heightened in the days that we have seen quite recently.

With the rise of terrorism in the world today and the increasing sophistication, there is a need for technology and equipment, but the real human effort remains with those individuals willing to don the uniform and fight to protect our country's sovereignty, freedom and role abroad to protect other countries as well.

The sad reality of the equipment and support that exists today is one which we are attempting to draw attention to through this motion. I would not presume for a moment to speak for members present or for those in the Canadian military, but I suspect that the last thing people want to see in this debate is a pure partisan attempt to score points. What has to be done is the securing of proper resources and support for our Canadian Forces, and to get on with giving them the ability to do the job with which they are tasked.

Clearly, we have seen a decline and a full retreat from the necessary implementation of a plan for the equipment and support that members of the armed forces should rightly expect from their own government. This is not coming solely from the opposition or commentary that is of a partisan nature.

This comes from the Auditor General. This comes from impartial observers, and those with knowledge like *Jane's* magazine, who keep track of how countries are responding to these global threats. The American ambassador has made comments which should be of alarm to us all about the state of our armed forces. The general security threat around North America is very real and heightened.

We have seen chronic underfunding of our armed forces in the last 10 years. We have not seen an accurate white paper which would even depict the current state of our armed forces to allow us to accurately address where the greatest need is and where the greatest priorities lie. There have been attempts made in the past to put a patch or a bandage over the situation and that has simply exacerbated the situation overall.

Over the course of the last decade we have seen an unprecedented decline in many areas and now those decisions are coming back to haunt us. We had decisions made that were meant to cut corners, to simply put a very thinly veiled bandage over a festering wound within the armed forces.

My colleague from Prince George, British Columbia, referenced the state of housing. That is a deplorable state. We have seen, in fact, a retreat in terms of the numbers of individuals who are currently willing to serve in the armed forces. We have seen an inability to recruit and to train, even to give proper ammunition for live training exercises. Imagine, inadequate rifles and ammunition while we are still spending upward of \$2 billion registering hunting rifles in the country, and we cannot give rifles to our armed forces.

Supply

By way of comparison, \$250 million was spent on a sponsorship scandal and an inadequate amount of money for equipment. There was the purchase and procurement of government jets. And the ongoing charade, perhaps the biggest fraud ever perpetrated on our Canadian military, was the cancellation of helicopters which we are now still mired in a contract dispute.

● (1035)

This shows a distinct lack of priority and understanding by the Liberal government of the dire straits that currently exist within the Canadian military, even so far as to sending troops into a live war zone with inadequate uniforms, forest green uniforms in the desert. We may as well have issued hunters' orange with that type of background.

The sheer danger and humiliation that those soldiers must have felt, having to exchange boots and helmets as they disembarked upon arrival into a war zone. These are real situations that put real lives in real risk and the government has to bear the responsibility of those decisions.

The current state, as was referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, and the attempts by the Prime Minister to gloss over what has happened, to suggest that adequate funding is coming, and that help is on the way is simply betraying the reality. When we look at what the Prime Minister has said about fixing the crisis, by all accounts this situation is in further decline.

The Minister of National Defence, who is present, has made statements in the House that would lead Canadians to believe that the government has invested heavily in the military. This is simply not supported by the facts when one examines the budgets and cuts that have been made to his department.

The Prime Minister bragged about some of the acquisition that has occurred. Yet we know that DND's strategic capability investment plan, the Prime Minister's own announcements, falls some \$20 billion short or 75% of the military budget for the last 15 years for equipment. That is a 75% shortfall. How does the minister square this reality with the figures that he has presented to the House of Commons and therefore to the Canadian people?

That type of shell game is dangerous. It is putting people's lives at risk and continues to contribute to the decline of our proud Canadian Forces. It is incredible that the Prime Minister would stand in the House and tell Canadians that he has addressed this crisis, as referred to by my leader, that he is fixing it for a generation. What utter bullroar. Absolute nonsense. This is not happening.

The reality is that he has not fixed the crisis in defence. He has failed to approve the full \$27.5 billion that is needed just for equipment. That does nothing to address the shortfall of enrolment and recruitment that we need in the forces to bring our forces to the full necessary capacity of 80,000.

To put this in context, there are more active police officers in the City of New York than we have currently in the armed forces of Canada. We expect soldiers to do peacekeeping, peacemaking, peacebuilding by putting them between warring factions in other countries. They need the proper training and equipment to do so.

Peacekeeping is a fine word. It is one in which we take great pride in this country. Canadians feel very emotional about the state of our peacekeeping forces and yet they are soldiers. They are there to do very dangerous work. Their very lives and their very being is put in peril. Their families are living at home in Canada awaiting their return in substandard housing. Many of them have chosen to live off military reserves because of the state of that housing. Much of that housing puts their own health at risk because of lead, and poor water and environmental conditions.

It is far past the time to address these situations head on. We cannot emphasize enough the immediacy of this situation, the dire straits which our Canadian armed forces personnel continue to face both at home and abroad. There is a real need and expectation from Canadians that the Government of Canada will simply do the right thing to properly fund and immediately address this shortfall.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada, I want to personally give assurances that we will both respect, support and continue to fully do our role in opposition to bring this to the attention of the House and to push the government to make the proper investment that is required on behalf of our armed forces. I want to thank those men and women who continue to do this very important work on behalf of Canadians both at home and abroad.

● (1040)

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the deputy leader for his comments. I also want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments, much with which I agree, and I think with which many of the colleagues on this side agree. Obviously, there are some points with which we disagree.

I welcome the deputy leader's comments about not scoring partisan points. That is the spirit in which we have tried to operate at the SCONDVA. That has been my experience and certainly all members on both sides hope that will continue to be the spirit in which we operate.

I would like to ask him to help me debunk one point that has been repeatedly stated. It was the subject of a conversation last night between myself and the official defence critic for the opposition party. It relates to this continued talk about sending our troops into harm's way in a desert situation in green uniforms.

About last April at the SCONDVA, the defence committee, we heard from the former Canadian commander in Afghanistan, Major General Leslie. He indicated that it was his decision to send those troops in with that equipment. He did not want the desert uniforms. This was testimony from the man who was there. He indicated very clearly the rationale for that was that much of the work Canadians were doing was at night and that it was for the safety of his personnel.

I am sorry if the opposition does not want the facts from Major General Leslie. I heard an indication of not wanting to score partisan points. We agree there are some real needs and real shortfalls in our equipment, but let us not give in to hyperbole. Let us admit it when we are wrong. The deputy leader is wrong on that point. According to the testimony of Major General Leslie, he deliberately chose the uniforms for safety and to distinguish the Canadian troops.

Is the member aware of that testimony? Could he help debunk the idea that somehow they were sent in with the improper equipment?

• (1045)

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond. In fact I was aware of the testimony. What is really sad and disturbing, and worse than bringing partisanship into this debate, is trying to blame it on the forces themselves. That is the only thing that could possibly be worse and it happened in this debate today.

The member opposite, who is the chair of the defence committee, was quick to come to the defence of the navy in suggesting that it was not because of navy decisions. It was the responsibility of the government. He talked about the need to examine thoroughly what happened to the HMCS *Chicoutimi*, and we are hopeful that that will happen. I know the minister himself is a compassionate man. He is a caring man. He does want to get to the bottom of what happened that cost the life of Lieutenant Saunders of the Royal Canadian Navy.

We in the opposition are committed to working with the government to find the proper solutions, but the bottom line is the funding has to be there. The priority has to come from the government. It has to be prepared to put cold hard cash into the Canadian Forces if the men and women are to continue to do the job that is expected of them, which is dangerous and costs lives. It comes from the blood, sweat and tears of men and women of this country who go out and do that work.

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, apropos of the previous exchange, I was the person who asked that question in the Department of National Defence about the uniforms. I was persuaded at the time, and continue to be persuaded, that the answer was adequate and it was not a question of the officer at the time saying what he thought he should say. It is a good example of how certain incidents get blown up out of proportion and in the end do not serve the debate about defence spending very well.

My question for the deputy leader is this. His leader before him and he himself referred to the collaborative defence of North America. Could he tell us, because there was a paucity of comment on this in both speeches, about the position of the Conservative Party with respect to national missile defence? Perhaps while he is at it he could tell us, because so often in the past it has argued for public input, why the Conservative Party opposed the idea of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs holding public hearings into whether Canada should participate in this particular anti-missile defence system.

Mr. Peter MacKay: Madam Speaker, at least the member did not use the words “star wars” and further try to alarm Canadians about this debate.

The reality is that we in the Conservative Party support Norad. We support keeping up our commitments within NATO. We support

Supply

having a full and open debate in the House of Commons, which was part of an amendment that we made to the throne speech.

What we are asking is that the government lay out the position of the Government of Canada. We believe there should be an absolute open and transparent debate on what exactly this proposal means. It is frozen until the American election is over and the hon. member knows that. Yet there is a continued attempt on behalf of the NDP to bury its head in the sand and pretend somehow that we are living in splendid isolation on this continent.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin by congratulating the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Central Nova for the introduction of this motion in the House. I look forward to hearing the comments from my critic, the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills. As was pointed out, he is an addition to the House.

I believe it is important that we have opportunities to do what we are doing today and that we will have many extensive discussions on these important and timely issues in the House. Canadians expect no less. Defence is one of the most important and critical responsibilities of government, something that the government recognizes and on which it is acting.

The military in general and the navy in particular have been the subject of much discussion of late during question period and now in the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. However, I welcome this dialogue today. There is no question that we need to support the men and women of the Canadian Forces as they go about their important work on our behalf.

I entirely support the comments of the Leader of the Opposition about the contribution that our armed forces have made to the history of Canada and to the creation of it. They are responsible for what we are today and we owe them that recognition. We must now take time to think critically about what we as a country expect from our military, and today's debate is part of that process.

It will hardly surprise members if I tell them that I entirely reject the motion's preamble. The member for Central Nova rejected the idea this would be a debate involving partisanship, but he pretty quickly slipped into some hyperbole and false analogies that the member for Elmwood—Transcona, whose memory is good, was good enough to draw our attention to that.

We should all welcome the opportunity to debate the roles of the Canadian Forces and determine what is its security of the nation. I hope to demonstrate to the House that the government is engaged in the very process set out in the dispositive part of this motion.

As my colleagues will know, the government is now in the process of completing a defence review in conjunction with an overall review of Canada's place in the world. It is doing so with precisely a view to addressing some of the observations of the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Central Nova. The very criticisms they have about the capital plan and the strategic capability investment plan are exactly the types of things we should be examining together as we do this critical review.

Supply

● (1050)

[Translation]

Essentially, this defence policy review will enable us to set Canada's defence priorities and determine what kind of armed forces we will need in the future. Its primary objective will be to provide an effective and affordable defence policy that reflects the realities of today and tomorrow.

I believe all members of this House will agree that Canada is now facing extremely complex security and defence issues. As the dawn of this 21st century, we are confronting new threats such as international terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the danger surrounding bankrupt and near-bankrupt nations. In addition to these traditional destabilizing factors, we see new threats such as environmental crises, civil disturbances and pandemics.

In short, the fine line between security and defence has become blurred and may have completely disappeared. This has a considerable impact on the way we approach national and continental security, our relationships with our closest allies and partners, and how we protect—and project—our interests and values abroad.

All over the world, countries are adapting and transforming their armed forces in order to be able to respond to the strategic imperatives of the 21st century. That is the situation for our NATO allies, such as the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and others.

That is exactly what we want to accomplish with the defence policy review. The review will find an appropriate balance between the domestic and international responsibilities of our armed forces. It will also show us the way to improve the security of Canadians within our borders. This process began with the adoption of our national security policy, the first in the country's history.

Among the options we must now examine are increasing our surveillance and anti-terrorism capabilities and increasing the personnel and resources of the reserves in order to deal with domestic crises.

Now, more than ever, our security and protection must be viewed in a continental context. We are stronger because we work alongside our American partners. That is why the defence policy review will examine new and innovative ways of working with the United States to defend North America from emerging threats.

Internationally, the review will build on the government's multidimensional approach to foreign intervention and will examine how the Canadian forces can continue to participate in a wide variety of international operations.

We expect to conclude the review this fall, at which time we will seek the opinion of the parliamentary committees. I am sure all hon. members will agree that this process will allow everyone to express their opinion and contribute to the debate.

I would like to say I look forward to working with all the members in this House to determine what direction we should take in our defence policy.

● (1055)

[English]

As we look to prepare the Canadian Forces for the future, our point of departure must be a recognition, first and foremost, of the skill, professionalism and impressive capability of our current military.

Over the past few years, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and now as Minister of National Defence, I have had the privilege to witness firsthand the outstanding work performed by the men and women of the Canadian Forces in places as diverse as Bosnia, Afghanistan, Haiti and elsewhere.

I am extremely proud of our men and women in uniform. They have consistently met and very often exceeded expectations and, in that spirit, to imply, as the preamble to the motion does and much of the comments coming from the opposite benches do, that they cannot properly do their job is, in my view, to display a lack of respect for the Canadian Forces themselves.

Let us consider for a few moments the nature of their work. I am speaking of the superhuman efforts of our search and rescue technicians whose typical evening might involve going out into the harshest of conditions imaginable to help someone in need right here in our own country. Or, of the young faces of a handful of determined sailors from HMCS *Calgary* heading off to inspect suspicious freighters in the sweltering heat of the Persian Gulf.

I am convinced that the Canadian Forces are one of the most effective and capable armed forces in the world. There should be no doubt in the minds of Canadians that our soldiers, sailors and air personnel are able to deploy and, when called upon, to fight alongside the best militaries in the world.

Two years ago Canadian troops deployed to Afghanistan and, together with American forces, they fought remnants of the oppressive Taliban regime, as well as al-Qaeda terrorists, in a very harsh environment. Their extraordinary contribution earned them praise from our American allies. I think the opposition would do well to consider that praise and consider the fact that those troops went into a dangerous situation equipped to do the job they had to do and did it well.

We returned to Afghanistan last year to undertake a different but equally important mission. With some 2,000 Canadian Forces personnel in the Afghan capital of Kabul, we were the largest troop contributor to the NATO led international security assistance force. Under the able leadership of Lieutenant General Rick Hillier, Canada assumed command of the overall international mission for a six month period. This was among the most significant commands held by a member of the Canadian Forces since the Suez crisis of 1956.

If I could break here to just remind the members opposite that when they denigrate what is being achieved by saying that they were ill-equipped and not prepared, I just want to say that our NATO allies chose the Canadians to lead that mission. Our NATO allies were willing to put the lives of their troops under the command of a Canadian officer with his troops. That is a demonstration of the international community's recognition of what our troops can do, not a bipartisan attack in this House.

In the Arabian Gulf our navy has been widely recognized for its skill and interdiction operations and shipboardings. In 2003 the Canadian navy led a multinational force composed of over 20 ships from several allied countries in the Persian Gulf.

How could there be any doubt about the capability of our armed forces? I am sure all members of the House will agree that what I have just outlined does not reflect a military with decaying capabilities.

● (1100)

[*Translation*]

We must do better. Since 1999 this government has invested more than \$10 billion of new money in defence so that our Canadian Forces would have the means to function effectively in the 21st century. In the 2004 budget alone, this government allocated \$1.6 billion of new money for defence.

This government under the current Prime Minister has allocated more than \$7 billion for buying new equipment for the Canadian Forces, including more than \$3 billion for new sea helicopters, more than \$2 billion for joint supply vessels, more than \$1 billion for new search and rescue planes and roughly \$700 million for mobile gun systems. I am talking about new equipment.

This new equipment will reinforce the high-tech capabilities the Canadian Forces already have such as our Coyote reconnaissance vehicles, our new light infantry carriers, G-Wagens, our frigates and our first class maritime coastal defence vessels, as well as our CF-18 fighter aircraft and upgraded Aurora surveillance aircraft.

Need I remind the members of this House that our lightly armoured vehicles, the LAV-III's, which are built in London, Ontario—our committee chair will be pleased with this reference—are also being sold to other forces throughout the world?

[*English*]

The government recognizes that we can and we must do better for our armed forces. As we conduct the defence review we are not standing still.

In the recent Speech from the Throne the government committed to increasing the size of the Canadian Forces by 5,000 regular force personnel in order to allow our military to assume an even greater role in bringing peace, security and democracy to troubled nations.

We are also moving forward on our commitment to increase the size of Canada's reserves by some 3,000 personnel. In addition to complementing our forces deployed abroad, a strengthened reserve force will provide Canada with much needed capacity to respond to domestic crises, including terrorist incidents, chemical, biological and nuclear emergencies and national disasters.

Taken together, those are most significant commitments to defence and they are the most significant commitments in more than a decade. They are a clear demonstration of the government's commitment to modernizing and strengthening Canada's armed forces.

I would like to make one point very clear. Contrary to what the motion before us implies, expanding the size of the Canadian Forces will not be done at the expense of our existing capabilities. As I have

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said before, it will not be a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. The additional troops will be funded through new investment by the government. I am currently working to have these new resources featured in the next federal budget. I look forward to collaboration with my colleagues across the floor so we can ensure that happens.

The government is committed to ensuring that the Canadian Forces are prepared in all respects, that they have the training and equipment they need to perform their respective roles, both through the defence of Canada, of North America with our American allies, and in their missions abroad when called upon to do so by the government.

Indeed, the past few years have seen significantly increased pressures on our forces to respond to events in many quarters of the world. Each response has carried with it its own unique set of challenges, from Afghanistan to Bosnia, from Ethiopia and Eritrea to Haiti.

In rising to these challenges our forces have established an enviable record of bringing the best of Canadian values to help establish security and relieve suffering in some of the world's most troubled places.

Our forces have demonstrated an ability to adapt to different and challenging environments. They work with foreign affairs and CIDA to combine diplomacy, defence and development in an integrated approach that will increase the effectiveness of Canada's actions on the international scene. All of this has made them an indispensable asset in the search for global peace and security. What we have learned from their experience is in fact that the world wants more of their services.

All Canadians can take pride in their contribution. I know that Canadians will follow with interest the debates in the House as we conduct our defence review and establish the policy guidelines that will enable our forces to meet the challenges of the future.

The government is committed to that goal and we back that commitment with the significant new investments that I referred to earlier in my speech. We also recognize of course that, as in the case of all countries that are seeking to transform their military, more needs to be done, but it needs to be done intelligently and it must be done clearly. Their role must be defined. The task of our forces must be set out. The types of future investments in equipment and training must be reviewed. This will be our duty as we continue the important task of the defence review.

Let us therefore begin this task, not with a partisan litany of issues from the past, but rather with a recognition of the great role that our forces have played to date and a collective determination to work together to build on this record, to improve on one of our greatest national assets so that it may continue the role of defending us while contributing to the security of others who live in far less fortunate circumstances than ourselves.

● (1105)

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Madam Speaker, the minister has given us a very rosy travelogue of the defence department. He has also told us what the government may do in the future. What he has not told us is what the problems are in defence right now, and they are quite severe.

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One of the prime responsibilities of a government and the military is to protect our sovereignty. Would the minister explain why in the north of Canada we cannot survey on a continuous basis by air, land and sea? Why can we not deploy troops rapidly there? Why we do not have enough Arctic equipment? Why are our troops not trained in the north. How are we enforcing our sovereignty in the north?

Hon. Bill Graham: Madam Speaker, my hon. colleague's question gives us an opportunity to discuss something that we will be looking at in the course of the review.

We consider that sovereignty in the Arctic is a key feature of what the government is determined to do. The Prime Minister has spoken regularly on the need for us to increase our activities in the Arctic.

However it would be unreasonable and misleading to suggest that nothing is being done. Just recently we had a very substantial operation in the Arctic. It involved not only our forces, but also civilian responders in that area. We are looking at ways in which we can use unmanned aircraft as a way of continuing our surveillance. We are looking at ways in which we can employ modern conditions in the Arctic to guarantee our sovereignty.

I accept the premise that more can be done but I reject the premise that nothing is being done. Somewhere between those two, lies the truth. Let us work together to find out how we can ensure we get the right assets, the right approach and get the job done.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is the first time I have been on my feet since you have been in the Chair and I congratulate you on your appointment.

One of the concerns we have had has been the poor treatment of our forces. It is the only way I can put it. I know the minister wishes to avoid past practices. However let me just ask the minister if there are any plans to deal with the issue of housing on the bases or of providing additional remuneration to the lower ranks in particular, from lieutenant on down, so they would have the ability to cope with the general expenses for themselves and their families, especially when they are on active duty for this country.

Along the same lines, I want to speak specifically to the housing and the horror stories we have heard. From the perspective of our party, very few of those housing accommodations on the bases have been improved over the last few years. This has been raised repeatedly in the House. Is there any prospect that the government, in the very near future, will address the issue of housing and better remuneration? If so, the recruitment that is underway at this time, initiated by this specific administration, will be much more successful and we will draw the best candidates in the country.

•(1110)

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, I certainly subscribe to the point raised by the hon. member from Windsor, that the quality of life of the members of our armed services, here in Canada and when they are serving abroad, must be an important preoccupation of the government.

The member will recall in recent times that the defence committee specifically did a study and travelled across the country. Previous defence ministers addressed the issue of salary and other issues.

Do we continue to have concerns? Of course we have concerns. Will we continue to try to bring up the standards? Of course we will continue to bring up those standards. The department and the military leadership itself are determined that first comes the security of our forces and then comes their quality of life. We recognize that. We will work on these issues to ensure that they have the quality of life they need and deserve as they serve our country.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know time is short but I would like to pose a quick question to the minister.

He said at the close of his remarks that he was hoping the debate today would not be conducted with a partisan litany of the record of the past. With all due respect, we do have to examine the past to make sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. That would be the reason that many people in the House are bringing up issues of inadequacy of the funding that the government has provided for our military.

I wonder how the minister can square his desire to see the debate conducted in a non-partisan way when members of his party perpetrated a terrific lie on the Canadian people during the election campaign when they ran television ads day after day that showed the Conservative Party of Canada was in favour of buying nuclear aircraft carriers for our military when they knew that was not true. They knew it was a lie and yet the Liberal Party did that day after day with ads on television. How can the minister now stand and say that he hopes we have the debate in a non-partisan manner?

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, let me make this clear. Election campaigns tend to be extremely partisan affairs. What I suggested to the House in my speech today was that for the good of the future of our forces and for what we are trying to achieve, what is needed here is a dispassionate review of the policies that we need to put into place, the equipment and the training that our forces need in order to do their job in defending North America and in projecting Canada's values abroad. That is what we are trying to do and I ask the hon. member to do that.

Many issues were discussed during the campaign. My recollection is that a suggestion came from the other side of the floor about purchasing an aircraft carrier. That seemed to us to be a real folly. It seemed to be the type of expense on equipment that was totally unjustified for the needs of a modern army that has to face asymmetric threats of terrorism in a different world situation. Let us not do that. That is not where we are going. It was not a good idea and we still reject it.

If the member wants to argue about the past and the election, I would be happy to argue about the election. However I would prefer to talk about what we can do to help our forces face the future. We need to do that in the House, not drag up the election.

•(1115)

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the minister, we cannot let this stand the way it is right now.

He knows, because he must have been talking to the navy, that it desperately needs those ships to move troops and equipment overseas. We talked then about a hybrid carrier. It is basically a cargo ship with a flight deck on top for helicopters. We are not talking about a nuclear aircraft carrier similar to what the United States has. He knew it then and his party knew it then, and they know it now. I cannot believe he would stand up in the House and try to defend the indefensible when he knows that the navy needs those ships and our country needs those ships.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, of course we recognize that. That is exactly why the government came out in support of the joint support checks the Prime Minister spoke of when he was in Halifax. He specifically said we need the type of modern equipment that is focused on that, not aircraft carriers. That is what we need and we are focused on that. We will make sure we get the best equipment for our forces, whether it is our maritime forces or our land forces.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I have a comment with respect to the opposition whip. I would like to have on the record the fact that the member is the first person in history to have been the whip of three different parties. I would like to congratulate him for that.

I would like to comment on one point the opposition whip has made. He suggested that we should review the mistakes of the past. I would like to make sure it is on the record that the Conservatives cancelled the Avro Arrow.

The opposition critic brought up a good point relating to northern sovereignty and I am glad he did. When the Prime Minister became leader of our party his first speech was on northern sovereignty, something which I have been pushing for. Last year the military responded with a great arctic exercise. It made the front page of the paper. It was the longest patrol in history, the UAV patrols of Baffin Island, the first ever full scale exercise in the north, millions of dollars to map the north, more money for the rangers and junior rangers, and complete satellite coverage of the north.

I know it was in the throne speech, but I would like to get assurance from the minister that support for northern sovereignty will continue.

Hon. Bill Graham: Mr. Speaker, the member for Yukon is extremely knowledgeable about the north, being a member from there. I have had the opportunity to visit him in his constituency. It is his concern for the issues of the north that obviously make him such a great member of Parliament.

I can assure him that I personally as well as others will work with him as we address these complicated issues.

As minister of foreign affairs I had the opportunity to go to meetings of the Arctic Council. I met with my American, Russian, Finnish, Norwegian and other counterparts. We were all looking at ways to make sure that we can deal with the emerging issues of the Arctic, which clearly are going to be one of the most important

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changing issues in our global environment. I can assure the hon. member that the Canadian military will be playing its part.

Exercise Narwahl, which we just finished, was the beginning of a set of measures which will make sure that we are not only present there and cooperating with civilian responders, but that we will be there in the future as these issues unfold.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, allow me to take a few moments to greet my voters in Saint-Jean. This is my first speech in the House since the election, and I would like to thank them for placing their trust in me a fourth time. I have very little to do with that. Like everyone in Quebec, the people of Saint-Jean have realized that, right now, the Bloc Québécois best defends their interests. I wanted to tell the people of Saint-Jean that I am very pleased with the position they have taken and that I will serve them to the best of my ability in the coming months, however long the House gets to sit before the next election.

Today, I am pleased to outline the position of the Bloc Québécois on the matter before us. In the Projected Order of Business, it is under “National Defence Policies”. The motion brought forward by the Conservative Party does deal with national defence policies that are “out of date”. But in our opinion, there is a contradiction in that motion. While that statement is made in the first paragraph, reference is also made to the need to inject substantial funding to maintain “air, land and sea combat capability”. We can say immediately that we will not support this motion, and I will attempt to explain why.

I have heard the Minister of National Defence and his parliamentary secretary tell us that a defence policy is on the way. I just want to remind the minister that we have been hearing the same thing for a number of years, and we have been waiting and waiting. They may sound serious about it this time, but former minister Eggleton was also serious, and so was John McCallum. Still, the defence policy never materialized.

Now, this motion—we also criticize the government on this aspect of it—is suggesting that more money be injected to upgrade a number of things. Granted, the Canadian Forces lost a great deal of credibility in recent years, probably because of underfunding. We must not forget, however, that the defence budget increased by about 40% these past few years, from \$8 billion in 1998 to \$13 billion today. This means that money was injected.

This may come as a surprise to a lot of people, but we have always been opposed to the investment of additional funds. Why? Because we do not know where we are headed. When a small family decides to buy a vehicle to commute to work, it will probably not get a ten-wheeler. It may buy a small Volkswagen if it does not need a bigger vehicle than that. A construction contractor who needs a vehicle to carry material for his business may get a ten-wheeler, rather than a Volkswagen.

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Here, we do not know what the new policy will be. I remind hon. members that the defence policy is obsolete. It dates back to 1994. In terms of the security of Canadian Forces—and this is true at the international level—September 11 has changed everything. For decades, centuries and even millennia, armies always fought each other in uniform. We knew the enemy, we could face it in a theatre of operations. We could see its manoeuvres. We studied its doctrines, which were often millenary doctrines, to know more about its concept of a theatre of operations and to find out how it wanted to win its wars. Since 2001, all this has radically changed. We no longer see our enemies. We know who they are. We know that they probably belong to some extreme right or extreme left militant groups, but they do not dress in a specific fashion to show who they are. They do not say, “I am wearing a uniform today because I am defending a cause and I intend to attack you”. This completely changes the doctrines that we have known for thousands of years.

As I said a moment ago, September 11 changed that. The world's strongest army—everyone agrees that it is the U.S. army—is not even able to counter this type of attack. The Americans were not able to anticipate the September 11 events. Investigations took place. Will a space defence shield protect us from the use of aircraft to destroy buildings and hit Canadian, American or European interests?

• (1120)

Will the country with the strongest army, the biggest infantry, the biggest air force, and the biggest navy in the world, in other words the Americans, be able to protect us? No, they will not.

This is why we have been calling for several years now for the policy to be reviewed. In the meantime, we see what the government has been buying. The minister has touched on this, and I have some examples as well. Some \$7 billion in procurement has been announced.

There are a number of comments to be made on this. For instance, the purchase of new vehicles, the Strikers, seems to suggest that we are embarking on a more offensive policy, and this is the topic of much debate.

Then there are the tanks. Some people in the Canadian army are not entirely in agreement with the old tanks being scrapped and replaced by wheeled or tracked vehicles that are certainly not tanks.

Much has been said on this topic. We are hearing from a number of lobbyists, “We cannot let the tanks go. Look at what is going on in Iraq. They are needed”. So the situation is far from clear.

What is more, the lobbyists and major armament manufacturers are the ones profiting from this. They are doing their job well, convincing the government to make purchases, even though Canada has no defence policy and we have no idea where we are headed. We see this regularly. The troops heading off to Haiti lacked equipment and it had to be borrowed, for the simple reason that we have no defence policy.

What do we want, and what in particular do Canadian and Quebec taxpayers want? That is important. There have been all these purchases made, submarines in 1998, the Strikers, the Sikorsky helicopters, many things that could be discussed. The taxpayers were not consulted, yet they are the ones that have to foot the bill.

The world has changed, we must admit. It is different, of course, than it was 2,000 years ago, but it is also different in the aftermath of 2001. Before investing in anything, why not take time to collect our thoughts. Do we want strike forces? Do we want to go along with the Americans?

We are hearing more and more about this desirable interoperability with the Americans, but there are consequences for Canadian sovereignty.

Indeed, if we want to interoperate with them and deploy combat soldiers within their battalions, at one point or another, should the Americans decide to go to Iraq or elsewhere, these soldiers may be obliged to go along. We may also be obliged to buy from American suppliers if we want to be completely compatible and operational with them. There are all kinds of impacts.

Having a defence policy would clarify the issues before we embarked on this kind of purchase. Now, we go ahead and buy equipment before deciding on what kind of military force we want.

The danger here is that we might adopt a policy right now because we feel that the current situation makes no sense, that we cannot leave our Sikorsky helicopters docked or on our ships' flight decks because this no longer meets our needs. It would therefore be highly risky to formulate a defence policy on the strength of the equipment we have, given the equipment we have just bought.

That is why we oppose such purchases and announcements. It's not that we are against the Canadian Forces. We think they have a vital role to play. I think that a sovereign Quebec will also need armed forces. But we will certainly have a policy in place before creating any armed forces and we will know where we are headed before buying military equipment. Naturally, I hope that we might get some of the Canadian equipment, but we will broach that subject in future negotiations.

I would like to come back to the subject of equipment. I spoke of helicopters and the Strikers. The throne speech talks about an extra 5,000 soldiers and more than 3,000 reserve forces. Right now there are perhaps 50,000 or 55,000 soldiers. So why should we want any more? Is it to send them on peace missions? Is it to send them on offensive operations alongside the Americans? The throne speech does not say.

The approach is piecemeal. We have bought submarines, helicopters, Strikers and new Jeeps to replace the old Iltis. This may be useful.

• (1125)

If we had a defence policy stating clearly that our troops would be equipped in a certain way to carry out missions as defined in the policy, it would make a lot more sense. We are putting the cart before the horse.

I would like to raise another point and that is the missile defence shield. Once more, we are getting announcements about this issue and we can all confirm that there have been changes in the past two years. I remember that two years ago my colleague and I asked questions about the Canadian government's intentions to join the American missile defence system. The answer was, "Oh, no. We are maybe just having a little discussion with them". Now the discussions are big time. Moreover, the NORAD treaty has just been modified. This is all part of getting ready to join the Americans—toward the end of November according to the latest rumours.

So, what is the 1994 National Defence policy concerning the missile defence system? The Reagan-era *star wars* policy was already outdated in 1994. But it still has an impact and growing importance today. And yet it is not in line with the 1994 policies of either Foreign Affairs or National Defence. It is a typical example.

I think our point of view is clear. In Quebec, we come from a pacifist country. As for this kind of weapons, we think there are already enough weapons on earth. We must invest our energy in treaties and conventions that promote disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons. In fact, that is one of the major arguments used to undermine our position against the missile defence system—Canada is breaking its multilateral tradition. In fact, we have agreements with a number of allies. The whole world recognizes the importance of Canada in the international treaties and protocols on disarmament and non-proliferation.

Participating in a missile shield program now means losing this credibility. This presents a danger, because this credibility was long established. It earned Lester B. Pearson recognition, in the form of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to him for creating peacekeeping missions. Canadians and Quebecers are renowned for their contribution to a more peaceful world, not to an increasingly militarized one. We have noticed changes in that respect since the new Prime Minister took office. The way to get closer to the United States is the military way. On that, we can tell the government it is completely wrong. It should focus much more on economic concepts and contacts with the Americans instead of encouraging American military industries and getting closer to George W. Bush on the militaristic path. We have a great deal of difficulty with that. As far as we are concerned, it is no: no to the shield, no also to the acquisition of equipment without a defence policy.

I will conclude on this. As I said earlier, my colleagues and I come from a peace-loving country. Had it not been for us—and I say so in all modesty—I think Canada would have participated in the war in Iraq. The government felt it was important to align ourselves with our American friends. But we denounced the illegality of this action. Today, even the Secretary-General of the UN says that it was an illegal war. I think that, had it not been for Quebecers, Canada would have followed the U.S. into Iraq. And look at the mess now. We were right before. If we had a defence policy and a new foreign affairs policy, we would have a framework, parameters, procedures to work with. We would have a stronger basis for justifying the acquisition of this type of equipment over that one and participating or not participating in projects that can present dangers for our diplomacy and our peaceful tradition.

It is not surprising that we cannot agree with this amendment. As I was saying earlier, the motion before us today states that the defence

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policy is out of date. If it stopped there we would vote in favour of the motion, since the defence policy truly is out of date and we do indeed need one—although we have been hearing promises for a long time. However, we have a problem with the second paragraph, which talks about maintaining our air, land and sea combat and peacekeeping capabilities. We do not even know what the defence policy is going to be.

• (1130)

I would also ask the minister to be transparent when he establishes this defence policy. So far, everything has been done in closed circles.

I gave some examples earlier. The minister decides to make an announcement on something, and no one is consulted except maybe the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office, of course, but that is it. A handful of individuals are deciding what the taxpayer will pay for, under what conditions and why. Taxpayers can just keep paying their taxes and this group of individuals will decide for everyone what we will do.

I remind the minister that his policy is completely out of date, unless he buys new equipment and adjusts his policy accordingly. However, we think that would be a terrible mistake. First we have to look at the world we are living in and how we want to take part and then we can buy the equipment necessary to satisfy the conditions of the new defence policy, or the new foreign affairs policy.

For all these reasons, the Bloc Québécois will be voting against this motion. I find that Quebecers were right to say no to the war. They are traditional and pacifists. We are very proud of not taking part in the war in Iraq. We are soon going to be very proud, as Quebecers, to have an army that is much more peace-minded than militaristic.

• (1135)

[English]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from the Bloc for his questions, but I really have to take umbrage at many of his comments.

First, so many people in the province of Quebec have contributed so much for so long to the Canadian Forces and have done honourable work to defend this nation here and abroad. I think he is really remiss in his comments in not acknowledging that fact.

To be a pacifist is all well and true, but the fact of the matter is that the milk of human kindness does not course through a lot of people in this world. It is sad to say that some of those people take actions against individuals, most of whom are civilians, and today more than 90% of the casualties in conflict are innocent men, women and children.

The government is putting an investment into our military. We know that we have some specific needs today. We know we have some critical needs and that is why we are putting 5,000 people on the sharp edge and 3,000 in reserves. We have purchased four new critical pieces of equipment and we are going to do more.

Supply

I want to ask my friend the following question. How does he propose that we as a country are going to defend innocent civilians in cases such as what we saw in Rwanda, what happened in Sierra Leone and what took place in Bosnia? How are we going to defend innocent civilians when people who are quite nasty are going to slaughter them? Are we going to ask our troops to sit back and watch? Are we not going to contribute? Or are we going to do the right thing under certain circumstances and be there to defend those people?

At the end of the day, does he or does not agree that peacekeeping is war by another name and we had better outfit our troops to be able to accomplish that objective?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I will answer both parts of the hon. member's question.

First, I do not know whether his father was a World War II veteran. Mine was. I remind the hon. member that Quebec was opposed to that war. Because we were stuck in the Canadian straitjacket, my father, like many Quebecers, helped free Europe. He took part in the liberation of Holland. This experience had such an emotional impact that it traumatized him, to the point where he could hardly talk about it. He saw some of his friends come back in baskets, without arms or legs.

Later on, Quebecers felt that the best way to deal with military issues was through diplomacy, conciliation, mediation and discussion. We do not like wars. However, I agree that we may get the call to go. If so, we will go.

I remind the hon. member that I trained with the Royal 22^e Regiment, the Vandoos. I was deployed in Bosnia with its troops and I am proud of the work that these people are doing.

If the hon. member wants a debate on peacekeeping, we are more than willing to participate. We advocate this approach, because it is more peaceful. I feel that our troops do a very good job as peacekeepers.

However, we have a problem with the government deciding, without any defence or foreign affairs policy in place, to buy more weapons in order to get closer to the Americans. This is what we are trying to tell the government. It must first develop a policy, before buying such material.

I think our troops are doing an excellent job as peacekeepers, in Bosnia and elsewhere. However, we must ensure that what happened in Haiti does not occur again. We found out that we did not have the necessary equipment to go there. We bought helicopters, but these are not necessarily what is needed in Haiti. This is why we are asking foreign affairs and defence officials to review their policy.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone in this House wants to achieve a balance between our armed forces, their role in the world and the protection of Canada. I am sure that the hon. member for Saint-Jean agrees with me that, today, the role of peacekeepers is no longer what it was 20 years ago, when our troops were in Cyprus, on the Golan Heights, or elsewhere. The situation then was stable.

Today, peacekeepers need to have the capability to fight, otherwise they cannot maintain peace. It is very important that all members of the House realize that. Contrary to what the member for Saint-Jean suggested, our point of view on this issue is not secret; rather, it is very open and transparent. We will submit it to the committee. The committee will be its own master. We will do all that. However, we should all recognize that we are now living in a much more dangerous world and we need new means to protect ourselves and uphold our values abroad.

• (1140)

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister. We need new means that are suitable for what we wish to do as a country. But what are they? What are the solutions? What exactly are we doing?

When the minister buys Striker vehicles, which are offensive vehicles, are they intended for peacekeeping? No, they are vehicles better suited to accompanying the Americans in Iraq.

And thus the government is sending out mixed messages. We want helicopters; we want this; we want that. I return to my example of peace. We send a contingent to Haiti and we cannot equip them properly. They do not have boots or bullet-proof vests.

There is a problem: we do not know what this government wants, because it does not have a policy. Its policy is completely behind the times; it is 10 years old. Reality has changed. The minister and I agree on that.

However, before any equipment is bought, its use in the next year and in five years must be known, which is not the case at present. Equipment is purchased without a plan, and when specific events happen and we want to help, we realize that we may not have the right equipment for the job.

It is time to turn things upside down—

An hon. member: Or right side up.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Yes, it is time to turn things right side up because they are already upside down.

In order to have a defence and foreign affairs policy, we must first know what we want, what we want to do, and then later, we can equip our soldiers.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, to follow up on the hon. member's comments, I do not know whether he is confusing being a pacifist and being a peacemaker. I will give him two examples. One is the situation in Rwanda, when our heroic General Roméo Dallaire watched in absolute horror as 800,000 Rwandans were slaughtered. He could not do anything, for many reasons, one of which was lack of personnel and another being the rules of engagement that he could not intervene.

Let us switch to Sierra Leone and a conflict that took place over 15 years, where a quarter of a million people were murdered. Hundreds of thousands were slaughtered in horrendous ways. They were tortured, raped and maimed and their limbs were chopped off. How was this stopped? The British walked in with 780 troops and started shooting some of the rebels. The result was that the conflict stopped. The people of Sierra Leone have now started to build a peace and are living in relative security. The slaughter of civilians stopped only because 780 British troops went into Sierra Leone and stopped the killing because they used force.

I will ask the member the following simple question. Does he believe that the Canadian military at times will need to use force when diplomacy or other coercive measures have failed, tragically? Are there times when our military will need to use force in order to save innocent civilian lives?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I will repeat to my colleague what I said earlier. We do not live in an angelic world, either. We believe that conflicts ought to be resolved through diplomacy, conciliation and mediation, but, admittedly, that is not enough sometimes, and then the use of force becomes necessary.

Regarding the many examples he has given, I want to remind him that our opinion must be sought on the placement of our forces under foreign command and our loss of control as a result. That is the kind of point that should be covered by the defence policy and the foreign policy.

That is the problem General Dallaire encountered. He was on a UN mission. He notified the UN of what was going on. But the rules of engagement did not allow him to use force.

We need to discuss what type of intervention we are prepared to take to help our allies and friends around the world. We need to know if we agree to have our forces placed under UN command. I remind my hon. colleague that the Canadian Forces are currently under NATO command in Afghanistan. Is that what we want?

What do we do if and when NATO rules of engagement are not consistent with ours? These are all questions that remain unanswered, because we do not have a defence policy or a foreign policy. Every question raised by the hon. member is linked directly to this problem, which just adds validity to what we have been saying all along on this matter.

• (1145)

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Saint-Jean for his strong presentation on the need to engage in war only as a last resort, and for his commitment to a peaceful world.

[*English*]

I welcome the opportunity to speak to the motion today. Defence is certainly on the minds of Canadians as a result of the tragedy that occurred on the HMCS *Chicoutimi*. There seems to be a growing consensus in the country that something has been wrong with government support for the military in the past, although there may not be agreement as yet on how we remedy whatever was wrong, because we may not even agree on what kinds of support we are lacking for our military. Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing

Supply

consensus. If I might put it in somewhat Churchillian terms: Never have so few been increasingly asked to do so much more with less and less resources. It seems to me that this is the view so many Canadians. Even members on the government side have come to realize that perhaps with the best of intentions, fiscal and otherwise, the men and women of the Canadian armed forces have been put in a position where they are being asked to do the work of Canada abroad, in terms of peacekeeping and peace making and other international efforts, and that they increasingly do not feel they have the resources to do that.

There may be grounds for reallocation of resources within the Department of National Defence. Certainly many would make the argument that DND is top heavy and that a lot of money is spent on senior bureaucrats, both military and civilian. There may be room for reallocation, but I also think, and I think all parties agree on this, we are open to the argument that there actually needs to be more money spent in an absolute sense on our armed forces if they are to do the kinds of things we want them to do.

However, what is it we want them to do? That is where we might disagree with each other as parties. I do not see that as partisanship in a bad sense. We need to have a debate in the country and there will be differing opinions. That is not partisan, that is the nature of democracy. What is partisan in the pejorative sense is when we exaggerate the case or when we continue to use examples that we know are no longer relevant. The case arose earlier on the floor today about the Canadians arriving in Afghanistan with the wrong uniforms, I thought was sufficiently put to rest by the military itself when it appeared before the committee sometime ago. I do not think it actually serves the debate very well to keep bringing those kinds of things up. That is a form of partisanship we could do without.

Sometimes we see parties agreeing with each other. We saw that yesterday. We have had a lot of back and forth between Liberals and Conservatives on the floor here today. One would think they do not agree on anything. It is quite the contrary. Yesterday, in the foreign affairs committee they agreed to combine together to defeat a motion supported by the NDP, and presumably the Bloc, to hold public hearings on the question of whether Canada should participate in the national ballistic missile defence system that George Bush is proposing for the United States and is proposing Canada be a part of that.

Sometimes appearances can be deceiving. Somehow there is this great divide between the Liberals and the Conservatives. However, when it comes to the single most important decision that Canada will have to make in the near future with respect to foreign policy and defence, they are one. They are one not only in substance, but they are one in process. They are one in substance because it has been clear from the beginning that the leader of the Conservative Party is in favour of Canadian participation in ballistic missile defence. If he has changed their position, members on the other side are free to get up and tell me that this is no longer the case and that they are now on the fence or something like that. However, they are certainly not against it.

Supply

When it comes to process, as I said, yesterday the Liberals and the Conservatives were as one in the committee on foreign affairs in denying members of the Canadian public the opportunity to come before that committee throughout the country and express their opinion on whether Canada should be part of this.

If the government has another view of how Canadians are to be consulted on this it should say so. It agreed to a motion, an amendment to the throne speech, that said this decision would be taken only after a vote in the House of Commons and after all the relevant public information was available. To whom will this be available? How will Canadians have an opportunity to react to that information, presuming that it is adequate and that we do in fact have all the relevant information? Will it be a kind of in-house exercise, as so far the international policy review of the government has been, or will we actually give Canadians a chance to express themselves on this? We have the time. There is no rush. We could do this.

•(1150)

With respect to the Conservative motion itself, it says that Liberal policy is seriously out of date. This is true. The 1994 white paper is obviously out of date. I do not think even the Minister of National Defence would want to rise in this place today and say that it is an adequate description of the world and an adequate description of what Canada's role in that world should be.

It may be that the 1994 white paper was never an adequate description of what the world was like, but that is more for a debate on the historical side. However, it is true that we now live in a completely different world, and some people have already alluded to this. We certainly live in the post September 11, 2001, world. We live with new geopolitical realities, with the United States having emerged as the one global superpower. We live in a unipolar world instead of the bipolar world of the cold war. We live in a world where terrorism is abundant, terrorism of many different kinds, not only the kind that we find in organizations like al-Qaeda. We live in a world of failed states and proliferation of nuclear weapons.

We still do not know the location of all that nuclear material that existed in the former Soviet Union. Where is it all? There are some attempts by Canada and other countries to decommission nuclear facilities and weapons and find out where that stuff is or ensure it does not fall into the wrong hands, but there is all kinds of it all over the world and we do not know where it is. Even though we are back from the nuclear abyss in terms of the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States of America, it could also be true that we live in a much more dangerous world in terms of the possible use of nuclear weapons by all kinds of non-state actors, the names of which we do not even know, as well as their locations.

We also live in a much more dangerous world because we now live in a world of pre-emptive war doctrines, the doctrine adopted by George Bush. I believe it was on September 27, 2002 when he made a speech and said that from here on in the United States would act pre-emptively whenever it had a belief, and it could be the wrong belief, that someone is about to attack the U.S. This changes the whole strategic environment in a way in which the Canadian government has yet to respond. We need to respond to that because we are so involved with the United States in terms of the defence of

North America and in terms of its expectations as to what we will do as a neighbour.

Of course we have a changing world in terms of the increasing polarization between rich and poor, not only within countries but between countries as a result of 20 years of globalization, free trade, deregulation and all the other things that have contributed to an increasingly unstable planet in social, environmental and economic factors, not to mention global warming.

Not all things are obviously related to defence, but I just want to set out what I think is the changing world to which we need to respond.

With respect to the Conservative motion, it is rather odd. It sets out, perhaps unintentionally, a dichotomy between peacekeeping and combat operations that I have often heard Conservatives criticize. In other words, it is not uncommon to hear Conservatives and others, and quite legitimately so, point out that peacekeeping is not what it was when we went to Cyprus. Often, it is not like there is a peace to keep. There is a peace to make and to enforce. Peacekeeping has morphed over the years into peacemaking and peace enforcing and often that involves our troops in combat situations.

•(1155)

Therefore, this motion, one could claim, seems to have been drafted without any knowledge, or at least without having that knowledge impact on the drafting of the motion, of situations like the Medak pocket, where Canadian peacekeepers actually had to have combat capability in order to defend themselves and to defend others.

I find it somewhat ironic that we have a motion from the Conservative side of the House which appears to reinforce this dichotomy, because it is important from the point of view of the NDP as well as from the point of view of many, I would assume, that our peacekeepers do have this combat capability, because they are going to need it in the increasingly difficult situations that we send them into.

Peacekeeping is not what it used to be. That means that our forces, when they are sent into these situations, need to have that capability. That has been demonstrated in a concrete way on a number of occasions.

Perhaps that is what the parliamentary secretary meant when he said, although I think it is a quote he probably does not want to distribute, that "peacekeeping is war by another name". I thought that was an interesting thing for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence to say. Perhaps the Minister of National Defence could elaborate on that at some point as to what his assistant meant.

I see smiles breaking out over there, so perhaps they will want to have some research done on exactly what was meant.

An hon. member: Get those BlackBerries working.

Supply

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, when it comes to Liberal defence policy, there is much to criticize. Of course the first thing that comes to mind is the absolute scandal of how long it has taken, and the way in which it was dealt with, to replace the Sea King helicopters. I was here in the House when the debate about the EH-101 helicopters took place. I think there were legitimate positions to be taken on either side of that debate, but it also had a political dimension in the negative sense of what it means to be political.

We were critical of that purchase at the time, but I can tell the House, at least from my point of view, that if I had thought, by killing that helicopter contract, that 11 years later Canadian Forces personnel would still be flying around in Sea Kings and there would be 30 hours of maintenance or something like that for every hour in the air, I might have had a different point of view. I had no idea that even Liberals would do that. There is always a long lead time with Liberals. I think it was something like 42 years between the first promise on medicare and when they kept it, but I thought with helicopters they might be able to do better than that.

But here we are 11 years later and we still do not have those replacement helicopters. That is an absolute scandal. I am sure it is the internal politics of the Liberal Party that got in the way, as so many other things have been obstructed by the internal politics of the Liberal Party: who is going to get the contract, which friend of who is going to make the money off this particular thing, and on and on it goes. It is not just when it comes to advertising and sponsorship scandals that internal Liberal Party politics get in the way of things.

However, it is not just the Sea Kings. It is also the way in which the Liberals have treated the armed forces, both the civilian and the military personnel in the armed forces. I think of ASD, alternative service delivery. It sounds really nice. It sounds like something good is happening.

What was happening, of course, was that people who were unionized and being paid decent wages to be the civilian part of the military family on a long term basis were laid off and gotten rid of so that others, or perhaps even the same people, could be hired back on the next day by firms that had the previous service contracted out to them, such that people could come back and do their old jobs for half of what they were being paid before. Probably the person who ran the company the service was contracted out to had some relationship with the military or perhaps was a retired military person or someone like that.

On and on it goes in regard to the way in which ASD was used, allegedly to save money but in a way that showed contempt for the loyalty and the quality of service that had been provided to the Canadian armed forces over the years by their civilian personnel.

•(1200)

Another good example of what has been wrong is what has happened to our reserves, our Canadian reserve army. I have never heard anyone, in 25 years in the House, ever get up and say they were against expanding the reserves. In fact, for 25 years everyone has been for expanding the reserves. There has been no political price to pay by any government for expanding the reserves, yet it has never happened. Why is that? Partly, I think, it is because the regular army itself stands in the way of expanding the reserves.

Our reserves have been allowed to deteriorate. If we go into some of our armouries, we see that it is the only place where we can walk in and feel that time has stood still. I used to go into Minto armouries in the 1960s when I was a cadet and when I belonged to the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. When I go into armouries today, nothing has changed.

There are some things I do not want to change, but there are other things that are not working anymore. I asked some of the people down there about it and I was told, for example, that they cannot use the rifle ranges. What is an armoury without a rifle range? And when they do get a rifle range, they do not have bullets. They have no ammunition. One cannot practise and learn how to use a rifle when someone says, "Here are your two bullets for this month". It just does not work. It just does not cut it.

This is the kind of indignity that our armed forces have been subjected to under the reign of the Liberal Party, so I am glad to see that in the throne speech there is a commitment to proceed with the third stage of the expansion of the Canadian army reserve. I hope that actually goes ahead.

The other thing I want to comment on again has to do with the Tory motion. I talked about the dichotomy between combat operations or combat capability in peacekeeping, but in the same motion the Tories also seem to set up a dichotomy between the creation of this new peacekeeping brigade that the government has said it wants to create, this increase of 5,000, and combat capabilities. I think it is too soon to judge whether or not what the government has in mind is creating a peacekeeping brigade that does not have combat capabilities. If that is what it is doing, then that brigade is not going to be of much use to the international community.

Ultimately, our vision is of a Canadian armed forces that is a meaningful resource, at the ready, that can get there when it needs to get there, with the equipment it needs, to be a meaningful resource to the United Nations or in other international situations where the Canadian government deems it appropriate, not as an interoperable arm of U.S. foreign and defence policy, which is what the United States wanted us to be when they went into Iraq.

It was good that the Liberal government of that day decided not to go into Iraq, but these ad hoc decisions, even when they are good decisions, are no replacement for an overall foreign policy which integrates the need for a strong Canadian armed forces that gives us respect in the world and makes us a meaningful resource to the international community but is integrated with an appropriate development policy, because ultimately good international development policies are a form of prevention.

The government likes to talk about the right to protect, but there is also an obligation to prevent situations from becoming the kinds of situations where we have to go in and protect people. We can do that by having the kind of development policies we used to have. We could do that by spending more money on development instead of spending less money on development, which is what has happened over the years with the Liberal Party. I have talked about defence, development, and diplomacy. The external affairs department has been cut back and does not have the resources it used to have.

Supply

We also need concerted work on disarmament, on getting rid of nuclear weapons, number one. We had an opportunity after the cold war to get rid of nuclear weapons. We have blown that opportunity, but it is never too late to refocus the world on the need to eliminate nuclear weapons altogether and other weapons of mass destruction. That means going after them where they are, not where they are not, in Iraq.

● (1205)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the opposition asked what I meant by saying that peacekeeping is war by another name. He answered his own question when he said that if we had a brigade that was not combat capable, it was not going to be “of use” to very many people. That is exactly what I mean. If we are going to have effective peacekeeping soldiers, those soldiers must have the capability of waging a war. If they do not have it and do not need it, that is fine, but we must have that capability as a basic and essential means if they are going to do their jobs under the most difficult circumstances. If they are not necessary, then so be it.

I hope, though, that the member will support the following. This government is currently engaged in an integrated approach toward our security needs. It involves development, it involves diplomacy, it involves defence and it involves trade. It is an integrated approach to deal with the very complex array of threats we have today.

We also have a defence review that is going to be released to the defence committee this fall, so I will ask the member a simple question. Will the hon. member support the government's initiatives in the 3Ds plus trade review? Will he support the defence review? Will he support our introduction of and our commitment to increasing the numbers of troops on the sharp edge by 5,000, including an increase of 3,000 to our reserves?

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I am from Transcona, but I am also from Missouri, and I will support an integrated policy on the part of the Liberals when I see it and when I see it actually being put into action. I do not see much integration there at the moment at all. I see a foreign defence policy that has been dis-integrated and disintegrating for a long time and which has actually over time reduced the perception of Canada in the world as a real player.

I think we have been living off our laurels for a long time in the world. It takes other countries a long time to figure out that Canada is not actually spending what it used to spend on overseas development aid. It is not uncommon if we travel to have people be very complimentary about Canada. I think that is good and I think there is still a lot to be complimentary about in terms of the role that Canadians play in the world as individuals.

But the role that the Canadian government plays in the world has increasingly become smaller and smaller, not just in terms of its capacity to make Canadian troops available where they are needed in certain situations, but in terms of development and diplomacy and its role in terms of disarmament.

I noticed that the parliamentary secretary talked about defence, diplomacy and development. Now I had only been up on my feet a minute or two before and I had also talked about the need for

disarmament, nuclear disarmament, but the parliamentary secretary did not mention that. Maybe that was an oversight or maybe it tells us something about where the government is at: that it has actually given up on that.

We have not given up on that, so I say to the parliamentary secretary, when the Liberals come forward with an integrated policy and show that they mean it and that they actually intend to do something about it, instead of just having photo ops with Bono and pretending to be the kind of country we used to be, then maybe they will get some support from us, but not before.

● (1210)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments. I have the utmost respect for my colleague from the New Democratic Party for the ongoing work that he does as the defence critic for his party. I had the opportunity in the last Parliament to work closely with him on the defence committee. I know that these issues of concern for our men and women in uniform are as near and dear to his heart as they are to mine and many of our colleagues.

I just want to agree with his rebuttal to the statement by the parliamentary secretary when he asked whether he, and by extension all of us as parliamentarians, would be supportive of an integrated approach that the government may or may not put forward. I would suggest as well that what we have seen from the government over the past decade is far from an integrated approach to defence, diplomacy or foreign assistance and development. A hodge-podge of knee-jerk reactionary policies has been put forward, rather than any sort of vision on how to address not just the needs of the defence community, but those other needs that he spoke of as well.

We just went through an election campaign and all of us had the opportunity to participate in all-candidate forums in our constituencies. I know that he personally believes in a strong military in Canada. He personally has spoken many times about the need to have, as our motion states, combat capable troops not only to protect the sovereignty of our own nation, but to assist other nations as well. I wonder if he could explain the NDP policy in this regard.

The new Conservative Party of Canada was very clear during the election campaign on what we would commit. We said that we would commit \$1.2 billion up front to provide the needed financial assistance to get our military at least to turn the corner. We recognize that is not enough, but we wanted to move toward, as quickly as possible, the NATO average as a percentage of GDP.

There was a lot of confusion in my constituency about exactly where the NDP stood. It never put any numbers down as to what it would commit. One thing the Liberals do is to talk in flowery terms of how they will support our men and women in uniform. However, it is quite another thing when it comes to actually making the commitment in writing of what will be done to accomplish the things the member talked about during his remarks. What specifically is his party prepared to commit in order to ensure that our troops are combat capable? How many dollars will the NDP put on the table?

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I think the member is missing the point. One of the things we have been calling for, and I think his own party has been calling for, is a full scale policy review on the part of the government, presumably with public input, although it appears that his party is against public input when it comes to national missile defence. In our view anyway, it would be putting the cart before the horse to say how much we think it will cost before we know exactly what it is we will do.

We are engaged in an internal review ourselves as a party. We think the country should be engaged in a similar review. If the Conservative Party knows already what it wants to spend without having engaged in that kind of review, then good for it. However, we feel that this is the kind of thing that can only be arrived at when we have a much more specific notion of what it is the government is proposing to do and therefore what we might propose as an alternative.

Mr. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I think, with all due respect, my hon. colleague from the NDP missed the point. That is why the new Conservative Party has been very explicit in what it is proposing. I know our defence critic, who is about to speak in the debate, will elaborate even further on that.

We are prepared to make those types of commitments to the Canadian people before a defence review, which of course we support. We know that there has not been a defence review since 1994. A decade has passed. The events of September 11, those tragic events that are all too familiar and which are seared into our memories have happened since that review, so a defence review is needed.

I said repeatedly when I was the defence critic that we cannot allow the government to use the need for a defence review as an excuse to do nothing further. The men and women of our military, of our armed forces deserve better. They deserve to know from their elected politicians what we are willing to commit to.

I ask the question again: What is the NDP willing to commit in dollar terms, in real dollars, to help the men and women in our military to turn the corner and to provide them with the tools they need to do the job?

• (1215)

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member to take note of the fact that the main political thing here is we are not against an increase in defence spending, if it is money spent on the kind of vision, so to speak, that I laid out in part in my speech. I laid it out only in part because I did not have the time to deliver the entire vision.

What is significant is we are saying that we are part of the consensus that something has been underfunded, that something needs to be addressed in terms of the Canadian armed forces. I have no illusions, and people in my political universe should not have any illusions about this. If we were to create the kind of Canadian armed forces that the NDP wants and put them at the service of the goals that the NDP has in mind, this would not necessarily be cheap. This could actually be very expensive.

What I am trying to do is transcend the old debate between this party wanting to spend less, and that party wanting to spend more. I

Supply

am trying to get beyond that debate, which has kind of an obvious partisan dimension to it, in which we both appeal to our traditional constituencies. I want to get beyond that debate and ask what it is that we want our Canadian armed forces to do.

It may well be that even though the hon. member and I have a different view of things, both views will require more money if they are going to be done properly.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, until the end of the cold war, the two military blocs, NATO and the Warsaw Pact, established a stable international order through their overwhelming military strength and influence with client states around the world. With the fall of communism, international stability quickly evaporated. The long suppressed underlying tensions unfortunately resulted in failed states, ethnic cleansing and terrorism which continues unabated today.

In 1994, the last time the government took a serious look at defence policy, it did not anticipate the threat focus shifting so much so rapidly. The force structure flowing from this flawed policy and the desire to secure a peace dividend resulted in armed forces that are not properly structured, equipped or manned to meet the challenges of today or the challenges in the future. On the contrary, our military capabilities are in a state of ever increasing decay. The forces simply cannot meet the range and size of the tasks assigned them.

To do what the Canadian Forces are currently being asked to do requires a steady state of funding of somewhere between \$18 billion and \$19 billion a year. The government is currently spending \$13.5 billion, or about \$5 billion less per year.

For the last 10 years the government has knowingly underfunded the military, preferring to reap the so-called peace dividend in a world that is less peaceful. This benign neglect has consequences which we are living with today.

During the last election campaign the government complained that our party was putting too much emphasis on the military. At that time we committed to restoring the credibility of the armed forces by significantly increasing funding and restoring personnel levels to where they were about 10 years ago.

Our plan included investing in new equipment, ensuring that the current equipment was properly maintained and military personnel had the necessary individual and collective training needed to maintain combat capabilities. This reality is well explained by Liberal Senate defence committee chair Colin Kenny, who stated the following on September 8:

—the Liberals won the recent election with a defence platform that almost seemed pacifist when compared with what the losing Conservatives offered up. Paul Martin's people took a shrewd, calculated risk that most Canadian voters would not see the country's military decline as a priority issue.

Having depicted us as war-like, the Liberal government tossed out the suggestion that it was going to establish a new 5,000 person peacekeeping brigade. This would somehow solve the myriad of defence problems and permit us to play effectively on the world stage.

Supply

Although the armed forces desperately need more manpower, the Liberal government's suggestion of creating a peacekeeping brigade is flawed. When we dispatch troops to offshore deployments involving failed states, ethnic cleansing and terrorism, they must be prepared to conduct combat operations to enforce peace and to protect themselves from attack.

Classic peacekeeping was possible during the days of the two large military blocs because they were able to suppress much of the tensions in the client states. This type of action can only occur where there are two sides that can control their forces and they are willing to work toward a political settlement.

Given the conditions in the world today, this type of operation is becoming more and more rare. The majority of offshore deployments involve peace restoration. When our military is involved in peace restoration or stability operations, they must be prepared to threaten the combatants with the use of force, and if hostilities continue, they must be prepared to use force. A soldier standing by with a blue beret and a rifle encouraging people just to talk and resolve their problems will not restore stability.

The proper way to prepare members of our military for their tasks is to train, equip and support them for the most difficult role, which is combat. With very little adjustment they can do lesser roles like peacekeeping. To use a civilian analogy, a security guard can protect a building, but he cannot participate in a police SWAT team. On the other hand, a SWAT team member can guard a building.

As well as believing that the concept of a peacekeeping brigade is a flawed idea, I also believe that the government should not be creating new military formations when the remainder of the forces are under-equipped, under-trained and under-manned.

The 5,000 personnel and the money needed for their equipment, some \$2 billion, should be used to restore current combat capabilities. To use an analogy, it is like someone spending money on a cottage while his house is crumbling and his car is broken down

• (1220)

The real challenge for the military is not that it lacks a peacekeeping brigade, but that the Liberal Party has starved it of funds over the last decade. It is hard pressed to fulfill any of its current roles because it does not have enough personnel, it is not properly equipped, nor is there adequate logistic and infrastructure support.

The Canadian Forces have an authorized strength of 60,000. It is estimated that it is currently paying about 62,000 military salaries. Because of severe problems in the recruiting and training system, it only has an effective strength of about 52,000. This means that 20% of military manpower is not available for employment. That is an extraordinary amount.

The reserves, which play an important part in meeting our commitments, have for years been promised by the government that they will be expanded and properly equipped. Altogether they number about 20,000 which is inadequate for what they have been asked to do and their numbers have been essentially the same for years.

Overall, the Canadian Forces are too small to meet current defence policy. An example is our over-tasked army. The effective field strength of the army is about 13,500 although some will argue that it is more like 12,500. It is hard pressed to meet its national and international commitments. Each time the government commits a battle group of 1,000 soldiers to some stability operation, the army must identify three additional battle groups to support the commitment.

Once the six month rotations are in training, one battle group is in theatre, one is returned home undergoing rest, retraining and reassignment, a third battle group is conducting collective training and briefings in anticipation of future deployment, and a fourth battle group is assembled to carry on the sequence. If anything less than four battle groups are involved, the soldiers rotate out of country too often and this affects their home life and their desire to stay in the military.

In a field force that can establish at most nine battle groups, one commitment of a battle group involves four. The field army is simply too small to meet the current tempo of offshore deployments and that is why we are pulling back from many of our previous commitments.

As with the navy and the air force, the army manpower has to be substantially increased so that it can meet domestic and foreign tasks. Overall the regular force needs to be restored to the 75,000 to 80,000 range while the reserves have to be expanded to the 40,000 to 45,000 range.

Because of the tempo of operations and the lack of adequate funding, much of the collective training within the armed forces is not being conducted. Most of the training effort and funds are committed to ensuring that individuals achieve their required skills. As a result, group or collective training has suffered.

The military, to be effective, does not act as individuals, but acts as a collective in organizations like naval task groups, air squadrons, and army battle groups and brigades. If this neglected elective training continues the Canadian Forces will slowly lose its ability to conduct meaningful military operations.

Currently, somewhere around 12% to 13% of departmental funding is committed to equipment upgrading and replacement. This is far too low a contribution to achieve the equipment requirements on the long term plan of the department which needs an investment greater than 20%. This means that over time more equipment will have to be abandoned resulting in a much less capable military that will be under increasing strain.

Ironically, the Prime Minister recently bragged about his announcements on defence equipment acquisitions. However, according to the DND strategic capability investment plan, the Prime Minister's announcements fall short by some \$20 billion according to the 15 year plan. It is incredible that the Prime Minister can tell Canadians he has fixed the crisis in defence when he has failed to approve the full \$27.5 billion plan required for military equipment.

To be clear, the Prime Minister has only approved \$7 billion or 25% of what the military needs to meet the policy requirements. By contrast, the Australian cabinet last year approved its military's 10 year, \$50 billion equipment plan based on its 2000 white paper and its 2003 defence policy review. Australia recognizes that it needs an effective military. With one of the biggest economies in the world among G-8 nations, should Canada do less?

The lack of investment in new equipment means that much of the current equipment in service in the Canadian Forces is nearing the end of its useful life and beyond. This means that extraordinary maintenance and servicing has to be carried out to keep it operating. This ever increasing demand for funds diverts money from the capital program. The military is caught in the law of diminishing returns. More and more effort is being committed to maintain this shrinking armed forces.

●(1225)

A prime example is the air force, which in 1994 had approximately 700 aircraft with an availability rate of 85%. In other words, at least 580 aircraft could theoretically fly on any one day. Currently, the air force has about 300 aircraft with an availability of 55%, or 165 aircraft available for flight. The air force currently has less than 30% of the capability that it had 10 years ago.

Another example of equipment underfunding is the navy's 12 maritime coastal defence vessels which were originally sold by the government as a means of dealing with mines placed by an opponent near our harbours. Unfortunately, not enough money was assigned to the project and the vessels do not have this capability.

The lack of modern, reliable air and sea transport handicaps Canadian Forces deployments and national policy independence in an era when operations are conducted in far off places. Rapid transport assets are a critical factor for both deployment and sustainment of forces. A few years ago the Canadian Forces took six weeks to deploy 900 soldiers and light equipment to Afghanistan. This is far too long a period.

Support for the Canadian Forces requires that sufficient spare parts, transport, medical personnel and supplies, and knowledgeable technicians are able to service every piece of equipment. Without adequate support even the best combat soldiers cannot perform as required. Unfortunately, all of these categories of support are critically short and the problem increases with each operational deployment due to personnel attrition and aging equipment.

As with equipment, military infrastructure is in a serious deteriorating state. The department typically plans that buildings and structures will last 50 years. As a result, the department must invest about 2% of replacement value per year to keep infrastructure in overall serviceable condition. This standard has not been met for a

Supply

very long time and therefore the department is facing a bow wave of infrastructure replacement and servicing demands.

Married quarters are a prime example. There are thousands across the country. The great bulk of them are 50 years old or more and need refurbishment and replacement, yet the government does not seem to know whether it should keep them and invest or abandon them. Meanwhile, they continue to deteriorate.

The restoration of Canada's military capabilities will not be without challenges. We believe that the branches of the armed forces should individually and collectively retain or acquire those capabilities that are relevant to current and anticipated missions. We reject the concept of mission roles for the military, like peacekeeping because it is unworkable in practice given the range of demands governments will always place on our forces.

Any attempt to reduce the military to a constabulary force is inconsistent with the demands of the new security environment. A force configured for light policing and humanitarian relief work would be unable to cope with armed groups threatening the stability of a state, to say nothing of terrorist organizations or dictators bent on territorial aggrandizement.

Finally, we ask the government to provide our forces with clear policy direction in the future. As well, it must provide the funding necessary to ensure that the manpower, equipment and support is there to ensure that our military is combat capable to take on the range of tasks that a great nation like ours must do.

●(1230)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the opposition critic for defence. I look forward to working with him in the coming years on defence issues to give our armed forces the tools they need.

Our biggest problem with the motion, quite frankly, is not the body of the motion but the preamble. We cannot agree with the preamble. The truth of the matter is that we are doing a great deal to support our military, including the integrated review we have right now on defence, diplomacy, development and trade. They are critically important if we are going to deal with the very complex issues of security that we have today. We know they have changed since 1994. That is why this is taking place.

Second, we have the defence review that is taking place in the department. It will be released to the committee that the hon. member sits on. We look forward to his expert testimony as to how we could make that review better so it will serve our men and women in uniform.

Supply

We are increasing our regular forces by 5,000. He knows the restrictions that we have right now. Perhaps he could provide the House with some constructive solutions as to how we could rapidly get the 5,000 troops that we need into the sharp edge of the military. What would he do to enable them? The bottleneck is that we can only get so many people into the system at a certain time. How would he propose we do that? In what time period does he think we could most rapidly do that, and how would he accomplish that goal?

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, it is not my responsibility to structure the Canadian armed forces. I did that in the past as a military officer, but it is not my responsibility now. It is the government's responsibility. The government and its military advisers will have to work out how they can effectively train and employ 5,000 additional service people, which should not be a great problem.

The hon. member has certainly changed his position in the last 10 months. In an article from his local newspaper he complained that government cuts were hurting the military rank and file. He complained about rent increases, post-living differentials going down, new equipment that was years away from coming on line, all kinds of antiquated equipment that needed repair, threatened cuts to the military by the type of review that is going on right now. I do not know what happened in the last 10 months, but you seem to have adopted an opposite position.

The Deputy Speaker: I would remind all hon. members to use the riding names when we have these discussions.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to announce what the government has done in the last 10 months. It made a commitment of \$7 billion to address the exact problems I mentioned in the articles I wrote some time ago. The money will go into four very important equipment acquisitions. Those acquisitions, as the member knows, will involve search and rescue aircraft, helicopters, a mobile gun system and four new supply ships.

That is a very important new contribution to the equipment of our armed forces. Can we do more? Yes. Are we going to do more? Yes. On top of that we are going to increase our troops at the sharp edge by 5,000 and we will increase our reserves by 3,000. That is all good news. It is a good start to improve the capabilities of our armed forces. I look forward to increasing and improving upon that performance in the coming years.

•(1235)

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca said that the government had committed to increasing the capital program by \$7 billion, but at the moment what we have in practical terms are statements.

For example, in the case of the naval logistic vessels that we, by the way, referred to in our campaign are going into a study period now. There is going to be a study of a few years and it will be years and years before we ever see these vessels. I do not know how long the search and rescue project, which was also recently announced, will take.

In many of these cases the government announces the projects so that it can say it has announced them, but whether it actually implements and concludes them is another matter. If we are going to maintain the kind of armed forces we have today, we will have to

substantially increase the capital program because it is anemic right now. The military only has about one-quarter to one-third of what is needed to achieve the force structure that is needed to do its roles.

Yes, the government has made some contribution, but I would not exaggerate the importance of that contribution. It is not significant against the whole demand.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will follow up on the inane comments by the parliamentary secretary, the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, who stood and bragged about what his new-found party, the Liberal Party of Canada, has supposedly done for the military.

He quoted the Prime Minister and the ex-minister of defence who was defeated in the last election campaign. They went out east and made some grand announcements last spring and talked about all of the equipment they were going to provide our military some years in the future. Our defence critic touched on it just now.

It is easy for a government to project spending way off into the future on some hardware. It is much harder for it to commit the dollars today in this year's budget or last year's budget to meet the operational needs of our men and women in the military.

The hon. parliamentary secretary knows it. He used to speak vehemently and passionately about this when he was on this side of the House, but how quickly he has forgotten that. It angers me to no end when I hear this type of nonsense being perpetrated by the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

The men and women in our military know better. They knew it when the budget came out and they were short \$600 million in the three services this past spring for their operational needs. Then the Prime Minister had the gall to stand up and talk about building some ship years into the future. That is going to be little solace to the needs of our men and women of today. He should know better.

I would ask my hon. colleague to enlighten the House and the general viewing public a bit more about the hypocrisy of the government.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I believe the previous defence minister alluded to it during the election, and it is our understanding today, that the government will be making a series of announcements of grand things that it intends to do but it will not really commit any money for quite awhile.

The government is going into a defence review that has stretched on. I think this defence review was to be completed about a year ago and it has been stretching. Every time someone brings up the defence review it goes on for three more months, three more months, three more months. The latest prediction I have is that the defence review will be completed by June next year.

If the government meets that schedule of June of next year and it has a completed new policy, then the force structure people within the department will have to take that policy and the guidance that is in that policy and develop a force structure. The force structure will then have to be approved. The earliest possible time the government could trickle any money into this new policy would be April 2006. If it is careful with that process, it can make sure that the significant funding requirements are shunted into 2007, 2008 and 2009 by which time somewhere in there it would hope to run in an election and hope that it does not have to meet the bills.

We are in this endless chain process where the military is being spun around and around with promises but there is no real money going into it.

● (1240)

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the official opposition defence critic to comment on the size of National Defence headquarters which employs 11,000 to 12,000 civilian people. This is equivalent to 14 infantry battalions in a military that cannot afford 14 infantry battalions.

As well, could the member take a moment to comment on the relationship between the military personnel and the civilian personnel in headquarters?

Mr. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, given that the armed forces have decreased year over year, the headquarters we have today is far too large for the requirements of the Canadian Forces. We now have a headquarters that is sort of a bureaucratic driven department.

The headquarters has more members than the navy, probably more members than the air force and close to being equal to the army field force. It is excessively large.

The other problem is that we have military officers tangled in with bureaucrats all through the headquarters. One of the great difficulties with the headquarters is that when the minister wants military advice he rarely gets pure military advice. He gets blended bureaucratic political advice. I think the government should be looking at the DND headquarters.

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate today on the opposition motion. I have listened with great interest to my colleagues on both sides of the House.

I am certainly pleased to see some of the new members in the House of Commons, such as the defence critic for the opposition party with his obvious expertise and experience in the Canadian Forces. I believe a commitment exists in all parties in the House to try to do the best we can for the men and women in the Canadian Forces.

At the outset I want to thank the men and women of the Canadian Forces for their hard work and commitment on behalf of Canadians, both here at home and in working for peace and stability in what is surely a dangerous world.

I have a few observations about the tone of today's debate and the tone of the larger debate that is taking place and needs to take place in this country, whether it be in the Standing Committee on National Defence, in the media or in the public generally.

Supply

The tone of the debate is very important. I feel the best efforts of members ought to be directed toward trying to keep their comments as non-partisan as possible. I understand this is a competitive place and that it is partisan by nature. I know we will seriously disagree from time to time and perhaps even vehemently on various points related to defence or anything else.

However, given that we are talking about the Canadian Forces and doing the best we can for the men and women who risk their lives, often daily, in the service of their country, I think it behooves all of us to tone down the rhetoric and the volume a little. It has been pretty loud in here today already. Maybe we could be a little more respectful and tone down the debate, not by any means deleting our disagreements or watering down our points. We were elected to come to this place to make those points but I hope we tone down the rhetoric and volume just a little so that in the spirit of cooperation on both sides of the House we can look to what is the future that this country wants for its Canadian Forces and the resources they need to carry out the tasks with which we charge them.

I want to now make reference to the fact that members opposite, primarily from the official opposition, have made the point that the previous Liberal government significantly cut spending on national defence. That is true. I was elected in 1993. I was not enamoured of the fact that we were cutting as deeply as we were, but the reality is those cuts were made. I honestly and sincerely believe that we cut too deeply but I believe we are turning the corner on that now and that we need to turn it more quickly.

I want to recall for my friends opposite that this did not start with the previous Liberal government. Many of my colleagues know that from 1984 to 1999, under the previous Conservative and Liberal governments, there were, I believe, 15 straight years of cuts to the military budget.

What I have been hearing from the other side, which is called a selective recall of history, with all due respect, is that the cutting started 10 years ago with the 1993 Chrétien government coming to power. The fact is that it actually started at least back in 1984, or perhaps sooner, when the governments of various political stripes cut the defence budget significantly and, I would agree, probably too deeply.

I will maybe put a little more of a non-partisan perspective on the fact that if we want to point the finger of blame about cutting defence in this country, we have to point in several directions and not just in one.

● (1245)

I would like to make a point about some of the hyperbole or exaggeration that I have been hearing and have heard from members of Parliament in the debate today and in past debates, within the Liberal caucus and within the opposition caucuses. We hear this hyperbole or exaggeration in the media from time to time and I certainly hear it from various members of the public when I go out and hold my regular town hall meetings in my riding in every season of the year. I am sure my colleagues, when they interact with their constituents one way or another, would probably acknowledge that they hear some of this exaggeration or hyperbole about the state of the Canadian Forces and the state of the equipment.

Supply

I think the opposition motion moved by the opposition critic is well-intentioned. However, we must look at some of the wording and look for some of the hyperbole. The motion states that the forces "have been permitted to decay". That sounds as if they have been destroyed or that they no longer exist, which is not, I believe, what the mover intended. In days past I had the opportunity to teach and one of the subjects I taught from time to time was English. I find there is a very clear connotation in the words that would suggest that if the forces have been permitted to decay, they are rotten or they have been destroyed. I do not believe for a minute that is what my hon. friend intends but it is very important. Words have power and meaning and it is very important that we focus on that.

Let me talk about that point. I do agree that the Canadian Forces have been in decline, probably for the past quarter of a century or longer, in decline in the sense of probably we are under-peopled in the Canadian Forces. I think there is an acknowledgement of that. I believe there is an acknowledgement in the current government that we are falling behind in terms of replacing our infrastructure. Some of our equipment needs have to be and have been addressed very recently and will be addressed in the next budget and in future budgets.

It is far different to acknowledge that there has been a decline in the Canadian Forces, which ought fairly to be laid at the footstep of past governments of different political stripes and not just past Liberal governments, and that the decline needs to be addressed and is being addressed. That is very different than saying that they do not exist or that they are total non-functional. I wanted to make that point because I know that is not the intention of the mover's motion but it is a proper understanding that one could take.

The reality is that since 1999 there have been some \$10 million of new funding directed toward the infrastructure needs of the Canadian Forces. The reality is that I was chair of SCONDVA, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. I am honoured again to have been elected chair of that committee and am pleased to be working with some of the colleagues in the opposition and on the government side who are really committed to doing good work there.

The first time I had the opportunity to chair that committee was in 1999. We produced a report, largely under the chairmanship of a former colleague of mine, Mr. Robert Bertrand. I became defence chair toward the end of the study on quality of life. The report was considered by most as an outstanding report. I was told this repeatedly by people in the military, not the generals but the ranks, the troops, some of whom I personally know and some of whom I taught in a former life. They said it was an outstanding report and, if it is, it is because it is their report. Members of the defence committee went coast to coast to coast in Canada. We went overseas to engage the men and women of the Canadian Forces. We said that we did not want any military brass in the room, that this was their chance to tell us what was really on their mind or they should not complain in the future. Well, they did. They laid it out in spades. The result was what is now considered an outstanding quality of life report on the state of the Canadian Forces and the challenges they and their families face.

●(1250)

It was in the 1999 budget when we saw the first increase in at least 15 years in the Canadian Forces. It was directed at trying to improve a very badly needed and deserved salary increase, and more funding to recognize the housing challenges. It was a direct result of their work that we were trying to do more to improve the situation of our men and women in the forces and their families.

I believe we began to turn that corner in 1999. Every budget since has seen some new money for the Canadian Forces. We need to turn that corner more quickly, but we have to acknowledge the facts of the matter. There is a strong recognition and commitment by the Prime Minister and the government to seriously reinvest in our Canadian Forces.

When I talk about this hyperbole, I want to go back to the comments earlier today of the deputy leader of the opposition party. I took him up on them a little, trying to do it in a cooperative way. I think maybe he took umbrage. The reality is there are some serious problems with the Canadian Forces and we acknowledge that. They need to be addressed. The government is trying to address them and I hope we will do better in addressing them in the very near future, in the best spirit of cooperation on both sides of the House. However, as my friend the defence critic from the NDP indicated, it serves no one to perpetuate falsehoods about this.

I do not think the deputy leader intended to mislead the House, but perhaps he was not aware of the statements of Major General Leslie at the SCONDVA around last April or May. That was when the whole issue, which got so much play in the media, was overblown about our poor troops having to go into desert action without tan camouflage uniforms and that they were sitting out there in an unsafe situation or they were a target because they did not have these proper uniforms. That is simply not the fact.

Do not take it from me. Take it from Major General Leslie who was our commanding officer in Afghanistan. I have his testimony here which I could quote. I could table it if anyone wants it. He came to our committee and very clearly said, "We had tans for most of the soldiers". He said that it was his choice that they not use them. He very clearly explained why he made that choice. He talked about much of their action being at night and that they were better off in the green uniforms. He talked about wanting to distinguish Canadians from other troops there, so many of whom were wearing the tan uniform. There was no distinctive look for the Canadians and the Canadians wanted to have that. It was very positively reinforced by the population that they recognized the Canadians instantly.

We have heard the word nonsense many times on both sides in some heated exchanges. Let us stop the nonsense where we play the partisan game, and let us not continue to say something that we know is wrong. We acknowledge there are real challenges that exist for the Canadian Forces and we need to deal with them. However, let us not continue to perpetuate something like the myth that our troops in Afghanistan did not have tan uniforms, because it is not true and Major Leslie was very clear in pointing that out.

Supply

I simply bring this point back up because I do not think the deputy leader, in answering my earlier question, answered it at all. He then went on to say that I was blaming the military. I was not blaming the military. I was recalling the testimony, which I am prepared to table, of Major General Leslie at the SCONDVA around last April or May. Those are the facts he gave us.

It would behoove all of us to tone down the rhetoric, tone down the volume, tone down the hyperbole, acknowledge the real problems that exist and work cooperatively to try to address those. When we have new facts that put a different light on something which has been stated incorrectly, let us be candid enough to acknowledge that, get past it, and move on.

• (1255)

I agree with some of the points made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He made some good points, but again he gave into the temptation for hyperbole. How? He stated in the House pretty much something to the effect that Canada sent troops around the world on missions where they were unsure of their purpose on those missions. I invite the hon. Leader of the Opposition to go into the field and talk to the men and women of the Canadian Forces on mission. I did so in Kosovo along with colleagues on both sides of the House.

Mr. Jay Hill: You guys make up the rules of engagement to go along with it, and you know it.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Perhaps. I understand that the opposition whip feels strongly about this, as do I. I want to encourage him to let me say my piece and I will listen very carefully when he has his chance to say his, as we have normally done at the SCONDVA committee.

The point I am trying to make is this. If we go on mission and talk to men and women in the Canadian Forces, my experience is that their morale is extremely high and they know exactly why they are there. They believe in what they are doing. They may wish they had a little more up to date equipment, no doubt, and I acknowledge that. The reality is it is simply an exaggeration and an unhelpful piece of hyperbole for the Leader of the Opposition to suggest that our men and women, when they are in the field on a mission, have no sense of their purpose. I simply do not believe that.

Mr. Jay Hill: He didn't say that.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: He said something very close to that. I originally said that he said something to that effect.

Mr. Jay Hill: You guys are talking about hyperbole. Don't use it.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: We can have a look the blues, but that is clearly what the Leader of the Opposition was suggesting and, quite frankly, he is wrong in that. My plea for toning down the rhetoric is falling on deaf ears.

Mr. James Moore: You started that.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: It will not dissuade me, because I feel every bit as strongly about the Canadian Forces as members across the floor. Some of them over there know it because we worked together. They should tone down the rhetoric, because I will have my say whether they like it or not. We can holler. We can turn up the volume too. It serves nobody. Let us all tone it down and show some respect as

colleagues. I do not interrupt other members and I do not expect to be interrupted when I am speaking, so do us all a favour.

I want to talk about equipment, because much of the hyperbole we hear revolves around equipment. We hear it in the press, we hear it from members of Parliament on both sides, I am sorry to say, and in my own caucus, and we hear it from some of the public, that all the Canadian equipment is junk. It is too old, it is junk and it is inadequate. I invite people who feel that way to come to my riding of London—Fanshawe and visit a plant now owned by General Dynamics, formerly General Motors, on Oxford Street East. I know the defence critic is well aware to what I am referring. I do not suggest that he has made the “all the equipment is junk” statement, but members of his party have. At that plant, the very latest state of the art light armoured personnel carrier is produced. It is leading edge equipment and is the best in the world. The Americans think so highly of it, and they have an enormous military budget, that they are spending some \$6 billion to purchase this equipment. It has been exported to various countries around the world. It is the very best piece of that type of equipment. It is not a panacea. It does not solve all our needs in a military vehicle, but it is excellent for what it does, what it is built to do and it is leading edge.

I will attempt to wrap up by simply saying that the defence review is under way. I believe it is certainly high time that it go to the defence committee. I look forward to participating in that review. The Irish rock star, Bono, said that the world needed more Canada. He was right. That means the Canadian Forces as well, working for peace and security both here at home and around the world. We ought to acknowledge the outstanding work the men and women do. We ought to admit we have shortchanged the Canadian Forces over the past probably quarter century, both Conservative and Liberal governments. I acknowledge that. I believe we cut too deeply. We have turned the corner. The Prime Minister and the government are seriously committed to reinvesting in the Canadian Forces, have done so, and will continue to do so in the very near future.

• (1300)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Madam Speaker, the member was certainly right that I find it difficult not to get emotional about this debate today. He was also right when he said that we worked together on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs.

He said that we needed to stop the nonsense. It was his party in the last election campaign that ran ads that were not just totally misleading, they were outright lies. For him to stand in his place here in the House and say we should tone down the rhetoric is also absolute nonsense. The day he stands in his place and apologizes to Canadians for not just a misleading advertisement that stated the new Conservative Party of Canada was in favour of buying nuclear aircraft carriers, which his party knew was a lie, is the day I will choose to tone down the rhetoric and not get quite as emotional about adequately funding the men and women of our Canadian military.

Supply

He stated in his speech that we had turned a corner. I would ask him to try and defend the fact that in the last budget the military itself said that it was over \$600 million short for its operational needs for the combined army, navy and air force. There was nothing in the first budget of the new Prime Minister to address those operational shortfalls. How does he square standing up in this place and saying that we have turned the corner?

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, the member was so busy being emotional that he did not pay much attention. I feel we have turned a corner because I indicated—

Mr. James Moore: Apologize for the ads.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, they do not really want the answer because they are interrupting me again, but I will try again.

For 15 years and every year under the former Conservative government and former Liberal government, cuts were made to the defence budget. As the member should know, and I believe he does, in 1999 we began to reinvest in the Canadian Forces and we have continued to increase the budget every year since. I define that as turning a corner. I want to see us turn it more quickly and I want to see us reinvest more seriously.

The member is a great one to quote history, but he is a bit selective when he does so. I congratulate him as well for having been the whip of three political parties. The first two parties, the old Reform Party and the old Alliance Party, as well as his current leader, are clearly on record in the House demanding cuts to the Canadian military budget. I could table those comments if anyone wants to challenge their veracity. It serves the hon. member's purpose to selectively look at history. That is his game plan. I have known him to do better on this subject.

• (1305)

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I wish to make a couple of comments and then pose a question to the hon. member.

Regarding the uniform situation, the fact is that at the time we deployed forces to Afghanistan we did not have sufficient summer tan uniforms, desert uniforms, for our troops.

If I understand the witness, the military officer at that time, he did not answer definitively whether if there had been those uniforms available would he have taken those over the green uniforms. So the matter is that the Canadian Forces did not have the necessary uniforms to go into a desert climate.

The other point, our leader was referring to the rules of engagement. There have been instances where our forces were deployed overseas where the rules of engagement had not been crafted properly and precisely enough for our troops.

The third point I want to make and I will lead it into a question. I did intend to use the word “decay” and decay is a scientific term. It refers to a body that starts in its original state and over time it basically disappears. Would the member for London—Fanshawe confirm whether there are now less supply ships in the navy, less destroyers in the navy, less aircraft in the air force, less armoured squadrons, and less artillery squadrons than there were when the Liberals took power?

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague for showing that he can make his points without hollering and that he can use his expertise without having to turn up the volume. I could probably shout as loud as any member here, but I do not think it adds anything to the debate.

Mr. James Moore: Prove it.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: I am proving it right now as I speak. I am not hollering. He and I will have a respectful exchange right now.

Let me start with Major General Leslie. I have here and I am prepared to share with my colleague and table in this House his answer to the question of why the troops in Afghanistan used green uniforms and not tan. He said:

We had tans and they stayed in our barrack boxes, for most of the soldiers. Certain select soldiers used them for certain specific missions, when they went up in the mountains, but I don't think I ever wore mine.

That is about as clearly stated as anyone could state it. I am happy to share it with my colleague later on.

Let us get past it because I think we have bigger issues to deal with and my colleague has talked about some of them. The phrase that he has in his motion states “the Canadian Forces have been permitted to decay”. That is the past tense of a verb as he knows and as we all know.

It suggests that the process is complete, that the decay is complete. Members would think, by that wording and it may have been unfortunate wording, that we had no men and women in the Canadian Forces, that we did not have any equipment, and that we were reduced to a Boy Scout troop here at home that just helped elderly people across the street or something.

That is not what my colleague intends. He has far too much expertise to intend that I am sure, but it is clearly what it says. I only point this out not to challenge necessarily his use of language. I point it out as part of the bigger problem. There is a tendency for hyperbole. There is a tendency to exaggerate that all of our equipment is junk, and that we cannot do anything. Let us show a little more respect for the work done by our troops.

We hear it time and time from our allies. We hear from our allies how our troops give outstanding service in the field. We hear about the outstanding work and the evaluation of their work from independent sources. Let us not add to the negative tone that exists so much in the debate around our forces. I think the men and women of the Canadian Forces deserve better. I think we can rise above that in this House.

• (1310)

Mrs. Diane Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk, CPC): Madam Speaker, we have been asked to tone down the rhetoric and deal with the facts. That is an honourable ambition, so let us look at some of the facts.

It is easy to determine where the priorities of the government lie when we have more people on the payroll dunning us for taxes than troops defending our country. There are 54,000 employees at the Canada Revenue Agency and 52,000 troops. That is a fact; that is not hyperbole. The priority is on tax collectors over troops.

Supply

In 1993 the Liberal government cancelled the helicopter contract that was already in place at a cost of \$.5 billion to Canadians. The promise was that the government would replace that contract with a better contract soon. Guess what, it has not happened yet. That is a fact.

Our Sea Kings are 50 years old. Every hour that they are in the air, they need 30 hours of maintenance on the ground. This is a fact.

Our sub fleet is grounded again and our Cormorant helicopters have been grounded for the second time this year. These are facts, not rhetoric. When the emotion gets a little high, it is not rhetoric. It is justifiable outrage.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, the reality is that the government is committed to 5,000 more full time personnel in the very near future and to 3,000 more reservists. I agree with the member that the helicopter purchase has taken far too long.

I have been in politics 24 years and I have not been successful because I have ducked what I see is the truth. It has taken too long to purchase the helicopters, I agree. However, the member is comparing apples and oranges when she talks about bureaucrats in the military and outside the military.

Her leader calls for a force of 80,000 troops. If the member were to do a little research, she would also find that there are whole parts of the bureaucracy that have more than 80,000 non-military people. What the member says may be factual, but I would encourage her to look for a few more relevant facts.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Oxford.

I would like to begin by congratulating the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills for the motion that he has brought forward on behalf of the Conservative Party of Canada. On this supply day our party has picked the topic of debate and put forward a motion that will be voted on.

It is important to recognize in the House that we have somebody, out of the 308 members of Parliament, who has the expertise that is needed to bring meaningful debate and actual facts to the House of Commons on the state of our military. I welcome that member for his contribution not only to our party but to the debate in this country on the state of our military.

I would like to go back to September 11 a couple of years ago. I believe it was a wake-up call that went around the world. From that day on, the world changed. I also believe on that day that people in the military around the world, whether it was the Department of National Defence in Canada, the minister, or the chief of staff suddenly realized that we as a nation have cut our military to the point where we may not be able to defend ourselves against that kind of action.

This is not a traditional war or confrontation situation. This is terrorism. These people do not attack in normal ways. We must be able to defend the citizens of our country. First and foremost, the duty of a government is the safety and protection of its citizens. I believe on that day the alarm bells started to go off, particularly in Canada, to say that all of the cuts to the military over the last number

of years have put us in a position where we fear that we cannot protect our citizens.

This motion today is a great opportunity for all members to rise and talk about what we would like to see done. That is where I would like to focus my comments.

Some of the parties in the House of Commons do not support the military to the degree that we would like to see it supported. I do not think anybody does to the degree that my party would. We want to see our regular forces increased; we want to see our reserves increased. We want to see a substantial increase in the funding that would go toward capital replacement.

I have had two occasions to be involved with the military on visits in North America. On one occasion I went to Norad headquarters in Colorado Springs and actually went inside Cheyenne Mountain where the operations took place on September 11. A Canadian was in command.

I also had an opportunity to go from air force base Trenton to Alert Bay on a Hercules resupply mission. It was a three day trip. It took a couple of days to go up and a day and a half to come back. It was an experience that I will never forget. The resupply mission that goes there on a weekly basis, particularly in the wintertime, is the only connection the people on that base have with the rest of the world.

Our men and women in uniform were on a Hercules cargo plane that I was able to get on that had over twice the flying hours recommended for that air frame. It had been re-winged and new motors were installed, but the plane had 40,000 hours that was only supposed to be on duty for 20,000. People are expected to get into those planes every week to take those supplies into that air force base. That is not the only situation. The people on those bases depend entirely on this aging fleet of airplanes to bring in their goods and supplies.

I know full well that the crew on that airplane, from the two loadies in the back up to the pilot, the captain, the navigator and the engineer, were excellent, qualified people. They knew that equipment. Nobody moved until the engineer said that plane was safe. Thank goodness for him.

● (1315)

I learned a few things about how the military operates. I will never forget that crew and how dedicated they were. They did not complain. They knew I was a member of Parliament and they knew they had an opportunity to say some things. They were very open with me but not once did they say they regretted joining the military. They enjoyed that life. However they were disappointed to some degree with the respect they were receiving from some quarters but they did that job week after week and were proud of the job they did.

When we looked at the throne speech it was shocking to see the support the government expected to give to the military. There were three critical words in the speech: the military needs to be smart, strategic and focused. I agree with all those things but it bothers and worries me that they might just be code words for just more of the same, that we do not need to re-invest, that we need to somehow re-conform the military into a smaller, less capable command.

Supply

I think we need to keep those words in mind as we go through this next year and the next budget process. It will be our job as the official opposition to hold the government's feet to the fire and ensure that it properly funds the military to the degree that Canadians are expecting. More and more Canadians realize that it is our military personnel who will have to protect us from terrorism.

We just have to think back to yesterday when Ambassador Cellucci from the U.S. indicated that Canada could be, not has been, a launching pad for terrorism to anywhere in North America, including Canada. We have to be very aware of that.

One of the issues that keeps coming up is the funding. Let us get to some facts. The Prime Minister indicated that his defence equipment acquisition is what the military is asking for and that the Liberal government will take care of it. The actual fact is that it has only approved \$7 billion, which is only one-quarter of the military's own 15 year request of \$27.5 billion. This is based on the 1994 policy and recent operations.

We can compare that to Australia, a country smaller than our own, that has spent \$50 billion on equipment replacement over a 10 year period. It just goes to show where we are positioned in the world regarding our military capabilities.

The chairman of the defence committee mentioned decay. What we are indicating is that it continues to decay, not that it has decayed to nothing but that it is in a decline in terms of its capability and equipment.

As our critic mentioned earlier, every time there is a deployment and our equipment is moved around the world or within Canada, it gets more worn out, more run down and more in need of replacement. We are not keeping up to that need.

We can look at the money needed for capital replacement and infrastructure repair. When I was on the air force base at Trenton it looked to me like it had been a magnificent place at one time but that it needed some serious upgrading. They were only simple things. The lawns were in disrepair, the parking lots needed repair and the buildings needed painting.

When I went into the operational buildings there was the look and feel of them being rundown. It was not because of the men and women in our armed forces who work there every day. It was because they did not have the capability, because of budget cuts, to do what was needed.

We also need to look at the numbers. If we are going to do a proper job of defending Canada against terrorism, we need the numbers. Right now our recruitment process is so bunged up it does not work properly. We have people who are lining up to be in the military but they cannot because the system is not capable of doing that.

Those are a number of the areas we need to address before we can properly stand in any forum, whether it is the House of Commons or anywhere, and say that we are doing our utmost to keep Canadians safe.

● (1320)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I appreciated the

comments by the member of the opposition who is a thoughtful vice-chair of the defence committee. I look forward, as all of us do, to working together to strengthen our armed forces.

I would ask the member a fairly simple question. He articulated well the change, post-9/11, that our threats are more diffuse, more complicated and involve a multifactorial approach to the problem.

I wonder if he is aware of the new \$300 million that the government has put in to having an integrated response to maritime security. Does he support that? The \$300 million plan involves operations both on the west coast and the east coast and integrates our defence, RCMP and Coast Guard capabilities. Does he see that as a move in the right direction?

Mr. Rick Casson: Madam Speaker, one of the issues that was very apparent during and after the September 11 crisis was the total inability of different agencies and different forces to communicate. Whether it is within a country or between countries, certainly in the Norad sense, we need to be able to do that and do it in a very meaningful way. Whether it is the program to which the parliamentary secretary referred or whether it needs to be more or different, it needs to happen and it needs to happen in a major way.

It was illustrated to us how difficult it was for the different non-military agencies, the ones which control air traffic and control movement on the oceans and in the ports, to communicate with each other. It caused major confusion. It slowed down the ability to respond to these attacks and to potential problems that could arise.

Absolutely, communications has to be the best that we could possibly acquire. We can think back to an occasion when our air force planes could not communicate with the other allied defence airplanes and different operations without the enemy being able to listen in. So there are all kinds of areas in communications that are so important. As we know, in any business or any walk of life, communications is absolutely critical, but in a military context it is absolutely the difference between life and death.

● (1325)

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague, the vice chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, made some very interesting remarks. I am always very impressed with his reasoned approach and I look forward to working with him again as we have in the past.

If I did not misunderstand him, I would like to clarify. I thought I heard him draw an inference from the Speech from the Throne that somehow the government may be talking about scaling back the size of our Canadian Forces. Did I hear him correctly? Is he not aware that we are committed to at least 5,000 more regular forces and 3,000 reserves?

His leader spoke today about going to 80,000 men and women in the Canadian Forces. I wonder if there has been a costing of that size of increase to 80,000? Has there been a detailed rationale? I wonder if he is aware of that or was his leader just kind of throwing out the number.

Mr. Jay Hill: It is in the platform.

Supply

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Well, if it is in the platform, it has to be costed and with a detailed rationale. I did not see that and I would love to see it. If the member has it I would love to see it today, or perhaps he could share it with me as soon as possible.

Mr. Rick Casson: Madam Speaker, yes, we do want to see the military increased. I do understand in the throne speech and subsequent documents that the government has talked about increasing regular forces and increasing peacekeeping capabilities, but it has talked about that in the past.

My reference was to the three words that were used in the sentence, "We have to earn our way in the world". I agree with that, we do have to earn our way in the world as a country. It goes on to say, "but ours will never be the biggest military force, so it must be smart, strategic and focused".

Instead of me offering an explanation on our platform, our rationale and the dollars behind increasing the military to 80,000, the government should explain what it means by those three words and how those three words will turn into a better, stronger and more well-equipped military?

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have listened to a number of the speakers today and I find it rather hard not to be partisan. I take it that is the nature of the facilities here. I am only an old policeman, not an English teacher, so sometimes my words may not fit what he would like.

I stand before the House today to discuss yet another issue that has plagued our military and brought undue embarrassment to our country and to the government. Yesterday, the chief of defence staff and the admiral for our navy appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs to explain why Canada needs to have a submarine capability for our navy. What was truly apparent was what I equate to buyer's remorse. It is like me buying a used car and the salesman neglecting to tell me about the three or four accidents the car has been in, only to have it pointed out when a mechanic is changing the oil and has a look at the vehicle.

In 1993, the British navy pulled the four Upholder class submarines from the water because they were duds. Nothing on these subs operated properly. They were filled with design faults bad enough to frustrate one of the greatest maritime nations in the world.

As a new member of Parliament, I still feel my observations are from the outside looking in. These great military men who appeared before the committee yesterday were essentially gagged and unable to say what they really felt was wrong with the sub program.

I would venture to go as far as saying to the Canadian people that there is no doubt there is a need for submarine capability in Canada's navy. Why would these more than qualified servicemen rally around these four flawed submarines? I feel that it is because the government of the day followed what the rest of the world was doing in a former era. Aside from cutting the guts out of our health care system, it could not put the knife down and, like a crazed butcher, pounced on Canada's military.

We did not buy the subs because they were good value for the money. As the hon. Sheila Copps attested to last night on CBC, if the subs were such a good deal, then why were they still around five

years after they were dry docked. Where was the bidding war? Saudi Arabia declined, Spain declined and the Australians decided to build their own subs.

The reason the navy pursued these subs was because it convinced the cabinet of the day, a cabinet, I might add, that was led by our current Prime Minister and then finance minister. However, the navy was told to find something cheap or, as the Liberals would say, cost effective. In other words, the navy was given a budget, told to forget what we need, to forget about worldclass equipment and to just go out and buy the best subs it could with one-tenth of what it needed to accomplish the task.

Our military has a motto. It is known as the "can do" approach and, because they are such good people, they compromised and took on these subs that presented them with challenges even the British navy could not conquer. What was even worse was watching the most recent information about the *Chicoutimi* disaster on the news networks last night.

We have service people who are risking their career advancement to make sure Canadians know the truth of what happened on that doomed sub. Lieutenant Bryan was described by the Halifax centre as being casual on the phone. What did they want, mass hysteria? Perhaps he was exhausted from what had just happened hours earlier. Lieutenant Bryan states that he had good reception on his satellite phone and that everything he said was repeated back to him, including the words "major fire". Halifax command said that the reception was not good and yet they could hear the word "fire", the number of casualties and the fact the sub was dead in the water. However, when they went before the media they called the fire minor.

Lieutenant Bryan also stated that there was a great deal of concern on the other end of the phone line and that he felt that by them repeating everything he had said back to him, it left him with no doubt his words were understood. So imagine, Halifax did not log or record the phone call. How ironic, a case of their words over another.

It is not like the *Chicoutimi* reached the call centre trying to sell some carpet cleaning services. I say that with all due respect to those in the call centre industry. They were talking to experts in the field of navy operation so how could major be interpreted as minor? It is now up to a military inquiry to determine if the navy did indeed downplay the fires and, if so, whether it was intentional or merely a bad case of communications. Or, perhaps there was political interference to downplay the already plagued sub. Perhaps the government wanted to control the situation to ease the cloud of doom that was being cast over its choice of flawed submarines

● (1330)

Touchy as my statement is, I feel it needs to be debated. It would not be the first time that politics got in the way of the truth. Just look at that napkin contract for the sale of shares in a golf course.

Supply

The party across the way has no bounds when it comes to its contempt for the intelligence of the people of this country. The solution to the sub crisis in the country has yet to be discovered. From what we know now, it is clear that Canada should be looking to purchase a fleet of six new off the shelf proven subs, such as those built in Germany. These subs are NATO friendly, environmentally friendly, diesel operated and are being built with an AIP system that will allow them to go under the ice of our northern coast.

When my party is elected to government in the next election, we will remove the gag order on military officials and let them speak freely and allow them to react to our financial constraints. What we need now is a full military review. Underfunding of our forces has taken its toll on our service personnel and our national pride. It has left our forces on the brink of disaster and that is no exaggeration.

Today, after some \$850 million spent on flawed subs, we are without a sub program. We have no heavy lift aircraft capability to move our military operations around the world. Rust out threatens nearly every vehicle we own. We have also learned in the last several days that we cannot even supply our soldiers in Haiti with gloves, flak jackets and proper boots. I recall a report that it took nearly 12 years to decide on the purchase of a backpack. And we wonder why we have poor recruitment numbers for our military of the future.

In the last campaign the government said it would add 5,000 new troops to our forces. A quick estimate shows that it takes two years to train a soldier at a cost of nearly \$2 billion per year for those members. When have we ever seen the Liberal government increase the defence budget by \$2 billion per year? It will not happen. It will go down as just another broken election promise. I say we have to look no further than across the House because that party has gouged the life out of our military.

When it comes to our NATO allies, only Luxembourg spends less GNP on its national defence than Canada does. That says it all about the Liberals' regard for our service people and the defence of our nation. Their decade of cuts and failure to increase the defence budget in significant numbers is a disservice to every soldier that has paid the ultimate sacrifice for our beloved country.

● (1335)

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I listened with great interest to our new colleague. I also welcome him to the defence committee and look forward to working with him.

He talked about this being a partisan place. He certainly has demonstrated that and I would like to take him up on that a little just to set the record straight.

I indicated that I had taught some English, but my first degree is in history. I read and taught about the Pacific scandal. I read and taught about the Mulroney years. If there is a lesson to be learned from history in this country it is that his party has no right to point the finger at anyone else when the subject is integrity.

On the member's point, I think he has levelled a serious charge. He is a new member, but I cannot let it go. I have to challenge him in a friendly way. He used the term "gag order", that when elected to office his party would "remove the gag order on the military". I ask the hon. member to indicate to us where he feels there has been a gag order and what evidence he has that there is a gag order in place.

With respect, I say it is very unfortunate that he chose to say that Vice-Admiral MacLean and the chief of the defence staff General Ray Henault were gagged yesterday, that they were unable to say what they wanted to say. They were witnesses and were called witnesses for a reason. They were giving what is called testimony, evidence, at committee

I ask my colleague, and hopefully my friend soon, does he have evidence of this gag order? That is an extremely serious thing to say in the House of Commons about the interplay between the government and the military. If he has evidence, I want him to table it at the earliest opportunity. Otherwise I think he should retract.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, my friend from London—Fanshawe is partially right. The two members of the military who were at committee yesterday, and I think I said that, are two excellent people. What they had to say was in answer to the questions. The answers to the committee were forthright. To be honest with the member for London—Fanshawe, I cannot specifically tell him of a gag order.

My sense is that members of the military know what is important to say in the bounds of what they do and that is what I alluded to. I may have been intemperate in my words, but the fact remains that I think they are very guarded in what they tell us.

Mr. Pat O'Brien: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's honesty and his candour, and I accept his statement, as we all do.

I will end with this. I spoke about hyperbole in this debate, the tendency on both sides of the House to exaggerate beyond what the facts are. This subject is too important. I know my friend agrees and I very much appreciate his candid and honest statement. It is too serious a subject to give in to the temptation to be overly partisan and to exaggerate. I caution all members, and I include myself obviously as chair of the defence committee, let us stick to the facts and deal with them as fairly and objectively as we can.

● (1340)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I want to add some historical context to what we are talking about today.

Back in 1993 to 1995 our government was enduring dealing with very large deficits. As a result we had to make cuts across the board to everything. I am very happy that over the last little while we have been able to change that and have started to make strategic investments in our military.

Obviously when I was a member of the opposition party, I went through the Conservative Party's defence white paper. One of the great difficulties I had, and why I did not sign off on it, was that the demands, the requirements and requests in that white paper were simply not affordable. The problem was that if we had purchased all of what was requested in that paper, our country would be in a deficit situation again, which was completely unworkable.

Is the hon. member aware of the costing out of the white paper of the Conservative Party? It is a leading question because I can tell members that it is in excess of what this country could possibly afford.

Mr. Dave MacKenzie: Madam Speaker, I am not sure if it was costed out with respect to a \$1.9 billion surplus or a \$9.1 billion surplus.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, since this is my first speech in this 38th Parliament, I would like to take some time to congratulate you on your appointment as Acting Speaker of the House and to thank my constituents, the voters of my riding of Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for electing me.

On June 28, 64.9% of voters reaffirmed the trust they had in their MP for the third time. That is a clear sign for me to keep up the good work. It shows me that they approve of what I do in this House and that they support the work of my colleagues, the members of the Bloc Québécois. I would also like to thank and congratulate my colleagues from northwestern Quebec, my seatmates, who provide us with moral support during our speeches.

Please excuse me, I forgot to mention that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Jonquière—Alma.

Enough thank yous and compliments, let us get to the heart of the debate. The Bloc Québécois and I are against this motion, not because it is bad, but because it asks to invest money in national defence when there is no national defence policy. The same is true for Canada's foreign affairs policies—there is no policy.

The last time national defence policies were reviewed was in 1994. I wonder if DND still uses these policies. If so, it should consider changing them because the concept of defence and military armament has changed dramatically since September 11, 2001.

We no longer have an army to contend with, we have to deal with people we call terrorists, who have not been identified and whose methods we do not know. Consequently, this government absolutely must establish a defence policy. In the meantime, it should invest money in the living conditions of our service members.

I have, unfortunately, had occasion to provide support to young men and women the age of my own son, who have returned from war or peacekeeping in Bosnia with post-traumatic stress syndrome. They have come home as human wrecks, a harsh term perhaps but they are greatly in need of psychological and psychiatric help. Unfortunately, we turn a blind eye to them.

Some of these young people in my riding have to spend time at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue regularly, daily or weekly. Unfortunately, they need more help than that. Let us not lose sight of the fact that

Supply

these young people, like all our military personnel, have been to war or on peacekeeping assignment in order to advance the cause of democracy. That was their role.

The dangers that await us if we invest in our armed forces without any national defence policy is that these investments are likely to be wasted. I will give a few examples of this.

• (1345)

Hon. members will recall that, in 1998-99, the national defence budget was \$8,964 million, while it will be \$13,400 million in 2003-04. That is a lot of money. Ordinary people's dreams of winning the lottery never exceed a million. So this is an increase of 49.5% in national defence spending since 1998.

What did that money go to? Let us think back to 1993, when the government over the way spent \$500 million to cancel the helicopter contract. Or back to 1998 when, without consulting the House, it announced, just like that, the purchase of four used submarines from Great Britain, ones that had been in mothballs since 1993. They were purchased in 1998 for \$800 million, apparently to protect our coasts, the Arctic and the far north, but the submarines were not equipped to operate under northern ice.

Since then, several hundred million dollars have been invested in those submarines. The total has reached nearly \$1 billion in expenditures on those four submarines, now all in dry dock. Unfortunately, for that to happen, Lieutenant Saunders had to lose his life in the incident aboard the HMCS *Chicoutimi*.

While waiting for my colleague to take his seat, I would just like to add that we spent another \$174 million needlessly on a communications satellite that has not been used. That is one of the things the auditor general pinpointed.

With that I shall pass things over to my colleague for his ten minutes.

• (1350)

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Madam Speaker, my colleague from the Bloc brought up the issue of communications. I wonder if he is aware that right now at the Ottawa Convention Centre there is a very large technological conference with hundreds of displays. Our Canadian Forces put seven submissions into this very large competition on technology. Our Canadian Forces had four finalists and won three awards, two gold and one silver, which is an extraordinary accomplishment.

S. O. 31

One of the submissions is a communications network we are using in the Arctic. It is a world leader. It will save lives not only in the Canadian Arctic but also internationally. I wonder if the hon. member is aware of and supports the investment and experimentation done by our Canadian Forces in order to improve its capabilities and also save lives here at home and abroad.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Madam Speaker, I am indeed aware of the exhibition. The army does not only do bad things. It also does good things. I think, however—and this is the Bloc's view—that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Defence will have to agree with me that it is time this country had a national defence policy.

I sincerely believe that we need to know what role and responsibilities our army will have. Will it be a defensive or an offensive army? What role will it have? We absolutely must develop a defence policy for this army.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, I am in strong disagreement with the member's statement. The army does not do only wrong things. I am going to ask him to explain what he means by that, because our army does not do wrong things. Our army does good things all over the world. It saves lives.

I want to ask the member if he is aware that our army has capabilities of both a defensive and an offensive nature. It must have both of those capabilities. I am wondering if he is aware of and knowledgeable about the heroism that our armed forces displayed in the Medak pocket in Croatia and the awards they received from the U.S. government, and the awards that our snipers received in Afghanistan for the extraordinary work they did there. Also, is he aware of the fact that our armed forces save lives in both a defensive and an offensive nature?

Does the member support and acknowledge the fact that our armed forces must have the weaponry and capability at the end of the day to engage in offensive operations in order to save Canadian lives and also lives abroad with respect to the work they do to keep peace and security internationally? Does he support the offensive capabilities of our armed forces, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Madam Speaker, I recommend that my colleague, the hon. parliamentary secretary, read the blues carefully tomorrow, because I said that the army does not only do bad things, that it also does good things. That is what I said. The army does not only do bad things, it also does good things.

In response to the second part of his question about whether the army should have offensive weapons, yes, these are necessary in a conventional army. More needs to be done, however, and I would like to hear him on this: should there not be a new defence policy for this army? That is the problem. We are working with defence policies dating back to 1994; we are still talking about the 1994 white paper, even if this is 2004.

• (1355)

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question about the war in Iraq. Quebec took a very pacifist stand on this war. There

were demonstrations. People who disagreed expressed their opinion. Today, I am proud of the position against taking part in the war that was expressed and promoted here in the House.

I would like my colleague to explain this situation more fully and in connection with a debate that could redirect the entire involvement of the armed forces in this new global context.

Mr. Gilles-A. Perron: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Jonquière—Alma for this opportunity to say something about the war in Iraq. Yes, I completely agree with the position Quebeckers took on this issue. It was also the Bloc Québécois position. Since the beginning we Quebeckers have been a peaceful people. We do not like war. For example, during the second world war, we opposed sending soldiers. But a law was passed here that forced us to go and fight.

Let us return to the war in Iraq. Yes, it is true that we, the people of Quebec, put pressure on this government not to follow the Americans on this issue. I am aware that, for once, the government listened to the people of Quebec, and all the more so because this war—as is very clear now—is especially and uniquely about oil, the lifeblood of the modern economy. No weapons of mass destruction have yet been found.

[*English*]

Hon. Keith Martin: Madam Speaker, I know we do not have much time, but I want to enlighten my hon. colleague from the other side.

Do we need a defence policy? Absolutely. Are we going to continue to work on the 1994 policy? No. Do we have one in the works? Yes. It is going to come out to the defence committee in the fall. Not only do we have a specific defence policy, but we also have a combined four part policy that integrates a lot of the things he talks about in terms of development, defence, foreign policy and trade. It is an integrated approach to deal with complex security challenges. We are doing that and I look forward to my colleague's input so we can make the policy as strong as possible.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, this is the time of year when communities across Canada celebrate Small Business Week.

In Atlantic Canada, 70% of all jobs created by new firms are created by small businesses. That is why the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency focuses on helping entrepreneurs access the capital, information and business management skills they need to succeed.

An excellent example of how ACOA works is a company in my riding called Fabco Industries. This small company started in 1978 and is now a leader in marine construction and offshore oil and gas. When the company needed to expand and modernize, ACOA was there to help with a \$450,000 business loan. Today Fabco has 50 full time employees and serves the offshore and marine industries worldwide.

The Government of Canada, through ACOA, also supports organizations that provide advice to small businesses on improving their profitability. ACOA works for Atlantic Canadians.

I congratulate all the entrepreneurs and I congratulate ACOA for its valuable support to small businesses in Atlantic Canada.

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•(1400)

RIDING OF NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Madam Speaker, among others, the following local issues are very important to the constituents of Newton—North Delta.

Transportation and traffic congestion on Scott Road, 72nd Avenue, Highway 91 and Highway 10 is an ongoing problem, yet this government returns only 3% of the gas tax revenue to B.C. We need money for the construction of the South Fraser perimeter road.

With emergency services and beds cut in the Delta hospital, health services in Surrey and North Delta are inadequate, yet the Prime Minister's "fix for a generation" is not even a fix for a decade.

Auto theft, marijuana grow ops, prostitution, break and enter and organized crime put the safety of residents at risk. Laws without teeth and the revolving door justice system need to be fixed.

Newton—North Delta being the host of Burns Bog, we need the government's commitment to conserve the environment and the bog rather than waste resources on selling Kyoto.

We need resources for dredging the Fraser River, and the Fraser docks need expansion with better connections to road, rail and air transportation.

The misplaced priorities of the Liberal government are hurting our communities.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CO-OP WEEK

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Madam Speaker, along with my colleagues in this House, I would like to point out that October 17 to 23 is Co-op Week.

Over the years, Co-op Week has become a major event and a prime opportunity for promoting the cooperative way. Every October the entire cooperative movement in Canada expresses its pride in being a part of this worldwide movement, which has rallied millions of people to its unique values.

This week gives both the French- and English-speaking communities a chance to celebrate the cooperative presence and promote the co-op sector through special events and initiatives in every region.

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With its theme of "Take control of your affairs!" Co-op Week reflects the pride of place afforded individual members, their commitment and their shouldering of responsibility, in the cooperative formula.

Therefore, I wish everyone a happy Co-op Week.

* * *

[*English*]

GOVERNOR GENERAL'S AWARD

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents of Nunavut, I would like to congratulate Allison Brewer of Iqaluit, Nunavut on being awarded the Governor General's Award in Commemoration of the Persons Case.

Allison is a true advocate of inclusion and equality. This award is well deserved, as Allison's life has been dedicated to removing discrimination from society. Allison has shown courage and integrity throughout her life and has been active in social justice and feminist causes.

This is the 25th year of the Governor General's Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case, and Allison is truly a worthy recipient of this important award for her work in Nunavut and also in her hometown of Fredericton.

This award honours what Allison has achieved until now and I know Allison will continue to educate and motivate people to end discrimination. I wish her all the best in her future endeavours. I say congratulations to Allison. Her family and friends are proud of her.

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RIDING OF BRAMPTON—SPRINGDALE

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise before this House today to pay tribute to the constituents of Brampton—Springdale. The Brampton—Springdale community is a community like many others across our great country. It has been built on a sense of pride, hard work and dedication. These are so many of the same values that are shared by Canadians coast to coast.

It is truly an honour to be part of a government that wants to build upon these values. It is truly an honour to be part of a government that wants to be responsive to the many needs of these Canadians: having a national quality childcare program, ensuring that we have the highest quality of health care, and ensuring that we have the best cities and communities in which to live. These are the very reasons that Canada will continue to be the envy of the world.

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I am humbled to be able to be a member of this House and to contribute to the achievement of these goals with the same energy, enthusiasm, dedication and spirit that make up and define the success of the Brampton—Springdale community.

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VICTORIA CROSS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, next week Branch 6 of the Royal Canadian Legion in my riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will play host to the southwestern Ontario unveiling by Canada Post of two stamps commemorating the Victoria Cross. Owen Sound was selected as the site for this prestigious unveiling because four of the 94 Canadian Victoria Cross winners have Grey-Bruce connections. I would like to pay tribute to these people today.

In World War I, Samuel “Lew” Honey of Conn was awarded the medal. In World War II, the recipients included Owen Sound born and famous flying ace Billy Bishop, Thomas William Holmes, and David Currie, who are all buried in or near Owen Sound. I would also like to acknowledge Mrs. Shirley McGregor, niece of Mr. Holmes, who will be participating in the ceremony.

The 49¢ stamps mark the 150th anniversary of the war. One stamp features a medal based on photographs provided by the Canadian War Museum, and the other an illustration of the Canadian Victoria Cross, approved in 1993 by Queen Elizabeth II.

The Victoria Cross is a medal awarded in recognition of the most exceptional bravery, and on behalf of my constituents—

•(1405)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Tobique—Mactaquac.

* * *

BILINGUALISM

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition's Belgian waffle proposal is yet another slap in the face to Atlantic Canadians. His plan for the future of Canada suggests a decentralized system that separates the nation's language communities and divides our country into regions.

We have seen this model before in New Brunswick. It is called the Confederation of Regions. In the late 1980s, Progressive Conservatives and Liberals alike joined together to fight the Confederation of Regions' divisive platform. A return to that period in our history would be a huge step backward for our entire country.

As a New Brunswicker with Acadian ancestry, I am personally offended that the opposition leader would float an idea that threatens our proud distinction as Canada's only officially bilingual province. We have spent decades building bridges between our language communities. Let us continue to build bridges, not bomb them.

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[*Translation*]

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, whether it is permanent or temporary, the experience of a growing number of people who are homeless or those at risk of becoming so is a matter

for our attention. Homelessness is often presented as an urban fact, but it happens in all regions as well.

Thousands of people have found themselves homeless in the Lanaudière region in recent years. More than 1,500 people have turned to shelters for housing, food and friendship. Continuing an event started 14 years ago by the Regroupement des auberges du coeur du Québec, the 8th night of the homeless will be held in Joliette all night from Friday to Saturday, October 22 and 23. Such vigils will be held simultaneously at fifteen sites across Quebec.

In Joliette, the event will be full of talk, songs and stories, and this year for the first time the population will be invited to spend the night with us in the heated tent. Near the end of the night, about 4 a.m., in solidarity with the homeless, and with my sleeping bag, I will join the crowd.

* * *

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week, October 18 to 24, Canadians from coast to coast are celebrating Citizenship Week. This annual event is designed to promote a broad awareness of the values of citizenship, including its rights, privileges and responsibilities.

In schools and community and cultural centres everywhere, thousands of new Canadians will take the oath of citizenship, as my family and I did 41 years ago. Many other Canadians will reaffirm their citizenship at these events by publicly reciting the oath of citizenship.

[*Translation*]

It is a time to reflect on the rights and privileges that we all enjoy because we live in a peaceful, welcoming and democratic country called Canada.

I want to welcome all the new Canadians in my riding of Ahuntsic and I wish them much success in this great country they have chosen to live in.

[*English*]

Being a Canadian citizen means many things, but it means freedom, respect, and belonging to the greatest country in the world.

* * *

CANADIAN LIGHT SOURCE

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon is bright with columns of light this week as the city and in fact the world celebrate the grand opening of Canadian Light Source.

The \$173 million synchrotron owned by the University of Saskatchewan represents one of the nation's largest investments in science in 30 years. Our national synchrotron is expected to have a tremendous economic and scientific impact. The potential for research and development is endless and jets Canada firmly onto the biotech world map. It means world class jobs, world class scientific opportunities, and world class companies doing business in our city.

It has been 10 years since the idea of building a synchrotron in Saskatoon was first proposed. There were many challenges to overcome, but thanks to the vision, dedication and persistence of its supporters, the Canadian Light Source synchrotron is open for business in Saskatoon.

I will be conveying my congratulations at the gala opening tomorrow, but I would like to offer my thanks and good wishes to everyone who has had a hand in bringing the Canadian Light Source to Saskatoon.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for keeping the hon. members of this House in a good mood. His humour is greatly appreciated.

The Leader of the Opposition has taken a leaf from the book of the leader of the Action démocratique du Québec, Mario Dumont, who suggests changing the name of Quebec to the Independent State of Quebec. Mr. Dumont also suggests that Quebec should have its own constitution, collect all taxes itself and then decide what the federal government's share will be.

Mr. Dumont's proposals provoked a burst of laughter in the National Assembly and across Quebec. Everyone heard in it an echo of Yvon Deschamps' joke about wanting an independent Quebec in a united Canada.

Allow me again to praise the sense of humour of the Leader of the Opposition who thought, rightfully so, that if the members of the National Assembly could get a kick out of this good joke, then the members of this House should not be left out.

* * *

● (1410)

[*English*]

CREDIT UNION DAY

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on Credit Union Day to pay tribute to Canada's credit union system.

The great distinction of credit unions in Canada is that they are owned by their members. Accordingly, credit union services are determined by the needs of all their members rather than those of profit driven shareholders.

Credit unions serve and help communities drive their own economic growth. They have a proud history of introducing

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innovative services like life insured loans and weekly versus monthly payments, both great benefits to their members.

Today in Canada there are 572 credit unions with close to 1,800 locations serving more than 4.6 million people. They manage assets in excess of \$74 billion. Including the caisses populaires in Quebec, one in three Canadians is a credit union member.

I extend congratulations to all credit unions, a vital component of Canada's economic and social life.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during this year's election campaign the Prime Minister told Canadians that the Conservative Party was wrong when we said we could have both increased spending on priority areas and lower taxes. The Prime Minister said:

Stephen Harper says he can do it all, he says he can protect health care, increase transfers to the provinces, he can eliminate debt, he can cut taxes. I'll tell you something, his numbers don't add up. They're not even close.

Now we know that the surplus has rolled in at \$9.1 billion rather than the \$1.9 billion that the Minister of Finance forecast. So much for Liberal math. How ironic that only four months after the Minister of Finance said there is no room for tax cuts, now he is proposing them.

We could not agree more. The OECD says Canada's tax burden remains the heaviest in NAFTA. It is time to cut taxes. We were right all along.

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[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today we are celebrating International Literacy Day. Knowing how to read and write is essential for life in today's society, since illiteracy can lead to exclusion.

One million people in Quebec have limited literacy skills. Nearly 415,000 people 65 or older have less than a grade nine education. Limited literacy skills can result in a lower quality of life for seniors and increased health risks.

Illiteracy also affects young people in Canada. Almost 11% of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 experience great difficulty reading.

That said, thousands of people are trying to improve their situation. We congratulate them and want them to know how proud we are of them.

I invite you all to contribute to literacy by giving someone a book. Happy reading.

*Oral Questions**[English]***LITERACY**

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across Canada there are people who struggle to function every day. Their disability is invisible and affects everything they do, but it is curable. Canadians who lack general literacy skills struggle every day, not only to hide their problem but also to seek a cure.

On Literacy Action Day, we pause and consider what it would be like not to be able to read. This year I was assisted in that with a wonderful visit from Carmen, Debbie, Tara and Carey.

We are reminded of our obligation to help others by giving them the gift of literacy. We know that literacy has positive impacts on health, income, equality and self-esteem.

Every year I meet with people who have learned to read late in their lives. Although literacy comes late for them, they all say they do not regret stepping forward and asking for help.

I encourage those in need to ask for help and those who can to offer it. Let us make Canada a better place.

* * *

• (1415)

HUNGARY

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Saturday, October 23 will mark the 48th anniversary of the start of the Hungarian revolution.

The revolution was ignited when a student-led demonstration against Soviet communism was met with gunfire. The revolution was crushed by Soviet tanks. There were 25,000 freedom fighters killed and 100,000 wounded. A reign of terror was to follow.

Two hundred thousand Hungarians fled Hungary with nearly 40,000 being granted refuge in Canada. The then minister of immigration, Jack Pickersgill, went to extraordinary lengths to expedite the movement of Hungarian refugees to Canada.

On behalf of my family and the nearly 40,000 refugees, I want to thank the Canadian people, the former St. Laurent government and Jack Pickersgill for the compassion, concern and safe haven they offered us in this wonderful country.

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*[Translation]***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in this Citizenship Week, I would like to demonstrate the kind of hardship possible under the immigration system.

Take for example the sad case of the Vega family. One such case is already one too many.

The Vega family is from Colombia. Mr. Vega is a university professor who actively championed human rights. The price for that was torture, and he had to flee Colombia with his family. Returning to his native country would put his entire family at risk of death.

Unfortunately, Immigration Canada denied their application, condemning them to the worst fate possible. They sought refuge in a sanctuary. But that is an extreme last resort. An appeal division was announced two years ago, but it has yet to be put in place. It could have dealt with the Vega's situation.

I urge the entire House to find quick and efficient solutions to help those who need our help today, and right away.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD*[English]***SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in February of this year the Prime Minister went on national television to tell all Canadians that he was mad as hell, that he was out of the loop and that he knew nothing about the conduct of the sponsorship program. Now we know his office made phone calls to Gagliano. We know it resulted in reversing decisions and securing hundreds of thousands of dollars in sponsorship money for his fundraisers and his associates.

How long has the Prime Minister known that these calls were made by his office?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when one hears the unwarranted accusations, the innuendo from the other side, it is clear why it is preferable for Canadians and for the truth to come out that we rely upon the Gomery commission. It will get at the truth of this entire matter. It is why Canadians and the government are going to rely on it. It is clear that the opposition is not interested in the facts. It is interested in unfounded accusations, and that is not going to wash.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is worried about accusations and innuendo, he has only himself to blame. The easy solution would be to stand in his place and answer simple, straightforward questions.

I will ask the question again. In February the Prime Minister said that he knew nothing about the sponsorship program and that his office was not involved. Now we find out that it was. Did he know that at the time? How long has he known that his office was making calls to secure hundreds of thousands of dollars of sponsorship money for his bagmen and their associates?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very evident why the Leader of the Opposition and his party are trying to subvert the Gomery commission. It is very clear why they do not want the Gomery commission to succeed. It is because the Gomery commission is going to get at the truth and it is going to demonstrate that the innuendo and the unwarranted accusations coming from the opposition have no basis in fact.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is concerned about the truth, he just has to tell it and it will set us all free.

Oral Questions

The Prime Minister cannot expect to come to the House of Commons and refuse to answer questions on the grounds it could incriminate him in another inquiry. He cannot take the fifth amendment on the floor of the Canadian Parliament.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

• (1420)

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the Leader of the Opposition appreciates help and advice in the course of asking his question but perhaps we could have a little order so we could hear what the question is without all that advice and help. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when did the Prime Minister learn that his office had been placing calls to the office of Alfonso Gagliano to secure funding for his friends and fundraisers?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the United States constitution today, Belgium yesterday. Let me tell the Leader of the Opposition that this is the Canadian House of Commons not the United Nations General Assembly.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the Canadian Constitution it is the Prime Minister who is supposed to be accountable on the floor of the House of Commons. I have witnessed Mr. Trudeau, I have watched Mr. Mulroney, I have stood face to face with Mr. Chrétien when their integrity was on the line and watched them answer questions in tough situations.

When did the Prime Minister know his office was making calls to Gagliano to get sponsorship money for his friends?

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We will have no booing in the House. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services has the floor.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I call attention to the headline in today's *Ottawa Citizen* that says, "Tories 'wrong' about PM, phone call". Further, three days ago the deputy leader of the Conservative Party was wrong on Francis Fox. Two days ago the leader of the Conservative Party was wrong on the Prime Minister making phone calls. Yesterday, the deputy leader of the Conservative Party was wrong when he said that only Liberals knew about the sponsorship program.

It is pretty clear that on that side of the House the leader of that party is becoming Mr. Wrong and the deputy leader is Mr. Wrong Again.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this member is doing nothing but stonewalling on the truth and it is totally unacceptable.

The Prime Minister said in February:

Anyone who knows anything that could help shed light in this area—in the government, in the caucus or anywhere in the country, corporations or in the Liberal Party—should come forward and not wait to be compelled to do so...

Apparently the Prime Minister means this applies to anybody but himself. Will the Prime Minister come forward and tell us when he knew the truth about these telephone calls?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, it is important to recognize the importance of an independent judicial inquiry. Furthermore, I draw the hon. member's attention to an editorial in today's *Halifax Chronicle Herald* that says:

It's only natural for [the Leader of the Opposition] to make political hay out of the scandal...[the leader] should show patience in letting the inquiry do its probe. After all, the commission is paying the Conservatives and Bloc Quebecois a combined \$775,000 for them to fulfil their observer status at the hearings.

The hon. member should listen to the good people at the *Halifax Chronicle Herald* and let Justice Gomery do his work.

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• (1425)

[*Translation*]

PETRO-CANADA

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, despite the representations made by Desjardins to be involved in the sale of Petro-Canada shares, the Quebec firm was ignored. Yesterday, the Prime Minister tried to explain this oversight—as he calls it—by saying that it was outside consultants who told the Department of Finance which firms should be retained for that operation.

Are we to conclude that it is on the basis of the recommendations of these outside consultants that the Department of Finance ignored Quebec's most important financial institution? Who had the last word in the selection of the firms: the Minister of Finance or the so-called experts?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the sale of Petro-Canada's assets was a tremendous success. Unfortunately, however, some applicants could not be retained.

[*English*]

However, I am very pleased to say that we had a very strong process. It was reviewed independently by people of great stature in this country, including a former auditor general and a former governor of the Bank of Canada. The process yielded one of the most successful transactions in Canadian history.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, history will conclude that Quebec's most important financial institution was overlooked in the single most successful transaction ever to take place in the western world.

We are told about "objective" criteria. However, the president of Valeurs Mobilières Desjardins learned from a finance department official that only the first three firms were retained on the basis of so-called objective criteria. The other 19 firms were selected after a turn was taken around the table, where names being suggested.

We want to know what these criteria were and, particularly, which procedure is more objective: to go around the table starting from the left or the right?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this transaction was conducted by the most impeccable standards, based upon quality of expertise and the strongest possible external advice. Not every worthy candidate could be included in the syndicate.

However, I am very pleased to say that the Banque Nationale located in Quebec was one of those chosen, as was Casgrain, located in Quebec. I would point out to the hon. gentleman that not every province had a representative on the team, including five Canadian—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the president of Desjardins Securities is totally frustrated by the unfair exclusion of Desjardins from the Petro-Canada share offering. I might add that all Quebeckers are indignant at the way the Minister of Finance and his department have acted.

After making apologies, did the Prime Minister look into who was responsible for excluding Desjardins from the Petro-Canada share offering? Who was it that deprived Desjardins of this business opportunity? Who deprived thousands of Quebeckers of this opportunity?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I dearly wish that every strong Canadian investment banker and every strong Canadian financial institution could have been included in the transaction. Unfortunately, that was simply not possible.

It is important in these things to try to make decisions on the very best basis that is humanly possible. We sought external advice. We acted upon that advice in the best interests of Canadians. I think the fact that we achieved the single most successful transaction of its kind in Canadian history is proof that it went rather well.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the Bank of Montreal, the Royal Bank or CIBC had been excluded from this important transaction, the Minister of Finance would have been the first to denounce it as the scandal of the decade, and he would have advised his staff to redo their work.

Frankly, how can the Minister of Finance talk about this as the greatest success of the decade, when the largest financial institution in Quebec was excluded? Either he has no clue what is going on, or that was what he wanted, to exclude Desjardins.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we tried very hard to be inclusive of all the regions of the country and we succeeded in that. There were firms from western Canada, there were firms from Ontario, there were firms from Atlantic Canada, and indeed there were two very strong and successful firms from the province of Quebec that made a very large contribution to the success of the most important transaction of its kind in Canadian history.

● (1430)

INDUSTRY

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the New Democrats have been sounding the alarm about the fact that the Prime Minister appears to have no plan to deal with the foreign takeover of our resources. Today we learned that the proposed takeover of Noranda is only the start.

There is not very much cause for comfort looking at the record. There have been 11,000 business takeovers in the last number of years under Investment Canada processes. None of them have been rejected. There appears to be no plan.

My question for the Prime Minister is, when will we see a plan having to do with the foreign takeover of our natural resources?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member would check the act, he would find that there is an investment threshold of \$237 million in gross assets under which those applications are not reviewed, but they are required to apply.

When it is said that there has been complete approval of those transactions, they simply were not reviewed. The other 13% were reviewed and when approved, were approved with strict undertakings.

Mr. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am sure Canadians right across the land are going to take an enormous amount of comfort in that answer when they see their resources being bought out from underneath them. I find it unacceptable, if I can offer this opinion through the question, that the Prime Minister is not standing up and telling us what his plan is to deal with our resource industries being bought up by foreign governments and foreign investors.

Where is the plan? Where is the action? How can Canadian communities and workers know that they are going to be protected in this context?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have the Investment Canada Act. I understand the parliamentary committee on industry is going to have some discussion and review of this issue. I think it is something that needs some very careful thought.

I can say that there is a feeding frenzy going on out there, but there is nothing to eat. There is no transaction yet, so it is a good time for people to take stock of what the long term consequences of these decisions will be.

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SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister continues to hide behind the public works minister and the Gomery commission. There is nothing to prevent him from answering questions in the House.

We know the former public works minister, Mr. Gagliano, sanitized his files to hide information. It is clear the Prime Minister is not interested in overturning stones on the sponsorship scandal. He is interested only in stonewalling.

Oral Questions

I ask the Prime Minister again, when was he aware his office was calling Alfonso Gagliano to secure sponsorship money for Liberal fundraisers?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We would not want to waste time in question period. The hon. Minister of Public Works and Government Services has the floor, and if we do not get an answer and there is a long delay, it means we are going to lose another question. No one wants that.

Hon. Scott Brison: I think, Mr. Speaker, they are referring to—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I point out we are wasting time. The hon. Minister of Public Works has the floor. I would urge order.

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I think what they were referring to is our rock hard commitment to respecting the independence of a judicial inquiry in this party and in this government.

We have a judicial inquiry underway. It is important that we respect the independence of that inquiry, let it conduct its work; and in fact, not only to respect the independence, but to prevent the hon. members opposite from, on a daily basis, making grievous errors that damage the reputation of all members of the House.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): That is more irrelevant drivel, Mr. Speaker.

Last March the former minister of public works said in the House, “The Prime Minister has been very clear that he is willing to answer any other questions relevant to this matter”. That is from the former minister. In fact the Prime Minister has been far from clear and refuses to answer questions.

Therefore, again I ask the Prime Minister a very simple question. When was the Prime Minister's office aware that he was calling Alfonso Gagliano to secure sponsorship money for Liberal friendly fundraisers?

• (1435)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again it is critically important that the hon. members opposite, and in fact all members of the House, recognize the importance of the independence of a judicial inquiry.

Perhaps it is that party's aversion to our independent judiciary that causes a bias for them respecting the independence of a judicial inquiry. We respect the independence of our judiciary because we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I am quite glad that we have a judiciary that is there to interpret it.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here are the facts. Canadians found out via the Auditor General that deep and pervasive mismanagement of hundreds of millions of dollars had taken place in the sponsorship program. The Liberal Prime Minister was called to explain. He said on national TV that he knew nothing and was kept out of the loop, but now he does not deny that his own personal assistants lobbied the program to direct a wad of cash to the Prime Minister's personal bagman.

Therefore the question must be answered. When did the Prime Minister know about the calls from his office?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, again, we have to respect the independence of a judicial inquiry. I believe the hon. member is a lawyer and ought to recognize the importance of that.

Beyond that, I want to talk about members of Parliament who have phoned the public works minister's office on sponsorship programs. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands in fact made phone calls to the office. We have letters from the former member for Saint John, who was not a Liberal, and from the member for South Shore to the minister. In fact, the member for Edmonton—Strathcona received funding for projects in his riding, as did the member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill has the floor now. We will want to hear the question. We will have a little order, please.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I want to put on the record that I categorically knew nothing about the sponsorship program, nor did I receive any money from it. Never.

This member knows that Parliament is the highest tribunal in the land. Here we have a Prime Minister who promised full disclosure about a terrible scandal in his own government. He has been asked for a simple explanation as to why his own office was involved and he stonewalls. He will not answer the highest tribunal in the land.

Let him stand in his place and give Canadians the answer that he promised them.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Once again, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member was not aware as a member of Parliament, then I expect her constituents will probably be quite upset with her because in fact, many members around the House from all parties were aware of the program. It was a federal program and part of our jobs as members of Parliament is to be aware of these programs, to assist our constituents in their ability to receive funding.

In my riding, when I was part of the former Progressive Conservative Party which no longer exists, we were able to obtain funding for the pumpkin festival in Windsor and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Gomery commission has brought to light the existence of a memo dating back to June 1999 from Michael Calcott, the former director general of Communications at the Treasury Board Secretariat. Even then he was complaining about mismanagement and waste in the sponsorship program, and saying that it could not go on that way. Yet the office of the present Prime Minister intervened directly.

How does the Prime Minister explain that he did not have access to this important information as either the Minister of Finance or the vice-president of the Treasury Board? That is unthinkable.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, not only did the Prime Minister set up the Justice Gomery commission to do its work, he cancelled the sponsorship program and then encouraged all departments and ministers to cooperate fully.

We are doing the right thing in this government by cooperating fully and by providing information broadly, in fact, cabinet documents back to 1994, which is a remarkable step. We are doing the right thing because we are not afraid of receiving Justice Gomery's report and the truth.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims not to have been in the loop. He was Minister of Finance, yet he knew nothing. He was vice-president of the Treasury Board, yet he knew nothing. He is the member for LaSalle—Émard, and his executive assistant was phoning Gagliano's office, yet he knew nothing. I wonder if perhaps he did not even know that he knew Serge Savard. We ought to ask the Minister of Social Development, because he does know Serge Savard.

In a more serious vein, I am asking the Prime Minister whether he is in fact giving us the right answers. Did he know about the sponsorship program?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said repeatedly that he was aware of the sponsorship program, as were all members of Parliament in this House aware of the sponsorship program.

The Prime Minister was not aware of any alleged malfeasance. When he became aware of that alleged malfeasance as a result of the Auditor General's report, he acted swiftly to end the sponsorship program and to ask Justice Gomery to get to the bottom of this issue. That is why we are cooperating with Justice Gomery. We are looking forward to his report. We would urge all members of Parliament to respect the independence of that judicial inquiry.

*[Translation]***NORANDA INC.**

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Noranda Inc. may soon be purchased by Chinese interests, and this sale is apparently the first of a long list of acquisitions we can expect, according to a Chinese minister.

Since a transaction of this size requires government approval, does the Minister of Industry intend to make the company's respect for human rights one of his criteria for deciding about the authorization?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I understand that the parliamentary committee on industry will be discussing the Investment Canada Act. I am sure it will give some advice and we will give that advice serious consideration.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in view of the fact that the minister's decision may have serious economic consequences for a number of regions of Quebec, if the Standing Committee on Industry makes its recommendation promptly, will the minister promise to make his decision known as quickly as possible?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will respond in a very timely manner to any advice we get from a parliamentary committee.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this man is allegedly the Prime Minister of Canada, but he will not answer questions that go to the integrity of his government. What is the matter with that?

The truth is the Prime Minister made a commitment last spring to ensure that he would get to the bottom of this. He made a commitment to answer questions regarding his own integrity and the integrity of his government.

When did he know that his own office was calling the office of Alfonso Gagliano to ensure it got sponsorship money for Liberal fundraisers?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, individuals over there actually called for a judicial inquiry. That is what the Prime Minister ensured happened, a full judicial inquiry.

I cannot understand why they would actually attack the independence of a judicial inquiry. For goodness sake, what will they be questioning next, Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms? I guess they have already done that. Sorry.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said he wanted to clean up government. Now he is part of the problem. This Prime Minister is showing contempt for Canadians when he will not stand up and answer questions about his involvement in this whole affair.

My question once again is, when did he know that his office was involved in calling Alfonso Gagliano's office to get sponsorship money for Liberal fundraisers?

•(1445)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister cancelled the sponsorship program and appointed Justice Gomery to do his work.

We have a new ethics commissioner who is reporting directly to Parliament and appending amendments to the Financial Administration Act. Whistleblower protection legislation has been introduced in this Parliament. A new ethics and integrity package in my department has been rated a best practice model by the Conference Board of Canada for both the public and private sector.

We are on the job and doing the right thing in defending the ethics and integrity of government over here in this government.

[Translation]

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. We are not asking questions about the Gomery commission but about the Prime Minister's integrity. We will not accept the Prime Minister's refusal to answer our questions.

When did the Prime Minister learn that his office had made calls to obtain a grant for his financial backer?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been able to enumerate at least three errors that the hon. members have made in a three day period in this House by commenting on the testimony at Justice Gomery's commission.

In fact, it is not just to respect the independence of Justice Gomery, but also to protect them against themselves over there because they are really damaging their own credibility significantly by commenting on a day to day and play by play basis on testimony today that could be contradicted by testimony next week. Let us wait for the full report and have the truth.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what the Prime Minister said earlier this year:

—it is important that as Prime Minister I be very clear about what I know and what I did not know. It's very important for public confidence that as Prime Minister I be clear about the degree of my knowledge of this matter.

We agree. That is why we will not be stonewalled. We want to know, when did this Prime Minister learn that his office made calls to obtain sponsorship funds for his million dollar fundraiser? When did he know?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to the hon. member's attention a report today, an independent analysis, that Canada and our government received a score of 8.5 out of 10 in terms of an ethics index. It remains well ahead of the United States which, incidentally, was tied with Belgium at 17th.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

EDUCATION

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition is having fun balkanizing, or even waffling over the country's future, I have a real question for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

The Canada-Ontario agreement on education for language minorities has expired. This agreement is vital to the accessibility of post-secondary education in French in Ontario.

When will the Minister of Canadian Heritage announce a new agreement, which is so important for such institutions as the Cité collégiale, the Collège d'Alfred and the Collège Boréal?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and I commend him on his determination in encouraging and defending minority communities.

We have allocated \$1.2 billion for minority language teaching or learning a second language. We are currently in negotiations with the provinces. They will wrap up on March 31, 2005. I must say that these negotiations with the provinces have been very productive and we have had excellent cooperation, as we have had for the past 30 years.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in mid-July the Great Lakes provincial and state governments released proposed agreements on diversion of Great Lakes waters. Under the agreement, these states will be able to unilaterally divert water from the Great Lakes without any veto from Canadians.

These agreements override treaty arrangements between Canada and the United States that go back 100 years. The legal framework between our countries make it absolutely clear that it is the federal government's responsibility to control the flow of water in the Great Lakes basin.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Will he today, to this House, declare the government's opposition to these agreements and to the further diversion of water out of the Great Lakes basin?

•(1450)

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the proposed annex does not affect Canadian and U.S. obligations under the boundary waters treaty. It does not affect levels and flows of the Great Lakes.

We are assessing whether the proposed agreements can be implemented in a manner consistent with the treaty, in consultation with the U.S. government, Ontario and Quebec. The Council of Great Lakes Governors has said that it would welcome comments from the Government of Canada after the October 18 deadline.

*Oral Questions***SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

On the same day that Canada has slipped to historic lows on the government corruption index, we have learned that the sponsorship program involved weekly calls between the minister's office and Liberal connected ad firms.

Now it seems that the very evening Gagliano was stuffing his bags for Denmark his staff was stuffing the shredder with papers documenting political influence and the awarding of sponsorships.

The Prime Minister has already overseen two cabinet shuffles. What assurances can he give this House that ministers are not routinely shredding evidence of their political influence over contracts?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member pointed out, on that study we were actually an 8.5 out of 10 in terms of ethics, and beyond that we were well ahead of the United States which was tied with Belgium at 17.

Beyond that, on this very important question in terms of providing information as it ought to be provided, our department and our government has cooperated fully with the public accounts committee and with Justice Gomery. We have provided information responses commensurate with our legal authority and consistent with the laws of the land. In fact, we have provided over 10 million pages of documents of information, including cabinet confidences.

* * *

[Translation]

BROADCASTING

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, besides the two ministers, we learned today that Ruth Thorkelson, from the PMO, met with the chairman of the CRTC on the eve of the hearings concerning CHOI FM.

What was the Prime Minister's advisor doing at the office of the chairman of the CRTC?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what Ms. Thorkelson was doing was to ascertain transparency to have more—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Speaker, Ms. Thorkelson was talking with agency heads to ensure greater transparency in the appointment process.

That is why she met with him. They did not talk about any specific file.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, we know that Michel Decary, from Ms. Scherrer's office, also met with the chairman of the CRTC.

What explains this frantic shuffle between political authorities and the chairman of a so-called independent tribunal over this short period?

Hon. Liza Frulla (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Minister responsible for Status of Women, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we said last week, and repeated it yesterday: the CRTC is and will always be independent and it is one of the best systems of the sort in the world. France, Germany and Australia have modelled their systems on our broadcasting system and on the CRTC per se.

There is nothing wrong with administrators meeting with agency heads just to discuss their needs.

[English]

Ms. Bev Oda (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last spring important decisions were before the CRTC. During that same period the former minister of heritage, the former industry minister, the Clerk of the Privy Council and the Prime Minister's deputy chief of staff, Ruth Thorkelson, met with the chair of the CRTC. Liberal candidates then campaigned and made promises about CRTC decisions not yet taken.

Why were there so many meetings with the CRTC by ministers and senior officials if not to influence their outcome?

• (1455)

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House knows that the CRTC is an independent body. The government takes pride in ensuring that it operates independently. There are numerous times when senior officials meet with senior officials of these agencies to talk about broad policy issues.

I understand that was the purpose of those discussions, not to discuss any specific issue that was before the agency.

* * *

SOFTWOOD LUMBER

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe in supporting our softwood lumber industry, but rewarding Liberal friends is no way to do it.

The Prime Minister's deputy chief of staff, Ruth Thorkelson, got a \$15,000 contract from the trade department, the same department she was lobbying.

What is more, André Albinati left the trade minister's office to become an Earnscliffe lobbyist. Only a week later, \$800,000 followed him to the Prime Minister's favourite lobby firm.

Why are the Prime Minister's cronies making big bucks at the expense of our softwood lumber industry?

Hon. Jim Peterson (Minister of International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the softwood lumber industry is absolutely critical to the economic future of Canada, \$11 billion, and \$7 billion in sales to the United States. It affects 250,000 employees in 350 communities across Canada. We entered into an advocacy campaign that was industry led and I will continue to support that to my dying day.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the former Minister of the Environment has been loudly criticizing the Prime Minister's lack of leadership in the greenhouse gas reduction program and accusing some ministers of acting like lobbyists for the industry.

Faced with such serious accusations from the former environment minister, how can the Prime Minister expect us to believe him when he says he takes Canada's Kyoto commitment seriously?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I understand the frustration felt by the hon. member for Victoria, my predecessor in the environment portfolio. The fact is that we are facing enormous challenges in environmental issues and that is why the Government of Canada must change its working methods and develop new models with the Canadian people.

I can assure you that, from this perspective, the Minister of Natural Resources is green, the Minister of Finance is green, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services is green, and as for myself, I am a minister for a sustainable Canadian economy, and for success. That is what we ask of the Prime Minister of Canada and all Canadians.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, is the refusal of the Minister of the Environment to produce a plan and debate it explained by the fact that he is held hostage by his own colleagues, who are acting like industry lobbyists within cabinet? That is the fact.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is not the fact at all. The fact is that the Government of Canada intends to work hard, according to a solid plan of action. This plan will commit all members on this side of the House so that Canada may be a champion in the battle against the harmful effects of climate change and putting our country in the forefront of sustainable economies.

* * *

[English]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister promised, and his promises are recorded on tape, to give Newfoundland and Labrador 100% of the revenues from offshore development without any clawback. These revenues include all royalties, corporate income tax and revenues from the offshore revenue fund. To date, the provincial government has received nothing in writing.

Will the Minister of Natural Resources tell us why the government is dragging its feet on this deal? Why do we not have a deal yet?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, work is ongoing very vigorously. As late as last evening I was in a conversation with Minister Sullivan in Newfoundland, as I was earlier in the day yesterday with Minister Clarke in Nova Scotia. The work is being pursued very diligently by the two provinces as well as by the Government of Canada. We hope we will achieve a successful result.

● (1500)

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Natural Resources said that the Prime Minister gave him the job of working out the deal.

However, at the recent meeting of health care ministers, the Prime Minister promised the premier of Newfoundland that a deal would be delivered before October 26, six days from now.

Will the Prime Minister live up to his promise and deliver the deal, the whole deal and nothing but the deal, by October 26?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, both the Prime Minister and I indicated to Premier Williams and to Mr. Sullivan that we would pursue this matter with great diligence and that we wanted to see a conclusion by the 26th if at all possible. We continue to work toward that objective.

I must say that I have had nothing but goodwill from Minister Sullivan. I have had great cooperation from the Minister of Natural Resources and the Minister of Fisheries on this side of the House in pursuing a successful conclusion to this. I hope that we will all be able to celebrate a very happy result.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mrs. Carolyn Parrish (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

According to John Ibbitson of the *Globe and Mail*, a large body of officials at Foreign Affairs and CIDA are convinced that Canada is about to sacrifice its hard won reputation as an honest broker in the Middle East, a reputation established by Lester B. Pearson in the 1956 Suez crisis.

Is the cabinet considering a change in policy in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. Canada's longstanding Middle East policy is focused on the goal of peace, security and the well-being of Israelis, Palestinians and the other people of the region. It has been endorsed by successive governments over decades.

Canada has been a staunch friend and ally of Israel since 1948. We take Israel's security concerns very seriously. Our policy in the Middle East reflects our support and concerns, and remains unchanged. Canada's policy remains anchored in our support for international law and our desire to play a constructive role toward peace in the region.

*Privilege***HEALTH**

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past year a new strain of the bacterium *Clostridium difficile* has killed over 600 hospitalized Canadians in Quebec. Today's papers are filled with concerns. The government has known since July's *Canadian Medical Association Journal* that hospitalized patients on gastric acid inhibitors are at increased risk of contracting this superbug.

Why has Health Canada not warned Canadians about these dangerous risks?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Dr. David Butler-Jones, the chief public health officer of Canada, has spoken to the chief medical officer of Quebec, and the National Microbiology Laboratory in Winnipeg has been contributing to the examination of the most recent outbreak in Quebec.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has been monitoring the situation. On November 1 we will start surveillance in the 25 major teaching hospitals in the country on this very issue.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. John Furlong, Chief Executive Officer of the Vancouver organizing committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the recipients of the Governor General Awards in Commemoration of the Persons Case: Allison Brewer, Léa Cousineau, Huberte Gautreau, Rosemary Speirs, Bonnie Sherr Klein, Frances Wright and Chi Nguyen.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

• (1505)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the government House leader if he could advise all members of the House on the business for the rest of this week and next week. Could he also advise the House when we will see legislation, as promised by the Prime Minister, on MPs' salaries?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we will continue this afternoon with the debate on the Conservative opposition day motion.

On Friday we will debate a motion of reference before second reading of Bill C-10, the mental disorder legislation. We will then turn to a motion of reference before second reading of Bill C-12, the Quarantine Act amendments. We will then resume this debate commencing on Tuesday and follow it with second reading of Bill C-7, the parks reorganization, and Bill C-8, the public service human resources agency bill.

We would then turn to second reading of Bill C-14, the Tlico legislation. This will be followed by reference before second reading

of Bill C-13, the DNA bill, followed by Bill C-9, the Quebec regional development bill.

Next Thursday will be an allotted day.

On Monday, instead of a normal sitting of the House, there will be an address to both Houses by President Fox of Mexico. This will take place at 2:15 p.m.

With respect to my hon. friend's last question, that legislation will be coming forward in due course.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands arising out of question period.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the Prime Minister is hiding from the House, but during question period the Minister of Public Works stated that I personally called that office with respect to the sponsorship program.

I want to state, first, that is absolutely false. It is not true. I believe the member is intentionally misleading the House. I was not even aware of the sponsorship program until we learned about the money being shovelled to Liberal friends. The only thing I have ever done is write letters to various ministers asking that an application be given fair consideration based on its own merits.

For the minister to rise in the House and tarnish my reputation, intentionally misleading the House, is absolutely wrong.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on December 28, 2000, the hon. member or a member of his staff called the office of the Minister of Public Works to inquire about the sponsorship program. If the hon. member was not aware of the sponsorship program, I guess at least he had a good staff member who was aware of the sponsorship program and was making a phone call on his behalf and on behalf of his constituents to obtain funding.

I am glad the member opposite is someone who understands the difference between a member of Parliament calling a minister's office and a staff member calling. If I was wrong when I said that the hon. member called and it was a member of his staff, I absolutely have no difficulty admitting that.

Beyond that, let us be perfectly clear that it was either he or a member of his staff who called about the sponsorship program on December 28, 2000. I appreciate his bringing to our attention the fact that his office was aware of the sponsorship program at that time.

The Speaker: I think perhaps hon. members will want to review what each other said but it sounds to me as though we have gone as far as we can go in the House on this matter. I am not sure there is a question of privilege.

Privilege

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think there is a more important issue here. We have just heard the minister talk about a call log and what was done with the call. Every member of Parliament may call or write a minister's office. It does not necessarily mean that it has to do with the sponsorship program. Yet it was inferred by the minister that the member called with regard to the sponsorship program.

I am looking at a note written by the minister to the member which says "it's on the call log, your office did call". He said that it was on December 28. The problem is that the member's staff was not working on December 28. Members of his staff do not work between Christmas and New Years. Something is wrong here.

Mr. Speaker, are telephone calls made by members of Parliament being recorded by ministers' offices? I want to know that. I think that is very important. Are our calls being monitored by ministers' offices?

How does this minister know? There were no staff in the office and the member says that he did not call. What was the call about? He is imputing that the member called for support from the sponsorship program but the member says that it is not true.

The minister should withdraw his remarks. He should also advise the House on whether members' calls are being taped.

• (1510)

Hon. Scott Brison: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Nixonian sort of allegation around tapes of members' calls. The fact is that all members' offices record ministers, members or staff who are calling. That is part of the process to ensure that every request gets responded to. That is simply good management.

I do not understand why the hon. member would not understand the importance of ministers' offices keeping track of requests from offices of members of Parliament. We maintain those logs to ensure we are responding on a thorough basis to all members of Parliament on all these issues, because we are responsible to all Canadians.

The Speaker: We are getting into a dispute about what transpired in this case. It seems to me that there already is a committee of the House that is looking into the sponsorship scandal. Questions on these kinds of phone calls are certainly ones that members of that committee could ask. They can ask for production of documents. The committee has the power to do all that. It seems to me this matter could be dealt with there rather than here on the floor of the House.

The fact that there may have been a call made on a particular day is clearly a matter in dispute. I would suggest that if members wish to pursue the matter they pursue it in committee rather than have statements on this matter here in the House. We have reached the position where there is some disagreement and we are not going to resolve it by cross-examining one another here. The committee has the power to do that. I suggest that if members wish to pursue it, including the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, they go to the public accounts committee which is dealing with this issue.

An hon. member: They do not give any documents.

The Speaker: The hon. member said that it does not give any documents. The committee has the power to send for documents, persons and papers. It can command the presentation of these materials. There will be no problem with that. That is where I believe the hon. member should now go.

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, the member has referred to a call log. He is impugning my reputation as a parliamentarian. I would ask that the call log be tabled in the House.

The Speaker: I have suggested that the hon. member take the matter up in committee, which is where the call log could be produced if the committee orders it to be produced. I believe that is where this matter should go.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe the House would appreciate your esteemed judgment on whether it was a serious conflict of interest and a major breach for the Minister of Public Works and Government Services to be quoting a seriously compromised journalist in defence of the Prime Minister when that journalist, Anne Dawson, is married to someone on the Prime Minister's payroll. Is that not a serious conflict of interest and a major breach of ethics?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is referring to a headline in today's *Ottawa Citizen*, which he is free to read, and probably, I suspect, subscribes to. My experience with journalists is that journalists typically do not write the headlines. The fact is the headline said that the Tories were wrong about the Prime Minister and the calls.

The Speaker: I may have missed the point of the remarks made by the hon. member for Saskatoon—Wanuskewin. He seemed to be suggesting that perhaps the minister was in a conflict of interest for quoting somebody. I cannot imagine that. We all like to quote people with whom we agree, or sometimes with whom we disagree, for various reasons. Whether quoting somebody puts us in a conflict of interest I would have trouble imagining that. That normally has to do with business transactions and not who we quote. I suspect there is no conflict of interest here.

• (1515)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like your guidance on this. As you know, during question period I set the record straight on a matter involving the Minister of Public Works and Government Services. However, there is a deeper issue here which I would really appreciate your advice on, and that is the freedom of members of Parliament to do their work on behalf of constituents.

As it happens, in this case, I knew nothing about the program nor did I access the program. What bothers me is if I do access the program, then I am always vulnerable to a minister opposite standing up and making an accusation that I have accessed a program, or mentioned something to a minister or wrote a letter. Surely, we can all see how this can inhibit us working together for the good of Canadians.

Supply

I would be interested in any direction or advice you could give on how can we ensure that our dealings on behalf of constituents will remain on a basis that would allow freedom of congress between members of Parliaments and members of the cabinet and ministers. I do not know if you have considered this, Mr. Speaker, but it certainly is becoming a problem.

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill for raising the issue. I have not sat about considering it, I must admit. It seems to me that if a member contacts a minister's office and there is a note made, and we are hearing a lot today about the value of notes, then that becomes part of the public record and at some point will become public. Whether the minister chooses to make it public early, or after the records have become part of the public archives or some other date is another matter.

However, I thank the hon. member for expressing her concern. I am sure the members of the government will bear it in mind. However, obviously the tenor of questions makes for a different tenor in the answers and so we are in the midst of a disagreement over certain facts that bring out things that perhaps might not otherwise be brought forward. That is certainly true of the commission of inquiry as well, and I will leave it at that.

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to bring up a matter in support of the point just raised by the member. It is the privacy concerns of the constituent in question as well. It is not just the members of Parliament. They have a right to access this House and government programs and so on. It seems to me members have to represent their constituents. There are privacy concerns too. When government members bring forward these documents in the House, they could be violating the privacy rights of constituents by doing that, and I find that offensive.

I would like the Speaker to consider—

The Speaker: Of course I do, but I point out that I do not think there have been any specific cases of the constituents mentioned. What the minister mentioned, or what is being complained of, is the fact that calls were made in support of something, not the fact that constituent X or constituent Y received something. I think the minister referred to some pumpkin group in his constituency that received funding. He is free to do that, if he wishes, in respect of his constituent. He did so.

I do not think there have been any cases mentioned today that have involved a private arrangement for some constituent, such as an immigration case or something like that, which might possibly constitute problems under the Access to Information Act or the Privacy Act or whatever it may be. I do bear it in mind, but I do not think I heard anything today that would create that problem.

As the hon. member for Prince Albert knows, on the floor of the House members do have considerable freedom in their ability to discuss matters. In fact there is freedom of speech in this House, but all hon. members are urged to exercise judicious restraint in respect of their use of language.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1520)

[*Translation*]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before speaking on the motion before the House, I would like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, who rose before question period and clearly set out the Bloc's position on this issue.

I also want to commend the hon. member for Saint-Jean on the thoroughness and determination he has shown on this issue. I know things have been tough these last few weeks for our military, especially with what happened with our submarines and the fire on board the *Chicoutimi*. Once again, congratulations to both my colleagues.

I am very pleased to have the opportunity today to speak to this motion for a number of reasons. First, we have in my region a major military base, CFB Bagotville, where the CF-18 fighter jets are based. We also have two reserve regiments, that is a marine regiment and the Régiment du Saguenay. As a paratrooper in the latter, I have had the opportunity to take part in many exercises.

So, I think I can address this issue with some authority. I am against the motion before us today, and I want to tell the House why.

I do not think that injecting money is the solution to the problems currently facing national defence. There are many reasons, including outdated equipment. I had the opportunity to see for myself how out of date the equipment was, definitely enough to cause serious problems and, in some cases, to jeopardize the safety of troops abroad.

We have seen accidents happen in the past. Think, for instance, of what happened with the *Iltis* in Afghanistan. I have told this story a few times to demonstrate the gap between modern equipment and what is being used.

I remember that PRC-25s were used back in 1995. The PRC-25 is a 35-pound radio you carry on your back with a range of barely 13 km. When the radio did not work, we had to grab a cell phone and call the person at the other end and ask them to either hook up the radio or change the batteries. These are aberrations, and there are many more.

We can hold this up to ridicule, or at least regard it as a metaphor. The fact remains that, on a daily basis, this outdated equipment is jeopardizing the safety of troops and people abroad.

What we need today is a debate to guide National Defence to know what our position will be in the future, say, the next time we have to deploy forces. We know that we our society is a pacifist one. We must therefore conduct, today, an in-depth review of the policy of National Defence. We could patch up the problem by throwing money at it, but that would be just a bandaid solution.

To review this role today would help differentiate our forces not only from the American forces, but also from other coalition or foreign forces. We would be creating a niche, and that is important. It would help in the development of leadership that reflects who we are, Quebecers and Canadians, to ensure we have an army or an institution to convey our concerns.

It is also important to understand that, in recent years, we have done some good deeds. We participated in several UN peacekeeping missions. I must salute the courage of these troops who were deployed abroad, gave a lot to the international community and protected people facing death, violence or other threats.

Today, it is the safety of these troops that is threatened by certain problems. Once again, the solution is not money, but a comprehensive debate.

The same goes for the missile defence shield. There is much talk about this issue. The Bloc Québécois managed to ask, with other opposition parties, for a vote in the House. We want to discuss this because it is a real concern.

• (1525)

It is such a concern that, in the case of the war in Iraq, 77% of Quebecers were against our involvement. The Bloc Québécois worked very hard to get this government to vote here in the House. We won. Today, Quebecers are very proud that they were not caught in the mess that the Americans are in.

I believe that with an extensive debate on changes in the Canadian army, we will be able to work on the priorities and the development of niches. Small and medium businesses must position themselves to gain a place in the market, to have leadership.

Why could we not do this with an institution such as national defence? Why not direct our next actions? Because our actions must change. After September 11, the map of the world changed completely. We must review our position, in light of recent events, in order to have leadership, but also, I believe, to keep the peaceful values that sustain us, that reflect the Quebec and Canadian society.

I would like to invite all parliamentarians to push this recommendation for a change and a thorough review of national defence so that, together, we can plan its directions.

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that it is the member's first speech in the House of Commons. It was great to hear him put forward his point of view in this important debate concerning the future of Canada's military.

I do not believe I heard him address the issue about Canada's combat capability. What we are discussing and what we would like to find throughout the debate today is where each party stands when it comes to the commitment to Canada's military.

I heard him talk about the disastrous state of some of our equipment. I would certainly agree with him, although I do recall that earlier in the debate, before question period, that one of our Liberal colleagues accused some of us in the opposition of saying that all our equipment was junk. I certainly want to be on the record, as I have been in the past for the Conservative Party, that it is not the case.

Supply

We know, for example, that we do have some state of the art equipment, but there is not enough of it. He was quick to point out that we had state of the art LAV III light armoured vehicles that were well respected and appreciated by our armoured troops, especially when they were overseas in dangerous situations. That is not to say that, because we have the vehicles, we do not need helicopters to replace the Sea Kings or submarines that will operate properly without catching fire or springing leaks.

I would ask the hon. member this question, as I have tried to ask of the New Democratic Party. Exactly what is the Bloc Québécois commitment when it comes to adequate funding for Canada's military? It is very clear we took a lot of heat in the election campaign when we said unequivocally that if we were elected as the government on June 28, we would put an immediate infusion of \$1.2 billion into Canada's military and we would move rapidly toward the NATO average in terms of a percentage of GDP.

We were very clear on that in the Conservative Party, but it is very difficult to get that type of detail from the other three parties. When I asked that question of New Democratic Party members, they said that they wanted to go through a review process, that they were all in support of having a defence and a foreign affairs review to see where the money should be spent and that the money needed to be spent wisely.

My fear, and in the past year when I served as our party's defence critic I said it repeatedly, is that I did not want to see the need for a defence review to become the excuse for doing nothing for our men and women in the military. There are very real needs there and there are things that we will have to do regardless of the outcome of the review.

I would like to know very clearly where the Bloc Québécois stands on this issue and what it means when it says that it will make a commitment to preserve and restore the integrity of the Canadian military.

• (1530)

[Translation]

Mr. Sébastien Gagnon: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. I would point out that this is my second mandate here, and this is not my maiden speech.

I have taken part in exercises on numerous occasions, and have therefore been able to see the shortcomings for myself. Before talking dollars and cents, however, I need to know where the military is headed. At the moment band-aids are being used to fix fractures.

What is needed is an orientation, a vision, the vision of Quebecers and of Canadians with respect to the army.

Remarks were made just now about equipment. Yes, it is true that there is some cutting edge technology. There has been some investment. We have seen increases to the defence budget. Perhaps the members beside us will say that they do not agree and that it is insufficient. What I am saying is that, before injecting any more money or taking any other steps, what is needed is an in depth review of our vision and our interventions and an examination of the fundamental role of the army in future. That is what must be asked.

Supply

For example, we can see how worn out our troops are now. I have friends who have already done three tours in Bosnia. They have been left absolutely drained as a result. Problems for society then develop, illnesses and the like. Before making any decisions and before injecting any funding or purchasing any new equipment with potentially fatal consequences for personnel, a thorough review is needed.

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):
Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

At this opportunity I am pleased to thank the good voters of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for allowing me the privilege to represent their interests in the 38th Parliament. I pledge faithfully to represent their interests to the best of my ability.

At this time, in recognition of the motion before us, I salute the women and men of CFB Petawawa, which is located in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke. I gratefully acknowledge the support they have given me since I was elected and most recently in the last election.

The message I received from the military electors in the last election was clear and short, "Keep fighting for us. We need you". I thank those who serve our country for their support. I will not let them down.

It was humbling for me for the troops to acknowledge that my campaign to ensure proper military equipment for our soldiers, that things like ballistic plates for their fragmentation protection vests and the right colour of camouflage uniforms were provided, was recognized. Spouses of soldiers called when they were first told of the equipment shortages. They were alarmed at the unnecessary dangers their loved ones were being placed in by not having the proper equipment to go into a combat zone. Afterward, they called me to let me know that the items had been scrounged up for roto zero Operation Athena.

Things just do not change. Canadians troops were sent to Haiti earlier this year and they were begging for the same equipment that would have been missing going to Afghanistan, things like ballistic plates and frag vests and even the proper boots. This is basic military equipment and it is outrageous that even basic equipment to outfit our soldiers is not available in sufficient quantities.

The rank and file of our military understand that if someone had not been prepared to stand up for them in Ottawa, Canadians would be mourning the loss of more than Lieutenant Chris Saunders, more than those who have already died in Afghanistan, and all the other soldiers who in the mind of the government have just become statistics.

As Canadians approach Remembrance Day, I find myself once again participating in a debate condemning the way the government treats the men and women who serve in our nation's armed forces. I say armed forces, but how long will I be able to continue to say armed forces? It is clear from the throne speech and the actions of the government that it is only a matter of time before the disarming of our nation's military will be complete.

If anything represents the democratic deficit that exists in Canada today, it has to be that this debate is even necessary. In debate after debate, with participation from all sides of the House, including the backbenchers of the Prime Minister's own party, and in committee report after committee report, along with every independent defence analysis, we have all been unanimous in recommending a stop to the destruction of the Canadian military.

So what is the problem? Let us be clear: the blame for this sad state of affairs rests solely in the Prime Minister's Office. This reference from a Canadian defence magazine sums up the situation clearly:

But in Canada, the centralization of power in the Prime Minister's Office and the almost complete lack of Parliamentary oversight of the operations, organization and administration of the Canadian Forces has relegated the Canadian Forces to the status of a prime ministerial instrument. In the...past the Prime Minister has selected important Canadian Forces missions without consultation with Parliament and apparently over the objections of the military. He has dominated the procurement process. This cannot continue.

I congratulate my leader, the member for Calgary Southwest, for the leadership role he played in amending the throne speech policy blueprint to include the priorities of Canadians. As a result of our amendment, the Prime Minister is to commit to a vote in the House of Commons before a decision is made on missile defence, something, as noted in the defence community, that has been refused previously.

• (1535)

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has also stated that ultimately cabinet will make the decision on missile defence, regardless of how the vote goes in the House of Commons.

Forcing the Prime Minister to send certain items to committees will now allow for at least an element of parliamentary oversight.

So for the thoughtful observers in the broader defence community and their fear that the democratic deficit has destroyed our military, they should know that things are starting to get better.

For years the government has sought to confuse the Canadian public in directing the debate over military spending by focusing on expensive military procurement projects. This always results in a discussion over whether or not there is any need at all.

The latest discussion is whether or not Canada should even have submarines. It was clear that the government was so desperate for any piece of equipment it figured that second-hand equipment was better than nothing. Was the military so stretched for money that it was forced to get what it could for free? Was there no other option?

So it goes with every piece of equipment: helicopters, tanks, jeeps and frigates. The list goes on and on. What is always lacking, once the government apologists in the media have their go, is what this systematic neglect does to the morale of the existing troops.

Soldiers are calling me up and asking me what kind of army does not use guns. The army has been suffering from ammunition shortages for years. Even soldiers who were in Afghanistan had not been given the opportunity to fire their weapons before going into theatre. In some cases, it has been several years since troops were allowed to practise on the range. It was inevitable that the government would solve the problem of not enough ammunition by taking away soldiers' guns.

Now the plan is a Canadian peace corps, whatever that means. Does the Prime Minister intend to send Canadian citizens on peacekeeping missions without combat training? The reason soldiers are sent on such missions is because of the instability in the theatre of operations and the potential for volatile situations to erupt.

Even in the role of peacekeeping, this government tarnishes our once proud reputation. In the most recent figures from the United Nations, Canada has sunk to 38th when it comes to contributions of military observers and civilian police and troops, behind such nations as Kenya, Pakistan, Ghana, Ethiopia and Nepal. Canada, as a member of NATO, ranks only above tiny Luxembourg in per capita defence expenditure and Luxembourg is at the top of the per capita contributor list for the United Nations regular budget.

The fact is that the government is failing Canadians when it comes to international peace and security. Military observers in Canada have this to say about the current state of affairs in our military, "The Canadian Armed Forces is collapsing—not might or could collapse, but is collapsing".

The problems with this navy's marine helicopters that dogged Jean Chrétien during his tenure as prime minister are only a sample of the problems facing today's military. Besides the \$3 billion needed to replace these essential pieces of hardware, billions more will be required over the next few years to replace transport aircraft, navy destroyers and army logistics vehicles, to list just a few. The estimated budgetary shortfall for equipment replacement for the period ending 2008 is approximately \$15 billion, and equipment replacement isn't the military's most pressing problem.

Even more critical is personnel. The men and women of the Canadian armed forces are being called upon to participate in too many missions, which not only causes fatigue and burnout but is seriously affecting training. New recruits do menial tasks at home while the people who should be training them are off on foreign missions. Too many back-to-back missions lead to marriage breakdowns and these pressures lead to suicides.

Is the defence of Canada worth fighting for? And the question now: is Canada worth fighting for? Every member of Parliament, if they believe as I do that Canada is an independent nation worth fighting for, will vote in favour of today's motion.

● (1540)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments and clearly, we have to invest in our military. Clearly, we have to strengthen its capabilities. Clearly, we have to redress issues that have taken place and give our military the personnel, the training and the equipment to do the job. There is no question about that for the reasons the member mentioned.

Supply

I want to take a look at the Conservative Party's platform. One of the reasons I left the party was that the party was putting out information that was factually incorrect and, quite frankly, not doable. The Conservative Party as part of its platform wanted to increase spending in the military from \$13.3 billion to \$33 billion. That is in the Conservative Party platform. The ultimate amount would be in 2010. In addition, that would take place against the backdrop of \$58 billion in new spending and \$41 billion in tax cuts.

I ask the member, how is the party going to square that circle, to increase spending on defence from \$13.3 billion to \$33 billion and have a global spending increase of \$58 billion, plus tax cuts of \$41 billion without running into a deficit?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the statements of the member across the way are completely false, but I will say what is true. Two years ago this month he stated:

The government has been neglecting defence and as a result there is an absolute crisis. The government has been told about this repeatedly. Its failure to give economic and moral support to our military is eroding not only our standard here at home but our stature abroad.

Again in 2003 he said:

For the last 10 years the government has underfunded and disrespected our military by not giving our people the tools to do the job. As the PC member mentioned, the helicopter is but one issue. We can go through manpower, equipment and training. Our people are wanting at every level. They have the desire and the will to do the job, but they do not have the tools. The Canadian public would be shocked to know that many of our service people are spending upward of 11 out of 12 months abroad, away from their families. Why? Because the government has gutted our military and our manpower is so low that it does not have the ability to put the people that we require into the field to do the job of our nation.

Again that month, he said:

For too long we have been living off the coattails of our allies on the international security concerns that we all share. The NATO secretary general mentioned two years ago that Canada must come up to the plate and contribute. That, sad to say, has fallen on deaf ears on the part of the government.

What happens when they cross the floor? Are they given lobotomies?

● (1545)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to tell the member that my frontal lobes work just fine.

I want to tell the member that I am very happy that the investment in manpower, training and equipment is happening right now. We have done a lot over the last nine months and more will come on board. She is right to the extent that we have to do more, and more is happening now, and we want to do more in the future.

The problem is that whatever we do has to be in the context of having a balanced budget. It would be absolutely irresponsible for us to go back to the days prior to 1993 when massive deficits were compounding a debt that was completely out of range. It was compromising our ability to spend on everything, including our military.

Supply

Again I ask the member, how does she square that circle? Her party was going to support over \$100 billion in extra spending while having a balanced budget. It just cannot be done.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I find it odd that I would be asked geometric questions when the government is dyslexic on the math, telling us that we were going to have a \$1.9 billion surplus when it turned out to be \$9.1 billion.

There is no reason to be depriving the people in our armed forces the equipment they need.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join the debate on our motion concerning the state of the government's defence policies.

My riding of Prince Edward—Hastings is adjacent to 8 Wing CFB Trenton, one of Canada's largest and busiest air force bases. Many military personnel and employees of the base reside in my riding. I compliment them on their fine work and on being a source of pride for the Quinte region.

Approximately 3,500 military and civilian personnel are employed by 8 Wing CFB Trenton. It is a key component of the local economy. It serves many functions for the Department of National Defence.

Most personnel and equipment used in peacekeeping efforts such as Bosnia and Kosovo pass through the air base. Search and rescue missions are provided by 8 Wing's Squadron 424 covering over one million square kilometres in central Canada. The equipment warehouse for the disaster assistance response team called DART is also maintained by 8 Wing CFB Trenton.

In my response to the throne speech, I referred to a visit by the Liberal chair of the Senate committee on defence, Mr. Colin Kenny, to CFB Trenton in June 2002. In his report he outlined the shocking neglect of the base by the Liberal government. He stated:

We came away with the impression that there is a shortage of personnel, a shortage of equipment, a shortage of spare parts and there are issues involved with (staff) retention that involve more than just salary.

The senator was told on that day that only half of 8 Wing Trenton's 20 aircraft were capable of flying due to a barrage of problems attributed primarily to underfunding. The aircraft technicians simply did not have the spare parts necessary to keep planes in the air.

In a follow-up interview, the senator from Rideau stated that not much had changed. He stated, "These problems are happening at all 15 bases we visited. It's not a question of a lazy base commander, they're all getting the short stick. There are shortages all over the place and not just for planes. Uniforms, ships, housing, training facilities are in dire need".

One year later in June 2003, the then defence minister came to Belleville for a Liberal fundraiser. At that time he dismissed any suggestion that his government had done a deplorable job of equipping our military, yet he readily admitted it in an interview with the Belleville *Intelligencer*. He said, "We had difficulties with buying spare parts and not having enough money to buy new equipment". This is just about as blatant a contradiction as honestly I have ever heard.

We can talk with anyone at Canada's largest transport base today and nothing has changed. Our military is still trying to make do with insufficient funding, obsolete equipment and a government that continually acts like an ostrich or passes the buck.

Despite its importance as a key air transportation location, the Canadian Press in February this year reported that the Canadian Forces faced a \$500 million shortfall and some air force personnel recommended closing CFB Trenton or other bases across the country within the next 10 years.

We can imagine how difficult it is to do an important military job when the person cannot be sure that he or she will have that job 5 or 10 years from now. Military positions are difficult enough without having to worry about job security.

I believe that CFB Trenton is the jewel in the crown of our air force bases across Canada. Under a Conservative government our valued military personnel, to whom we owe so much, would be treated with the respect and support they deserve and the motion before the House would do just that in its intention.

Underfunding for the military is an undisputed fact even among my hon. colleagues on the other side of the House. Yet the Prime Minister has the audacity to boast that he has fixed the crisis in defence. I would suggest that he talk with the fine folks at CFB Trenton and ask them personally whether the crisis is over. I have. Or for that matter, ask any of the thousands of people in my riding who live underneath the flight path of these dated military aircraft.

Last Saturday the Ottawa *Sun* reported that the government is looking to cut a further \$700 million from the \$13.2 billion budget. Yesterday the International Institute for Strategic Studies revealed Canada's funding of the military is near the bottom of 169 nations when it comes to spending as a percentage of GDP, trailing countries such as Croatia and Guinea. The list is embarrassing. This country and the government should be downright embarrassed that we spend only 1.2% of our GDP on the military.

● (1550)

There once was a time when Canada's military was capably supported. Proudly, a number of years ago we were a middle power which did not have to flex its might but could be counted on to carry its weight on the international scene. Canadians were proud of their role, like a Boy Scout's badge of honour. Yet as Chris Malette of the Belleville *Intelligencer* pointed out:

If you want our air force, navy and army to be the Boy Scouts, at least have the decency to give them an adequate pocket-knife.

Supply

We cannot complete peacekeeping missions if our helicopters cannot take off. We cannot live up to NATO commitments when our submarines have to be tugged into port, and of course not even with our own tug. We cannot transport troops, equipment or supplies without dependable, capable and safe air transportation.

Our C-130 Hercules, the backbone of our peacekeeping and disaster relief assistance programs, are up to 40 years old. Our men and women in the military deserve better. Particularly in light of the millions of dollars of taxpayers' money spent on Challenger jets so the Prime Minister and his brethren can crisscross our country, I say to myself, as do Canadians across this country, where are the government's priorities?

I would be remiss if I stood here and simply criticized the government without offering a few helpful suggestions.

Our defence critic, the member of Carleton—Mississippi Mills, a man of great military experience, has noted that national defence headquarters employs between 11,000 and 12,000 military and civilian personnel, which is equivalent in size to 14 infantry battalions, in a military that cannot afford the personnel to have 14 infantry battalions.

It is time that the government started treating our uniformed personnel as well as it treats the bureaucracy that supports them.

I would also suggest to the government that it update the defence policy which has remained stagnant since 1994. However, if the government remains true to the form that I saw in the House earlier today and since I have been here, I expect only more promises prior to the next election.

My colleagues and I have outlined reasons why we on this side of the House believe the military is in desperate need of greater funding. We do this because Canada does not live in a bubble. Robert Wright of the Canadian Association of Security and Intelligence Studies points out that Canada is still a terrorist target.

Osama bin Laden had publicly identified Canada as a country he believes his followers should attack. He ranked Canada as fifth out of seven countries, and every other country on that list has already been attacked. This is just not simply someone else's problem.

I am not an alarmist and I am not a fearmonger, but the terror threat is real. When the terror alert was raised, fighters were stationed at CFB Trenton so that they could reach our nuclear facility at Pickering within five to ten minutes, and Toronto and the Golden Horseshoe, a region of over 12 million people, shortly after that.

This is why I am committed to properly funding our military. It is not simply in the self-interests of Quinte's economy, employing 3,500 people or more, but more important so that our national security and our ability to contribute to the military and humanitarian efforts around the world is secured.

The government has a responsibility, a duty and an obligation to our military personnel. The military needs the money. It is as simple as that.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

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, I will be splitting my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

I think this debate on the government's commitment to the Canadian Forces is very relevant, and I am glad that the official opposition has put this motion before the House.

However, I have to tell the House that, although I find the terms of the motion itself reasonable, I have a lot of trouble with the preamble. There seems to be some inconsistencies between the preamble of the motion put forward by the official opposition and its position on the throne speech. I will refer to some parts of the throne speech which I will quote.

In today's world, effective international engagement is needed to advance national aspirations. Now that time and distance have lost their isolating effect, it is no longer possible to separate domestic and international policies. Canada's internationalism is a real advantage, but we must find new ways to express it if we are to effectively assert our interests and project our values in a changing world.

Just as Canada's domestic and international policies must work in concert, so too must our defence, diplomacy, development and trade efforts work in concert. This fall, the Government will release a comprehensive International Policy Statement that will reflect this integration. Parliamentarians and other Canadians will have the opportunity to debate its analyses and proposed directions.

Let me quote four more consecutive paragraphs from the throne speech. They read as follows:

Enhancing Canada's security means that we have to invest more in our military as part of defending ourselves at home, in North America and in the world. We have to earn our way in the world. But ours will never be the biggest military force, so it must be smart, strategic and focussed.

Canada's proud tradition as a leader in peacekeeping is being tested today by increasing demands in extremely dangerous and politically complicated situations, often involving failed and failing states. We have seen what extraordinary work Canadian men and women can do in places like Afghanistan, Bosnia and Haiti. We know that Canadians are among the best in the world in meeting the challenge of being soldiers to make the peace, diplomats to negotiate the peace and aid workers to nurture the peace.

That is why the Government regular forces will be increasing 5,000 troops and our reserves by 3,000 so that they may be better prepared and equipped to meet these challenges.

Here is the last paragraph:

As Darfur and other situations have shown, sometimes intervention is best achieved by regional forces attuned to their cultural and geographic conditions. In such cases, particularly in Africa, Canada intends to continue playing a role by training regional peacekeepers, to prepare them to conduct challenging security operations within the principles of international humanitarian law.

I wanted to remind members of the House of these quotes from the Speech from the Throne and also the fact that it was agreed to unanimously just last night. All members of the House supported what I just quoted. This is why I was trying to demonstrate that there is some incongruity in the preamble of the opposition motion, which is before us today. It is not the case for the text of the recommendation itself. This is why I am saying that the opposition could have been more consistent.

Supply

For the time that I have left, I will focus my remarks on what the government is doing to better equip our troops. The government firmly supports the armed forces members and is committed to ensuring that Canadian Forces remain a modern, multi-purpose and combat-capable force.

•(1600)

Despite insinuations to the contrary, major investments have been made in the military to ensure that Canadian Forces remain capable of protecting Canadians here and of promoting Canada's interests abroad.

More specifically, the government is committed to providing \$7 billion for new equipment, including fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft, mobile gun systems, marine helicopters and supply ships.

[English]

The government is providing and will continue to provide the necessary support to the Canadian Forces. We understand that key equipment purchases are required in order for the Canadian Forces to remain effective.

The government is ensuring that the Canadian Forces have the tools they need to do the job. For example, the mobile gun system will allow the army to become more deployable and mobile. It will be a key part of maintaining the army's direct fire capability while being more versatile and transportable than our Leopard tanks.

Once it comes into service, the MGS will operate as part of an eventually larger group of vehicles that will improve the army's air defence and direct fire capabilities. This direct fire system will be part of the army's move toward a modern and medium weight fleet.

These are not the only new vehicles for our army. Recently the government delivered G-Wagons directly to Afghanistan, an example of where rapid procurement delivered first rate equipment to help our troops in the field.

[Translation]

These examples clearly show the government's commitment to provide to our army with first class high tech equipment, which, for the most part, will be built here in Canada.

The government has also decided to go ahead with the acquisition of new joint supply ships. These multi-role support vessels will support our navy at sea, our forces deployed on the ground, and will also provide useful services in sealift operations. They will help our forces to continue to be effective in the future context of security.

As regards the air force, I already mentioned that the government is funding the purchase of new marine helicopters and fixed-wing search and rescue aircraft. The latter is a \$1.3 billion investment.

A large part of the funding has been allocated to other modernization programs in recent years, including the retrofitting of our CF-18 fighter aircraft and long range Aurora patrol aircraft, and the conversion of two Airbus aircraft into strategic tanker aircraft.

[English]

The government has also invested in technologies that will improve the Canadian Forces' intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. For example, the forces have been using unmanned aerial vehicles. Such vehicles have already made important contributions to our mission in Afghanistan. Experiments with UAVs were also recently conducted in the context of Arctic operations.

The government is also supporting enhancing the role of the Canadian Forces in domestic security. It is providing our military with the means to protect our critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks. After the events of September 2001 the government announced that it would double the size of JTF2 and create a joint nuclear, biological and chemical defence company. In addition, the Department of National Defence is leading the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear research and technology initiative, also known as CRTI.

Together with other government departments, industry and academia, members of defence are working on chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear issues, an area where defence has recognized expertise. Four mobile nuclear laboratories have been acquired and boast state of the art equipment to assist in the event of dirty bomb radiological attacks.

•(1605)

[Translation]

As I quoted from the throne speech, the government recently announced a plan to increase our regular forces by some 5,000 troops and our reserves by 3,000.

All this shows the government's will to ensure that our military, the soldiers who are part of the military forces, have the equipment that they need to do their job.

Notwithstanding the preamble of the official opposition motion, we have to look at the facts and the facts are just the opposite of what this preamble says. If we looked only at the actual content of the motion before us, I think we could come to an agreement.

[English]

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the Liberal member across the way from Ottawa—Vanier.

I want to address my comment and question on one particular issue that I have been raising consistently over the past year or so. I was the defence critic for the Conservative Party and lately, as a concerned member of Parliament, I have received literally dozens of petitions that encompass hundreds and thousands of names of concerned citizens. They are signing petitions on behalf of our young military families, in most cases young families that live on bases.

Those petitioners are Canadian citizens who are deeply concerned about the deterioration in the housing standard that is provided on bases. It is an epidemic. It is on bases all across Canada.

In particular, I wonder if the member has had the opportunity, as I have, to view some of the homes at Rockcliffe base right here in Ottawa. I would first ask, is it even in his riding? It might be, but if it is not, it certainly adjoins his own constituency. Is he aware of the deplorable state of some of the housing there? It is a fact that his government keeps raising the rents every year and it will go up another \$100 next month. What is he doing to ensure that those homes are improved to a satisfactory standard for those families to live in?

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, yes, I certainly am aware of the base. It is in the riding that I have the honour of representing in this House. I have had the occasion of visiting the base. In the past I have also had occasion to help, in some specific circumstances, resolve some of the difficulties that the people living there were going through.

I am in a bit of a difficult situation however because as associate minister of defence I am afraid that I am limited in terms of the interventions that I can engage in with respect to the military installations in the riding that I represent. I will not go further in terms of the Rockcliffe air base at this point.

I would like to add though that, in terms of salary, this government has acted in recent years to boost substantially the income levels of the people who were at the lower echelons in the military. Also, in the last budget this government introduced a measure whereby the income of anyone serving abroad in a mission would be tax free.

I had the occasion of being in the welcoming line when the last contingent of troops returned from Haiti. That is one of the features that they appreciated the most.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments of the hon. member opposite, particularly with regard to the mobile gun system, otherwise known as a Stryker. This is a system being brought in by this government to replace the Leopard tanks.

I find it disingenuous at best and a joke at worst to equate the Stryker with a main battle tank such as the Leopard. It was not all that long ago that I myself was in the Canadian Forces. I still talk with my friends in the forces and they are very upset with the loss of our heavy armoured capability.

Would the hon. member comment as to how he sees a Stryker mobile gun system, as the Liberals call it, being in any way an adequate replacement for a heavy tank unit?

• (1610)

Hon. Mauril Bélanger: Mr. Speaker, the capacity of the military has to be varied depending on the circumstances in which it is engaged. The military had long requested a capacity that is offered by the mobile gun system. We have followed its advice based on assessments that it conducted and by all accounts the army is welcoming that greatly. That is a capacity that it wants and a capacity that it needs.

We recognize that it is not a heavy armoured capacity, but not having that medium weight capacity was detrimental to the ability of our forces to deploy rapidly.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as this is my maiden

Supply

speech in this Parliament, I first want to thank very much the people in my riding of Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca for giving me the honour of representing them again. It is a profound honour to be in the House. Very few Canadians have that chance and I am profoundly grateful for those who have given me the chance to do this once again.

In my riding is the Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt. Both the civilian and regular force personnel who work there and their families are a significant part of my riding. Again, particularly in this post, I commit to them to work hard for them, to fight for them and to get them the things they need so they can continue to perform the extraordinary duties for our country at home and abroad. I give them an enormous thanks and gratitude for what they have done, are doing and continue to do for our nation. We are in deep gratitude to all of them.

Let me begin by talking about the motion from the official opposition. The body of the motion is something where there will not be much disagreement. It talks about the government committing to maintaining air, land and sea combat capabilities and ensuring that the members of the forces are trained and equipped to their job. We have been trying to meet that goal and we are fighting hard to do so. The government has made a significant contribution, particularly in the last nine months, to that effect. In fact we want to go much further than that. Our objective is not simply to maintain those capabilities, but expand upon them, and I will get to the reasons why.

What we disagree with profoundly though is the preamble to the motion which states:

—the government is continuing this trend by proposing to raise a peacekeeping brigade at the expense of existing combat ready forces...

I unequivocally deny and do not accept that whatsoever. The opposition members know full well that this is completely untrue.

I want to talk about the fact that the government is strongly in support of the Canadian Forces. I listened very carefully to the allegations of the Conservative Party. I will go through the various commitments it made if it were to become the government.

First, the Conservatives would invest an immediate \$1.2 billion per year in the military. What has the government done? We have put in \$1.6 billion in the 2004 budget. On the issue of personnel, the opposition would increase those numbers to 80,000. The cost of that alone would be \$1.6 billion. The personnel increases, for which the opposition has called, would more than swallow up the exact amount of financial commitment it would put in to the military. The numbers simply do not add up.

Furthermore, the opposition in the last election said that it wanted \$54 billion in extra spending, plus \$41 billion in tax cuts. The only way to do that is to go into a deficit. We see that south of the border in the U.S. It has a \$470 billion deficit. We want to give as much to our military as we can, but the opposition knows full well that we can only do that if we have a balanced budget. It cannot be done with a deficit budget because it would eviscerate our ability to provide not only for our military, but for health care and other priorities of Canadians.

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As we go down the list of the opposition party, of the 11 things that it wants to do, 10 of those things we have either done, are in the works or we are doing better. I will simply give a few examples.

With respect to the issue of the air force, the CF-18 fleet upgrade is being done right now. With respect to the older C-130 transport aircraft, 10 new aircraft are coming on board and they will retire our older Hercules. With respect to the Sea King replacements, the opposition knows full well that commitment has already been made. We also have three new support ships coming on board.

The opposition party talks about having a stronger independent Canadian Coast Guard. The government has put together two new operation centres, one on the west coast on Vancouver Island and one on the east coast. They will integrate not only the Canadian Forces, but also the coast guard and the RCMP. We will have a combined multilateral approach to threats that come toward our borders. That is very exciting.

•(1615)

The opposition should know full well that not only have we accomplished a lot of its recommendations, we have gone beyond them and we have done it with a balanced budget. Our primary object, which we have always had, is to have a combat-ready, capable force to deal with threats. Let me list a few of the things we have been doing.

We are committed to putting 5,000 people on the sharp edge of our military, plus 3,000 reserves. As well, \$7 billion has been committed to mobile guns, three new supply ships, new search and rescue planes and helicopters. Is that enough? It is a pretty good start. Are we going to build on that? Absolutely. Those are our commitments to the House and most important to the men and women in our armed forces. Those are the people to whom this speech is directed. We will do our best to give them the manpower, the training and the equipment to do the jobs they have been tasked to do.

[Translation]

It is worth reminding the hon. members that the Canadian Forces are already using equipment that is on the leading edge of technology.

[English]

Some of those examples are the Coyote armoured reconnaissance vehicle and our new leading edge surveillance technology. I was privileged to go to the meeting held here today. Our military received four awards out of seven submissions. One of those was for an extraordinary surveillance and communications tool that they developed for our arctic, which can be applied to saving lives, not only in Canada but also abroad. That is a contribution to not only our security but to the security of our partners, and internationally. It will go a long way in many areas, including search and rescue. Also, the army's armoured personnel carrier, the LAV III, is a very advanced system and we will build on that too.

I can assure my hon. colleagues that the government is committed to expanding our commitments to the armed forces, not only in personnel but in training and equipment. Why is all this important? Because members from all side of the House have said very clearly that the type of threats we face have expanded and changed. They

are not the same threats as we have had before, and 9/11 showed that very clearly.

What is exciting is we have taken the initiative to do something that few countries are doing, and that is to integrate our defence capabilities, our diplomacy, our trade and our development. We all know those four tools will be used and needed to address the asymmetric threats. We have extraordinary capabilities in all those areas and we are committed to accomplishing that.

Furthermore, the public ought to know, and I will repeat this, that a defence review is taking place. It will be released this fall. Public input will be required. More important, input from the House will be required, so we have the best review possible. Our objective is to have the best minds, the best ideas and the best defence review we can possibly have for our country and for the men and women in our armed forces. They are extraordinary individuals. We owe it to them to give them our best as they give their best for our country.

I have been privileged to see their work. In Sierra Leone they are there training a new army for peace and security. They saved lives in Bosnia conflict. Our snipers received awards from the American government for their work in Afghanistan. It shows that our armed forces personnel are some of the best in the world. While the threats out there are defused, and we saw it in the U.S. 9/11 commission report, as partners and as individual countries we have to do a great deal more in terms of addressing these threats.

It is a new world. There are new threats and new challenges, and the government is committed to addressing those challenges for all Canadians and for the world.

•(1620)

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not believe a single word that member just said and let me tell the House why. As recently as a year ago these are the things he said about his government's record on defence:

—the government has been neglecting defence and as a result there is an absolute crisis...Its failure to give economic and moral support to our military is eroding not only our standard here at home but our stature abroad.

Further, he said that the men and women in uniform:

—have been giving much more consideration to our country than the government has given to them.

He also said:

For the last 10 years the government has underfunded and disrespected our military by not giving our people the tools to do the job.... Our people are wanting at every level. They have the desire and the will to do the job, but they do not have the tools.

He further said:

—the government has gutted our military and our manpower is so low that it does not have the ability to put the people that we require into the field to do the job of our nation.

Finally he said:

For too long we have been living off the coattails of our allies on the international security concerns that we all share.

Those are his statements in this place a year ago. That is a 180° turn from what he just said moments ago. That is why I do not believe a word he has to say on the question of our national defence.

He said that all had changed in the past nine months since he became a member of the Liberal Party. Surely he has changed 10 years, 20 years, 30 years of neglect that he spoke about. Yes, right. This from a government that just gave a throne speech that contained one completely meaningless line about defence. This from a government that campaigned using demagoguery against our party for proposing substantial new capital investments in the military. This from a government that is still delivering the second lowest defence expenditure in NATO as a percentage of GDP. This from a government that is still delivering, according to the International Institute on Strategic Studies yesterday, one of the lowest relative defence expenditures among 164 nations that were studied. This from a government that is still leaving our men flying 45 year old helicopters and in submarines that cannot make it across the Atlantic without tragic fatalities.

How can he have any shame giving a speech like that?

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is sad that the member on the other side continues to live in the past. He does not recognize the exciting commitments the government has put forward, particularly over the last nine months. I will repeat it for his edification because obviously he was not hearing or comprehending what was being said.

The government will be providing \$7 billion of new money to our military for four good pieces of equipment. There will also be 5,000 new troops and 3,000 new reserves. The government is committed to change the situation.

The member ought to look in the mirror and look at the commitments his party has made. He has to understand a bit of basic mathematics. The Conservative Party wanted to commit \$54 billion in new spending plus \$41 billion in new tax cuts. The only way that could be done is if the government went into deficit spending. The member might look in the mirror one day and ask himself if he wants to support the kind of policies like those in the United States, resulting in a \$470 billion deficit. If he wants to adopt a deficit spending protocol, then he should say that. However we will not support that.

We will not support that. We will have surplus budgets. We do not think that is the way to support our military, our health care and the requirements and necessary needs of Canadians. We will not compromise the economy of our country. We will have a balanced budget and support our military at the same time.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not get into the budget and explain how it works because the Liberals seem to have difficulty understanding it.

During the election campaign, the Liberals proposed, through the foreign affairs department, a peacekeeping brigade, which came as a complete surprise to national defence. It was specifically called a peacekeeping brigade because the people who came up with the idea had no concept of combat capability. They were going to create a force with blue berets and rifles and negotiate peace. That is why we are having this debate today. We want to make certain that the 5,000

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regulars and the 3,000 reserves that go into the military will be trained for combat at the highest standard only.

• (1625)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, those 5,000 troops are going to get on the sharp edge as well as the 3,000 reserves. Both of them will be integrated into the needs of our armed forces in order to carry out the complex duties that they do across the board.

The member knows full well that we can only do that if we have a balanced budget. The government has been able to have a surplus or balanced budget and the strongest economy of any of the OECD countries. That is something to be proud of. The only way we will be able to support our military is to have a strong economy. That is our commitment.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to speak in the debate today. I think I should repeat the motion that our party has put before the House so that members will know where my comments are coming from. The motion states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's national defence policies are seriously out of date and funding has fallen dramatically short of what is needed to meet defence commitments, the combat capabilities of the Canadian Forces have been permitted to decay and the government is continuing this trend by proposing to raise a peacekeeping brigade at the expense of existing combat ready forces; and accordingly,

This House call on the government to commit to maintaining air, land and sea combat capability by ensuring that members of the forces are trained, equipped and supported for combat operations and peacekeeping, in order to enhance Canada's status and influence as a sovereign nation.

The one thing I would like to say is that whatever members of Parliament from all parties, and that goes for Canadians from all parts of this country, believe about the Canadian military, they believe one thing and support one thing. If we are going to send our serving men and women into harm's way they deserve the people and the equipment necessary to do the job on our behalf as safely as possible. Canadians right across the country agree with that. The members of all political parties agree with that. There is no argument about that.

I believe the facts have to be looked at, the facts on what has happened over the past 11 years with the Canadian military. It has to be examined and it has to be differentiated from the statements made by various ministers of the government and by members of the Liberal Party throughout this debate and over the past couple of weeks. I think it is really important to look at both and to see the differences that we have.

To provide our country with the people and the equipment that we need for them to do their job safely, we have to increase spending. There is no other way of doing that. We have to do others things, but we have to increase spending.

The Liberal government keeps repeating that it has done that. Even though it keeps repeating the line that it has increased funding to Canada's military, it does not make it so. Let us look at the facts.

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First, the government has cut \$20 billion from defence spending over the past 11 years. Second, in terms of personnel, when that government came into power we had a military of roughly 80,000 effective strength. Now we have 52,000 effective strength. That is a fact, no matter what the government says.

Yes, our forces been provided with some new equipment, but while they have some new equipment, there are glaring shortfalls in the equipment they have. We tend to point to the most obvious examples, such as the Sea King replacements, the problems with the refurbishing of the subs and the lack of supply capability, supply ships and so on. We tend to point to those types of things, but a part of that equipment deficiency, which is much less obvious but every bit as important, is the maintenance and repairs needed to ensure that the other equipment, which is often extremely old, is safe, usable and in reliable condition. That is rarely referred to and rarely talked about.

As I said, to do all that requires money. The Liberals say that they are spending all the money needed. By the military's own calculations, the money that the Prime Minister has promised, \$7 billion roughly, is only one-quarter of what the military itself says is needed.

• (1630)

As we know, the top brass in the military answers to government. They will not be going around saying things against the government, the elected representatives of the people. In spite of that, the number the military gave, the minimum needed to provide what is necessary, is four times what the Prime Minister has promised, not that he has delivered but that he has promised. Clearly, there is a huge gap of many billions of dollars.

The fact is that we need the money. Let us look at Canada relative to other NATO allies. I think that is a good measure of where the Canadian military is really at, a good measure of what the Prime Minister, the parliamentary secretary and others on the other side have said.

Canada spends about 1.2% of GDP on its military. The NATO average is somewhere over 2%. That is a huge gap. The Prime Minister, the defence minister and others have stood in the House and said that Canada is one of the largest military spenders in the world, but what they do not say and what the facts are is that Canada, in terms of percentage of GDP, is in fact the second lowest of all the NATO allies. That is the truth but we do not hear that from the government, which is unfortunate.

The money is important because of what it provides. What it provides, what it could provide and what it will provide when we form government is the people we need and the equipment they need to do their jobs as safely as possible on our behalf because they work on our behalf.

Is it only the Conservative Party that says the money being provided is very short of what is required? Not at all. I was a member of the House of Commons committee that tabled a report about a year ago or so. The majority of members of that committee were Liberals, including the former defence minister. What did that report say? That report said almost exactly what the Conservative Party says, that we have to move spending toward the NATO average. It

said that right in the report. The Liberals, Conservatives, all parties agreed to that.

Within the last two years a Senate committee said virtually the same thing, that government simply was not providing what was necessary to give us the military that we needed to do the job that we were asking them to do year after year on behalf of our country.

The military itself has said that it needs more. We need only look at its proposals laying out what it needs to provide just what the government said should be provided on behalf of our country, in the 1994 white paper and in some more recent statements than that.

There have been various other independent studies that have said exactly the same thing. The government simply is not spending the money necessary to give us the people and the equipment that can provide what we ask our military to provide. I do not think there is any doubt about that. That is simply a fact.

I will quickly mention this new 5,000 member peacekeeping force that the government talks about. This sounds really good. The problem is, the money has not been provided. The problem is, we cannot send people who are not combat capable and trained and with the equipment they need, into harm's way. We have done it too many times in the past. How many times does it take before we all learn? I think we on this side have learned. We cannot afford to do that any more. We need our people to be combat trained, ready and equipped whether they go into combat or not. At the very minimum, we owe them that.

• (1635)

Many members in the House have been taping a Remembrance Day message today in the Centre Block. Many members have gone out and said how they support the Canadian military, how they remember and give thanks to those who have served our country in the past, and I believe every member says that from the heart. However, just the words are not enough any more. We all must provide our current military with what they need to protect us and to serve us as we ask them to do.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the words of my colleague and certainly was moved at the end of his speech when he talked about Remembrance Day and remembering those who have, in all too many cases, given the ultimate sacrifice to defend the freedoms that the rest of us all too often take for granted. He is so right in his statement.

It is easy to mouth the words. It is often easy for us to forget. Of course, we must always remember, lest we forget. It is so important on Remembrance Day to give thanks for those people who answered the call time and time again and those who continue to answer the call, as was the case with Lieutenant Saunders who, sadly, gave the ultimate, his life for the freedoms we all too often take for granted.

We often are forced to send our troops abroad to help protect those people who are less fortunate and who might be struggling for freedom and democracy, the freedom and democracy we all too often, as I said, take for granted. We commit troops, as we have, to Afghanistan, Bosnia and other troubled spots around the world. In the debate today I believe the central thrust of my colleague's comments was the need to ensure that whatever troops we do send must be combat capable and as well-equipped as possible. It is the least we owe our young men and women if we send them abroad to do that important work.

I want to ask my hon. colleague to comment on a poll which, I think, shows how out of step the Liberal government is with the mood of Canadians, not just the mood of the Conservative Party of Canada and the commitment that we have made in writing to our military, but the mood of Canadians. The poll came out just last week. I want to quote from a newspaper article. The headline reads "Liberals out of step with public on military" and it says:

Nearly 80 per cent of votes cast in a CanWest Global online survey supported preparation for war as the primary role of the Canadian military, with peacekeeping taking a back seat to defending Canada's borders.

Of 10,366 votes received via the Internet, 8,160 said "Prepare for war" should be the military's primary role.

The next most popular choice was defending Canada's borders—

Only 745 votes, or 7.19%, supported peacekeeping as the chief role.

That is what we are trying to get at today. Our forces need to be combat ready.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, actually I have not seen the poll. I have not even heard about the poll, but it must have been at least 8,000 or 10,000 people in total, and that is a huge poll. This will accurately reflect what Canadians really believe. I am not surprised by that.

It may sound like we are blowing our own horn, but what parliamentarians have said again and again over the past five years in particular, is that the need to have a combat capable military is sinking in with the general public. They are thinking about it and they have come to understand what the government will not acknowledge. The government understands it. I do not believe for a minute that the government does not understand what is necessary, but it is simply not willing to make the tough decision when it comes to how taxpayer money should be spent. It is just unwilling to make those tough decisions and that is the saddest commentary. As a result, it says the peacekeepers are good enough.

As the member said, we absolutely owe our serving men and women, at the minimum, the capability to defend themselves under any imaginable circumstance that may come upon them. The one thing that is predictable about going into an extremely unsettled situation is unpredictability. Let us give them all we reasonably can to defend themselves and to be safe in whatever situation.

God willing, when they go into a situation that they think is a peacekeeping situation, whatever that means, that it will be that, but too often in the past it has not. It has been a combat situation. Combat is necessary to stabilize the situation, and so many times that provides for people of that area, that country, some stability they have not seen for an awful long time, a chance to move ahead and a

Supply

chance to become a free and democratic nation. Let us give them that and let us give that to the countries we are out to help as well.

* * *

● (1640)

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among all parties and I believe if you were to seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, at the conclusion of Oral Questions on Friday, October 22, 2004, the House shall hear a brief statement by a representative of each party to pay tribute to Senator Jean-Robert Gauthier.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. David Chatters (Battle River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join in this debate on our supply day motion from a couple of different perspectives.

Certainly from the perspective of a member of Parliament, in my riding I represent the only two armed forces bases in Alberta. There is the Cold Lake air base, which is world renowned for its Maple Flag operation, which brings countries from around the world to the best facility in the world for training and practising among air forces in the work they do flying and training for combat capability. I also represent the Edmonton garrison, of course, which is one of the Canadian super bases and certainly a base that continues to deploy soldiers around the world.

I speak from both of those perspectives because in just the few short months that I have been the member of Parliament for Westlock—St. Paul, which is now Battle River, the file in my office from Canadian Forces personnel is by far and away the largest file, with both current and retired members of the forces contacting my office.

I am sure that my colleague who just spoke and who represented the Cold Lake area before I did probably had the same experience. Certainly the amount of mail we get and the problems we recognize I think indicate just how serious the morale situation is in our Canadian armed forces and how abandoned by the government the members of our forces feel. I want to talk a little about that.

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I also want to talk from a personal perspective, because my family has a long tradition of service in the Canadian armed forces, both in wartime and in the days of the Pearson peacekeeping tradition. Today my son has served for 18 years in the military. It makes me very proud as a father to support what he is doing for his country.

However, particularly in my speech I want to focus more on the enlisted ranks because I think that group has truly been let down and betrayed by the Liberal Government of Canada, going way back to the years of Pierre Trudeau and the amalgamation of the three wings of the forces and what that did to morale. It has been a constant downhill slide ever since then.

I have to say right up front how disappointed I am with the parliamentary secretary and his words and his statements, because I served in the same caucus as the parliamentary secretary for 10 years and I always knew him as a man of great principle and integrity. In his years in our caucus, he was a person who did not buckle down, who stood up and took controversial positions on things like health care because he believed in them. I believed that he was serious, that he believed what he was saying was right, yet his party sends him in here on this supply day to stand in response to almost every speaker and defend the government's position, knowing full well that the record is here, the record of his comments over the last 10 years on how Canada has treated its military.

My sympathy goes out to the member because it must be very difficult to have sold your principles to that degree: to be a member of the Liberal Party. Of course what he is doing today has to be the supreme test to see if he belongs in the Liberal Party or not. My condolences to him. It seems he does.

● (1645)

As I have said, I think it certainly is the non-commissioned ranks that are being shafted in the way the government is treating its armed forces. This is for a couple of reasons. Certainly the mail that I get does not come from the officer corps. Occasionally I do have a few letters from officers who, after retirement, seem to have been released from the bonds of this esprit de corps and are able to speak out. I think the officer corps has an advantage in a couple of ways.

First, the top levels of our armed forces are so overloaded that they do not face the strain our non-commissioned ranks do in doing the day to day work. We have such a surplus of officers that they do not face the redeployment pressure that I think the non-commissioned ranks do. Second, I think the officer corps has let down the non-commissioned ranks in their responsibility to stand up, speak out and defend the foot soldiers, the airmen and the seamen when they are facing the kinds of problems that they do.

I focus more on that direction because it is the families of the enlisted ranks who are being destroyed by this lack of personnel and the requirement to redeploy over and over again. It is the families of those ranks who really face that challenge and it is a huge one. If we were allowed to see the statistics of family breakdown, suicide and alcoholism in those enlisted ranks compared to the general population, I think we would be absolutely shocked and appalled at what we are doing to our armed forces personnel, who continue to be, in spite of all these things, so proud to wear Canada's uniform and stand up and represent Canada all over the world.

Second, it is the non-commissioned ranks that face the funding shortages. As an example, I will refer back to the group of servicemen who were on course in British Columbia and were awarded some \$70 a day in an expense allowance. They were paid, but when they came back after the course the payment was clawed back. It was clawed back to the point where at least one of those servicemen had to mortgage his home in order to pay that back. I do not think the officer corps faces those kinds of challenges. That is why I focus on the ranks. I just think this is unforgivable.

The parliamentary secretary actually stood up and defended and talked about the Canadians in Iraq and Afghanistan. I think it was in Afghanistan that they were recognized, where the snipers were honoured for their ability and the work they did in Afghanistan. The parliamentary secretary actually stood up and said he was so proud of them, but the government that he is speaking for today refused to allow the U.S. government to honour those guys with a service medal. Maybe he is proud of them, but his government did not seem to be proud of them. I do not understand why.

According to the Americans, they were doing an exemplary job, the best there was. Then when the Americans wanted to recognize these people on the international stage, for some reason the Canadian government did not want our soldiers to be recognized for that kind of work. It is far better to be recognized with peacekeeping medals, I suppose, but that is not what being a soldier is all about. That was really a shame.

Certainly it is again the non-commissioned ranks that face the challenges to keep obsolete equipment operational. It is the ranks that have aircraft and ships and army equipment that has to go to work. They have half the fleet cannibalized for parts for the other half in order to keep it operational. How discouraging is that? They do not have the tools. They do not have the parts. That really is demoralizing.

● (1650)

Here, of course, the Liberals, like they do in every department I have seen in the last 10 years, always talk the talk but never walk the walk. There is all this talk about spending money and giving money. Let us look at the shipborne helicopters if we want to see how they walk the walk. It is 11 years later and we still have not ordered the helicopters.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I did represent that part of the constituency which the member is representing now with the Cold Lake air base and I did hear from a lot of personnel over the years about some of the difficulties they were facing in trying to keep our jets flying. I did hear about the strain on the families due to over-deployment and so on. That certainly was there then, as it is now.

It is amazing to me that for the 11 years we have been here in the House we have heard that our equipment overall is continuing to deteriorate and is simply inadequate, yet so often when Canada goes to various trouble spots it is recognized as serving extremely well. When we look at why that is, I think the reason is obvious, but I would like to ask the member about his thoughts on this.

It clearly is not because they have state of the art equipment generally, and it certainly has not been the case in the past. It is because of the ingenuity and the excellent training of our military personnel. It is the people themselves who are so capable, so proud and so committed to doing a good job on behalf of our country and making our country proud that they make up for the dreadful inadequacies of the equipment. I would like the member's comments on that.

• (1655)

Mr. David Chatters: Mr. Speaker, the member makes a good point, because our military people are the best trained people in the world. My son went with a crew from his squadron years ago to an international airlift rodeo in North Carolina, and our crew was one of the best in the world in spite of the fact that they went there with a 20 year old aircraft when countries like Israel and the United States flew in with brand new aircraft. Our people represented us proudly. They did great.

When the government finally does get around to providing them with new, state of the art equipment, instead of giving these highly trained service people the responsibility of maintaining and being proud of the aircraft, for political reasons the government hires civilian contractors to do the maintenance on this equipment.

Members have no idea how demoralizing that is to someone who has made a career of learning how to maintain this equipment and becoming the best in the world at maintaining it for Canada and for the Canadian armed forces. Clearly this government does not even think about that. Its first consideration is political, it is spinning, it is providing smoke and mirrors to cover up what it is doing. The government is making promises that it has no intention of fulfilling and I think that is tragic for those people.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know time is quite short so I will get right to the point. Earlier in the debate today, the deputy government House leader, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, referred to the fact that his government in last spring's budget allowed for tax exemptions for our overseas troops. When he was bragging about that it reminded me of the fact that when the Liberals brought in that policy they were in such a big hurry to try to buy votes and shore up their support among the nation's military that they did not even think it through.

First of all, the Liberals said it would be applied only to those involved in high risk missions, but they did not define what a high risk mission was. Then they said it was going to be only for those people serving in Afghanistan at Camp Julien. Then when some of us made the point that there are people on patrol in mine-infested areas in Bosnia who are certainly on high risk missions, they said they would look at extending it to Bosnia. Then it was Haiti. Even I do not know yet where they are going with this policy or whether it has been clearly defined in regard to who qualifies for it and who does not.

Has the member, in representing military people in his riding, heard about this issue? How do the people this policy actually affects feel about it?

Mr. David Chatters: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question. It is certainly one of the topics that I most often hear about. Not only do I hear it from people who are deployed internationally over and

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over again at great cost to them personally and to their families who do not qualify for that. However, there are other cases of high ranking officers who fly into these hot spots for a matter of days or hours and claim the tax exemption. The whole thing is a nightmare and there are endless concerns about it. It needs to be addressed because it is a huge issue.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too want to join others who have congratulated you on your appointment to the Chair. I have enjoyed working with you over the last number of years and have known you to be nothing but fair, at least when you are in the Chair.

It is interesting today that we would be here debating the motion that is before us. As my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona mentioned earlier today, the preamble and the motion do not seem to give a clear direction as to what the official opposition was looking for. It is interesting to note, and as someone who has been here now since 1997, that often motions are written in such a way to catch the opposing parties and use something against them whether in an election campaign or in a newspaper article. We just want to have something to use against them and that so often is the case.

I would hope that was not the intent of the opposition on something so serious as proper funding for the military and ensuring safe equipment for the men and women who are in our military. I would hope that is not the case and that what we are really doing here is discussing and debating what the government's policy should be and whether or not the funding is adequate.

I will read a section of the motion:

—the combat capabilities of the Canadian Forces have been permitted to decay and the government is continuing this trend by proposing to raise a peacekeeping brigade at the expense of existing combat ready forces—

Most Canadians have a hard time distinguishing peacekeepers from combat ready. There are those who know the military and have said our peacekeepers are combat ready. They are trained individuals. They have to be combat ready for the jobs that they are doing. So we are left wondering what the heck is going on here. Is it a matter that the Conservatives are opposed to peacekeeping? I do not think so. However, I am not sure.

I want to read another section which I believe is from the Conservative's platform. It says that Canada's defence policy must reflect the global environment by balancing fiscal constraints with issues of collective security, participation in peacekeeping and peacemaking missions, and an appropriately structured military that is sustainable and sufficiently flexible to react to needs.

The Conservative Party was saying, at least during the election campaign, that it supported peacekeeping. However, if we go strictly by the motion today, we would say that it does not really support peacekeeping as compared to combat. It only supports the one and not the peacekeeping, so I have to wonder what exactly it was intending to do by the motion.

Over time we realize different parties say different things at times. Again, I have to question the reliability of what the Conservative Party has said because during the election it said the following on strong democracy:

The Conservative Party of Canada believes true democracy involves vigorous participation by all citizens in the affairs of the country.

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This is extremely important. It said:

We will commit to broad consultation with citizens across Canada to further the ongoing policy development process and ensure Members of Parliament have the fullest input from all Canadians.

Yesterday the defence committee refused to meet with the people of Canada on missile defence. It sided with the government and said we are going to go along with George Bush and put in the missile defence. The Conservative Party does not care what the people of Canada have to say. It did not want to hear that Canadian citizens do not go along with missile defence because anyone with an ounce of sense would know that is the weaponization of space.

• (1700)

There are Republicans in the United States saying this is the weaponization of space. There is no question about it. Once again we have a situation where, rather than standing up for Canadians and what they believe in, we have the Liberal government and, as we have always said, those just like them, the Conservatives going right along together saying they do not care what Canadians say.

Before I forget, I want to indicate that I am splitting my time with my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh.

I want to emphasize the seriousness of this motion today and the lack of clarity in the motion. I do not think there is any question that every member of Parliament and all Canadians appreciate what our military people have done for us in the past. On Remembrance Day we always make a point of taking the time to recognize the people who have been either injured or killed over the years.

Certainly we recognize the military people who support our efforts. Whether Canadians agree with the government's position and what it might be doing on a particular issue or not, Canadians support the people within the military because they know the military is acting on their behalf to promote what they want to see as Canadians. There is no question about that.

Do we need to properly fund the military? Absolutely. It is unconscionable that any government or Parliament would say that we want our troops to go on a peacekeeping or peacemaking mission in a certain area of the world where we know it is going to be dangerous because some people who will not agree with it will be jumping out at them and possibly laying bombs on the road. We would want our troops to be riding in the best armoured vehicles that would help protect them. We all know that things could happen and they could be killed, but let us give them the best of what is available.

It would seem like a basic thing to think that people who are in situations where there may be possible sniper attacks and those kind of things would all be wearing at least bulletproof vests. We give them to a good number of our police forces within our country, but do the military have them? No. That is not acceptable. These men and women are working on our behalf for our country and we are not giving them what they need.

Somehow the government's priorities would rather see money going elsewhere. Some would say that it was only millions, not billions, that was wasted in the scandal or in different patronage plums within the Liberal government. If 1¢ of taxpayers' dollars was wasted that could have provided one piece of equipment for our

military men and women, it is unconscionable. For every dollar that was wasted, people should remember that possibly one life might have been saved, maybe two, and maybe more. That is what is unconscionable.

As the Conservatives said, we need to be fiscally responsible. We need to have sustainability and balance based on the environment. It is crucially important that we provide the proper funding when our men and women are going into certain operations, otherwise we should not be sending them. That is the name of the game. We should not be sending them.

I want to mention, as my Conservative colleague from Trenton did, that I had the opportunity to take part in the defence program for parliamentarians. It was excellent. I had never experienced any kind of military operation. There were no bases where I grew up or in my riding, so it was a great opportunity to see the people in the search and rescue operations in Trenton and the fact that they were still using some of the older helicopters and equipment that has not been updated.

They were doing the best they could with what they had and speaking very proudly of their force, as well as their country. As a show of respect to them, we should do the same by properly funding and equipping our men and women in the military.

• (1705)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member from the New Democratic Party for her remarks directed at our supply day motion concerning our nation's military.

I must admit that I am little baffled. She said in her remarks that she had a problem understanding the intent of the motion. Without reading the preamble, the latter part of the motion states:

This House call on the government to commit to maintaining air, land and sea combat capability by ensuring that members of the forces are trained, equipped and supported for combat operations and peacekeeping, in order to enhance Canada's status and influence as a sovereign nation.

I do not know what could be more straightforward than that.

The problem that we have had, which has come out in debate today time and time again, is that words are cheap and to the government, all too often, lives are cheap because it refuses to commit.

The key word in our motion today is that the House call on the government to "commit". We want to see it in writing. We want to see the money in the budget line instead of having what happened last year when the budget was tabled. The government talked about the \$300 million and it hardly covered the costs of our expenses in Afghanistan and Haiti. There was nothing in new money to even address the shortfall in the ongoing operational budgets of the three branches of the forces: the army, navy and air force.

That is what we are seeking. We are seeking a firm commitment. We are tired of words. Men and women of our armed forces continue day after day to take the risks on behalf of their country. We are asking in the motion for a commitment in writing because we are tired of words.

Supply

•(1710)

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, I know we are all very passionate about our military. It is interesting how it is always our military when we are just talking about them like this. We do not probably think about the military each and every day, which we should.

In between remembrance days we should remember why the military is over there. We should remember when we are voting on issues, if we ever get to vote on issues in the House, as to whether or not when we have military personnel go into places, that we are putting their lives at risk. It is crucially important that we do not forget that.

I accept my colleague's explanation of the motion. As I indicated, I had issue with what was in the preamble in relation to the motion. As he well knows, as do members of the House, we often have to consider that because there is a tendency to use some of that against each other in political times. I accept his clarification of the motion.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said she had a problem with what was in the preamble. I am going to read the preamble. I do not see the problem. I would like her to explain the problem.

Before I read the preamble I would like to comment that the member sort of supported the military in her statement. However, the bottom line is, and this is so common in that party, when it comes to actually committing the resources necessary to provide the kind of support that we are talking about, its members will not do it.

I want to know specifically what the member finds offensive or unacceptable in the preamble which states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government's national defence policies are seriously out of date and funding has fallen dramatically short of what is needed to meet defence commitments,—

That is pretty clear. How can she argue with that? That is a fact. It goes on to say:

—the combat capabilities of the Canadian Forces have been permitted to decay and the government is continuing this trend by proposing to raise a peacekeeping brigade at the expense of existing combat ready forces;—

That is the preamble. What part of that would she argue with? Would she argue that the government's commitment of 5,000 peacekeepers who would not be combat capable troops, that there is no problem with that?

I would like the member to explain why that would be? Does she think it is okay to send people into harm's way when they are not properly equipped, when they are not properly trained, and they may have to deal with a combat situation when it arises? Is that what the member is saying?

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais: Mr. Speaker, absolutely not. The member is free to look at the *Debates* tomorrow since he obviously did not hear what I said. That is totally opposite from what I said.

We in this party absolutely support the fact that if our men and women are going to be sent into whatever situation, be it peacekeeping or combat, they definitely should be properly equipped or we should not be sending them. That is the issue.

There is no question about our support for our military men and women. As long as the government, and the country, has in place a policy where we will be partaking in peacekeeping, peace making or combat efforts, we have to ensure the funding is available to do so.

•(1715)

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I saw the wording of the official opposition's motion, I could not help but to think back on a couple of events, one just this past weekend in my home riding and one in the spring.

This past weekend we officially opened the new armouries, which is an interesting concept. The city of Windsor along with the Department of National Defence are jointly sharing the facility with our Windsor police services and the military, including a number of the reserve regiments that are based in Windsor and Essex County.

As part of that event, we had a number of vintage military vehicles as we did this past spring in an event that I co-sponsored with the mayor of the city of Windsor to recognize the veterans from our area who had been involved in the D-Day invasion 60 years ago. It gave us the opportunity to recognize the contribution they made to the country and to the world. As I read the motion, I could not help but think, as I did on both those occasions, that the government was still expecting our military to use those vintage vehicles.

I know that is a bit extreme, but the reality is we all know, and we saw so tragically just in the last few weeks with the incident on the *Chicoutimi*, that we have repeatedly placed our current military personnel at risk, sometimes when they are in training and sometimes when they are actually in the field.

To be very clear, the NDP, as I believe every party sitting in the House, believes that we can no longer do that. We should never have got to the stage we are at now. Even the government probably believes it and is now scurrying to catch up, but not as rapidly as it should be.

On the other hand, when I first saw the motion this morning, my reaction was that the official opposition was being somewhat misleading in the usage of the word. The official opposition says that we have to be combat ready. That is the ultimate resolution. We need to have that capability in the air, on land and at sea. The reality is that it will not occur.

It was interesting to hear one of the members talk about the report that came out of the defence committee about a year or 15 months ago. I read the report. It would have had the effect, if fully put into play, of more than doubling the budget that we spend on the military, from approximately \$11.5 billion to \$12 billion, as it was at that time, to something in excess of \$20 billion, probably \$22 billion, over a five year period. It would have got us to that level. The reality is the governing party would never take us to that level.

What we are faced with is very clear. We have been arguing for this for quite some time. We have to make decisions as to what we will provide by way of a military budget and the services that will flow from that. For ourselves, once the decision is made, the money is spent and the services are in place, the absolute number one criteria always is that none of our personnel should be put at risk with faulty equipment, equipment that is not up to the job that we are asking them to do.

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• (1720)

Does that mean that when we have to look at replacements, as we really do now with the CF-18s, we will replace them? We will have to make choices. I do not believe any political party or the Canadian government is capable of spending the money that we would need to absolutely protect us. It is just not there, and we have to make choices. The only way we can make those choices is if the government finally comes to its senses and does a meaningful review of defence policy for the country.

It is not just about being combat ready. It is about having military facilities, services, equipment and the accompanying personnel to defend the north, to extend our sovereignty clearly there, and to rebuff the claims that are being made by other countries. I was unbelievably sad when we looked at the small contingent that went north in the last few months and the problems it ran into. It was a very small contingent, we did not have the proper equipment for it and we put some at risk.

The equipment that was in Afghanistan, when we lost some of our troops, was clearly not adequate. Whether it was the communications or the transport vehicles, we put them at risk and we suffered casualties as a result.

As is so often the case with the official opposition, the simplicity with which it approaches this and expects other parties to accept, almost boggles the mind. It is not that simple. Had the motion called for a meaningful review of our defence policy, establishing a meaningful defence policy in the country, it would have received all party support. As my colleague from Churchill indicated, the opposition is playing games and the end result of that is to attempt to lead the Canadian public to believe that the motion has some meaning. It does not.

It was interesting to listen to some of the questions the NDP has been asked today such as what would it spend. It is inappropriate and in fact verging on irresponsible to answer that question before that policy is completed, before we make the decision on how much we will commit to peacekeeping, peace making and traditional combat roles. The official opposition does not have the answer to that because there is no policy. We do not know. Of course the government has been schizophrenic on this for years.

I want to make one final point with regard to the integrity behind the motion. Both Conservative and Liberal governments have cut our forces. They have put us in the position we are today. We do not have a public policy that is meaningful and is something we can follow. It is one that both parties, Conservative and Liberal, have an absolute responsibility to bring before the House, get the review done and get that policy in place as rapidly as possible.

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member to comment on something a bit different from what he spoke about, but something that deals with the topic generally.

Throughout the country we have several strategic areas, and we have seen government cut back and cut back in relation to our bases. In my own province, I am thinking of places like Goose Bay in particular, Gander and Stephenville. At a time when security is so important, when we talk about defending and protecting our nation,

surely this is not a time for weakening our defences or our presence in strategic locations. I know in the member's own province, certainly in the north and Goose Bay would be in that category, our presence at this time is imperative, with our own people ensuring that the rest of us are protected.

I would like to know the member's views on this. Does he agree with the government's idea of downsizing our forces and our presence, especially in strategic locations throughout the country?

• (1725)

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I do not agree that we should be downsizing. I have studied historically as we moved from 100,000 down to 80,000 and down to 60,000. The reality is that even though we are at 60,000 at this point, realistically we never have more than somewhere in the high 40,000 personnel available because of imminent retirements, people off ill, seconded to other duties or any number of other reasons. I recognize that and I do not see us downsizing. I want to take a position on that policy that I am talking about. I do not see us downsizing.

In fact I very much see us spending additional money. Part of the policy that I and I believe our party would like to see is spending more so that when someone like Commander Dallaire is in the field, we would be a position to lead and to commit an additional 2,000 or 5,000 troops and be able to ask Australia, the U.S. and other countries to put 25,000 to 30,000 personnel in the field in Rwanda and stop the killings. We were not able to do that.

It was interesting to listen to the Prime Minister recently talking about whether we were going to make some commitments to Iraq. He said no, obviously, but the reality is that we cannot make that commitment. If the world comes to its senses and actually deals with this properly, we will not be in a position to help them.

I very much believe that we have to hold our numbers and in fact probably increase them, but not so much that we are doing the high tech stuff. I have real problems with that. It is not the security problems that I see we are faced with.

On the other hand, as the member knows, we have faced problems at our borders. He also knows the historical problems of foreign trawlers. We need to secure our fishery on both coasts and we need military personnel to provide that to us.

Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did not hear all of my colleague's comments but I heard enough that I would like to just ask him a brief question.

I heard him state his personal position and I think he was quite clear about that, but I would like to ask him to speak to the position of the New Democratic Party. I see that the former distinguished leader of that party is close by.

My honest view is that the NDP position on defence, at least in my 11 years in the House, has been somewhat nebulous, if I can put it that way. Others might be less kind, but I would say it has been somewhat nebulous.

The member spoke for himself but to what degree can he speak for his party? Does the NDP support an increase in military funding for personnel in the forces and, if so, to what extent does it support that increase? If there is clarity from his party on this, wonderful, we would like to hear it.

Mr. Joe Comartin: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear. We have heard from the Conservatives and I guess we are now hearing it from the Liberals. They want to know how much are we going to spend. This is not a bidding war. We need to know what we are going to do. The Liberals clearly do not know. They are hedging. We heard from the defence minister that we would have a full blown review and then that we would have a review just within the department. I am not sure what that meant, and we are not even sure if that is happening at this point.

It would be irresponsible for any party to stand in the House and say that it will spend \$1 billion on this. I know I want to spend somewhere in the range of \$100 million to \$200 million on housing and better remuneration for the lower rents. I know I want to do that but I cannot say what the exact number is. Will that figure change if we take on those additional 3,000 or 5,000 in the reserves? Obviously it will go up.

Do we support the replacement of the Sea Kings? Obviously we support that. My colleague from Nova Scotia has been very strong and adamant on that, in spite of the incompetence that has been shown so often by the government on the issue and the length of time it has taken.

However it is irresponsible for anybody to stand in the House today and say that he or she will spend this amount of money. It was irresponsible for the Conservatives in their party policy to say that \$1.5 billion had to be spent on operations and \$1.5 billion a year on new equipment. They did not know what that meant and they do not know it today either.

• (1730)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak in support of the motion. I will begin with a quote:

In the final analysis, it may be said that a nation not worth defending is a nation not worth preserving.

I did not make that up. Those disquieting words were written by a Liberal defence minister. The year was 1994 and months before the newly elected Liberal prime minister had announced a comprehensive review of defence policy. In 1994 a special joint committee produced its white paper on defence policy, which will be familiar to many here. Here is one of its conclusions:

The consensus achieved on the way ahead—an effective, realistic and affordable policy, one that calls for multi-purpose, combat-capable armed forces able to meet the challenges to Canada's security both at home and abroad—will serve to guide the work of the Department and the Forces into the next century. Together, we can take pride in a new defence policy that meets Canada's needs and fulfils our obligations, both to the nation and to our men and women in uniform.

While that minister of the day might take pride in a new defence policy, Canadians want to take pride in their military.

However, with that optimistic consensus that I just quoted, comes a prescient warning:

Canada cannot dispense with the maritime, land, and air combat capabilities of modern armed forces. It is true that, at present, there is no immediate direct military

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threat to Canada and that today's conflicts are far from our shores. Even so, we must maintain a prudent level of military force to deal with challenges to our sovereignty in peacetime, and retain the capability to generate forces capable of contributing to the defence of our country should the need arise. Beyond this basic national requirement, were Canada to abandon the capability to participate effectively in the defence of North America, NATO-Europe allies, and victims of aggression elsewhere, we would stand to lose a significant degree of respect and influence abroad.

The minister continued his clairvoyance when he said:

The past year has marked a significant turning point in the history of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces.

And so it was a significant turning point, but it was in a downward direction. The government of the day had committed itself to investing in a modern, combat capable force, but quite the opposite happened.

I will not go back to the good old days of the cold war, like 1962 when we had a well-equipped military of more than 126,000. In 1990 we had 78,000 and now, with the continued erosion, we have an effective strength of around 52,000 personnel who are poorly equipped.

It is not just opposition MPs who have noticed this. Numerous institutions and agencies have commented on this, such as the Royal Military Institute and the Conference of Defence Associations. In 2002 the Council for Canadian Security said:

—the CF stands on a precipice between truly viable combat capable forces and a constabulary force.

If members do not like what the council had to say, maybe they would like to hear what the standing committee on national defence had to say in 2002:

To argue that the Canadian Forces are in need of additional funding is to utter a truism.

Our Committee has heard nothing in the way of testimony that would lead us to quarrel with...the conclusion that the CF may well be in the midst of a crisis.

We can no longer continue the practice of "robbing Peter to pay Pau" in the attempt to keep our defence structure afloat"

If members do not like what the standing committee had to say, perhaps they would like to hear what the Auditor General said in 2001 after looking at the equipment. She reported:

The Department [of National Defence] has frequently said that the Canadian Forces have never been more capable... But until steps are taken to manage equipment readiness more adequately, these claims should be taken with a grain of salt.

A huge grain of salt I would say.

She found what we all knew. It has old equipment that costs a lot to maintain. She also found that we do not have the personnel to keep up with the maintenance schedule that is required to maintain the old equipment, if it is possible to maintain at all. In fact, one well-informed author estimated that by 2004, 40% to 50% of the army's weapons and vehicles may be immobilized because of inadequate spare parts.

If members do not like what the Auditor General had to say, maybe they could talk to some people in our constituencies. I have active and recently retired Canadian Forces members and I speak to them, as I think we all do.

Supply

● (1735)

What do we find when we ask them how things are? They tell us that the Forces are in a sad state of disrepair. They tell me that their equipment is out of date, if they have it at all. They tell me that morale is at an all time low. Can we find anybody, except perhaps these few opposites, who think that the Canadian Forces is properly supported by the government? The emperor has no clothes and it is about time the Liberals joined the crowd in admitting it. Canada has disarmed itself unilaterally and precariously.

Our motion talks about the role that a well-equipped combat capable military plays in enhancing Canada's status and influence as a sovereign nation. How do we maintain our sovereignty when we are forced to contract out our national defence to the Americans? During the election I was struck over and over by the paradox that those who were accusing us of being too close to the Americans were the very ones who had allowed our military to erode to the point where we had little choice but to depend on them. We are saying that we need to rebuild our military so that we can maintain our sovereignty.

Clearly, we do not have the kind of forces that the 1994 white paper envisioned. What went wrong? I think it was a lack of political will. Our current Prime Minister said that he would fix that and buy them some new equipment, but only 25% of what they really need. He said he would get them more people, 5,000 people, a brigade of peacekeepers. Where is he to get the money to recruit, train and equip them? What will they do? To hear the Liberals speak, it sounds like it thinks we can give them sensitivity training and send them around the world to join hands and sing *Kumbaya*.

People are shooting at these peacekeepers. We need to be sure that they are properly trained and equipped.

I am not a soldier nor the son of a soldier, but I see a soldier almost every day I come into this building. He is Lieutenant Colonel George Harold Baker. He does not say anything because he died in 1916. He is made of bronze. He is in the entrance to this building. He just stands there. However, he stands there as a reminder to us that freedom is not free; it is costly, and men and women over the years have paid the ultimate price. Soldiers, sailors and aviators have given their lives so that we can live in a free and flourishing nation. Let us forget, beside that statue is engraved part of a poem that most of us know:

To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

How better to hold that torch high than to commit, as this motion states:

—to maintaining air, land and sea combat capability by ensuring that members of the forces are trained, equipped and supported for combat operations and peacekeeping, in order to enhance Canada's status and influence as a sovereign nation.

Every day as we walk past that soldier, we should ask ourselves whether we are doing our duty and whether we are doing everything we can to support the men and women of our military who serve to

preserve and advance Canadian values at home and around the world. We need to ask ourselves whether it is right for our men and women in the service to make do with old, poorly maintained equipment. We need to ask ourselves whether we are treating them with the dignity they deserve.

In the final analysis, it may be said that a nation not worth defending is a nation not worth preserving. I think it is worth preserving, so let us pay the price of being ready to defend it.

● (1740)

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for a very well thought out and well researched talk on this very important topic.

The member mentioned some things that also caught me in the place where I live. He mentioned that we should have a military that we can take pride in. I agree with those comments. We must have a military that we can have pride in. The member talked about our military losing respect. Unfortunately it has come to that, he said. As he mentioned, our military is losing respect.

My grandfather was in World War I. My deceased brother spent seven years in the navy. They were very proud of their service. I remember when I was just a little guy and my brother would come home from the navy, I was proud when that man walked in wearing his uniform. I wonder now in the same situation when a young 22 year old man comes home from the navy and his 12 year old brother is there, whether that 12 year old is as proud of that sailor as I was of my brother.

We have to equip the people in our military properly. My colleague talked about the Auditor General. He talked about what we need to give our troops.

My riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry is the home of the Glengarry Highlanders. This regiment fought in both world wars and did quite well. It is a very proud regiment. These people went to Dieppe to celebrate being there during the Battle of Britain. They took part in the D-Day remembrance ceremonies. I met with them. I have a couple of friends who were there and who actually took part in the D-Day invasion. They told me that it is a shame, "Forget about us, but do something for the troops of today". I think that is what my worthy colleague has tried to say, to please help the army, the navy and the air force of today.

My colleague has researched the topic much better than I have, but the people in the military tell me that the average age of the equipment they use is older than the average age of the troops. Is it possible that we are sending members of our military to these dangerous situations and the equipment they use is actually on average older than they are? If that is the case we must do something. I would ask my worthy colleague to comment.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I share similar views on this issue. He is right. That is the research I have done as well. I quoted one author who said that by this year it may well be that almost half the equipment that we own will have to be immobilized. It is so old that we cannot get spare parts for it any more.

Supply

That was not all of the problem. The hon. member raised another part of the problem which is that we are having trouble recruiting. I think we are having trouble recruiting because the members of our military do not have a sense of respect any more. They do not have a sense of respect because as a Parliament and a government we are not giving them the things they need to do their job.

We must give them the equipment and the training in order for them to do their job. Until we do that, we lose not only the respect of the people in the military, but we lose the respect of people around the world.

If we want to be a sovereign nation and be able to do our duty, whether it be in peacekeeping or peace making or even in combat around the world, then we need to take this seriously.

There is one thing that has surprised me very much. The government likes to get involved in areas of provincial jurisdiction, but in the one area that is so clearly an area of federal jurisdiction, it is delinquent. That is unacceptable.

● (1745)

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to speak to this motion to enhance and support our military. I am also proud to represent Calgary Centre, a riding that has a proud history of support and respect for our military.

In fact, many Calgarians were incensed during the recent election campaign when the Liberals mocked the Conservative Party's serious proposals to give our military the funding it deserves. Providing proper funding would allow the brave men and women who serve our nation to carry out their duties knowing they have been endowed with the best training and equipment possible.

Over the past few months we have seen the Liberals continue to show disregard for our armed forces. We even read this week that the Liberals intend to impose further cuts, cuts of perhaps \$50 million a year from our beleaguered armed forces. As one young officer recently told Conservative Senator Mike Forrestall, who quoted the young officer, "The government pretends to want a military and we pretend to have one".

I find the government's contemptuous attitudes disgraceful. Canadians are not pleased with such attitudes. We share a proud history of support for our armed forces. We are incensed by Liberal government cutbacks in military funding and are saddened by the tragic loss recently of submariner Lieutenant Chris Saunders.

This terrible event, combined with the never ending horror stories of aging Sea King helicopters, underequipped troops and the loss of Canada's international standing are surely sufficient examples for the government to recognize that it must stop ignoring our sovereignty, jeopardizing the safety and security of our nation and demeaning those in uniform. We must restore the respect for our servicemen and women and return a sense of pride to their commitment to protect us.

In the post 9/11 world, we face a new reality which includes threats of global terrorism, oppressive regimes and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Rather than approach these matters with the urgency they demand, the Liberals have opted to treat our military with contempt and our foreign policy with indifference.

A decade ago in its white paper on defence, the government forecasted a diminishing role for the Canadian military. The Liberals assumed that the world would become a safer place and that military and defence matters would become less important. The Liberal government was wrong then and it is wrong now.

While our allies have conducted thorough reviews of their defence policies after 9/11, the Canadian government has been unresponsive, wasting time and resources and placing our sovereignty and security at risk. The Liberals have chosen to keep these matters on the back burner, not deeming it necessary to adopt new defence policies to new realities. While they have dramatically reduced our defence capabilities throughout the years of cutbacks, they have multiplied our commitments abroad.

The cutbacks have been so severe that the military has been forced to defer funds for badly needed infrastructure upgrades just to fund day to day operations. Since it is capital spending that allows for the renewal of military capabilities, the future of our military has been sacrificed to pay for its day to day existence.

Canada now spends less than 1.1% of its gross domestic product on its military, far below the NATO average of 1.9%. That means, to quote Liberal Senator Colin Kenny who is chair of the Senate committee on national security and defence, "We are spending about half of what would legitimize us in the eyes of our allies and the rest of the world".

Not that long ago, from 1985 to 1987, under a Conservative government, a government with which I am proud to have been associated, the Canadian defence budget accounted for 2.2% of our gross domestic product, twice what the Liberals allocate today.

I am also very worried by the short-sighted, minimalist view adopted by the Liberal government on the role of our military. Conversely, as the Conservative Party leader said earlier in this debate, our party supports three longstanding and increasingly interlinked goals: the security of Canada, the collaborative defence of North America, and the promotion of peace and security on the international stage.

● (1750)

We must act now to deal with the ever increasing challenges that confront us. We must immediately increase defence spending by \$1.2 billion per year and continually increase annual expenditures until we at least reach the NATO average of 1.9% of GDP per year.

Our 52,300 regular forces now struggle to meet the demands placed upon them. It is too much to ask of our overworked and under-supported troops. To adequately serve and protect Canadians we need a force of at least 75,000 military personnel and we need to provide funding immediately for new equipment, including airplanes, helicopters, tanks and artillery.

Supply

I want to acknowledge the fact that members of the Canadian Forces have held up remarkably well under trying circumstances. The brave men and women whose job it is to protect us deserve our respect and support.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Roger Clavet (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I think at this stage the debate might be on the wrong track. I was just listening to my Conservative colleague and several others before him. Fortunately the interventions suggest that there are inaccuracies in the Conservative party's proposal. My colleagues in the NDP noticed it earlier and I agree with them.

I heard my Conservative colleague say that improved defence requires more money. This remark has been made many times. We are told numbers need to be increased and money needs to be added. We in the Bloc Québécois are against the Conservative motion because it seems like an exercise in reverse. It puts the cart before the horse. Let me explain.

Instead of investing more in defence, we have to start by re-evaluating Canada's foreign policy; we have to read it and understand it better. It is very important to grasp the nuances.

During previous interventions, I heard Conservative members say that it was very important to have a better army with more money because, in fact, the purpose of the army is to raise Canada's status and influence.

I think we would need a lot more than an army to enhance the reputation, status and influence of Canada. First, we need a long term vision. It would also be a good idea to have a government from time to time. That could be what is missing in Canada and my Conservative colleagues might agree with me that we may not be addressing this issue the right way.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, think that we need to have a debate on the plans for the future of our armed forces. We like to remind people that we are committed to improving the living conditions of our troops. It is important, and we are not just paying lip service. We believe that a better army begins with giving its members their due. But please, let us not pour in more money right away without developing a comprehensive policy and examining the whole situation.

This brings me to a quick discussion of the missile defence shield. This is an option we absolutely have to avoid. It is probably more important to talk about it than to continue to fund it.

Let me conclude by making a comment and asking my Conservative colleague a question. To ensure peace and security, we certainly have to focus more on development assistance. Should that not start with peacekeeping missions?

[*English*]

Mr. Lee Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if there was a question there frankly. If the member has some doubts as to what the motion is, I would be happy to read it again but he can do that himself of course, in both languages.

I did want to point out that if the member had further remarks to make, and he suggested we should have a longer debate on this

matter, we would have been pleased to have done that. We do consider it a very important point.

Not to diminish the other aspect of the member's question with regard to foreign aid, the debate today is on the question of national defence, the lack of national defence of our country and the lack of support for our troops and the commitments that we make to our military.

I do not need to reiterate the motion as it is stated here, and would simply thank the member for his comments.

• (1755)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was trying to be recognized earlier in the debate when one of our colleagues from the NDP was speaking. He used the term in reference to the Conservative platform that it was inappropriate and borderline irresponsible for us to make firm commitments prior to the outcome of the defence review. I take personal exception to that.

Too often in the past there have not been firm commitments made to our men and women in the military about what different political parties, in particular the government, are prepared to do for them. As I said repeatedly today, there are too many words and not enough action on behalf of the government. I do not think it is irresponsible for each party to state where it stands. I was pleased to hear my colleague from Calgary reiterate yet again exactly to what the Conservative Party is prepared to commit.

Mr. Lee Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I have found a remedy to his concern about comments made by the NDP. I just no longer pay any attention at all.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Newton—North Delta, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been extensive discussions with all the parties and you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move that the first report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations, presented to the House earlier today, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—NATIONAL DEFENCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to this important motion put forth by the opposition. I come from an area of the country in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour which is still largely a military community and the death of Lieutenant Saunders had a profound impact on us all.

I speak to this issue, not simply as a bystander but as an individual who grew up in an area like others in my area where many of my best friends, and dare I say many of my campaign workers, come from the military. The military is of great importance to me. I also wanted to speak today on the issue because I believe very strongly in the work that it does.

I came to Ottawa to support the interests of my constituents, to advocate on their behalf, and to challenge, when necessary, our government to do more. I stand behind the members of our military. I know of their loyalty, hard work and dedication, courage, skills and determination to keep our ships and aircraft operational, sometimes under less than ideal circumstances.

I came to Ottawa to not only look out for the interests of my constituents, but as an MP I also believe I am here to protect and to support the national interest as well.

Let me say in the strongest terms possible that I will advocate and defend the interests of the military in my area of the country. I will do so because this issue goes well beyond local interests. Our military and its support is an issue that affects us all.

I came to this Chamber to discuss solutions to our problems, including this issue. I would like to do so in concert with all of my colleagues on all sides of the House.

I believe the Prime Minister will act and continue to support the men and women in our armed forces. He has proven to me that he is serious about addressing this issue. As an example, one of his first decisions was to replace the Sea King helicopters.

We face challenging times in our world. Global security is paramount. It is necessary that we be prepared and equipped as a military to undertake the defence of our country, and indeed to defend the interest of global security when called upon by the international community, when the cause is right and only when the cause is right.

It is clear that our military has some of the finest soldiers in the world and must continue to receive the necessary support, and indeed enhanced support to meet our obligations here and abroad.

In the October 5, 2004 Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister committed to releasing a comprehensive international policy statement that reflects our government's intention to integrate our defence, diplomacy, development and trade efforts in order to assert our interests and to protect our values in a changing world.

The government is in the process of this review and upon completion the role of the Canadian Forces will be brought up to date and adequately funded as a result. I support the government in this regard. I urge, that in this process, that we be comprehensive and create an integrated policy that reflects our values as Canadians.

Some would argue that we have to earn our way in the world, and I agree with that. I am proud of our country because I know Canada

Supply

is a respected country, a peaceful country. It is clear that ours will never be the biggest military force in the world, nor should it be.

It must be smart, strategic and focused with Canadian principles and values at its core, values that support diplomacy as the first and best solution to our global problems, values that speak to use of military as a last resort, not a first response, and only in circumstances that honour our principles and values.

The government is also committed to sound fiscal management and to ensuring that we invest in high priority areas, and there are many of those. Beginning with the 1999 budget, the Liberal government began investing new money in defence which by 2006-07 will amount to almost \$11 billion. This demonstrates that we are serious about this issue.

Coming from a military area, I know and I hear of the strains placed on the Canadian Forces, and they are well-known. That is why I am pleased that the government is moving ahead to expand the size of the regular forces by 5,000 regular force members and 3,000 reservists. I hope and would support that we do more in years to come. Our election platform, the platform that I ran under and support, commits to providing new money to fund this initiative.

● (1800)

This increase will go a long way toward solving some of the problems associated with recent high operational demands, enhancing our ability to respond to domestic emergencies, and contributing to international operations.

I think it should be noted, and I suspect all members would agree, that the introduction of the tax exemptions of income earned by the military and police while serving in high risk international missions is a positive and important step to help our military personnel.

In April 2004 the government extended the tax exemption to all deployments except low risk missions. Our government's national security policy includes a six point plan to enhance Canada's maritime security, along with an investment of \$308 million. As part of this plan we will be increasing the on water presence of the navy, as well as establishing the maritime security operation centres in the Halifax-Dartmouth area, my own riding, and Esquimalt. These centres will involve cross-department and agency coordination, and will include personnel from the Coast Guard, Transport Canada and the RCMP.

In recent months the government has announced an increase in the availability of reserves for civil preparedness, including their capacity to deal with natural disasters and local emergencies.

I am not here to blame people or to create problems, or to embarrass colleagues from years past. I believe strongly that we must all work together to be honest in the way we find solutions to our problems and to do what parliamentarians are called upon to do, which is to find solutions for national problems.

Supply

I believe we need to reinvest in our military, and I hope all members will work together to meet those objectives. Predecessors from my own riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour from all parties have left a strong legacy of support for our men and women in the military. There is Mike Forrestall, who was a member for 25 years, who is involved in the Senate defence committee. Ron MacDonald, who was visiting here today as a matter of fact, served in this Chamber for nine years and was one of the strongest supporters that the military had. Wendy Lill, my predecessor, with the New Democratic Party, was a strong supporter of military families and the military.

My commitment to military personnel is to ensure that they are properly trained, properly equipped, properly compensated and properly deployed. While I may disagree with members opposite on how our military should be deployed and in what causes they should be asked to serve, I support increased funding for our personnel. I believe our government is moving strongly in the right direction. It is my intent to ensure that we stay true to that course.

• (1805)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (York—Simcoe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, freedom and democracy are important Canadian values and ones we have enjoyed throughout our entire history. Our history is instructive to us when it comes to the question of defence. Canada was formed largely by the leadership of Sir John A. Macdonald, but in many ways in reaction to security threats that Canada faced at that time. There was a need for British North America to bind itself together in defence against threats from outside.

That has always been one reason for our military. However, we never believed as Canadians that all we worry about is ourselves, that our security lies only here in Canada. We believe that we have a worldwide obligation to advance freedom and to defend freedom because a threat anywhere to the free world, tyranny anywhere, is a threat to Canadians here and a threat to our world order.

I have heard people say we do not need the world's biggest military. If we look at Canada's history and our involvement in World War I, we came close to having one of the world's biggest military forces. Canada's nationhood was forged on the battlefields of Europe where so many gave their lives. That was when our country really reached its true status as a world player.

In World War II we fought unprecedented tyranny. Even after World War II, we have been key players. Korea was the very first United Nations action. It was not a peacekeeping action, it was a peacemaking action, advancing the cause of freedom and protecting against an authoritarian threat. In every case, our proud military tradition came to the fore. We had a military force that was able to step up to the plate.

Today, people are sometimes complacent about the freedom that we enjoy in Canada. We forget that role, duty and obligation we have to the future. In my view, Canada cannot forget that role. We have to work to advance the cause of freedom everywhere.

However, these days it is difficult. We have now had a series of conflicts where the Prime Minister and the government have stood up and said we cannot play our role, that we may believe in the cause but we do not have an equipped military capable of doing our part on

the world stage to fight tyranny, to fight authoritarianism and to protect freedom. To me that is a sad reflection.

Does the hon. member think that we can see from this government the kind of changes that are necessary for Canada to once again play that role on the world stage, of advancing the cause of freedom and protecting liberty, not just here but abroad?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the sentiment the hon. member described and certainly the history of Canada's military personnel and the armed forces through the years, although there is perhaps a very big difference between the way I would see the role of our military and how some members opposite might see it.

I think one of the most important statements that we as a country have made in the last number of years was not to go to war in Iraq, to stand up for an independent Canadian foreign policy that is made here in Canada and that allows Canada to be independent in the world. It does not take anything away from the importance of the work our military people do. I stood at the dock in Halifax in 1991 when our ships went off to Desert Storm and I stood there proudly when they returned.

There is a role for Canada's military in the world and I think we can perform it. As I indicated in my speech, I believe we do need to put more money into defence, but I think we are perfectly capable of being a world player without going to war in Iraq.

• (1810)

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know the government has indicated on numerous occasions that it has put more money into the military and it has increased the numbers of the forces and the reserves. I am curious to hear if the member is aware of what those actual numbers are for the increases to the forces and reserves. I am of the impression that although the government talks about increasing all these numbers, in actuality it really is not. There is no real effort for recruitment and retention. I would like to know if the member knows what those numbers are.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, in terms of specific numbers we have \$300 million to help in the cost of deployed operations, \$300 million for search and rescue aircraft, \$3 billion for the maritime helicopter project, \$700 million for the mobile gun system, and \$2 billion for the joint supply ships, as well as putting in 5,000 new full time forces and the 3,000 reservists. So yes, I believe the numbers are there. I believe that we can back them up. I believe they make sense. I believe they make us stronger as a nation in the world.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that all day I have been listening to rhetoric from members opposite, and I was not going to stand up to comment because I thought that many people from our side of the House said very relevant things, but I could not hold myself back. I have to ask the member a question.

My father was in the Black Watch. He was a decorated World War II veteran. There is something that has not been mentioned here, and that is growing up in a family where one's dad spends most of his time in Deer Lodge, which is the veterans' hospital in Manitoba. It has not been mentioned how hard it is make a living growing up on a farm with one's dad away all the time.

As a former MLA in Manitoba and as a current MP in Manitoba, I am now dealing with veterans. As we know, there are few who are alive now, but I am dealing with veterans who are talking to me about the fact that they cannot get the proper false teeth, hearing aids or medical attention from this government.

With all due respect, I think it is a sad day in the House of Commons when I have to come here as a member of Parliament and the first thing I hear is about the death of a military person.

I tried today to stay out of things because I have to watch myself. It hits me very emotionally because of what I have seen first-hand as a child growing up and now as an MP, because, with all due respect, the military is neglected. One thing the member said really hit me. I could not hold myself back. The member said it and members opposite have talked all day about how well the military is being "taken care of", and I heard tonight that everyone is being compensated.

With all due respect, I would like the member to explain to me how, in this day and age, right now, coming up to Remembrance Day, the veterans are being compensated in such a grand way. I want to be able to take that message back very specifically now to the veterans who do not have housing, who do not have their false teeth replaced when they need to, who do not have the hearing aids when they need them, who are sick—

Supply

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have a question from the hon. member opposite. We have had the chance to be on a panel together as new members in the chamber. I certainly appreciate the generous tone of her question; it seems to have continued.

I think we do an awful lot for our veterans. I have already indicated that I think we should do more for our military personnel and I think we should do more for veterans. I think the guaranteed income supplement and increasing that also help veterans. There are a lot of things we do that help veterans across the country.

We will all be paying our tribute on November 11. I personally had the opportunity, since the opening of the House three weeks ago, to lay two wreaths with many veterans to commemorate the lives lost. While I have the opportunity, I would also like to mention to the House—

• (1815)

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Marcel Proulx): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but it being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to the order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion are deemed put, and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, October 26, 2004.

It being 6:15 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:15 p.m.)

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