



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 13, 2005

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Palliser.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

VAISAKHI

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sikhs in Canada and around the world are celebrating Vaisakhi, the 306th birthday of the Sikh nation, Khalsa, this month.

The founder of the Sikh nation, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, prayed for equality, truthfulness, tolerance, honesty, brotherhood and respect for all. Canadian Sikhs are invited to follow in the path of Sikh gurus. Canada's Sikh community and I deeply appreciate the Prime Minister's continued involvement in the Vaisakhi celebrations, including his attendance at this morning's religious ceremony in the Confederation Building.

Sikh Canadians can be proud of their many significant contributions in all fields of Canadian achievement. I wish to congratulate all Sikh Canadians on the anniversary of the birth of the Sikh nation, the Khalsa.

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• (1405)

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, private ownership of property and the development of that property is the basis of our national economic growth and prosperity. Yet the proclamation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982 did not include property rights.

Property rights should include the right to buy, maintain, sell, bequeath or enjoy one's properties. Enshrining property rights would not prevent governments from interfering with the use of property but would have to provide appropriate compensation to the owners.

The current situation is particularly frustrating for rural land-owners. For example, if the government decides that an animal species is in danger and one of them is found on a rural property, the owner cannot make use of the affected land. However the owner continues to pay taxes. If the owner tries to sell the land, no one is likely to buy it because it is unusable.

If property rights are acceptable in a communist country like China, why are they not acceptable in Canada? It is time for Parliament to protect property rights.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GRAND FALLS KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS

Mr. Andy Savoy (Tobique—Mactaquac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to pay tribute today in the House of Commons to the Grand Falls Knights of Columbus Council 0621, Msgr. Leclerc Chapter. This organization has been serving my riding of Tobique—Mactaquac for 60 years and has just celebrated its diamond jubilee.

Two of its members have been part of this organization throughout its 60 years and several others have long records of service as well. They are: Msgr. Urbain Lang, member of the Knights of Columbus for the past 63 years, even before the Grand Falls Council was formed; Joe Toner, 60 years of service; Bernard Savage and Patrick Ouellette, 59 years; Everard Daigle, 49 years; and Enoil Bourgoquin, 42 years.

I want to congratulate the Grand Falls Knights of Columbus on their 60th anniversary.

* * *

QUEBEC SOLO AND SMALL ENSEMBLE COMPETITION

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Quebec's fifth annual solo and small ensemble competition will be held in Victoriaville, in my riding, from April 15 to 17. The theme this year is "Hats off to Musicians".

More than 1,700 musicians between the ages of 7 and 42 will take part in this major event being held under the honorary presidency of Jean-François Harrison, a popular actor with young viewers.

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This competition is being organized by the Fédération des harmonies et des orchestres symphoniques du Québec, which has over 13,000 members.

More than 800 performances will be held in about 10 different venues during this prestigious competition. Over \$30,000 in scholarships will be shared by the best musicians and musical ensembles.

The public will be able to attend a number of performances and concerts being held at various locations.

This is a unique opportunity for the public to enjoy our local talents.

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[English]

NATIONAL DAY OF BULGARIA

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House as the first federal member of Parliament of Bulgarian heritage.

It was a great honour for me to attend the National Day of Bulgaria celebration at the Bulgarian Embassy. The National Day of Bulgaria celebrates the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule in 1878.

On that auspicious occasion, I witnessed the presentation of the Insignia of Honour, the “Golden Laurel” of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria to Mr. Luc Dupont for his contribution to the development of economic relations between Canada and Bulgaria. Mr. Dupont is the first Canadian to receive this honour.

I would ask that all parliamentarians join me in offering their congratulations to Mr. Luc Dupont on his receipt of the Golden Laurel and to Bulgarians around the world in celebration of their National Day of Bulgaria.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as Canadians become more disgusted with the sponsorship scandal, many are turning to the Conservative Party to form the next government. They are looking for a party which does not muzzle their members for important votes on great social issues, a party which does not unilaterally shut down parliamentary committees because they fear negative testimony and a party which does not resort to shady backroom deals with party henchmen in order to win elections.

With one phone call to the Government of Ontario, our leader was able to establish better working relationships with our largest province than the Prime Minister has over the past 10 months. His support for the provinces in the fiscal imbalance led the provincial Liberal finance minister, Greg Sorbara, to state that the opposition leader “is a great friend of Canada”.

If the leader of the official opposition can achieve better working relationships with the provincial government with just one phone call, the public can just imagine what he would do as Prime Minister.

BOXING

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise in the House of Commons today to congratulate one of my constituents, Michael Gerrow. Michael is a 15-year-old resident of Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia.

Today I am proud to announce that Michael has returned from Prince George, B.C. where he received a gold medal in the welterweight division of the Canadian Boxing Championship.

Michael is a member of the Tommy Gordon Boxing Club in Florence, Cape Breton where he is coached by John MacNeil. John and other volunteers at the boxing club are doing a great job working with the youth of our community and are to be commended for their good work.

Cape Breton is very proud of Michael and gave him a hero's welcome at home in Florence. On behalf of all Cape Bretoners, I want to congratulate Michael and the Tommy Gordon Boxing Club on their hard-earned success and wish Michael many more gold medals.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

DEMOCRACY

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, democracy is threatened when people are prepared to lie, betray, scorn, to mislead and humiliate Quebec out of greed, greed for power, material wealth, the pretence of unification and dirty money, and in the name of the leader.

Democracy is threatened when manipulative programs attempt to impose deceitful and mind-numbing presences, sterile unanimity and conspiratorial silences.

Democracy is threatened when fear, nepotism, hypocrisy and corruption, in arrogance, pound on Quebec's door in order to erect monuments to ignorance and partisanship.

The Bloc Québécois believes that human dignity, the one true value, must never be diminished or debased, especially in politics. We are convinced that, in order to interest a substantial number of individuals in our communities to do their civic duty, politics must not only seem clean, it must also be clean through and through.

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[English]

HEALTH

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Needle Aid is a small medical business located in my riding of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. This relatively new company is innovative and forward thinking, and is an example of how a small business can succeed with the support of government through ACOA.

Needle Aid was developed in Canada as a safe, convenient device designed to guide a needle safely to the right spot and is of particular benefit to those individuals who are required to self-administer their needles. Needle Aid is helpful to a variety of patients: the elderly, visually impaired, diabetics, and for those who at times have a fear of needles. This is a valuable service to many Canadians.

I congratulate Needle Aid chief executive officer Tom Inkpen and his entire staff for their hard work in developing new technologies to assist in the care of Canadians. I also congratulate ACOA and its minister for supporting technology and innovation in Atlantic Canada.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a proud Canadian and as such it is my duty to stand up for honesty, integrity and accountability.

The fine citizens of Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre have entrusted me to uphold what is right and to put an end to Liberal corruption. Extortion, corruption and criminality are not Canadian values. They are however the values of the Liberal Party of Canada. The fact that the Liberals not only condoned but participated in these activities is unforgivable.

Simply put, the Prime Minister, the cabinet and the Liberal Party as a whole are not fit to govern. Canadians deserve an open, accountable government that not only respects Canadians but also respects Canadian laws.

From the outright criminal fraud and money laundering to the cronyism appointments of this government, one thing is very clear: from Gagliano, to Chrétien, to the current Prime Minister, a Liberal is a Liberal is a Liberal.

On behalf of all Canadians, I have a message for the Liberals. We will not be bought and come election time, we will not forget.

* * *

[Translation]

POLYVALENTE AUX-QUATRE-VENTS

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity on March 18 to meet a group of students from the Polyvalente Aux-Quatre-Vents in Dalhousie, New Brunswick, to tell them about my role as an MP and the role of the government.

I was fascinated to see their interest in Canadian politics and the relevancy of their questions. It was an extremely rewarding experience for me to talk with young people, who are the future of our country. I am sure that some of them will be here in the House one day. I encourage all my colleagues to take part in such exchanges so that young people can learn more about our system of government.

I want to publicly thank the teacher, Joan Branch-McIntyre, and her students for having invited me to their class. I hope that it was as rewarding an experience for them as it was for me.

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[English]

HEALTH

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian women were angry this week when they learned that Health Canada conducted secret meetings with breast implant manufacturers to discuss returning silicone breast implants to the Canadian market.

This incident highlights a problem with the way Health Canada conducts drug approvals. Canadians are often kept in the dark about safety concerns, the true effectiveness of a product, and even how a product is tested.

Clinical tests on silicone implants were often too short and followed too few women to be effective. It was only over time that Canadian women reported leaking implants and increased complications with arthritis, vascular problems and autoimmune disorders.

Offering a public comment period after a report is filed will not protect the health and safety of Canadian women. This is yet another example of how women are not a priority for this government.

* * *

● (1415)

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister referred to himself as having the moral authority to lead Canada out of the scandal ridden quagmire that the Liberal Party has landed in.

However, the real truth has come out and it is not pretty. His conspirators in the Liberal Party have revealed their utter contempt for Canadians of non-white origin. In fact, cultural communities are only welcomed by Liberals as slaves during elections and leadership campaigns, according to Liberal organizer Beryl Wajzman who said in today's *Le Devoir* "Every time the Liberal Party needs cultural communities, it is for two reasons: as slaves during an election campaign or to buy tickets".

This is outrageous coming from one of the Prime Minister's closest organizers. It shows the real Liberal attitude toward ethnic communities. They expect them to show up and vote Liberal, but really think of them as nothing more than their personal property.

I demand that the Prime Minister stop thumping his chest about his moral authority, and apologize to every Canadian he and his party has ever exploited.

* * *

[Translation]

921 L'ANCIENNE-LORETTE SQUADRON

Mr. Bernard Cleary (Louis-Saint-Laurent, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for over 10 years, 921 L'Ancienne-Lorette Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Cadets has been giving a voice to our young people by providing them with training in various survival techniques, experience with flying techniques, instrumental music practice and a number of sports.

Oral Questions

This year, the squadron is launching the President's Challenge, in which participants will have to refurbish a certified aircraft under the supervision of experienced pilots.

The Bloc Québécois thanks all the stakeholders who make 921 Squadron a place where young people can learn, thereby helping to build the Quebec society of tomorrow.

* * *

[English]

AIR-INDIA

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night the House spoke for the victims of the Air-India disaster and demanded that the government hold a public inquiry into the worst act of terrorism in Canadian history.

Since the B.C. Supreme Court verdict on March 16, I, along with my leader in the Conservative caucus, have been demanding that the government hold a public inquiry. The families have waited in anguish for 20 years and have watched the investigation drag on and on. They endured the horror of reliving the moment year after year with no visible progress to a conclusion.

In the end the families are left with nothing, no sense of closure and more importantly, no answers. The Deputy Prime Minister's eminent person approach is not what the families and Canadians want. It is a sham and a cover-up.

To honour the memory of 329 people who died on Air-India flight 182, this House spoke last night and now it is time for the government to act.

* * *

[Translation]

TEXTILE INDUSTRY

Hon. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday in Cowansville, I took part in an important announcement for the textile sector. Consoltex Inc. has announced a \$14 million investment in its plants, with the participation of the Government of Quebec.

Consoltex Inc., of Cowansville, will be the main benefactor of this investment which maintains 40 jobs. I commend its president, Marcel Thibault, who chose to innovate in an industry which is facing major problems. My thanks to the MNA for Brome-Missisquoi, Pierre Paradis, and to Minister Claude Bécharé for putting everything together.

I am totally committed to the textile industry in Brome—Missisquoi. I have organized meetings in Ottawa with the various departments concerned, to open new markets internationally. Sustained cooperation among all levels, the federal, provincial and municipal governments, the company's management and its labour union, will ensure that we can not only preserve, but also develop our textile industry.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

AIR-INDIA

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night the House voted to hold a public inquiry into the Air-India tragedy. In fact, members representing every party in this House voted for that motion. The Prime Minister has the moral responsibility to respect the will of the House and the wishes of the families.

Will the Prime Minister respect this vote and immediately call a public inquiry into the Air-India tragedy?

• (1420)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister met this week with a number of the families. She announced that she would be announcing the name of an eminent Canadian who will meet with the families. This individual will seek the answers and seek the questions that should be answered, and the government will determine its position.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House has voted for a full public inquiry.

I want to return to the Prime Minister's evasive answers yesterday. Before the Gomery commission, the Prime Minister said that he had barely any relationship with Claude Boulay, anything beyond a casual "How do you do?" That was his testimony. However, another witness has testified that the Prime Minister discussed government business with Claude Boulay over lunch at the Liberal convention.

Did the Prime Minister have lunch with Claude Boulay on any occasion, yes or no?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my testimony is a matter of public knowledge. Any allegation that I interfered in any contract is a lie.

I will tell members what is not a lie, and that is what is now the Conservative position on health care. Last week it was Ralph Klein. Today it was Preston Manning and Mike Harris.

What is the Conservative agenda, which is no longer hidden? I will tell members. It is no federal role in health care. It is no Canada Health Act. It is no one saying no to the privatization of health care. I will fight the Conservatives tooth and nail and we will protect the Canada Health Act.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we often accuse the Prime Minister of not being transparent, but that was about as transparent as one can be. I am going to ask the Prime Minister the same question again until he answers it.

[Translation]

Yesterday, when asked whether or not he had lunch with Claude Boulay, another sponsorship millionaire, the Prime Minister refused to answer.

Oral Questions

I will put my question again. Did the Prime Minister have lunch with Claude Boulay at the Liberal convention, yes or no?

[*English*]

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again, the full testimony is there. However, let us talk about transparency. Let us talk about the Conservative hidden agenda on health care that the hon. member refuses to divulge.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It seems the invitation is being taken up rather enthusiastically. I know the Prime Minister said, “let us talk”. Perhaps we could use other words and carry on with the answer without invoking the need for everyone else to get into the discussion during question period. There are places to carry on those discussions outside, but we are doing it in here, and it is a one on one question at the moment. I invite all hon. members to remember that.

The Prime Minister now has the floor to answer this question.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has the responsibility to Canadians to give us his vision on health care.

The fact is the three most important pillars of his party, Ralph Klein, Mike Harris and Preston Manning, have now revealed what he is afraid to tell the Canadian people, and that is that he would gut the Canada Health Act, withdraw the federal government's role in health care, and privatize health care. We will not allow that to happen. We will defend Canada's health care system.

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is no wonder the head of the Liberal Party had to write members saying “don't panic”.

I will read the testimony:

Mr. Finkelstein: Do you recall, though, any meeting or get-together of any significance beyond a casual, How do you do?

[The Prime Minister]: No, no.

Alain Renaud: I heard about it at the Convention of the Liberal Party, when the [Prime Minister] and Claude Boulay were together and Mrs. Deslauriers, and they were talking about Attractions Canada. They were talking a lot about it. It was difficult not to listen. I was beside a table, at the Convention, eating a sandwich, and it looked very friendly.

Did—

• (1425)

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to the hon. member that he read the full testimony and that he also read the comments of Judge Gomery when he passed a comment on what Mr. Renaud said.

Having said that, why is the hon. member refusing to address his hidden agenda on health care? Why is he refusing to stand here and deal with the issues raised by Preston Manning and by Mike Harris on his behalf? Canadians are entitled to know what the Conservative position is. Why did he send Mike Harris and Preston Manning out to do his bidding?

Hon. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if this were not so serious, I would say the Prime Minister is in danger of making himself a national joke.

It is very simple. The Prime Minister testified he had no real relationship of any significance with Claude Boulay. One last time, has he ever sat down and had lunch with Claude Boulay, yes or no?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, health care may be a joke to the Leader of the Opposition but it is no joke—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The Leader of the Opposition has asked a question. The Prime Minister is attempting to answer and he is entitled to respond to the question that was asked. We will have some order. We are wasting a great deal of time. Some members will be frightfully disappointed at the end that they missed their questions and the answers.

The right hon. Prime Minister has the floor to answer the question.

Right Hon. Paul Martin: Mr. Speaker, only that leader thinks health care is a joke. Those members will not be able to shout down the millions of Canadians who want to defend the health care system. They have now called the principles of the Canada Health Act, the federal role, into account. They now say they want to privatize the health care system, and the Leader of the Opposition does not have the guts to stand up—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in his open letter to the Liberals, the Prime Minister wrote:

I made sure that those implicated were removed from their positions as crown corporation executives.

To make things perfectly clear, is the Prime Minister stating that Jean Pelletier, André Ouellet and Marc LeFrançois were let go because they were directly involved in the sponsorship scandal?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when these events occurred, the reasons for the dismissal of these individuals were given. Clearly, in the case of Mr. Pelletier, it was related to Myriam Bédard. The reasons were given in every instance.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this version is in total contradiction to the one he wrote to his supporters. He is getting tangled up in his contradictory versions.

He also says he is the one who recalled Canada's ambassador to Denmark, Alfonso Gagliano. That is his version. Yet he told the Gomery inquiry, in response to a question from Mr. Gagliano's lawyer, “Mr. Fournier, we never judged Mr. Gagliano”. He went on, “and it was a recommendation from the minister that I endorsed, but we never judged Mr. Gagliano”.

How can he state now that he fired him and recalled him from Denmark because of the sponsorship scandal? When is he telling the truth: before Justice Gomery or before this House? And when is he lying?

• (1430)

The Speaker: The last question may pose a problem, but the Prime Minister can answer the previous one.

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the case of Mr. Gagliano, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the time said that he had been recalled in order to preserve Canada's image abroad. We know very well where the image problem lay: it was the result of the events here, within Canada.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are hard pressed to understand the remarks by the Prime Minister, who was quite confident about dismissing Alfonso Gagliano, Jean Pelletier, André Ouellet and Marc LeFrançois, risking court proceedings, which subsequently were initiated, but said he knew nothing when he testified before the Gomery commission.

How can he be confident enough to dismiss three heads of crown corporations and an ambassador but say he was not aware of what had gone on?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister took very decisive action, first, to remove these people and further, to end the sponsorship program. He set up the Gomery commission, which we absolutely and unequivocally support, to pursue legal action against 19 firms and individuals to recover \$41 million for the Canadian taxpayer.

The hon. member is absolutely right to remind Canadians that the Prime Minister has taken action and he will continue to take action on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer and on behalf of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services has got the wrong tape. That is not the question.

The decision to dismiss everyone was made well before the end of the work of the Gomery commission, as the Prime Minister even brags in an open letter to his Liberal friends.

So since he took decisive action against these senior managers before the end of the commission's proceedings, why then is he refusing to answer here, when the commission has still to complete its work?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, further to the hon. member's question, the fact is the government has acted decisively to strengthen governance within departments and with the comptroller function. The government has introduced whistleblower protection which has the capacity to make a real difference in terms of accountability on an ongoing basis.

Through an expenditure review process, the government has saved the Canadian taxpayer \$11 billion over the next five years. That is money that can be invested in health care, in child care and in Canadian cities and communities.

We are demonstrating respect for the Canadian taxpayer and respect for Canadian values.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have seen no defence of the Canada Health Act. We have seen an epidemic of privatization under the Prime Minister. Let us be crystal clear.

[*Translation*]

Thirteen years ago, the Prime Minister said that cleaning up the environment was the greatest battle facing humanity. Today, he has laid down his arms. His Kyoto plan breaks his promise. The major polluters can do what they like, and the government will send our money off to Europe rather than clean up our air and our water. Our children deserve better.

After such a long wait, why such a big failure?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the leader of the NDP to reread the plan, which will soon be tabled in the House and which, as a courtesy, we gave in advance of its tabling to all MPs to read. If he rereads it, he will see the absurdity and inaccuracy of his evaluation of it.

The fact is that the plan will enable us to be a leader in building a sustainable economy and to do our part for the planet.

[*English*]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time to redefine a scandal. When we promise to clean up pollution for 12 years and it goes up and people can barely breathe, that is a scandal. When we cave in to the big polluters and Canadians have to pay the bill as a result, that is a scandal.

That is the problem with politics right now. Canadians called for action on climate change, not to surrender. Time is running out. Is this the best the Prime Minister can come up with in the face of a crisis?

• (1435)

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it will be my great pleasure to discuss the plan with the hon. member when the plan is released. Everyone in the House will see how partisan the leader of the NDP is today. Instead of keeping the environment above partisan politics, he is involved in partisan politics in a very shameful way.

* * *

SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, he consummated millions of dollars of business with the government and the Prime Minister at the time was political minister for Quebec. Yet the Prime Minister said to Gomery that he did not know Mr. Boulay. He just had a passing acquaintance with him.

Did the Prime Minister ever have lunch, as another witness testified, with Mr. Boulay?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is actually incumbent upon the opposition to get its facts straight. First, I was never political minister for Quebec. Second, the facts are all set out in the testimony. It says that there may have been social or political occasions where I would have seen him.

Oral Questions

However, the issue really is the defence of the Canada Health Act. Why will the Conservatives not stand up now and defend the Canada Health Act? The most important members of their party have essentially attempted to eviscerate it. The Leader of the Opposition and his acolytes have a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had many opportunities to set the record straight about whether he was just an acquaintance of Mr. Boulay or whether he had lunch with him, but he has refused to answer.

Why does the Prime Minister have a pathological aversion to telling the truth?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was very open, transparent and cooperative when he was a witness before Justice Gomery, a commission that he had the courage to set up in the first place.

She is commenting on the testimony of a witness that has already contradicted some other witness testimony. I would urge her to do what all Canadians want her and her party to do, which is to wait for Justice Gomery's report.

Last night on television the leader of the Conservatives said, "There's lots of people in the Liberal Party of honesty and integrity". He is absolutely right and our Prime Minister is one of them.

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is one of the most pathetic performances by a Prime Minister I have ever seen. It is no wonder David Kilgour ran away from his party.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I suspect the hon. member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam was referring to the hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont. I think that is to whom he was referring. He knows he has to refer to members by their constituency name and not by their real name.

[*Translation*]

Mr. James Moore: Mr. Speaker, when the sponsorship scandal was in its heyday, Lucie Castelli, known as the Prime Minister's eyes and ears in his riding, sat on the Quebec Liberal Party's finance commission with Alain Renaud and Jacques Corriveau, who allegedly obtained almost \$500,000 from Groupaction and the sponsorship program without doing the work.

How are Canadians to believe the Prime Minister's statement that he knew nothing?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his preamble, the hon. member referred to the hon. member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

I would like to remind the hon. member what the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont had to say this morning on CBC. He said, "I never heard, in all the seven years in cabinet, a word about the problem with the kinds of things that were revealed at the Gomery inquiry last week. To me it makes sense that the Prime

Minister did not know anything about this and he has said that many times".

That is the hon. member he has referred to who has left the Liberal Party because he does not want to defend Justice Gomery.

• (1440)

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think they are scraping close to the bottom of the barrel when they are relying on somebody who has quit the party to defend them and the scandal that the government is involved in. That is pretty pathetic.

Last year we learned that Castelli sought and obtained \$500,000 in sponsorship cash on behalf of Serge Savard, the Prime Minister's million dollar fundraiser. Castelli assisted Serge Savard in getting sponsorship cash.

How can the Prime Minister still claim that he knew nothing about ad scam when his chief organizer was involved in getting cash for his million dollar fundraiser?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister is not afraid of the truth. Our Prime Minister has put country ahead of party. Our Prime Minister has put principle ahead of partisanship. That is exactly the opposite of what the Conservatives are doing, what the Bloc is doing with this important issue.

The fact is the Prime Minister supports Justice Gomery because he believes, as Canadians believe, that Canadians deserve the truth. That is exactly what they will have with Justice Gomery's report, not a smattering of witness testimony that some days contradicts other witness testimony. Canadians do not benefit from that kind of partisanship. They benefit from the truth.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Quebecers are entitled to the truth. However, on April 11 in the House, in response to a question from the leader of the official opposition about his actions with regard to the sponsorship scandal, the Prime Minister said, from his seat, "We are the government that fired the heads of a number of crown corporations. We are the government that recalled the ambassador to Denmark". Those were his actions.

He told the Gomery commission, "We never judged Mr. Gagliano". They never judged Mr. Gagliano, Mr. Speaker.

We want to know which truth to believe?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Both, Mr. Speaker. We were the ones who recalled Mr. Gagliano. We never judged Mr. Gagliano. It is a matter of Canada's reputation abroad. We will leave the conclusions to Justice Gomery, as we should.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if I understand correctly, he dismissed the ambassador without judging him. He got up one morning wondering who he could dismiss that day: Gagliano, what a coincidence.

Oral Questions

Are we to believe this? Is he telling us that he never judged someone he dismissed? Is this the kind of truth we can expect from a Prime Minister, that was how he chose someone? This truth does not hold water. There are two different versions, one under oath and the other as leader. Which are we to believe?

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was extremely clear just now in the House. He said that Ambassador Gagliano was recalled for reasons relating to Canada's reputation abroad. This had nothing to do with the deliberations by Justice Gomery and eventually the courts. It was a matter of Canada's credibility abroad, which certainly interests this side of the House more than the other.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we would like it if the minister were more concerned about the government's credibility. That would be somewhat of an improvement.

The Prime Minister and the government did not wait to fire individuals and sue ad agencies involved in the sponsorship scandal.

How is it that they had enough evidence to sue the agencies and fire individuals, but not enough to make the Liberal Party put the dirty money into a trust fund?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, opposition members called for the recall of Mr. Gagliano at the time. That was done. They should be commending the Prime Minister for doing that and pursuing that course of action, not attacking him for it. Furthermore, it is clear that what is going on here is hysteria. It is reputations being smeared. Today the *Ottawa Citizen* said:

Reputations are being casually smeared, the self-serving claims of accused fraud artists...are accepted as gospel and...fragments of testimony are flung across the Commons aisle every day, under the cover of parliamentary privilege.

Why not let Justice Gomery be the judge?

•(1445)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the agencies, the government takes action. When it comes to senior officials, it takes immediate action. When it comes to the Liberal Party, we have to wait until the end.

Is the Prime Minister using the end of the Gomery inquiry as an excuse because he is planning to use the dirty money to finance a fourth election, since he is currently unable to finance his own party? That is the only way they could manage an election.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the party has been clear. If the party received inappropriate money, it will reimburse the taxpayers.

[English]

The initiative taken by the Prime Minister to recover funds from 19 firms and individuals, \$41 million of funds, is an important one. I am glad the hon. member recognizes the importance of it. It is achieving justice on behalf of Canadians. It is achieving justice on behalf of the Canadian taxpayer.

Regardless of his or her party stripe, anyone who committed fraud, anyone who achieved financial gain inappropriately on the back of the battle against separatism deserves to be punished.

[Translation]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claimed that some swindlers had organized a parallel system of funding for the Liberal Party in Quebec.

Beryl Wajsman, a Liberal, said that the only parallel funding system that existed in the Liberal Party was the one set up by friends of the Prime Minister.

Will the Prime Minister finally stop denying his involvement in his party's dubious funding and admit that his henchmen helped him finance his campaign through illicit means?

[English]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Prime Minister has been very clear that he has worked assiduously to support Justice Gomery. We as a government have cooperated fully with Justice Gomery.

In fact, the Liberal Party has cooperated fully with Justice Gomery by engaging auditors to conduct financial reviews and providing all that information to Justice Gomery. The party continues to work cooperatively with Justice Gomery because we as Liberals want to get to the bottom of this issue. We as Liberals want to defend Canadian values and the Canadian taxpayer and do the right thing.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, here is what senior Liberal organizer Beryl Wajsman said in *Le Devoir* about what the Liberal Party really thinks about ethnic minorities: "The Liberal Party of Canada needs the cultural communities only for two purposes, as slaves during an electoral campaign, or to buy tickets".

The Prime Minister claims that he has the moral authority. How can he explain the immoral contempt his party has for new Canadians?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is really quite a twist. I guess being one of those new Canadians and a minister of the crown qualifies me as being held in contempt.

I think the only contempt that I feel is that which the Leader of the Opposition indicated toward one of his own members yesterday, when on a point of order he took the opportunity to identify the \$50,000 that his member from Newton—North Delta charges his constituents in order to write me a letter and the Leader of the Opposition referred to that as criminal activity.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that statement was entirely incorrect.

The special counsel for the Minister of Justice believes that cultural communities in this country should be seen and not heard. Beryl Wajzman in *Le Devoir* today said: "Every time the Liberal Party needs cultural communities it is for two reasons, as slaves during an election campaign, or to buy tickets".

Will the Minister of Justice stand up and denounce these horrible comments, or is his special counsel simply telling the truth about Liberals?

• (1450)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess the opposition, and I hesitate to say the hon. members, have a difficult time understanding that people in Canada have adopted this country as their own and that they willingly participate in a democratic process. They are delighted to do everything that is required to be completely integrated.

Look at this side of the House. There are members of the new Canadian family from every walk of life, every race, every culture, every creed, and we do not hold them in contempt—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Provencher.

Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, then why will he not denounce those comments of that special counsel?

This week a senior Liberal organizer in Manitoba, Chief Terrance Nelson of the Roseau River Indian reserve stated that the David Ahenakew hate trial in Saskatoon was the fault of "Jewish controlled media", naming specifically the Asper family of Winnipeg. Days have passed and the Prime Minister has said nothing to denounce these racist, anti-Semitic remarks by a member, worker and organizer in his party.

Why does the Prime Minister remain silent when a senior Liberal makes these comments about—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Hon. Andy Scott (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the situation the hon. member refers to is a tragic one, one which is before the courts and it should not be exploited by the hon. member.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, health care is the number one issue for many Canadians from coast to coast. It is the number one priority for the Liberal government and the Prime Minister.

However, it seems that the Conservative Party cannot get it straight. Just this morning Canadians heard the Harris-Manning proposal to eliminate the federal role in health care management and financing, thus opening up the doors to private delivery across the country.

Could the Minister of Health please tell the House about this very dangerous proposal?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Harris-Manning proposal for health care would kill the Canada

Health Act, would check people's wallets before checking their pulses, and would force people into credit card medicine. The Leader of the Opposition remains silent while icons of his party call the Canada Health Act the dusty old rule book and ask for privatization of health care, which we would never let happen in Canada.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Ed Broadbent (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has said that he has the moral authority to speak out on issues. I want to say to him that when the Leader of the Opposition asks a question about corruption and he replies with a question to the Leader of the Opposition about health care, he completely undermines the office of the Prime Minister. He should check the moral authority.

When I left politics 15 years ago, the Prime Minister was talking about the need to deal with climate change. When I returned a year ago, he was still talking about the need to deal with climate change. Today we have a program that ignores the promise.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised. I would expect the member, who is a parliamentarian of great experience and a member who has defended the fundamental principles of the Canada Health Act, to understand that I will miss no occasion to defend the Canada Health Act. I will defend it 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. I will certainly not stand here and listen to the Leader of the Opposition while he refuses to accept his responsibilities and delegates the pillars of his party to attack the Canada Health Act.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Ed Broadbent (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is making a complete mockery of his moral responsibility to deal with issues in the House of Commons.

Considering that the Liberals have broken promises on health care, day care, child poverty and post-secondary education, when is the government going to understand that broken promises undermine moral authority also?

• (1455)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before this House at this very moment there is: \$5 billion for cities and communities, \$5 billion for children and early learning, \$2.7 billion for senior citizens, \$3 billion for Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, \$5 billion for the environment, \$3.4 billion for foreign aid, \$13 billion for national defence, and \$12 billion for tax relief.

That is a demonstration of moral authority and moral responsibility: delivering the goods.

*Oral Questions***SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the Gomery commission, counsel Finkelstein asked the Prime Minister, “Do you recall...any meeting or get-together of any significance beyond a possible casual ‘How do you do?’” The Prime Minister responded, “No, no”.

There is now testimony that the Prime Minister may, frankly, have perjured himself, that he may have had lunch with Mr. Boulay, one of the principal scamsters in the ad scam. Would—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member for Calgary Southeast is using legalistic language to dodge around words that he knows are unparliamentary. I would invite him to rephrase his question. We will not have any suggestion that any member has committed perjury in this House. He knows what that means. I would invite him to put his question directly.

Mr. Jason Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I am going to give the Prime Minister one more opportunity to set the record straight between this conflicting testimony. Without any evasion, without any games, did he or did he not sit down and discuss government business over lunch with ad scam kingpin Claude Boulay, yes or no?

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The Prime Minister at no time intervened to direct contracts. The Leader of the Opposition last night said that there are honest decent people in the Liberal Party. He is absolutely right, and our Prime Minister is one of them. He has demonstrated remarkable courage and determination to get to the bottom of this important issue.

The fact is that today's *Toronto Star* said that the Prime Minister has “acted honestly. No other federal party chief has faced such a leadership test so openly. Fairness demands this be recognized”. I would urge the hon. member to recognize that and to stop playing partisan games with an important issue like this.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister is being honest with Canadians he can demonstrate it now by standing up in his place and clarifying this very grave conflict in sworn evidence before a judicial commission. This is serious business.

Will the Prime Minister stand up and discharge the moral responsibility that he claims by clarifying whether or not he had lunch to discuss government business with the ad scam kingpin, Mr. Boulay? Did he or did he not? We want the Prime Minister to stand up and tell the truth, even if it is hurtful.

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. This Prime Minister has consistently told the truth to Canadians because this Prime Minister is not afraid of the truth. That is why he established Justice Gomery. That is why he supports Justice Gomery. That is why he is not afraid of Justice Gomery's report: because he is ready for the truth and because he knows Canadians deserve the truth.

The only people who are afraid of the truth, who are afraid of Justice Gomery presenting his report, are sitting right over there. We are not afraid of the truth in this part of the House.

● (1500)

EQUALIZATION PROGRAM

Ms. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the people of Ontario are proud of the role they play in helping to build an even stronger Canada, but Ontario now ranks 10th out of 10 provinces in university spending and 9th out of 10 provinces in federal funding for health care.

We cannot allow the fiscal imbalance to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. When will the Prime Minister sit down with the premier of Ontario to negotiate a fairer and more equitable arrangement for the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a large portion of federal tax revenue flows from Ontario because Ontario very positively has the largest provincial economy in Canada and the largest number of successful upper income Canadian taxpayers, both in the corporate sector and in the personal sector.

In terms of the transfers from the Government of Canada for things like the CHT, the CST, infrastructure and housing, they are indeed based upon a per capita system, and when we include the tax transfers and the cash transfers they are exactly per capita.

Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the federal immigration minister across the floor met with Ontario Liberal finance minister Greg Sorbara earlier this week, he puffed like a penguin and claimed to reach a series of deals. Sorbara disputed that claim, saying there are no agreements and the minister's account of the meeting is “absolutely wrong”.

The reality is that the government across the way denies the fiscal imbalance in Ontario and across this country. Instead it relies on phantom deals and bogus arrangements. Why should Canadians give it any trust?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in our relationship with the provinces, the transfer of \$41 billion is no phantom deal. It is no bogus arrangement. The transfer of \$33 billion for equalization is not bogus.

The transfer of money for housing, the transfer of money for immigration, the transfer of money for infrastructure and the transfer of money for science and technology are all real dollars from the Government of Canada to the provinces of Canada and the territories of Canada to build a stronger country.

* * *

[Translation]

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister proclaims to all and sundry his desire to get to the bottom of the sponsorship scandal and the awarding of contracts to friends of the regime.

How can the Prime Minister, with this claim of transparency and a desire to get to the bottom of things, explain that the Liberals on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts voted against the motion to hear witnesses in connection with the behaviour of the Minister of Finance and of Earncliffe?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Liberal members of the committee cooperated fully because they wanted to get to the truth. It was opposition members who actually in the end scuttled the ability of the committee to submit an important report, an interim report that would have given Canadians some insight into the issue at an appropriate time.

Liberal members of this House are totally committed to getting to the bottom of this issue.

[Translation]

Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister has played back the wrong stock answer. What I am referring to is this week's events in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

How can the Prime Minister explain that the people working for him, his henchmen, refused to appear voluntarily before the public accounts committee and needed to be subpoenaed?

[English]

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a committee can ask any witness to appear before it. I understand from the media reports that in fact all potential witnesses have been in communication with the clerk of the committee.

I think what is clear is that the opposition is playing nothing more than partisan politics with an issue that the Auditor General examined some 13 months ago. She stated, "Overall, public opinion research was managed transparently, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined".

All I can surmise from the line of questioning is that it is nothing more than partisan politics.

That is why we set up the Gomery commission. That is the way Canadians will get to the truth and that in fact is why they should wait for Gomery to report.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all day today we have heard about broken Liberal promises. I want to deal with another one. The CAIS program is such a disaster that two weeks ago the government was forced to make an announcement in which it pretended it was going to give new money to agriculture. That was not true.

We find out now that much of it is just going to offset CAIS payments that farmers were already receiving. How much of the promised money will be clawed back through lowered CAIS payments?

● (1505)

Hon. Andy Mitchell (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is an absolutely erroneous type of logic that the hon. member is using. First of all, we announced \$1 billion of support to Canadian producers and \$1 billion of support will be delivered to Canadian producers.

How those dollars are treated in future calculations is being done in line with other programs that we have provided. Quite frankly, we have made clear to all producers exactly the terms and conditions that are being applied to these dollars.

* * *

CANADA POST

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has tried to blame virtually everyone else for the Liberal sponsorship scandal. It began with rogue bureaucrats, then it was the opposition that was to blame and even his predecessor.

He cannot blame Jean Chrétien for the mess at Canada Post. The Deloitte & Touche audit reported that Liberal porkmaster general André Ouellet paid himself \$2 million in unreceipted expenses, yet the Prime Minister has taken no action to get his hands on the receipts.

It is tax time and Canadians are being asked to pay theirs. Will the Prime Minister commit to the House and the Canadian people that André Ouellet will be paying his?

Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the board of directors of Canada Post is continuing to manage this issue. I am informed by Canada Post that the Canada Revenue Agency is currently auditing the expense payments coming out of the office of the president. Action is clearly being taken on this matter.

* * *

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment.

For the guidance of the Conservative members, who still do not understand that a healthy environment goes along with increased growth and economic prosperity, could the minister explain to the House what the new Liberal plan to deal with climate change means for the environment, for our economy and our quality of life, and for keeping our commitments under the Kyoto protocol?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no question I could take more pleasure in answering in this House.

It is a great day for Canada.

[English]

It is a great day for our role as a good citizen of the world. It is a great day for our health and our quality of life. Yes, Canada will be a champion of a sustainable economy.

[Translation]

I therefore have the honour to table, in both official languages, the Government of Canada document entitled "Project Green—Moving Ahead on Climate Change: A Plan for Honouring our Kyoto Commitment."

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie wishes to say something.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Gilles Duceppe: Mr. Speaker, earlier, in my statement, I used the words “And when is he lying?” with respect to the Prime Minister. I wish to withdraw them, because I know these words may not be said, at least in this House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

BANKRUPTCY AND INSOLVENCY ACT

The House resumed from April 6 consideration of the motion that Bill C-236, an act to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act (student loan), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: It being 3:09 p.m. the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-236 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1520)

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Speaker: The hon. member for North Vancouver appears to have voted both yea and nay. Perhaps he could clarify his position for the Chair.

Mr. Don Bell: Mr. Speaker, I wish to indicate I was voting for Bill C-236.

And the Clerk having announced the result of the vote:

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo.

Mrs. Betty Hinton: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. I was engaged in conversation and stood and voted no. I had already voted yes and I wish the vote yes to stand.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 61*)

YEAS

Members

Ambrose	André
Angus	Asselin
Bachand	Bell
Bellavance	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Boire
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Broadbent
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Casey
Christopherson	Clavet
Cleary	Coderre
Comartin	Côté
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	D'Amours
Davies	Demers
Deschamps	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Doyle
Duceppe	Failla

Finley
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Galloway
Gauthier
Guay
Hearn
Jaffer
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Laframboise
Lavallée
Lemay
Lévesque
Lunn
Marceau
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
Ménard (Hochelega)
Minna
Myers
Nicholson
Paquette
Perron
Picard (Drummond)
Poirier-Rivard
Reynolds
Sauvageau
Siksay
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)
St-Hilaire
Stoffer
Vincent
Wrzesniewski— 105

Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet
Godin
Guimond
Hinton
Julian
Kotto
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Layton
Lessard
Loubier
MacKay (Central Nova)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McDonough
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Neville
O'Brien
Paradis
Phinney
Plamondon
Prentice
Roy
Savage
Silva
Simms
Stinson
Stronach
Wasylcia-Leis

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Alcock	Allison
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Augustine
Bagnall	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Batters	Bélangier
Bennett	Benoit
Bevilacqua	Bezan
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Bulte
Cannis	Carr
Carrie	Carroll
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cummins	Day
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Folco
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Godbout
Godfrey	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Graham	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harrison
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jean
Johnston	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Kennedy (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	Lauzon
Lee	Longfield
Lukiwski	MacAulay
MacKenzie	MacKlin
Malhi	Maloney

Private Members' Business

Marleau
McCallum
McGuire
McLellan
Menzies
Miller
Mitchell
Murphy
Obhrai
Pacetti
Patry
Peterson
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Ritz
Rodriguez
Saada
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Sgro
Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Steckle
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Torsney
Tweed
Valeri
Van Loan
Volpe
Watson
Williams

Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
Owen
Pallister
Penson
Pettigrew
Poilievre
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Savoy
Schellenberger
Scott
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
Solberg
St. Denis
Szabo
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Tonks
Trost
Ur
Valley
Vellacott
Warawa
Wilfert
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Bellavance
Bigras
Blais
Boivin
Bonsant
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle
Byrne
Cardin
Carrier
Christopherson
Cleary
Comartin
Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
D'Amours
Demers
Desjarlais
DeVillers
Duceppe
Eyking
Folco
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet
Godbout
Goodyear
Guimond
Hubbard
Jennings
Kotto
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Layton
Lemay
Lévesque
MacAulay
Macklin
Marceau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
Ménard (Hochelega)
Minna
Myers
O'Connor
Paquette
Patry
Phinney
Plamondon
Proulx
Rota
Sauvageau
Schellenberger
Silva
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Bergeron
Blaikie
Boire
Bonin
Boshcoff
Boulianne
Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte
Cannis
Carrie
Chamberlain
Clavet
Coderre
Côté
Crowder
Cummins
Davies
Deschamps
Desrochers
Doyle
Easter
Faillie
Forsyth
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Galloway
Gauthier
Godin
Guay
Harris
Jean
Julian
Laframboise
Lavallée
LeBlanc
Lessard
Loubier
MacKenzie
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McDonough
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Murphy
Neville
Pacetti
Paradis
Perron
Picard (Drummond)
Poirier-Rivard
Rodriguez
Roy
Savage
Siksay
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Amant
Tilson
Vincent
Watson

PAIRED

Members

Drouin Lalonde
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Zed — 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

CANADA LABOUR CODE

The House resumed from April 7 consideration of the motion that Bill C-263, an act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), as amended, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-263 under private members' business.

(The House divided on the motion, which was negated on the following division:)

● (1535)

[Translation]

(Division No. 62)

YEAS

Members

André
Asselin
Bachand
Bakopanos
Angus
Augustine
Bagnell
Bell

Ablonczy
Allison
Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Barnes
Bélangier
Benoit
Bezan
Boudria
Breitkreuz
Carr
Casey
Catterall
Chong
Cotler
Day
Dion

NAYS

Members

Alecock
Ambrose
Anderson (Victoria)
Bains
Batters
Bennett
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bradshaw
Brisson
Carroll
Casson
Chan
Comuzzi
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Dhalla
Dosanjh

Private Members' Business

Dryden	Efford
Emerson	Epp
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Fontana
Frulla	Godfrey
Goldring	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri
Guergis	Hanger
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland
Ianno	Jaffier
Johnston	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Komarnicki
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
Lauzon	Lee
Longfield	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	Malhi
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Mitchell	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Brien	Obhrai
Owen	Pallister
Penson	Peterson
Pettigrew	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Pollievre	Powers
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Saada	Savoy
Scheer	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Scott	Sgro
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)	Solberg
Sorenson	St. Denis
Steckle	Stinson
Stronach	Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Tweed	Ur
Valeri	Valley
Van Loan	Vellacott
Volpe	Warawa
Williams	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich — 143	

PAIRED

Members

Drouin	Lalonde
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Zed — 4	

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES ACT

The House resumed from April 11 consideration of the motion that Bill S-3, an act to amend the Official Languages Act (promotion of English and French), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill S-3 under private members' business.

● (1550)

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 63)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Alcock	Ambrose
Anderson (Victoria)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Bélanger	Bell
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Blaikie	Blondin-Andrew
Boivin	Bonin
Boshcoff	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Broadbent	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Carr	Carrie
Carroll	Casey
Casson	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Chong	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cummins
D'Amours	Davies
Day	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Eyking	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Forsyth	Frulla
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Harris
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffier
Jean	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
Lauzon	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Longfield	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Mitchell
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Myers	
Neville	Nicholson
O'Brien	O'Connor
Obhrai	Owen
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Peterson

Private Members' Business

Pettigrew
 Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
 Prentice
 Rajotte
 Redman
 Reid
 Rodriguez
 Saada
 Savoy
 Schellenberger
 Scott
 Siksay
 Simard (Saint Boniface)
 Skelton
 Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
 St. Amand
 Steckle
 Stronach
 Thibault (West Nova)
 Toews
 Torsney
 Ur
 Valley
 Vellacott
 Wasylcyia-Leis
 Wilfert

Phinney
 Powers
 Proulx
 Ratansi
 Regan
 Robillard
 Rota
 Savage
 Scarpaleggia
 Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
 Sgro
 Silva
 Simms
 Smith (Pontiac)
 Solberg
 St. Denis
 Stoffer
 Szabo
 Tilson
 Tonks
 Tweed
 Valeri
 Van Loan
 Volpe
 Watson
 Wrzesnewskyj — 194

[*Translation*]**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

The House resumed from April 12, 2005, consideration of the motion that Bill C-280, an act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting) and another Act in consequence, be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division at second reading of Bill C-280.

● (1600)

And the Clerk having announced the result of the vote:

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Notwithstanding the outcome of the vote on Bill C-280, I would like to have struck from the list the names of three members of the Liberal Party who were recorded as voting against this bill, but had left their seats prior to the start of the fourth vote. The Minister of the Environment had even gone to the rear lobby.

Pursuant to Standing Order 45, I wish to have struck from the list of the vote the names of the member for Cardigan, the Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario) and the Minister of the Environment. After the voting had started they returned to their seats in the House of Commons. I therefore demand that their votes not be counted, pursuant to the Standing Orders.

The Speaker: Perhaps the chief government whip could confirm whether the members in question left as the question was being put. As the House knows, all members must remain in the chamber until voting has ended.

Can she tell me the answer to this question?

● (1605)

[*English*]

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, while the hon. member is correct that these members left their seats, I believe they all remained in the chamber and, as such, would be allowed to vote.

Hon. Joe Comuzzi: Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the accusation is, but I never left the chamber and I was in my seat when the vote was called.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, on the same point of order, without pointing fingers at anybody in particular, the fact of the matter is that over time the practice of people having to be in their seats before the vote is called and staying in their seats until after the result is read has fallen away. It has not been enforced by the Chair, or by parties or by whips.

The votes are getting more and more chaotic. People are getting up in the middle of votes, they are talking to other members, people are coming in after votes start and leaving after they vote themselves. All this is happening because there is no discipline in this place, either collectively or individually. There are rules and the sooner people start following them, we will not have this kind of mess.

NAYS

Members

Allison
 André
 Bachand
 Benoit
 Blais
 Bonsant
 Boulianne
 Breitzkreuz
 Cardin
 Cleary
 Demers
 Duceppe
 Faille
 Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
 Gaudet
 Goodyear
 Guergis
 Hanger
 Johnston
 Laframboise
 Lavallée
 Lessard
 Loubier
 Marceau
 Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
 Pallister
 Penon
 Picard (Drummond)
 Poirier-Rivard
 Richardson
 Roy
 Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
 St-Hilaire
 Vincent
 Williams — 69

Anders
 Asselin
 Bellavance
 Bezan
 Boire
 Bouchard
 Bourgeois
 Brunelle
 Carrier
 Côté
 Deschamps
 Epp
 Gagnon (Québec)
 Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
 Gauthier
 Guay
 Guimond
 Harrison
 Kotto
 Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
 Lemay
 Lévesque
 Lukiwski
 Ménard (Hochelega)
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 Paquette
 Perron
 Poilievre
 Preston
 Ritz
 Scheer
 Sorenson
 Trost
 Warawa

PAIRED

Members

Drouin
 Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
 Zed — 4

Lalonde

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
 (Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

Private Members' Business

The Speaker: What I will do right now is declare the motion carried because my recollection of the vote was that the yeas were more than the nays. I will make the declaration that the vote is carried, and I will deal with the point of order raised by the whip for the Bloc Québécois in a moment. Regardless, if the vote is varied by three votes, in my view the motion is carried.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 64)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	André
Angus	Asselin
Bachand	Batters
Bellavance	Benoit
Bergeron	Bezan
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Boire
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boulianne	Bourgeois
Breitkreuz	Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Cardin	Carrie
Carrier	Casey
Casson	Chong
Christopherson	Clavet
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cummins	Davies
Day	Demers
Deschamps	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Doyle
Duceppe	Duncan
Epp	Faille
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)	Galloway
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Goldring
Goodyear	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Johnston
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lauzon
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunney
MackKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
McDonough	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Pallister	Paquette
Penson	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poillievre	Poirier-Rivard
Prentice	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Roy	Sauvageau

Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Stoffer
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Trost
Van Loan
Vincent
Wasylycia-Leis
Williams

Schellenberger
Siksay
Skelton
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Stronach
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Yelich — 156

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	Augustine
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Bélangier	Bell
Bennett	Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Carr
Carroll	Catterall
Chamberlain	Chan
Coderre	Comuzzi
Cotler	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours	DeVillers
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Dryden
Easter	Emerson
Eyking	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Godbout	Godfrey
Goodale	Graham
Guarnieri	Holland
Hubbard	Iano
Jennings	Kadis
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Khan	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Longfield
MacAulay	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
McCallum	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	McTeague
Minna	Mitchell
Murphy	Neville
O'Brien	Owen
Pacetti	Paradis
Patry	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Powers
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sgro	Silva
Simard (Saint Boniface)	Smith (Pontiac)
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Szabo
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Volpe
Wilfert	Wrzesnewskyj — 116

PAIRED

Members

Drouin	Lalonde
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Zed — 4	

*Tributes***RICHARD PARÉ**

The Speaker: Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I want to point out the rules governing decorum in the House during a vote, and I quote Standing Order 16(1), “When the Speaker is putting a question, no Member shall enter, walk out of or across the House, or make any noise or disturbance”.

I have already said all this to all the hon. members. Perhaps the next time a question is put, everyone will respect this rule in order to ensure there is silence in the House during a vote. That was not the case today.

• (1610)

[*English*]

I will also cite page 493 of Marleau and Montpetit to reinforce the message. It says:

When Members have been called in for a division, no further debate is permitted. From the time the Speaker begins to put the question until the results of the vote are announced, Members are not to enter, leave or cross the House, or make any noise or disturbance.

Members must be in their assigned seat in the Chamber and have heard the motion read in order for their votes to be recorded. Any Member entering the Chamber while the question is being put or after it has been put cannot have his or her vote counted. Members must remain seated until the result is announced by the Clerk. Members' votes have been questioned because they left the Chamber immediately after voting and before the results of the vote were announced, or because they did not remain seated throughout the process. However, if a Member's presence is disputed and the Member in question asserts that he or she was present when the motion was read, convention holds that the House accepts the Member's word.

If the hon. minister indicated that he was here when the question was put, and heard it, we will take it that his vote counts and at the moment with respect to the two—

[*Translation*]

Two other ministers were mentioned by—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister has indicated that he was in his seat when the motion was read. If so, as I mentioned, his vote will be recorded.

As for the other two ministers mentioned by the hon. member for Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, the whip indicated that they were present at that time. Perhaps we can obtain their confirmation of this fact later. For now, the motion has already been carried. We can change the division, if need be.

However, today, I have read the Standing Orders to the entire House. There has not been a discussion of these rules for many years. I am prepared to reinforce them if necessary. Everyone has now heard them.

[*English*]

I understand that there is an agreement between the parties to have some brief statements at this time and I therefore call upon the hon. chief government whip.

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the distinct honour today, on behalf of my party to pay, tribute to Mr. Richard Paré, Parliamentary Librarian, who has decided to retire after 11 years of great service on the job.

Mr. Paré was born in Quebec City in 1938. After receiving degrees from Laval University and the University of Ottawa, Richard undertook an intensive program in management in an assistant deputy minister orientation course.

Mr. Paré served as associate parliamentary librarian for 14 years before being appointed Parliamentary Librarian in 1994 by the Prime Minister of Canada.

For those who do not know Richard, he is without question, a true gentleman. He is a soft-spoken individual. His step could also be described as soft. For those who are familiar with the halls of Centre Block and Parliament Hill there will be an understanding that the long hallways and the marble floor it is very easy to hear an individual's footsteps as they echo throughout the corridors. Not so with Richard's.

One only realizes that Richard is walking behind one when he is actually at one's side making a greeting of a quiet smile and in a soft voice saying, “bonjour”.

We will miss his kindness. I hope Richard's grandchildren will allow him to actually read some of those books he has cared for so well and that he will enjoy this in his much deserved retirement.

[*Translation*]

On behalf of the national Liberal caucus, I want to thank Richard Paré for all the work he has done for Canadian parliamentarians over the years. I also want to wish him a wonderful retirement with his wife Renée, his children and his grandchildren.

• (1615)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, it is my pleasure to offer my party's best wishes on the occasion of Richard Paré's retirement as Parliamentary Librarian for Canada's Library of Parliament.

Retirements are always filled with a mix of emotion and pride, but they also provide an opportunity to look back on past accomplishments and achievements.

Speaking as an individual member of Parliament, I know I speak for everyone when I say how much parliamentarians appreciate the work of the library and all those who work within it.

Mr. Paré has seen many changes over the years. As an MP who has recently returned to Parliament, I have been particularly impressed with the automation that has taken place at the Library of Parliament under his watch this past decade. Intraparl of course now plays a huge role in the daily life of Parliament Hill and beyond.

It is also important to note that Richard Paré is the first francophone chief librarian in the history of the Library of Parliament.

Points of Order

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paré has always felt it was a great honour to be the first francophone Parliamentary Librarian in the history of Canada, and to have spent 24 years in the service of Parliament, its institutions, parliamentarians and their staff, and the general public.

Mr. Paré worked under six different Prime Ministers, six Speakers of the Senate, and six Speakers of the House of Commons.

[*English*]

I want to commend Mr. Paré and his staff for his commitment to customer service. I know this can be a very demanding place, but there are only good things to be said about him and the work that he has provided.

In closing, I am informed that he is a dedicated family man and a proud grandfather who enjoys golf and tennis. I expect he will be keeping very busy with those pursuits in his retirement, but as a politician I am somewhat loath to sound too envious of the notion of retirement.

I wish on behalf of the Conservative Party to extend to him our very best wishes for his dedication to Parliament and to Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to pay tribute to our Parliamentary Librarian, Mr. Richard Paré, who will soon be leaving us for a well-deserved retirement.

Mr. Paré was born in the Limoilou area of Quebec City. His grandparents on both sides came from Saint-Joachim-de-Montmorency in my riding. We can consider him a son of Côte-de-Beaupré, the cradle of French civilization in America. What is more, he has the distinct honour of being the first francophone Parliamentary Librarian in the history of the Library of Parliament. He has worked for this institution for 25 years, the first 14 of them as associate parliamentary librarian, and now close to 11 as the Parliamentary Librarian.

Mr. Paré has played an important part in the administration of the library and also in the lives of a number of members of the House of Commons and the Senate. In addition to his strong commitment to the field of political librarianship and information, he has had an equally strong commitment to enhancing the status of the Francophonie within this parliamentary organization. He most certainly has played a large part in the success of the Library of Parliament, which now enjoys an international reputation due in part to his skills and expertise, as well as those of the entire library team.

On behalf of all the members of the Bloc Québécois, I congratulate Richard Paré on his past accomplishments and wish him a wonderful future in a long and happy retirement with his wife, children and grandchildren.

• (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the New Democratic Party it is a real honour to stand today and pay tribute to Mr. Richard Paré for the service he has

given not just to us parliamentarians, but in a way to the people of Canada.

Educated at Laval and Ottawa universities, he has built a reputation as a Canadian leader in library sciences. His staff provide excellent service to parliamentarians of all political stripes, and it should be particularly noted not just their research skills but their ability to turn around complex questions in very short order.

As a new member of Parliament, I have to admit that when I landed here I felt I had landed in some kind of Byzantine labyrinth and that it would take me years and years to find my way through all the obscure traditions and knowledge. Of course as we know, members of Parliament do not have a long learning curve; we have to hit the ground running. His staff and the way that material and information is organized in the House makes it possible for new members and veteran members to come to Parliament prepared on an equal footing. That is very important.

I would also like to pay tribute to the man and his staff who have shown that the fundamental pillars of service are based on dedication to the democratic principle of impartiality and to research and to integrity. We see that throughout the parliamentary system in Canada. We might be a somewhat unruly lot here in the House, but we are backed up by people who set the highest standards on every level.

On behalf of the New Democratic Party, I wish Mr. Paré well in his future endeavours. I would especially like to thank his wife, his three children and his five grandchildren for sharing him with the parliamentarians and by extension, the people of Canada.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. members who have made speeches or comments on this subject today.

[*English*]

There is a reception in Room 216 now to honour Mr. Paré. I invite all hon. members to come and meet Mr. Paré and wish him well in his retirement.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF DOCUMENT DURING ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point or order, which I hope will be very short and I am sure that you hope that too.

I am referring to the fact that during the soft lob question during question period the Minister of the Environment tabled a document as part of question period.

Mr. Speaker, you know that we have enough trouble trying to keep the questions and the answers related to the questions the way it is now, and surely we do not want question period to degenerate into a time when ministers take up our time tabling documents.

I refer you to page 371 of Marleau and Montpetit which states:

A Minister or Parliamentary Secretary acting on behalf of the Minister may table documents in the House during Routine Proceedings—

On the last line of that page it states:

—if a Minister wishes to table a document which is not required to be tabled, it can only be tabled in the House during Routine Proceedings.

I submit that the document which was tabled by the Minister of the Environment is not yet properly tabled. I think it should be tabled during routine proceedings which is to follow soon.

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, during question period the minister offered to table a document. There were no objections. The document was received by a table officer. Therefore, it is considered a public document tabled.

The Speaker: I must say I am surprised to hear the citation from the hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park because I was unaware of any writing that said it could only be done during routine proceedings.

My clear understanding since my arrival here 16 years ago was that a minister could table a document at any time in the House simply by standing in his place and tabling the document. The minister did that and I took no objection at the time because I believed it was entirely proper and in accordance with practice, unusual to do it in question period, I admit. The hon. member for Edmonton—Sherwood Park is diligent in that respect, but I was unaware of any citation and I am surprised to read it.

What I will do is look at Beachesne's on this point, because my recollection was this could be done at any time. Indeed I had seen it done at other times in the House by various other ministers.

I will look into it and get back to the House on the point.

I should inform the House that because of the deferred recorded divisions, government orders will be extended by 55 minutes.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1625)

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS, PUBLIC SAFETY AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS

Hon. Paul DeVillers (Simcoe North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

[*English*]

In accordance with its permanent mandate under Standing Order 108(2), your committee undertook a study of a draft report on the

Routine Proceedings

subject matter of Bill C-43, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 22, 2005, and agreed to it on Tuesday, April 12, 2005.

[*Translation*]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the list of members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the 32nd report later this day.

* * *

CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION ACT

Mr. Christian Simard (Beauport—Limoilou, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-363, an act to amend the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act (profits distributed to provinces).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce in this House, under private members' business, an act to amend the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Act (profits distributed to provinces).

This enactment requires the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to distribute any surplus from its reserve fund to the provinces for social housing purposes, to encourage the supply of quality housing at affordable prices and to increase housing choices for the people in the provinces.

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

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent of the House to move concurrence in the 32nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs tabled earlier today.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition is signed by hundreds of people in my riding and is with respect to the processing of applications to sponsor parents. These new Canadians are very concerned about the increasing delay and backlog in processing applications to sponsor parents. In fact, in some cases it has quadrupled.

The petitioners ask the House in the spirit of humanitarianism to increase the quotas and decrease the backlog in these applications.

• (1630)

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Madam Speaker, the other two petitions also are signed by hundreds of people in my riding who pray that Parliament define in federal law marriage as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

I am pleased to present these petitions to the House today.

FISHERIES

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—Richmond East, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have a petition today from people in British Columbia requesting a judicial inquiry into the disappearance of 1.3 million sockeye in the Fraser River.

The original request for this judicial inquiry was rejected by the government. It appointed former chief justice Bryan Williams of the B.C. Supreme Court to conduct that investigation. He submitted the first of what were to be two reports and the government pulled the plug on him. It seems that it shut him down because some of the information that was coming out was a little too hot to handle. In particular, one of the reports suggested that some of the poachers were armed and the government was concerned about that issue, yet it did nothing about it.

The petitioners are again calling on the government to establish a judicial inquiry so that all the information relating to the disappearance of these sockeye can be addressed and brought forward.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Madam Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have another of many petitions that we get from our ridings where the petitioners are concerned about the outcome of Bill C-38. They insist that marriage should be defined as a union between a man and a woman. These are people from St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in Warwick Settlement, New Brunswick.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Calgary Centre. They are concerned about the delay in tabling in the House a plan to tell Canadians the full costs and benefits of implementing the Kyoto protocol. Although a plan was tabled by the Minister of the Environment today, the petition insists that we have a clearer understanding of the full costs and benefits of Kyoto to Canadians.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am delighted today to stand in the House and present a petition from approximately 200 people from my riding on the definition of marriage. They feel the definition should not be changed by the courts and that it is the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament to define marriage. Therefore they request Parliament to define marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

AGE OF CONSENT

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Madam Speaker, today I have the honour of presenting two petitions, the first with over 250 names from my riding of Simcoe—Grey. The petitioners are calling on the government to raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age.

MARRIAGE

Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC): Madam Speaker, the second petition has close to 200 names and calls on the government to maintain the traditional definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have three petitions to present today. The first one is on the definition of marriage.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that marriage is the best foundation for families and for raising children, and that the institution of marriage as being between a man and a woman is being challenged. They also point out that the definition of marriage is the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament. Therefore they call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

• (1635)

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the second petition is on a health issue and has to do with health warning labels. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the Food and Drugs Act is designed to protect Canadians from potentially harmful effects related to food and drug consumption, and also that consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to require health warning labels on the containers of beverage alcohol to caution expectant mothers and others from certain dangers associated with the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the final petition has to do with the use of the notwithstanding clause, again in reference to the issue of marriage. The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that fundamental matters of social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament and not by the unelected judiciary, and also that it is the duty of Parliament to ensure that marriage is defined as Canadians wish it to be defined.

Government Orders

Therefore they call upon Parliament to use all legislative and administrative measures possible, including the invocation of section 33 of the charter, commonly referred to as the notwithstanding clause, to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as being the legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Edmonton—Leduc, Citizenship and Immigration; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Forces.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2005

The House resumed from April 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-43, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 23, 2005, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Madam Speaker, I rise today to address Bill C-43, the government's budget bill, which contains many flaws and recycled promises. I would like to address a number of different areas in the bill that I think are problems for Canadians and for the country.

The first area that I want to focus on is the gas tax commitment that the government delivered in its budget. To give the government some credit, it is going to deliver \$600 million for the next fiscal year, which is about 1.5¢ per litre. It also announced a commitment to Ontario specifically of about \$1.85 billion over the next five years. On that front, that is good news. However, there are absolutely no details on how that money would be distributed once the province receives the transfer.

Mayors and councillors from many municipalities have indicated to me that there are no details as to whether or not the money would be transferred to the upper tier of municipal government or to the lower tier of municipal government. Furthermore, there are absolutely no details as to whether or not the money would be given to more densely populated areas or be given out on a per capita basis, equitably distributed throughout the entire province. Those are serious concerns, especially for ridings like Wellington—Halton Hills.

The township of Centre Wellington with a population of over 22,000 has over 100 bridges. That township alone currently faces a bridge work backlog of close to \$15 million, a huge number for a township that only has an annual operating budget of about \$15 million.

In Halton Hills, which includes Acton and Georgetown, I have been told that there is a backlog in road work of \$57 million, an equally big number for a community with only about 50,000 residents and an annual operating budget of only about \$20 million.

Many municipalities are wondering if and when they will see this money. The budget and the bill, and its lack of details on how this gas tax would be distributed among municipalities and whether or not less densely populated areas would get their fair share leaves much to be desired.

The second area I am going to focus on is the budget's approach to child care. I think it falls short in this area. Excellent child care is important to me and to my community. It is also important to my party. I am very much in favour of working with families to obtain excellent child care, but the government's current plan for child care is seriously flawed.

First, the plan is far too vague and contains few concrete and workable details. It contains few details on how flexible the system can be and how to hold the provinces accountable. It also contains few details on exactly how many child care spaces would be created.

Second, the plan calls for the child care program to be a joint federal-provincial program. Programs based on that model have had a history of cross-jurisdictional difficulties that are hard to overcome and hard to manage.

Third, the plan would take too long to implement. For over a decade Canadians have been promised access to affordable child care: in 1993 in the red book; in 1997 in the red book; in 2000 in the red book; and in 2004. Canadians still do not have access to reasonably priced and accessible child care.

In the last election we proposed to provide families with a \$2,000 year tax deduction per child under the age of 16. That is the solution to the child care issue in this country. The taxes refunded could be spent as deemed appropriate by parents. In the case of a dual income family, the money could be spent on child care either locally provided by for profit centres or not for profit centres. In other cases the money could be spent on clothes, education or other sundries.

Government Orders

Our proposal would avoid the difficulties of federal-provincial programs, would provide flexibility in meeting both rural and urban needs, and would allow for profit and not for profit involvement. Most important, our proposal would let parents decide what was best for their own children.

I believe our proposal is a better proposal and is more straightforward to implement. This is the best way to allow parents accessible child care. The budget does not address this problem.

●(1640)

The third area where the budget falls far short is on Kyoto. Conservative governments in the 1980s and early 1990s brought in environmental protection. It was a Conservative government in the 1980s that negotiated the acid rain treaty with the United States. We invested in and created organizations like the Ontario Centre for Environmental Excellence located in Elora.

We are often accused, as a party, of being anti-environmental. Nothing could be further from the truth. We believe strongly in environmental protection and share Canadians' concerns about a healthy environment for future generations.

However, the government's approach to Kyoto has been nothing short of a complete disaster. It took the government until today to deliver a plan for Kyoto even though it became the law of the land on February 16. It has announced billions in new spending on Kyoto without having a plan to implement them. This is simply risky and foolish public policy. Spending billions on a program without having a plan to implement it is simply foolish.

Our current Kyoto targets are entirely unrealistic and unattainable. In 1990 our emissions were about 28% below what they are today in terms of carbon dioxide emissions.

I believe that Canada should negotiate and work with other signatories to set real targets and then develop real plans to implement those targets. We need to do far more as a country to encourage energy and resource conservation. The use of fuels such as propane, natural gas, ethanol, and other biofuels should be encouraged. There should be greater funding for the development of alternative energies such as wind power and solar power.

All these steps that I have proposed here and that we as a party have proposed would address the real environmental problem we have in this country which is suffocating summer smog.

As a resident of Wellington—Halton Hills I know about smog. We have many residents who are subjected to issues around smog in the summer. We have issues around smog days that not only apply to the GTA but apply to places like Grand Bend in as far north as the Muskokas. It has terrible health implications. The government's Kyoto plan does nothing to address the cause of that smog, which contains nitrous oxides and sulphur oxides. On that count, this budget once again falls short.

Madam Speaker, before I go on, I want to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member from Saskatchewan.

As I go on to the fourth area of concern about the budget, it is about the budget surplus. The government has consistently underestimated the budget surplus over the last number of years. We have

had surpluses in the last seven budgets. This year, for the budget that was just presented, we were told that we would have a \$1.9 billion surplus. It turned out into a \$9.1 billion surplus.

This is unacceptable because Canadians, when they are told that we do not have surpluses, are being robbed of an opportunity to have a real debate about what should be done with our hard-earned tax dollars, whether we should spend it on tax cuts or whether we should spend it on debt reduction or whether we should use it toward new program spending.

That debate does not happen in this country, and has not happened, because the government has consistently underestimated the size of the surplus. That is unacceptable.

Our party proposed in the last election, and we do now, that Parliament needs to implement an independent budget office that reports to Parliament, so we do not get into situations where the surplus is of a magnitude five to six times larger than what was originally forecasted.

The final area where this budget fails to address the real concerns of Canadians is in its inability to address one fundamental problem we have in our economy which is a lack of productivity growth.

Incomes across the border are growing more rapidly or are higher on a per capita basis than they are in this country. As a result, we are losing our ability to pay for the wonderful social programs that Canadians coast to coast to coast have come to enjoy.

Productivity is the single most important factor in long term prosperity. That is why the government needs to address the issue by taking a look at reforming capital cost allowances and by taking a look at real personal tax relief.

This budget fails to do both. This budget proposes a personal income tax cut of \$19 this year. That is completely unacceptable. Let me finish by saying that the government's budget falls far short of what the residents of Wellington—Halton Hills expect, what my party expects, and what this country expects.

●(1645)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I have a couple of comments for the member.

With regard to the gas tax rebate and the details of how the provinces will distribute the money among the various communities, we can speculate all we want but the one thing we do know, and I am sure the member will agree, is that no matter how it is done the provinces will be in control because we cannot give the rebate directly to the municipalities.

The provinces constantly play this game of offsetting. If they receive a bit of money there, they will deal with communities. The communities will have an important role to play in the negotiations with the provinces. The federal government will not really be able to drive that resolution very easily.

Government Orders

However the equitable starting point would be on the basis of the gas utilization per community. Those statistics are available.

I found it interesting that the member was referring to bridge and road work, et cetera. That is infrastructure and there is infrastructure money.

I want to ask him a question about Kyoto which is certainly an important issue. Canadians have already told us that they agree with the objectives of reducing greenhouse gases and the attendant health impacts. In the last election the Conservative Party ran on a platform which opposed the Kyoto protocol and I think it is important to get an update.

Does the Conservative Party support the Kyoto protocol to meet our emission targets, along with the other partners around the world, or does it feel we simply have to do some other things ourselves and not make any commitments by any year?

• (1650)

Mr. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, I will address the first part of the member's question which had to do with the way the gas tax will be distributed among municipalities in Ontario. The government had an opportunity to negotiate with the provinces to get them to commit to an equitable distribution of this gas tax.

As it currently stands, the government had the money. It did not have to give away the store without any strings attached. It could have sat down with the provinces and told them what strings would be attached to the money before it was given and that it wanted to see an equitable distribution of the money. To date, I have not heard anything about how the money will be distributed. I think that just to give away the store to the provinces without getting some conditions back on this is not acceptable.

Furthermore, I would say that gas utilization is not the way to go on this. I think it should be done on a per capita or population basis because gas utilization is very difficult to ascertain. With the gasoline alley in Muskoka along highway 11 and other gasoline alleys in different parts of Ontario, it would mean that those municipalities would get a disproportionate amount of the gas tax even though they do not have the infrastructure that more heavily populated areas have.

The way to distribute the gas tax should be based on a per capita basis, which is what the mayors and councillors in Wellington—Halton Hills and surrounding areas have told me.

It is the government's position, its approach to Kyoto and its plan that we are opposed to. We in the Conservative Party are in favour of a strong, clean environmental policy and strong environmental initiatives, and our critic has done a lot of work in this regard.

The problem with what we have opposed, and what we will oppose in an upcoming election, are the lack of plans as to how we are going to address the issues around emissions. We are very much in support of environmental initiatives but we oppose the government's lack of an approach and lack of a plan to Kyoto.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I have a question for my colleague. I find he is given to contesting the content of this budget implementation

bill, but, as we know, the Conservatives will support it. I therefore have a bit of a hard time with his message, especially with regard to the infrastructure program and the sharing of the gasoline tax, when, in the budget speech, which I have in my hands, the minister said, and I quote:

—5¢ per litre, or \$2 billion, in 2009-10, and continuing thereafter indefinitely.

So the principle was that the cities would have an indefinite deal. Bill C-43 before us, however, provides:

For the fiscal year 2005-2006, pursuant to the Government of Canada's five-year initiative commonly known as "A New Deal for Cities and Communities"—

The budget speech referred to an indefinite deal, which would continue on, and I repeat the quote, "—continuing thereafter indefinitely—" but the bill refers to a five-year plan, that is a plan for five years.

Does my colleague still agree with what C-43 is proposing compared with what the budget speech proposed?

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Chong: Madam Speaker, what I will say is that this party will not be supporting any initiative by the Bloc to take down the government on a vote of confidence vis-à-vis the budget or any other motion of confidence. We will be the party that decides whether or not Canadians want an election when Canadians tell us that they want an election.

In response to my hon. colleague, I will say that my criticism of the government's bill, Bill C-43, regarding the gas tax, stands. If he wishes to examine it further he may examine the blues tonight or *Hansard* later on.

• (1655)

Mr. Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, CPC): Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have spoken since the birth of my new son Thomas, the newest constituent in Regina—Qu'Appelle. I have to be honest and say that this new constituent might receive a little bit more attention than other constituents in my riding. However I am sure the other inhabitants of Regina—Qu'Appelle will understand.

I would like to address a few aspects of Bill C-43. I think all members of the House will agree, and I think the members of the Liberal Party would agree if they had the boldness to be straightforward, that this bill should be divided into three separate bills.

The Liberals are playing games here with the budget bill by placing unrelated provisions into one single omnibus bill. This is not terribly surprising. We have seen this movie before. We have seen Liberals do this as part of the games they play in this House, but by all rights we should have a separate bill for the Atlantic accord, a separate bill for the traditional budget implementation measures and a separate bill for the Kyoto implementation measures.

I find it abominable that this government would sneak in, through the back door, Kyoto provisions when there has been no comprehensive plan laid out for Canadians. Canadians do not know what the government's intentions are nor do they know what it is going to do and how this will affect their actual quality of life, their economies and their jobs.

Government Orders

No plan has been outlined for Canadians about how the government is going to reduce greenhouse gases. We also have seen no plan to outline the Liberal Party's hidden agenda on buying hot air credits from other countries, including China, Russia and perhaps France.

What impact will Kyoto have on Canadians? Major economic and public policy groups are predicting the following: major increases in fuel taxes, a major increase in fuel prices, major increases in home heating costs and dramatic increases in home electricity costs.

For example, in the first few years it is predicted by many groups that there will be up to a 19% spike in gasoline prices, up to a 21% spike in home heating costs and up to a 35% spike in electricity costs. What this means for the average Canadian is a dramatic decrease in their disposable income. To drive their cars to work, to keep their homes warm in the winter and to power their homes and appliances it will cost more of their hard-earned dollars. More of their paycheques will be going toward utilities.

For my rural constituents it will be even more dramatic. They have seen the cost of diesel fuel almost double already and this is before any Kyoto implementation schemes. How much more will their fuel bills rise under the Kyoto plan?

I also want to mention that it is very disappointing to see the NDP position on Bill C-43. What the NDP is saying about the Kyoto implementation measures is that they do not go far enough. Can anyone imagine the New Democrats thinking that farmers in Saskatchewan should pay even more for their diesel fuel? I challenge any one of those members to come to my riding and look a group of farmers in the eye and say that their diesel fuel bills will increase and we are happy about it.

The farmers in my riding cannot afford the potential heavy costs of a Kyoto scheme that will see more of their tax dollars go to buy pollution credits, which will mean no actual reduction in greenhouse gases. It will simply mean a transfer of wealth from Canadian taxpayers to countries such as China, France and Russia.

China, by the way, has the world's largest military and an aggressive space program, and we are going to transfer our tax dollars to buy credits in China. This would not reduce greenhouses gases one bit.

The Liberal plan will have a particularly devastating impact on Saskatchewan in particular. We have seen Saskatchewan go from a have not province to a have province. This is not because of any good management on the part of the provincial NDP government. It is because of a huge boom in oil prices.

The extra revenues that come from the oil prices will keep our hospitals open, pave the roads in rural Saskatchewan and keep the utility costs where they should be for Saskatchewan residents. What impact will Kyoto have on Saskatchewan's oil and gas industry? If we lose just 10% of our revenues from these industries due to the hidden Kyoto taxes of the Liberal government, I think I can safely say that we will see more hospital beds closed as the revenues from that industry plummet.

● (1700)

I do not know why the federal NDP would want more hospitals to close. I know that the provincial NDP has a habit of closing hospitals. We all remember the closing of the Plains Hospital in Regina and the swath of beds closed just recently in rural Saskatchewan. This part of the bill really troubles me.

I would like to turn to the Atlantic accord very briefly and outline the duplicity of the Liberals in lumping that agreement in with this bill. Let us consider that the Liberals did not need to bring in an omnibus bill for the health accord. They did not have to wait for the budget to bring that in. I believe it took only 11 days for them to bring in the health accord in a stand-alone bill. Why can the government not do that for the Atlantic accord right now?

The finance minister is attempting to dither his way out of his obligations by lumping this in with the rest of the budget. The Liberals are holding the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia hostage by linking that accord with this bill. We could pass that bill right now. We could have passed it the other day when my leader got up and challenged the government to bring it in. We would have given it unanimous consent at all stages and the people of Atlantic Canada would have seen the benefits immediately. The Conservative Party would do that.

We have seen a few other interesting facts come out of the proposed budget. We know that the Liberals misled Canadians when they attacked our campaign platform. They said our platform was fiscally irresponsible and then came in with pretty much the same level of spending we proposed, but without the substantial tax relief, which we knew we could afford because we knew the true size of the surplus and we were not playing games with Canadians by trying to underestimate the surplus.

It seems that the finance minister and the Prime Minister have numerical dyslexia, because they now have had the surplus wrong for seven years in a row, is it not? They have consistently given Canadians the wrong figures on the surplus and attacked our numbers based on their misinformation.

Tax freedom day for Canadians does not happen until sometime in July. It is unacceptable to think that every single hard-working Canadian working today is working for the government. Right now, for anybody off laying highway in rural Saskatchewan, about to get ready to start seeding or working any number of jobs, their paycheque is going to the government. The government does not let them keep any of their own money until the year is already half over. That is unacceptable.

I would like to touch just briefly on the issue of airport rents, which are having a direct impact on constituents in Regina. A major airline had to pull out of Regina, cutting back on its main line services because the airline industry is in trouble. It is in trouble because of excessive taxation on ticket prices through the air travel security charge. It is in trouble because of the various fees that are lumped in there. As a result, and we have seen this with Jetsgo, there are turbulent times in the airline industry. The airline industry employs thousands of Canadians.

Government Orders

I sit on the transport committee. The Minister of Transport came to our committee and said he is doing everything he can to get issues like airport rents addressed. Airport rents are costs that are passed on directly to air travellers. The cost of landing at an airport is directly related to the cost of the ticket. This means that travellers in and out of Regina, starting in 2006, will likely pay more for their tickets because those costs will go up. As well, we have seen airport workers in Regina laid off, essentially, and then hired back at half the wages.

This issue of airport rents is having a direct impact, not on the big corporations but on the individual people in Regina who are trying to travel in and out of the city on business or to visit family, and it is having a direct impact on those workers at the airports, who will now see a 50% reduction in their salaries.

Of course we know that the budget bill does very little for farmers. Most of my riding was hit by a devastating frost last August, which wiped out what was promising to be one of the best crops that the Regina—Qu'Appelle area had ever seen. Where is the aid? Where is the disaster relief?

The Minister of Agriculture came to Regina and outlined some spending which to date has not even been delivered. It took the government months to get out the forms from the last round of spending, and it took months to deliver them. I would like to see how much money was delivered from that.

Farmers in my riding need a direct assistance package that is meaningful. The latest one announced by the minister works out to about \$4.80 per acre, I think, which will be just enough to pay the property tax increase that the NDP provincial government brought in for rural Saskatchewan.

We have a lot of work to do. Thankfully, there are enough Conservatives in the House that we can do some of this good work at committee. We will address these issues that I have outlined. We are going to try to do what the Liberals should have done and make this a better budget bill, because that is what Canadians need.

• (1705)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I enjoyed the member's speech. I do not get a chance to hear everybody speak, but it is important to get to know people and see where they are coming from. I think his strong representation of his own constituency is laudable, but we are still members of the federal Parliament and it is important that we look at the national picture as well.

I do not share his views with regard to Kyoto simply because the issue of Kyoto is not just one of greenhouse gases. It is not just what the impact is on individual consumption of various things like the use of automobiles or large emitters, those being hydro or petroleum.

It is also very much linked to the health of Canadians. The major emitters, those being the hydro, the coal fired power plants and the petroleum producing facilities, create more than half of the greenhouse gas emissions as well as the most substantial component of particulate matter in the air of Canada, which is directly related to the health of Canadians.

Thus, we have to temper these things with a plan that is spread over a period of time. The member will know that today the Kyoto plan was tabled. The member also knows that there was a voluntary agreement reached with the auto sector to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions of automobiles by 5.3 megatonnes by the year 2010. That is very important. That was the target.

Would the member not concede that we have to look a little beyond our own ridings and make sure that the national interest is also properly balanced?

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Absolutely, Madam Speaker. I certainly agree that when we come to this place we have to act on what is best for all of Canada.

Let me address what Kyoto will do for all Canadians. All Canadians will pay for increased home heating costs, increased fuel costs and increased costs of doing business. All Canadians will face a devastating impact on their jobs in this economy. Whether it is the auto workers in Ontario, the oil and gas workers in Alberta or the thousands of jobs we eagerly anticipate being created in Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia if the Atlantic accord ever gets passed by this government, these are all jobs across Canada that will be affected.

Let us talk about the national implications of airport rents. Regina, Edmonton, Halifax, Victoria and cities all across Canada are seeing their rents go up every single year, with new rents coming in. These are air travellers and workers in the airline industry all across the country, not just Regina.

Let us talk about how Kyoto does not even address particulate matter. It does not address pollution. This is a red herring that the Liberals always talk about. They say, "We must do something to clean up the air". This is something and therefore we must do it, they say, but Kyoto does not actually even address particulate matter. It does not address smog. It is not going to clean up the smog days in Toronto or Vancouver or other large cities. It addresses only greenhouse gases. It does not have a plan for acid rain. It does not have a plan to clean up our waterways, our lakes and our rivers.

Kyoto is only about greenhouse gases and it will not even address that, because the government is going to buy pollution credits, greenhouse gas credits offshore, meaning that globally there will not be a reduction in greenhouse gases but our tax dollars will go to purchase those credits.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would like to begin with congratulations to my colleague, not for his position on the budget but on his fatherhood. My congratulations to his wife as well. Parenthood is a joy, but being a grandfather is even more of a joy.

Government Orders

Now to return to his speech on this budget. He spoke of course of the price hikes for diesel, gas and energy. He also referred to wages dropping and to the possibility of a 10% drop in revenues. He did not say this, but there is absolutely nothing in the budget about poverty and families. How can he, a new parent, justify his position or his party's position in favour of such a budget?

• (1710)

[*English*]

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his congratulations on the arrival of my son Thomas in Regina.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Your wife had nothing to do with it, right?

Mr. Andrew Scheer: Madam Speaker, I am reminded by my hon. colleague that I should pass those congratulations on to my wife. The new baby being 10 pounds, 9 ounces, I do not deserve too much of the credit. Most of it should go to my wife.

I would like to point out that although there is not a whole lot in this budget we can be extremely supportive of, we have to recognize the baby steps, the very small baby steps, of this Liberal government in even coming close to addressing issues of working families. I am embarrassed to even mention the minuscule tax decreases because they work out to something that is really not even worth mentioning. I think the figure is \$16 a year.

We have to recognize that at least that is not a tax hike and that is an important change in policy direction. Without a strong Conservative opposition in this minority Parliament, I would be afraid of what would come out of the finance department. Tax increases would be just one of a myriad of things we would see if the Conservatives did not have a strong presence in the House.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Social Development (Social Economy), Lib.): Madam Speaker, I very much appreciate this opportunity to express my support for Bill C-43, which implements the measures contained in budget 2005.

[*English*]

Before I continue, let me say that I will be splitting my time with the member for York West.

[*Translation*]

As my hon. colleagues mentioned in their remarks, in this year's budget, the government has taken major steps towards delivering on its commitments to Canadians. Indeed, that is the theme of budget 2005, "Delivering on Commitments".

Canada is known internationally as a country with a strong social foundation. Canadians believe that everyone should have the opportunity to succeed, to achieve full potential and to participate fully in the promise of Canadian society. In this way, Canada's prosperity is shared by all. This belief drives the government's support for strengthening Canada's social foundations.

[*English*]

In my remarks today, I would like to focus on what this government has done to build on Canada's enviable reputation in this

area. Our actions are based on the premise that economic and social policies of the government must reinforce each other.

Strong social policy provides the security for Canadians that is necessary to support sustained economic growth and provide opportunity for all. Strong economic performance has enabled Canada to build a solid social foundation and provide equal opportunity for all citizens. All this must be accomplished with an unwavering adherence to fiscal discipline now and in the future: a commitment to balance the government's budgets and to live within our means.

In its October 2004 Speech from the Throne, the government set out an agenda to strengthen and build a more globally competitive and sustainable economy. This agenda involves strengthening Canada's social foundations through investments in health care, child care, seniors, aboriginal people, Canada's cities and communities, culture, and the justice framework.

By the end of this year, we will have invested \$13 billion in programs to support children and families. The Canada child tax benefit, which provides over \$3,000, and over \$200 for stay at home moms, is just one of those initiatives to support families and children. So when the hon. members of the opposition say there is nothing in the preceding budgets or the present budget in terms of stay at home moms or choices that are given to Canadians, this is one example.

Let us not forget the choice that the Conservatives are in fact giving Canadians. They call it a choice. If we cut the numbers out it is \$2,000 as a tax cut, which provides only about 15% to low income families and about \$200 or \$300 per child. Let us try to find a space in a day care centre in Toronto or Montreal for that amount of money. Also, that does not build a system of early learning and child care.

Budget 2005 builds on the initiatives we have outlined. Let me take a moment and outline just how the government is delivering on its commitment in some key areas, such as early learning and child care, and seniors, which are both part of the social development ministry.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Child care and early learning opportunities are essential to support our children's physical, emotional, social, linguistic and intellectual development, and to set them on a path of lifelong achievement.

The Government of Canada's commitment to a new early learning and child care initiative—which we are working on with our provincial and territorial partners—recognizes the important role that early learning and social integration play in expanding children's horizons, as well as in building a more productive economy. Budget 2005 follows through on this commitment with new investments of \$5 billion over five years to help build the foundations of this initiative across the country. Hon. members will recall that the federal, provincial and territorial ministers agreed on four inter-related, key principles, known as the QUAD principles, to help shape a shared vision for early learning and child care and go beyond earlier agreements and investments.

Government Orders

QUAD stands for: quality, universally inclusive, accessible, and developmental.

Quality refers to evidence-based, high quality practices relating to programs for children, training and supports for early childhood educators and child care providers, and provincial and territorial regulation and monitoring.

Universally inclusive means that the programs are open to children, without exception or discrimination. Accessible means that child care is available and affordable. And finally, the development principle ensures that child care is focused on enhancing early childhood learning opportunities and the developmental component of ELCC programs and services. These principles were already in place and constituted our commitments.

I know that, soon, we will put the finishing touches on a new national initiative under which the provinces and territories will have all the flexibility required to meet their own needs and be accountable to their own citizens. In the meantime, as a sign of our good will, we are establishing a trust fund, which will provide the provinces and territories with federal funding from now until March 2006, so that Canadians no longer have to wait to experience the improvements in early learning and child care programs and services. Bill C-43, which is now before the House, proposes that \$700 million be paid into a third-party trust.

[English]

Canada's support for seniors is one of the major success stories of government policy in the post-war era. At the same time, it is an area facing new challenges resulting from the longer and more vigorous lives of seniors.

To address the evolving needs of seniors, the budget makes significant investments across a wide range of policies that matter to seniors from health care to income security programs, from assistance for people with disabilities, to support for voluntary sector activities by and for seniors.

As hon. members know, together with the old age security pension, the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, provides low income seniors with a fully indexed benefit that ensures they receive a basic level of income throughout their retirement years. Proposals contained in Bill C-43 will increase maximum GIS benefits by more than \$400 per year for a single senior and almost \$700 for a couple. Half of this increase will take effect on January 1, 2006 and the remaining installment will effect the following year.

It is important to note that the increase will be of particular benefit to senior women who account for more than one million of the seniors receiving GIS benefits. And may I say at this point that this comes from recommendations made by committees of the government's caucus that did an extensive study across the country and came up with recommendations which were incorporated in previous budgets and in this budget in particular.

I would also point out that another proposal included in the bill to increase the basic personal amount to \$10,000 over five years will remove some 240,000 seniors from the tax rolls.

• (1720)

[Translation]

In summing up, I will say, as I said at the outset, that Canada is a country that cares about all its citizens. This government has established a solid base for its commitment to strengthen and secure Canada's social foundations.

The initiatives in this bill, which my colleagues and I have briefly detailed today, illustrate that commitment by building on past actions.

I also want to note that we are talking about initiatives related to the social economy—which is an extremely important issue in Quebec. In fact, my province already has such child care programs in place. I am very proud that our government wants to reach an agreement with the provinces on something I consider so fundamental.

I therefore urge my colleagues to accord this bill speedy passage.

[English]

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened to all the wonderful things the Liberal government has done in the last many years I have been here, since 1993. I think the member who just spoke has been here since then as well. She will well remember that in 1993 the Liberals talked about doing something by 2005 for the one million children in the country who were living in poverty.

We have done something all right. It is now 2005 and up to 1.5 million children are living in poverty. That is really fixing the problem. We have had huge surpluses over the last while. I know we were all excited about a \$1.9 billion surplus in the last budget. Lo and behold it is \$9.1 billion. The Liberals had their numbers mixed up, and another \$8 billion suddenly appeared.

I watched Prime Minister Chrétien and the past agricultural minister stand in a field at some farm and say that they were giving another \$6 billion to farmers across the country. Then we keep hearing announcements about billions of dollars given to farmers, but they are going broke day by day. There are more bankruptcies across the country.

In my riding, 75% are farmers. I guarantee that they are going under. There are all these fabulous announcements, but what makes the news more than anything else is ad scam. We cannot trust a government that does not take care of these accounts. It is not looking after the children who are living in poverty, as evidence shows. It is not helping our farmers. I can guarantee that I will produce the farmers to testify to that fact if the Liberals want.

When will they quit talking, start to get honest and do some things around here that will really benefit us?

Government Orders

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I do not think there was one question in that garbage from the other side. On that alone, let me deal with the two issues with which I dealt. They have to do with early learning, child care and child poverty, which is an issue that I have championed also.

The Conservative Party, or the official opposition, has misrepresented some of the statistics. It has been stated in the House both by the minister and myself of how the OECD deals with the statistics on poverty in Canada. This does not mean that a single child in the country should go hungry. We are not proud of that. With the child tax benefit, which I mentioned if the hon. member took a little of time to listen, we provide assistance to low income families. What those members have proposed, which is a tax cut, will not solve poverty in the country.

For example, 70% of Canadians are working, including mothers, and are looking for assistance from the government in terms of assuring that their children are in quality, universal early learning and child care. Education will take children out of poverty. I am a living example of that and so are the members in the House. Education is the basis of getting out of poverty and so is providing enough income and other benefits to families. It is not a tax cut that would go to the rich in the country and not to the low income families. The Conservatives are proposing a tax cut of \$2,000 which will not provide any assistance whatsoever to any single person. That is exactly from the electoral program of the Conservatives. They can sing a nice tune about everything that has not been done.

On agriculture, the minister has announced in the House various programs of assistance for agriculture. They have received it. I know they do not want to listen to the truth. The truth always hurts. It hurts badly, especially when we can throw mud instead of ideas in the House.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would simply like to mention to the hon. member that a picture is often worth a thousand words. The day after the budget, the *Journal de Montréal* carried a picture showing that the result of the tax cuts by the Liberal government for one year would fit in one hand. Canadians and Quebeckers got a fistful of change, as we say.

So I put the following question to the parliamentary secretary. The government has given nothing to help the unemployed who have to cope with the gap or seasonal workers or to help families. If I were in her place, I would try not to be too arrogant about this budget.

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos: Madam Speaker, I will not touch the last part of the question. Indeed, we try in this House to keep debate elevated.

First, I already said in my speech that I myself had worked on some of the measures taken by the government and contained in the budget concerning assistance to society's most disadvantaged families. A number of these measures are in operation in my own riding.

I can provide another example of a measure that will help new families and that is the one providing loans for students to go to

school. It is well known in my riding. People are eager to take advantage of this program, which gives children a loan they can use in the future for their education.

Unfortunately, I do not have the time to address other measures the government has established. I am still convinced, however, that the Bloc will never be satisfied with any measures except one that leads to separation. This is what they have been repeating in the House for the past 12 years.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak and join in this interesting debate today. I want to share a bit with my own constituents how our government is working to build this great country and to make it even greater.

Budget 2005 demonstrates the government's commitments to keeping its books balanced, while providing investments for health, children, seniors, et cetera. It implements more tax reductions, building on our five-year \$100 billion tax cut, which the opposition always forgets to mention, and increases funding for defence and international aid.

There has been a lot in the media lately about our budget and about issues in and around Ontario, which is my home province. I would like to outline some of the areas, specifically to Ontario, that are in this budget, and why it is so important for the people of Ontario and the people of Canada to pass this budget in the upcoming weeks.

Let us talk a little bit about gas tax revenues. Ontario will receive more than \$1.9 billion over the next five years as a result of the Liberal government's decision to transfer a portion of federal gas tax revenue to municipalities. By year five, Ontario will receive \$746 million per year in stable and predictable funding. That will mean better roads, improved transit systems and more sustainable infrastructure. That is new money, not old money. That is a new initiative of our government investing in our cities.

We talked about economic development. Budget 2005 will provide \$88 million in funding over the next five years to FedNor to support the economic development of communities throughout northern Ontario and in rural southern Ontario. We know how badly that extra money is needed there. Included in this is a permanent increase of \$12 million per year to FedNor's budget.

Also in 2005-06, another \$6 million would be provided for FedNor for its priorities in northern Ontario, as well as an \$8.2 million in support for eastern Ontario development funds that would work to provide jobs and create new opportunities.

We hear a lot about border security, something that is very important to all of us. Again, this is strictly for the province of Ontario. Since signing the Canada-U.S. smart border declaration in December 2001, Canada has made considerable progress on improving border security.

Government Orders

Budget 2005 provides an additional \$433 million over five years to strengthen the federal government's capacity to deliver secure and efficient border services. A portion of these new resources will help increase the number of officers at key border crossings and airports across Canada, especially in Ontario.

Immigration settlement is a huge issue for us in Ontario because Ontario gets the majority of all new immigrants, and we are glad to have them. Budget 2005 provides an increase of \$298 million over five years for settlement and integration programs for newcomers to Ontario. Ontario will receive 60% of the total \$298 million. That is a huge increase of money for the province of Ontario to help deal with our newcomers, our new immigrants, and help them to integrate and settle better.

We talk about a variety of things. Let us talk about Genome Canada and the research opportunities. Budget 2005 provides \$165 million to Genome Canada, a not-for-profit corporation supporting Canadian genomics research, with five regional offices, including in Ontario. Over the past two budgets, the Liberal government has provided \$225 million to Genome Canada, which could lead to breakthroughs in the way we treat disease, grow crops and protect our forests.

I would like to talk about health care, which we heard a lot about today, and the new health care accord that we signed with the provinces.

Under the Liberal government's 10-year plan to stop the bickering and have some stability to strengthen health care, Ontario will receive \$16 billion in additional health care funding. Of this amount, \$13.9 billion will be core health funding, \$194 million is for medical equipment, and \$2.1 billion is in order to reduce waiting times. That is just for Ontario.

We talked about urban transit. We talked about Kyoto and our environment and smog, and all of the other issues we are investing in. The greater Toronto area and the City of Ottawa are benefiting from a \$985 million investment to improve efficiency and help meet environmental goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

• (1730)

What about infrastructure? We all know how important that is. Ontario's smaller centres will benefit from our investment of up to \$298 million over the next five years through the Canada-Ontario municipal rural infrastructure fund.

Given that the province and communities would match contributions, the total investment in new infrastructure over the next few years could reach as much as \$900 million. That is new investment in infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

Let us talk a little bit about housing. This is a very important issue for all of us in Ontario. On May 17, 2004 the federal government provided a 40 acre site in the McLevin Woods area in northeast Toronto to Habitat for Humanity. The site, valued at \$4.8 million, was made available to Habitat for Humanity at a nominal cost under the surplus federal real property for homelessness initiative, another initiative of the Government of Canada. This site will feature approximately 600 residential units of a mixture of semi-detached homes, street townhouses and block townhouse units.

In addition to that, another \$99.4 million was allotted in SCPI funding, \$8.4 million through urban aboriginal homelessness, and over \$2.7 million through the regional homelessness fund.

All totalled, this is a huge amount of money that is going to help us ensure that we are offering housing to those who need it the most. That will be specifically \$53 million for Toronto, \$17 million for Ottawa, and \$12 million for Hamilton in SCPI funding alone.

We talked about a variety of initiatives that are really important as we move forward here in Ontario. In economic development and job creation, the government has contributed to Ontario's economic development through a variety of initiatives through a \$207 million investment in Pratt & Whitney to sustain Canada's position as a world leader in aerospace research.

There is a \$100 million investment in Ford of Canada to help it introduce innovative manufacturing processes, and a \$106 million investment through the Canada research chairs program to provide research funding aimed at helping Canada meet its goals to be among the top countries in the world in research and development.

A little bit earlier one of the opposition members mentioned the issue of agriculture. Under the Canadian agricultural income stabilization fund, Ontario farmers received \$81.6 million for the 2003 crop year as of January 2005.

We talked about a variety of initiatives in Ontario. Another one is the research chairs. Ontario was awarded more research chairs than any other province in Canada. Ontario was awarded more research projects than any other province. Investments in Toronto's Harbourfront also continue to go on, so that we can continue to build our province to be the very best that it possibly can be.

Our budget invests in families. Investing in families is a very important part of creating the Canada that we want. Budget 2005 includes initiatives for Canada's seniors, caregivers and Canadians with disabilities.

This budget makes significant investment in seniors' programs as my colleague has mentioned, from health care to income security, from retirement savings to assistance for their caregivers. Our constant goal is to enhance the quality of life for Canadians, especially our seniors. We must always remember that our seniors built this country.

The guaranteed income supplement also provides low income seniors with a benefit that ensures a basic level of income throughout their retirement years. In 2004 our government, under the great leadership of our Prime Minister, made a commitment to increase the guaranteed income supplement payments over the next five years. Budget 2005 goes above and beyond that commitment.

Government Orders

This budget provides \$13 million over five years to establish a new seniors secretariat. We have never had that before. Our Prime Minister also appointed a minister for seniors, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina, as the Minister of State for Families and Caregivers. This is so that we can put specific attention and focus on our seniors, our families, our caregivers, and the many challenges that they are facing in this world today

• (1735)

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a question specifically on the topic of border security which she raised in her comments, not only in that respect but because she was past Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

In my riding and in a number of ridings at least in southern Ontario, 60% to 70% of the work we do in our constituency offices involves immigration and the completing of passports.

We have had the Auditor General make some very severe criticisms about the security with respect to the production of our passports. Quite frankly, my office is swamped in assisting people with respect to that. We have had Americans saying that our security is terrible at our borders, that we have severe problems, and that we are not pulling our weight.

The former minister has talked about the issue of border security and has said that it is in pretty good shape. I submit it is not. I submit that our constituency offices are not going to be able to handle the passport problem. I submit that I have seen no signs that the Department of Citizenship and Immigration is going to be improving security with the passports. I have had no signs through the budget, which we are speaking on today, that sufficient money will be put into the passport system to improve security.

Not only as the member who just spoke in the House but also as a former minister. I would like her to comment on those very serious issues.

• (1740)

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, all of these issues of course are issues that we face every day when it comes to the whole issue of passports. Some of the changes that are coming about in the next little while will put increased pressure on that whole division.

In budget 2005 there is a commitment of \$433 million to go to border security, so that the resources are there that are needed to ensure that Canadians can travel feeling safe and comfortable at their borders.

We should remember as well that we have a good relationship with the U.S. The Minister of Public Security and Emergency Preparedness is working very closely with the U.S. to ensure that we have border security on both sides in a partnership, so that we can continue to ensure that Canada is safe and the U.S. border is safe as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my speech is also on poverty. Earlier it was mentioned that one of the goals of the budget was to address poverty.

I have on hand—and I would like the hon. member's comments on this—the Campaign 2000 national report on child poverty in Canada. According to the report's findings, child poverty has increased in Canada, during an economic boom no less, to 15.6%. In other words, one in six children live in poverty in Canada. The report cited lack of political will.

Why is that poverty was not a priority in the budget, except, obviously, for tax measures?

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro: Mr. Speaker, the question gives me an opportunity to highlight some of the investments that frankly would be at risk if we were to defeat the budget. A lot of the things that I mentioned earlier would not happen.

When we talk about child poverty and some of the investments we are making, there is \$5 billion over five years to start building a framework for an early learning and child care initiative in collaboration with the provinces and territories. We must always remember that a lot of the things that we do require provincial cooperation. That is not always coming and it is not always easy to work in those areas.

We are putting \$5 billion on the table and an additional \$120 million over five years to improve the special education program for first nations children living on reserves. That is a very important investment.

As well, there is \$398 million over the next five years to enhance settlement and integration programs and improve client services for newcomers to Canada. I can tell the House that money will be very much appreciated in all of our cities and provinces as they continue to deal with the challenges that are facing many newcomers in Canada today.

There is also \$125 million over the next three years for next steps for the workplace skills strategy again to help people get themselves into employment areas and give them additional assistance. There is \$30 million over three years for the national literacy secretariat. All of those are funds that are going to be helping a lot of people.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Niagara Falls.

Before I address the environment parts of this budget, because after all, this was a green budget, I would like to quickly summarize the Liberal record.

First of all, on the environment, earlier we heard mention by a member of the opposition that the OECD does a different rating for child poverty. I have checked its rating for the environment and we are rated 24 out of the 24 countries in terms of environmental integrity. It used a whole bunch of criteria which are accepted internationally, have been peer reviewed by a number of scientists, and basically agree that in terms of environmental integrity we are lacking dramatically.

Government Orders

We have over 300 boil water warnings at any given time. We have increased smog days in our major cities. We have more and more contaminated sites and brownfields right across the country. I do not think that the members over there should be bragging too much, certainly not on the environment.

We also have a \$500 billion debt. That amounts to about \$40,000 per man, woman and child in this country. To hear the government members speaking about this, they talk as if, "We have three credit cards. They are all at the max, but we have \$20 in our pocket so we have lots of money. We have a surplus to spend". Actually our country has a \$500 billion debt for our future generations.

We have a justice system that becomes weaker and weaker. Day by day more and more offenders are released, who everybody says will reoffend. We have less influence in the world because of poor leadership. We have an EI fund that overcollected \$43 billion and basically less than 40% can collect that.

We have an immigration system that is close to collapse. A friend of mine who works in Qatar says that a person can go to an office building there, have a guaranteed Canadian passport within one year and have an apartment in either Toronto or Montreal given to him or her. He knows of families who have received their Canadian passports simply by going to an office in Qatar.

We have a gun registry that was estimated to cost \$2 million but it has gone to \$2 billion. That is our first black hole. The second black hole was announced today where there will be \$10 billion instead of the \$5 billion that was estimated for Kyoto. It will probably be 10 times that and will be our second deepest black hole that we could have.

There is the sponsorship scandal where organized crime is involved with a political party in this country.

When I first came here in 1993 we had a budget of \$140 billion. This budget is \$210 billion. Think of the spending increase. How many Canadian families have been able to increase their spending by that kind of percentage?

We have higher taxes. They keep going up. Our tax free day occurs later and later. We have a back-loaded budget. We have a defence that has collapsed. We have, as I say, an environmental record that we really cannot say very much about.

What about this budget? Let us talk about the government's lack of planning. In 1992 we went to Rio and said, "Clean air is a major problem. Climate change is a major problem. We recognize it in Canada and we are going to do something about it". Well, it took from 1993 to 1997 before anything was done. No planning, no budgeting, nothing was done.

In 1997 we went over to Kyoto, we signed something, no planning, no idea of what it was going to cost, no economic projections, no understanding of what that even meant, and we signed on. Then we did nothing.

In 2002, because the whole international community was putting pressure on us, we came up with a plan. The plan of today is a quarter as big as the plan of 2002. It has less detail. It does not even attempt to be a plan. It does not tell where anything is going to come from. It does not tell us how we are going to achieve any of our

targets, but it says we are going to spend \$10 billion doing nothing. Ten billion dollars is an awful lot of money for Canadians to absorb.

• (1745)

How are Canadians going to absorb that? The only way is by doubling the cost of their electricity, doubling the cost of heating their houses, and probably doubling the cost of driving their cars. That affects everyone. Whether we buy lettuce, the trucking costs will be more, whether we heat our home, whether we are a senior citizen on a fixed income, it means we are going to pay.

What are we paying for? We are going to pay for something that is not going to achieve any targets. What should we be doing? I will get to that in a few minutes. Obviously there is an answer to this, but the government is not going to find it.

If we examine the budget, we would find that part 13 talks about a climate fund. What is it? It is basically \$1 billion, only \$1 billion. The Liberals are going to take this money and buy emission credits. What the minister said was that we are not going to buy emission credits in Canada probably because they would be too expensive. We would not want to give farmers something for their sinks for agriculture practices. We would not want to give the forester something because of his forestry practices. That would be too expensive. We would not want to do that.

We would rather go to Zimbabwe, Africa and tell them, "You guys never industrialize. We will keep you poor and we will buy your credits and you can give them to us cheap". We are going to get them for \$2 or \$3 for a tonne of carbon because after all, the European market is at \$30 and we do not want to pay that, so we are just going to boot some of the poor guys, maybe Mexico, Africa or whomever. That is a real Liberal way of dealing with the climate change problem; let us buy cheap credits because after all we are a powerful nation.

I do not know about the buying of emissions credits. It is full of holes. How are we going to administer it? We say to the people of Ukraine, "We will send you about \$100 million and you will do an environmentally clean project and we will get credits for it and we will monitor you". Yes, we are going to monitor them. How can we monitor things that are happening in Canada? We know \$100 million goes missing in Canada pretty easily; just imagine in Ukraine or Zimbabwe or Mexico. It just does not make any sense.

Government Orders

Obviously we are going to have a clean fund. I think the name has changed but I have a hard time keeping up with the names because they change every week. We are going to buy these credits and most of them by the minister's admission will be international. I would like to see that in the budget. I hope Canadians ask a lot of questions during the next election about the climate fund and where it is going.

Part 14 is about greenhouse gas technology investment, which sounds good until we look at it. Twelve Liberals are being appointed to a board to take money from one company and distribute it to another company which develops clean technology. That is a great idea too. It is really good to develop new technology, but imagine the Transaltas of this world which are working on clean coal technology. They are the second heaviest emitters in Canada and we are telling them that they will pay millions of dollars into a fund, that 12 Liberals are going to sit on a board in Ottawa and are going to distribute it to new technology funds. Who are they going to be? They are going to be Liberal friendly firms. It is shocking that they would even consider doing that, but they just might.

On the CEPA clause, the Liberals took it out of the budget. They are going to give us a win. Where does it appear? They are going to administer this new plan using CEPA, a carbon tax on Canadians. That is what it will be. That is how it will end up. It is a blank cheque for them so now they have snuck it into that plan out of the budget.

● (1750)

In conclusion, we do have a better way. We have a solution to this problem. We would have a clean air plan, a clean water plan, a soil plan, an energy plan involving conservation, transitional fuels and alternate energy. It will be a long term plan that will achieve the goals and we will have a clean environment for Canadians.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know what a passionate environmentalist my colleague is. We both had the fortune, or misfortune, I cannot tell which, to be at the press conference on this. One comment that came from one of the ministers was the fantastic international record that Canada now holds in terms of the environment, which is contrary to what the OECD and other groups have said.

The NDP invested quite a bit of time and energy in developing its own Kyoto plan. In the absence of a plan coming from the government, it felt it was important to actually cost out what it would look like, cost out the kind of job creation we could have in Canada, what kind of reductions we could achieve with what type of expenditure. He has mentioned his party's plans. I am wondering if his party has done this, if there is a plan available, or if it is a set concepts.

The hon. member made a number of speeches before I came to the House wherein he talked about how climate change did not exist. He was denying the aspect of climate change. I am wondering if he could correct the record as to when his party started to believe that climate change existed.

How is it, in the absence of a plan per se right now, his party would achieve the Kyoto targets? Would there be some suggestion that we should pull out of the international agreement?

● (1755)

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I certainly agree with the hon. member about the international record. It is pretty disgraceful. It is kind of embarrassing. When his leader and I were in Buenos Aires, we sat with representatives from 150 other countries. They told us we were a bunch of laggards. It was pretty embarrassing to be put in that situation. All we could do was point to the environment minister and say that he was to blame, that it was not us.

On the Kyoto plan, yes, my party has one. Yes, I have reviewed the NDP's plan. I think it has some problems. What I have learned is that there is a party in government which, if given everything up front before an election, it steals what it wants and discredits the rest. It does that on everything. It is best to hold one's fire, get that party right in one's sights and then pull the trigger, but do not pull it too soon because one just might miss.

As far as climate change is concerned, we have always maintained that our environment is in great need of help. There are boil water warnings. The aquifers are becoming polluted. The air is polluted. There is an increase in asthma cases caused by particulate matter, sulphur dioxide, nitrous oxide, all of those things.

Just as a precautionary principle, we have to deal with greenhouse gases. Climate change is occurring. It is occurring every day. It has occurred 33 times before and will probably occur 33 times again. We are probably having an impact on it and we should deal with it. Just as a precautionary principle, we should deal with it. My party's plan deals with it in a clean air way.

We cannot pull out of Kyoto. Section 26 of the Kyoto protocol says that we have to give one year's notice and then wait three years before we can opt out. It takes four years to get out. It is not practical to waste time doing that. Lawyers get rich. The WTO would punish us. Instead of doing that, it would be much better to come up with a real solid plan and go for it. Get industry and the provinces on side and go for it. We can achieve those targets and better. We could be leaders, but we are not leaders now, I guarantee that.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Niagara Falls, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to follow my colleague from Red Deer in this debate today. Let me say how pleased I am to be sharing my time with him. He is, as we know, a committed environmentalist. I and all Canadians, I think, appreciate the clarity which he has brought to the subject of environmental issues. I certainly appreciate his comments on the government's lack of initiatives in that particular area.

I am pleased to speak to the budget implementation bill. There are many parts to this budget, and I have said before that I and members of my party support any measures that include tax deductions for Canadians. Canadians are overtaxed. The extent of the federal surpluses over the last few years is proof of that. We support any initiatives that would reduce the tax burden on Canadians. We certainly welcome that.

Government Orders

We welcome those initiatives that would put money into the hands of our armed forces. I pointed out on a previous occasion that this has been spread out far too long and is all back-end loaded. It seems to me that it fits this government's pattern. The government either makes a promise or makes an announcement and we are supposed to wait indefinitely for the results or the cheque to arrive.

Quite apart from that, I wish the government would have a look at this bill and make some changes to it in order to facilitate its passage. As we know, the last budget implementation act is still working its way through the system. It takes a long time to get one of these bills through. By piling up a group of things into the bill, the government is leaving certain things hostage, things that are widely supported.

I want to mention a couple of things about the budget. Certainly the Atlantic accord is one of them. It was the right decision to make, but it came about for the wrong reasons.

We will remember that at about this time last year the Liberal Party found itself in trouble. The Liberals thought they were going to lose some seats in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, so against what he has been saying for many years, the Prime Minister reversed himself on the whole question of offshore resources and made a promise.

We support the result even if we do not agree with the reasons for which it was done. In any case, the Atlantic accord has ended up in the budget implementation bill and that is too bad, because those particular provinces want and are entitled to the money that would flow to them from that accord but it is tied up in this bill. Our leader and our party have made it very clear that we would separate this out and pass it at all stages in one day. We would go ahead with that if the government were so inclined.

It is too bad about that, but it actually raises a bigger issue and that is the question of transfers to the provinces. Our party has advocated having a look at the whole process, not as was done in this particular case where the government feels it is being held hostage or is desperate for a couple of more seats.

No, we should do it in a comprehensive way. We should look at the whole question, because other provinces have concerns as well. I picked up the paper this morning, and the *Toronto Star*, no less, points out the premier of Ontario taking the Prime Minister to task under the headline, "PM has 'Lost Touch' with Ontario voters... premier says".

These are not my words or those of somebody in the New Democratic Party. This was the premier of Ontario talking. He went on to say—

An hon. member: Dalton.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Yes, that is right, Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal premier.

According to this article, the Prime Minister has "lost touch" with the Ontario electorate. I agree with the premier. The Prime Minister has lost touch with the electorate in the province of Ontario as he has right across the country.

On the subject of fiscal arrangements, then, we think we should all have a look at fiscal arrangements and the way the government

handles them. We should come up with a plan that is fair to everyone. We should not be doing this in the one-off way we saw in the last federal election.

• (1800)

I am also concerned about the government's commitment to the whole question of border security. In my riding in the Niagara Peninsula, we have four border crossings. It is a huge issue and one that concerns all Canadians, not just me as a member of Parliament from that area.

There are a couple of things I have raised before and on which I will continue to press the government. One is this: not enough is being done on the subject of border security. Here is what is happening. Because the federal government does not live up to its responsibility now, the tab or the price for border security falls to the Niagara Regional Police Service. It is not done by the federal government or an agency of the federal government to the extent that it should be.

This is the responsibility of the federal government. It is elementary constitutional law that international security is the responsibility of the federal government, but the government is not taking it on. As a result, the government has received resolutions from the Regional Municipality of Niagara. A little over a month ago it received a resolution from the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. That resolution says, among other things, "Whereas border security is a responsibility of the federal government, be it resolved that the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake supports the Regional Municipality of Niagara in requesting that the cost of border security be borne by the federal government".

Is that not a reasonable request? Is there anything radical about the Government of Canada living up to its responsibility? This was sent to the other municipalities. The resolution I received, of February 28, 2005, indicates that this was also supported by the city of Niagara Falls.

However, it is not just the waterways that I am concerned about. This week in Ottawa we heard from representatives of the customs officers union. They met with a number of us and cited a number of concerns about their ability to do their jobs. The problems they cite at Canada's border crossings included the following. They have problems with the databases. It is apparently very difficult to call up information to check on who a customs officer is dealing with. In this day and age it should not be like that. It should not take them a long time to go into various databases when they have to make a quick decision on what is before them.

They point out that there are over 225 unguarded roads between Canada and the United States. They point out that 1,600 vehicles just blew right past border patrols in the year 2004. They cite problems with students working alone. They cite problems with the fact that customs officers are told not to deal with armed and dangerous criminals but to let those criminals into Canada. Then they are supposed to call the local police. Unfortunately, that sometimes means the response time is very slow, so dangerous criminals have the opportunity to get into this country.

Government Orders

This is a big problem. I think it is a big problem for all Canadians. This is one of the things I have been saying over the past few months to the government: work on these issues. There is money, a lot of money. The government has already figured out that the supposed surplus is about double what was projected just a few weeks ago when the budget came in. The Liberals should use some of that money to protect Canadians and give the tools to our customs officers that they deserve.

As well, members of the Canadian Real Estate Association have concerns that they want to take up with the finance minister. They are worried about the Department of Finance abandoning the reasonable expectation of profit test. I say that the Liberals should sit down with these people and work these things out.

There are a couple of other areas. I would love to get into this area of the municipal infrastructure money. The Prime Minister made announcements on this a couple of years ago, but it is just like a lot of things. The announcement is made, but very often we are still waiting for the cheque.

I am pleased to have had this opportunity for debate and would be pleased to take any questions that may arise.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, with a budget comes the allocation of public funds. The government makes choices and there are priorities.

Social housing was completely ignored the current budget. Instead, the government chose to invest in the army and to give funding to foundations.

I would like my colleague's opinion on this. I want to know what he thinks of the initiative to put \$600 million into a specific fund.

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the point of the problems I have with this budget. It is the question of the government's priorities and the choices the government has made.

The night this budget was presented, the member for Wild Rose made a very interesting comment. As soon as the speech was completed, he called over to the Minister of Finance and said, "I think there is a misprint in the copy I have. The chapter on agriculture seems to be missing. I cannot find it". The member remembers saying that. I did the same thing.

Agriculture is absolutely vital. It is important to this country. Much of the tender fruit industry and the grape and wine industry in this country is centred in my part of Canada. Of course I looked for assistance in the budget, or a demonstration that the government knows about and wants to support these industries. I will tell members that we had to look real hard to find any reference to agriculture. I was very disappointed.

Again I will come back to this about the Government of Canada and the choices it makes and its way of doing business. I was in Winnipeg a couple of years ago and heard the Prime Minister, then the finance minister, start talking about giving gas taxes to the municipalities. I was a municipal politician at the time. I had no reason to doubt the sincerity of the then finance minister. I told my

colleagues, "Gee, I think we are going to be getting some of that gas tax in the municipalities. This will be of interest."

The spring becomes the summer, the summer becomes the fall, we are into the winter again and there is talk that it is coming. Then we are into an election. There has been an announcement and "gas tax to the municipalities" is part of the election. The election comes and goes, the summer becomes the fall, the fall becomes the winter again and the cheque is never in the mail.

That is the problem with this government. The announcement comes and then we wait. It is like the constituent who came up to me and said, "I'm voting Liberal this time because I think they are going to legalize marijuana". I said, "Well, jeeppers, you'll get to vote for them all your life, I guess, because that's a promise they make every election".

I disagree with that promise, but the Liberals just keep making it and it dies on every order paper. It gets buried somewhere.

The same promises go on and on. In the end, just like the municipalities waiting for their cheque for the gas tax, those promises just do not quite make it. I would guess that we will probably be hearing another announcement with respect to this.

That is not the way government should be done in this country. We should make commitments to people and then follow through on those commitments in a timely manner.

• (1810)

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great attention to the discourse of the hon. member. Of course, the reason I listened with great attention is not that I agree with him; it was because I wanted to have the opportunity to state the opposite, mainly of course to bring the facts back to what they are, which I know is what Mr. Speaker would want me to do, being the truly objective non-partisan person that Mr. Speaker is. Being truly objective and non-partisan as he is, he will therefore appreciate what I am just about to say here.

Now, on gas tax revenues, because I know the hon. member is a member of Parliament from Ontario, a very good province of course, he knows that Ontario will receive more than \$1.9 billion over the next five years as a result of the Liberal government's decision to transfer a portion of the federal gas tax revenues to the municipalities. I want to know whether that means he will vote for the measures in question.

Next—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. The time for questions has expired, but we are going to have an answer from the member for Niagara Falls.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the member highlights exactly what I have been talking about. He says, "Oh, the member will be happy with this". I am happy with announcements, but I will be happier when the cheque actually arrives. That is what I want to see. That is all I want to see. I think it is a reasonable request.

I would ask the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell to use his influence with the finance minister and say to him, "Look, cut the cheque. Do something about some of these promises we have made". That is what he should be doing.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has expired. Unfortunately, the five hours in which we have 20 minutes for speeches and 10 minutes for questions and comments following has also expired. We are now into the period where we have 10 minute speeches without any questions or comments following.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to the 2005 budget implementation bill, Bill C-43, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget which was tabled in Parliament on February 23.

[*Translation*]

As chair of the Standing Committee on Finance, I am making it my duty to insist on having this bill passed as soon as possible in order to be able to respect the wishes expressed by Canadians.

[*English*]

The finance committee in its pre-budget consultation report entitled, "Moving Forward: Balancing Priorities and Making Choices for the Economy of the Twenty-First Century", made 33 prebudget recommendations to the Department of Finance when it tabled its report in December 2004.

This report was prepared based on the testimony the committee heard from individuals, groups and associations from across Canada. The report was not based on my personal views, nor the members' on the committee, but a collection of views of different industries and sectors. Budget 2005 includes many of the committee's recommendations, and I would like to speak on a few of these.

For example, the budget implementation bill would create a \$700 million trust for the provinces and territories to invest in early learning child care programs and services. This amount is the 2004-05 and 2005-06 portion of the \$5 billion over five years committed in budget 2005. This was similar to the committee's recommendation 27.

I will not go through all the committee's recommendations, but I want to highlight how many of the budget implementation items were recommended by the finance committee. Again, the finance committee's recommendations were based on all-party agreement by members.

The budget implementation bill also would increase the guaranteed income supplement benefits for low income seniors by \$2.7 billion over five years. That recommendation was similar to recommendation 29 in the prebudget report.

The budget implementation bill would also provide \$600 million in federal gas tax revenue sharing for 2005-06 for municipalities to support environmentally sustainable infrastructure projects, which was similar to the committee's recommendation 9.

The budget implementation bill would also establish a new agency under Environment Canada to manage the \$1 billion climate fund which will provide incentives for the reduction and removal of greenhouse gases, which was similar to the committee's recommendation 8.

The budget implementation bill would also increase the amount that Canadians can earn without paying federal income tax. That was similar to the committee's recommendation 24.

The budget implementation bill would also increase the annual limits on contributions to registered retirement savings plans and other tax deferred retirement savings plans. This was not a committee recommendation, but was included in the Liberal portion of the report.

The budget implementation bill would increase the child disability benefit supplement to the Canada child tax benefit. This was similar recommendation 28 of the committee report.

The budget implementation bill would allow for a longer period for the existence of and contributions to a registered education savings plan in certain circumstances where the plan beneficiary would be eligible for the disability tax credit. This was similar to the committee's recommendation 28.

The budget implementation bill would increase the maximum refundable medical expense supplement. This was similar to the committee's recommendation 28.

There is a clause for emergency medical services, which I think is a slight technicality, that we did not address in committee. The tsunami relief was not an issue when the committee held its consultations.

The budget implementation bill would eliminate the corporate surtax and reduce the general corporate income tax rate. That was similar to the committee's recommendation 12.

The budget implementation bill would extend the scientific research and experimental development tax incentives to SR and ED performed in Canada's exclusive economic zone. This was not exactly pinpointed to what the committee recommended, but it is very similar to recommendations 17 and 18 in its prebudget recommendations.

We have the air traveller's security charge. We did not address it because we left that up to the transport committee.

One that is interesting is the budget implementation bill would address the phase-out of the excise tax on jewellery. This was addressed in a separate report on two occasions, one in the last Parliament and one in the last session before the House broke for its Christmas break. The finance committee again tabled a separate report in which it recommended exactly what the finance minister has proposed on the excise tax on jewellery. Therefore, we need to have this budget implementation bill approved and adopted.

Private Members' Business

●(1815)

Another area that the budget implementation bill would provide for would be to extend the application of the 83% goods and services tax/ harmonized sales tax for the rebate for hospitals to government funded non-profit entities that provide health care services traditionally performed in hospitals. This is very similar to what the committee recommended in recommendation 30. We recommended any type of help that health institutions could be given, they would take it. This one was very well received by the health care service people.

The budget implementation bill would amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act to facilitate the future addition of greenhouse gases to the list of substances under the act. This would allow the Minister of the Environment to regulate emissions and implement the proposed large final emitter regime and emissions trading system.

The budget implementation bill also would establish a technology investment fund to provide companies regulated under the proposed large final emitter regime with a compliance mechanism that encourages investments in greenhouse gas mitigation research and development.

It would also provide an additional \$300 million for the green municipal funds, \$150 million of which would be used to help communities clean up and redevelop brownfields, abandoned sites where environmental contamination exists. This is very similar to what the committee recommended in recommendations 7 and 8 and also what the Liberal Party highly recommended in its separate report.

The budget implementation bill would also introduce a new employment insurance rate setting mechanism under which the EI commission would have the power to set the premium rate, taking into account the principle that the premium rate should generate just enough premium revenue to cover program costs. This was one of the recommendations the committee made in recommendation 25.

There are other areas that the budget implementation will address and that is the offshore agreements with Newfoundland and Labrador and Nova Scotia, which were signed on February 14. The committee did not address this because it happened after the committee tabled its report.

●(1820)

There would be a transfer of \$100 million to the province of British Columbia to battle the mountain pine beetle.

The last item I have on my list is to create a \$100 million trust to help the territories meet the goals of the northern strategy, a joint initiative between the Government of Canada and territorial governments aimed at improving the quality of life of northerners. I do not think any member of the committee would have been opposed to that.

If I go through the list of recommendations, I have a list of 33 recommendations. If I go quickly through the list I can say that of the 33 recommendations of the finance committee, 7 recommendations from the committee were not addressed in the budget. Again, the finance committee is made up of members of all parties. The report

was not dominated by only the Liberal members, but all members of the House.

The government is one that wants to govern. It has shown the openness and transparency to govern. If I am asked how, I would say by listening to what Canadians wanted.

Canadians told us what they wanted during the prebudget consultation when we prepared this book. The book was very detailed and provided the finance department with details of what Canadians told us. The finance department did a good job of listening to us. We owe it to Canadians to vote on Bill C-43, get it to committee and get it back in the House so the people of Canada can benefit from budget 2005 adopted by the finance minister.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

●(1825)

[*Translation*]

INCOME TAX ACT

The House resumed from February 3, 2005, consideration of the motion that Bill C-285, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (exclusion of income received by an athlete from a non-profit club, society or association), be read a second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today in support of Bill C-285, which will have a major impact on all elite or developmental athletes.

My speech will, essentially, address three points: the situation facing current athletes, the positive impact of Bill C-285, and the funding of amateur sports in Quebec and Canada. It is important, however, to consider the situation facing our athletes in this country.

Developmental or elite athletes in Quebec or Canada must go to great lengths to find the funds they need to train and improve their performance.

In my opinion, sports provide a learning experience that helps each individual in our society grow. Unfortunately, playing a sport in Quebec or Canada remains a privilege because of the cost. Playing a sport, particularly at an elite level, requires an athlete to invest many thousands of dollars. To reach the top, athletes need their parents' support for their development. Parents have to make sacrifices and major investments to pay for travel expenses, competition entry fees, training and many other things.

For years, these parents have made the same sacrifices as their children, having to get up for the early-morning practices before school and on weekends.

Private Members' Business

The problem worsens as the young athletes move up, because then parents are often unable to afford the cost of travel so that their children can compete further afield. The children have to drop out when the money is not there. Despite the lack of assistance to parents, I do feel that implementation of Bill C-285 would be profitable to the people of Quebec and Canada and would have direct impacts on society as a whole.

This is why the Bloc Québécois is very much in favour of this bill. I repeat, the situation of our athletes must be improved if they are to remain competitive, not only nationally but internationally as well.

The impact of this bill would, moreover, be beneficial to the community in a variety of ways. True, there is no money being provided directly to the 1,400 or so athletes targeted by this bill, those at the elite and developmental levels, but passing this bill will be a step in the right direction.

At the moment, an athlete who receives contributions from his or her regional association or any other non-profit body, up to a total of \$8,000, is taxed at a rate of 16%. If this bill is passed, that athlete will have an annual tax saving of \$1,280.

Clause 2 of this bill provides retroactivity. This means that, for the past five years, an athlete with an income in excess of the marginal tax rate of \$8,000 would get back \$6,400.

Needless to say, implementation of such a bill would cost Quebecers and Canadians several million dollars. However, the positive impact for athletes and the population as a whole must be considered.

• (1830)

When our athletes distinguish themselves at international events, the impact is felt in the community directly. There is a feeling of pride that contributes to people's sense of who they are.

Athletes become role models for young people and have an influence on the way sport is played.

I would also like to put forward other arguments. In fact, implementing such a bill is only a start—it should be only a start, because there has to be more help for athletes.

Our athletes need more grant money and financial assistance in order to compete internationally. Despite the increase in the amounts allotted to the athlete assistance program, there is a long way to go yet.

As I mentioned earlier, even though the bill does provide a tax exemption for athletes, more must be done for them.

The Canadian government must provide more support for athlete development. This financial help must not go only to athletes at the top of the pyramid, but to athletes at the bottom of it, too. How can we expect to develop athletes if we do not promote this group and encourage more people to participate in sports?

This bill renews the entire debate on funding for amateur sports. The athlete assistance program is unable to meet the needs of various Canadian and Quebec athletes. Currently, the program gives precedence to elite athletes over developmental athletes.

It is important to know that the maximum monthly stipend for developmental athletes is only \$900. Some will say that this is a huge sum to meet all the needs of such athletes. However, given that athletes at this level must train extensively, up to 30 or 40 hours per week, there is not a lot of time left for them to work for a living. As a result, many young athletes must abandon their training, because they can no longer pay for food or housing.

Even with the recent announcements by the Minister of State for Sport on increased monthly stipends for carded athletes, elite athletes receive 70% of the funding, while developmental athletes receive 30%. Fewer athletes at the top are sharing 70%; more athletes at the bottom are sharing 30%. Only 30% of athletes receiving stipends are at the developmental level.

In Canada, many athletes receive funding only once they have obtained top results. Many companies then want to be associated with the winners. So this is a major problem that needs to be addressed.

In closing, I want to reiterate my support for Bill C-285. This is an excellent initiative to develop our rising hopes, as well as the values we want to instill in our society and our communities.

• (1835)

[English]

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure, being from Saskatchewan, to speak to this issue. I thank the Bloc members for their support on this bill. I see a unity being built around this issue. Hockey is important in Quebec and it is important in Saskatchewan. Hockey is our national sport and very much a part of the culture of this nation, so anything that would promote amateur sports, especially junior hockey, would be a plus.

I would like to express a concern about government policy on athletics. Canadians rightfully, after an Olympic event or whatever, are concerned that maybe the lead athletes are not competitive, that we did not receive enough gold or silver medals and that we should have done better. The government approach seems to be to put more money in the elite programs.

Private Members' Business

I think it is too late at that stage. We will have elite athletes when our amateur athletic programs are strong at the grassroots. That will produce the high quality athlete and that is where the focus should be. I am not saying there should not be funding for lead athletes, but we should not lose focus. Lead athletes come out of very strong grassroots programs. The government, in this case, is not giving any support to grassroots junior hockey in this country. It is doing the exact opposite. It is trying to tax it out of existence with questionable applications of tax law.

The bill has wide applications. It deals with not for profit associations that are directly involved in amateur sports. It allows them to expend \$8,000 per participant or team player under that umbrella without bringing on the wrath of the federal government and its tax collectors.

Somebody said \$8,000 sure sounds like a lot of money. Let us apply it to the Saskatchewan junior hockey league. The Canada Revenue Agency, in its wisdom or judgment or whatever one wants to call it, has deemed a \$100 a month allowance per player, players who are 17 or 18 years of age. They have left home, their parents are not paying an allowance, and they are under the guardianship of their junior hockey team. They are billeted into really good homes. The parents want that for their kids. They want to make sure they are in good homes. They get paid \$300 a month. They eat that up in the first two weeks of the month, but the tax department says that is a taxable benefit. It assesses Canada pension, unemployment insurance and income tax deductions even though these players are never going to be eligible for the benefits that they are assessed.

It does not stop there. The \$8,000 is needed for a whole lot of other reasons too. Let us use our imagination. If the expenses and billeting costs are taxable benefits, what about the transportation costs when they are on the road? What about the meal costs when they are out of town? We travel to Flin Flon. That is 200 or 300 miles away. Some of the teams travel 500 miles away. They have to eat on the road and the teams pay for their meals.

There are hotel expenses when they are on the road. They have hockey sticks and uniforms to buy. The list is endless. It would not take much of an imagination before everything the hockey team is doing is a taxable benefit. I raise these concerns. I almost think the \$8,000 is too low, in my view, but it is a good start.

A team in my league was the first to be audited. The government got it up to \$65,000. I know how that team operates. It is non profit. Seventy per cent of its revenues are derived from ticket sales, raffles and bingos. It is a community event. It is not a big community and the team has to put in as much sweat equity as it can to make the books balance. Along come our federal tax collectors into this community and they say the team has to pay \$65,000.

• (1840)

Our national sport is a truly amateur production. They are killing the hockey dreams of these players. Most of the players came to that team with one objective and that was to hopefully continue their schooling, attract a scholarship from a major American university, and get a full scholarship to a university in the United States. The parents are behind them 100%. They are hoping that their kids' dreams will become their dreams.

The people in the community, from all walks of life, in January go out to the hockey rink to cheer their team on. Everybody in the community, every class of person we can think of gathers together to cheer their team: farmers, labourers, professional people, business people, the aboriginal community, low income people, high income people, and retired people. That is the culture in rural Saskatchewan communities.

What does the federal government, through its tax policies, want to do? It wants to destroy that; it wants to undermine that. I would remind the members opposite that in the last two major Olympic events or international competitions that Canada has had, our of the 20 players on the team, we had four players from the Saskatchewan junior hockey league alone. These were players who came up through the development of that league. There were four NHL hockey coaches only a few years ago who cut their teeth in that league.

What is the federal government's attitude for promoting amateur junior hockey at the grassroots level? What is its policy? Hammer them with taxes. If excessive regulations do not kill off something, let us bring in a whole bunch of government taxes. Maybe some day they will come back to the Liberal government on bended knee and ask, "Is there a foundation that can hand us out a grant or something so we can carry on?"

That seems to be the government's mentality, to create a dependency in this country where nobody wants a dependency. They say, "Just get out of our lives, leave us alone and let us be amateur athletes". However, that is not the Liberal approach. It is more taxes, more regulations, and more interference in the lives of day to day Canadians. In Saskatchewan it is killing something that is very important in Saskatchewan: junior A hockey.

Government members should really be ashamed of where they are at. I am hopeful on this point that logic will prevail and that government members will see the wisdom in supporting amateur athletics in this country by making grassroots amateur sports in this country strong and healthy, not weak and dependent on government.

The Saskatchewan junior hockey league has a long history. I got interested in hockey back in the fifties. That kind of gives my age, but I remember the Regina Pats were in the Saskatchewan junior hockey league and the radio station covered them. Bob Turner, whose obituary I just saw the other day, played with that team. He played with the five Stanley Cup teams of the Montreal Canadiens. The players on that team, Red Berenson, Billy Hickey, Terry Harper, Ted Greene and Dave Balon went to the Memorial Cup. There was a whole slug of really great players from Saskatchewan who were on that team. They played the Montreal Canadiens dream superstar team, the Ottawa-Hull Canadiens. For four or five years they were together on that team with Ralph Backstrom, J.C. Tremblay, Bobby Rousseau. It was a great series. This is the tradition we have in that league in Saskatchewan. There was Gordie Howe and Red Berenson, great hockey players.

Private Members' Business

What is the Liberal position on something that is so much part of our heritage and culture? The government spends millions of dollars through the Department of Canadian Heritage and it spends millions of dollars on elite athletes, but here it is going to send its tax collectors out to kill something that has a very rich legacy in this country.

The Minister of Finance prides himself on being born near Father Athol Murray's college in Notre Dame: the Hounds of Notre Dame. I knew Father Athol Murray, and if Father Athol Murray was around here today he would have the Minister of Finance chased around the block 15 times on this issue alone. There is nothing to be proud of on the government's approach to dealing with junior hockey in Saskatchewan. It is a disgraceful record.

I want to close on a positive. By making this one simple change in the law we would be helping every grassroots amateur sports association in Canada from coast to coast, right at the bottom. With the Liberal government's elite athlete programs, it is like trying to take somebody at 18 or 19 who cannot read or write, and start spending money on them to teach them how to read and write. It starts in grade one, it starts in kindergarten, it starts from the grassroots with a solid program.

● (1845)

I would ask Liberal members to please support the bill because it is a good approach to building a really strong, healthy amateur sports regime in the country.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased, on behalf of the NDP, to join in the debate on Bill C-285 and to hopefully build on the comments of some of my colleagues.

We too feel very strongly that Bill C-285 is a good bill. It speaks to the very direction that we should be going in trying to promote more young people to go into sports, whether it be at the highest level or at the lowest level, in neighbourhood hockey rinks or soccer fields.

As my colleague said, Olympic athletes, the high level athletes, have to start somewhere. They do not start at age 25 to seek to be a medal winning Olympian. They start at knee-high to a grasshopper, and that is when they need encouragement.

Bill C-285 is an example of a way we could use our taxation system for a number of things such as paying for necessary services. We could also use it to nudge people in the direction we want them to go and to steer them away from things we do not want them to do. For example, we put heavy taxes on cigarettes because we would rather people did not smoke.

We could also use positive taxation measures to encourage people to do things for their general well-being, for their health and their happiness and for the sake of our health care system which is already burdened with a generation of people who are less than healthy.

Bill C-285, put forward by my colleague from Cypress Hills—Grasslands, in some small measure recognizes the fact that we could encourage amateur athletics with our taxation system, with a very modest proposal.

I notice the bill is only one page long. In fact, it is only one paragraph long. It says that an individual could deduct income up to

\$8,000 donated to an amateur athlete from a non-profit club, society or organization. In other words, if the Manitoba Speed Skating Association donated \$8,000 to a champion like Clara Hughes to subsidize her training, then Clara Hughes could write that money off. The \$8,000 would not be viewed as income. It would be an acknowledgement by the federal government that it would be in all our interests to encourage Clara Hughes to continue making Winnipeg proud of her.

A world-class speed skating oval is in the heart of my riding of Winnipeg Centre which is heavily subsidized by volunteers, non-profit organizations, charity clubs and community centres. Imagine on a crisp cold Winnipeg night of -20° or -30° the sound of those long blades cutting into that flawless ice. To stop for a moment and watch somebody of the calibre of Clara Hughes carve that ice in that long track speed skating is a thing of beauty. I myself do not grace that ice because I would not want to spoil it with my clumsy efforts. However, there are people in Winnipeg who make us very proud.

If we reach our Olympic goal in the 2006 Winter Olympics of 25 medals, I am will say right here and now, and I can be quoted on this, that 10 out of those 25 medals will be won in speed skating. I also believe that seven out of ten of those medals will be awarded to Winnipeg speed skaters because where I come from we take that seriously.

The only thing holding amateur sports back in this country is the lack of financial support. In the absence of any real commitment to comprehensively subsidize amateur sport, the government should at least consider measures such as Bill C-285 which would put a bit more money in the pockets of our amateur athletes who struggle for their craft and art in spite of overwhelming financial adversity and sacrifice and who continue to maintain their craft and make Canadians proud.

An hon. member asked me when I skate on a skating rink, if I skate to the right or skate to the left. One has to be creative or else the ice wears out. We could view this as a metaphor for the political arena. If we only skated in one direction, we would wear a path or a rut in the ice. It would not be effective and we might trip and fall, so we try to balance things from where I come.

● (1850)

This is a type of creative measure. I should recognize that my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore has a very similar private member's initiative saying that all money spent on amateur sport should be tax deductible. He thinks that if \$100 is spent for one's child to play soccer, then it should be deductible. I would go that far, too. I would support my colleague from Sackville—Eastern Shore. We know we have a generation of kids who are not as healthy as even we were when we were playing freely outdoors.

I know young parents now will not let their kids just go out and play on the front street the way we used to, or run around until dark, horsing around in the neighbourhood. They have to be supervised for their own safety. I do not think they get the same amount of physical activity that we did in our schools.

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I have talked to family doctors who have said that they have 10 year old and 12 year old children coming in overweight with high cholesterol. Imagine a 10 year old or 12 year old child whose arteries are clogged with cholesterol because of their diet, lifestyle and lack of physical activity. Not only can we pretty well count on those people not being a medal winning Olympic athletes, but the quality of their lives are going to be jeopardized throughout their entire lives. Kids who cannot participate in sports do not enjoy life as much and do not become such well-rounded children.

If this in any way helps our amateur athletes to carry on with their first love, the sport that they have chosen, or in the case of someone like Clara Hughes, the two sports that she has chosen, and then won Olympic medals in both I should point out, then for heaven's sakes those of us in the House of Commons should be willing to entertain it at least to the point of passing it at second reading and getting it to committee where we can do a careful analysis and perhaps some messaging to ensure that it is practical, feasible and realistic.

I believe this measure could be costed out fairly accurately so we would know the cost to the Government of Canada in terms of lost revenue. I do not suspect it is a huge amount of money. I know the Government of Canada plans on spending a fair amount of money on amateur sport. It does not want to be embarrassed at the 2010 Winter Olympics, which we are hosting in Whistler, B.C. However, it could factor into its overall subsidization of amateur sport perhaps the cost of this measure, which is a realistic way to put money back in the hands of the athletes.

It also is a motivation for non-profit fundraising organizations to raise more money for amateur sport, knowing that the money they give to the athlete will not be taxed. In other words, if we raise \$1,000 to subsidize Clara Hughes in her speed skating efforts, we would know that the whole \$1,000 would go to Clara Hughes. I think it is more of a motivation for people who donate money if they know the money will not be gobbled up in administration or, God forbid, be taxed back by the federal government.

There are a multitude of benefits to the bill. We would be wise to look at it. If we listen to the amateur athletes across the country, they are telling us they can do it if we support them. They say they can deliver, make us proud and affect a whole generation in terms of health.

I suppose one thing we cannot ignore is the benefit it would be to our public health system. As we know, it is creaking under the strain of aging baby boomers who are putting unbelievable stress on the system. If we can create a generation of young people who are healthier, they are going to be happier. They will not be the burden on our health care system. In other words, it is a penny wise and pound foolish situation. If we can find a way to promote amateur sport, we will all benefit in the near and distant future.

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly are having a good debate tonight. The hon. member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands has brought to the House a situation that we have heard from Saskatchewan in the past. I know Mr. Bailey, when he was from that area, encountered this and discussed it with many of us in the House.

I know all members certainly want to assist, encourage and promote amateur athletics. In Canada we not only have the very

good athletes, but we also have a great number of other people who benefit from not for profit organizations that sponsor and provide the infrastructure and activities in which young people are able to participate.

The House is aware of the granting formulas, the granting activities and support that our government gives to elite athletes. I believe the money offered to them is tax free. The point before the House this evening deals with another matter. Probably before the debate is concluded, we will first attempt to determine what exactly is income, in terms of the Income Tax Act. Second, we have to look at the fact that every Canadian, regardless of activity in obtaining employment or income that is regarded as employment, has a basic level of \$8,000 which is tax free.

The bill recommends an additional \$8,000. We know this is a significant amount. However, those who are out there trying to develop their skills, the money they may need to travel and to participate is a tremendous cost to individuals and families.

It is true not only in athletics. Families and parents support their children in many different types of activities. It may be somewhat lacking in the bill, but we have children involved with ballet, with art, with music and families invest a lot of money in the development of these skills. From the point of view of the bill, we mainly are dealing with amateur athletes.

I am not sure how we would define an amateur athlete, but we do know these amateur athletes must be getting some remuneration from, as the bill says, a not for profit club or organization. They give them a weekly or a monthly cheque.

We know we have to question just how Revenue Canada is applying the concept of what is income. Is income money that these amateur athletes have to spend on a weekly or monthly basis or is the support for board and lodging that they may have as they are accommodated in different communities?

I know even in the House we have amateur athletes. Not too long ago we had our two hockey teams here. I do not think they were that professional, but somehow the Conservatives hockey team thought they were almost semi-pro. They were amateur, almost above amateur. I am not sure if their organizations are paying them an income, but they are having a lot fun. I know members from both sides of the House enjoy those competitions, as the various parties put together what I would call amateur teams.

Therefore, we should try to define what an amateur is. Does it have an age limit? Does it have a concept in what that club or organization is trying to do? I know we have to look at a very broad scope. However, my concern about the bill is this. It would need to better define income. Perhaps the member could better define that when he puts before us the concept of increasing the basic exemption from \$8,000 to a total of \$16,000 for amateur athletes.

I want to salute tonight all those who are sponsoring these types of activities.

•(1855)

Next week back home in my riding probably 500 or 600 aboriginal youth from all across Canada will come to compete in hockey at the aboriginal games. Those activities will last for nearly a week.

It is very important to us as Canadians that we encourage our young people to participate, to develop team skills, to develop skills of cooperation and above all, to develop their athletic prowess and to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

In terms of this bill, even though the idea is good, even though the concept seems very palatable to a lot of us, I would hope that we could reach a better solution than having a very broad, undefined concept. Someone said it is only page; in fact, it is only a paragraph, and better definitions of what this is are certainly needed in that paragraph.

In fairness to all Canadians, whether they be people who want to become involved in athletic activities, whether they want to become involved in various types of social activities, music, drama, ballet, whatever it might be, I believe that we cannot give special consideration to only one group of people within our society.

We have to recognize also that part of the problem with hockey is that much of the money in hockey is absorbed by too few people. In terms of our professional hockey organizations and salaries, there is a strike going on right now. Professional hockey players are demanding \$2 million, \$3 million, \$4 million, \$5 million a year. At the amateur level, people are very short of money and the clubs rely on a lot of volunteers and a lot of help from people within the community.

It is a very good idea but it is lacking somewhat in terms of what the House and the government can accept. I certainly commend the member for bringing this issue to our attention, but hopefully we can address it through other means.

•(1900)

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to speak to a bill which very much is part of the proud Canadian tradition of supporting hockey. It is not about supporting hockey just for hockey's sake, but doing it because hockey is important to our culture, to our people, to the people of Saskatchewan and to the people of my riding of Saskatoon—Humboldt.

When we look at this bill it is important to understand the history and the reasoning as to why it was put together. The history goes back not that many years, just a couple of years. This could very well have been a very simple issue.

Only a couple of years ago we would not have needed this legislation. The tax department, Revenue Canada, was reasonable. It realized that the stipend, the money given to people for taking care of amateur junior hockey players who played for non-profit junior hockey teams really was not income.

However a couple of years ago something strange happened. The people at Revenue Canada, the government's tax people, began to look around and noticed that there was more money to be had. They decided to do something about it, but they did not do it across the

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whole country. They decided to pick on one province only, my home province of Saskatchewan. They decided they would go after the SJHL, the Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League. They decided to go after those players and those teams and not just change the rules for the future, but to back tax them and make assessments.

For the House to understand just how absurd the government's position was with respect to this and how absurd Revenue Canada was, Revenue Canada did not even go after all the teams in the SJHL. It just went after the ones inside the boundaries of the province of Saskatchewan. For the record I am not arguing that the Flin Flon Bombers, the one team outside, should have been taxed. I am just noting the hypocrisy of it all.

To give credit to the current member for Prince Albert, he immediately started to get involved. The former member for Souris—Moose Mountain, Mr. Roy Bailey, got involved. They began to deal with the issue.

Having talked with members who have been in the House longer than I, what began to happen was a typical story of government ping-pong, "It is not my fault; it is someone else". They talked with the revenue minister. They were told that no, it was with finance. They talked with finance and were told that no, it was with revenue. It was back and forth and back and forth. It was a classic case of dithering. There was absolutely no decisiveness, no leadership, no ability to stand up and make a decision on something as easy as hockey. It was just "It is not my department, not my fault".

A couple of the members from the province of Saskatchewan began to take leadership. I wish to congratulate the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for taking that initiative and dealing with this after two years. It has become a bit of a national issue.

I will even note for the people watching on TV that I was not a member in the House when this issue first came up. I read about it in the newspaper. I watched *Coach's Corner* and saw Don Cherry, Mr. Hockey himself, stand up and speak for the SJHL and speak for fairness.

We are not talking about players who get out there and play for big dollars. These players do it for the love of the game. This affects smalltown amateur hockey teams, such as one of my favourite teams, the Humboldt Broncos, a team with a great history.

The government does not seem to worry about small things. We watch how it spends and wastes money. It did it with the gun registry. It is now doing it, as we are seeing in painfully excruciating detail, on the sponsorship program. It does not really seem to care about the little people, the things that impact and make a true difference to people in Saskatchewan and people all across the country. The government just seems to ignore it.

This is something that has a real impact on the town of Humboldt. It will have to raise money, and the amount could vary from \$10,000 to \$15,000, or depending on how the rules are, an extra \$20,000 a year. That is money going from my community to Ottawa, money that has to be raised either through raffle tickets, or in whatever ways that amateur hockey teams do it.

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The Humboldt Broncos have a proud tradition. Every little bit of government tax, every element of government assault on them makes it harder for them to do it.

● (1905)

In fact, the Humboldt Broncos are one of the best junior level tier two teams in the history of the league as it has been developed. In 2003 the Broncos won, I believe for the second or third time, the national championship. It is harder to win than the Memorial Cup because there are more teams and leagues involved.

I am very proud of the efforts of the players on that team and what they did. It is something that needs to be continued and which we need to support. It is only fair. All we are asking for is a practical solution, to go back to the way it was in the 1990s. We have been forced to do this because of the intransigence of the tax department.

What are some of the consequences if this does not go through? I have already talked about how it will affect the financial situation of various teams throughout the province of Saskatchewan and across Canada. This will affect teams in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, all across the country.

One of the more practical things that has not been understood by the government is the effect this could have on university scholarships for hockey players. Most of the players do not make it into the NHL. Some do, such as Curtis Joseph. He is a graduate of the Notre Dame Hounds, one of the teams of the SJHL. Some do make it into the NHL, and most of the players tend to go on to play university hockey in the United States. They get outstanding scholarships for an excellent education, an education which many of the players could not have afforded otherwise.

The NCAA has a rule that if someone is a professional and has been paid professionally, that person cannot receive a scholarship. The NCAA is currently looking the other way and is not really enforcing the rules with regard to Canadian hockey players. We are fortunate that it has used some common sense to realize that these are not professional players, but the Government of Canada's ruling has put those players in jeopardy.

There is the potential that if the NCAA enforced the rules, those players would not be eligible for university or college scholarships. This is very serious. It could harm the future careers of the players or the potential for these teams to recruit players in the future. It would have a severe and negative effect on hockey in the province of Saskatchewan.

This is something we have to think about and be cautious and cognizant of when we are debating this issue. We do not want our hockey teams destroyed. We do not want them to be put under this pressure. We do not want to have to find new ways to do this.

All we are asking is for things to go back to the way they were, very simply, that the government not tax what really should not be taxed. Unfortunately this is the only mechanism we have been able to find to do it. If it helps protect amateur sports in other leagues or all across Canada, so much the better. There is so much more we should encourage. We thank the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands for his foresight on this bill.

I have heard some criticism from the government. I have heard its members offer some irrelevant statements. They do not really comprehend the root of this issue or what really has to be addressed. I have not heard any real alternatives. I have not heard any other way to deal with it. I would be open to listening to them. I think the member's bill is absolutely outstanding but I would be open to other ways in order to get unanimous consent in the House and pass the bill.

I appreciate the support from the member from the Bloc who has shown real courage in the issue, as well as the members of the New Democratic Party. If we could get Liberal members to come on side, I would be most happy to work with them, but unfortunately, that is not to be the case.

In conclusion, why am I supporting this bill? It is about fairness. It is not really about anything extra or special. It is about fairness, about the way the rules used to be so that the Humboldt Broncos in Saskatchewan are not discriminated against.

With respect to support for amateur athletics, we have to walk the walk and not just talk the talk. This is an excellent way to do it. It is an outstanding way to look after our athletes at a level where it is important and without costing very much money.

If we are to be serious, we must support hockey in Canada. We must support amateur sports.

● (1910)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak in favour of Bill C-285. This is to change the Income Tax Act, so that income for the year not exceeding \$8,000 received by an athlete from a non profit club, society or association that is operated exclusively for the purpose of improving athletic performance and promoting amateur athletics is excluded.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke we are home to a junior A hockey team, the Pembroke Lumber Kings. In fact, Pembroke, Ontario is known as "Hockey Town Canada".

I want people to understand what exactly the tax department is doing. This may be localized right now to Saskatchewan, but it is considering the actual billeting of these students as income and, therefore, taxing the club and the students accordingly.

These are not professional athletes making thousands or millions of dollars a year. These are young men who have come from all across the world to fulfill their dream. They have been embraced by the community, giving them a home setting in which to go to school, and in their spare time live out their dream of playing hockey.

In addition to providing healthy entertainment and supporting a rich culture of Canada in hockey, they also participate in community services. For example, the Lumber Kings, together with Spectacle Lake Lodge, have put together breakfasts and have raised money for the United Way. On occasion the Pembroke Lumber Kings go into the schools and libraries to teach other students how to read.

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We are not asking for money here for a sector of society. We are only asking that the tax department leave these students with the money that they have and not tax the people who are supporting them.

We have a problem in this country with obesity, for example, and encouraging active participation in sports should be emphasized right now.

We have the Olympics coming to Canada in the year 2010. We should be supporting amateur sports in any way possible. One simple way that is not going to cost the government any money is to support this bill put forth by the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands

• (1915)

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to be back again debating the second hour of the bill.

I want to take a little bit of time to thank some of the people who have been involved in the debate today. It was great to have the support from the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord. He did a very good job in laying out some of the implications of the bill.

I want to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre who spoke in favour of the bill as well. Some of my colleagues who have been involved in it from the beginning were the member for Prince Albert; the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt, who spoke; and the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, who has been a big help in this as well. I want to thank the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for her intervention.

I cannot forget Roy Bailey. He is not a member any longer, but he carried the torch on this for a long time. Other people have also taken up the cause, such as Don Cherry, and the member for Edmonton—Leduc, who sits near me, has made an effort to be here just so that he could contribute and support the bill.

I was a little concerned earlier when I heard the member for Miramichi debating the bill because the Liberals are in enough trouble now without also opposing amateur athletics in this country. One would think they would learn at some point, but they seem to continue in their imbalance.

I want to talk a little bit about the bill, and lay out once again where it came from and what is happening with it. There are approximately 130 tier two junior A hockey teams in Canada. The players have always been considered amateurs in these leagues. They receive room and board, and a small monthly stipend of \$100 to \$200. They play for fun. They are not playing for money, so they play hockey in the wintertime.

The allowances that they receive, both the billeting and the small expense allowance, were never taxable until 2001 when the tax department came thundering into Saskatchewan. It decided to audit some of these teams and make a determination as to whether or not these young players were employees. Unfortunately, that is exactly what the tax department ruled. It ruled that the small monthly stipend and the billeting amounts were to be considered as income.

The tax department was basically scared off the whole project because there was a real public outcry in Saskatchewan. It backed off on this and it had not really come to the forefront until just recently, when the revenue minister sent out a memo reasserting the government's intention to consider these hockey players as employees of the hockey teams.

That is actually where the bill came out of that. A number of us were very concerned about it and came forward with the bill. It is a very simple bill. I do not have a lot of time today to talk about it. It is just one paragraph that amends the Income Tax Act. It excludes income that is received by an athlete from a non profit club or association. That is all it says in the one paragraph. It excludes income for the year not exceeding \$8,000 received by an athlete from a non profit club, society or association that is operated exclusively for the purpose of improving athletic performance and promoting amateur athletics.

The bill is pretty straightforward. It is not nearly as complicated as the member for Miramichi was trying to make it. He recognized that amateur athletes already receive a tax free stipend. As some of the athletes are already getting that, we are just trying to extend it a little bit further.

He also argued it is unfair because others do not get this break, but in reality others are not being crushed by the tax department. He talked about art, ballet and music. If young people in those areas were receiving a little bit of money, a stipend from some of their associations, and if the bill did not cover it, we would hope that the government would be willing to go along with an amendment that would include them. We have no problem with including them in this and they should be included.

I would like to thank the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord for doing an excellent job of breaking down the figures and pointing out that the average athlete pays about 16% income tax. This would save them all of \$1,280 a year, which is significant for the athletes, but does not cost the government anything.

I would like to encourage members to support the legislation. It champions amateur athletics. We look forward to its quick passage in the House and to every member supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

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Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, April 20, 2005 immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

candidates were being looked at. It was obviously an inadequate response for the people of Edmonton.

I do want to give some background here. Edmonton has been without a citizenship judge for more than nine months. There is a backlog of well over 2,000 people, and at some point there were perhaps up to 4,000 people waiting to officially become new Canadians. That is why the issue matters. We have people in line who have left whatever homeland they had to seek and to build a better life, and to become citizens of this great country. They should be welcomed with open arms when they pass through all the hoops to do so.

It is incumbent upon the government to make this appointment just from a question of basic competence. I would like to ask some very specific questions.

Why has it taken so long to make this appointment? When will Edmonton finally have a citizenship judge of its own? If the government could not make up its mind for nine months, why did it not choose to renew the contract of a previous judge, Judge Bhatia?

Judge Bhatia, frankly, did an excellent job. I have no idea what his political leanings were and that is the way it should have been. He was a true public servant. I attended many ceremonies with this individual. He did such an excellent job of welcoming citizens. I would stand beside him welcoming these people. He spoke a few words in about 27 different languages and he would spend a little moment with each person. It was such a heartwarming event.

He is of Sikh background and would give an excellent speech about what it means to be a Canadian, and the very multicultural fabric of our nation. He is just an excellent public servant. If the government cannot make a decision, it should certainly renew his appointment. I would like the government to answer specifically these very straightforward genuine questions.

●(1925)

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member for Edmonton—Leduc. He has brought up a problem in his own area. It is certainly a legitimate one.

I want to give him some background and hopefully some faith that very soon this problem will be resolved, because I know it is a concern for him. I know he has brought it up many times in this House, very legitimately, and I certainly hope that we will be able to resolve this very soon.

We know, as the member said, that the backlog was quite large at one time. In fact, it was at about 4,000. Now, according to the member, it is down to about 2,000, which is certainly a move in the right direction. Is it perfect? No, it is not, but there are a couple of issues I would like to bring up that might shed some light on the reasons why this was taking place.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

●(1920)

[*English*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to once again address the issue of the lack of a citizenship judge in Edmonton. I want to perhaps give a timeline and some background for the benefit of the House.

Edmonton has not had a citizenship judge since July 3, 2004. In September 2004 I wrote to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration explaining this problem and asking her to address it as soon as possible. The fact is that as a member of Parliament I never even received an acknowledgement or a response to that letter, so I wrote again to the new minister, the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, in January 2005.

I did not get a response to that letter, so I raised the issue in the House of Commons on February 4. That is the issue that I followed up with at this time, and the Minister of Public Works at the time did not know about the issue, but he said he would get back to me. Again, nobody on the government side got back to me with anything. There was more waiting and no appointment. I raised the issue again, this time in the House on March 7.

I want to point this out because I have tried to follow the legitimate process. I have tried not to make this a partisan issue. It is an issue of just appointing a citizenship judge for all the citizens of Edmonton, and obviously for those people who hope to become citizens of Edmonton.

I raised this again on March 7 and the minister answered with what I consider one of the most contemptible responses I have ever received in the House, basically casting aspersions on our political party, instead of actually addressing the issue of why there was no citizenship judge in Edmonton.

The written response came from the minister later that month, seven months after I had originally written to the previous minister of immigration. It basically said that everything was fine and that there was a merit process in progress. There is no reason why it would take eight months. It was also stated that many prospective

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We know, interestingly enough, that the numbers of applications for citizenship and immigration have increased quite dramatically over the last few years. In fact, over a period of one year there was an increase of 40%, which put an excessive demand on the supply of the resources in the department. In January of this year, the minister went to Treasury Board and in fact secured an increase to the amount of resources of the department.

In order to try to resolve this, we have also taken some action. As I said, we have reduced the backlog by half. Part of the reason for that reduction is that we have brought in other citizenship judges from afar in order to process these people, who quite rightly have to be processed in short order. We have also started a merit process to try to get somebody to replace the previous judge. I hope that will happen in the very near future.

We are trying to get the backlog down. We have succeeded at doing that quite substantially in the recent past.

On the specific issue of getting a citizenship judge to replace the previous judge, the merit process is taking place and the assessments are taking place right now. I certainly hope, for the member and in particular for the people in Edmonton who deserve and must have a citizenship judge, that we will be able to get one very quickly.

I know the minister is very committed to doing this. I know the minister wants to get process done properly, quickly, fairly and transparently so we can get a citizenship judge in there in very short order and the people of Edmonton who are new citizens and who want to become new citizens will be able to have access in short order.

We all respect and appreciate the commitment and the contribution that immigrants have made to Canada. We welcome new immigrants to this country and recognize that historically, and for today and tomorrow, immigrants and immigration have played and will play a substantial role in the future of our country in a very positive way. For that, I think all of us here in the House are very thankful and grateful.

Mr. James Rajotte: Mr. Speaker, I would just point out that I did not get any answers to the questions I asked, and they are legitimate questions.

As well, I would point out to the government that flying in judges from all over the country is not an answer. The simple answer is to find a qualified candidate and appoint him or her to be the citizenship judge. Instead of flying judges from Ontario and elsewhere across the country into Edmonton to do a ceremony, why not appoint someone from the community? Is someone from the city of Edmonton not qualified to take on this position?

I would renew the question again about the person who did the job. Judge Bhatia did an excellent job. If the government is having a tough time finding someone to replace him, why not renew his contract, at least for a temporary period, and put him in place to deal with the situation of this backlog?

I would like some specific answers to these specific questions. I do want to point out that this is certainly not also a problem with the department in the city of Edmonton. In the city of Edmonton, according to my office, the local citizenship and immigration office

deals very well with these situations, but it needs some leadership in terms of a citizenship judge.

When will Edmonton have a judge? Why has it taken nine months? Why not renew the contract of the previous judge? These are three very straightforward questions.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, all I can say to the member is that we are engaged in a process right now. We have a number of applications. We are going through the process to review those applications in an open, fair and transparent competition so that the best person can be put forward for the people of Edmonton and then process those applicants who currently need to be processed.

We have done our best to get new resources. That has happened this year. We have applied those resources to the existing backlog. We have reduced that backlog by 50%. We will continue to work hard to try to make sure that the remaining people will be processed quickly and that Edmonton will have a citizenship judge forthwith.

• (1930)

CANADIAN FORCES

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in this adjournment debate to obtain an answer from the Minister of National Defence to my question of February 7 on why members of the Canadian Forces residing in Ontario are being forced to pay the new Ontario health premium tax when they have no access to the benefit.

Military members in Ontario deserve to know why the minister, with the increased cost of rations and rent, continues to refuse to stand up and demand a full refund of the Ontario Liberals' health premium tax.

To add insult to injury, as of today the men and women who put their lives on the line for the service of their country still have not received the pay increase they were promised over a year ago; yet another promise made and promise broken.

As the minister is aware, on May 18 of last year, after campaigning on a promise to not raise taxes, the Ontario Liberal government introduced a controversial new tax called the Ontario health premium, with the claim that all contributions made by residents of Ontario would be funnelled directly into the Ontario health insurance plan, OHIP.

However, members of the Canadian Forces residing in Ontario are insured under the Canadian Forces health services plan and are specifically excluded by the Canada Health Act from the definition of insured individuals.

The Canadian Forces health services plan is a \$450 million health care system that the federal government identifies as a direct federal contribution to total health care spending in Canada.

In turn, the federal government uses this figure in health care negotiations to reduce the amount it transfers to the provinces.

As a result, Canadians soldiers living in Ontario are being asked to pay twice for health care. That is wrong and it must stop.

Adjournment Proceedings

It is important to note that similar health care premiums instituted by the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia specifically exclude members of Canada's military residing in these provinces because they are insured under the federal health care plan. Why is the federal government consenting to the Ontario Liberals' violation of the spirit and the law of the Canada Health Act when other provinces in Canada have acted to exempt the military from their health premium plans?

The Minister of Health excuses his decision not to take action and stop this appalling misuse of power by refusing to recognize that payment of the Ontario health premium is for the purpose of health care services in Ontario.

The fact that the Ontario health premium tax is called a provincial income tax and must be paid by all residents of Ontario, regardless of access to coverage under OHIP, ignores the stated purpose of this premium tax, that is, to pay for health care. The province of Ontario has been very clear that every dollar of the Ontario health premium collected will be invested directly in Ontario's health care system.

The method by which Ontario collects this health premium tax from soldiers is not the issue. The federal government should not be concerned with how the premium is being collected, but only that it is being collected.

The fact is, our soldiers in Ontario are being forced to pay for a benefit they have never received and will never be allowed to receive.

Hon. Keith Martin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the member brought this issue up. I want to address some of the misrepresentations that she made in her speech about promises made. These promises have been kept and I will talk about them right now.

The first is the pay raise. The member knows that we had to wait because the pay raise had to be compatible with the public service. Normally, this process is completed by the end of the fiscal year and a pay raise is announced in April or June. However, the public service collective agreement was not ratified until January. Since that happened, we have ensured that our men and women in uniform will receive a pay that will be fair, equitable and, more important, retroactive.

I am pleased to announce that our members of the forces will receive that pay raise this month. I also am pleased to announce, in response to the member's query, that this pay raise will be made retroactive to April 2004. This significant pay raise is 6.6% for non-commissioned members and 3.3% for officers of the rank of lieutenant colonel and below. It will have a direct effect on their lives.

On the issue of the Ontario health premium tax and its effect on the Canadian Forces, I am glad the member brought this up also. She knows full well that the management of health care resides in the hands of the provinces. An exception, however, is Canadian Forces members.

In May 2004 the province of Ontario introduced this tax. The government immediately contacted the province to determine if Canadian Forces members would be exempt from paying the Ontario

health premium, given that the Canada Health Act precludes our military members from accessing those services.

We received the following response, that this was a tax instrument which applied to all residents of Ontario. We are working on trying to change this. As the member alludes to, and personally I would agree, we have to change it. I know the Minister of National Defence has approached the ministry of health. He has spoken to the health minister to try to reverse this charge for our Canadian Forces members.

In the meantime, we factored the tax for our Ontario members in something called a post-living differential. That basically is a cost of living allowance. If our members who live on Ontario bases receive a higher cost of living as compared to those in other parts of the country, their post living differential will be increased.

We have tried to accommodate and ensure that our CF members are not hurt financially. I think the member has to agree that the pay raises our members have received this year are generous and fair. They are in response to the deep and profound debt of gratitude that all of us here have to our Canadian Forces members and their families for their services day in and day out to our country.

• (1935)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by correcting the parliamentary secretary. There is more than one exception to the rule. RCMP officers are also forced to pay the health care premium when they are covered by the federal system.

On November 3, 2004, during the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, the Minister of National Defence acknowledged that Ontario was being completely unfair in collecting the premium from soldiers in Ontario. He stated that he would personally raise the issue with the provincial treasurer of Ontario.

On February 7, I gave the minister an opportunity to share the findings of his department's request. However, his seat mate, the President of the Treasury Board, responded with a non-answer.

The minister has received a full report from the Department of National Defence and he has the excuse from his provincial cousins. Now is the time for the Minister of National Defence to defend military members against the obvious violation to the Canada Health Act.

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, there are some core groups, the RCMP, aboriginal people, the CF members and corrections, but that is another matter all together.

The Minister of National Defence has gone to the health minister. Currently, we are working with the Ontario government to try to resolve this issue quickly for our Canadian Forces members.

In lieu of that, we have taken the position to try to accommodate members who live in Ontario in the post-living differential. We have factored this in, so at the end of the day if the cost of living of CF members who live in Ontario has increased greater than members living in other parts of the country, then they will receive more money through the post-living differential.

Adjournment Proceedings

This demonstrates a clear commitment on the part of the government to ensure that our CF members are treated fairly and that they receive the moneys they deserve. We are committed to resolving this issue with the Ontario government.

•(1940)

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands

adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 7:40 p.m.)

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