



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, June 19, 2006  
(Part A)**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## CONTENTS

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### CORRIGENDUM

The June 16, 2006 issue of *Hansard* should be amended as follows:

Page 2503, in the right-hand column, in response to \*Question No. 30, the answer should appear as follows:

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is as follows:

a) The Government of Canada intends to compensate those infected with hepatitis C through the Canadian blood system before 1986 and after 1990 as quickly as possible. Much work is underway on the steps needed to reach an agreement with the class. Given that this is a negotiation, no firm date can be provided as to when an agreement will be reached, but the Government of Canada is ensuring that all necessary steps in this process, that are within its control, are completed as quickly as possible.

b) Upon taking office, the Government of Canada immediately proceeded with its campaign commitment – work is ongoing. The most recent negotiating session was held on May 24-26, 2006. This is a complex issue with many stakeholders, and the Government of Canada is working diligently to provide compensation to the class as quickly as possible.

c) For the issues that it is able to influence, the Government of Canada is taking all possible steps to quickly reach an agreement with the class and provide compensation. The Government of Canada will proceed as quickly as possible but some factors are outside of the government's control, for example, the process of obtaining court approvals of any proposed settlement agreement. After court approval, an administrative process to evaluate and pay compensation must be established.

d) As per the memorandum of understanding signed by both sides in November 2005, determining the eligibility criteria for compensation is part of the process of settling with the class. Compensation programs established to date, the 1986-1990 agreement, the Red Cross settlement, and provincial compensation programs, have used an application and evaluation process to determine eligibility. Eligibility criteria, and a process to evaluate eligibility and compensate class members will be established in a final settlement.

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 19, 2006

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1100)

[*English*]

### CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC)** moved that Bill C-300, An Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (direct sale of grain), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to start off the week with a great private member's bill.

The genesis of the bill goes back a number of years. When I first started farming in the early 1970s and attended some of the Canadian Wheat Board meetings, and of course there were its allies in the NFU, a lot of the excuses and arguments they are using now were used then, such as the argument that we cannot have this type of thing, that it would weaken the core of the Canadian Wheat Board, and of course that it could not survive if it had any kind of competition, even from the producers that it purports to save.

Let us set the stage. Why this private member's bill and why now?

I guess what it comes down to is the strength and viability of rural Canada, especially in western Canada. We see the statistics. A third of all Canadians live in rural Canada. Twenty-five per cent of our jobs are anchored in rural Canada and that number is sliding. Some 22% of our gross domestic product and some 40% of our exports and trade are generated out of rural Canada, and we are a trading nation. At the same time, 75% of the farmers within the Canadian Wheat Board area must have an off farm job in order to support that nasty habit we call farming.

What the bill seeks to do is add to the options, so to speak, for Canadian primary producers in the Canadian Wheat Board area only, because that is who is feeling the hurt at this point. The bill seeks to add to the options those producers will have to add value to their own product.

At this particular time and place under the Canadian Wheat Board Act, any product in grains, durum or malt barley that is designated for the foodstuffs line has to go through what is called the buyback procedure. That sounds innocuous enough, but what it entails is not

just a percentage by the Canadian Wheat Board, in order to administer the fact that it goes in and out of its books, but the freight and elevation charges. In many cases now, these charges are horrendous and add some \$30 to \$50 per tonne to the basic cost of a product that has not yet left the farmer's yard.

That takes the feedstocks and puts them out of sight as far as getting any kind of positive bottom line is concerned when we are talking about a risky venture, let us say, in the eyes of the financial institutions. Now let us add to that the fact that the board likes to collect the world price at any given time on that buyback as well and again the problem is exacerbated in making those feedstocks for producer processing completely out of line.

We have seen groups come and go. We saw a group of 650 farmers from southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and even into North Dakota, who were wanting to build and supply with their own product a durum facility, a pasta plant attached to the Weyburn Inland Terminal. That idea bubbled and percolated along for four or five years, but the group could never get a deal with the Canadian Wheat Board to do away with this buyback provision, which made their feedstocks drive the viability of that system into jeopardy. It never did happen.

We have to address those types of things. We are seeing the advent of the value added side of agriculture, the agrifood side, and it is doing very well. It has seen huge increases. It is controlling the vast majority of the exports and domestic use in this country now. Over the last 15 years there has been a paradigm shift. The primary producer, as a hewer of wood and drawer of water, has been left behind. That is where we are seeing all of the trade injury hurt, with the market costs, the input costs and of course all of these extra charges on their product taking the primary producers away from any segment of viability.

This bill seeks to rectify some of that. Certainly we have to address this in the near future.

We do have some naysayers with regard to this particular perspective. I had lunch a week ago with some of the Canadian Wheat Board officials. I was pleased to buy lunch for Ken Ritter, the chair of the board, Adrien Measner, the CEO and president, and Victor Jarjour, the Ottawa coordinator for the Canadian Wheat Board. We discussed this particular issue along with others that are very pertinent to primary producers at this time.

*Private Members' Business*

They are not against the premise of the bill. They are not against the idea. In fact, their own polling numbers, which they just got back, show that some 80% of respondents said that the board needs to move this way. That is 80%, with 67% in that same survey saying the board is not doing its job and 49% saying they just want out from under the board so they can do this. So we know this is percolating out there, and while a lot of folks say that producers must have the final say, I would say this polling number just did that.

• (1105)

We can go back and argue that when we campaigned on a dual market in the last election, a lot of us were elected on January 23. In fact, other than the former minister of the Wheat Board who was elected within that trading area and another member from northern Saskatchewan, there is no one in this House who speaks for farmers. Also, we all know about the problems the former minister of the Wheat Board had in ordering farmers arrested, and in having a complete revamp of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, that saw farmers jailed, shackled and strip-searched, all for running an auger over the international boundary.

That particular farmer in that case farms on both sides of that line. It is an arbitrary line on his farm. He augered a barley that the Wheat Board was not handling and would not sell for him because it was a niche market. The officials arrested this fellow. They impounded his trucks. They went further than that under the Customs Act. They impounded the trucks of a lot of farmers who took a bag of something across the line, donated it to a 4-H club or dumped it because it was wood shavings. No one ever checked what it was they were hauling, but the minister, in his exuberance, came down with a heavy hand. He changed some of the rules arbitrarily and retroactively so that he could go ahead and do that, all to save this wonderful government operation, because it is controlled by the Canadian Wheat Board Act.

That goes to the next group of naysayers. The only other real voice out there against this type of provision is the voice of the grassroots farmers, the National Farmers Union, which says it speaks for those grassroots farmers. I am just amazed at how the NFU could be against this. Those farmers are taking the side of the multinationals they hate because of the profit margins for their shareholders and they are saying that farmers would then partner with these terrible bastions of enterprise in this country and start to circumvent the board.

This bill does not really allow that, because the bill says that a majority of any processing facility has to be producer owned and Canadian based. So unless the Cargills of the world are going to sell a flour mill to farmers, which is not necessarily a bad thing, that could not happen.

The NFU members have some specious arguments. They made three or four points in a letter that they circulated, none of which have any validity. I think the flat earth society that is running the NFU had better look in the rear-view mirror because the free marketers are overtaking them. It is just not going to happen in the way they are talking about.

There are other people who speak against this type of thing but at the same time put forward a report. I am talking about the former parliamentary secretary from Malpeque. I know he is the House

today. He is very interested in agricultural issues. Again, he is probably going to talk against this bill because of the Canadian Wheat Board and how he wants to see that solidified in the fortress that it is, but in his report he made several recommendations from the airport tour he did in 2005.

Let us talk about those four recommendations. I want to get them on the record so that when he stands and speaks against this, he will have to tell us why he is being a hypocrite. The first recommendation, which is a general one, states: "That all governments place a priority on measures that will enhance farmers' economic returns from the marketplace". That is what this private member's bill seeks to do.

Another point is on consolidation and market power: "That governments work with farmers to support, develop and maintain collective marketing initiatives, particularly through assisting New Generation Cooperatives and other farmer-owned corporate structures".

Those are great points. I tend to agree with them.

The third point is on international trade. The member for Malpeque talks about "recognizing the legitimacy of the right of primary producers to market their products how they want". That goes a long way to supporting this particular private member's bill. I am happy to see this.

The last point is on innovative marketing and product development. He talks about "addressing issues that restrict the production, distribution and retailing of organic agricultural products". This group of producers is one that has a terrible time out there right now. We have one member of this group on the board of advisers of the Canadian Wheat Board, a fellow named Rod Flaman from southern Saskatchewan, an organic producer who says the board does a tremendous job for him, but he is the only one who says that.

There are some 50 members of a co-op based in Maymont, which is just outside my riding, who have built themselves a little mill. They clean and process to international standards, but they are forced to do this buyback. They have identified the markets. They have developed a niche market and have developed the product to fit it, through innovation and tenacity more than anything, and they are being punished with an extra \$50 or \$60 per tonne, or whatever it is, added to their commodity for absolutely zero services rendered by the Wheat Board, or by anyone else, for that matter. They have done it themselves. Good for them. That speaks to the future viability of rural Canada. It speaks to innovativeness and the niche markets that are available to us.

*Private Members' Business*

•(1110)

There is another group called FarmPure. It talks about making some positive changes like this. It is a group of certified seed growers who have become involved in processing because they felt it was in their best interests. The group is based in Regina, Saskatchewan, which is the heartland and centre of the Wheat Board, but it will not build within the Wheat Board area. It is building facilities outside that area, even if it is a malt plant. It is very big into the beverage industry, with products such as non-alcoholic beers and beverages like that, using Canadian cereal grains and so forth for malt plants.

Jim Venn, who works for the group, made a presentation at committee the other day. Jim spent 15 years with Dominion Malting, one of the largest maltsters in this country. He is very well versed in buying, selling, and the operation of the board and how he can deal directly with producers.

In my own farming operation in my past life, there was a maltster about 40 to 45 miles just north of us in Biggar. It was Prairie Malt. Cargill is now the major shareholder. At that time, it was a private sector initiative. The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was involved in it. Cargill has now bought out Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. It supplies malt to a lot of the smaller breweries, including some in Mexico and even in China. Saskatoon's Great Western Brewing Company and companies like that buy from Biggar maltsters.

I grew a lot of malt barley as a certified seed grower. When I wanted to sell that malt, I found my market in Biggar or in Alix, Alberta, or at Calgary Brewing and Malting or wherever it was, and I trucked it there. There is no railway between Rosetown and Biggar. It had to go through Thunder Bay at that time because of the Crow rate. When I trucked it up there with the B-train or my own trucks, I paid freight and elevation charges to tidewater at either Thunder Bay or Vancouver. Guess what? I had never used either system. I was out \$40 to \$50 a tonne already, plus I had the cost of trucking it myself to Biggar.

I used to sit and have coffee with the fellow who happened to run that plant at that time. He is a great guy. He is a good operator and is now in Alix, Alberta. He said the reality is that he can buy cheap barley through the board, but he would just as soon pay farmers \$10 a bushel for it as opposed to the \$3 it was going for at that time. He was not allowed to do that.

Now there are some changes. The board has tinkered with it a bit and will allow some incentives. It speaks more to trucking so that we are not double paying, but not so much to the price of the commodity. If a buyer gets offside and tends to distort the buying power of the Wheat Board, it comes down on the buyer very hard.

A good friend of mine, a fellow named Bob Nunweiler, took over a portion of an abandoned armed forces base in Alsask, Saskatchewan. He actually farms at Rosetown and Eston. He grinds every bushel of wheat that he produces. He creates his own flour. He goes through the buyback, this arcane punitive system, because he has to do that. He buys it back from the board and runs it through his mills. He has created Grandma Nunweiler's pancake mix, bread mix and so on. He exports worldwide. He went out there and found the markets.

However, in the meantime he is harassed on an almost monthly basis by the board going through his books and checking his plant to make sure he is not slipping in a bushel from somebody else. That is ridiculous. Alsask needs every job it can get. Bob needs to be able to buy from other producers because his markets are growing. He can no longer supply them on a quantity basis because he cannot get enough grain and he is not allowed to buy it from anybody else. Those types of things have to change.

My time is flying by, but I am just scratching the surface. There is a lot of concern being pumped up by certain groups that my bill, which is very short and succinct, does not have a proper definition of the word "producer". The word "producer" is very well defined in the Canadian Wheat Board Act and that is what we are seeking to do. If people think it is too broad, I note that it is the same definition used for the voters list, which a lot of us think is too broad. Let us change that. I am willing to make those changes at committee.

As well, what exactly do we mean by processing and percentage of ownership the producers must have? Let us talk about those things in committee and get on with this.

Tremendous numbers of folks are waiting for this type of thing to happen. Rural Canada, as I said, is on the cusp of change. We must have this. Our farm safety nets are nowhere near able to keep up with the hurt at the primary production level. Allowing producers to value add and to seek out all of the niche markets and the innovation they so badly need is all addressed in this particular private member's bill.

I will close with a quote from the Wheat Board itself, in its own production called *Grain Matters*: "The only way farmers could get more for their wheat and barley in a multiple-seller environment is if end users like millers and maltsters would pay more for grain". If primary producers own those mills and malt houses, they will certainly pay more for the grain.

•(1115)

It has been raised again by the NFU, the Flat Earth Society, that somehow it could circumvent this by buying extra, producing it and sending it out. That would not be in the best interest of producers. The bill seeks to backstop producers. I look forward to its speedy passage and movement on to committee.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member used a lot of strange names during his remarks but I will keep my question to the subject at hand.

*Private Members' Business*

The bill states that while a purchasing firm has to be “engaged in the processing of grain”, which would allow for the bypassing of the Canadian Wheat Board, it does not state that the firm has to process the grain itself. What would prevent a group of producers from establishing a milling or processing operation, purchasing more grain than it requires and exporting the balance of any unprocessed grain to the United States, in other words, using it as a vehicle to bypass the Canadian Wheat Board and its single desk selling agency operation which is used to maximize returns to primary producers?

The bill is not very specific and it is very short, which opens it up to a lot of problems. What is to prevent a group of Canadian farmers from setting up a processing facility in the United States and using that facility as an operation to transport the grain to the United States?

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite answered his questions in his own report that was tabled here a year ago, which his government never saw fit to implement or even discuss. It is sitting on the shelves of the Library of Parliament gathering dust. The report contains some good things. The genesis of this private member's bill could lead back to those four recommendations that I talked about.

The member is quite concerned that somehow farmers will make extra money. What he read was right out of the dogma of the National Farmers Union, which is his background and he will remain anchored there, but I cannot for the life of me understand why he would be concerned with producers making an extra dollar on their product. The bill seeks to address production and producers based in Canada.

He also talks about—

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Answer the question, Gerry. It is a simple question.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** He will get his time. He will make it seem like a half hour but it will only be 10 minutes.

The member says that we should not be allowed to open facilities in any other part of the world. That is actually done now. The Canadian Wheat Board just invested \$1 million of farmers' money in China. If he believes in the Canadian Wheat Board, it already has a facility over there. There is no reason in the world to stop Canadian producers from owning facilities anywhere in the world. If there is a niche market out there and a way to get the product there, then let us do it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. The member said that the report was gathering dust in the Library of Parliament. In fact, it is on the minister's website as a discussion and consultation document. The member should keep his information straight.

• (1120)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** That appears to be a point of debate and not a point of order.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Wheat Board is a democratically elected group that is 100% controlled by farmers. If this change is so important for farmers, I would imagine all farmers would make the decision through an election or plebiscite.

The hon. member probably would not want a top down solution from the federal government if he is of the firm belief that farmers should control their own destiny. What part of democracy are we afraid of? Why would we not let the Canadian Wheat Board make its own decision, instead of this top down, we know better kind of approach?

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** Mr. Speaker, the one thing we hate worse than a farmer from Prince Edward Island telling us what we should do in Saskatchewan is someone from Toronto telling us the same thing.

The Canadian Wheat Board purports to be farmer controlled. The unfortunate part is that we could elect all 15 members of the board, which I am sure is the way we will move, but they are still confined. Under the definition of the Canadian Wheat Board Act it does not allow this type of thing.

As I said at the beginning of my speech, the Canadian Wheat Board's own poll is saying that 80% of producers want this, while 67% said that the board was not moving there fast enough. I guess that would speak to the answer that the member is looking for.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat saddened by the last remarks of the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster. This is a serious issue and it is serious legislation. It is pathetic and it is wrong to try to disqualify myself or the member opposite from entering the debate because of where we reside. I spent 17 years of my life in western Canada as a farm leader.

**Mr. David Anderson:** You did not. Tell the truth, Wayne.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I did too. I spent 17 years of my life in western Canada as a farm leader, travelling across western Canada, indeed, all of Canada. I have great familiarity with that area. It is disgraceful for a member to cast aspersions on people in terms of the debate because of where they live.

Let me get to the issue. As the agriculture critic for the official opposition, I do have serious concerns about Bill C-300. During my remarks I will outline those concerns. I might say as well that quite a number of prairie farmers are notifying our office and raising their concerns as well. I will mention a few of those concerns later.

In my opinion and, I would submit, the opinion of the majority of grain farmers in western Canada, through a plebiscite approved by the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board, the grain farmers should be the ones who determine if a bill, such as the one before the House now, is acceptable and should be acted upon.

If the member opposite and the government were certain that the provisions of Bill C-300 were acceptable to producers, why has the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food not proposed such a measure to the board of directors for their approval and through the board a vote by producers?

*Private Members' Business*

The reason is evident. This measure is an attempt by the government, through the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, to begin the process the Conservative Party has long advocated: the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board and with the objecting being that the single best selling feature of the board is eliminated. That is the real objective of the members opposite.

The Canadian Wheat Board Act is very specific with respect to the measures required by which the activities and the mandate of the board can be altered. The minister, according to the provisions of the act, must first consult with the board of directors and, subsequent to that, any significant initiative must demonstrate by a vote support for those changes.

The other course is that changes to the board, changes that I would submit have not been voted upon by the farmers affected, is through a private member's bill, such as the one before the House.

I would challenge the member who introduced the bill to withdraw the legislation and have its contents submitted by the minister to the board of directors of the Canadian Wheat Board and, through them, to the grain producers of western Canada. If he supports the democratic right of the majority of producers to address his proposal he would do so.

With respect to the contents of Bill C-300, I have three areas of concern. First, the bill states that while a purchasing firm has to be engaged in the processing of grain, which would allow for the bypassing of the Canadian Wheat Board, it does not state that the firm has to process the grain itself. It should be noted that the member opposite would not answer that question.

The question was: What would prevent a group of producers from establishing a milling or a processing operation, purchasing more grain that they require and exporting the balance of any unprocessed grain to the United States? This could be a way of circumventing the board.

Second, what is to prevent a group of Canadian farmers from setting up a processing facility in the United States? The bill states that Canadian based producers must hold the majority interest in the purchasing firm and its facilities. It does not specify where those facilities must be located. There is nothing to assure western grain producers that the processing facilities must be located in western Canada, eliminating any claim this bill will increase western processing facilities.

● (1125)

The provisions of Bill C-300 may extend legislative advantages to some processors while excluding others which could result in trade challenges. The Library of Parliament's assessment of Bill C-300 made this point:

Currently, Part IV of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act* expressly prohibits the export and interprovincial or international sale and purchase of wheat and barley, as well as wheat and barley products, by any person except the Canadian Wheat Board. The scheme of the Act is that all wheat and barley entering interprovincial or foreign trade is to be purchased and marketed by the CWB.

The act is designed that way for a good reason. In order to be a single desk seller and thereby maximize the returns back to primary producers, the board must retain control over those products that it

will be marketing. As well, the Library of Parliament makes this argument:

Some might argue that under the Bill, it would be possible for a producer to sell grain to a processing plant in the United States, if the majority interest of the plant is held by producers in Canada. The processing plant in the United States may then process to the grain or may even sell it in bulk to a third party. The Bill does not specify what the end use of the directly sold grain should be. This problem is further compounded by the fact that the Bill allows for the transportation of grain for the direct sale specified in the Act. The bill does not impose any territorial limits on such transportation.

I would make that argument. The bill also seeks to encourage value added processing in Canada, notably in the biofuel sector, and I agree that we should be increasing it. The member opposite mentioned the four recommendations in the report that I drafted. The Canadian Wheat Board is looking into that area. The board of directors is reviewing its value added policies in light of the importance which farmers have told them they attach to creating more value added processing in the prairies. The board, in its survey, states that 85% of farmers want the Canadian Wheat Board to work with producers to create more value added processing in the prairies. That is a good thing.

The board, in its remarks on the bill, say that it is looking at that, that it is willing to work with the farm communities and that it is willing to find solutions. The board also believes "that all decisions that affect the CWB's marketing mandate, whether overall as a single desk selling marketing agency, in the value added or the organic sectors, should be made by farmers". That is what should be happening. Farmers should be making the decision by a plebiscite and then recommending changes to Parliament. However, the member and the government opposition is trying to circumvent that process by not giving producers their democratic rights. They are trying to do what they can to undermine the single desk selling agency concept of the Canadian Wheat Board.

I would like to quote Reg and Beverly Stow, producers from Manitoba. In a letter directed to Mr. Ritz and copied to myself, they state:

If passed into law, this short and seemingly innocuous piece of legislation would gut the CWB mandate and eliminate any remaining trace of Western farmers' power in the transnational-owned marketplace.

They conclude by giving a message to members opposite:

It is alarming to us that a party which owes its mandate to the rural vote evidently can't wait to erode further the economic power of the very group whose historic... support brought it to government.

I strongly urge to defeat Bill C-300.

● (1130)

I will be urging members of this House to think about the impact of this legislation clearly, and yes, to defeat the bill at the end of the day. Let us see what producers have to say rather than, as the government opposite is trying to do, undermine the single desk selling concept of the Canadian Wheat Board.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in today's debate on Bill C-300, which was introduced by the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster, who is also the chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, and with whom I truly enjoy working.

*Private Members' Business*

That said, today we are talking about a different issue. We will not necessarily be on the same wavelength about his bill, which is no doubt the product of his very serious and thorough effort. He truly believes in the arguments he has put forward. However, it is not because one believes in something that one is right. We, the Bloc Québécois, have some concerns about this bill that I will discuss during the time I have been given.

The purpose of this bill is to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (direct sale of grain). If this bill were to be adopted, it would authorize grain producers to sell grain directly to certain specified associations or firms engaged in the processing of grain, and transport grain for the purposes of those sales, without having to pay a fee to the Canadian Wheat Board.

As I said earlier, we cannot support this bill because we have concerns about some things we found out. Many people were involved in this file, but that does not mean there was unanimity. I agree with the member who introduced the bill that there are major differences of opinion. The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food studied the issue. We have concerns that prevent us from moving ahead with this bill. I believe that it would weaken a collective marketing tool used by 85,000 barley and wheat producers in the west.

As the Bloc Québécois agriculture and agrifood critic and a defender of the interests of Quebec farmers, I am afraid to see the Conservative government go after another collective marketing tool. Hon. members will have guessed that I am talking about supply management, which Quebec holds dear and which, as we know, accounts for 40% of farm income in Quebec. I mention this because every time people attack the Canadian Wheat Board at the World Trade Organization, they are also attacking supply management. If we open the door to dismantling the Canadian Wheat Board, I am really afraid that the federal government will prompt other countries—and will itself decide—to dismantle the supply management system. If that happens, the Bloc Québécois will fight tooth and nail to prevent the supply management system in Quebec from ever being modified.

I will talk very briefly about what the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food said about this issue. When he appeared recently before the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, he said that in the end, Canada stands alone on supply management. It was even implied that there had been a vote of 148 to 1. In fact, there was no vote.

Clearly, the other countries have always tried to challenge the supply management system. To me, the fact that Canada was alone did not mean that it should give up and get rid of a system it has always defended. The minister implied that he planned to be flexible, because Canada would have to get along with the other countries and eventually sign an agreement.

I was once a union president, and I have also been a grievance officer. When I am not happy with an agreement, I do not sign it. If an agreement is bad, we do not sign it. We have to stand up for what we believe, and we have to defend our farmers. In this case, we have to defend supply management. That is what the minister should be saying.

There were also the comments by the WTO director general, Pascal Lamy. He came to Montreal to bring pressure to bear, saying that we need to start looking at what is going on with the Canadian Wheat Board and supply management, and that concessions need to be made. I do not think we have any lessons to learn from Mr. Lamy. I do not know whose interests he is serving, but he wants an agreement in the end. In any event, he wants Canada to bow to the dictates of the other countries, the United States and the European Union in particular.

He talks about market access and says we need to be increasingly open. That is the goal of every market. When we do business, we want other markets to be open, just as we are prepared to open ours. But in this case, there needs to be a level playing field before this happens. Five percent of the entire market in Canada is already open to foreign products, while on average 2.5% of the markets in the U. S., the European Union and the other countries are open. As far as hatching eggs are concerned, we already allow 20% of the product to come from other countries.

● (1135)

At some point, before holding discussions and making concessions, everyone needs to realize that these figures do indeed exist and that other countries still are not as open as we are when it comes to market access.

Let us also talk about the attitude of Canada's chief negotiator at the WTO. He is still having a hard time living with the motion on supply management passed unanimously on November 22 by the House of Commons. Fortunately, the Bloc Québécois had this motion passed to protect our supply management system.

All these concerns make me worry about a domino effect if this type of bill is passed and the Canadian Wheat Board is dismantled. I fear that the next target will be the supply management system.

Collective marketing is very important in Quebec. I have spoken at some length about supply management. In addition, there are the joint plans and the cooperatives. All of this serves to protect farmers' income. This is a unique instrument of governments, and is not comparable to a subsidy. There are even some emerging countries, notably in Africa, that are beginning to take great interest in this. It is a very good thing, given the income stability for farm producers, as I was saying earlier, and also because it ensures a fair price for consumers.



*Private Members' Business*

Furthermore, farmers have an absolute right to organize the marketing of their products, and that includes organizing to join forces to obtain the fairest possible market. That is what producers have done with the Canadian Wheat Board. That is also what the members of the cash crop producers, the Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec, did last year, when they created the wheat sales agency called the Agence de vente de blé à consommation humaine du Québec. With this new agency, the federation becomes the only agent authorized to market wheat for human consumption in Quebec. This is modelled on the way other products operate in Quebec, such as milk, maple syrup, pork and the cattle industry. Such selling agencies are emerging through a democratic process. The producers are called upon to make a decision on their product. That is what the cash crop producers have done. They have asked themselves by what means could they get a fair return in selling their wheat for human consumption. Their interest was drawn by examples in other kinds of crops, and they created this compulsory selling agency.

Unlike the Canadian Wheat Board, the Federation of Quebec Producers of Cash Crops does not own the crop and has no government affiliation. All the same, the Quebec wheat sales agency is disturbed that it is being associated with the criticism directed against the Canadian Wheat Board at the WTO.

To challenge the agency is to attack not only the collective wheat marketing instrument that has just been created, but also the Quebec act respecting the marketing of agricultural, food and fish products. That act permits our producers to join forces to create a collective marketing agency.

Therefore, our position is to defend at all costs the existence of publicly-owned corporations as discussed at the WTO negotiations, for if the government abandons the Canadian Wheat Board, the entire collective marketing system may be weakened. I spoke earlier about the domino effect. This bill opens the door to attacks on all fronts, on all sides, against our collective marketing system.

With this bill, as with all of its policies concerning the Canadian Wheat Board, the Conservative government's intention is to offer farmers the freedom of choice. This might appear entirely democratic. In fact, we are talking about varied opportunities to sell their grain. In 2002, the current Prime Minister proposed a motion to eliminate the Canadian Wheat Board. Voluntary marketing is being proposed. However, that does not work, which is unfortunate for the member who is presenting the bill. A few people have tried this and experience has shown that the balance of power between sellers and buyers does not exist if the selling agency is not compulsory. Yet, some western producers want changes made to the Canadian Wheat Board, as we have heard. However, a great deal of contradictory information is circulating about this, specifically concerning what producers really want. Here are some results from a National Farmers' Union survey, which was criticized earlier by the Conservative member behind this bill, although the survey is nevertheless entirely scientific: 76% of producers support the Canadian Wheat Board and 88% want to have the final say in deciding the future of the Canadian Wheat Board.

In my opinion, before we agree to vote for such a bill, we should do what was decided in parliamentary committee, namely, allow

producers to decide through a referendum, by plebiscite, and hear what they really think.

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to comment on Bill C-300 as well as on some other important issues facing agriculture in Canada today.

Although this amendment may appear logical on the surface, it raises a number of questions and could in the long term undermine the Canadian Wheat Board as a single desk seller of wheat, barley and durum in Canada. Conservatives have a platform commitment to introduce a dual marketing system where farmers would have a choice to sell through the Canadian Wheat Board or seek their own markets. Bill C-300 is the first step in this direction.

The core of Bill C-300 is it would give farmers the right to sell grain produced by the producer directly to an association or firm engaged in the processing of grain if a majority of interests in the association or firm was held by a producer or producers in Canada. This terminology is wide open. For example, if a Japanese mill took on a Canadian farmer partner, that mill could circumvent the Canadian Wheat Board. If a group of farmers set up a milling operation, bought several times more grain than they needed, and then exported the balance unprocessed to the U.S., they would be bypassing the Canadian Wheat Board. If a group of Canadian farmers set up a cleaning facility in Canada, Bill C-300 might give those farmers the right to circumvent the CWB and then re-export the grain again.

This bill is an attempt to impose a very neat solution to a complex problem. It could trigger massive unintended consequences and set the stage for a raft of trade challenges. It could create a huge number of problems, all to solve a problem that to a significant extent does not really exist.

The Canadian Wheat Board is a self-sustaining democratic organization of farmers with a mandate to act in the best interests of farmers in the world marketplace. It is not a crown corporation, although it was created through legislation after World War II. The majority of members, 88%, believe that any changes made to the Wheat Board must be made by farmers themselves.

These are challenging times for the agriculture industry in Canada. There is tremendous pressure from major world players to modify or to get rid of not only the Canadian Wheat Board, but also our supply management system. It is my personal belief and the belief of my party that we must as a nation resist this temptation in the interests of our own food security.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

For example, our supply management system works very well in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. The government does not give subsidies and producers, for the most part, can make ends meet. Tremendous pressure is being applied at the WTO on Canada to modify its supply management system. The objective of the negotiations is to remove customs barriers and other obstacles to trade, to the advantage of the poorest countries.

Developing or emerging countries, with Brazil and India at the top of the list, are calling for large reductions in American agricultural subsidies and European customs duties. Americans and Europeans, while passing the buck for the impasse from one to the other, are applying pressure on poor countries to open their markets to their industrial goods and services. For its part, Canada wants the United States to reduce its agricultural subsidies. Here in Canada, there are those who believe that by adjusting the supply management system we will have even greater access to world markets.

In a sense, our supply management system, which protects primarily the dairy, egg and poultry sectors, is closely tied to the Canadian Wheat Board. These are two Canadian-style solutions to problems faced by our farmers. There will be an enormous price to pay if we begin dismantling them.

I would like to thank our Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food for his willingness to defend our supply management system at the WTO.

• (1145)

[English]

There are other positive signs that the government is taking an active role to assist those in the agricultural sector. One is the willingness of the minister to participate in tobacco industry-led forum to discuss an exit strategy that is fair and equitable for Canadian farmers.

I also urge the minister not to abandon farmers in the grain and oilseed sector. The Americans are looking after their farmers and they are making money. We must have a short and long term strategy to level the playing field until such time as we can convince other countries to reduce their subsidies.

This should involve an immediate injection of sufficient funds for disaster relief for farmers hit hard in northeastern Saskatchewan. Let us not forget that what is at stake here is the survival of our rural communities and our way of life.

The negotiating position of the Government of Canada at the WTO talks has been to defend the democratic right of Canadian farmers to choose the kind of marketing institutions that will best serve their interest. For western Canadian farmers, this means defending the Canadian Wheat Board, with its statutory authority as a single desk seller.

If farmers want to change the board's mandate, they must be able to do this through their own democratic elections or through a plebiscite. If their decision and it should not be interfered with by the WTO or by us in the federal government.

The U.S. and the European Union want us to remove that decision from our farmers. At the World Trade Organization talks, their negotiators have been clear that they want an end to our single desk authority of organizations like the Canadian Wheat Board, which in their terminology are called state trading enterprises. The WTO position of the U.S. and the European Union, which represents the position of large grain companies, would basically outlaw the ability of farmers to have an effective organization able to compete with these companies.

[Translation]

This bill mirrors the debate surrounding the Canadian Wheat Board. It would result in a series of undesirable consequences and would open the door to a multitude of commercial disputes.

Let us review one scenario. A group of Canadian farmers establishes a processing plant in North Dakota. Bill C-300 seems to grant to these farmers, and to all western Canadian farmers, the right to transport their grain across the border to the plant. Bill C-300 states that producers established in Canada must have a majority interest in the company that purchases these facilities.

[English]

The bill could unleash a number of trade challenges because it gives legislative advantages to some processors and not others. For example, a farmer owns a co-op pasta mill, buys durum and pays farmers a price equal to what other farmers in the region receive from the Canadian Wheat Board. Corporate owned pasta plants, which are barred by their ownership structure from accessing durum at this lower price, then decide to sue under chapter 11 of NAFTA.

Another possibility could be that U.S. farmers want to set up a pasta plant in Manitoba and take advantage of the ability to buy grain at the Canadian Wheat Board price. If they are refused, they may have a case under the national treatment clauses of trade agreements, which stipulate that nations cannot discriminate between enterprises in their own countries or foreign countries.

The Canadian Wheat Board has on occasion been inaccurately portrayed as an impediment to value added processing in Canada. There is a belief in parts of the farming community and in some government quarters that an exemption for the domestic processing market is workable, if not for the entire domestic, certainly for processing operations owned by farmers.

Let us ask some questions. Would an exemption for farmer owned processing plants provide farmers with increasing marketing choice? It would only do so if the exemption results in producer owned plants coming into existence either through new construction or purchase of existing processing capacity. Would this exemption increase value added economic activity in western Canada by attracting local investment and creating jobs in rural areas? Western Canada, with its small population, is not considered a particularly advantageous location for producer processors.

Bill C-300 does not specify or dictate where producer owned facilities must be located and does not alter the existing comparative advantages. Therefore, it is not likely to promote growth specifically in western Canada over elsewhere.

I believe we have to defeat the bill. We must let the producers, themselves, decide the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is my hope that today we will make that decision.

• (1150)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary (for the Canadian Wheat Board) to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is great to be here today to speak to the bill. I would like to congratulate the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster for being so forward-thinking in presenting a great and progressive alternative for farmers on the prairies.

As we have listened to the other parties this morning, it is interesting to hear all the reasons why farmers cannot succeed, why they cannot have this and why that would not be good for them. Those are the same people, particularly on the other side, who for 13 years left farmers without hope in their industry. Farmers have turned to us for that hope. The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster has shown courage and leadership in coming forward with this bill.

I want to take a couple of minutes to go over the bill. If we listened to the opposition, we would think that there is an awful lot to this, but it is very short. It is only a couple of paragraphs. It says:

(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act or the regulations, a producer may

- (a) sell grain produced by the producer directly to an association or firm engaged in the processing of grain if a majority interest in the association or firm is held by a producer or producers based in Canada; and
- (b) transport grain for the purposes of any such sale.

That would be logical, and:

(2) No fee shall be imposed under this Act in respect of the sale or transportation of grain in accordance with subsection (1).

It seems fairly simple. As producers, we can take our own grain and sell it directly to a processor as long as that processor is controlled by a majority of Canadian producers. One would think this would be something which would already be permitted, but unfortunately in a designated area in western Canada it is not. That is the only part of the country where producers are not free to process their own grains.

There has been a long history in our country. When I thought about the bill, I wondered why our ancestors had come here, why did my grandfather and my great-uncle settle adjacent quarters on the Prairies. There were a number of reasons. They wanted to go there because there was a whole world of opportunity for them to finally have some success and move ahead with their lives. They wanted the freedom to make their own choices, to set up their own little farms and to market their own grain. They wanted an opportunity to succeed. After all these years, those are the things farmers still want. They still want those opportunities. They still want a solid return for the work they do.

It is mainly because of the Canadian Wheat Board and the system in western Canada that western Canadian producers have been unable to maximize their returns. That is why the bill has been brought forward. It gives farmers one more option. It is a huge step in a positive direction for producers.

I am encouraged also by the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster's willingness to consider amendments. He said that if

### *Private Members' Business*

there were some things in the bill that were not as strong as they should be, he would be willing to strengthen them. We wish the opposition would have the willingness to have an open like the member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

Because the bill is simple and straightforward, we would have expected support for it. Farmers are excited about it. A lot of calls have come in in support of it.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** There sure are, but the wrong way.

**Mr. David Anderson:** The member for Malpeque wants to heckle me about that. It is interesting to listen to the people who are not excited about this bill. The first people who stepped forward were the huge grain companies. They were not sure whether they liked it because it was not exactly a level playing field, that producers would be given too much of an opportunity. The member for Malpeque would love to stand up with those grain companies against farmers. However, we will stand up for the producers themselves.

It is interesting, as well, that a lot of producer groups have supported it, except for some of the extreme, radical left-wing groups. Those groups have decided that they will take the bill on. They are going to join with the grain companies in opposing it.

I do not think they have read the legislation, and that is disturbing. Both the member from the Liberals and the member from the NDP have taken that letter, which I do not know if they had a part in writing it, and have decided to use it as their main arguments. There are just a couple of strange arguments in it.

They say that Bill C-300 purports to give an advantage to farmer owned Canadian plants. We would say it certainly does. They are going to try to find some extreme example that might not work to try to prove the whole bill is bad. How about if we take, for example, a corporate controlled joint venture flour mill in Japan? That is something we would not want, so it must be what the bill provides. The argument is we cannot allow corporate controlled joint venture flour mills in Japan to take advantage of this bill. The bill states that any plants have to be owned by a majority of producers. We are not talking about Canadian producers. Nor are not talking about corporate controlled entities.

• (1155)

Then it goes on to say that Bill-300 would create legislated cost advantages for some producers but not others. We say that it would create some advantage for producers, and we are more than willing to do that.

I am a little disturbed that these left-wing farm groups are defending the big companies against the small producers. I am even more disappointed that the member for Malpeque has chosen to join in that and to oppose Canadian farmers. He made an airport tour and came up a small report in which he made some recommendations. I would like to read a couple of things from that. It says in the conclusion:

—Canada's farmers, who work hard and efficiently, want to make their living from the marketplace, and the policies undertaken by our governments must provide the conditions allowing that to happen.

The bill tries to do that.

We need policies that help farmers earn a decent living and that create economic stability in rural Canada.

*Business of Supply*

The bill also tries to do that.

The first two recommendations of his report are: that all governments place a priority on measures that will enhance farmers' economic returns from the marketplace; and second, that ministers and ministries of agriculture see their primary role as advocating on behalf of primary producers. The bill does that.

He should be supporting it, but he is not and that is unfortunate. I find it ironic that he supports our position on child care, but he will not support our position on farmers to give producers some return in the marketplace. He was the one who suggested we should give child care choice to parents. He also supported our budget, and we thank him for that. However, perhaps he should step forward and support an initiative such as.

I am very disappointed with him. He claims to have been a farm leader for years, wanting to step forward and defend farmers. However, for some reason, he has insisted that his party take a position in opposition to the bill. We think he should reconsider that. He needs to support the bill and to give producers what they need enable them to make the return from the marketplace.

The member for Battlefords—Lloydminster made a very legitimate point when he said that the member did not live in the designated area. He is not from anywhere near there, but he feels he has an obligation to try to interfere with my ability to do business in the part of the world in which I operate. That is a huge concern for me. The last thing we need is people from other areas, who do not understand our systems, explaining to us what they have.

The ball is back in the official opposition's court. We look forward to its support on it.

• (1200)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper. When the item comes back for debate, there will be two and a half minutes left for the hon. parliamentary secretary.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.)** moved:

That the House recognize the urgent need to improve the quality of life of Canada's Aboriginals, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, living both on and off reserve, which requires focused and immediate initiatives by the government in areas such as health, water, housing, education, and economic opportunities and, especially, immediately moving forward with the implementation of the Kelowna Accord with its full funding commitments.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a motion on behalf of the official opposition, a motion that most in the House wish would not have been necessary.

It is a resolution that reflects a course of action that I believe again that most in the House wish was now well underway.

It is a resolution that promises hope and opportunity for a large number of aboriginal Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

It is a resolution that acknowledges the responsibility that flows from historic claims and relationships between aboriginal people and the non-aboriginal majority.

It is a resolution that speaks to the future of our country, to social justice and to economic prosperity.

It is a resolution that speaks to the potential of loss: the loss of opportunity, the loss of growth and the cost of doing nothing.

It is a resolution that speaks of the loss of international reputation.

It is a resolution that acknowledges the magnitude of an agreement of this kind with so many participants after so many aborted attempts.

It is a resolution that speaks to relationships and trust.

And it is a resolution that speaks to the honour of the Crown, to the integrity of the processes of the negotiations between governments themselves and between governments and aboriginal leadership across this country.

I speak of the Kelowna accord.

This past November, a solidly crafted and visionary agreement was concluded by a committed group of leaders in this country. Those present at that memorable meeting included the leadership of the five aboriginal organizations in the country, the AFN, ITK, Métis National Council, NWAC and the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the former Prime Minister of Canada, and the first ministers of all of Canada's provinces and territories.

It is important to reiterate here what the Kelowna accord was about. It was about an integrated, far-reaching plan to achieve a clear set of targets and goals to ensure that aboriginal Canadians throughout this abundant and inclusive country of ours have the prospects and opportunities of all Canadians.

The Kelowna accord was a clear plan to address the historic social and economic disparities that exist between aboriginal Canadians and others.

It was about eradicating the poverty and loss of opportunity that plagues aboriginal peoples.

It was about improving educational outcomes and opportunities for aboriginal young people and sometimes their parents as well.

It was about addressing an enormous housing challenge that haunts so many communities and contributes to profound social unrest. I

It was about providing the resources to improve water systems and train those who maintain them.

It was about ensuring that health care is available for aboriginal people, not just reducing waiting times. What is required is available services, so that infants do not die, so that teenagers do not commit suicide, so that diabetes is addressed, and so that tuberculosis is dealt with and becomes obsolete in this country.

The Kelowna accord was about creating economic opportunities.

It was about a commitment to aboriginal women for a stand alone summit to address their particular issues, including violence and matrimonial real property as addressed by Bill C-31 in 1985.

The Kelowna accord was a recognition that what is required in the far north may be different from what is required on reserve, which may in turn be different from what is required in the cities.

And it was the recognition that the needs of first nations, Inuit and Métis are themselves different, and that within these communities disparities exist.

The Kelowna accord was a plan that was developed by all the partners, very much a ground up approach, based on plans developed by the aboriginal organizations. As National Chief Phil Fontaine said at the aboriginal affairs committee last week:

We were able to convince the 14 jurisdictions of the validity and legitimacy of this plan—a plan that was considered by all as reasonable, doable, and achievable.

There were 18 months of consultation and collaboration that took place. Meetings were held, plans refined, memorandums to cabinet prepared, and memorandums to cabinet approved. Moneys were identified and moneys were allocated. Consultations were held between premiers, with each other and with aboriginal leaders. The consultations were held between aboriginal leaders, and between leaders and their constituent communities.

There were 18 months of discussion and dialogue, of give and take, of compromise and concession.

● (1205)

The agreement was concluded at a full meeting last November 24 and 25 with all the participants and all the players, before the television cameras and the media of the country, and with Canadians from coast to coast to coast observing a truly transparent and open process which all in the House support.

A comprehensive 10 year plan was in place to achieve a clear set of goals and targets, \$5.1 billion was provided for the first five years of this plan, and \$700 million was allocated under earlier agreements. The remainder was booked and allocated in the unallocated surplus of the economic and fiscal update of November 2005 as confirmed by the finance department officials at the meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance on May 10, 2006 in the sources and uses table.

Public statements and acknowledgments were made of what had been accomplished and handshakes by all the leaders were undertaken.

Yet, we hear from members opposite that either it was written on a napkin, it was a so-called accord, or comments that it was only a single piece of paper, or that there were issues concerning whether it was really an agreement or just a press release.

What has been described by colleagues opposite as a single piece of paper or written on a napkin was understood by all present as a firm agreement, a major achievement, a strong commitment, and a decision to proceed.

### *Business of Supply*

Let me advise the House of what the leaders present from all political parties and from all the aboriginal communities said of the agreement at the time and since.

Mr. Campbell, Premier of British Columbia said:

It has taken us 138 years as a nation to arrive at this moment. It has taken decades of dialogue and a tortured path of frustration and failure to bring us to this moment of clarity and commitment.

Conservative Premier Ralph Klein of Alberta said:

To make those improvements happen we need the federal government to live up to its constitutional responsibilities for aboriginal people, and it has been indicated here that you are indeed going to do that.

The NDP premier of my own province of Manitoba said, “This is the most significant contribution to aboriginals made by any Prime Minister in the last 30 years”.

In Ontario, Premier Dalton McGuinty said

For the first time ever, first ministers have agreed to targets and time frames on improving aboriginal lives and there exists a strong consensus to act immediately.

From Quebec, Premier Charest said, “Failure is not an option. The time has come to move ahead”.

Assemblies of First Nations Grand Chief Phil Fontaine said:

The country is watching us here. The commitments that are made are significant and it's going to be very, very difficult for any government to retreat from those commitments here.

We heard from Chief Ed John from the First Nations Summit who said, “We're off and running with this agreement. This is a great day”.

Jose Kusugak from the ITK said: “Everything we wanted to achieve, we achieved. We are very happy”.

When the government first brought in its budget, it contained an 80% cut in promised funding for aboriginal Canadians and their leaders were profoundly disappointed.

The Kelowna accord designated \$5.1 billion toward issues such as health, education, economic opportunity, housing, accountability and relationships.

The Conservative budget committed \$450 million toward on-reserve programs with the money being contingent upon there being a federal surplus. The government did not make a firm commitment. At the same time that it killed the Kelowna accord, it attached an asterisk to the limited amounts that it did commit.

Here are some of the reactions from the aboriginal leaders, the country over, to the budget.

Bev Jacobs, President of the Native Women's Association of Canada said, “I do not believe that the amount in this budget will be able to deal with complex and deep issues that face aboriginal communities and aboriginal women today. The issue of health was not addressed, and that is very discouraging”.

Grand Council Chief Beaucage from the Union of Ontario Indians said: “This budget is a far cry from what was committed by the first ministers. Once again we've been left out in the cold”.

*Business of Supply*

• (1210)

Chief Stewart Phillip of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said:

Our fear, suspicion and mistrust of the [Conservative] government to support the historic Kelowna Accord were well placed. I had hoped, however, that the [Conservative] government would have the integrity and political will to fully implement the historic Kelowna Accord representing a \$5.1 billion dollar investment in Aboriginal communities.

Clément Chartier, President of the Métis National Council said:

Despite years of hard work and great progress as we experienced with the previous government, Conservatives have not stood up for the Métis Nation.

David Chartrand from Manitoba said:

The Kelowna Accord would have helped the Métis People educate our youth and provide the necessary financial supports for sustainable housing and to combat diabetes in our communities.

Again we heard from National Chief Phil Fontaine when he said:

The approaches developed in Kelowna were developed with and supported by Aboriginal leaders, provinces and territories. These were not commitments from a particular party, but by the federal and all provincial and territorial governments.

The disingenuous of the minister, whom I have great respect for I might add, speaking on this issue is breathtaking. In reply to the private member's bill introduced by my colleague, the former Prime Minister, he said:

Aboriginal poverty is deep rooted. It is a complex issue. I say, with all due respect, that I do not think anyone can table a single page at the close of a first ministers' meeting as a compilation of numbers, issue a press release and believe aboriginal poverty has been solved.

What a profound lack of respect, courtesy and regard for the processes undertaken to get to that day and an even greater lack of respect for those people involved in getting there. The minister then went on to say:

The problems in this country are much deeper than that. They require a long term commitment, structural reform and renovation in consultation with first nations. Unless that is done, we will not succeed in the eradication of aboriginal poverty.

I believe that everyone that day in November believed that was exactly what Kelowna was about.

Let me tell the House what the loss of Kelowna means in concrete terms. It means that capital projects for education are being delayed for years as moneys are being reallocated or are not available. There are no funds for aboriginal health care identified in the budget while the tuberculosis outbreak continues to grow at Garden Hill First Nation, now 27 identified cases and 86 identified contacts. All perpetuated by many crowded, mouldy houses.

The Elsipogtog First Nation in New Brunswick has a detailed plan to address an ongoing substance abuse problem in their community. There has been no response and no funds.

The Shamattawa First Nation in northern Manitoba has a desperate need for new homes. Often 26 people live in one house. Again there was no response.

A large number of young people I met in Winnipeg will not be able to go on to post-secondary education, and yet we talk about skill shortages in Canada. The list goes on.

We have heard little commitment from the government to aboriginal peoples. We have heard some empty rhetoric, often a

deafening silence, a frequent attempt to change the channel, and talk of more studies and little action. But there was a glimmer of hope.

When first appointed to the portfolio, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development said:

Aboriginal Canadians are nosk as long as I am the mt going to live at riinister.

I would like to remind the minister and his colleagues of one of the many wise comments by the late Martin Luther King Jr. when he said:

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

It is indeed time for members of the government to sit down and listen to the aboriginal leadership throughout this country, to listen to their colleagues in the House of Commons, to listen to the provincial and territorial leaders, and most important, to listen to Canadians across this country who understand the loss for them and their neighbours by not proceeding with the Kelowna accord.

It is time for that ray of sunshine to shine on Canada's aboriginal people and it is time to let the wheels of Kelowna move forward.

• (1215)

We have heard much about accountability from the government. We all support accountability, but accountability is not just about dollars. It is also about a government's accountability, or lack thereof, to its citizens and its partners in Confederation. Accountability is indeed a two-way street.

This is the opportunity to ensure that the Kelowna agreement is not added to the record of injustices and failures that have plagued aboriginal peoples over the decades in this country.

Let me close with a statement by Richard Paton from ITK when he appeared before the aboriginal affairs committee on June 7, 2006. His statement sums up the feelings of many across this great land. He said:

In my view, and as stated by our president recently in Gimli at the western premiers meeting, acting honourably means at a minimum keeping your word. The word that was pledged to the first ministers meeting on the federal side was not the word of a particular individual or political party; it was the word of the Prime Minister of Canada, the highest-level servant of the Crown and the people and an important custodian of the honour of the Crown and, by extension, the honour of the people of Canada. We cannot run federalism, indeed we cannot run Canada, on the basis that high-level multi-governmental commitments to tackle fundamental societal ills that are the product of mature deliberation can be summarily discarded because one of the signatories doesn't find it expedient on partisan grounds.

I implore colleagues opposite to listen to the speakers here today, to reconsider and to look at the far-reaching impact of the Kelowna accord across this land of ours. I urge all in this House to unanimously adopt the motion.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have had the pleasure of serving with my hon. colleague on the aboriginal affairs committee. I believe she is genuinely interested in moving forward on the issues concerning aboriginal Canadians.

I would like to ask her about one area that was not involved in the Kelowna process, and that is in relation to structural reform. It is quite clear based on the commentary of many of the people who were at the table at the first ministers meeting, that was not an item that was unanimously agreed upon.

More important, how can she refer to empty rhetoric when we look back at the 13 years of inaction, where opportunities were missed and aboriginal Canadians saw the outcomes continue to be deplorable? How can she say that empty rhetoric is not most reflective upon her and her party?

• (1220)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I was anticipating the member's comment on structural reform. There is no question that structural reform is required. Legislative changes must be made and we have to move forward. To wait for structural reform is to do a huge disservice to the communities that we are speaking about. Structural reform has to move forward incrementally in consultation with first nation communities across the land. The member knows as well as I do that structural reform is a substantial undertaking. It will take years to move forward. While I acknowledge the necessity of it, I do not believe it is in any way an impediment to implementing the Kelowna accord.

I speak of empty rhetoric because we see very little happening from members opposite, while I know that many of them are committed to this issue. The previous government had moved on this agenda. The Kelowna accord came about as a result of this agenda.

It is really important that the previous government built relationships with aboriginal communities. This is not a situation where one tells; rather, one asks. One works with; one does not dictate. Relationship building is the essence of Kelowna and what the previous government was about. With respect to the successes and failures that were there, the successes came about by working together and the failures of the past came about by not listening to and not working with.

While I accept my colleague's comments about structural reform, I believe that the previous government made tremendous strides in dealing with first nations, aboriginal peoples, Inuit peoples, Métis peoples, and we are very proud of it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to my hon. colleague. I will have the opportunity a little later today to explain the Bloc Québécois' position regarding the motion proposed by the Liberal Party. However, I can say right away that we will support this motion.

Later today, I will hold a press conference along with my hon. colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who will rise in a few minutes, to denounce the current government's attitude

regarding discussions on the draft declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples currently taking place in New York.

That said, I would like to ask my hon. colleague a question. The members of this House must understand that the Kelowna agreement was not negotiated between the Liberal government and aboriginal peoples or between the Conservative government and aboriginal peoples. It was negotiated nation to nation—it is on this particular topic that I would like my hon. colleague to address the House. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, who was Prime Minister at the time, signed as the leader of a nation, just as Phil Fontaine signed as the leader of a nation.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following questions: What happens when two nations that have signed an agreement do not respect that agreement? What will happen in the years to come?

[*English*]

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, if I understood the question correctly, the previous government understood, recognized and acknowledged the nationhood of aboriginal peoples in this country. As such, we worked with them on a nation to nation basis acknowledging, listening, cooperating and collaborating so that there was not fragmentation, so that we were able to come in with a holistic response.

The key to the success of the previous government's dealings with aboriginal peoples was its willingness and ability to listen, to operate as equals, to understand the relationship and the historic context in which we were operating to ensure that aboriginal peoples have the best opportunities as they move forward.

• (1225)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her comments and certainly her commitment to this very important issue. However, I have to say that the current government has not demonstrated a commitment to solve some of the serious problems facing aboriginal communities. The previous government had an opportunity and the Kelowna accord also failed to meet its commitments. There have been decades of neglect.

I want to specifically ask the member about the amount of money that was in the Kelowna accord. My understanding is that part of that money was not new money. It was actually funding that came partially through Bill C-48 to do with housing and education and other money had already been committed around health care. I would like the member to comment specifically on the exact amount of new money that was in the Kelowna agreement.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the member's support of this motion.

The money from Bill C-48 was not part of the money established under the Kelowna accord. Some \$700 million was allocated under previous agreements leading up to Kelowna and \$4.5 billion was new money allocated under the agreement. The money was booked, available and documented by the government in a fashion that only the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance could remove the funds.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I come from Kelowna—Lake Country. Kelowna has been referred to on numerous occasions during this session of the House. It is obviously of great concern to the Conservative government. I am proud that the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development has done a great job of addressing the issues in the short period that he has been in the position of minister compared to the Liberals who were in government for 13 years.

I was a member of Kelowna city council at the time. I was in Kelowna standing outside the Grand Hotel while the talks were taking place and watched the protesters. The off reserve members were absolutely frustrated. They were shut out from the accord, as it is called.

As recently as Friday afternoon I had a face to face meeting with Premier Campbell and discussed this specific issue. There are all kinds of flaws in the proposal. Since I was elected on January 23 I have been trying to get a hold of the Kelowna accord, the document everyone keeps referring to. If the member opposite has such a document, I would like her to table it because it is a real mystery.

I asked Premier Campbell, as I mentioned, and I have spoken with all kinds of other people who were at the event. There are a lot of laudable goals in the discussion paper, as we have referred to it, and principles that we agreed to as a government and acted on. I would ask the member opposite to please table the Kelowna accord if she has such a document.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I am astounded by a question like that. Leadership takes courage. When one speaks of the Kelowna accord, there is not one member who would say it is perfect. It was a series of concessions, compromises, discussions, negotiations and it was important.

I am very surprised that the member opposite has not seen the transformative change accord between the government and the province of British Columbia that has been signed. If he says that he has spoken to Gordon Campbell and the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs, he will know that it was Mr. Campbell who indeed led the charge across this country to ensure that the Kelowna accord was ratified. It was massaged to ensure that it was agreed to by all involved.

• (1230)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today to tell the House how the current government is working to improve the quality of life of first nations, the Inuit and the Métis.

[*English*]

I agree with many of the things that have been said in the House and some of the comments put forward by the member for Winnipeg South Centre. I do not doubt her sincerity and I acknowledge the work she has done in the past on behalf of aboriginal people in the area of education. I do, however, disagree quite vehemently with her in terms of the way forward and I intend to speak to that without, in any way, disparaging her as a member of Parliament.

The approach we have tried to follow involves working together with other parties in the House. We have had good dialogue with the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan and the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue. We will continue to approach this in a constructive and thoughtful way.

I would also like to speak definitively in the House to the fine work that has been carried out by the member for Winnipeg South, who is my parliamentary secretary. He is one of the youngest parliamentary secretaries in the new Government of Canada. He has done an extraordinary job. He is a Canadian of aboriginal ancestry. I can say unequivocally in the House that I am proud to have him as a colleague. I think the people of Winnipeg should be extraordinarily proud to have a young Canadian of this quality in the government.

The motion put forward speaks to the need for action in the areas of health, water, education and economic opportunities. Each and every one of us in the House recognizes the importance of moving forward on an agenda that deals with aboriginal issues and addresses the real issues of aboriginal poverty.

[*Translation*]

I worked on land claims for many years. My work gave me the opportunity to visit a number of aboriginal communities long before I came to Parliament. As a member of the opposition, I was my party's critic for Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

[*English*]

I have come face to face with the conditions aboriginal Canadians experience. I have been to many of the Indian reserves in this country, perhaps as many as half of the Indian reserves across Canada. It has led me to believe that the eradication of aboriginal poverty is one of the greatest social issues that the country faces. There is a willingness on my part to proceed, to be thoughtful and to work in collaboration with aboriginal Canadians to deal with these difficult issues.

While I agree with the member opposite that we need to work together to improve the quality of life for aboriginal Canadians, we disagree on the methodology.

The first speech I gave in the House of Commons 18 months ago related to what we see inscribed in stone on the front portal of the House of Commons as we come through the door. It is inscribed, "Where there is no vision, the people perish". I use that inscription on the front door of the House of Commons, which can be seen several stories up in large letters, to talk about the Liberal record in dealing with aboriginal issues in this country. It is a record that is shameful. History will judge the Liberal government harshly on what it has done on aboriginal policy and how it has dealt with aboriginal poverty. It will be judged on a 13 year period of empty promises and dark poverty for aboriginal Canadians.

This government is committed to taking real steps to deal with these issues. We are committed to dealing with some of the tough questions, the structural issues which underlie aboriginal poverty and we are committed to moving forward in a way that the Liberal government did not and never would.



*Business of Supply*

Where we differ with the Liberals is in how to approach these problems. Over the last 13 years, Canadians have seen one approach, the Liberal approach. This approach was recently judged harshly by the Auditor General of Canada, who said essentially that on every major indicator of the quality of life of aboriginal Canadians, 13 years of Liberal government had been a failure. That is shameful. What Canadians have seen is rhetoric and what Canadians no longer want to see, whether aboriginal or non-aboriginal Canadians, is a continuation of that kind of approach to dealing with aboriginal poverty.

Does anybody in this House still remember the promises put forward by the Liberals in the 1993 campaign platform, the famous red book? There were promises regarding unemployment, health problems, poor housing, unequal education opportunities and unsafe drinking water. I have been through all the Liberal throne speeches and all of the Liberal red books during the time we were in opposition and they contained more and more Liberal empty rhetoric to aboriginal Canadians.

Finally, in 2004, after 12 years, the last Liberal throne speech admitted that “The conditions in far too many aboriginal communities can only be described as shameful”, an epitaph offered to 12 years of Liberal government by the Liberal government itself. That is the situation the new Government of Canada, a Conservative government, has inherited.

My friend spoke about the issue of water. This government took action within 45 days of coming into office to deal with the water situation. What were we left with by the members opposite, by the Liberal government? We were left with a situation where 21 communities in this country were living as communities at risk in terms of their water system, situations such as Kashechewan where e-coli was migrating into drinking water. Beyond that, 170 communities were living at high risk, which is a lower standard than a community at risk.

We took action. We instituted a system to get to the bottom of it. We introduced a certain amount of science. We have empowered a water panel to take the national standards, which this government announced, and implement them in law. That is the kind of approach this government will follow. We will take real action. We will deal with national standards. We will advance funds to deal with issues, with the assurance that there will be accountability and action. We are not interested in a continuation of Liberal rhetoric.

●(1235)

My friend spoke about the \$700 million that the Liberals promised for aboriginal health care. I am astounded that the member would come to this chamber and have the audacity to even raise the Liberal record of this \$700 million. The \$700 million was promised to aboriginal Canadians during the fix for a generation, the 2003 health care discussions. At that meeting the previous prime minister of Canada said that he had fixed health care for a generation and part of the fix was that \$700 million would be paid to aboriginal Canadians to deal with health issues.

The premiers met again in 2004. Not one penny of the \$700 million had ever been spent, not a cent, not a farthing. The Liberals re-promised the \$700 million in the 2004 June election. Still none of the money had been spent. After the election they promised the

money again in the House of Commons in the context of the minority Parliament.

When the Conservative government took office two years after those promises were put on the table, none of the \$700 million had ever been spent. It was fiction. It was rhetoric. It was nonsense. The money was never advanced to deal with the difficult issues of aboriginal Canadians. It is one of the most shameful records that exists in recent years in the House of Commons.

Finally, in the last days of the last government there was another grand gesture, another grand promise.

[*Translation*]

The Kelowna agreement never really reflected reality. The Kelowna process did not include all of Canada.

The province of Quebec, represented by Ghislain Picard, regional chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, did not participate in the process or in the Kelowna conference. Therefore, there was no Canada-wide consensus as such.

●(1240)

[*English*]

Mr. Picard was not even there and the aboriginal people of Quebec did not even participate in the process of Kelowna. In that sense a national consensus was not captured at all.

I was in Kelowna. There was no signed agreement. There was no consensus on funding. There was no shared financial commitment binding all the governments. If there were, I would say so in the House of Commons.

In the closing moments after the Kelowna accord conference finished, I met with the aboriginal leaders and I talked to many of the premiers. There was no consensus. There was confusion on what the prime minister had tabled, the single page compilation of numbers totalling \$5.085 billion. There was no understanding on how that money would be spent, who would receive it, how much of it would be advanced to the provinces, how much would be advanced to the territories, what portion would go to the Inuit, what portion would go to the public governments in the north, what portion would go to the Assembly of First Nations and how much the Native Women's Association would get. None of those questions was answered.

Some of the first nation leaders, about which my friend speaks, had never seen those numbers. Anyone who stands in the House of Commons and tells Canadians that there was an 18 month negotiation process, leading to that single page compilation of numbers, is facetious. It never happened. If we asked the aboriginal people, who were there, they had never seen the numbers when they were tabled.

My friend from the riding of Kelowna—Lake Country properly mentions this. If there is a motion in the House to implement the Kelowna accord, perhaps someone at least could table the accord, put it in front of us so we could consider it. The point is they cannot because it does not exist. There is no such document.

*Business of Supply*

Prior to the conference, a 20 page document described the circumstances of aboriginal poverty. It talked about targets, about the importance of five and ten year plans. I have never disagreed that it is a useful document and provides some guidance on the way forward, but there was no financial plan built around that document at Kelowna. It just did not happen.

Today we are discussing what was essentially a unilateral press release with the pre-campaign promise of money, no point by point plan, no budget for the year ahead, something that was tabled essentially three days before an election was called. As the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I am talking about a different approach. We have to seriously address the underlying issues of aboriginal poverty and it will take more than a press release.

I said this previously, when the former prime minister tabled his private member's bill in the House, and I say it again today. Anyone who believes we can deal with the most pressing social justice issue in our country, namely aboriginal poverty, by tabling a one page document at the close of a meeting, does not appreciate the scope and the nature of the problem.

I believe everyone in the House is well-meaning in terms of tackling the problem and dealing with the issue, but this is not the way to do it. It reflects the lack of understanding, which the Liberals have shown for 13 years, about what the fundamental problems are. For 13 years, the Liberals never took any action to provide water standards. Why were registered status Indian people the only Canadians living without water standards until the Conservative government arrived? It has nothing to do with Kelowna. It has everything to do with a government that was not prepared to act.

Why are aboriginal first nation children the only kids who do not have the protection of an education statute that defines curriculum, classroom sizes, certification, teacher-student ratios? The only children in Canada who do not have that protection are Indian registered status Indian children. This is after 13 years of Liberal ineptitude. This is the situation that we inherited.

It is said that a goal without a plan is just a wish, just a promise in the case of the Liberals.

●(1245)

I said before that I supported the targets discussed by the first ministers and the national aboriginal leaders. However, we will have a different approach to getting there. We are setting goals. We are taking concrete steps to meet them. We are budgeting properly and we are bringing financial plans before Parliament. We will deal with the structural issues.

Again, we have rhetoric from the Liberals. Why, after 13 years of Liberal government, is there still no matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women? How can the Liberals stand in the House of Commons and seriously argue, on behalf of aboriginal people, when for 13 years they were not prepared to deal with one of the most fundamental wrongs that exists in Canada today? That is the fact that aboriginal women do not have matrimonial property rights. Promises, rhetoric, red books, throne speeches, all of that, but never any action, just a continuation of rhetoric.

One of the other issues we need to discuss is how we will make the system work better for aboriginal Canadians. What do we have to do to give individuals a better sense of empowerment? How do we match job training to take advantage of the changing economy and the opportunities so some of our economic growth stories benefit aboriginal people?

How do we move beyond the Indian Act, the most outdated piece of legislation in Canada? How do we give first nations the tools to get beyond the Indian Act? The Indian Act was a compilation of pre-confederation statutes. It should be no wonder to the Liberals why many things are not working for aboriginal Canadians when the basic governance structure, which applies to everything that happens on reserve, is legislation that was developed 150 years ago. There was no action from the former government to deal with that reality.

These are tough, fundamental questions and they have gone unanswered for too long. The government intends to move forward. We intend to deal with these issues and we will work in collaboration and in consultation with national and regional organizations to do so.

I am optimistic. As Winston Churchill once said, "For myself, I am an optimist, because I don't see much use in being anything else". We can move forward on these issues and we have already in the budget.

My friend said, I think quite unfairly, and I want the record of the House of Commons corrected on this, that the government had put forward a budget that cut 80% of the funding to aboriginal Canadians. The budget put forward by the Conservative government contains more dollar expenditures for aboriginal Canadians than any budget that has ever been put forward in the history of the House of Commons and, for sure, more money than the Liberals ever put forward.

At this point, the Government of Canada is spending something close to \$9 billion on aboriginal programs and services. Our budget contained a number of extraordinary measures, totalling \$3.7 billion. We budgeted \$2.2 billion to deal with the residential school agreement. We included \$300 million for northern housing; \$300 million for off reserve housing, \$125 million additional in the budget this year, \$450 million in the budget in the following; and a \$325 million increase in the department's estimates. The total additional funds in that sense are \$1.075 billion. When we add that to the \$2.2 billion set aside for the residential school agreement, this is a very generous budget. As aboriginal leaders across Canada have said, it does more for aboriginal Canadians than the Liberals ever did.

*Business of Supply*

Yet what we hear is a continuation from the other side of the House about Liberal rhetoric, about promises and about moving forward. All of this disrespects the House of Commons. The money in terms of Kelowna was never budgeted for by the House of Commons. It was open to the Liberals, as a government, to bring forward a budget that included that money, to have it approved by the Parliament of Canada and to move forward. They never did. They are carrying on today with the same approach. The private member's bill that has been put forward, again, provides no money. There are more promises or regurgitation of previous promises, but no money.

● (1250)

What aboriginal Canadians have come to believe and come to see is that for real results they are going to see action from our government. The government has the courage to move forward and bring forward a vision that is different from where we have been.

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very quick question. He talks about the over \$1.2 billion. I find that hard to believe when \$300 million of it will go to provinces and \$300 million to northern territories. It is not going to aboriginal people. We have \$150 million this year going to aboriginal people, period.

Very clearly, I see the rubber hitting the road with the lack of understanding the Conservatives have with what the aboriginal people of Canada want. Their criticism that the Kelowna accord was a one page document is absurd. Do they not understand that the plans were to be developed jointly with the aboriginal people of Canada? The government is being prescriptive and telling them that it knows what is good for them.

What process of consultation will be utilized? Is it the one where there was none when the accountability act was introduced? Is it one where the aboriginal procurement provision in contracts was cut? Is it one where school projects were cut without consultation or where the Deh Cho negotiations were short-circuited by being told that they would not block this Supreme Court of Canada recognition of the duty to consult. Therefore, what is the consultation process, hit and run?

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, the member is a new member. Therefore, at the risk of repetition, I would like to take him back to how the budget process works. When he talks about the dollars being an illusion, he needs to look at the budget. These are real dollars.

The Government of Canada this year will spend \$9 billion on programs and services for aboriginal Canadians, primarily on approximately 600,000 status Indian Canadians. There will be \$300 million for northern housing, which will be real money leading to real results. That is \$300 million for off reserve housing. Surely the member does not contend that those moneys are not moneys from which aboriginal Canadians will see no benefit. There are \$475 million of additional increases in terms of the budgetary allocation to the department and \$2.2 billion for the residential school agreement. These are real funds.

On the consultation process, I think I have made it very clear that we will continue to consult with first nations and with the leaders of the Inuit and the Métis organizations. I have had meetings with every one of the national aboriginal organizations. In fact, I have had

extensive meetings with all of them. We work very closely with the Native Women's Association of Canada, with the Assembly of First Nations, ITK on behalf of the Inuit people, with the National Métis Council and with the Congress of Aboriginal People. These are all groups with which we have a very solid relationship and we are developing a constructive way forward. No one should suggest in the House that it does not exist.

If we listen to the comments, which the aboriginal leaders have put on the public record, they say that they have a respectful and a positive working relationship with the new government.

We will be mindful of *Haida v. Taku* and the sorts of decisions that have been issued previously by the Supreme Court of Canada. We are mindful of the obligation to consult.

I have been around long enough to know that imposed solutions do not work. At the same time, there is a fundamental difference between the Conservative approach and the Liberal approach on consultation. For the Liberals, consultation was a gridlock because it essentially amounted to a process where they would consult endlessly and they would never take any action.

In the case of the Conservative Party, we will consult on the road to results. We will consult on the road to making decisions. Consultation will be part of a decision making process. It will not be a dead end route, the way it was with the Liberals.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. minister, and one question immediately came to mind.

I like it when two parties take turns wielding power. It means that one of the parties can say that although it was forced to rejig a few things because of the other party's 13 years of inaction, it will fix everything up because it is the best party. That said, I have a question for the minister. Under Mr. Mulroney's government, with which he is no doubt familiar, the Erasmus-Dussault commission was created. This commission cost Canadians over \$55 million and was supposed to set up a new structure and new organizations for Canada's aboriginal, Inuit and Métis people.

My question is very simple: if he does not believe that an agreement was reached in Kelowna, will the minister commit to the immediate implementation of the conclusions in the Erasmus-Dussault report, which has already been written, which already exists, which was thoroughly documented, and which his government has had in its possession for more than 14 years?

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the hon. member opposite. It has already been mentioned that I respected the work of this commission. I have even discussed this with the hon. member. But now we have a new government and we will develop our own strategies to protect aboriginal people.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

The commission of which my friend speaks is an important commission. He is quite right that it has contributed enormously to this country and to an understanding of aboriginal issues. Many ideas were put forward. Frankly, the final report would fill the table in front of the Speaker of the House. There were good ideas in the report. There were ideas relating to housing, education and economic development. We will consider these ideas. I look forward to working together with my friend to do so. At the end of the day, this government is prepared to look at those ideas and move forward to make the structural changes in consultation with aboriginal Canadians, first nation, Métis and Inuit people, but to deal with the real issues.

My friend spoke about the history of previous governments in this country. If we look at what has transpired in Canada over the last 13 years, we have seen no significant improvement in the lives of aboriginal Canadians. All of the structural changes that were made in this country that have benefited aboriginal Canadians were made by previous Conservative governments.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister and the member for Winnipeg South Centre for the tone and the content of their remarks. I want to thank the member for Winnipeg South Centre for giving us the opportunity to be seized with this issue today. It is the most compelling social issue that we have in this country.

It is helpful if we all start this important debate from the same base level of facts and do away with some of the misinformation. I too was at Kelowna and I was there for the whole event. I know the minister was there as well because we sat together for much of that gathering.

It would do all of us a service as we spend the rest of the day discussing this issue to get some clarity from the minister to see if he understands the numbers the same way I do. If we subtract \$700 million, which was the health care money that was announced and re-announced many times in the most cynical of ways, from \$5.1 billion that brings it down to \$4.4 billion. If we take \$550 million for housing, which was money in the NDP Bill C-48, that leaves \$3.85 billion over five years. This is where the member for Winnipeg South Centre and I have some disagreement. We negotiated \$1.6 billion for housing of which we said one-third should go toward aboriginal housing which would be \$550 million. Perhaps the minister could confirm that if that \$550 million was not tied to Kelowna it would have been spent, but because it was tied to Kelowna, it was never rolled out.

First nations have asked me what happened to the money in Bill C-48. They want to know why their housing budgets have not doubled because of the money that the NDP negotiated on their behalf. They want to know where that money is. We said it was tied to Kelowna. Is that true or not? Since 1992, \$261 million was fixed and it never changed in the 13 years the Liberals were in government. That was the total housing budget.

Can the minister confirm or deny my understanding of the figures?

● (1300)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The minister for a short response.

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, it is always difficult to provide a short response to my colleague from Winnipeg Centre. I acknowledge the work that he has done and that we did together in the previous Parliament on residential schools and other issues. It is difficult to give a short response, but I would be pleased to talk to the hon. member later.

The single page document that was put forward at Kelowna talked about \$300 million for northern housing over five years. The Conservative budget deals with \$300 million for northern housing in one budget right now. We are committed to real results. In cases where we believe that we can move forward today, namely, northern housing and off reserve housing where the institutional arrangements are in place to make sure that money is delivered to aboriginal Canadians, we have moved forward immediately. We do not need the Liberals and their discussion about Kelowna to get results on northern housing. This government has delivered it.

My friend referred to Bill C-48. There is a lot of history that goes back to that legislation, but the point is made that this government is focused on accountability, real results, directed and targeted expenditures, and making sure that we improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians in a real way.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating a motion on the Kelowna accord, a rather unorthodox accord from the point of view of a non-aboriginal who has never dealt with any aboriginals whatsoever and who probably never has had any extended contact with aboriginals.

I want to remind hon. members that for an aboriginal, a handshake, especially in front of witnesses, is still stronger than a signature from certain people. We are talking about the Kelowna accord, entitled, "Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap". The motion reads as follows:

That the House recognize the urgent need to improve the quality of life of Canada's Aboriginals, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, living both on and off reserve, which requires focused and immediate initiatives by the government in areas such as health, water, housing, education, and economic opportunities and, especially, immediately moving forward with the implementation of the Kelowna Accord with its full funding commitments.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of this motion in principle, as am I. However, allow me to be skeptical about the real intentions of the leader of the previous government. Please remind me of a single time when he respected a single promise to the middle class or people who are struggling. We could even go back to his employees, both those on his ships and in his offices, to the days of the Voyageur bus line, for example. I think it has been well over 20 years. These employees, mostly women, are still waiting for their modest pension, which this former prime minister had the indecency to refuse to pay.

*Business of Supply*

I believe the former government would indeed have had the opportunity to negotiate and implement such an agreement. Members of the government also would have had enough time to extend the peace of the braves for the James Bay Cree, but they were in the government. And just like the Conservatives today, they prefer to be surrounded by lobbyists, which is much more profitable politically than being surrounded by Indians who, in any event, will still continue to vote for them. They have always done so and I hope one day they will see the error of their ways and that we will finally see change in Canada.

I would like to remind hon. members that, in my opinion, the previous government was the main architect of the disastrous situation in which the vast majority of first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples are mired today, both on and off reserve. In fact, I wonder whether, if that party had been re-elected, we would be discussing the same motion today, only this time introduced by the Conservative Party.

In its platform, the Conservative Party claims that it wants to achieve the objectives of the Kelowna accord. How does it hope to reduce the education gaps between aboriginal secondary school graduates and other Canadian graduates and the health gap between non-native and native Canadians? The government's 2006 budget does not provide a lot of money for aboriginal education and health. How does the government hope to know all the needs of aboriginal people without consulting the communities concerned?

This shows the opinion I have of both these parties when it comes to the power or the will to take tangible measures to address this issue or issues such as equalization, the fiscal imbalance, the softwood lumber dispute, Quebec's place at UNESCO, tax breaks for taxpayers and global warming, whether it is dealt with through the Kyoto protocol or something better. I have no more faith in one party than the other. If we were to put the two of them into a bag, shake it and pull one out, we would get exactly what we have always had: a dominating government that centralizes all the powers and assets of what is still this confederation.

Like all the fine promises made to Quebeckers, whether by the previous government or this one, that have turned out to be blatant intellectual dishonesty, this agreement could very well be used as a trap during the next election campaign.

How can the government go to first nations chiefs, negotiators or representatives today and claim that the agreement does not exist because it was not signed? Were all the provincial premiers not there? And what do they have to say?

All governments and all politicians worthy of the name, although very few remain, know full well what it means to shake hands with an aboriginal leader, or with his or her negotiators in certain circumstances.

• (1305)

We acknowledge that this agreement is still far from what the first nations could have hoped for. However, waiting to conclude the agreement required to achieve equality among the nations could seriously compromise this objective, which, we believe, could not be otherwise achieved, nor could the current situation be stabilized given the sums that were set aside for that purpose.

At least this agreement could slow the constant widening of the gap between aboriginals and Quebeckers and other Canadians.

We must face the facts and, for now, hope that the accord is implemented because, although it may be imperfect and insufficient, it can at least bring some relief to the gap that continues to grow between aboriginals, Quebeckers and other Canadians. I would remind the House that on November 25, 2005, despite the disagreement of the first nations peoples of Quebec and Labrador, this agreement was sealed by first nations peoples from the rest of Canada, the provincial premiers and the Prime Minister of Canada. If the accord is not respected, the provinces could find themselves in a very difficult situation, both financially and politically.

It does not matter how this agreement was sealed. From the moment each of the participants shook hands, according to the custom of one or more of the nations present, this accord was accepted. Various witnesses in this House, during the debates or question periods, have indicated that a number of personalities from the current government attended these negotiations. I raise this point because nowhere is there any mention of disagreement or anything else at the time and it would not be right to claim today that a handshake does not have the same value as a signature. We must consider that there was agreement, despite my skepticism about the will of the main signatory, to implement the accord.

How can billions of dollars be invested in companies that have never indicated any need, like the oil companies? How can there be such an open and intense search for manpower through immigration, given the cost this represents, when no effort is made to include our own citizens in a constructive and fulfilling system? It might be a good idea to plan for, even encourage, the establishment of industry in these communities, thereby rewarding the efforts made toward independence and self-government by all these nations for a number of years now.

We must consider these persons. Indeed, they are persons, just like the Quebec nation, which, by the way, is celebrating its national holiday this coming Saturday, June 24. Aboriginals are celebrating their holiday a few days earlier on June 21. All these persons cherish their languages and cultures. It is their fundamental right. They want to adapt at their own rhythm to another language and culture, while maintaining their own. It is not necessarily by choice that they are doing so and they do not necessarily have the motivation we would have hoped for in adapting to these other languages and cultures.

The Government of Quebec has understood this and it is in constant negotiation with most of the communities. One of the best successes was the peace of the braves that most of the other communities, in Quebec in any case, would like to achieve even though the intended purpose has not been reached yet because of the previous federal government, which the current government seems to want to imitate when it comes to the lack of motivation to achieve the same existing recognition in Quebec. The signatories of this agreement nonetheless gained self-government and very good economic strength in the Cree communities in northern Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

As is the case in Quebec, the aboriginal and Inuit peoples are founding peoples of Canada and should have all the rights of other Canadians, including the right to self-government, to their own culture, language and traditions, the right to property, the right to participate in and to profit from economic development and the right to healthy housing.

The first nations must have the foundation on which to build the social equilibrium required to forge a true alliance with the nations of Quebec and Canada. To this end, it is vital that the Kelowna accord be implemented while continuing to make every effort to negotiate complementary agreements needed to achieve true relations in a spirit of equality for all nations.

I was in northern Quebec, in Nunavik, not long ago.

●(1310)

At four in the morning I heard children talking outside. I looked out the window and saw six young people between eight and eleven years old, at the most. These children had to leave their home because their parents were fighting. The houses are overcrowded: between 10 and 14 people live in one unit. Young couples with four or five children live with their grandparents, brothers or sisters. They do not have time to look after their children. The tension becomes so intense that when the arguing breaks out, the grandparents and the young ones leave the house to avoid the fighting.

And it is not true that the children in the streets at four in the morning will be in school the next day. Those who do attend school find themselves, when they return home in the evening, without the parental support to help them advance in their studies.

For this reason, no matter the amount of money involved, the programs must be reviewed with each of the interested communities, in order to establish programs that meet their individual needs.

We will support this agreement in the hope that the government will continue to improve existing conditions.

[English]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague and I sit on the aboriginal affairs committee. He has had many years of experience in parliamentary affairs.

I would like to ask him a question in relation to the Quebec aboriginal groups that were not involved in the Kelowna process and how they did not proceed in extending their agreement.

The member does have considerable parliamentary experience and history going back to the 1980s. I would ask him whether that type of logic which he has extended today, where agreement was taken, should also apply to past agreements that Quebec was not a part of. Does that same logic extend when Quebec is not at the table and does not agree?

I would ask him to clarify the logic that he is using.

●(1315)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct something my colleague said. I do not think I have much more parliamentary experience than him, but I may have more experience with human relations and human behaviour.

Quebeckers have always been proud of their interaction with other communities, native and non-native alike. Even though aboriginal and Inuit peoples in northern Quebec were excluded from the Kelowna accord—they were quite forgotten both in the government's budget and in the Kelowna accord negotiated by the former government—Quebeckers are pleased that some people can benefit from improved quality of life.

Not to worry: aboriginal peoples in Quebec have always managed to reach agreements with the Government of Quebec, and if the federal government were to transfer the necessary funds and powers to Quebec so that the province could negotiate with all its aboriginal peoples, they would be even better served.

[English]

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as we have this debate about the Kelowna accord, we all bring different kinds of experiences and stories from our own provinces and across the country.

My first and probably most serious concern about the Kelowna accord, or the support that is planned for aboriginal people, Inuit and Métis is that it be extremely focused and that it have agreed upon goals between aboriginal people, Métis and Inuit about the progress that is being made.

We have heard stories about aboriginal communities where there has been economic success, but we have also heard stories of other places where it has greatly reduced. I think of two towns in British Columbia, one about which many stories have been told in the House today and at other times, and one where violence in general has dropped, graduation rates have gone up, sexual abuse of children has gone down, and learning of their first language has gone up. Why? Because it is economically successful and that leads to those other things.

The dollars that are going to go into those communities have to be focused. I understand that we want and need to focus everywhere, but without economic success in a community, none of those other things will happen with either the speed or the efficacy that we would like to see. They also need to happen in a modally coherent way where it is done in the way the community wants it done. These are not our communities. These are communities that belong to the Métis, Inuit and aboriginal people.

When I look at census data, I see that more babies in aboriginal communities suffocate because of the use of family beds. Aboriginal people believe in the “family bed”, where babies sleep with other people. A lot of the deaths are tied to alcohol use where somebody has rolled over on the baby and the baby suffocated. Does that mean that somebody loves their baby less? Of course not. It means they do not have the supports that we are talking about here, but they have to get there.

*Business of Supply*

We have to know if the supports are working. We have to have agreed upon goals and ways of measuring whether they are successful. In other instances when resources have gone into communities, it has not been modally coherent. It has not been comfortable for the aboriginal communities. We have spent a lot of money, and while it has been well intentioned, we are almost totally unable to measure the success.

As the question asked by the opposition about the money for the community—

• (1320)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member but it is a time for questions and comments. The comments have gone for a long time now and we do need to give the hon. member some time to respond.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her comments.

If I understood correctly, she spoke primarily about how to better plan the assistance that communities need and how to target that assistance. In my opinion, the previous government identified all of those priorities through the Kelowna accord.

This all looks like a vicious circle. In order to become autonomous, aboriginals need education to be able to manage their own affairs. In order to achieve such a level of education, they also need houses and homes that are healthy and safe. Thus, they could live comfortably; their children would have normal nights and could study in their own language, at their own pace, and based on their culture. They would then be much more motivated to receive the education needed to evolve.

Instead of giving them fish, why not give them the tools to fish for themselves? Why not give them businesses that will allow them to identify with their village and their community? This is the best form of motivation to ensure that the youth in these communities have a bright future ahead.

It is only normal that people struggle with alcohol and drug use when they see no prospects ahead. What kind of future can they expect to have?

Let us begin by providing them with decent housing that will allow them to rest properly. They must also be consulted to ensure that their education system harmonizes with their culture, language and preferences. It is at that point that we will see rather rapid progress among all Canadian aboriginal peoples, Inuit and Métis.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today on behalf of the New Democratic Party in support of the motion.

However, it is with some frustration that I speak to this matter. We are having this debate today because the former Liberal government did nothing for 13 years to address some of the crises facing the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples across the country. It is sad to say

that what galvanized the Liberals to action was a previous minority government.

Unfortunately, the current minority government has not yet been galvanized to the same kind of action. In fact, the current minority government has turned its back on a very important agreement that had support from the federal government, provincial governments and first nations, Inuit and Métis leaderships across the country.

I want to set a bit of context for this. I will go back to a press release put out after the first ministers and national aboriginal leaders met in Kelowna back in November 2005. In a document called, “Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap”, it talks about some of the important issues around housing, education and economic development that were critical for first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to join the rest of Canadians in a quality of life that many of us take for granted.

Much has been said about the fact that there was no signed agreement. People have talked about it being written on the back of a napkin. None of that is true. The agreement came about after extensive meetings and discussions were held over a number of months. In our country people's verbal commitment to things is considered binding. This agreement, in many people's minds, when we talk about the honour of the Crown, reflects the honour of the Crown.

The previous federal government said that it was committed to improving the quality of life for first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, that it was committed to putting money on the table and that it was committed to having discussions with leaderships across Canada. People understood this agreement to be a meaningful commitment and that it was directly tied to the honour of the Crown.

I want to talk about the conclusion in the document, “Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap”, because it sets out some of the principles and the agreement that people understood. It states:

This document represents a shared commitment to action by all parties. The initiatives set out in this document are the first step in a 10-year dedicated effort to improve the quality of life of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. Based on their shared commitment, First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders agree to take immediate action, to build on their commitments over time, wherever possible, and to move forward in a manner that will achieve the maximum results for the Aboriginal peoples of Canada which include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

Two of the important words in this document are “shared commitment”. It is that shared commitment that people are quite disappointed with in the current government's approach.

In case anyone thinks there is no reality around some of the conditions on first nations reserves and for Inuit and Métis people, I have a copy of the Economic and Social Council's report from May 2006. Canada is being cited on an international stage for its handling of indigenous issues. I will not read the whole report because I am sure most members of the House have paid attention to this report with a great deal of interest, but the committee noted, with particular concern, that poverty rates remained very high among disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups, such as aboriginal peoples.

• (1325)

Also in the report the committee talks about disparities. It states:

### *Business of Supply*

The disparities that still persist between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of the Canadian population in the enjoyment of Covenant rights, as well as the discrimination still experienced by Aboriginal women in matters of matrimonial property.

The report goes on to deal with things such as water, health and housing, which are the fundamental elements in the agreement that was struck back in the fall in Kelowna around closing the poverty gap. The report states:

The Committee is also concerned by the significant disparities still remaining between Aboriginal people and the rest of the population in areas of employment, access to water, health, housing and education,

The Committee, while noting that the State party has withdrawn, since 1998, the requirement for an express reference to extinguishment of Aboriginal rights and titles either in a comprehensive claim agreement or in the settlement legislation ratifying the agreement, remains concerned that the new approaches, namely the "modified rights model" and the "non-assertion model", do not differ much from the extinguishment and surrender approach.

It further regrets not having received detailed information on other approaches based on recognition and coexistence of rights, which are currently under study.

A little later on I will link the treaty rights back to closing the poverty gap because it is a fundamental principle. Not only is it not in the motion before the House today, it also was not part of the Kelowna agreement.

The report goes on to actually talk about a variety of programs. Again, culture, language and education are fundamental in terms of having people move forward with education and with economic development. The United Nations committee states:

The Committee, while noting the numerous programmes adopted to preserve Aboriginal languages in the State party, as well as the studies conducted in the area of the protection of traditional knowledge, regrets that no time frame has been set up for the consideration and implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures, and that no concrete measures have been adopted in the area of intellectual property for the protection and promotion of ancestral rights and traditional knowledge of Aboriginal peoples.

Those are serious problems that have been identified in the international community and are directly related to self-sufficiency and to addressing the poverty gap.

The last piece that I just talked about was around culture and language. Part of what was in the original Kelowna agreement around closing the poverty gap was a very substantial commitment to education and that education needs to be culturally relevant. It needs to include access to language. That important commitment has been lost by not having the Conservative government agree to proceed with those matters.

I mentioned earlier that much has been said about not having a signed agreement and the honour of the Crown. The premier in my province of British Columbia took it at face value that the federal government was committed to moving forward with this. The provincial government and the first nations leadership in British Columbia signed something called the transformative change accord. When people move forward by signing other documents they feel that it will happen. They thought this was a deal.

In a letter dated May 4, 2006 and addressed to the current Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, the B.C. Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs said that they had thought that the current minister had made public commitments to put wheels on the Kelowna accord.

However, the government has chosen not to uphold the honour of the Crown. The government has reneged on this historic, multi-government agreement and has proceeded to unilaterally implement its own plan to address our issues without any consultations.

The consultation that led to that agreement in Kelowna was an integral part of what happened. The verbal agreement was destroyed without any consultation with aboriginal people. The leadership goes on to say:

The funds announced in your budget will do very little to remedy chronic underfunding poverty and appg or the alling socio-economic conditions of First Nations communities. True recognition, reconciliation and social justice with respect to lands, territories and resources, as well as social and economic programs, are becoming even more distant goals.

● (1330)

Part of closing that poverty gap was a commitment to four key areas. It was also a commitment to funding, so I am going to turn my attention to funding.

In the letter that the first nations leadership in British Columbia wrote to the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Finance and Indian and Northern Affairs, they talked about the funding. They said:

Your government has abandoned this Accord and your budget reflects only a fraction of the financial commitments already committed by the Government of Canada to help improve the quality of life for First Nations and Aboriginal Canadians.

Your government has committed to addressing the fiscal imbalance with the provinces, yet this budget does nothing to address the fiscal imbalance faced by First Nations governments. Spending on First Nations programs has been kept at 2% for the past 10 years and is far outpaced by rapid population growth and rising costs.

When we are talking about money, I think it is really important that we talk about how much money is actually available and about some of the realities in first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. In a recent report by the Auditor General, she herself talks about the fact that funding has not kept pace with population growth. In the Auditor General's report, she says that between 1999 and 2004 funding increased by only 1.6% and yet population growth in first nations communities was at 11.2%. That is quite a significant difference.

As well, when we are talking about funding we have to actually talk about where money is spent and how it is allocated. In the department's own facts, it says that between 2005 and 2006 the government is forecasted to spend \$9.1 billion directly on aboriginal programs, policies and initiatives. It is important to note that 80% of this spending is directed toward basic province-like services such as infrastructure, housing and education.

I want to turn briefly to a report put out by the Assembly of First Nations in 2004, "Federal Government Funding to First Nations: The Facts, the Myths and the Way Forward". The reason I specifically wanted to reference that report is that, using the department's own figures, it talks about the fact that funding has actually decreased and says that funding for core services such as education, economic and social development, capital facilities and maintenance has decreased by almost 13% since 1999-2000.



*Business of Supply*

We have a crisis happening with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. We have a population that is growing and we have an infrastructure deficit. Many first nations communities do not have access to clean drinking water. They do not have access to sewer systems. They do not have access to adequate housing. We talk about the fact that the federal government actually has an obligation to provide “comparable services”. Comparable services means services that are similar to those that people who live in provinces and municipalities have access to. I would argue that many first nations, Métis and Inuit communities not only do not have comparable services, but their services are so substandard that most Canadians would not even dream of living there.

This Kelowna agreement, this closing of the poverty gap, was a step, a significant step. It would not be the answer to all of the problems, but it was a significant step in moving forward and addressing some of those issues.

In addition, in her report the Auditor General talked about the fact that the failures she was outlining were mostly to do with quality of life issues, well-being issues, and much of what she addressed actually falls squarely in the laps of the previous Liberal government. Her report was a condemnation of past policies and programs that are still failing to meet some of those very critical issues around housing, education and land claims.

Earlier I mentioned that I was going to touch briefly on land claims. This is not mentioned in the current motion and was not part of the agreement in Kelowna. Specifically, I am bringing up land claims in this context because treaties, comprehensive land claims and specific land claims are all part of paving the way for first nations communities to move forward, paving the way for first nations communities to have meaningful economic development, and paving the way for first nations communities to actually be able to take charge of some of the infrastructure programs and the educational aspects that are very important in that economic survival and the community.

• (1335)

I am going to come back to the United Nations report that I was quoting from earlier because it made a couple of recommendations that tie directly to this. Recommendation 37 states:

The Committee urges the State party to re-examine its policies and practices towards the inherent rights and titles of Aboriginal peoples to ensure that policies and practices do not result in extinguishment of those rights and titles.

Recommendation 38 states:

The Committee strongly recommends that the State party resume negotiations with the Lubicon Lake Band, with a view to finding a solution to the claims of the Band that ensures the enjoyment of their rights under the Covenant. The Committee also strongly recommends the State party to conduct effective consultation with the Band prior to the grant of licences for economic purposes in the disputed land, and to ensure that such activities do not jeopardize the rights recognized under the Covenant.

I specifically quoted the recommendation on the Lubicon Lake Band because I think it is a microcosm of a fact that many first nations communities are faced with. Because they cannot get adequate treaties or comprehensive land claims or specific land claims, they are unable to move forward with the economic development that is so critical to their survival and well-being.

I want to turn just for a moment to my home riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan. For a number of years, the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group has been in negotiations with the government. Part of the reason for their lack of community well-being they attribute to the lack of movement on the treaty.

Again, tying it back to the Kelowna accord and the Auditor General's comments around economic well-being, there is an index called the community well-being index. This was used to examine the well-being of Canadian communities. In my riding, six Hul'qumi'num communities scored between 448 and 482 out of 486 communities surveyed in B.C. Those are grim numbers. We are talking about poverty, unemployment, poor health, lack of access to education, and the list goes on. In the province of British Columbia, when six of these Hul'qumi'num communities score at the very bottom, that is of grave concern.

Part of what the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group is calling for is for the government to move forward on treaty and land claims so that people can take control of their lives, so that they can move forward and stand shoulder to shoulder with the rest of Canadians.

In an article in the *Cultural Survival Quarterly* of March 27, 2006, Robert Morales talks about Canada's own royal commission. He states:

Canada's own Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recognized that “Aboriginal peoples need much more territory to become economically, culturally and politically self-sufficient. If they cannot obtain a greater share of the land and resources in this country, their institutions of self-government will fail”. This is, they said, “the most pressing human rights issue facing Canadians, and failure to obtain a more global solution can only continue to tarnish Canada's reputation and accomplishments”.

What we know is that without meaningful movement on land claims, on specific comprehensive land claims and treaties, it is going to be very difficult for first nations communities to take charge of their economic self-sufficiency, as Robert Morales points out in his article.

It has been a long haul. I was speaking to one of the chiefs on Vancouver Island. He told me that at the age of nine, at his grandfather's knee, he listened to his grandfather talk to him about land claims and treaties. He talked about the fact that “soon it would be settled”. This chief is now 63 and his band still does not have a treaty.

In conclusion, I would like to urge each and every member of the House to support this very important initiative brought forward by the official opposition. We would like to be in a situation in 10 years' time where the United Nations is talking about the great progress Canada has made in terms of closing this poverty gap, in terms of enshrining the cultural and language rights, and in terms of economic self-sufficiency for first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

I urge all members of the House to support the motion and I urge the government to then actually allocate the funds to make sure that we can truly close the poverty gap in this country in this day and age.

*Business of Supply*

• (1340)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the thrust of the motion before the House today is to improve the quality of life of Canadian aboriginals, first nations, Inuit and Métis, both on and off reserve.

The member knows that the government has already indicated it will vote against this motion, which I think is somewhat telling of its attitude toward our first nations peoples. Indeed, the Conservative member for Prince Albert attacked Canada's policy on first nations by referring to them as a Marxist paradise. Also, the member for Nepean—Carleton—and much has been said about his words in this place—rebuked the Assembly of First Nations national chief, Phil Fontaine, saying that native reserve governments were not real governments. This is quite outrageous for a government that is supposed to govern on behalf of all Canadians.

Has the member other examples of where this government has made indications that it has no respect whatsoever for Canada's first nations people?

• (1345)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I will say to the member for Mississauga South that although I do not want to go into a laundry list of shortcomings, the very fact that the Conservatives did not put the wheels on the Kelowna accord, as the minister has been quoted as saying he would commit to, is enough of an indictment in itself. Given the idea of consultation, how we talk about consultation and how a number of court decisions talked about how important it is and about the government having a duty to consult, just the very fact that the Kelowna accord was taken apart without consultation is enough of an indictment.

I do not need to get into the various misdemeanours that people may or may not have committed, but I would urge the Conservative government to reconsider its position and to take a look at all of the work that went into the Kelowna accord.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague, with whom I also sit on the aboriginal affairs committee. She has clearly shown her diligence on issues related to aboriginal people and I think all Canadians should be appreciative of that.

One of the issues that has permeated this debate, not only today but throughout the last few months, is the fact that the system through which services are delivered to aboriginal people is itself broken. That was not considered as part of the process. I would like to know if the hon. member thinks the current system in fact does need that improvement, or if perhaps that need not be considered as part of these ongoing discussions.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the parliamentary secretary's question and the work he has done on committee as well.

I would agree that there are some fundamental problems with the existing system. We have had 12 reports from the Auditor General over the last number of years that have quoted chapter and verse all the problems with the system.

I would argue, though, that if we are going to look at taking apart the system what we in effect need to do is the consultation that I talked about earlier. We need to include first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in looking at what changes need to be made in the system, setting out some concrete timelines and a concrete action plan with no more missed deadlines. We currently have an education plan being developed with the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Already it has missed its first deadline of June 2006. That is not acceptable. We have critical issues facing first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. We cannot wait to fix a system that may not be working. We must move forward.

I would argue that we need to do some investment, short term and immediate, and then we need to do the medium and long term planning to make sure things are fixed, but it must be done in consultation with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I as well want to thank my colleague for her comments regarding aboriginal issues. I certainly believe that she has a real desire to have aboriginal issues advanced and to have addressed those issues that are concerning us.

One of my concerns with her speech was that she seemed to focus most heavily on the issue of communities. Right now, roughly 80% of aboriginal people live off reserve. I wonder if she could address how we could address those issues for the aboriginal people who are not on reserve so that we do not let them fall between the cracks. My understanding is that right now roughly \$8 is spent for every aboriginal person on reserve compared to \$1 for those off reserve. We find aboriginal people dealing with poverty and despair living in urban centres. Could she address that?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, the member raises a very good issue. I do not want to get into a dispute about the numbers. We had this conversation at the aboriginal affairs committee that sometimes we are talking about aboriginal people and sometimes we are talking about first nations, Métis and Inuit. One of the things we have asked for is better information around who lives on reserve and who lives off reserve.

It is a very valid point that we cannot just look at funding and closing the poverty gap on reserve. We must also look at off reserve. That is where we enter that very thorny ground of provincial jurisdiction. We need to bring together, as happened with the Kelowna accord, the federal government, the provincial governments and the first nations, Métis and Inuit leadership across the country to ensure that we are looking at closing that poverty gap on reserve and off reserve.

*Business of Supply*

• (1350)

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the previous question regarding on reserve and off reserve spending, is it not a bigger question to ask about the jurisdiction and the actual mechanism to fairly provide services on reserve and off reserve as opposed to the actual dollar value itself?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, jurisdiction is a very important issue to tackle. Recently we heard that \$300 million was going to the north for housing, and we discovered that it is being funnelled through the territory. Much of this money is going to be funnelled through territorial and provincial governments and may not actually result in building houses for first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

When we talk about jurisdiction over people who live off reserve, it is something in which we need to include first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in terms of discussing what the solutions may be. Currently the federal government says that off reserve is not its problem, that the provinces need to deal with it. We have seen an increased widening of that poverty gap for first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples who do not live on reserve.

The jurisdictional issue is a tough one, but we must come together with first nations, Métis and Inuit leadership, the provinces and the federal government to tackle this issue. Otherwise we will be having this conversation again in 10 years' time.

[Translation]

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my time with the member for Toronto Centre.

• (1355)

[English]

The motion states:

That the House recognize the urgent need to improve the quality of life of Canada's Aboriginals, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, living both on and off reserve, which requires focused and immediate initiatives by the government in areas such as health, water, housing, education, and economic opportunities and, especially, immediately moving forward with the implementation of the Kelowna Accord with its full funding commitments.

If we talked to Canadians from coast to coast to coast, we would find that they support this motion. If Canadians went to Métis communities, Inuit communities, and first nations communities throughout this land and saw the shortcomings in those communities they would ask why governments are not getting together and working with these people to address their concerns. They would ask why we do not see the shortcomings in these communities, why we do not see the potential in these communities. Canadians would ask why we are not addressing these problems together rather than all levels of government taking individual initiatives. When each level of government has its own initiative, they are often disjointed and seldom reach what we would like to achieve.

What was the Kelowna accord? It was not a deal done on a napkin prior to a press release. The Kelowna accord was the result of a lot of lobbying done by people in those communities talking to the federal government, the provincial government and local municipalities. Negotiations were held among federal and provincial officials and first nations. An agreement was reached.

To cancel the accord sends the wrong message. It does not recognize our responsibilities as Canadians. It does not look at the errors we have made in the past and provide solutions for the future. The Kelowna accord was a very good initiative. It was very well supported. To be able to get the provinces, the territories and communities together to come to an understanding took a lot of work, a good plan and a lot of compromise. Now it has been cancelled.

What are we telling those communities? What are we telling the young people who have dreams and aspirations? We are telling them that they cannot look to governments for help. We are telling them that they cannot trust the Government of Canada to enter into an agreement with them because a minority government on a whim might renege on it and remove federal participation.

[Translation]

The situation in which these communities find themselves is unfortunate and regrettable.

People are losing their faith and see no future in using the institutions available to them. They use means that I completely disapprove of.

Nevertheless, they see no other solutions. The burgeoning difficulties and the lack of partnership make them feel that they have to barricade roads, hunt and fish illegally—hence poach—and use illegal means to boost the economy of their community.

Canadians and the federal government should recognize that they have an obligation to guarantee to them that when a document is signed or a verbal agreement is made, the agreement is honourable and will be honoured.

[English]

We hear often from members on the opposite side who tend to be very, very right wing that if we do a special agreement, it is race based. We have to recognize the specific needs of these communities. We have to work together.

Sometimes I hear it said that the court is ruling Canada. Sometimes it is because sometimes these decisions are forced by the court. Sometimes the court forces us into action only when we do not recognize our responsibilities. Generation after generation do not see what the treaties really mean and do not recognize that perhaps we have some liabilities and some responsibilities as Canadians toward those treaties. I remember a member of another opposition party saying that when we buy the dog, we get the fleas. With those treaties came some responsibilities and we have not always met them. For the first nations in most cases, it all has not worked to their advantage.

We should go to the communities and see the lands that they have lost. They were forced to live on reserves, their resources stripped from them, their potential stripped from them and they were reduced to a mere existence. That is not acceptable. We cross oceans so that does not apply to other nations, to other countries, to other peoples. We send our military. We send our aid. This is what we have to do in Canada, but not in the same way. We have to recognize the majority.

*Statements by Members*

I had the opportunity to work with Bob Nault, as well as the member for Fredericton, when each was the Minister of Indian Affairs. We would want to work with the communities, to look at the fundamental problems in the governance and the administration, to look at the role of women, to look at the possibilities, to look at the shortcomings and how we can address them.

When we look at an agreement like Kelowna that gave such a sense of hope, that looked at those elements, at health care, at education, at infrastructure, at water and sewers, how can we back out of that? How can we go home and tell our people that our government has led us down this path?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but we have reached an order of the day. The hon. member has approximately three minutes left in his 10 minutes. We will proceed now to statements by members.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### MILLENNIUM EXCELLENCE AWARD

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and congratulate two accomplished young people in my riding: Amy Florian and Jillian Kaulbach.

Amy and Jillian are recipients of the prestigious Millennium Excellence Award. This honour recognizes their academic achievement, community involvement, and their demonstrated leadership abilities.

As they begin their post-secondary studies this fall, they should be proud of their accomplishments and know that we stand beside them to offer our support as they dream big and realize their potential.

I would ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating Amy and Jillian, as well as all the recipients of the Millennium Excellence Award for this important honour.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

[Translation]

### JOHN HORMAN

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was saddened to hear of the passing of Mr. John Horman, who was born in Matane and helped found the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League. He was also the league manager and statistician from 1969 to 1975.

Mr. Horman was the discipline prefect, vice-president and even interim president in 1983. He also helped found the Canadian Hockey League, which heads up the three major junior leagues. John Horman was inducted into the Quebec Amateur Hockey Hall of Fame and the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League Hall of Fame, which honours him by naming its executive of the year trophy after him.

I offer my sincerest condolences to Mr. Horman's family and the fans of the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, who are mourning

his loss. A great hockey man has passed away, but his fame and teachings will live on.

\* \* \*

[English]

### INTER TRIBAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Inter Tribal Health Authority serves 28 first nations communities on Vancouver Island and the surrounding areas.

First nations are challenged by health issues, such as the legacy of residential schools and the epidemic of diabetes and heart disease.

The ITHA works with first nations leaders and community health staff to ensure culturally appropriate services are available even in the smallest communities. This includes state-of-the-art health information technology that will ensure modern services and programs are available that are second to none.

The ITHA is among the first in the country to work closely with first nations and Health Canada to develop comprehensive community-based pandemic plans.

ITHA is on the leading edge of health care in Canada, based on first nations initiatives and leadership through self-determination and proactive programming.

I salute its hard work and look forward to seeing even more innovation in its health care services.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### TAXATION

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take advantage of the opportunity this afternoon to thank the Minister of Finance who, in his budget of May 2, 2006, changed the excise tax on beer produced by microbreweries.

This tax adjustment had been requested for more than five years and will help these brewers take their rightful place on the highly competitive beer market.

Among other things, this tax holiday will enable them to create more than 2,500 jobs all across Canada. The microbrewery proprietors in my region, who helped me become very familiar with this issue, asked me to insist on its inclusion in our budget and have shown their appreciation and asked me to thank the House for resolving this.

These sentiments have been echoed all across Canada through their association. I therefore thank the Minister of Finance.

\* \* \*

[English]

### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently I have heard several members of the Liberal Party try to position themselves as defenders of Atlantic Canada. We are not holding our breath waiting for that to happen because the Liberal record speaks for itself.

Take for instance the member for Kings—Hants, a candidate for the Liberal leadership, who on May 17, 2003 told the *Ottawa Citizen*:

I believe we need to replace failed regional economic development programs and corporate welfare with dramatic corporate-tax reductions—

Or another leadership hopeful, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who in *Maclean's* magazine, on December 8, 2005 implied that Maritimers were dependent on employment insurance by saying:

In the Maritimes recently, I was struck by the number of people who find the rhetoric of equalization condescending, as if the only way to keep the Maritimes in Confederation is to maintain EI—

Or how about the Liberal finance critic from Markham—Unionville who suggested in *Hansard*, on February 9 that Atlantic Canada and equalization-receiving provinces are “mired in the world of have not clamouring for subventions”.

No, we do not need Liberals pontificating about what they would do. In Atlantic Canada we know all too well what they have done. The track record of nothing speaks for itself.

\* \* \*

#### CHILD CARE

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government successfully negotiated early learning and child care agreements with all of the 10 provinces last year.

Early childhood education is critical for the development of social and intellectual skills.

Canada's children need quality early childhood education to prepare them for the future, as in this global economy, Canadians must compete with the rest of the world for the best jobs and the best opportunities.

Giving parents a tiny taxable allowance will not contribute to a child's healthy development and future education through early learning.

The Conservative government is failing Canadians by denying our children the opportunity for early childhood education. This is just another example of the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives.

The Liberals invest in opportunities for our children while the Conservatives are busy building jails.

I am proud to be a Liberal. I am proud of the plan that the Liberal government put forward and I look forward to us having the opportunity, when Liberals form the next government, to produce a national child care program.

\* \* \*

• (1405)

#### HUMAN TRAFFICKING

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on June 10 of this year I hosted a forum in Winnipeg entitled “Stop the Slavery”, a forum on the growing crime of human trafficking.

#### Statements by Members

Her Excellency Abina Dann, the Canadian ambassador to Ukraine, Victor Malarek, the author of the book *The Natashas*, Laura Lederer from the U.S. State Department, Irena Soltys from Help Us Help the Children organization, Sonja Bezyk of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and myself made up the list of presenters.

Over 2,000 women and children were trafficked through Canada last year alone. This is a growing crime that trafficks nearly a million women and children across the globe into the sex trade every year. Human rights groups, women and children's advocates, and police are applauding our government for announcing measures that will protect these vulnerable victims.

This is a crime our government is addressing. This is a crime we will not tolerate on Canadian soil.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### LEBANESE FESTIVAL

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, last weekend the Lebanese community of greater Montreal held their annual festival in the riding of Ahuntsic, which I have the honour of representing.

All of Montreal was invited for three days of discovery. Tens of thousands of people had an opportunity to experience and appreciate Lebanese culture, through music and song. This year, the theme was the family.

Since I am of Lebanese origin, I can tell you that this festival gave Quebecers an opportunity to get to know the beauty of the fundamental values that unite the Lebanese people, with their extraordinary diversity of ideas, traditions and religions.

The festival was a chance to get together and to renew acquaintances, and it was a great success. I offer my warm congratulations to all of the organizers from the Saint-Marion and Saint-Antoine churches and their 300 volunteers.

Bravo. I am looking forward to next year.

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[English]

#### TIBET

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, around the world, political conflicts are rife with violence, but the Tibetan people, under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, continue their strict adherence to the principles of non-violent conflict resolution as they seek to resolve the half century old Tibetan issue.

With five rounds of dialogue completed since 2002 between his envoys and Beijing, there is renewed optimism that a resolution on the Tibetan issue is finally possible.

Tibet represents the ultimate test for the future of peaceful dialogue and reconciliation. A peaceful resolution to the Tibetan issue prior to the 2008 Beijing Olympics would, therefore, be the perfect gift to His Holiness, to the Tibetan people, but also to the Chinese people and the world community.

*Statements by Members*

Non-violent conflict resolution is or should be a core value for Canadians. Therefore, it is essential for Canada to play a role.

His Holiness, who is now 71 years old, has had to spend the majority of his life in exile. He deserves our support to return home, along with the exiled Tibetan community.

\* \* \*

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell a story about a woman in my riding who recently became a mother of two, two standard poodle puppies.

That will have to satisfy her maternal urge for the moment as having human babies and being an entrepreneur does not seem to be attainable given the current lack of government support for parental leave for business owners and entrepreneurs.

[*Translation*]

Under the employment insurance rules, self-employed workers may not pay EI premiums. They are therefore not eligible for parental leave. Without that safety net, many entrepreneurs do not have the resources to have children.

It is somewhat hypocritical to encourage people to go into business and then deny them the opportunity to start a family and benefit from the same social programs as other Canadian families.

[*English*]

I call on the government to take immediate action on the issue of parental benefits and EI for entrepreneurs. Let us extend the opportunity to have children with full social support systems to all Canadians, not just a select few.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently Liberal leadership candidate Gerard Kennedy continued the Liberal attack on hard-working rural Canadians. He suggested that they pay even more tax on the vehicles that they depend on for their livelihoods.

In saying this, Kennedy took another low blow at our struggling farmers and our rural communities. I would like to say that Mr. Kennedy, like the Liberal Party, is simply out of touch with rural Canada.

Does he not understand that our construction trades, oil and forestry workers, and our farmers need these methods of transport to support their families?

Do Liberals believe that rural Canadians should bear a greater burden for choosing an honest and essential Canadian profession?

Mr. Kennedy has criticized the Liberal Party and even stated that “Western Canada has to stop being the afterthought when it comes to Liberal policy”. In true Liberal fashion, Mr. Kennedy is contradicting himself. Canada needs policies that respect all Canadians, including rural western constituents like my own.

**COMMUNITY EVENTS**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, I was honoured to be invited to march and participate in events celebrating two diverse communities.

The Sikh community gathered and I marched five kilometres with it to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the martyrdom of one of its most beloved gurus, Arjan Dev.

Guru Arjan Dev laid the foundation for the Golden Temple in Amritsar and is celebrated for his work in writing *The Guru Granth Sahib*, which compiled the writings of past gurus into one book.

I also joined several hundred friends and members of the Hamilton area gay, lesbian and transgendered community in a march celebrating our community's diversity through downtown Hamilton.

Once again, members of the downtown business community showed its support for Pride events and there were a series of successful events including a gala awards reception recognizing important community leaders.

This weekend's events served to remind that diversity and equality, core Canadian values, are alive and well in our community and we are one step closer to ensuring it is free of racism and hate.

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**VETERANS**

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently two outstanding volunteers in my riding, Mr. Andy Block and Mr. Marc Searle, saw their efforts to commemorate war veterans meet with great success in a ceremony to mark veterans graves in Surrey.

The Lieutenant Governor of B.C. along with MLA Gord Hogg were on hand to commemorate the 36 brave soldiers who fought for our freedoms.

I am pleased to see today in Ottawa another B.C. MLA and parliamentary secretary, Dave Hayer and his wife, Isabelle.

There are an estimated 3,000 veterans in unmarked graves across British Columbia, and who knows how many across this country? I urge this government to implement a national program to mark the graves of these unsung heroes who gave so much for us.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**TASHI WANGDI**

**Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today we welcome Mr. Tashi Wangdi, the representative of the Dalai Lama in America, to Parliament Hill.

He is a member of the negotiating group in the secretariat of the extended Kashag—the cabinet of the government of Tibet in exile—which plays an advisory and support role in negotiations between the Dalai Lama's emissaries and China.

Mr. Wangdi is a senior official in the government of Tibet in exile; he joined that government in 1966, and since that time he has held office numerous times as a *kalon*, the equivalent of minister.

He has headed a number of ministries, including Religion and Culture, Interior, Education, Information and International Relations, as well as Security and Health. For many years, he was also the Dalai Lama's representative in New Delhi.

The Bloc Québécois welcomes him to Parliament Hill and wishes him a productive visit among us.

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[English]

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the heels of abrogating on the Kelowna accord, the government now intends to eliminate the aboriginal standing offers on government contracts.

This aboriginal business strategy was created in order to increase the number of aboriginal suppliers bidding for and winning federal contracts. Many aboriginal businesses, large and small, rely on the Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business. Each year the livelihoods of many aboriginal entrepreneurs depend on these opportunities.

The previous Liberal government recognized that when it came to federal government procurement, aboriginal businesses pursuing and winning contracts were underrepresented. This government must realize that when it comes to fostering better opportunities for hard-working aboriginals, it must look beyond the bottom line and consider what is just.

The government should do what is right. It should honour and maintain the aboriginal standing offers on government contracts.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

#### MEMBER FOR KINGS—HANTS

**Mr. Dean Allison (Niagara West—Glanbrook, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, ageism is a very real prejudice that exists in our country and is in fact being fostered within the Liberal Party. In a recent interview, the hon. member for Kings—Hants, who wants to be leader of the Liberal Party, clearly showed his disdain for seniors.

He dismissed former external affairs minister Barbara McDougall's role in representing the federal government in the Caledonia situation and actually suggested that she had no role to play because of her age, calling her a "wax museum figure".

These comments are not only insulting to Ms. McDougall, but they are also an insult to Canadian seniors. We should be applauding Ms. McDougall and considering ourselves fortunate to have someone with her expertise and experience so committed to this cause.

The member owes Ms. McDougall an immediate and full apology. He should also apologize to all Canadian seniors for his insulting and demeaning comments and boorish behaviour.

#### Oral Questions

### ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

#### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today in the House we call on the House to direct the attention of Canadians to the need improve the quality of life of our aboriginal peoples, the quality of their housing, health, clean water, education and economic opportunity, our daily reproach to Canadians who live in one of the most fortunate and prosperous countries in the world.

The Kelowna accord represented an opportunity to break out of this situation, to turn the page, to start a new non-confrontational approach to our dealings with our aboriginal peoples.

Why has the Prime Minister turned his back on this historic opportunity for our aboriginal peoples and for Canadian society?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about opportunity. He had an opportunity while he sat on this side of the House for 13 years to act on the problems faced by our aboriginal people and for 13 years the Liberals failed to meet that opportunity.

At the last minute, days before an election, they made commitments that they never funded over 13 years and that they did not even put in their budgets. Whereas our minister of aboriginal affairs and the Prime Minister have committed \$3.7 billion in new investments, for water, for aboriginals who do not live on reserves, to help improve their living conditions. They talked, we are acting.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it may have taken the Liberal government 13 years to put together an historic accord for the aboriginal peoples of Canada and for Canadians. It took that government 13 days to turn its back on the possibility of an aboriginal accord. It is disgraceful. It is not acceptable in the House to continually throw out historic agreements.

In that precedent, a mood was set, a new mood for our aboriginal peoples. It was a commitment of all levels of government. Every premier across the country called upon it as a great move forward. This was no Liberal commitment. It was Canada's commitment. The Conservatives turned their back on Canada. They turned their back on the commitment of Canadians for our aboriginal people. It is not acceptable.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, every one of those words is a word of self-condemnation. For 13 years the Liberals had an opportunity to deal productively and concretely with the problems faced by our first nations people and for 13 years they offered platitudes and rhetoric and no action.

However, in the very first budget of this new government, there was \$3.7 billion in new investments to help improve the living quality of aboriginal people, to help improve the quality of water on reserves, of housing off reserves. They talked. We are acting and we will continue to act.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in contrast to the absolutely disdainful attitude of this government and this member, the parties to the Kelowna accord—the leaders of our aboriginal communities and the provincial and territorial first ministers—agree on one thing: this accord established a framework for addressing the serious problems of our aboriginal communities in a consistent and practical way. This government scrapped the accord without coming up with an alternate plan.

Why did the Prime Minister break this historic agreement between the Canadian government and Canada's aboriginal peoples and citizens?

• (1420)

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was very clear about this: the Kelowna accord had valid points, objectives and targets. The government is aware of these. But we want to act. We do not simply want to send out press releases and give speeches. That is why we have made a major investment in housing for aboriginal people. We have also invested in quality drinking water for first nations people. We will continue to act under the leadership of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the report card is in and the government has failed Canadians on the environment. The Sierra Club of Canada has issued its annual assessment and the Conservative government has been given a great big fat F: F for having failed Canadians on environmental responsibility; F for having forgotten that the environment is a priority for Canadians; and F for foolishly abandoning Kyoto because it was afraid to do the heavy lifting.

Giving this stinging condemnation of the government's inaction on the environment, will the Prime Minister apologize to Canadians for abandoning the fight against global warming?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a fight that the previous Liberal government abandoned before it even began. The Liberals cynically signed on to targets in 1997 that they had no intention, whatsoever, of keeping in 1997.

For seven years, the Liberals gave speeches and delivered rhetoric, but not results. This is why we saw greenhouse gas emissions increase by 35% over that period. The Liberals missed their targets by 26%. That is the Liberal record.

The Conservative government is going to act with a made in Canada plan, which it has already begun to do.

[Translation]

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in her recent speech to the Canadian Club of Ottawa, the Minister of the Environment—and not the parliamentary secretary—stated that it was ridiculous to think that her government was abandoning the

Kyoto protocol. According to the minister, the problem was not the Kyoto protocol but the fact that Canada's objectives were unattainable.

Can the Minister of the Environment tell this House what attainable objectives the government will set for Canada?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have a very clear objective, which is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Liberals' real objective was to do nothing for 13 years.

This was not enough for Canadians or for a number of the candidates in the race for the leadership of the Liberal Party, including the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who criticized the Liberal government for having no plan.

In this government, we are developing a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we learned today that the Minister of Transport, the Prime Minister's Quebec lieutenant, has serious reservations regarding the transfer of funds to the Government of Quebec so that it can implement its plan for the Kyoto protocol, a plan that, I would point out, has been very well received by environmental groups and the opposition in Quebec City.

How can the Prime Minister explain his stubborn refusal to work with the Government of Quebec, when that government has a plan for achieving the objectives of the Kyoto protocol? Where is the problem?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no problem. I find it somewhat curious for the leader of the Bloc Québécois to be asking questions about things that are under provincial jurisdiction. In this government, obviously, we respect the division of powers and provincial areas of jurisdiction. We are following the efforts of the Government of Quebec to improve the quality of the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions closely. We are going to work with all the provinces, including Quebec, to achieve those objectives.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are not asking them to do anything in any areas that are under Quebec's jurisdiction. We are telling them, when they are supposed to be the ones who recognize the fiscal imbalance, that there is too much money in Ottawa for what its responsibilities are. If they started by giving back \$328 million to Quebec, that would be one step on the road to solving the fiscal imbalance. That is what we are very clearly telling them and that is what the previous government committed to doing, particularly when there is a real plan in Quebec and there is none here.

I am therefore asking why they would not support Quebec in achieving the objectives of the Kyoto protocol, when that would also make it possible for Canada to take a step forward.



*Oral Questions*

• (1425)

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, we congratulate any provincial government on its own efforts in areas that are under provincial jurisdiction. At the federal level, we are going to pursue concrete policies to achieve results so that we reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, that is why we included a tax credit in our first budget to increase the use of public transit, and that is why we have expanded the renewable energy regulations. We are going to continue on that same path.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Sierra Club released its report card grading the federal, provincial and territorial governments on their action for the environment. Executive director Stephen Hazell said, and I quote, “While some improvements are being made at the provincial and territorial level, the federal government is sliding in almost all subjects”.

Why does the federal government insist on standing by a position that nobody else supports when the experts tell us that it is heading in the wrong direction away from the 162 countries around the world that ratified the Kyoto protocol?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after 13 years of Liberal rule, the Government of Canada now ranks 28 out of 29 in OECD countries on pollution control.

Compared to the United States on air pollution requirements, the U.S. requirements are either more stringent than ours or ours do not exist at all in comparison to the U.S.

We do have a lot of work to do and that is exactly what the government is doing.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is in no position to preach to members of the international community today.

The plan the minister intends to introduce to reduce greenhouse gases looks a lot more like an Alberta oil company plan than a real environmental plan.

Given that the minister was until recently an advisor to the Government of Alberta on environmental issues, does she not think that the only decent thing to do is distance herself from Alberta oil companies and make decisions that are in line with international environmental values?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not engage in politics with the opposition party when it comes to the environment. I will not jeopardize the long term opportunity for the government to put a good plan in place for short term political gain. That is exactly what the last party did for 13 years and not only did it get an F, it was kicked out of class.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last week, we learned that there was no official communication between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec

about the environment. However, today, the Minister of Transport, the Quebec lieutenant, is saying that the federal government cannot tell the Charest government whether or not there will be any money for Kyoto.

My question for the Prime Minister is this: will there or will there not be any money?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our first budget provides for significant investment in public transit, infrastructure and municipalities. Clearly, we are keeping our promise to correct the fiscal imbalance by holding talks with the provinces.

This government is therefore working closely with the provinces and municipalities to ensure that they have the tax resources they need to do their work.

• (1430)

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after years of Liberal inaction, we forced the Liberal Party to invest in public transit and the environment. This House voted this money and adopted a motion calling on Canada to honour its Kyoto commitments.

Why is the government refusing to respect the democratic will of the elected members of this House? And why is it refusing to give the provinces the money earmarked for combating greenhouse gas emissions?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the leader of the NDP that, in its first budget, this government immediately made \$94.4 million available to Quebec for public transit.

Any surplus in excess of \$2 billion in 2005-06 will be used to pay Quebec up to \$210 million for the Public Transit Capital Trust, rapid transit and urban buses.

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the matter of climate change, we have seen the government savagely cut programs established by the former government. We have also seen the government renege on Canada's commitments under the Kyoto protocol. And now the Minister of Transport is closing the door on collaborating with Quebec.

I am not very happy that they are ripping out so many programs. I even want to help them. In this regard, I have tabled a made in Canada private member's bill. Will they support it?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the member introduced has no relevance to what this government will put forward in terms of a realistic, achievable and affordable plan to reduce greenhouse gases and pollution.

### Oral Questions

In terms of working with the Quebec government, my office is in constant contact with the environment minister in Quebec. I would reiterate, and the minister from Quebec has said the same thing, that the number one cause of greenhouse gases in Quebec is transportation. The most important thing we can do is invest in public transit and to find ways to get people out of their cars and on to public transit, which is exactly what the federal government has done.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, they will do a lot of things.

We have read it: all the Quebec lieutenant is proposing is to look into the possibility of talks with the provinces and territories about equipping heavy vehicles with speed regulators. That is impressive. Except that Quebec's plan already includes this measure. I invite my colleague from the Pontiac to read about it on page 24 of a very interesting document.

Once he has perused this action plan will he attempt to convince his colleague, the Minister of the Environment, not to abandon Quebec? Will he tell her that we have had enough of this policy of abandonment?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, far from it. One of the key things in the Government of Quebec's plan is investment in public transit. Another key thing is it is trying to increase ridership to get people out of their cars and on to public transportation, which is one of the incentives that this government has put in place.

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### ENERGUIDE PROGRAM

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the EnerGuide program for retrofitting houses was popular with Canadians and very effective, cutting greenhouse gas emissions at a cost of a mere \$20 per tonne, about the best value in the world.

By contrast, the Conservative bus pass program will cost about \$2,000 per tonne, 100 times more expensive. The Conservative government has trashed programs like EnerGuide only to shift the money to bus passes, meaning there will be less action on climate change but a higher cost.

Why is the government making such a fundamentally perverse decision?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained many times in the House before, only 50¢ of every \$1 in that program went into doing anything for the environment. Those are the facts. Those programs were introduced by previous Liberal governments.

It should be no surprise to Canadians that there were a number of programs introduced by the previous Liberal government that just did not deliver. The Liberal record on greenhouse gas reductions was an unmitigated disaster. This government will not follow the Liberal government's record.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has killed all federal programs to help Canadians

upgrade the energy efficiency of their homes, including those aimed at low income families. Such programs helped cut greenhouse gas emissions while saving Canadian families on average more than \$400 each and every year on their energy bills. That one savings alone would be bigger than all of the benefits the average family may receive from the government's convoluted hodgepodge of tax credits.

Why is the government abandoning the policies that worked, abandoning Canadians and trashing the environment?

• (1435)

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that of some 120 programs, 95 are still currently in place. It should be no surprise to the hon. member that their programs did not work. If their programs worked, why are greenhouse gases 35% above Liberal targets? That is not a record that I would be proud of.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### SECURITIES

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister announced this morning that he intends to create a Canadian securities commission. In doing so, he will be going against the wishes of Quebec and most of the provinces, catering only to Toronto's point of view.

After so often repeating that it will respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, does the government endorse the finance minister's plan, which goes completely against its commitment?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

I believe the question relates to the speech I gave in Halifax this morning relating to a potential common securities regulator for Canada.

This is an important issue with respect to making sense of our economic union and in ensuring the provincial and federal governments work out a system whereby we have strong, effective and efficient capital markets in Canada so we can get away from a situation.

We are the only western industrialized society that has multiple securities regulators. We want to work on that in cooperation with the provinces toward a common national securities regulator.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what the minister is talking about has already been done. Quebec and the provinces have undertaken to harmonize their practices in the area of securities and have not needed any form of federal intervention in their areas of jurisdiction.

*Oral Questions*

Does the finance minister realize that, by proposing such a commission, not only is he renegeing on his government's commitment and going against the Canadian constitution, but he is directly contributing to a major shift of 6,000 jobs, as well as financial and trading activities out of Quebec, for the sole benefit of Toronto?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we acknowledge the work that has been done by the provinces and the territories with the passport system as they have tried to move toward harmonization. Unfortunately, it means harmonization with pages and pages of exceptions.

The reality is that the Ontario Securities Commission is now regulating something like 83% of the business and that is hardly paying respect to the regions across Canada and the involvement of the various provinces.

A number of good suggestions are on the table, including the report by Purdy Crawford's committee last week. I hope we will have some informed and constructive discussions next week moving toward a common securities regulator, not necessarily a federal regulator in Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was much clearer last December 19 when he came to Quebec and promised to correct the fiscal imbalance. Since then, statements made by the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister have become ambiguous. On the one hand, they say that the provinces should not expect much, and on the other, that the fiscal imbalance will sort itself out.

Do these statements not prove that the Prime Minister is about to renege on another promise, just like all previous governments have done with promises made to Quebec in the past?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we want to move toward fiscal balance in Canada. A great deal has been accomplished already with respect to discussions concerning core responsibilities of the provincial and territorial governments on the one hand and the federal government on the other and progress with respect to health care issues. We need to work more on infrastructure issues and particularly on the issue of post-secondary education. I look forward to those discussions next week with the provincial and territorial ministers of finance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the fiscal imbalance is far from working itself out. Instead, it is getting worse. For example, post-secondary education transfers are much lower than they were 10 years ago. Two reports have concluded that the equalization formula needs to be reviewed. Daycare funding has been slashed. Yet the government expects a \$12 billion surplus next fall.

Will the Prime Minister admit that all of these elements are making the fiscal imbalance worse rather than improving it?

• (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fiscal situation of the governments in Canada is better today than it was several years ago. Most of the provinces are in balance now. The federal government will not have surprise surpluses as we saw opposite. We are accurately reporting to the people of Canada.

As I say, we only have two governments in Canada now that are not operating in surplus and those are the Government of Ontario and the Government of Prince Edward Island. Substantial progress has been made already moving toward the fiscal balance of the federation.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a recent report by the National Energy Board clearly states that with the development of Alberta's tar sands gaining momentum, there will be an increasing demand for environmental and community resources.

Canadians would like some assurance that this development will be managed sustainably and in an environmentally respectful way.

What will the government do in response to the National Energy Board's report? When will the government act?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are looking at that specific report. We are actually looking at areas where we do need to respond. Officials at our department are looking at it. Incredible strains are being put on the systems from the increased expansion and our demand on energy.

As we face those challenges we are doing the research. For example, the amount of water that is used in the recovery of the oil sands is very high and we are looking at ways of reducing that. We are working together with our scientists to find solutions.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, studying is good and talking is good, but we need action. Right now Fort McMurray is facing a crisis and the Athabasca River basin is being severely strained by the speed of these development projects.

The government has a duty to protect the interests of all Canadians, especially those directly impacted in Fort McMurray and the surrounding communities.

A recent Pembina Institute study showed that 91% of Albertans want their environment protected. Why is the government abandoning the environment, the residents of Fort McMurray and indeed all Canadians? Why?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that may have been what happened in the 13 years of the old Liberal government.

*Oral Questions*

I have been up there. I have visited these projects. The work they are doing in the environment department on the reclamation of their lands, on the replanting of their forests has been very successful. On the recovery of water, they are going through extensive science and have been very successful at recovering almost 100% of the water, recycling it, re-purifying it and putting it back through the systems. There are a lot of resources being put on that, as well as on the scientific community. Natural Resources Canada is working with the industry to find solutions that work for Albertans and for all of Canada.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no place is facing greater disaster due to global warming than my riding of Nunavut. The ice cap and permafrost are melting. Southern vegetation and insect life are migrating northward.

As a result of the actions of the Conservative government, not one penny will be spent on fighting climate change until 2007. Will the Minister of the Environment immediately restart the programs that her government cancelled?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the party opposite that this did not become an issue on January 23. This has been an issue for Canadians for years and years and finally there is a government in power that is actually addressing it through action.

I can assure the hon. member that the issue is adaptation, which definitely is what is occurring in terms of mitigation of adaptation in her area. We are looking at it very closely and we are working with the government in her region.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to say that we have to do things differently, but the government has quit the fight on climate change by cancelling programs.

Our national sovereignty in the north is threatened by global warming. As the ice cap melts, more international vessels will try to sail the Northwest Passage without Canada's consent. It is crucial that we fight global warming to protect Canada's control over the north.

The minister has proven that she cannot even save one program to fight global warming. Will she resign and allow someone with more credibility to take over?

● (1445)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Resources has tried to get this point across to the opposite party. There is not one program that has been cancelled by this government that was not on the chopping block of the previous government. The review process that was undertaken by the Privy Council Office was begun by the Liberal Party of Canada. Any program that is not being continued was either terminated or had fulfilled its obligations. We are not cancelling any program other than those.

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last Thursday, the Montreal police reported that crimes committed with guns increased by 25% between 2004 and 2005, in Montreal—25%.

Can the hon. Minister of Justice explain to this House why the Liberals and the Bloc are against the bill on mandatory minimum sentences and why they insist on defending criminals who use guns instead of protecting honest people from criminals?

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his unwavering support for mandatory minimum penalties for gun crimes.

Those statistics out of Montreal are shocking to Canadians and yet the Liberals and the Bloc fail to recognize the clear evidence on gun crime in Montreal.

The Liberals and the Bloc can continue to defend criminals with guns. This party will defend law-abiding Canadian citizens and their hard-working families. We will protect them from criminals with guns.

\* \* \*

**MINING INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, regulatory delays in Europe and the U.S. are blocking an Inco-Falconbridge merger proposal, putting many Canadian miners at risk and their families in a status of limbo. Three weeks ago the industry committee put forth a unanimous recommendation calling upon the industry minister to actually delay the Xstrata hostile takeover of Falconbridge until at least the foreign bodies have ruled on the Inco favourable takeover.

Will the Minister of Industry commit to the House today to protect Canadian jobs, the industry and fair due process by ensuring that this hostile takeover does not take place because of bureaucrats in Brussels holding up the process?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, the provisions under the Investment Canada Act do not allow me to comment on any questions like that. As usual, we will act in the best interests of all Canadians.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is pretty clear the only thing more toothless than our foreign investment review act is the minister when it comes to standing up for Canadian mining and smelting jobs.

Let us paint a picture here. These are national resources and the government is sitting back while they are picked off by some company set up in an unaccountable Swiss canton. Meanwhile the futures of Sudbury, Timmins, Rouyn-Noranda and Bathurst are being traded away like chips in a card game.

When is the minister going to stand up for the rights of our communities and put them ahead of the interests of the financiers, the money-changers and the speculators?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is standing up for Canadians. Also, we are going to act according to the Investment Canada Act.

There is a test and the test is when we have an investment like that, it is to act on a balance of net benefits for Canada. We will do that for the net benefit for Canada and all Canadians. That is what we are going to follow.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in 2002 Mr. Justice O'Connor released his report on the Walkerton tragedy. His conclusions were stark. He noted that the Harris government failed to put proper safeguards into place after privatizing the water supply and that a weakened ministry of environment failed to detect the problem.

We are heading down that same path. Global warming is a real problem that will have devastating effects on our climate. Left unchecked, it will cost lives. Yet the government has chosen to cut or eliminate programs that fight global warming.

Will the Minister of the Environment announce today that she will reinstate those programs?

• (1450)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that after 13 years of Liberal rule, Canada now ranks 28 out of 29 OECD countries on air pollution and we are 35% above target.

I am reviewing all the programs related to climate change. I can assure this House that any of the programs that are effective and affordable and that will reduce air pollution and reduce greenhouse gases will be kept on by this government.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and the President of the Treasury Board were at the cabinet table in Ontario that made decisions which directly led to Walkerton. They have personal experience with the effects of bad management on the environment.

My question is for the Minister of Health. As the true guardian of our national public health and given the fact that he had a very real tragedy under his watch in Ontario, did it not concern him when he heard that the government was cutting programs that fight global warming? Did he not warn his government?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure members that the Minister of Health and I work very closely on a number of health impacts on Canadians, particularly air pollution. One thing I learned this week that made me very concerned is that not only has Canada fallen behind in every industry sector on air pollution compared to the United States, but there are areas where we do not even have regulation for air pollution because the last government completely ignored the issue of air pollution in Canada.

### Oral Questions

The Minister of Health and I will be working with provincial health authorities consulting on this. We will also be bringing forward regulation to curb air pollution.

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health continues to be embroiled in one conflict after another.

At first it was the minister's 25% ownership in a drug company. Then on the weekend we learned that the minister has hired his political crony and paid him \$25,000 for 33 days of work. Then today we learned that this political crony, Mr. Gordon Haugh, a long-time friend of the Conservative Party, is the general manager of the Canadian International Pharmacy Association and is responsible for lobbying on behalf of drug companies.

Why does the minister continue to put his and his friends' profits ahead of the health care needs of Canadians?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. As with all other members of this House, I hire people I have confidence in. I certainly was pleased with the work of the individual involved. Much as this was not the case when the hon. member and her colleagues were in power, I followed all the rules.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is nice that the Minister of Health has finally stood up and spoken to the House.

Let me give Canadians the real facts about this political crony. In 1995 Mr. Gordon Haugh was a tour director for Mike Harris. In 2000 he served as tour director for the Canadian Alliance. In 2002 he was hired by the minister as the minister created two tier health in Ontario. He was paid \$300,000 then and his \$25,000 a year contract adds up to \$300,000 now.

The minister has paid him \$25,000 for 33 days of work. This is absolutely not acceptable to Canadians. What does the minister have to say to Canadians who are paying the bill for his political cronies?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for itemizing some of the experience that the individual has. It shows that he knows about government. He has been a chief of staff. He has been active in government in the past. I hire people that I have confidence in. I am pleased with the work. I followed all the rules.

I would say once again that "Liberal" and "research" are two mutually exclusive terms.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL AID**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Reality of Aid Network report denounced the misappropriation of funds intended for international assistance to finance military operations. The report formally denounced the United States and suggested, without naming names, that Canada and Australia did this as well.

Since Canada is increasingly modeling its foreign policy on that of the U.S., can the Minister responsible for international assistance guarantee that this is not what Canada does with money intended for international assistance?

**Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is a great defender of the international development assistance program. We make sure this assistance is sent to the least fortunate.

That said, in all our development assistance programs, we fully respect the definitions established by the international community for public development assistance.

\* \* \*

●(1455)

**SMALL ARMS**

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the proliferation of small arms is another concern. In the past 10 years, 2 million children have died, 6 million have been disabled and 10 million have been left with psychological trauma because of conflicts involving small arms.

Forty-five countries are in favour of ratifying a treaty to limit the proliferation of these weapons. Canada still has not taken a stand. Does the Minister of Foreign Affairs plan to support such a treaty?

[English]

**Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the member has said, this government in fact is very concerned about the flow of small arms, their potential to harm lives and to destabilize conflict situations.

Canada is committed to looking at entering into a treaty and forwarding discussions in that regard. Canada has historically been a leader in disarmament measures. We will continue to be on this issue as well.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister said that the individual has so much experience, where are the results? Where is the action on the health care file?

The bottom line is that Mr. Haugh is paid to lobby on behalf of Internet pharmacies in this country. The Minister of Health is responsible for regulating the drug industry and protecting the drug supply on behalf of Canadians.

The government claimed that it was going to stop the revolving door for lobbyists, but there appears to be an open door policy in the Minister of Health's office.

After all the huffing and puffing about accountability, I would like to ask the minister, where is Mr. Haugh's five year cooling off period?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member has her facts completely wrong. The individual involved is not a lobbyist. He is not registered as a lobbyist. He would not be welcome in my office to do any lobbying. He has to follow every rule and guideline in place.

I would say to the hon. member that I have followed the rules. Why did her party not follow the rules as a caucus when it was in government?

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after 13 years of Liberal government, Canada's aboriginal peoples continue to face the same needs, such as adequate housing and safe drinking water.

Liberals would like to brag about their record, but if we can believe it, even one of their own candidates has said that the Liberals have "a devastating record on aboriginal issues".

Would the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development share his thoughts on 13 years of Liberal neglect and how the Conservative government will take action to improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, a devastating record is precisely what the Liberals have left after 13 years in office. It is shameful the way the former Liberal government failed aboriginal Canadians.

I hear a lot of noise on the other side. I think members are having trouble digesting the words of their own leadership candidate, the reference to a devastating record. Perhaps it is the 13 years of Liberal ineptitude, incompetence, mismanagement, 13 years of ducking, dodging, dithering, delaying, leaving behind aboriginal Canadians. We will not do that.

\* \* \*

**INCOME TRUSTS**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, forensic accountant Al Rosen recently published a report saying that income trusts could be overvalued in our country by more than 28%. In fact, he called it the \$20 billion deception. The problems are abuses in financial reporting, the marketing of business trusts and no laws to protect consumers. The Liberals totally bungled this issue through haphazard announcements and leaks.

When will the government get serious about cleaning up the Liberal income trust mess and when will income trust investors finally get the protection they need?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, there was a bit of a mess that occurred during the last government, relating to income trusts. That is still a matter of some police investigation in Canada.

The question relates to a question I was asked earlier in question period about securities regulation in Canada. The regulation of income trusts presently is with the provincial securities regulators. It is an issue that I know they are reviewing with the income trusts and it is an issue that probably we should discuss further when the finance ministers meet next week.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, no, this question is about what the federal government can do now to ensure markets have confidence by giving investors protection.

Many promotional materials on income trusts are intentionally misleading, but the agency with responsibility for this simply does not care. The Accounting Standards Board has refused to defend consumers even though it talks about misleading promotional practices. The government can fix this by changing the Income Tax Act with higher standards.

Will the minister recognize that it is his responsibility to clean up the mess or will he allow more investors to be misled on income trusts?

• (1500)

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member talks about the interests of investors. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why we need a common securities regulator in Canada. We need to protect Canadians who invest through RRSPs, through pension plans, those who invest in mutual funds, those who invest directly through the market, pensioners and others in Canada, not only with respect to the issue raised by the hon. member but also more broadly with respect to enforcement issues in Canada.

I look forward to having those discussions with the securities ministers next week, particularly with a view to establishing national standards and a national securities regulator in Canada.

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#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recent attacks on civilians by the Sri Lankan armed forces have reached a level of atrocity. In Mannar, navy troops lobbed hand grenades into a Catholic church where hundreds of refugees were huddled. Last week the Sri Lankan army raided a Tamil home, leaving the family hacked to death, with their seven and nine year old children hanged and disembowelled in a manner aimed to terrorize the local population.

When will the government protest the latest wave of military atrocities in Sri Lanka?

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada is extremely concerned with the breakup of ceasefire and peace talks

between the warring parties in Sri Lanka. We are calling on both parties to come back to the table, to come back to a truce and adhere to the ceasefire. We are going, with our likeminded nations, to put pressure on bringing both parties to the table.

\* \* \*

#### FINANCE

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend Liberal leadership wannabe, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, said that he would cancel all the tax credits the government introduced. That means getting rid of the transit pass tax credit in favour of higher emissions, getting rid of the sports tax credit for families enrolling their kids in sports and physical activities, and the former professor will end tax credits for students. I guess that is the Harvard way. It is certainly not the Canadian way.

Could the finance minister tell us why taking away these tax credits is simply the wrong way to go?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of helping the environment. That is why we want a transit pass that will allow people to take public transit, with about two months of free transit per year. We also want to help children be more physically fit. What could be more important for the next generation? We also want to help students and apprentices with tools and textbooks.

We are for public transit. We are for students. We are for our young people.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-21, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act (non-registration of firearms that are neither prohibited nor restricted).

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

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• (1505)

#### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

##### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development regarding the findings contained in the fifth report in the first session of the 38th Parliament.

*Routine Proceedings*

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. This report is with regard to the gun registry. It was supported at committee by all opposition parties.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT**

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-325, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Cambridge.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the riding that I represent, Cambridge, Ontario, is actually more than just the city of Cambridge. Just to the southwest of us is a huge, expansive land, with rolling hills, that include a number of small villages, including the village of Ayr. That area is more commonly referred to as North Dumfries.

I propose that the name of the riding be changed from Cambridge to Cambridge—North Dumfries.

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

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**CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-326, An Act to amend the Canadian Human Rights Act (gender identity).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am proud to table a private member's bill which would add gender identity or gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Canadian Human Rights Act, adding explicit protection for transgender and transsexual Canadians from discrimination in all areas of federal jurisdiction.

Trans Canadians face significant prejudice in their daily lives, whether it is job discrimination, access to housing and public services, especially health care, problems with identity documents, difficulties with law enforcements officials, a high suicide rate or the increased likelihood that they will be victims of violence. The situation trans peoples face demands our attention.

The bill would give trans Canadians direct access to the protections provided for in the Canadian Human Rights Act, which they so urgently need.

This should be a non-partisan issue. I would encourage the government to take the initiative to add gender identity or expression in the Human Rights Act. I would be prepared to work with any member from any corner of the House who is willing to give this legislation priority in their private member's legislation time.

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

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[Translation]

**BROADCASTING ACT**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-327, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act (reduction of violence in television broadcasts).

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to introduce a bill to reduce television violence, particularly during peak viewing hours for children.

A recent study by Laval University showed that acts of violence shown on television have tripled since 1994. The purpose of this bill is to amend the Broadcasting Act to create a regulation governing television violence. The CRTC would be responsible for monitoring how large broadcasters apply the regulation that would be created by the bill I am introducing today.

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

\* \* \*

● (1510)

[English]

**FOOD AND DRUGS ACT**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-328, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (trans fatty acids).

He said: Mr. Speaker, trans fats are deadly manufactured fats that cause obesity, heart disease and diabetes. All are on the rise in Canada. However, when I asked the Liberal health minister to eliminate trans fats from our diets, she replied that it was all right to have these poisons in our food as long as they were properly labeled.

We are putting forward this bill today to ensure that labelling is not considered to be adequate. We want these things to be eliminated. If it comes to it being between the shelf life of a human being and the shelf life of a doughnut, we want to err on the side of the human being.

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

\* \* \*

**REFERENDUM ACT**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-329, An Act to amend the Referendum Act (reform of the electoral system of Canada).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill would change the Referendum Act to contemplate a nationwide referendum on the electoral system by which we elect our governments.

People would know that our first past the post system has been patently unfair to smaller parties and that we are not represented to reflect the popular vote which we receive.

We believe the Referendum Act should be amended to enable, if and when this Parliament chooses, a nationwide referendum to take place, to see if Canadians want to change their electoral system to envision some form of proportional representation at such time of their choosing.



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

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#### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT ACT

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-330, An Act to amend the Business Development Bank of Canada Act and the Canada Student Loans Act to provide for a student loan system that is more supportive of students.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I felt compelled to introduce this bill to try to do something on behalf of the student debt crisis faced by post-secondary students today, students who graduate with a debt the size of a small mortgage.

The bill seeks to amend the Business Development Bank of Canada Act to put in place a regime of student loans that would enable more students to access capital at reasonable rates and repatriate the Canada student loans system to be the responsibility of the federal government rather than the private sector lenders. We all know that the experience through the main charter banks has been catastrophic in terms of providing students with the loans they need.

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

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#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-331, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (legal duty outside Canada).

He said: Mr. Speaker, Canada broke new ground when it extended the Criminal Code in the matter of exploiting children for sexual purposes of Canadians when travelling abroad. The bill seeks to expand on that same policy. Corporations, when operating abroad, would be bound and governed by the same codes of ethics, codes of practice, codes of health and safety and codes of environmental stewardship that we stipulate them to in our country.

In the case of the Westray bill, in which we were all very proud to take part in the 37th Parliament, we believe there is such a concept as corporate murder when workers die on the job due to poor health and safety conditions. This would also extend that same concept to corporations, the mining companies, et cetera, operating abroad.

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

\* \* \*

●(1515)

#### CANADA BUSINESS CORPORATIONS ACT

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-332, An Act to amend the Canada Business Corporations Act (annual financial statements).

He said: Mr. Speaker, white collar crime is a blue collar issue in that all of us need to trust the annual financial statements of the companies where our pension plans are invested. Annual financial statements lack clarity and there is a mystique associated with them that makes it impossible for trustees on employee benefit plans to fulfill their fiduciary obligations adequately.

#### *Routine Proceedings*

The bill calls for plain language. It calls for an expensing of stock options. For instance, when corporation executives are paid through stock options there should be a clear column in those financial statements to indicate the liability of the company associated with those stock options. This is about making annual financial statements user friendly for working people.

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

\* \* \*

#### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-333, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to stop at scene of accident).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the Criminal Code deals with the failure to stop at the scene of an accident but recent events have given light to the fact that the Criminal Code penalties are woefully inadequate to act as a proper deterrent in the event of the abuse of this clause of the code.

The bill seeks to amend the Criminal Code so that failure to stop at the scene of an accident will be a much more serious offence and would be punished more in keeping with the public condemnation of such an act.

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

\* \* \*

#### FIRST NATIONS VETERANS COMPENSATION ACT

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-334, An Act to provide compensation to First Nations veterans on a comparable basis to that given to other war veterans.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I put the bill forward because first nations veterans were not treated in the same way as other veterans who returned from the war. They had no settlement benefits, no educational opportunities and no housing allowances like the ones offered to people like my father.

The bill seeks to make first nations veterans whole on a comparable basis as any other veteran by recognizing their service in the war.

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

\* \* \*

#### BANK ACT

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-335, An Act to amend the Bank Act (bank amalgamations).

*Routine Proceedings*

He said: Mr. Speaker, many of us feel that Canadians are not well served by the mergers of our large charter banks. The charter banks were given the rights to certain financial practices, very lucrative ones such as credit card transactions, in exchange for providing basic services to Canadians in whatever part of the country they live.

These megamergers in the Canadian financial sector, which seem to be about to take place again, do not serve Canadians well. We want to put forward legislation to put specific guidelines, rigid criteria under which we may allow the charter banks to merge. They do not deserve their charter if they are not living up to their end of their charter which is to provide good service to Canadians in the financial services sector.

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

\* \* \*

● (1520)

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there has been considerable discussion between all four parties and I think if you seek it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, beginning at 6 p.m. and ending at the end of government orders, the Speaker shall not receive any amendments, dilatory motions or quorum calls; when no member rises to speak during debate on the opposition motion today, or no later than 9 p.m., whichever is earlier, the question be deemed put and the recorded division be deemed requested and deferred to Tuesday, June 20, at 3 p.m.; when debate on the opposition motion has concluded, the government may call Bill C-3, an act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another act, and C-5, An Act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain Acts; and if any recorded division is requested for Bill C-3 or Bill C-5, they shall stand deferred to Tuesday, June 20 at 3 p.m.; and when no member rises to speak to Bill C-3 and Bill C-5, or at the end of government orders, whichever is earlier, the House shall adjourn to the next sitting day.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been negotiations and we are supportive of the motion. I believe you would also find unanimous consent that if the last speaker has begun his or her speech before 9 o'clock that the member be allowed to finish his or her speech, which will be a 10 minute speech at that point in time.

**The Speaker:** Does the chief government whip have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** Subject to the caveat from the chief opposition whip, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## AGRICULTURE AND AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been other discussions and I think you find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in relation to its study on biofuel strategy, 12 members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food be authorized to travel to Ville Ste. Catherine, Quebec on June 20 and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

(Motion agreed to)

## LIBRARY OF PARLIAMENT

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament, presented on Wednesday, June 14, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

● (1525)

**Hon. Keith Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I have a motion to help the poorest in our country. It calls on the Government of Canada to introduce a low income tax free supplement of \$2,000 for all Canadians who have gross earnings of less or equal to \$20,000 a year. For those whose gross income is above \$20,000 a year, a supplement would be 10% of gross earnings, less \$4,000. If that amount is negative, they receive the grant in that amount to a maximum of \$2,000. If the amount is positive, they do not.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have unanimous consent to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## CHILD CARE

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table this petition on behalf of the University Women's Club of North York.

The petitioners, residents of my riding of York West and elsewhere in Ontario, specifically note that child care is an everyday necessity in this country and that there is an urgent and immediate need for assistance in child care spaces.

The Liberal government signed a full funding agreement with the Province of Ontario in November 2005 and the petitioners are calling upon the Prime Minister to honour the early learning and child care agreement.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit three more petitions from people in my community who are concerned about the government's killing of national child care.

The petitioners call upon the government to honour the early learning and child care agreement and to fund it for five years.

A number of these people met with myself and the Leader of the Opposition on Friday and they can assure us and I can assure this House that the fight for real child care is not dead in Canada.

## INCOME TAX ACT

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by more than 50 of my constituents from Hanna, Alberta.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation to include exercise gym fees as a deductible tax exemption under the medical expense tax credit section of the Income Tax Act. They feel that this would be an incentive for Canadians to get fit, to prevent disease and to improve their quality of life.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a few petitions to present to the House today.

The first petition is a very important one from my riding of Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

As the government has been closing down a number of rural post offices without justification, the petitioners call upon the government to instruct Canada Post to maintain and improve the network of rural post offices in particular as they serve rural Canada exceptionally well.

## EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after \$45 billion has been swiped out of the employment insurance fund over the last number of years, the second petition calls upon Parliament to introduce a fairer employment insurance system by first enacting the legislative reforms that came from a House of Commons committee on February 15, 2005 and which were unanimously adopted.

## HOCKEY

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition, which has been supported by all members in the House, calls for a national day of hockey to commemorate, in particular, the summit in 1972 when Paul Henderson gave all of us, from coast to coast to coast, a defining moment in hockey.

## FISHERIES

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure to introduce a petition on behalf of my constituents in Forteau and L'Anse au Clair on the south coast of Labrador concerning the fishing industry which is going through a very difficult time and many people are facing an uncertain future.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to immediately institute fisheries adjustment measures, including early retirement benefits, economic diversification and other appropriate measures to help coastal communities and fisheries workers through this adjustment period.

## CHILD CARE

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure but also with considerable frustration that I present a petition to the House today signed by people in my own riding of Halifax and all over Nova Scotia.

The petitioners call upon the Prime Minister and the Conservative government to honour the early learning and child care agreement

*Routine Proceedings*

signed between the Government of Canada and the Government of Nova Scotia in May 2005.

During the recent election in Nova Scotia this issue arose many times. I think it is fair to say that momentum has increased, not waned, because people have waited 13 years for such a policy to be delivered by the previous Liberal government which failed to do so, and the present government is stalling on this extremely important investment in the future of our children and the future of this nation.

• (1530)

## MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition today containing 60 names.

As a result of large trucks being involved in the deaths of two cyclists in Toronto in 2006, three cyclists in 2005 and one cyclist in 2004, the coroner's report in 1998 into the death of a Toronto cyclist found that these large vehicles were involved in 37% of these collisions resulting in cyclist fatalities.

As side guards are a legal requirement in the U.K. and in Europe to reduce injuries to pedestrians and cyclists, the petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to introduce a regulation under the Motor Vehicle Safety Act requiring side guards for large trucks and trailers to prevent cyclists and pedestrians from being pulled under the wheels of these vehicles.

## CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

**Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by what I believe to be thousands of Canadians regarding the client service counters at the Canada Revenue Agency. What is interesting is that the bulk of the work was done by the union representing the workers there. This is not a job issue and it is not about the union. It is the about public service, so the petition is signed both by constituents of mine and by petitioners in ridings across Canada, as well as and most important, by the employees who work there and who understand that this plan is wrong. It was devised by the Liberals and now is being implemented by the Conservatives and it means that Canadians will have less service at these public counter desks. The petitioners wish to call the government to account and ask it to halt this Liberal plan that the Conservatives are implementing to cut down on services that Canadians expect and are entitled to.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have one last petition signed by a number of my constituents in the Prince Rupert area of British Columbia that puts the truth to the lie of the Conservative child care support program. The petitioners call upon Parliament to re-enact the \$1.2 billion in spending to provide high quality, accessible, affordable and community based child care systems in this country. We have waited too long. Let us get on with actually doing something for families.

*Business of Supply***QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Before he was interrupted by question period, the hon. member for West Nova had three minutes remaining for his speech.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, about one hundred minutes ago I stood in the House to address this motion by the member for Winnipeg South Centre, a very good motion, and it is a little difficult one hundred minutes later to resume with exactly the same tone and at the same place.

I ask the House to imagine what it would be like should the government find the maturity to resume the discussions on Kelowna. The longer it waits the more difficult it is. I would ask the government to reconsider this seriously. I would ask all members of the House to look at the motion and support it, because we are at an opportune time in our country, in our nation, in our federation, where the economy is the best that it has ever been. For eight years we have had surplus budgets. We have resources. We can look toward financial resources for the future.

I believe it is incumbent upon us as a people to make sure that nobody is left behind, that we work together to make sure that those who are suffering the most or have the most difficulties get the assistance that is necessary, not welfare and not charity, but real and reasonable investments in the form of partnerships, in the form of a mature relationship, government to government to government. To me that is what Kelowna represents. Kelowna represents a chance for these communities to look to the future.

When I sat on the government side of the House and listened to the members in opposition speaking about their concerns and what they would do, it was completely different from what we have seen. The minute the government came into power the first thing it did was cancel that historic agreement. I would ask the government to return to it.

I see aboriginal communities, native communities and the Mi'kmaq community in my neighbourhood doing very well. Based on the resources, we have to go further than that. We have pitted people against people in a fight for a limited resource. Who is going to get the biggest amount of a finite resource? We have the fight in fisheries. We are looking at forestry now.

I think those communities deserve, as we do, to be able to participate in all sectors of our economy. They deserve, as we do, to know that their children are growing up in a healthy environment where they have safe water, good waste water treatment, adequate housing and not too many people per house, and where they need not be fearful of pandemics or diseases such as tuberculosis.

In my little community of Yarmouth, we have the risk of an outbreak of tuberculosis, with 700 people having to be tested a couple of times. I can tell members that this puts fear into the community.

First nations communities are facing that daily. They do not see any change. They must be very frustrated and disappointed. For once there was an agreement with them, the federal government and the provincial governments, an agreement that shone a light, gave them potential and was a place to start.

[*Translation*]

I encourage all House members to support this motion, to reassure these people and all Canadians, by proving that we are working together to ensure a better future for all of our citizens.

● (1535)

[*English*]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to the comments that the member for West Nova made in the seven minutes before question period broke up his speaking time. He was speaking in relation to the troubling situation that this new government has inherited. He spoke to the last period of time and having issues associated with it specifically for aboriginal people. There is no denying that there are many issues that we as a government have inherited.

He made reference to the phrase “when you buy the dog you get the fleas” in relation to the issues we have inherited. It seems to me that referring to these issues as fleas is very offensive. Perhaps his first language is not English, so maybe he would want take a look at that statement one more time and further clarify it for me.

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I was quoting a member of another opposition party who used that comment in the House once to say that there are some very difficult problems. There are some problems that are not going to be easy to resolve. The worst thing we can do is hide from them or stand back from them. I think we have to look at them in a serious manner.

I would ask the member to first consider that the Conservatives should not say that “they” have inherited this problem. This is our problem. All Canadians have participated for over 135 years in creating the problems that are out there in those communities. It is time to participate in the solution and to do that in an honest manner.

*Business of Supply*

The question that has not been raised here today is about what we should have seen at the last federal election. The people in these communities are underrepresented at the ballot box. They tend not to vote in the same numbers as the non-aboriginal community. If we wonder why, let me say it seems to me that they do not have any confidence. They do not have any confidence that Parliament and the government are going to have the proper effect, although the potential is there. The cancellation of this historic accord I think shows that they have reason to be apprehensive.

We had the provincial governments and the federal government getting together for years of negotiations and discussions on how this was going to be addressed. Finally we had one step in the right direction, not the solution to all problems, but a good step in the right direction, which was summarily cancelled after an election. Contrary to all the statements that I heard from the Conservative side of the House prior to the election on their desire to work with the first nations of this land, the Conservatives cancelled this agreement. This is the root of and the foundation for solutions to our many problems that we jointly share.

• (1540)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the aboriginal community not having confidence in government. We cannot really blame them. There have been so many empty promises. There have been endless consultations. There have been commissions. There have been promises. There have been red books. There have been discussions. There have been announcements and press conferences. Yet we have seen over and over again that announcements have been made but the money has not been spent.

We are here today considering a motion that I hope will pass, but I do not know whether it is empty rhetoric or not. I think what we need to do is come together and not look at the past, because we are all guilty. It does not matter which party.

The NDP has been very clear on what we would do, but as we have heard, so many times there have been broken promises. The discussion has been going around in circles. I would like to ask the hon. member a question. If the motion passes, what does he think would be one of the top priorities that can be done immediately by the Conservative government? Other than the Kelowna accord, what concrete action can be taken immediately?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Robert Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for this excellent question. I do not necessarily have an answer to it and perhaps it is not up to me to have one. This was the beauty of the Kelowna accord. In fact, no single person or specific level of government was expected to have all of the answers.

First nations communities are very diverse. Such communities have all kinds of differences. They have different capabilities and different challenges to overcome.

This accord facilitated a partnership between the communities and the federal, provincial and territorial governments in order to work on the various problems, using the various qualities that exist from one community to the next. We were getting closer to reaching our goal, but only the bigger challenges were addressed. The motion

mentioned health care, housing, education and economic opportunities.

In our communities, whether in Toronto or Baie Sainte-Marie, Nova Scotia, as Canadians, we all deserve the same opportunities, the same solutions and the same security. I believe it is entirely legitimate that these communities want the same thing and it is only reasonable to admit that the existing structures and systems are inadequate. We have seen some success, but there were many shortcomings. I therefore believe that we should go back to the Kelowna accord.

[*English*]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to rise in the House today to join my colleagues in discussing this extraordinarily important resolution and follow on the wise words of my colleague and friend, the member for West Nova. As he put it well to the House, this is an issue and a matter which far transcends in many ways the nature of the resolution itself. It is about Canada and our future.

It is not just about a province like Saskatchewan where some 50% of the population is made up of aboriginal people. It is not just about British Columbia, which is undergoing enormous social problems of adjusting on how to manage this extraordinary issue. It is not just about the member for West Nova's own province where we have seen picket lines in fisheries and disputes that pit neighbours against one another. It is not just about the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon where aboriginal people are controlling their own destinies now in a way which makes us proud as Canadians.

It is also about my riding of Toronto Centre where there is a large aboriginal community. I go to the council fire and attend aboriginal events, and find people living in despair, in conditions that we would really find unacceptable.

Basically, it is about us as Canadians finding a way in which we can deal with a challenge that is basically unacceptable, an embarrassment to Canada and Canadians, and an international concern for people around the world as they look at one of the wealthiest countries in the world and ask themselves how it can be that Canada, with all its success, resources, goodwill and ability to work on issues, has not been able to find in its long history a way of resolving this extraordinary issue.

My own formation is as a lawyer and colleagues in the House might find that an unfortunate background to come to such an important issue as this, but it is rather remarkable that in fact it has been the courts of our country that have been dealing with this issue rather than the politicians over the years. It has been the adversarial nature of the life of our aboriginal leaders that I have spoken about so many times that they have found so difficult.

In fact, in order to get justice in the world, instead of being able to turn to and get understanding from our political institutions, they have had to turn to the courts. I am proud of the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada in the Sparrow case established the special trust relationship that we owe to our aboriginal people.

*Business of Supply*

In *Delgamuukw*, section 35 of the Constitution was interpreted and guaranteed the aboriginal use of land. *Marshall* was a case which troubled my colleague from West Nova's own province so much, but which gave a wise solution to something that was creating huge social disorder. The *Calder* case resulted ultimately in the Nisga'a agreement, an agreement of which all of us are extremely proud.

My friends on the opposite side of the House may not recall, but I was in the House some years ago when we debated the Nisga'a agreement until the middle of the night. It was an agreement which was revolutionary in the sense that it gave people a sense of control over their own destiny. It was nothing more, really, than a sophisticated municipal government level of control over themselves, but it enabled them to control their resources and how their population would survive in the 21st century in a way that made us so proud.

That was fought so hard by so many in the House but, in turning the page, if we look back those who opposed that with such ferocity would today say it was the right thing to do. It was the right thing to do, as I think it is the right thing to do today, not to turn our back on the Kelowna accord for the same reasons.

These have been complex cases. I have had the opportunity to argue some of them. They pit treaty people against non-treaty people. They pit aboriginal rights against extinguishment. They drag in the jurisprudence from the United States of America, South Africa, Australia, and other countries with a common law tradition about what is the responsibility that the Crown owes to people of aboriginal origin in their countries.

They even bring in international cases. Everyone may recall the *Lovelace* case, a case that went to the international commission on human rights and which determined that women were being discriminated against by virtue of our Indian Act in a way that forced this country to change our own Indian Act because we were required to do so by international law and international pressure.

• (1545)

In my view, Kelowna turned the page. It created a new framework for discussing the settlement. As was eloquently said this morning by the member for Winnipeg South Centre, in her opening statement in this House, she referred to the remarks of the premier of British Columbia, for whom this is so important, the premier of Saskatchewan, and the premier of Quebec, who said that failure was not an option, the time had come to move ahead.

That was the message I got when I travelled across the country recently, meeting the Manitoba chiefs in Winnipeg and Saskatchewan, going with my colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, attending with him in his riding, and meeting people on the ground who said that we changed the tone, we changed an attitude.

[*Translation*]

We replaced this confrontation with cooperation. We created new hope. We had an opportunity to change things. But we are now wasting this opportunity.

[*English*]

I think that is a difficulty that we have as we speak in the House because when we contrast the past and the adversarial nature, look at what we can do when in fact there is political leadership. Look at it domestically. Look at what happened when we had the Yukon and the Northwest Territories agreements. Look at the cooperation that now takes place over our resources, the Mackenzie pipeline. When Mr. Justice Thomas Berger did his report, he said there would never be any cooperation among people, but today people are coming together because they have a buy-in. They have a sense that it is their problem; it is a common problem.

That is what Kelowna was about. It was not just about the money, but for heaven's sake, the money was there, \$5 billion, it was booked. It was more than the money. It was the sense that the communities had come together, the premiers had come together, and the Prime Minister of Canada had come together with all of the various communities represented. Money was committed, but we ourselves were committed to solving these problems.

I have seen what we can do when we work together. I have been to the riding of the member for Nunavut of whom we are very proud in what she does in her riding. I have seen what is happening up there and the challenges that are in our north and our arctic as climate change takes place. However, people are meeting these challenges. We can only deal with that in cooperation.

If members could have attended, like I did when I was the foreign minister, the Arctic Council, with representatives of our aboriginal people, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, and the Athabasca Nation. They sat there at the table, they looked at our Russian colleagues, American colleagues and Norwegian colleagues. They talked of the Sami nations across the pole. They spoke of what their future was at the pole. They spoke about climate change. They told us the way ahead. This is what our aboriginal people do for us internationally.

The same thing was true in Quebec City at the Summit of the Council of the Americas where we had our aboriginal people present. I had the Mexican foreign minister say to me, "Send us some of your aboriginal people. Help us solve the problem of Chiapas. You can help us". I have talked to our aboriginal leaders who have been in Mexico helping the Mexicans with their problems. I was in Chile with the leader of the Nisga'a nation when he spoke to the Chilean authorities and he went to islands there and helped negotiate with native people in their country, showing them how we can solve problems.

This is what cooperation leads to, as opposed to the adversarial system which we lived for so long in this country.

In conclusion, if we read the cases, and I would urge any member to read these cases, some of them are dry, boring legal cases. All cases tend to be dry and boring, but these tend to be the least dry and boring, if I may say. I read one, the *Gitksan* case, in which one of the chiefs said to the court, "The land, the plants, the animals and the people all have spirit, they all must be shown respect".

*Business of Supply*

That is what we would like in this House today, respect for an attempt to find a solution to this; not an approach that is partisan; not an approach that seeks to divide Canadians one from the other; and not to say, “Hey, we’re doing something. You didn’t do anything over 13 years”. We got somewhere. We had a new opportunity.

I beg of members, as the member for West Nova did, to say we learn from one another. Let us strengthen our country and our society. Let us work together for our environment, for the traditional roles of our aboriginal people on reserves or in nature, and for the new challenges in our urban spaces. We can also learn that the starting point is, as the chief said in Gitksan, respect; respect for one another and respect for an ability as Canadians to come together to find a solution which is not tolerable in a 21st century country as wealthy, prosperous, privileged and blessed as we are.

• (1550)

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1997 I came to this House with the Reform Party as the official opposition. In 1993 we came as the third party, but then we made official opposition under the leadership of Preston Manning. He asked me in 1997 to do some work across the country with aboriginal communities, dealing with grassroots natives from coast to coast.

In 1997, 1998 and 1999, I spent nearly two and a half years travelling the country, locating people in every province from the grassroots level, calling for accountability. The hon. Leader of the Opposition may remember such names as Leona Freid, the leader from a Manitoba grassroots community, the work on Aboriginals for Financial Accountability with Roy Littlechief, and a whole bunch of names I could bring up from every province.

At the end of that period of time, all of the grassroots people got together and filled out a very huge report about the problems on the reserves and the squalor. I want this leader to know that I went into their homes. I spent time sharing bread with people living in squalor. What little they had, they were willing to share.

We begged the government at that time. I asked questions numerous times, as did many of my colleagues, explaining the situation and asking the Liberals to take that report, look at it, and really start dealing with the down to earth problems. In every election, four of them in a row, there was a promise in every throne speech that the Liberals were going to address the squalor that was so terrible and they were going to do it in their budgets, and it only got worse. From 1993 to 2006, it got worse.

Could the member explain to me why they ignored the grassroots people across this country and that beautiful report they put together, which the minister in this party has finally taken down, blown the dust from it and had a look at?

• (1555)

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the reasons, with all due respect, has a little to do with the tone of the member’s question that it is our fault, pointing the finger, looking across the House and saying that we have not done this, they did that, and everything else.

What the member for West Nova and I were saying earlier, and what all members have said in the House, is that if we are going to solve this problem, we have to come together as Canadians.

Kelowna, whatever the faults of the past, was an opportunity to turn the page.

**Mr. Myron Thompson:** So was that report.

**Hon. Bill Graham:** I recognize there were merits in that report.

There was a great deal of talk, the member for Wild Rose will recall, about responsibility and accountability, but there was a lot of accusations about inadequacies in aboriginal governance structures. Inadequacies which the aboriginal people themselves have recognized. Phil Fontaine, the present chief, has come to us and said that they recognize they have to make changes. They have brought in accountability changes in their own governance structures in a way that frankly recognizes problems of the past and looks forward to a brighter future as we resolve those sorts of problems.

I ask the hon. member for Wild Rose to put aside those differences of the past. I believe him when he says he went into homes. I know he is an honest person who works hard in his effort to be a member of Parliament, but let us work hard on bringing ourselves together as much as we work hard at tearing ourselves apart and dividing us. That is what I would ask the House to do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments and the speech of the Leader of the Opposition. I also heard the question from the hon. Conservative Party colleague a few moments ago.

I agree with the leader of the Liberal Party. We should stop trying to pass the buck by saying that the Liberals were in power for over 13 years and did nothing. We could say the same thing about the Conservative party, which did not implement the Erasmus-Dussault report. So let us stop blaming one another.

I have a question for the Leader of the Opposition. We know that some of Canada’s first nations are far, very far, from living in the 21st century. I think they are living in the 17th or 18th century.

What does the Leader of the Opposition believe is the main obstacle preventing the native peoples, the first nations, the Inuit or Métis from joining the rest of us in the 21st century?

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Speaker, that is a key question. I thank the member for asking it. It might, of course, be more appropriate to ask this question of my colleagues from Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, Churchill, Labrador, Nunavut and Yukon who are grappling with these situations and problems in their communities.

From my standpoint—if I dared give a simple answer to such a complex question—I would say that it boils down to education. It is the lack of access to education that prevents individuals from realizing their full potential. This does not apply exclusively to our aboriginal peoples; it also holds true for our urban dwellers and the population at large.

*Business of Supply*

What is critical on our reserves is education. I travelled with my colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, in his riding. There are problems there with secondary schools and teacher's colleges: there are none. Never mind university, which is absolutely essential in this 21st century. There are no primary and secondary schools that are acceptable.

Therefore, let us provide these people with access to education. They will survive and, in my opinion, they will solve their own problems. Education is the key.

• (1600)

[English]

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Westlock—St. Paul.

In my riding of Sarnia—Lambton there is one aboriginal community. There are two aboriginal communities directly adjacent to my riding. I am happy to acknowledge the three communities in the House of Commons today, the Aamjiwnaang First Nation, the Walpole Island First Nation and the Kettle Point and Stony Point community. I have worked with members of these aboriginal reserves extensively over the years as warden and I look forward to working with them in my new capacity as their member of Parliament.

In fact I am happy to announce a new native craft and gift store in the village of Point Edward that will feature merchandise from vendors who reside at Aamjiwnaang, Walpole Island and Kettle Point. Native culture in the village of Point Edward is especially important because of the remarkable archaeological sites that continue to be found in the area.

I am happy to rise in the House today to talk about this government's early actions to improve the quality of life of aboriginal people in Canada. These early actions that we have taken stand in evident contrast to the last 13 years of Liberal rule during which very little was done for aboriginal Canadians.

We recognize that many aboriginal people face pressing challenges in their communities every day. This government is committed to improving the quality of life and reducing aboriginal poverty across Canada. Our government has taken concrete steps to develop real solutions to the problems facing aboriginal people. Indeed, in our few short months as government, we have moved swiftly to implement carefully structured, targeted investments that will reduce the level of aboriginal poverty and bring about tangible, measurable results.

This government did not wait 13 years to address this situation on the eve of an election three days before a non-confidence vote. Since taking office, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians has been meeting with aboriginal leaders. These ongoing discussions contribute to setting the stage for initiatives and programs that will address key aboriginal issues.

Backing words with the necessary resources, this government put forward a federal budget that allocates \$3.7 billion to fund programs and initiatives to improve the quality of life of aboriginal people living both on and off reserve, in the north and in urban settings. The

budget unveiled last month includes targeted investments in key areas such as aboriginal housing, clean water, education, and women, children and families. The returns on these investments will deliver real improvements by eliminating poverty in aboriginal communities, strengthened relationships with the provinces and territories and aboriginal leaders and organizations, and a more promising future for all Canadians.

The government has allocated \$300 million to go directly to affordable housing programs in the territories benefiting both aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples. Nunavut, where the problem is most pressing, will receive \$200 million. Yukon and the Northwest Territories will receive \$50 million each. Another \$300 million will be targeted for aboriginal housing in the provinces.

Furthermore, \$450 million has been set aside to fund initiatives for water and housing on reserve, education, and women, children and families. Through education aboriginal communities can successfully battle poverty, while women's initiatives will nurture healthy children and families and communities.

Aboriginal people deserve no less than the same opportunities we all seek for our families, our communities and our country. We are committed to securing these opportunities for aboriginal people.

• (1605)

Of the \$3.7 billion earmarked for aboriginal peoples and northerners, \$500 million will promote community development in areas potentially impacted by the Mackenzie gas project.

A settlement agreement was signed on May 10 to launch an advanced payment program for seniors who suffered abuse in residential schools. There has been \$2.2 billion set aside in the budget for common experience payments and for other programmatic elements such as healing and commemoration.

Please do not misunderstand me. I do not believe that just the money in the recent budget and the actions we have taken so far to resolve the challenges facing aboriginal people are enough. This is just the beginning. We must take on the hard work of renovating laws and institutions. This government is working collaboratively and respectfully with partners to identify and implement effective and lasting solutions through collaboration and mutual respect, as witnessed by the government's recent settlement offer to the Dehcho First Nations.

There have been other significant achievements. On March 9 an agreement in principle was signed with the Yale First Nation in the province of British Columbia.

Upon coming into office, this government launched an action plan to address drinking water concerns in first nations communities. This comprehensive plan consists of measures to identify communities at risk from unsafe water; to ensure treatment plant facilities are managed by certified operators; to implement standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and monitoring of treatment facilities; and to institute a framework to regulate water systems in first nations communities.



*Business of Supply*

Last month the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations announced the establishment of an independent three member panel of experts to examine the regulatory framework for water in first nations communities. The expert panel will hold public hearings across Canada in the coming months to obtain suggestions and advice from people with technical expertise and experience in the operation and management of water systems. At these hearings, participants will have the opportunity to provide their views and suggestions on what should be regulated and what legal framework should be used.

The panel's interim report on regulatory options will be submitted to the minister by September 2006. A progress report on the panel's findings to date will be submitted to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development also in September 2006.

The initiatives this government has undertaken so far to improve the quality of life of aboriginal people are an example of the way we intend to do business. We will work with aboriginal partners, provinces and territories to develop viable and effective solutions to the challenges in first nations, Inuit and Métis communities.

The government's approach to resolving aboriginal issues, including water, education, housing, and women and children is focused on tangible results and clear accountability.

We believe aboriginals deserve the same standards as non-aboriginal Canadians and we will not let 13 years go by without action. We have already taken action as I have just described. Our record already shows our commitment to improving the lives of first nations, Inuit and Métis Canadians. This is just the beginning. We all know there are many, many issues that need to be addressed, not only the issues that we have already started to address, but others as well. There are environmental issues, health care, education, women's issues, including matrimonial property rights.

At this time I would like to give recognition to the member for Winnipeg South Centre, the mover of today's motion, for her work on native women's issues. I have the privilege of sitting on committee with the member and I know how diligent she is and how hard she has worked to improve conditions.

●(1610)

The reality still exists. We have had 20 years of consultation on this and other issues and little or no action. The time for action is now. The Conservative government is committed to real action as we move forward in a positive and beneficial manner.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her kind words. I have a number of questions coming out of her presentation.

I am glad she restrained herself in terms of the blame game. It is time we moved on from the blame game. There is a common objective and goal, and it is important that we stop blaming one another and move on with it.

Is my colleague is aware that currently money is being drained from school projects in order to fund water facilities and the training of water technicians to run the facilities? School projects are being stopped because moneys are not sufficient.

When we talk about what has not been done, is the member opposite familiar with the First Nations Land Management Act? Is she familiar with the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act, the oil and gas and moneys management act, the commercial and industrial development act? These issues were front and centre on the agenda of the previous government, and will have a profound economic impact on aboriginal people.

I have one final question which relates to matrimonial real property. I sit on two committees, the status of women and the aboriginal affairs committee. She and I serve on a committee which is addressing this issue. I have been really puzzled about why members opposite on the aboriginal affairs committee have been very reluctant to re-submit to the government the report done by that committee on matrimonial real property. It was a comprehensive report—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** My apologies to the member, but I have to allow enough time for a response.

The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to reiterate the fact that the member opposite has a great understanding of aboriginal issues and has worked very hard to improve the status of aboriginal, Inuit and Métis in our great country. I would like to commend her for the work she has done.

We all know that a tremendous number of issues face us when it comes to aboriginal peoples and we have talked about a few of them. We have talked about environmental and water issues. What could be more important to our communities than having clean drinking water? We have talked about health care and women's issues with respect to matrimonial property rights. These issues are important to all aboriginals.

The member opposite asked about different projects. These projects are continuing and progress has been made. The residential school agreement is one example of that progress. There have been Improvements in drinking water. Commitments have been made to that as has money. The member opposite also—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I do want to allow some other members to participate in the question and comment process.

The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we all know what needs to take place. We know we need to resolve the lands claim dispute through an independent claims commission. We know we need to invest in infrastructure, health, housing and water. We know aboriginal people need to have good healing circles and self-governance. We know what we need because of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the 1983 Penner report on Indian self-government.

*Business of Supply*

We know that 50% of aboriginal children live in poverty. Why did her government's budget cut \$25 million to child care, specifically to aboriginal children to help them take care of their kids? That seems to be missing in the budget. If we are so concerned about children, especially aboriginal children, would she restore that funding so their kids could also get some support?

• (1615)

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to hear the member say that we all know what needs to be done. She addressed several of the issues we have talked about today. I think we are all in agreement that there has to be action taken. I am really heartened when I hear agreement from members of all parties that we need work in cooperation. That is extremely important.

The previous member asked about some of the acts that were in place and whether we were aware of those. Of course we are aware of those acts. They are all part of the negotiating process. The minister is dealing with all these issues. He is dealing with poverty, with women's issues and with environmental issues.

I am heartened when I hear members from all parties say that we need to cooperate and work together, rather than blame. That is wonderful news. If we all throw our support behind the minister, we can get this job done.

**Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as this is my first time standing to give a formal address to the House, I want to say what a privilege it is to speak on such an important issue as our aboriginal people. I am pleased to speak in response to the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Aboriginal Canadians contribute a great deal to Westlock—St. Paul, the riding I represent, and to Canada as a whole. We owe it to them and to Canada to find real solutions to poverty many aboriginals face.

The government has consistently recognized the need to improve the quality of life experienced by first nations, Inuit and Métis. We are keenly aware of the importance of reducing aboriginal poverty. We are taking action in a targeted, tightly focused fashion on priorities, action that will yield prompt, visible and measurable results. We are also laying the foundations for sustainable long term improvements to make life better for aboriginal people in Canada.

Past policies, as all members of the House should recognize, have produced dependency, hopelessness and despair in many of our aboriginal communities. That is why the government will not follow the practice of throwing money at the problems. Success is not and should not be determined by how many billions of dollars the Government of Canada spends. That is not a new approach. That should be a thoroughly discredited approach. The government is committed to finding real solutions, as its actions since taking office can attest.

I would like to speak specifically to our actions in the area of drinking water on reserves. We have designed and are implementing a plan of action that will make real improvements in people's lives. It is universally acknowledged that safe drinking water is a fundamental need. Within weeks of coming into office, the government launched an action plan to address long-standing drinking water concerns in first nations communities.

This comprehensive plan consists of four immediate measures: first, identify the first nations communities most at risk from unsafe drinking water and complete and implement detailed remediation plans to fix the specific problems of water treatment and distribution systems in these communities; second, ensure that certified operators oversee all treatment plant facilities and require mandatory training for all treatment plant operators; third, implement the protocol for safe drinking water for first nations communities, a series of benchmarks for local operators that establish clear standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and monitoring of treatment facilities; and fourth, determine options for a regulatory framework for water in first nations communities as the basis for sustainable solutions. Together these four actions will inject much needed improvements into the current system, but the actions are only the centrepiece of a much larger effort.

To appreciate the impact of these actions, though, it is important to point out that under the current system the leaders of a first nations community, typically a band's chief and council, are responsible for the operation and maintenance of water treatment facilities and for the delivery of safe drinking water to residents.

Our plan of action means that the government will ensure that first nations community leaders have access to the tools and resources they need to deliver clean water to their residents. We are working with those communities most at risk to develop remedial plans to reduce their risk level and assess what resources are required for long term solutions.

This collaborative effort will help address the most serious water quality problems, to establish national standards for the operation of treatment facilities and to institute clear rules for the people responsible for water quality. The ultimate goal is to ensure that residents of first nations communities enjoy the same protection afforded other Canadians when it comes to drinking water.

More recent, the Government of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations announced the establishment of an independent three member panel of experts to examine options for this regulatory framework. The expert panel will host public hearings in the coming months across Canada to obtain suggestions and advice from people with technical expertise and experience in the operations and management of water systems. At these hearings, participants will have the opportunity to provide their views and suggestions on what should be regulated and what legal framework should be used. I am pleased to note that the hearings are starting tomorrow in Yukon.

*Business of Supply*

The panel's interim report on regulatory options will be submitted to the minister by September 2006. A report on the panel's findings to date will be submitted to the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development in September of 2006.

• (1620)

The establishment of the independent expert panel is definitely a step in the right direction. It is in keeping with the tone and direction of our action plan to address drinking water concerns in first nations communities. It fulfills a commitment made in the recent federal budget to improve water supplies in first nations communities. It is demonstrable proof that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs are steadfast in their resolve to continue to work with our aboriginal partners to establish clear priorities and develop effective, sustainable approaches to overcome pressing challenges in our aboriginal communities.

A focused effective approach to addressing challenges is exactly what my constituents have asked for. They ask and expect their government to find practical common sense solutions. They want to know is it practical, is it affordable, and does it achieve results?

The people of my riding of Westlock—St. Paul know that past policies toward native people have not worked. This government is taking action that is practical, affordable and will achieve real results.

The government's action plan on water is focused on tangible results and clear accountability. It is a sterling example of this government's determination to effect positive change in aboriginal communities and to bring about the change in a focused effective manner.

To make everything a priority is to make nothing a priority. Our priorities have been and will continue to be set according to the most important and urgent needs. Moreover, our priorities will change because action will have been taken to address those needs, not because a new opinion poll will have been taken.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's description of what the government proposes to do to improve water supply. In fact, it is a ringing endorsement of what the previous government was planning to do and had under way.

I would like the member opposite to comment on the appropriateness of draining money from school projects to fund water projects. I would ask him to comment on what he would say to the people of Big Horn and Sunchild in Alberta whose funding for their school capital projects is being deferred so that the water work can be done. We know that condensation has been causing leaks. We know that the carpets are torn and need replacing. We know that the schools do not have a gymnasium.

We talk about education as a priority here. It is a real concern. The government has not lived up to the commitment of the \$400 million that had been allocated under Kelowna for water which would not result in the draining of funds from education projects to water projects.

• (1625)

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Speaker, I recognize my colleague's devotion to this subject.

It is important to realize that this government is taking a new approach. We are taking an approach that is focused on working with our aboriginal, Inuit and Métis people. We are taking an approach that is focused on getting effective results, not simply making promises, not simply committing to things prior to an election and then never actually putting them into a real budget.

It is very important to recognize the \$450 million that we have put into this and which is actually being utilized to help with things such as education and water treatment facilities on reserve.

I respect the hon. member's question because it is a simple fact that the best way to get any area of our population out of poverty is by continuing and advancing the educational levels of those people. That has to be a priority for everyone and it is a priority for this government.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps water and education are not mutually exclusive. We know there is a need for the education and training of children, young people and adults. Much of that can be done through employment projects and training programs. If we are to put in water treatment programs and plants, et cetera, I wonder if the hon. member could consider how many jobs and how many training programs could be provided for young people on the reserves. They could learn and build their skills in order to find jobs for themselves which would build respect. They could learn these skills on one reserve and then use those skills to help other reserves to deal with their water situation. This is a whole question of community empowerment and community development.

Does the hon. member see that as a possibility in order to move forward? No matter what is done on these reserves should be done by the local people themselves.

**Mr. Brian Storseth:** Mr. Speaker, when we talk about this issue, it is very important that we talk about accountability. It is very important that we talk about giving the money to the people who need it most. That is something that has been lacking for far more than 13 years.

My riding of Westlock—St. Paul has a large number of first nations people. My riding also has an unemployment rate of under 3%. What we need to do and what we are doing in the town of Bonnyville is working at creating a first nations training centre, one of the largest first nations training centre in all of Canada to help employ more people and to help educate the first nations people so that we can continue to help with the infrastructure needs of Alberta and Canada.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the well-regarded member for Labrador.

I am very pleased to speak to the motion which has been brought before the House by our distinguished colleague from Winnipeg South Centre. Certainly I and many others, as evidenced by some of the comments this afternoon, were aware of the hon. member's long-standing interest in and sensitivity to issues that affect our aboriginal population. I am grateful to her for having the opportunity to speak to her motion.

*Business of Supply*

My riding of Brant in Ontario contains the most populated aboriginal community in Canada, the Six Nations of the Grand River and New Credit reserves. Approximately 12,000 individuals reside on Six Nations of the Grand, and there is an equivalent number who reside off reserve, many of whom reside in the city of Brantford.

Since being elected in June 2004, I have had the privilege of getting to know many members of the Six Nations of the Grand and New Credit reserves. I can say unequivocally that they are people of generosity, people of dignity and people possessed of a deep spirituality.

I had heard from many individuals, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal, from the latter part of November 2005 up to several weeks ago. All spoke positively about the Kelowna accord and that at last, long term, creative solutions had been proposed for the difficulties faced by so many of our first nations, Inuit and Métis persons.

It is recognized by anyone who has any solid knowledge of the history of Canada that our aboriginal peoples have been treated at various times with a lack of respect, with a lack of honour and quite frankly, with a lack of morality. Previous governments have been complicit with certain churches in attempting to effect cultural genocide. Not so many decades ago it was the deliberate intention of government in concert with some churches to prohibit aboriginals from speaking their language, from following their traditions, from maintaining their culture. The history of residential schools is not a shining example of the much vaunted Canadian values of tolerance, generosity and respect for all persons, for their beliefs and for their traditions.

The Kelowna accord was a recognition that our aboriginal citizens require long term assistance and that the plight in which so many of them now find themselves is not of their own doing. Hence there was the recognition within the Kelowna accord that unique solutions necessarily had to be implemented once and for all to improve the living conditions of our aboriginal peoples, their health, their education, their economies and their very way of life.

Renowned journalist and social activist June Callwood and many others have said that each person wishes intuitively to lead a productive meaningful life, but each person needs to know how to do so and must be provided with the tools to lead such a life. In my estimation, the Kelowna accord was going to accomplish exactly that: to provide our aboriginal peoples with the tools, on a long term basis, that they and their communities require to eventually acquire living conditions which would be equivalent to those enjoyed by non-aboriginals.

The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was correct this morning. He described aboriginal poverty as the most pressing social problem in Canada. He is right. How dreadfully disappointing it has been then for first nations, Inuit and Métis in this country to have their pressing needs described by the minister himself as the most pressing social need in Canada and to not have their needs recognized as one of the government's five priorities.

• (1630)

The government seems to be about management, not about leadership. Management is uncreative and is reduced to unim-

aginative steps such as reducing the GST by 1%, or handing out to some parents a few extra dollars a day to care for their children.

With respect to aboriginal issues, and I say this with respect, the government is abdicating its responsibility to demonstrate leadership. Failing to recognize aboriginal issues as a top priority, reflects on the management style of the government and further reflects the vacuum of leadership on aboriginal issues. Needless to say, the scuttling of the Kelowna accord has served to further disappoint and frankly dismay aboriginals who were so full of hope after the accord was signed.

The first visit, which was made by our former prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, after the election in June 2004, was to an aboriginal community in Canada's far north. He understood the importance of reaching out to our aboriginal brothers and sisters. He understood the importance of the federal government taking a leadership role with respect to our aboriginal communities. He understood and still understands that the difficulty which aboriginal peoples face needs to be seen as a top priority, that no international body or community will assist us here in Canada with a problem or a set of issues which are uniquely Canadian and require a Canadian response.

In my riding, Jim Windle is a non-aboriginal journalist who writes for a weekly newspaper on the Six Nations of the Grand. He has written, speaking about his experience as a non-aboriginal with aboriginals. He has said:

To work among the most misunderstood and marginalized people of North America has been a life-changing experience. I have been blessed and privileged to have earned the trust and friendship of many, but certainly not all, citizens of the Six Nations.

My journey into their world comes into collision with my own world every day when I return to my home in Brantford and am confronted with people just like I was —arrogantly ignorant of the true history of the greatest society this continent has known.

Mr. Windle and so many others in my riding understand that the federal government must play a leadership role with respect to aboriginal issues, including land claims disputes, such as the current dispute outside of but adjacent to my riding in the town of Caledonia, a dispute which has been going on for close to four months.

As Mr. Windle also states:

Treaties made with the Six Nations are no less important, or no less binding than those made with any other Nation in the world. They cannot just be ignored. New treaties must be signed by both parties to replace old ones.

I have some concern that the Prime Minister and the government feel that the solution to the problems, which beset our first nations, Inuit and Métis communities, can be resolved by simply inviting them into a non-aboriginal world, in the naive expectation that their cultural differences, their unique traditions and their life experiences can be parked or set aside. Such an approach will not work, as our aboriginal citizens will not and should not allow their history to be ignored, their culture and traditions to be overturned.

*Business of Supply*

The Kelowna accord was about narrowing gaps in health care, education, housing, drinking water and economic opportunities that existed between aboriginals and the rest of Canadians. It recognized that these issues were interwoven, one with the other. The accord had the full support of 10 premiers, representing all political stripes. The premiers continue to call upon the government to implement the Kelowna accord, an accord which included \$1.8 billion for education, \$1.6 billion for housing and infrastructure, \$1.3 billion for health, and millions more for economic opportunities.

Approximately 1.5 million persons in Canada are first nations, Inuit or Métis. For the most part, thousands and thousands of these individuals live in conditions which are substandard and approach third world status in many instances. It is impossible to understand how the needs of 1.5 million people would not be viewed as a priority for the Prime Minister and the government

● (1635)

In the view of many Canadians, and I am speaking of non-aboriginals, helping our aboriginal citizens is a top priority. It is beyond the comprehension of many people with whom I have spoken as to why the Prime Minister and the government are not seriously dealing with aboriginal issues, why they have seen fit to dismantle the Kelowna accord.

A close observer of the government's pronouncements on aboriginal issues and the performance in dealing with aboriginal issues would surely conclude that such issues are not a priority, that the Kelowna accord will not be respected or honoured by the government, certainly not in letter and unhappily perhaps not even in spirit.

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find the comments disturbing by not only my hon. colleague, who has just completed his speech, but by many members of the opposition who spoke earlier today. They continue to allude to the fact that they believe that all native organizations and all native leaders are firmly in support of what the opposition members call the Kelowna accord.

I want to give an example to my hon. colleague of a well known, well respected aboriginal leader who holds a differing view. The gentleman's name is Jim Sinclair. For the benefit of my hon. colleague, should he not be familiar with Mr. Jim Sinclair, I will give a brief synopsis of his history and his contribution to Canada.

Mr. Sinclair has been a leader of two aboriginal national organizations. Mr. Sinclair has advised prime ministers. Mr. Sinclair has spoken at the United Nations on aboriginal issues and has dined with the Queen. Mr. Sinclair sat at the constitutional table for five years. In fact, he is widely acclaimed as being the individual most responsible for ensuring that aboriginal rights were recognized in the Constitution.

I hear comments from my colleagues opposite and I would love to engage them in a debate about the contribution Mr. Sinclair has made to aboriginal rights in Canada.

My point is, Mr. Sinclair is highly critical of what he calls a joke, the Kelowna accord.

How does my hon. colleague respond to leaders like Mr. Sinclair, who are critical and hold a completely different opinion of what benefits if any would come out of that so-called accord?

● (1640)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, whether it comes to one's personal development, one's performance in work or, frankly, a community or country at large, as others have said, "If you're not moving forward, you're standing still". We need to move forward as a country. The Kelowna accord would have moved us forward.

If my hon. colleague opposite is suggesting that we should do nothing until there is unanimity with respect to what we should do, we will be waiting until the proverbial cows come home. Quite apart from what Mr. Sinclair has said, and I have no doubt that what the member opposite has said is true vis-à-vis Mr. Sinclair's comments, I know of Phil Fontaine and so many others in the aboriginal community. I know that tens and hundreds of individuals in my riding were effusive in their praise of Kelowna. Of course the then prime minister and the 10 provincial premiers signed on after two days of negotiating.

It was not unanimous perhaps, but it was still acclaimed loud and long by so many people.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we have seen reports, commissions, accords and round tables that go round and round and do not go anywhere. The record by the government has been dismal. Would the hon. member support a suggestion that Parliament recommend or appoint a commissioner who would use the international and mutually acceptable standards as the basis for regular public report cards on government conduct and would keep the government honest? The commissioner would investigate complaints and report to Parliament when recommendations or promises, made in the House or during election time, are not implemented. The public and the House of Commons could then see what actually gets done.

Would the member support this kind of recommendation that Parliament appoint a person to ensure that what is promised is delivered?

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure what the member opposite is asking. Perhaps it was my interpretation of her question, but it is general to the point of being vague. Frankly, without seeing more specifics, it would be irresponsible for me to comment yea or nay on such a proposal.

● (1645)

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to the motion brought forward by my colleague from Winnipeg South Centre. I thank her for raising this matter and bringing it before the House for a full day's debate.

It is an issue that is very close to my heart, having served aboriginal people for 10 years in Labrador. Labrador is very much like Canada, in a smaller geographical context, in the sense that we have Métis, first nations and Inuit people. We have land claims that are resolved and unresolved. We have on reserve and off reserve people still looking for resolution of the outstanding, what we call Métis question in Canada, which is before us today as well as others.

*Business of Supply*

The motion speaks to the need to be urgent, the need to move now on issues that are important to aboriginal people such as housing, education, water, sewer systems and health care.

To begin, I want to raise a particular issue which is urgent and it may apply more to the Minister of Health than it does to the minister of education. It is about an HIV-AIDS Labrador project that has been going now for some six years. We have learned in the last couple of months that the funding for this project has been cut.

I do not believe I have to give a lecture on how important health promotion and prevention of these types of sexually transmitted diseases are, not only in our country and in aboriginal communities, but world-wide. It is amazing to see the government cutting the funding. I have raised this with the minister three times and there still has been no action on this file. If I could be so bold, I would appeal, through this forum, to the Minister of Health or the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to deal with the issue now. I would hope this is not indicative of the government's plans or attitude toward aboriginal health programs. If it is, it is a sorry state of how we will go forward.

I do not believe Canadians will stand for a government which ignores the most social and needy people in our society. I do not say that in the sense of them being inferior. I say that because it is a reality that exists in Canada, and we have to deal with that reality.

Many aboriginal people in Labrador and elsewhere in the country see ourselves as contributors. Sometimes during debate there is a sense of minimizing aboriginal people, that somehow aboriginal people are a problem that needs to be dealt with. We are Canadians. There are issues that need to be addressed and the Kelowna accord was one of those interventions that would have helped aboriginal people.

It is also interesting that the Kelowna accord invested money over and above the other initiatives that had already been announced by the Liberal government. It had \$1.3 billion to address health care issues among Canada's aboriginal communities. That was on top of the \$700 million we were investing. That was on top of the \$1.3 billion for the first nations and Inuit health program in 2003.

I and my colleagues on the Liberal side are concerned and certainly Canadians are concerned about the short-sighted decision of the Conservatives to turn their backs on Kelowna. I believe that means we are turning our back on progress and setting back the clock. It is one thing to claim to support the objectives of the Kelowna accord, but it is another thing if that support does not come with any meaningful financial commitment.

The Kelowna accord had the support of provincial and territorial leaders and aboriginal leadership across Canada. The Kelowna accord was going to work for people in Labrador and for people throughout our great country. We were not only looking forward to the elements of Kelowna to help in terms of health care funding, but in all the other areas that were mentioned.

• (1650)

For instance, Kelowna had budgeted \$1.6 billion for housing and infrastructure. It is depressing to think that this commitment will not be honoured by the current government.

I think about the Métis community of Black Tickle, which still needs water and sewer systems. I would challenge the ministers on the opposite side of the House, the Conservative ministers, to go to a place like Black Tickle and say that Kelowna was just a press release, that it did not mean anything.

There was hope in that accord. It meant something tangible for aboriginal people, not only in Black Tickle, because there are many Black Tickers in this country, but for all aboriginal people in all their communities.

As well, we made some advancements in terms of housing and infrastructure under the Liberal government, but more was needed. Kelowna offered that to people, such as those in Nain and in Hopedale on the north coast of Labrador.

Truly, I do worry about aboriginal policy under the government. Not only did we have the unfortunate episode earlier in this session with the statements made by the member that the Prime Minister appointed to the chair of the aboriginal affairs committee, we also had the comments from another government caucus member who described first nations reserves as "Marxist paradises". This is a disturbing symptom of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Reserves, or Marxist paradises, as the hon. member described them, are so bad that the Innu First Nation of Sheshatshiu wants to expedite its process of establishing a reserve for its community. These Marxist paradises are so bad that the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, during the election, called on the federal parties to expedite that process as well. Indeed, even the Prime Minister, to some credit, promised to proceed in a timely fashion on establishing the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation. Unfortunately, this process has not been expedited in any way. It would put the Innu on the same legal footing as other first nations in Canada.

Friday before last, I attended the high school graduation in Sheshatshiu. It was a very special occasion. Too often we hear only negative news about aboriginal communities, but this was a good news story. It was one of the largest graduating classes in recent memory. Nearly the whole community joined in the celebration. There is a new emphasis on education in aboriginal communities like Sheshatshiu and it is paying dividends. Labrador Innu, Inuit and Métis youth are graduating from high school and going on to post-secondary education in growing numbers.

The Kelowna accord would have provided a further \$1.8 billion in funding for education programs for aboriginal peoples in Canada. This was a commitment from the government and the people of Canada, not just a Liberal commitment. This is a commitment that the Conservatives have reneged on.

I worry as well about what this might mean for future graduating classes in the Innu communities of Sheshatshiu and Natuashish, in Inuit communities such as Rigolet or Makkovik, and in Métis communities like Cartwright, North West River or St. Lewis. We have to ask the question: will aboriginal students have the resources they need in the years to come under the Conservative government?

*Business of Supply*

Last year, my first major speech in the House of Commons was on the bill to implement the Labrador Inuit land claim and self-government agreement. This agreement was over three decades in the making. Some people might think there is no progress, but I have seen progress and certainly have been a party to some of the progress made under the Liberal government. I am proud to stand here, I might add, as a Liberal and an aboriginal person. Not everything was right and not everything was perfect, but I am proud to stand here as a Liberal and an aboriginal person.

Three decades ago, it would have been unthinkable that aboriginal peoples would have had such a direct hand in resource development such as Voisey's Bay. It would have been unthinkable. We have been making some progress. It is foolish to think that all the hard work we have all put in has been for naught. It has not. We have made progress, we make to make more, and Kelowna offered that.

That is why it is so important that we move forward with this historic agreement. It is so important because the honour of the Crown, the honour of the Government of Canada and, I believe, the honour of the people of Canada is at stake.

It is almost like an intangible. Real progress comes when there is honour of the Crown and when the fiduciary obligation of the federal government and other levels of government is lived up to. Kelowna is important because of what was real and tangible to people at the community level, but this intangible of the honour of the Crown is also important.

• (1655)

I believe the honour of the Crown was breached by the Conservative government. Not only is it going to take some money for housing or water and sewers, it is going to take relationship building in order to achieve the real progress we need to make in aboriginal communities.

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am a bit puzzled because the hon. member's colleague, just a few minutes ago, talked about how we should be getting away from blaming each other and how we should move constructively forward in addressing the issues that are present in our aboriginal communities, and then all I heard was "blame, blame, blame".

I would like to focus a little more on the agreement itself. I think the hon. member will agree that there are flaws within the Kelowna accord. In my mind, one of the most serious flaws is the relative omission of resources for off reserve aboriginals and non-status aboriginals.

As a preface to my question, I would like to quote Patrick Brasseur, the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. He said that they "asked this current government to revisit the agreement because it excluded the majority of the aboriginal population in this country". He said that "you have to target the entire aboriginal population", not one specific group. He concluded by saying, "We are most encouraged by the Conservative government's recognition of the need" to accommodate off reserve aboriginals.

I have a question for the member. Given the fact that the accord does have these serious flaws, why is the member still insisting on supporting this motion to implement the Kelowna accord?

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Mr. Speaker, I was not blaming. In fact, the opposition often talks about accountability and responsibility. Those members talk about it in the context of aboriginal people. If they make a decision, they have to be accountable for the decision they make. They have to be responsible for the decision they make.

Interestingly enough, I was sitting at the board table of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples for 10 years. It is quite interesting that the chief and president of Congress of Aboriginal Peoples at the time was at Kelowna. The president and chief of that organization signed on to Kelowna. I cannot speak to why the leadership of that particular organization would have a change of mind in just a few short months.

It seems rather speculative. Even the Minister of Indian Affairs was supporting Kelowna during the election, but could not find the money, the will and the determination to bring it over, so he changed his mind in a few months. Other leadership sometimes change its mind in a few months, but I cannot speak to the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples. All I know is that Kelowna was moving forward and we were building and making progress.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we know that a lot of the language has been lost in first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. Losing our language is like losing our past, our history and our heritage, so it is critically important that the language be regained.

I am wondering whether the hon. member would support an NDP idea or suggestion that we need to help train second language teachers so they could provide the education and the opportunity for this generation of first nations, Métis and Inuit children to again learn their own language and reconnect with their culture and the pride of their history and heritage.

Would that be a good direction in which to move forward? Whether they are on reserve or off reserve in big cities, language is critically important.

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raises a very good and valid point. I do know that under the previous Liberal government there were investments in culture and language programs and in the aboriginal languages and culture centre. I believe that a 10 year commitment to the aboriginal languages centre was made previous to that. There is no doubt that more needs to be done, because we are losing the battle. Even though we have made some interventions and have some programs in place, the speed at which aboriginal languages are being lost certainly exceeds any gains we are making.

I know of language nesting programs in Labrador involving preschool kids, which seem to work quite well in that particular context. That is something we should be looking at. Headstart programs also are very important for the preservation of the language and culture of aboriginal peoples.

I believe Kelowna also addressed this in some part, because it contained an element that talked about capacity building. When we talk about capacity building in aboriginal communities, we have to understand that it means the preservation of one's language and one's culture as well.

*Business of Supply*

There is one thing about language that I would like to say. The tone that I sometimes hear from the opposite side is so different from what I hear from my Liberal colleagues. Our tone is one that shows we have listened to aboriginal people about where they are at. I believe the Conservatives also will have to overcome this language issue in the weeks and months ahead.

I urge them to listen very closely to what aboriginal people have to say. I urge them to change their minds on Kelowna. There is no harm in changing one's mind when a mistake has been made. That is an honourable thing to do. I would urge the Conservatives to change their minds on Kelowna and move in the right direction, the direction that is good for aboriginal people and good for the rest of Canadians.

● (1700)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion made by my Liberal colleagues. As the Bloc Québécois critic, I will give my party's position on the Liberal motion. I would therefore like to inform this House that the Bloc Québécois supports this motion.

I am not the only one wondering how many bills, motions and interventions in the House it will take before the government endorses the Kelowna accord. I wonder what tone members will have to take and what language they will have to use so that this government stops turning a deaf ear and finally adopts this accord.

Since the House of Commons resumed sitting, we have made every effort to be heard. Moreover, on Monday, May 8, 2006, in support of the accord, I made a motion on behalf of my party before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, recommending that the Kelowna accord concluded between the representatives of Ottawa, Quebec and the provinces and the national aboriginal leaders be implemented. That motion, Bill C-292 and the motion we are debating today are reminders that once again, Ottawa has neither kept its promises, nor assumed its responsibilities to our aboriginal peoples.

We are talking here about an accord between nations: Canada, representing all the provinces, and the aboriginal nation, represented by its chief. When the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard signed the Kelowna accord, he did not do so on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada, but as the head of the Government of Canada. He signed this accord with Phil Fontaine, who was then the chief of the first nations. The accord was reached between nations, and these nations owe each other respect. That is not what we are seeing with the current government, which does not want to respect this accord.

We should not kid ourselves. The Kelowna accord is just a temporary measure that will do nothing to improve aboriginal peoples' living conditions in the long term. It addresses the growing gap between aboriginal peoples' quality of life and that of Quebecers and Canadians. The accord would represent \$5.1 billion over five years for education, health, housing and economic opportunities for aboriginal peoples. We have to understand how urgent it is to improve aboriginal peoples' quality of life. We are not talking about improving their quality of life, but about the urgency of improving it.

We must take into account the fact that the \$5.1 billion will be shared among the federal government, the provinces and Quebec, the territories and their own administrations before the money gets to where the needs are: to the first nations, the Inuit and the Métis. This is precious little to address the quality of life gap between Canadians and aboriginals. There are desperate needs. For example, first nations in Quebec have urgent housing needs. It would take well over \$700 million to provide the 7,000 units needed and this number is growing by the hundreds every year.

● (1705)

This lack of housing has very serious human and social consequences. Aboriginal people are the ones paying the price every day.

Closely linked to the lack of housing is health. It is urgent that we put a stop to the increasing incidences of poisonings, infection, tuberculosis—yes, I said tuberculosis—and so on.

Just as worrisome are the incidences of diabetes, fetal alcohol syndrome and suicide. Unfortunately, these too are realities that aboriginal people live with. Suicide is another serious problem. Although suicide rates vary considerably from one community to another, they are unacceptably high overall. Suicide rates are five to seven times higher among first nations youth than among non-aboriginal youth. Suicide rates among Inuit youth are among the highest in the world—eleven times higher than the Canadian average. We must invest time and money now.

As for education, if and when the government finally makes up its mind to address the issue, it would take 27 to 28 years to close the gap between aboriginals and Quebecers and Canadians, according to the Auditor General's 2004 report. That is an understatement.

Several reports from the Auditor General, observations by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and, more recently, the final report of the UN committee on economic, social and cultural rights, concerning the living conditions of first nations people in Canada, have been alarming. Many recommendations, supported by aboriginals, Quebecers and Canadians, have already been made to Ottawa. These have fallen on deaf ears. What we are doing here again today is reminding this government that urgent action is needed.

On the eve of the first ministers' conference, the Bloc Québécois publicly supported the opinion shared by the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women, who rejected the government's plans. The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women criticized the fact that the approach, designed to "narrow the gap" between the living conditions of first nations and those of Quebecers and other Canadians, did not tackle the real causes behind the first nations' situation, namely, a lack of equal access to land and resources, and a lack of respect for their rights.



The Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women also criticized the fact that the objective of the Kelowna accord, due to its pan-aboriginal approach and lack of consultation with communities to target the real issues, will only maintain the first nations' cycle of dependence and will not sufficiently narrow the gap to improve the quality of life for aboriginals. Essentially, this means that the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women were not present in Kelowna. The reason is simple: they found that the accord did not go far enough. Later, they accepted the conclusions of the accord.

The Bloc Québécois believes that concrete solutions are needed, solutions that are adapted to the realities of the various first nations peoples in order to correct the inequalities that affect their communities. Furthermore, these measures must stem from discussions with the various nations, because money alone will not solve the problems.

• (1710)

On the contrary, it perpetuates the paternalistic approach of the federal government toward aboriginals.

Now we all know, here in this House, that the federal government has an obligation to meet the great needs of the aboriginal people, among other things those related to housing, infrastructure, education and health care. The Bloc Québécois continues to make sure that Ottawa does not shirk its obligations as a trustee. The federal government should assume its responsibilities as long as all aboriginal nations do not have the tools for self-government.

The first indications of the current government's handling of the aboriginal issue are not very reassuring. For example, the initiative for a protocol for safe drinking water for first nations communities is commendable in and of itself. However, when the initiative sets aside communities with the greatest needs, those that still do not have a drinking water system and are still today hauling their water in buckets, is that quality of life?

This same protocol explains the following:

First nations are responsible for the construction, design, operation and maintenance of their water systems. INAC provides funding to First Nations for these activities, subject to the appropriate technical review and funding approval process.

With this new initiative, the current government is telling communities not only that no new money is being committed to implement the protocol, but that the communities in the greatest need could have their funding withdrawn if they fail to obtain approval from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Is that quality of life?

The first budget is another indicator of the "new approach", to use the words of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Aboriginal communities have critical socio-economic problems. In some cases, the situation is intolerable, and the Bloc Québécois does not believe that \$450 million over two years, as announced in the budget, will be enough to properly address the problems.

Also, in its budget, the new government is giving considerable prominence to the accountability of communities in managing the funding they are given. It is important to emphasize that aboriginal

### *Business of Supply*

peoples wholeheartedly support the principle of accountability. The same principle should also apply to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to make sure that it is accountable not only to its minister, but also to the community it serves.

The present government, in its search for a new approach to handling aboriginal affairs, should start by reviewing the findings of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Erasmus-Dussault commission. This royal commission was established when the Conservatives were in power and after the report was published its findings were forgotten. It cost Quebec and Canadian taxpayers \$58 million.

I will close by saying that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion presented today, a motion on implementing the Kelowna accord.

The commitments made by the federal government in Kelowna represent a first step in closing the gap between native peoples and Quebecers and Canadians. However, the causes of this inequality have not yet been addressed. It is not about catching up; it is about addressing the roots of the inequality with a sense of urgency.

• (1715)

Native peoples must have all the tools to develop their own identity, namely the right to self-government and recognition of their rights.

The Bloc Québécois wants the amounts promised at the Kelowna conference to be delivered. For the future of relations between the government and aboriginal peoples, we recommend a more global approach that meets the aspirations of native peoples and promotes the negotiation of nation-to-nation agreements.

I would like to note that in this House we believe in the right of native peoples to self-government. In more general terms, we are dealing with the claims for autonomy of aboriginals. We recognize that native peoples, just like distinct peoples, have the right to their own culture, their own language, their own customs and traditions as well as the right to control the development of their own identity.

We can no longer tolerate that native peoples live in conditions that are harmful to their health development and autonomy.

In closing, I would like to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois will keep urging the government to respect the Kelowna accord. The Bloc Québécois will keep rising in this House to ensure that the accord is respected. The Bloc supports the motion introduced today because one can only turn a blind eye for so long to such basic needs as health, access to clean drinking water and adequate education, as well as economic opportunities that will enable aboriginal peoples to become autonomous.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member if he has had any more comments back from first nations leaders in Quebec.

*Business of Supply*

I want to go on record with what one of our chiefs said. James Allen, Chief of the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations stated, “The Kelowna accord was an historic agreement between the Government of Canada, the premiers of the provinces and the first nations of Canada. It was historic because it was the first meeting that dealt exclusively with first nations’ issues. The accord was developed after many high level talks with Canada. The accord was a plan to start eradicating poverty in first nations communities by improving housing and infrastructure, to improve the education of first nations students and encourage first nations to take over control of education in their communities. The accord also had plans to improve health services and programs for first nations to improve their living standards”.

“So far, this government has not issued a clear statement on whether or not they embrace the Kelowna accord. The failure of the federal government to implement the accord would set back the relationship and trust that was established in Kelowna, B.C. between first nations and Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member for Yukon. I almost said “Your Honour” because I am so used to addressing a judge. Once again, I apologize for having given you a raise.

That said, I listened carefully to the member for Yukon’s remarks. I agree with him, and so does the Quebec Assembly of First Nations through its Regional Chief, Mr. Picard, and everyone in fact.

Nobody in this House can convince me otherwise. On November 25, everyone thought that there was a written accord signed by all parties. Shortly thereafter, we were told that there was not. The Assembly of First Nations, as well as several provinces, said there was. The only party saying that there was not is the current government.

Maybe this government thinks that the accord is too closely associated with the previous government. This government can take back the accord if it wants, it can even rewrite it, but it must provide the funds that are vital to the survival—and I am choosing my words carefully—of many aboriginal communities.

• (1720)

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to ask the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue if he does not feel it is time to stop playing politics at the expense of aboriginals and first nations peoples. Does he not feel it is time to rise above all this?

Certainly, the day that we achieve a dialogue with first nations peoples, when we can listen to them and grant them the right to full self-government, the right to fully manage their own affairs, only then will first nations peoples truly form a nation within Canada. Aboriginals, within first nations, will be able to assume their full stature. At present, we are not giving them the opportunity to live their lives as a people and as a nation.

I would therefore like the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue to indicate whether he sees the Kelowna accord as an end in

and of itself or as a stepping stone to something else, and why do we continue to play politics at the expense of first nations peoples?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question.

Last November, an accord was reached between two nations: Canada, then represented by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, and Canada’s first nations, then represented by Mr. Fontaine. They signed an accord between two nations. I do not see why that should be called into question.

I feel it is important to realize today that this goes further than respecting the Kelowna accord. All the first nations I have met with in recent months as the Bloc Québécois critic for Indian affairs and northern development have told me that the Kelowna accord was a step in the right direction, but that more was needed. It is clear that the first nations want to move toward self-government and that efforts will have to be made.

Canada’s 640 aboriginal, Métis and Inuit communities are not all the same, and they will have to make an effort. But the Kelowna accord is a step in the right direction that has to be respected and that could enable the first nations to start taking charge of their lives.

What is missing is a government that keeps its word. Aboriginal people generally do not give their word in writing; they shake hands and respect each other. I can tell this House today that I am not sure that Canada’s first nations have much respect for the current government.

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the hon. member’s statement about respect and the importance of self-government. Land claim settlements are the most important and we need an independent, effective system to resolve land claim disputes.

The NDP has been pushing for an independent claims commission that respects treaty based settlements so Canada can meet its legal obligations. Is that something we could collectively work toward? Is that something the hon. member would support?

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I want my hon. colleague to know that I agree with her. The land claims negotiations are different than the Kelowna accord negotiation, but should be dealt with at the same time as the implementation of the Kelowna accord.

I will draw a parallel, for what it is worth. You can feed a person fish, or anything else, but if you never teach him to fish or hunt, he will never grow. We can take care of education, health, infrastructure and empowerment of first nations, but at the same time, the first nations have to settle their land claims. There are currently more than 700 of them. This will go on for hundreds of years if the government, which is judge and judged in these negotiations, does not sit down and decide to settle them. Nonetheless, this has to be done in parallel with education and health.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak in the House today in support of the motion. It is an issue with which I am closely associated.

I grew up on the reserve community of Pelican Narrows and I have experienced firsthand many of those issues that aboriginal leaders raised in Kelowna and which they spoke extremely passionately about.

It is difficult for anyone to understand what those leaders were talking about unless one has actually lived it. It is difficult to understand what poverty can do to one's health, how overcrowded housing diminishes self-esteem and how a lack of education can hold back the hopes and aspirations of a people and of a community. What is perhaps worse is being kept from being a part of the solution building and having the government ignore people's plight and not helping them to help themselves.

I want to stress the point that far too often people confuse the culture of poverty with the culture of aboriginal people. I see evidence in this House, especially across the aisle, of this lack of understanding between these two very critical issues. I implore the members opposite to begin to understand this.

The Kelowna accord needs to be understood from an aboriginal perspective and I will attempt to briefly provide a bit of a context so we can all better understand what Kelowna represented.

I will summarize the modern aboriginal-state relations into three distinct phases.

From approximately the 1950s to 1969, the federal government's approach to dealing with aboriginal people was basically ad hoc responses to a crisis occurring in an aboriginal community. It was not until a crisis occurred that a response was raised at the government level and, unfortunately, the nature of that response was usually ad hoc. There was no long, medium or short term planning. It was all predicated upon crisis management.

Aboriginal people grew tired of being ignored and not having their issues taken very seriously. This changed in 1969 with the introduction of the white paper. It was the spark that enraged aboriginal Canadians and caused them to rise up, and rise up they did. Thus began the next phase of aboriginal-state relations. In the period beginning in approximately 1970 to the early 1990s, aboriginal people demanded that their rights be recognized, respected and protected.

When I was first elected chief six years ago, one of the people I look up to the most in this world, Carole Sanderson, said, "Gary, never apologize for the rights that we have as a people. Never ask permission to use them. Instead, work with governments to respect them, to build our people stronger, to build Canada stronger".

Aboriginal people, as a result, began to utilize the courts to advance and protect their rights. Over more than two decades, many landmark court battles were won in favour of aboriginal people: Lovelace, Sparrow, Calder and others. It was also a time marked with protests and conflicts, such as those we have seen at Oka, Ipperwash and others across the country, and that phase can best be

described as an adversarial phase where relationships were strained between aboriginal Canadians and Canadians in general.

Finally the courts said that enough was enough and implored governments to use the political fora to address and deal with aboriginal issues and to use the court decisions as a framework to move forward and address these outstanding issues and grievances. So began the next phase of aboriginal-state relationships, from about the early to mid-nineties to what we have today, and that phase we can best describe as relationship-building.

That phase saw self-government negotiations spring up across the country. We saw an acceleration of programs being devolved to aboriginal first nations' control. We saw a series of round tables being established to deal with socio-economic issues of critical importance to the people in our communities.

● (1730)

The basis of these developments were the court decisions, but also other things, such as the Penner report on education and numerous justice inquiries and the like. We began to see improvements, contrary to what we have heard. Improvements in that period of time have been made.

The problem is we have difficulty identifying them. It is easier to see a glass half full than to see a glass half empty. We politicize that perspective to the negative consequences upon our people.

Despite that growth and prosperity there still remain gaps to be addressed. There is one key ingredient missing throughout those three phases that Kelowna began to put in place. That was to include the aboriginal people in the building of the solutions to the issues that they wanted to take ownership of, instead of having governments saying, "we know what's good for you. Here's a policy, you react to it".

No. Kelowna represented a high water mark in a new relationship between aboriginal people and Canadians. It established a new consensus. It established a relationship where the previous government, the provincial governments and the aboriginal people of Canada would work together to build the solutions necessary to address all these issues that we have talked about today. A new consensus is what I call Kelowna. That is the context within which Kelowna evolved over three phases.

It was not written on a napkin on the eve of an election. It was not done in the 18 months before that. It was 50-plus years of blood, sweat and tears of the aboriginal people, first nations, Métis and Inuit, working toward being included in the policy development of the issues that affected them on a daily basis.

The Conservatives may think they are punishing the Liberals by not honouring the Kelowna accord. They are wrong, very wrong. It is the aboriginal people of Canada that are being punished. It is the aboriginal people who built Kelowna. To have the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs play petty politics with this accord is insulting to the House and to aboriginal people.

*Business of Supply*

First, the government pretended the money was not there. The proof was there. The money was identified and the government chose to use other priorities to move forward. The government says there was no agreement. The accord was broadcast to millions of people across the country and to the aboriginal leaders in the room, it was very real.

The Conservatives said there were no plans. Here is where the greatest exposure of a lack of understanding of what Kelowna represented presents itself when it comes to the Conservative government. No plans? Of course there were no plans. It was not the intention of Kelowna and the previous government to go and hide on a hill somewhere and design policies in isolation and then tell the aboriginal people what they were. This was about working together collaboratively to build the solution to address the issues that the first nations people wanted to take ownership of.

To build complex solutions requires the involvement of those that were reached in the new consensus with the provinces, the federal government and all national aboriginal groups.

Now we hear that the government has disregarded this new consensus. The government will go it on its own. It knows best. Instead the government will decide what is right and that is condescending.

The agreement was not a partisan effort as many have said. It was an effort to deal with one of Canada's most embarrassing legacies.

I have not been left with a feeling of confidence with the so-called Conservative approach to dealing with aboriginal issues. We have had members opposite stand and say ridiculous things.

● (1735)

They have suggested that first nations and Inuit people are not real people living in real towns. They have suggested that first nations and Inuit people traffic prescription drugs on the streets, and that first nations and Inuit people are not real governments. They have cancelled the aboriginal procurement initiative, the critical school projects, and completely ignoring the Métis in the budget.

They have stalled on many more issues like self-government and have not proactively tried to resolve issues like Caledonia. In my riding specifically, they have reneged on the Isle à la Crosse boarding school compensation, among others.

I just learned that the Prime Minister is in Vancouver today and he made a statement that in just under four centuries Canada passed from an unsettled wilderness to what it is today. That is blatant ignorance. This was not an unsettled land 400 years ago. The aboriginal people of this country were here. They inhabited the land. This demonstrates the lack of understanding the Prime Minister has with respect to aboriginal issues.

I am not sure, but this does not inspire confidence in me or the vast majority of aboriginal Canadians. I did not hear first nations, Métis and Inuit people calling for the Kelowna accord to be killed. I did not hear premiers say that the accord was bad. In fact, I heard pleas from all Canadians for the Prime Minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to honour the Kelowna accord.

This was a common goal that would have benefited all Canadians. I believe the government is moving backwards toward that adversarial phase that I talked about earlier. I see efforts to break apart this unprecedented unity and new consensus among aboriginal organizations, provincial and federal governments. I see one off discussions to fragment aboriginal people, communities and leaders. I see wedge issues being introduced to split on and off reserve aboriginal people. I see efforts to introduce difficulties between aboriginal leaders and provinces. This is not healthy. This is not good for aboriginal people and it is not good for Canada.

I would like to cite some passages from a speech that was made by Georges Erasmus in 1990. He stated:

We have come to a fork in the road, where if we are going to continue to be immersed in a status quo, we're just not going to be together very much longer. Or else we are going to be so disgruntled across this country, we're not going to be able to live with each other. We have the ability in this country to create a country that will be envied. We have the potential but we also have the potential to fragment and create many smaller states, and that's absolutely not necessary.

He goes on to say:

This country was not settled like United States. I'm a Dene. No conquering army came to the Dene and defeated us. No conquering army came to the Mohawks and defeated them, or any other of the people across this country. We willingly, consciously with our eyes open, thought we had enough resources. Being a peaceful people we arrived at an agreement that provided for our institutions to continue on part of our land and for the institutions of the people coming in to also be placed on our lands. Never in our worst nightmares, did we ever imagine what was going to take place. That for nearly 100 years, from 1867 until 1960, we would be so limited in our activity that we would need passes to get off reserves. We couldn't own businesses. We couldn't run for office. We couldn't vote. We never reached the age of majority. We weren't human beings really.

Mr. Erasmus had the foresight to understand what needed to happen. He added:

The time is here. We must now be sincere. Native people are not a threat to this country. We are not a threat to the sovereignty of Canada. We actually want to reinforce the sovereignty of Canada. We want to walk away from the negotiating table with an agreement that Canada feels good about and native people feel good about, where we can say that we have strengthened the sovereignty of Canada. So not only will Canada talk about how the Crown brought a version of sovereignty here, based in one family that continues to have it forever and ever and ever, but in addition to the original sovereignty, the sovereignty of the people that were here for tens of thousands of years is now also another source of the sovereignty of Canada.

So we're not a threat. We are only a threat if we continue to be ignored and taken lightly. We are only a threat if people don't understand that it is impossible for people to maintain the frustration level without the kind of actions that we've seen this summer.

He was referring to Oka of course.

What was visionary in his speech was the wisdom in calling for a new agreement, a new Canada. We all walked away from Kelowna feeling good about what was agreed to. Unfortunately, the Conservative government does not have the same vision.

● (1740)

I was at a powwow this past weekend in the great reserve community of Witchehan Lake. In attendance were first nations World War II veterans. They enlisted in war efforts in higher numbers than any other cultural group in this country despite many of them having to disenfranchise and give up their treaty rights. Why? Ironically enough, to protect their treaty rights.

*Business of Supply*

It was their belief that because of the nation to nation treaty relationship, that when Canada went to war, they as warriors in their proudest tradition would stand shoulder to shoulder with other Canadians against those who threatened our great country. That is what they fought for.

[Member spoke in Cree]

[English]

Basically what I said in Cree was that these veterans came back and they said they fought as equals on the front lines and yet they are not equals in this country. These treaties and this new relationship must move us forward. These men and women lived through these aboriginal-state relationships that I just described. They invested with their lives.

I can never find the words to express how profoundly affected I am by the government's inaction and petty tricks of denial and delay with respect to the Kelowna accord. If the minister and the Conservative government simply think they can deny or delay Kelowna and other aboriginal initiatives, they are wrong. Their meagre, weak efforts to toss aside Kelowna are no match for the will of a people, the premiers, and the people of Canada.

Everyone long ago accepted our shared path and the tremendous opportunities that Canada's aboriginal population had to offer. For too long our shared history, once one of cooperation and nation to nation status, has been marked by a breaking of faith.

The Supreme Court has established that the honour of the Crown is enshrined in the Constitution. Kelowna was a commitment by the Crown to aboriginal people, a new consensus that signalled a new relationship and a new future. Our path is one.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the member's background, but we came into this debate with a commitment to work together and to speak on compassionate grounds to figure something out. In my entire time here I have never heard anything so divisive and aggressive as that speech. The member should be completely ashamed of himself.

He talked about aboriginal veterans. What did the Liberal Party do for aboriginal veterans? It did zip. The worst thing that could happen to the aboriginal community of Canada is to have that party back in power. Where were those members for 13 years?

I would like to ask the hon. member if he was not paying attention when this government, unlike the past Liberal government, spoke about education for aboriginal students, about women, children and families? How about water on the reserves? Does that member know that the minister of the past government ignored Kashechewan for eight weeks? During their 13 years, 100 reservations still had polluted water.

I would like to ask that member, when did he think the previous government was going to get around to anything? Canadians decided they had 13 years of blah, blah, blah and dithering, and decided to elect a government that gave two thousand, two hundred million dollars toward a residential school commitment, something that group never did. I would like that member to confirm what his government did for aboriginal communities. What did that old, tired, dithering crew do for aboriginal communities? They did nothing.

● (1745)

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, our government must have done a great job because the Conservative government has copied everything that we did with respect to aboriginal issues. What have you done for the veterans since you have come to power? I have heard commitments—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. It is okay to have a spirited debate but we do not want to start using the second person. This is not the Ontario legislature. We do not want tempers to rise. Let us refer to each other in the third person as it helps to keep things a little more parliamentary.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, we can ask the question as well, what has the government done for Kashechewan? Nothing has happened yet. Have the Conservatives put any money into water? No. Instead, money has been taken from building new schools and put into supposed water infrastructures, \$150 million this year. The provinces and the northern territories received more money than aboriginal people did from the current government, and so did the pine beetle in B.C.

The main point of the speech was the relationship. We can get hung up on specifics, but Kelowna created a new consensus to work together.

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the hon. member opposite gave us such a wonderful history lesson which he knows very well because his family probably has been part of that history for many generations. I would also like to thank him for reminding us of the commitments and the contributions of aboriginal people as veterans and the work they did in looking after us.

I am going to touch on something that the former leader of the Liberal Party said in a speech in this House in May 2005. He said that it was in Newfoundland and Labrador that the start of North American history began to take shape. He said that it was no exaggeration to say that the story of North America in many ways began with the story of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I am curious to know how the member feels about the former leader of his party saying that, when we know very well that this country's history began with the first nations.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, the history of this country is certainly rich and steeped in tradition. The history books that are used in the schools of this great nation do not properly reflect the realities and the true history of this country over the last hundreds of years. Having spoken with the previous leader on this issue, he understands that very clearly. That is why it is incumbent upon our education system to teach what is historically true about the history of this country.

*Business of Supply*

• (1750)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the commentary of my hon. colleague with whom I have the pleasure of sitting on the aboriginal affairs committee. He has definitely brought great insight to that committee.

I would also like to thank him for indicating that there were no plans. Of course there were not. Those plans were in fact going to be brought out over the next few years. It is in direct contrast to the member for LaSalle—Émard who did talk about how plans were substantially in place. It is nice to hear my aboriginal colleague talk about the truth and that is appreciated.

The member talked about the investment, the money, and how it is going to improve lives, but I need to ask about the system. The system itself is flawed. He must agree that the only way we are going to truly improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians is to look at the system itself. I would ask him to bring forward his ideas on that.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right regarding the first question on the plans. On this side of the House we understand that when it comes to the exact planning for policies to deal with some of the issues on the reserves, it would not be done in isolation here. The plans that the member for LaSalle—Émard talked about were the plans on how to get together to begin that relationship and move forward on achieving what everyone wants.

The new consensus that Kelowna reached would have given us the tools to begin to address those complex issues. If current government members think that they can fix many of these issues in isolation by breaking apart the aboriginal groups and not talking with

the provinces and not working with the federal government, it is not going to happen. Kelowna represented a new consensus to actually tackle these very complex issues. The member is right in that they are complex. It requires many people in the room to solve them.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague spoke at length about the nature and importance of the relationships. I wonder if he would expand on the importance of the relationships in establishing the Kelowna accord.

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, in talking with aboriginal leaders across the country, many of whom are my friends, we all understand that prior to moving forward to address these complex issues, as the member opposite talked about, we must establish those relationships of trust and respect and recognize that there are nation to nation discussions that need to happen.

These leaders and the leaders before them expended a lot of time to cultivate a relationship with the federal and provincial governments to address these complex issues. I reiterate that when Kelowna was bashed and so unfairly tainted that it was not a good agreement by the government opposite, it is actually a disrespectful blow to the aboriginal people who worked so hard to get to that point. It was not partisan. It was focused on relationships and addressing what we all have in common.

As I mentioned, it is a path that we all share, regardless of whether we are first nations, Métis, Inuit or non-aboriginal Canadian. Improving the socio-economic levels of our people in aboriginal communities would benefit all of Canada. Aboriginal people feel that has taken a blow but they are not going to give up.

*[For continuation of proceedings see part B]*







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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, June 19, 2006  
(Part B)**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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### CORRIGENDUM

The June 16, 2006 issue of *Hansard* should be amended as follows:

Page 2503, in the right-hand column, in response to \*Question No. 30, the answer should appear as follows:

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the answer is as follows:

a) The Government of Canada intends to compensate those infected with hepatitis C through the Canadian blood system before 1986 and after 1990 as quickly as possible. Much work is underway on the steps needed to reach an agreement with the class. Given that this is a negotiation, no firm date can be provided as to when an agreement will be reached, but the Government of Canada is ensuring that all necessary steps in this process, that are within its control, are completed as quickly as possible.

b) Upon taking office, the Government of Canada immediately proceeded with its campaign commitment – work is ongoing. The most recent negotiating session was held on May 24-26, 2006. This is a complex issue with many stakeholders, and the Government of Canada is working diligently to provide compensation to the class as quickly as possible.

c) For the issues that it is able to influence, the Government of Canada is taking all possible steps to quickly reach an agreement with the class and provide compensation. The Government of Canada will proceed as quickly as possible but some factors are outside of the government's control, for example, the process of obtaining court approvals of any proposed settlement agreement. After court approval, an administrative process to evaluate and pay compensation must be established.

d) As per the memorandum of understanding signed by both sides in November 2005, determining the eligibility criteria for compensation is part of the process of settling with the class. Compensation programs established to date, the 1986-1990 agreement, the Red Cross settlement, and provincial compensation programs, have used an application and evaluation process to determine eligibility. Eligibility criteria, and a process to evaluate eligibility and compensate class members will be established in a final settlement.

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 19, 2006

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Timmins—James Bay.

I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre for recognizing the need to improve the quality of life for first nations, Inuit and Métis, and for including off reserve as well as on reserve people. I congratulate her for bringing this motion before the House so that we can highlight the urgency of the issue and tell the Canadian people how important it is to honour our commitments and fully implement the Kelowna accord.

For the past 13 years her party was in government with many years in a majority situation and all the while conditions for aboriginal people were no better than they are today. I have to wonder why, with such power, her party did not do more to improve the quality of life for first nations, Inuit and Métis people in Canada. It seems there was a lot of talk but not enough action on the part of the previous government.

Now we have a situation where the current government is not honouring an agreement made with first nations, Métis and Inuit people, an agreement that was years in the making and was signed onto by the provincial governments and the Government of Canada. The Conservatives may say they are honouring that agreement, but the budget speaks for itself. The Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations have expressed their disappointment with the federal budget. They predict a continuation of the imbalance, fiscal and otherwise, between first nations and other Canadians.

It is important to me to speak to this motion because in my riding of Vancouver Island North I have the honour of representing more than 20 different first nations bands with over 7,000 members. It is for them that I support any measures to improve living conditions, to improve health, social and economic opportunities both on and off reserve. As I travel around the riding and meet with first nations on and off reserve, I see overcrowding in housing, with sometimes two or more entire families living together, inadequate sewage treatment resulting in pollution of shellfish, and an overall sense of frustration

on the lack of movement in resolving these and other long-standing complaints.

A few weeks ago I spoke about the need for a road in the village of Kingcome, one of the most remote first nation villages in my riding. The children of that village wrote to me about the dangers of travelling by boat down the river to get to services that we all take for granted. They told me about the deaths of many of their relatives and friends who had to travel the river in winter, which is the only way out of the community if one cannot afford the airplane ticket, or if the weather is too bad to fly. They have been asking for this road for many years. There are land ownership issues around it, but I have to wonder, is it because they are isolated, out of sight and out of mind, or is it because they are a first nation community that our governments have never figured out a way to build a road into this village, a road that would provide safe access to health care and other services?

In Port Hardy at the very tip of Vancouver Island the Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'Xw on the Tsulquate reserve have been asking for improvements to their social and housing situation. They are a very proud people who have been relocated to this area and although they have been there for many years, they still do not call it home. They were relocated from their remote ancestral communities, a move that was in the best interests of the Canadian government. This move took away much of their identity and connection to their heritage. At the time of the relocation, housing was built, but it is now inadequate and some of the homes are deteriorating. This is leading to health issues as well as overcrowding.

As we learn more about the effects of the loss of heritage on a group of people, we find that it goes hand in hand with social and health issues. The Gwa'Sala-'Nakwaxda'Xw are learning how to live together in a small community, but they need us to recognize that it is a struggle for them.

Another first nation band near Port Hardy, the Kwakiutl, used to eat the shellfish right off the beach in front of their homes. When I visited them a few months ago, they told me that because of inadequate sewage treatment facilities in the town nearby, they had to travel by boat to one of the small islands to get the clams we were eating .

*Business of Supply*

●(1800)

While the situation might not be thought to be an on reserve issue, there is a negative effect on the shellfish which is part of their food supply. There are also negative impacts on their health and the social impacts of not being able to use a beach that is right outside their front door. If this were happening in our communities, I am sure we would be outraged and demand funding from the federal government for clean up and infrastructure to ensure adequate sewage treatment.

Again, I have to ask why this is allowed to happen. Why, with surpluses in so many budgets, does the government, as did previous ones, allow this to continue?

As I think of other first nations communities, such as 'Namgis at Alert Bay on Cormorant Island, I am reminded of the social impacts of the residential school that still stands next to the Umista Cultural Centre in their community. It is a grim reminder of a time when they and many other children were forced into abusive situations in an attempt to assimilate them.

Some members of that community want the old school torn down, while others want to find a way to turn it into a healing centre or another appropriate venue.

The effects of the residential school on so many first nations women and men is playing itself out in a loss of self-respect, alcohol and drug abuse and an inability to be proper parents.

I was glad to hear about the money the federal government was giving to victims of the residential schools across the country. I know the money will be put to good use. However, with a lack of healing facilities for survivors, the effects of the abuse will continue and are continuing. The effects do not stop with the survivors. They continue through generations. The government needs to consult with first nations and to invest in services and programs to end the cycle of abuse.

On Guilford Island the Moosgamaw First Nation is finally getting a new water treatment facility. The chief told me that it would be the first time in nine years that they will be able to drink fresh, clean water from the tap. Once they have taken care of the water issue, they will be working on building some new homes. Many of the houses that were built cheap are now uninhabitable due to mould. This also causes health problems for a community that has to travel by boat or plane for health services.

According to the chief, once they have the water and housing issues resolved they can then move on to economic development and the creation of jobs that are sorely needed in their community. They need our support.

I have talked about some of the more remote first nations communities on Vancouver Island North and now I would like to talk about the first nations in the Campbell River area. Campbell River is a small city and home to two first nations bands. In fact, it is difficult to tell when we are on reserve as we drive through town because of commercial and residential development.

The Campbell River Indian Band is working hard to create opportunities for its people but it is difficult because it has to balance the competing demands of so many issues: residential school abuse, education, housing, health care and many members living off

reserve, which is why they, too, need our support. This growing community is trying hard to become economically self-sufficient but it is difficult with limited resources to meet all the needs of the people.

The same is true for the Cape Mudge Band in Campbell River. Unresolved treaty issues use up much of its financial resources with legal and research costs, leaving precious little for social services, health care, housing and infrastructure, but they persevere. The band's determination is evidence as it prepares to open a cultural centre which will attract visitors and provide employment and opportunities to its community.

Many issues face aboriginal people living off reserve, such as housing, education, health, child care and access to other services. There is a great need for these services since off reserve aboriginal people often face isolation, discrimination and alienation while they are far from home attending school or trying to earn a living.

There is a network of Friendship Centres in this country that are providing many of those services to first nations people living off reserve. Alternative, culturally appropriate education, support groups for young parents, teens and elders are bridging the gaps and helping make connections.

Last, I would like to also honour a group of people working hard on Vancouver Island to address the health needs of first nations in my riding, as well as others. The Inter Tribal Health Authority, which my hon. colleague talked about earlier today, is located in Nanaimo and serves 28 member nations.

●(1805)

First Nations are challenged by serious health issues well beyond what we experience. The Inter Tribal Health Authority works with first nations leaders and community health staff to ensure culturally appropriate services are available.

Yes, this House should support the motion and recognize the need for improvements in the quality of life of first nations, Métis and Inuit people in Canada and, once recognized, we must honour our commitment to aboriginal peoples by settling land claims, building trust and fully funding and implementing the Kelowna accord.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her eloquence and her long list of needs that are apparent to all in the opposition parties. The list of needs would no doubt take in part of \$5.2 billion that was promised in the Kelowna accord.

I have to wonder why the NDP pulled the plug on the Liberal government and did not allow Kelowna to go ahead. However, I have a real question for the member. Is she beginning to see that the three pillars of the Conservative government's attitude toward aboriginal affairs are paternalism, patriarchal and patronizing?



*Business of Supply*

When the hearings on Bill C-2 took place in the accountability committee all opposition parties banded together to prevent the government from treating aboriginal resources and money as its own. Comments were made that the money belonged to the taxpayers of Canada. It does not. It belongs to the first nations.

Do you see the patronizing, patriarchal and paternalistic ways of the government in the way it is, in just dribs and drabs, doling out minuscule amounts of money compared to the \$5.2 billion promised by Kelowna?

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I do not know how many times the Chair has to intervene, and the member for Winnipeg South Centre did it after I mentioned it the last time, but the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe again used the second person. I appeal to members not to use the second person. The Standing Orders say that we will refer to each other in the third person and speak to each other through the Chair. It is not that hard. Just pay attention and do not do it again.

The hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that it was the previous government, his government that was in power for the last 13 years, that did not live up to many of the commitments that it made to first nations in this country, which is why we are in the predicament we are in today.

As members know, the New Democratic Party was happy to support the Kelowna accord and we did. The previous Liberal government went to the polls and, frankly, it was up to the people of this country to decide what happened to it. It was not the NDP that made the difference there.

The hon. member needs to remember some of those points when he asks the questions. It is important for all of us to remember that we need to ensure we live up to our commitments to first nations, rebuild that trust and that we honour our agreements.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we all would agree that the targets and objectives that were laid out at the first ministers' meeting of last year were important and our government will work with all parties to help move forward the issues of aboriginal people.

The member referred to clean water. I would like to highlight the fact that it was this minister who proceeded immediately with a clean water policy to address the issue and give first nations the opportunity to have clean water. We have seen many communities throughout Canada on a high risk boil water advisory.

Does the member not agree that it is real money and real action that will help achieve progress for aboriginal people? Is that not the approach we should take?

**Ms. Catherine Bell:** Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of talking regularly with all the chiefs of the first nations and, quite frankly, they are quite concerned about the lack of commitment from the Conservative government. While we know it is important to have money for infrastructure, they are concerned about there not being enough and about the renegeing on some of the commitments in the Kelowna agreement.

While we agree on some things, we also see a real need here for money, for clean drinking water, for housing, for social services and for health services on and off reserves. We are very concerned about the lack of commitments and the insult to the leaders of first nations who were there at the signing of the Kelowna agreement when many members of his party said that it was not an agreement and that it was written on the back of a napkin. Those are insults to first nations people and they do nothing to build trust.

• (1810)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to stand in the House tonight, especially given the fact that it is the Speaker's 55th birthday. As a fellow Scot, I understand how emotive and physical the Scots are, so I could go up and give the Speaker a hug now or maybe he could give me two or three extra minutes in my speech. I will leave it to the hon. Speaker to decide.

We are talking about a government that has come in and ripped up a signed agreement with first nations across the country. It is shameful and it sends a message across first nations communities of a policy of contempt. However, it has to be seen in the light of a longstanding history. Unfortunately, this is what federal governments do. Federal governments sign agreements and make commitments time and time again with first nations and then walk away from them and leave those communities in abject poverty.

I will begin by telling a story because it was this subject and a former Indian affairs minister that inspired me to go into politics.

When I was working for the Algonquin Nation, we had the opportunity to meet the then Indian affairs minister in Rouyn-Noranda. I was with the chiefs at that time. We wanted to come forward with one suggestion, one issue that he would understand and with which we could bring change. The issue concerned a child at our reserve school, the Kiwetin School in Notre-Dame-du-Nord, Quebec, who had extreme special needs. Indian affairs would not pay money for special education for this little child. However, if the school and the community agreed to put that child on a bus and send the child 26 kilometres into Ontario to a non-native school, where the child basically sat strapped to a desk out in the hallway all day with an adult watching him, Indian affairs would pay the full shot.

We thought that was an outrage, that it was so crazy that anyone who saw it would say that it was a waste of money and that it would be fixed. The suggestion was made to the then Indian affairs minister and we said, "Surely to God it makes more sense to put the money for special education dollars into that community at its school so it could not only raise that child properly but the money could be used for other children". Nothing happened then and nothing happened under the following Indian affairs minister. We will see if anything happens under the present Indian affairs minister.

*Business of Supply*

I remember sitting there that day hearing his response and thinking that if that was as good as it got then we needed other people to run. I made the decision that day to run for politics because I never wanted to sit in front of first nation communities that were facing such a need and the special education funding for their children had to be blown off like that.

Across my region we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of treaty 9. The first question people in my community ask is: What is there to celebrate? What is there to celebrate in Peawanuck where 50,000 barrels of PCB contamination are sitting on the shores of the Winisk River, left by the Department of National Defence?

We have had government after government talk about maintaining and protecting sovereignty in the far north but not one of them will come back and admit their responsibility for the damage they have done on those lands. I have met with the families whose children and elders are suffering from the effects of that PCB contamination that flows into the river and into their communities.

When I asked the present Liberal House leader, when he was the defence minister, to work with us, he could not run fast enough from that obligation. When I hear him talk about how the Government of Canada does not walk away from signed obligations, that is what it has been doing and it does it year after year.

Let us look to Kashechewan. I do not want to get into the evacuations or the terrible housing conditions, but I will talk about the deaths of three people in my community between January and today: Ricardo Wesley, Jamie Goodwyn and 4-year-old Trianna Martin. Trianna died in a house fire with 21 people. The other two men died in a makeshift jail cell that looked like a crack house. That jail cell would not have been allowed in any community in this country and yet it was considered good enough for the Nishnawbe-Aski police to risk their lives and the lives of the people they brought in.

When those two men burned to death, we said that this was not the way things should be in the 21st century. Things have to be better. We said that there had to be basic standards. Members can ask the people in that community if there is something to celebrate after 100 years.

We can talk about the health authority in James Bay where some of the top rated efforts to do telehealth, teleophthalmology, dialysis and telemammography are all facing being cut because the former government, and it is being followed up by this government, allowed the deficit in that community hospital to rise year after year because it would not fund first nation health anywhere near the levels of non-native health funding.

• (1815)

Ask me if there are two countries in Canada and I will say yes. There is a country that sets a certain standard for health and then says to the rest of the first nations that it is not there for them.

I hear a lot about how we had the blueprint for change, the dialogue for change, the road map for it and the round table for it. When a person lives in Martin Falls or Pikangikum, a person does not have any round table with which to discuss anything. They have their INAC bureaucrats. A hundred years ago they had the Hudson's Bay factor. Fifty years ago they had the Indian agents. Now they

have the INAC bureaucrats. People can talk all they want about a blueprint for it. It means nothing in these communities because they are put in a box and they are not let out.

I will refer now to the latest piece of bizarre news that I heard. The Liberal leadership candidate from Kings—Hants said his plan for improving life on first nations was:

Innovative tax incentives can attract private capital from both within Canada and abroad to help aboriginal businesses...We all know that countries around the world have found that low tax environments attract private sector capital. I would use the Departments of International Trade and Industry to attract private international capital to these dynamic aboriginal industrial parks.

I did economic development on first nations. It is a crock for that member to stand up and pretend that this is the solution for first nations. Let me explain how development happens on a first nations community. We will go back to Peawanuck.

Peawanuck is an isolated community with a diesel generator. Every year Indian Affairs would pay \$600,000 to subsidize the heavy cost. Then about five years ago, Indian Affairs said that it would not subsidize it any more, that the band would begin to collect from the people.

The band took it over, the families started to rapidly go into debt and the community started to put its capital dollars into running the fuel generator. It put its development dollars into running the fuel generator and it was not enough. The community was going under. It knew if it went below a certain level, it would be put into third party management.

The community said to Indian Affairs that it would not continue to run the generator. It said that \$600,000 that the department used to give it helped, but it could not do it any more. The community was going bankrupt so it returned it to Indian Affairs.

Indian Affairs hired a third party manager. Guess what Indian Affairs paid that third party manager? It was \$600,000. The \$600,000 that used to subsidize the community was now being paid to a third party manager. On top of that, it was taking another \$300,000 to subsidize that. We are now looking at almost \$1 million a year.

The third party manager's job is to get the money from the families for the rates of hydro. What are the rates of hydro? We are talking about one of these dynamic aboriginal industrial zones to which the member for Kings—Hants is going to attract international capital. How do we attract international capital when people are paying 18¢ a kilowatt hour? That is three times higher than the provincial standard?

What happened then? The band members said they could not pay that amount, that they could not even turn their our lights on for that amount. Indian Affairs set it at 200 kilowatt hours. They knew that was not possible.

*Business of Supply*

I have been in that community in January. I have seen families with their lights off. These families tell me that they run the hot water once a day to keep the lines flushed out and they still pay \$500 and \$600 a month. With INAC setting the acceptable rates for the lower end of kilowatt hours, which is 16¢ a kilowatt hour, the families went into such high levels of debt that they were now carrying \$2,000 and \$3,000 a month debt, which they could not pay off.

Last week I spent my day trying to stop 30% to 40% of that community having their hydro power cut off. That is not only happening in Peawanuck. It is happening in Martin Falls and in communities across this country.

When I hear people say that the federal government does not walk away on its responsibilities, it walks away all the time. This is not good enough and it has to change. I look at these communities. Their futures are continually being snuffed out and erased by being kept in these boxes. Young people have no future because they cannot get proper education.

• (1820)

When I hear this kind of talk about fixing it and making changes, well let us make real changes. Let us make these communities sustainable. Let us live up to our commitments. The Kelowna agreement was a start. The government has an obligation not to do what the last government allowed to happen for 13 straight years.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague who has shown considerable passion throughout the years in relation to aboriginal issues. I do not think anyone would question where his heart is on these matters.

As the hon. member knows, I am a new member of this place. I have come here to enter into debate. I want him to illustrate to me how the debate proceeds in relation to certain premises, such as the premise of truth in relation to one particular issue.

Aboriginal leaders from across Canada went to the first ministers meeting last year. However, the consensus, about which he speaks, perhaps was not as strong as some would think. The member referred to "a signed agreement". The National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations appeared before the aboriginal affairs committee. He was asked if there was a signed agreement, a signature page. Under oath, he indicated to us truthfully that there was not.

Is it helpful to this debate to indicate something such as a signed agreement if in fact there is no signature page?

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, that was a funny question. That question was thrown at us about the signed agreement between the Government of Canada and Kashechewan. I sat there with deputy ministers from all the major departments and watched an agreement being signed between the Government of Canada and the people of Kashechewan. Whether the government wants to accept that or not, it will have to live up to those obligations because there is no going back.

In terms of the issue of a signed agreement with respect to Kelowna, the response is quite simple. If the government believes that was not enough, then it would hold a meeting immediately with all first nation chiefs and tell them what it will do to honour the spirit that the Crown brought to the table. All we hear now is bantering back and forth. If the government has a better deal than Kelowna, a commitment that will move forward, then it has an obligation to sit down with first nation leaders and hammer out an agreement.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a question about community safety. I will reference the highway of tears, Highway 16, in British Columbia. Since 1990, nine young women have either been murdered or have gone missing on this highway. These young women are between the ages of 14 and 25 and all but one are aboriginal.

Could the member comment on how the Kelowna agreement could contribute to keeping young aboriginal women from coast to coast to coast safe?

• (1825)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, that was a powerful question. As I was coming in here today, I was thinking about when I worked in Barriere Lake and the pressures those families faced. There was a case of domestic abuse. That is what happens when 21 people are living on top of each other. The question had been raised about whether there was a safe house for the woman to go to. If there had been any house, or any trailer in Barriere Lake, people would have moved into it with their kids immediately. There has been no support for these people.

My colleague mentioned the horrific number of women who died. When I used to drive into Barriere Lake, I would see a homemade shrine at the edge of Val-d'Or, in memory of a young Algonquin woman who had been sexually assaulted, murdered and left by the side of the road. I do not know if that person was ever caught.

The needs are great for these families. They need proper police services, social services, health and safety and counsellors. The women and children all too often suffer from violence or men suffer from self-destructive violence.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I have listened to comments from everyone. There were very incredible speeches. I know the passion is there to turn the tide for what has been in our past not the best record for dealing with aboriginal issues and the situations in which we have found ourselves.

I have also listened with dismay to many comments by members, especially on the government side, who do not leave me any more assured today than in the past that they understand aboriginal issues. They have further cemented my belief that they do not get it.

I stand here trying to figure out how to speak from the heart.

I will be splitting my time, Mr. Speaker, with the member for Fredericton.

I want to premise my comments in the little time I have to try to bring a better understanding.

*Business of Supply*

I come from a people where things are done in a consensus way. We even run our legislative assembly in Nunavut that way. It is a way of working together. I am trying to figure out a way of trying to bring a better understanding of the issues. There is no winner or loser in this debate. It is a way of working together to better understand how we can move forward as a people with the country and what Kelowna means to me. I want to give a little lesson in what we look at when we look at aboriginal people in Canada.

I hear many comments from people who speak about first nations only. I know they mean the aboriginal people of Canada. Right away I know someone does not understand aboriginal issues in Canada, if they just use first nations. That is no disrespect to my first nations friends in the country.

There are three aboriginal groups recognized in Canada in the Constitution: first nations, Inuit and Métis. We make up the aboriginal peoples of Canada. When people speak of just one group, we know right away that they do not understand the fundamental definition of aboriginal people in Canada.

I come from the Inuit population. I represent the riding of Nunavut, which has an 85% Inuit population. The majority of the people do not understand either French or English. This is like trying to understand a different country within a country.

Sometimes I better understand what people from other countries feel when they immigrate to Canada. We have commonality in the issues that we are trying to work through. It is to create a better understanding that I stand before the House today and to try to figure out how we can move from here.

What does Kelowna mean to me? I speak from the heart. I look at the motion and I know that none of us are going to disagree with the main objective of it. Kelowna means a new understanding of our relationship with the Government of Canada. It is an opportunity to work together.

We saw the aboriginal people, the federal government and the territorial and provincial governments at the table. As an aboriginal group of people, represented by five organizations, we were at the table. We were meeting with the Prime Minister. We were forging new relationships, gaining new respect of where we were coming from and deciding together how to move forward.

I am a strong believer in moving forward. I know there are many things in our past that make it very difficult for our people to move forward. I am not saying that I want to forget the past, but how do we learn from it so we can all better deal with the realities of where we are today?

• (1830)

To me, Kelowna was a realization that there is more than one approach to dealing with all our challenges. Speaking on behalf of Inuit, I will say that we had our own way of governing ourselves before a system was imposed on us. We have to be able to gain that ability again, but in a modern context.

There are many opportunities for aboriginal people today. We have opportunities for education and, in that, gaining positions that perhaps our parents never thought we would participate in. We see RCMP officers, teachers and nurses, and for a lot of people those are

the everyday career decisions they can make, but for us, seeing our own people in those positions as managers and supervisors and even in elected positions means a great deal to us.

One example I can use is that as we gain responsibility we have to learn how to use those responsibilities. We went for too long without having a say in how to live our lives. Someone else was making all those decisions. Even though we get those responsibilities today, it does not mean that every one of us will know how to charge forward with our new responsibilities.

An example I can use is getting one's first driver's licence. Colleagues here will remember all the harrowing experiences I had when I got my first driver's licence and was driving in the city. It took a lot of practice and a lot of mistakes. I got to know the city quite well because I always took the wrong turn, but I learned from those mistakes. I just kept trying and trying because I had to get my kids to hockey games.

I am a little more comfortable driving in the city today, six years later, but people had to be patient with me. People had to know that when they were getting in the car with me they were taking some risks. I am more comfortable in taking on that responsibility, but it took a little time. I had to learn to deal with that responsibility given to me. Just because I got my driver's licence did not mean that I suddenly could be a race car driver.

It is the same with us. As we take on responsibilities as aboriginal people, we have to learn to work with those responsibilities.

For me, Kelowna was a step in the right direction. It is not the be-all and end-all. We can talk until we are blue in the face about what was wrong with it, whether it was signed and whether it was budgeted, but I am trying to get everyone back to the basics. My colleagues on the Liberal side know that when I talk about basics I am talking about going back to the fundamentals and not getting caught up in all the party politics.

We just want access to good housing, education, good facilities and infrastructure, good health and access to health. I know what Kelowna meant to me as far as reaching those objectives is concerned. It gave us an opportunity to strive for those objectives and an opportunity to, in five years and ten years, evaluate where we have gone and whether we want to change direction. We have the right to change our minds once in a while too. We all want a good future for our children.

Another example is that we have been lucky to see in our lifetime a communist country like Russia become a free society. Those people did not exercise their rights as free people the next day. We also have to learn to exercise those rights. They had to learn what it means to live in a free society. It takes time.

*Business of Supply*

All of this takes time. It is a learning curve for us. I am not saying there is one solution or one size fits all for all aboriginal people, but it was a chance for us to work together with all the people who have the expertise and the best practices and put those into our own context, to give us an opportunity to take on the different responsibilities depending on what our ability is. We are not all homogeneous either on how to do things and in having that capacity within us to take on new responsibilities.

• (1835)

Yes, we will make mistakes, but they will be our mistakes. We are under a microscope all the time. It seems that people are just waiting for us to make mistakes so they can say they gave us that responsibility, we blew it, and they should take back control. Like everyone, we just need a level playing field. I want a good future for my four sons, my two granddaughters and future grandchildren, and again, an opportunity to work together and pool all of our resources for a good future for our people.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the intervention of the member for Nunavut she mentioned education and employment a couple of times. Recently, I believe in March, Mr. Berger put forward a report about the importance of education and how education that is culturally relevant and in an appropriate language is so important in closing the employment gap in the north. Could the member comment on that?

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for the question because I cannot even begin to say how important education is for us, in more than one way. There is culturally relevant education. I always say that even though my parents are unilingual Inuit and do not have any certificates on the wall giving them the recognition that they have a master's degree or other diplomas, I know they have the knowledge that is equivalent to the knowledge you might get from a recognized university.

All I am saying is that there are different ways of deciding how to teach our children. It could be successful to have both the southern culture and our aboriginal culture integrated into a way of teaching that is relevant to us.

When I first went to school, English was the only language. We read about trees and highways. We could not even picture what they were. Today we are making great strides in being able to teach the same knowledge, but in a different way, a way that is more relevant to us. I think we really need to pursue the Berger report because it offers a lot of opportunity in recognizing that there is more than one way to teach, but we all have the same end goal and that is to see a good education for our children.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know the member is genuinely interested in assisting the people of Nunavut, who are well served by her.

I would like to ask the member for Nunavut if she would not agree that this government has moved forward on some important initiatives, and in fact, some would suggest, on the most important initiative for the people of Nunavut, which is of course housing. I would like to quote the premier of Nunavut, who stated:

And the budget sets aside \$200 million for Nunavut for housing so I'm very encouraged by that. It will definitely help our residents here that require housing, social housing.

It is this real action with real dollars that I think is important as we proceed, especially for people of the north. I come from the north myself and I know there are special requirements. It takes a lot more energy and resources to deliver materials to the north. When I was in Iqaluit this March, I witnessed that message loud and clear. Is this government not taking real action for her people?

• (1840)

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Mr. Speaker, that is a pretty loaded question to ask me to answer because it is not one thing that will improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians; it is more than one thing. I know that housing is a large component of it and we are not going to say not to give us the housing that was given in the budget. Going back to what I said earlier, it is about a whole relationship of how we decide what priorities are going to be taken care of.

Yes, housing is a big component of the whole plan to improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians. I thank the member for pointing out that housing is one message that has been received from aboriginal Canadians. It is just a piece of the puzzle, though, and it is part of the road that we were on with the Kelowna accord.

As I said in my earlier interventions, Kelowna was a broad approach for how to deal with the challenges that face aboriginal Canadians. We cannot do it with just little piecemeal things here and there that are not coordinated in some way. We need opportunities as aboriginal people to be part of that along the way.

For me, as I said, the importance of Kelowna was that it was a broad approach and a working relationship that went beyond just the five goals. That is the way I understood the Kelowna accord. That is why we keep going back to that accord and not just the one piece taken out of it by itself being the solution for all.

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and happy birthday. I would like to take the time that is available to me in this debate to talk more about the Kelowna accord.

The Kelowna accord only came about at the time of the health ministers meeting in September 2004 when provincial and territorial governments agreed to a first ministers meeting on aboriginal issues. This process started in April 2004 when the aboriginal people round table was called.

Seventy-five aboriginal organizations in Canada, about 500 people, spent an entire day discussing the challenges facing first nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians. The difference in that instance, I believe, was the fact that the Prime Minister realized perhaps for the first time that the solutions would have to be collaborative. In the past, well intentioned people made decisions on behalf of first nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians and generally speaking, those initiatives were unsuccessful by their very nature because they were imposed rather than collaborative solutions.

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I was at that meeting as the minister of infrastructure and housing. We met all day and came up with six areas that needed further study in terms of real solutions to the problems. It was a collective decision by all assembled. Those areas were health, education, housing, economic development, accountability and negotiations. At the time the Prime Minister said that this was the first step and from then on, first nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians would have a place at the table.

Not long after that, in September 2004, a first ministers meeting on health was scheduled and the aboriginal community stepped up understandably and asked about its seat at the table. This meeting on the question of health included federal, provincial and territorial governments as well as aboriginal leaders. It was at that time that the decision was taken to have a first ministers meeting in the following year which ended up being Kelowna. That was really the first time the aboriginal community and the federal, provincial and territorial governments met altogether.

Over the course of the winter, following the health meeting in September, workshops took place and meetings were held in terms of the community working together with the federal government. At this point it was still bilateral. I was quite encouraged by these meetings. Critics were there from other parties. We were seriously engaged in dialogue.

I remember in Calgary that spring the present Minister of Indian Affairs participating in the negotiations as part of the process that brought us to these reports. There are a large number of reports as a result of all the exercise on these six subject areas. However, it became apparent that notwithstanding the fiduciary responsibility of the federal government, if it was going to deal with those six issues, it would have to engage the provinces and territories in a meaningful way.

In March a meeting of aboriginal affairs ministers was held in advance of the final policy retreat that was part of the original process. This was bilateral between the federal government and aboriginal organizations.

I remember clearly the provincial aboriginal affairs ministers saying they would like to have their governments involved, but a serious financial investment would have to be made. Even if the ministers wanted to do something, their premiers, their finance ministers, and their intergovernmental affairs ministers would not buy it because they would believe the federal government was trying to off-load. That is when I began, as the minister responsible, to seek from my government both the policy agreements that were necessary to make this work and the funding arrangements that I will speak of in a minute.

On May 31 the process that started with the round table reached the first phase of completion and that was the policy retreat that was originally intended.

● (1845)

Five agreements were signed between the Government of Canada and the five national aboriginal organizations. That was intended to be bilateral. The provinces were aware because of the meeting we had in March and we scheduled a second aboriginal affairs meeting

for Ottawa on June 21 to discuss the policy retreat that we had just completed in preparation for Kelowna.

At that meeting on January 21 we added a couple of items to the agenda. Everyone was encouraged, but once again the Government of Canada received a loud and clear message that this was not going to work unless the federal government made the kind of investments that were necessary and if it did, the provincial and territorial governments would in fact be involved in areas where they would have to be like education, health, housing, economic development and so on.

That process caused me and four of my colleagues to go forward to cabinet seeking policy decisions from the government and funding decisions that supported those policy decisions, and that happened all through the summer and fall leading to Kelowna. By the time we actually got to Kelowna the funding had been secured against the means and uses ledger that was available to the government as we accounted on a monthly basis.

The funding was secure. The Minister of Finance had said that, the Prime Minister had said that, and the finance officials appearing before the aboriginal affairs committee said the same thing. That was done. The policy framework was established and agreed to and signed off by the five national organizations twice; once on policy in May earlier that year and once in Kelowna, we signed five agreements over again.

The only trilateral agreement that was signed that day was signed with British Columbia. That was intentional and deliberate. We were then going forward with an agreement that everyone understood. I have the quotes of all of the premiers, territorial leaders and the aboriginal organizations themselves.

There can be no question what happened over a period of 18 months in this instance. I am sure there will be members who will get up and speak of the fact that we were the government for 13 years. No one in Canada really believes that this problem was one that was created even in our lifetime. The problems we are talking about here are hundreds of years old and repeated governments are responsible for the conditions that we all recognize exist.

I really believe that the difference in this instance was simply an honest desire to come up with a shared collaborative solution. It takes time. It takes more time than people wish to give, given the terrible situation, but the community wanted to be in on the solution and they were.

As a result that is the reason why there is such investment in the arrangement. People like my colleague from Nunavut talk about the fact that this is as much about the relationship as anything. That is why to turn our back on it at this point, as a country, would be a major mistake by virtue of the fact that what it would say to the community is that nothing has changed. The reality is, it is a wonderful opportunity. The community has an overwhelming consensus.

We will be able to identify individual people who do not like the arrangement, that is for sure, but there is an enormous consensus within the community. The people who were in Kelowna could see that. The statements that were made by the leaders that day and the statements that were made by the premiers that day all suggested that this was an important moment in the relationship and in terms of improving the living conditions of Métis, first nations and Inuit Canadians.

They stepped up. The Government of Canada stepped up by making the policy changes it requested and made the investments that were necessary to support those changes. The provinces and territorial governments stepped up for the first time to say, yes, they will work with the aboriginal people on education, they will work with them on housing, and they will collaborate in a way that is perhaps very new in terms of the relationship on this file in Canada. All of those things converged.

I think we have an opportunity to do the right thing by first nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians and I call upon the Government of Canada to consider the motion that was put by my colleague and do the right thing.

• (1850)

**Mr. Rod Bruinoo (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been here just a few months, but one thing I have noticed about this hon. colleague is that he tends to speak in a very non-partisan way that seeks to move the debate forward in a fashion that is constructive, and that is appreciated.

I would also like to say that both myself, the government and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development have often spoken of how we agree with the objectives and targets that were laid out at that first ministers meeting. There were a lot of them.

If I were to ask a question, though, of this hon. member who has served in many capacities in the previous government, it would be to ask him these questions: Why is it that it took until the last moment of the previous government's life to move forward? Why did it take so long and what stopped him previously from moving forward with these types of discussions?

**Hon. Andy Scott:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments, this started at the round table in April 2004. Kelowna took place in November 2005, 18 months later. When I was involved in the round table, I was the minister for infrastructure and housing. I can tell the House that at the time I was excited by the possibilities because housing would be a big part of it and I remember wanting to be part of something that I thought, done right, could make a big difference.

Little did I know at the time that I would become the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development eventually and have the opportunity to facilitate this dialogue between a number of federal government departments. The Department of Justice was involved. I will not even begin to describe the number of departments involved to help facilitate that.

The Prime Minister had struck an aboriginal affairs committee of cabinet to make every policy change that was necessary. Over 20 times I had to go to cabinet to seek a policy change and to get the

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funding in order to support that policy change. This preoccupied the government for a year and a half, always respectfully, always recognizing that this would not work if it was imposed on the community, regardless of good intention.

This would only work if it was a respectful collaboration between the first nation of our country and the government of the day. That was what it set out to be and that is why so many people were invested in this agreement, because it meant so much to the people who contributed and participated.

At the end of the day one cannot build houses without investment or educate people without investment. There are all kinds of details that would explain how it was that we wished to go forward and the processes that would be involved because process is a big part of collaboration, but it is not all of it.

We would plan education with the provinces and we would structure educational systems because at the end of the day the consensus was that most of the education delivered, particularly in first nation communities, was delivered not by educational systems but simply in schools. My own children going to school in Fredericton would recognize that education is now a system and that is not the case in first nations communities generally.

Therefore, all of that content was a part of this exercise and there was a great deal of content, such as private ownership of homes. There is a long list and I will not get into enumerating it. More important perhaps than all the content, even perhaps more than the revenues or resources that were secured, is the relationship, the idea that finally the government was sitting down with the community and we were going to solve these tragic problems that have haunted our country for hundreds of years. We were going to solve them together, respectfully.

That was the nature of the new relationship and that is probably what is most at risk if the government does not see fit to support my hon. colleague's motion today.

• (1855)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

I too was at Kelowna for the whole event, as was the leader of our party, the member for Toronto—Danforth, as was my colleague from Skeena and my colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan as well. Our party was well represented there out of the sense of hope and optimism that dominated that proceeding. The NDP caucus was caught up with a wave of optimism that finally the country was seized with the issue of the social condition of aboriginal people. There was excitement in the air.

Frankly the dollar figures were not the most important factor. I could argue with my colleague from Fredericton that the dollars were not enough, that they were not all new dollars. I could go through all that, but I am not going to because in the spirit of this debate, what is more important is that we managed to pull the nation together for this common purpose. That far and away overshadowed the dollar figures.

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We were seized of the issue for the time being. We were running the risk of and may have reached the point where we had allowed a permanent underclass in society to be created over the last 100 years. No one federal government is to blame. It is a product of a mindset not of the last century, but of the one before that and the century before that, a Eurocentric colonial mindset that aboriginal people were to be either defeated in a war or in our case to be assimilated or phased out as we occupied this territory.

It is a testimony to the enduring spirit of aboriginal people that we are still dealing with identifiable cultures today. In the face of overwhelming adversity and in the face of colonial design that would have seen them stamped out, whether by war, by small pox, or by economic starvation, the fact that we are still seized with this issue and with a burgeoning healthy aboriginal population with cultures and language in place is a modern day marvel. It is something we should dwell on and be inspired by as we mature in our approach to our first peoples in this country.

The sad truth is that I represent an inner city riding, a core area riding of one of Canada's major cities. No matter what economic, social or medical indicator is used, our aboriginal people rank dead last. That is certainly true with respect to the health determinants, whether it is virtual epidemics or diabetes and other conditions that are often associated with poor diet, poverty, et cetera.

If we do not address this permanent underclass for all the moral and ethical reasons, then we should address it for enlightened self-interest. It does no one any good to leave 20% of the population back, or whatever percentage of the population it is that we are leaving back. This is something Canadians should be concerned about if for no reason than our own enlightened self-interest.

With respect to NDP policy, there is a saying that society does not move forward until we all move forward together, that we leave no one back. In this case, by design or perhaps the lack of a design, by the lack of a concerted effort, we have abandoned a significant number of people. Even in the time it took in the last decade to arrive at Kelowna, another generation of youth will certainly not realize its full potential. Some will be left behind altogether.

We would be remiss in this debate not to address the dollars though, because we are not doing it justice if we all do not start from the same informed level of information. The figure of \$5.1 billion that is bandied around and which the Liberals like to use is a myth. It is a cruel myth in a way because it is being featured to the general public as a huge amount of money, "Look at the commitment, look at how massive our commitment is".

● (1900)

Of that amount, \$700 million was health care money that was announced and announced over and over again until finally it was announced in Kelowna. Let us deduct that right off the top. That leaves \$4.4 billion. Of that \$4.4 billion, \$600 million was the NDP's housing money from Bill C-48. The NDP put \$1.8 billion toward housing and we said one-third of that should be dedicated to aboriginal housing. That is \$600 million of money that the NDP negotiated. If that is deducted off the top, we are down to \$3.8 billion of new money. That is over five years. That is about \$600 million a year.

That is not an enormous commitment to meet the greatest social tragedy of our time. In fact, that is one month's worth of EI surplus. The EI fund was showing a surplus of \$750 million a month. Less than one month's surplus of EI per year is dedicated to this social tragedy that is the social condition of aboriginal people.

Let us at least keep it in perspective. Maybe this is an unfair comparison but INAC has 6,000 employees. There are 6,000 employees at Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to manage the poverty of about 600,000 people. That is \$500 million a year in salaries alone, never mind the workstations, computers, benefits, pension plans and the buildings they occupy. A huge amount of this money is not going to the communities that are in such desperate need.

It galls me that it is like pulling teeth to get a bit of money to try to lessen the misery of a lot of people, whereas when the military wanted to go from \$12 billion to \$14 billion to service 50,000 troops, it was there. In fact, people are saying it should be more, more, more.

We are talking about \$7 billion to meet all of the needs of 600,000 to 800,000 people. That is roughly \$8,000 per head. We spend more than that on high school students alone in Manitoba. We spend about \$8,500 per student per year in high school while this \$8,000 per person is to meet their health, education, housing, infrastructure, sewage and water treatment plants, the whole kit and caboodle.

I say with all due respect that Canadians should never be sucked into this myth and illusion that there is a gazillion dollars being poured into aboriginal communities. There is not nearly enough to meet the basic social needs of those families to survive.

One time I heard a very gifted speaker say that if there are five children and only three pork chops, the solution is not to kill two of the children. The social democratic point of view is to challenge the lie that there are only three pork chops. Do not try to tell me that in the richest and most powerful civilization in the history of the world we cannot provide for the basic needs of a family to survive, whether the family lives in Pukatawagan, Shamattawa, or the inner city area of Winnipeg. I am not buying that any more. It is a myth and it is a cruel myth because it is costing people their futures.

To come back to Kelowna, the money is not the important issue. The current federal government could easily match the dollar commitments of Kelowna. What was important was bringing the nation together for the common purpose of acknowledging the fact that there are these appalling social conditions. The Indian Act can best be described as 135 years of social tragedy. It was a terrible, evil document, unfit for a western democracy. It is Eurocentric colonialism personified and institutionalized into one evil document. It must be eradicated before these oppressed people can move forward.



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In closing, I will remind people that we should be aware of a famous Harvard study that looked at the most economically progressive reserves in all of North America, the United States and Canada. It found that the degree of economic development success was directly proportional to the degree of self-governance and independence. In other words, solutions do not come from above and are not imposed on people. Solutions will come commensurate with the degree of self-governance and independence and out from under the Indian Act.

● (1905)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague comes from an important part of Manitoba and represents an important region within the city of Winnipeg.

In relation to the first ministers meeting last year, the focus of that meeting did not shine much light on the plight of the urban aboriginal, individuals whom the member serves quite proudly.

My question relates to his commentary on the means for which services and benefits are delivered to aboriginal people, Métis, first nations and Inuit. The system is flawed. He pointed that out in language perhaps more descriptive than my own. Should we not as a government be looking first at ways to improve the means for which these benefits are delivered as we move forward? Is it not incumbent upon us to take that action as our primary objective?

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg South has given me the opportunity to add a point that I should have made in my speech.

It is true that the plight of the urban aboriginal, the off reserve aboriginal person, is the most desperate. Even what paltry support mechanism they may have had in their home communities is often not available to them when they move off reserve. They often get lost in the inner cities.

One of the heartening things about the Kelowna meetings was that the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, which represents off reserve aboriginal peoples, and the Métis National Council were represented at the table and were given equal status to first nations and Inuit people. We took some comfort in that it was not only the provincial and territorial leaders who were with the prime minister around that table, but the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, the Métis National Council and the Assembly of First Nations were represented.

In retrospect, it was almost a miracle to get those diverse interests together in one room for a common purpose. I am really reluctant to let that slip away. Even though I often accuse the Liberal Party, I heard the former minister of Indian affairs outline the steps that got us to Kelowna. It sounded that exactly what was wrong with the whole administration managing poverty, I call it, of Indian affairs is that it goes around and around to round tables that lead nowhere, to more studies, et cetera. That all seemed to stop at Kelowna when a collective enlightenment, a kind of collective consciousness dominated the room. Everybody was bobbing their heads at once saying, "You are right. The time has come. No more debate. No more prizes for predicting rain. The prize is only for building arks".

● (1910)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is with respect to trust and good faith negotiations. First nations that I represent in my riding have a long and proud history of having negotiations and treaties between nations and attempting treaties with the federal Government of Canada, and the Queen prior to that. Time and time again those negotiations have broken down and treaties have been broken. I am wondering what aboriginal leaders must be thinking of the current incarnation of the Queen, the current federal government, and what faith they might have or not have in the current decisions to tear up yet another negotiated treaty.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Skeena is absolutely right. The honour of the Crown is at stake. Those very words are part of today's motion, I believe.

It took me a number of years to realize that when aboriginal people talk about making treaty, they are not just talking about signing a contract. They are entering into something that is a relationship. There is no other way of describing it. It is a sacred trust.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg who has allowed me to split his time.

It is a privilege to once again rise in the House to speak about the issues that are so important to people across the country and, in particular, to the people I represent. My riding in Skeena, northwestern British Columbia, is made up of more than 30% first nations. Some 23 different nations exist within the boundaries of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, which is an extraordinary representation. The history, culture and pride of those nations is most remarkable.

For Canadians who have come and spent time in my region of the world, one of the first and most striking elements of that visit is the deep and strong history that exists in the ground. For anyone visiting Ottawa and our Museum of Civilization, there is almost an entire wing of that place dedicated to the art and craft of people who come from that region. The Haida, the Nisga'a, the Tsimshian the Heiltsuk are all represented in some of the most incredible expressions of culture that we have seen. It is well established and well known that the people have a strong history of pride, yet that has suffered greatly, since the first contact with Europeans. It has been a slippery, sliding and disastrous slope.

I turn to the negotiations at Kelowna. I, too, was in attendance with the baggage of skepticism, having watched and reviewed the history of our country in the treatment of first nations. I wondered if this was yet another meeting for potentially another photo opportunity for the then prime minister.

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The New Democrats stood at that meeting with the current Minister of Indian Affairs and applauded the efforts, as did the minister. We heard his commitment. We heard him say how important the negotiation was for the first nations people. As the member for Winnipeg Centre has said, it is not just because of what is written on the page or the financial commitments. It is to treat with another nation, to go into a trust based negotiation and resolve to change the future and not repeat the mistakes of the past such as residential schools, displacement camps and the grinding poverty, which we see day in and day out with many of our first nations people.

There is a real struggle within the first nations communities to which I speak, particularly for the young people coming up in this generation. They struggle to maintain one foot in the oral traditions, the traditional concept and world view and another foot in the so-called modern western era, to go out and seek higher education and to achieve a certain amount of wealth and status in our world. That struggle is hindered fundamentally because the basic tools of achievement are not available to the vast majority of first nations.

The basic tools are predicated upon those things that we all take for granted in terms of our quality of life. We take for granted the ability to have decent care, basic food and housing. We take for granted the ability to have education for our young people and lifelong learning to improve our lot in life.

If I could only take members to some of the villages and communities I represent. There is no more sobering a moment as one walks through some of these villages that have been there for many centuries, if not millennia. It is sobering to witness first-hand the pride coupled with that grinding poverty and what that psychologically does, in particular, to the next generation coming up.

We met with the first nations leadership when we were at Kelowna. We continued to meet with that leadership. We continue to lend our shoulder to the wheel to put the force necessary behind the initiatives, what few initiatives have come from those governments. The New Democrats have stood, year in, year out, decade in, decade out, with our first nations people, saying that things must improve.

I remember Frank Howard, a former New Democrat and member of Parliament for my riding, who filibustered for three years on every Friday, insisting on the basic right of first nations people to vote. It is a shame that this was going on in the 1950s and 1960s. It is incredible how recent the time is, certainly within the lifetime of many people within the House. New Democrats had to fight for that basic principle for first nations people to attain the simple ability to cast a vote in a federal election.

●(1915)

Recently I was at a National Aboriginal Day celebration in Terrace, B.C. My chest was swollen with pride when I watched the first nations come together and celebrate. There were many dancing groups, and these have grown over the last number of years. This is an excellent sign of a rebirth of culture and reclamation back to things that held people together. In particular, I watched the young people dancing, learning the songs, learning the traditional ways and grounding themselves. There is some possibility of them improving and becoming a generation that is stronger and more able to succeed than the generations before.

The youth will only be able to do that if the Government of Canada is willing to sit at the table, in good faith and with honour, which carries a significant meaning and weight within the communities I represent, and negotiate a treaty and principles to allow first nations people to succeed.

The government, during the election, claimed to support Kelowna and the funding. Then immediately afterwards there were contradictory views within its key members. When it arrived in government, it fundamentally broke that promise. This is yet another sad piece of the chain of the legacy of broken commitments to our first nations people, which has gone on too long.

If the issue were not so important and the need not so great, one might choose to lose faith. One might decide to throw one's hands up and say that this seems to be an impossible conundrum. From government to government, regardless of their political stripe, they are consistent in one thing, and that is failing the first nations people of Canada.

The Liberals were wonderful at rolling out programs and making announcements with little substance and less effect. The Liberals talked about teen suicide. There was a community that I intended to visit in my region, but it was hard to get to. I would have to go by float plane. Over the course of six to eight months I tried to get there for meetings. I tried three times but each time there had been a teen suicide in the week prior to my arrival and the community was in mourning. The community was unable to welcome me because a feast was required, people needed to publicly express that mourning and there was no time for politics.

I asked the Liberals to introduce programs to prevent the unbelievable and disgraceful rate of teen suicide within aboriginal communities. I said that all they had to do was use one indicator in their program. If their program was successful, teen suicides would go down. If they measured themselves by that and nothing else, they would have our support. We would have worked with them to achieve that. First nations leaders would have worked with them.

The government of the day refused. I challenge the Conservative government to use numbers and indicators that mean sense, not false promises, not paper tigers of bills that do not achieve results. When the children of a community are killing themselves, hope has abandoned that community to such a fundamental level. The government simply cannot talk about anything else until it re-establishes that hope.

It is hard to imagine for me to return to my communities and express hope based on the direction and course the government has taken. I would like to see some small measures on housing and on water. Provincial ministers across the political spectrum, first nations leaders from across the country, and with the support of at least two opposition parties at the time to move through those negotiations, created that moment. To then have an election and then back away from that moment, hoping that somehow it would be recreated, is beyond the pale. It requires first nations people to have hope, while another insult has been thrown at them.

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There is not a community, not a culture within this nation that would do that. We would not accept the conditions first nations people live under for any other identifiable community in our country. There would be rioting in the streets.

However, for some reason the culture from within this place, from within this room, has been so much talk and so little action. I will give the government credit for its decisiveness, but decisively wrong on this file. If the government were to change course and re-establish that faith, it would go a long way to proving itself to be a true government, rather than some reactionary force swinging hard to the political right.

• (1920)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government, the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs and all members on this side have stated time and again that the objectives and targets laid out at the first ministers meeting are important, but it is the approach that we need to proceed with which we must consider.

I take the member back to the points raised by his colleague from Winnipeg Centre, who made a very impassioned point on the system for which services are delivered toward aboriginal people. Would the member not agree that it is in fact the system itself that needs improvement, it is the system that we need to look at primarily? If we are to help aboriginal people, must we not start there?

• (1925)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, if the interest is taking a run at the Indian Act and taking a good run at INAC, he has only to walk over and talk to us. I do not think there is anything holding up first nations communities than the deplorable bureaucracy, which has been created year in and year out by both parties.

I have watched time and time again as initiatives get stalled. Bureaucrats run the gamut of meetings, consultations and round tables with 80¢ on the dollar not hitting the communities for which they are intended. If the government said how it would circumvent the bureaucracy and how it would achieve results for first nations people on the ground, we would welcome the conversation, but we have not heard that.

New Democrats are interested in improving the quality of life of first nations people. It is the reason some of us went into politics in the first place. I watched former Reform Party members represent my riding. I hesitate to utter some of the phrases I heard them publicly use with respect to our first nations people. One of the burning reasons I first put my name forward to run for politics was because of the unbelievable attitude held by the former party. I will not attribute it to this one. Let us say it is a brand new day and the Reform Alliance and all those things have not infiltrated into the Tom Flanagan thinking of that party. However, let us for a moment remember that some of the attitudes at base level, with respect to first nations and their place in this country, are most discouraging in the history of the party and they must relinquish those attitudes if we are to get anywhere.

I would challenge the member on one key point. Today we are challenging and battling fish farms that his government seems to

keep wanting to ram down our throats in the northwest of British Columbia. They are absolutely not wanted. I implore the member to talk to the Minister of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and get his head screwed on straight. Just today the first nations people of Skeena River, the major tributary in northern British Columbia, announced:

We the first nations of the Skeena River and its approaches proclaim the waters of our traditional territories a fish-farm-free, wild-salmon-only zone.

If the parliamentary secretary has the true intention of entering into sincere dialogue with the first nations people of my region, this proclamation will mean something. If he has true intention, tomorrow morning he will make absolutely sure that he marches over to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and at least let the minister know that first nations people in the northwest of British Columbia have spoken loud and clear. There simply will not be any more Department of Fisheries and Oceans initiatives to ram these things down our throat, as an example.

This would be an encouraging place for the parliamentary secretary to show a new dialogue, to show a new conversation. It would go a long way. I would stand with pride with him on any stage that he would like to confirm this proclamation, to confirm that the federal Government of Canada will respect such a serious wording and such a serious effort by our first nations people.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

I am pleased to rise today to speak to the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. With all due respect to her good intentions, however, I must note that the motion is somewhat contradictory. It calls for focused and immediate initiatives at the same time that it calls for the implementation of an accord that the Liberals themselves have been unable to table in the House.

As a result of last fall's first ministers meeting, there is a deeper shared understanding of the challenges and needs faced by aboriginal people in areas such as health, water, housing, education and economic opportunities. The first ministers meeting brought the parties together, federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal, for discussions to clarify priorities and shared responsibilities.

The process and the discussions actually began much earlier, but as several aboriginal groups have pointed out, they were not perfect. Nevertheless, they were a significant step forward in terms of consultation and consensus building, one of the three elements that the Auditor General has identified as essential to improving the lives of aboriginal people.

However, last fall's meeting did not go so far as to culminate in an accord outlining focused and immediate initiatives, nor did it adequately address two other elements the Auditor General has highlighted as the key to further progress: structural change and capacity building.

*Business of Supply*

Earlier today the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre did not answer my question regarding her motion, but instead read from a prepared statement of defence against anticipated criticisms on this point. After 13 years of Liberal governments and little or nothing on this front to show for it, I am not surprised that she would take this precaution.

As she noted earlier, structural changes are difficult. What she neglected to emphasize, however, is that they are nonetheless extremely necessary. In many cases, they are needed simultaneously with if not prior to further investments. This will ensure that current and future investments have measurable results that someone is accountable for producing.

Not only is our Conservative government committed to conserving and building on the good consultation and consensus work done at the first ministers meeting, to investing additional funds where they will be most effective, and to increasing capacity building, we are also committed to making the difficult structural changes the Liberals so long neglected at a significant cost to all Canadians. It is a significant challenge. We are committed to accountability, another area in which Liberals have had to scramble to prepare statements of defence.

Given that we fully support the objectives and targets identified last fall, there is little the Liberals can do except try to pass off a press release with a Liberal pre-election spending promise and attach it as a legally binding Government of Canada commitment. The Liberals may publicly attack five months of Conservative action because it does not fulfill one day of pre-election Liberal promises, but will they ever publicly admit that today's motion for debate is all about deflecting attention from the fact that five months of Conservative action have brought more new funding and initiatives on key aboriginal issues than the past 13 years of Liberal inaction?

These 13 years have given the Liberals a record that even their potential future leader, Gerard Kennedy, has recently called "devastating". I have to repeat that: devastating. It was incredible to hear but at the same time it was very illustrative of the record of the party of which he is seeking to be leader. As my hon. colleague, the member for Winnipeg Centre, pointed out this morning, the Liberals, after 13 years in power, had become skilled at announcing program funding spread out over so many years that it had little significant impact and skilled at re-announcing the same programs year after year.

● (1930)

This will not be the Conservative government's approach. What is required now is a plan of action, a means to move forward, a plan that will involve, as needed, specific consultations, structural change, capacity building and additional funding, a plan that will produce tangible, measurable results, and one that will have the details of the concrete steps we need to take in order to implement that plan. Furthermore, it must be prioritized, focused and resourced, with clear responsibilities and accountabilities.

We are taking swift action. In March, one of this government's first acts was to launch a plan of action to address drinking water concerns in first nations communities. We set a priority, we put together a plan and we are moving forward.

This government understands the critical importance of improving the quality of life for aboriginal women, children and families. We recognize that providing opportunities for women and their families builds economic strength and capacity from inside their communities. This means that aboriginal people become more prosperous in their own right and so does Canada.

Our budget has allocated \$3.7 billion for aboriginal and northern programs. That includes \$2.2 billion to address the legacy of the Indian residential schools, an important payment that will be going to these claimants and one that is long overdue.

The budget targeted investments in key areas. These investments include \$300 million for affordable housing programs in the territories, benefiting both aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples. Nunavut, where the problem is in fact most pressing in terms of housing, will receive \$200 million. Having travelled to Iqaluit as one of my first duties in the role I have now, I must say the people there will be looking forward very much to these funds. Also, Yukon and the Northwest Territories will receive \$50 million each.

Another \$300 million is meant to improve housing, enhancing the quality of life for thousands of aboriginal people living in non-reserve communities. Through previous discussions at the first ministers meeting, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples pointed out that this is one area that was not looked at properly. Off reserve housing is an important area that this government has addressed.

Furthermore, some \$450 million is set aside to fund initiatives for education, for women and children, and for on reserve water and housing.

Of the \$3.7 billion earmarked for aboriginal and northern Canadians, \$500 million will promote community development in the areas potentially impacted by the Mackenzie gas project. In fact, this is in conjunction with all of the economic development that is flowing to the north. In my opinion, and I think that of others, this will begin to stimulate the degree of industry and economic benefit that so many people are seeking in the north. It is an area that has seen little economic development in the past.

This government has pledged to make progress toward its goal of working with first nations, Inuit and Métis partners and with the provinces and territories to establish priorities and develop effective, sustainable approaches to the social and economic challenges they face in their communities.

We are delivering real results, not just empty rhetoric. Canadians voted for change. We are delivering positive change to them. We are committed to better lives for aboriginal people in Canada through a practical and decisive approach. The steps we have taken so far clearly show this.

I would like to say also that many people from the region I come from are looking forward to seeing this government move forward in a way that will see real benefits flow through to the people who need it most. I am very proud to be part of this administration.

● (1935)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions and comments for the member.

*Business of Supply*

First, I welcome his comments about the residential schools agreement. It was agreed to in principle by the previous Liberal government. The dollars were allocated by the previous Liberal government. It is important that all members of this House acknowledge the inequities and the injustices of the past. I am delighted that the party of the member opposite sought to affirm what the previous government brought in.

I have a number of questions for the member.

He references the water issues. What my first question would be, and it is a question I have asked others, is whether he thinks it is appropriate to drain money from school projects, two in particular that we know of already and with probably more to come, to enhance the water projects when indeed we know that \$400 million was allocated for enhanced water management development and the training of those who manage the systems.

Second, the member talks about structural change and its importance. I agreed with him earlier today that it is important. I do not deny it. As an aside, I note that there was no prepared text on that. What he heard was what I responded to.

Again, though, I would ask him what I asked one of his colleagues. Is he aware of the legislation brought in by the previous government that dealt with the First Nations Land Management Act? Is he aware of the fiscal management act? Is he aware of the oil and gas act? Is he aware of the commercial and industrial act? Is he aware of the structural change they have brought about for first nations and aboriginal peoples? There is a model of structural change, but I do not think we can hide behind it.

Last, could he please elaborate to this House on what his vision is of consultation with first nations? I think it is important that we understand the relationship the government anticipates having with aboriginal peoples.

● (1940)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Speaker, I think the comments the member made in terms of water are important. Upon coming into government, we immediately found that many first nations communities throughout Canada were in a situation that simply would be unacceptable in so many other regions of Canada. The Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development proceeded to show great leadership. In fact, the first thing he did was put forward policies that set standards. He has also moved forward with the department to ask that these standards be put in place and that water, something as fundamental to life as water, be made safe.

Simply put, the minister has shown great leadership. I would suggest that the initiatives he has put forward make the most sense based on the circumstances that were inherited.

The member asked a question in terms of consultation. When government is moving forward with any legislation or policy that affects aboriginal groups, there is no doubt that aboriginal Canadians always appreciate being consulted. Again, it is something that the minister has stated on numerous occasions. He said that his consultation process will be elaborate and substantial and will take into account the stakeholders that are going to be affected by any legislation or policy that is brought forward.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to speak to the motion from the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. I serve with the member for Winnipeg South Centre on the aboriginal affairs committee and I am very aware of her commitment and her desire to see the living conditions of aboriginal peoples all across Canada improved.

Even prior to my appointment to serve on this committee, I have had a strong desire and commitment to see the needs of our aboriginal Canadian brothers and sisters more adequately addressed. However, since my appointment to this committee, having met many more aboriginal Canadians and having read many reports dealing with a wide variety of issues facing them, I can only say that my resolve to be more involved in moving forward on these issues has increased. I am committed to seeing the gaps closed and my colleagues on this side of the House are committed to seeing those gaps closed as well.

Improving the lives of aboriginal Canadians is something this government takes very seriously. The former Liberal government spoke about aboriginal issues but failed to provide any action or results. In fact, living conditions for aboriginals have steadily become worse over the past 13 years. First nations, Inuit and Métis Canadians have far too often been the subject of too many broken Liberal promises.

On the other hand, our government has begun taking action immediately, and we are just getting started. We are providing real action and real funds, and we will make real changes.

On May 18 the Government of Canada reaffirmed the importance of Friendship Centres by announcing that it was establishing a new long term approach to their funding with a four year, \$77 million contribution agreement. This agreement will provide stability to the 116 Friendship Centres across Canada that support the needs of aboriginal peoples in urban settings.

● (1945)

The Minister for Canadian Heritage and Status of Women said, "Friendship Centres have played a pivotal role in the delivery of community focused programs and services for aboriginal Canadians. This agreement will help build strong aboriginal communities and maintain vibrant aboriginal cultures in Canada".

Stable funding is an important start but we must all work together to develop options to address the long term sustainability of Friendship Centres.

As I have said, the government is committed to improving opportunities and the quality of life for all Canadians, including first nations, Inuit and Métis in concrete and practical ways. However, any effort to improve opportunities and the quality of life must take into account the changing demographics of aboriginal peoples in Canada.

*Business of Supply*

Over the past 30 years, the first nation, Inuit and Métis population in Canada has grown rapidly and now over 70% of aboriginal peoples live off reserve and 50% of aboriginal people live in urban centres. Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing segment of Canada's urban population. The aboriginal population is also a young population, with a median age of 24.7 years. That is 13 years younger than the non-aboriginal population of Canada.

Recognizing these changing demographics, the government is working with the National Association of Friendship Centres to continue monitoring, managing and delivering programming for aboriginal people who live in urban centres. This is especially important for aboriginal youth programs, such as the Urban Multipurpose Aboriginal Youth Centres and Young Canada Works for Aboriginal urban Youth.

Friendship Centres, through a strong community focus and by providing targeted programs and services, contribute to improving the lives and socio-economic conditions of aboriginal people living in urban centres.

The Friendship Centres continue to develop innovative and appropriate solutions to the social, cultural, economic and other obstacles that could impede the ability of first nations people, Inuit and Métis living in urban areas to fully participate in Canadian society.

Friendship Centres make a tangible impact on the lives of aboriginal peoples on a daily basis. They play a vital role in assisting aboriginal individuals and families as they integrate into urban communities after relocating from rural, remote or reserve life.

Friendship Centres provide assistance with education, skills training, employment, housing, health care programs and services and serve as a reciprocal link to other community organizations.

Friendship Centres are recognized by local service agencies as an important part of the safety net for aboriginal urban peoples. They provide a culturally appropriate environment through which hundreds of urban aboriginal youth can develop leadership skills and improve their lives.

Friendship Centres support the needs of aboriginal peoples to access programs and services, to participate in activities in their own language, to feel connected to their community within safe, supportive and culturally appropriate environments and to feel connected to the non-aboriginal community.

The government recognizes that first nations, Inuit and Métis are distinct peoples with diverse histories and cultures and they have different needs and requirements. We also recognize that they live in different conditions and situations. They live on and off reserves. They live in Inuit and Métis settlements. They live in remote and rural settings throughout the provinces and territories. They also live in towns and cities all across Canada. This recognition is critical to achieving success in improving the lives of all aboriginal peoples in Canada.

We have shown our commitment to all aboriginals regardless of where they live, through our budget of \$300 million for off reserve housing. This is in addition to \$300 million for northern housing where a majority of aboriginals reside.

The Liberals had 13 years to make a difference in the lives of our aboriginal Canadians and yet the result was, in Gerard Kennedy's own words, "a devastating record".

Our government has already taken action in ways that really make a difference to the lives of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. In the days, weeks and years to come we will continue to do so.

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as there are distinct cultures within the different groups of aboriginal people, could the member tell the House what specific work and progress has been made on the Métis file since his government came to power?

• (1950)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Speaker, it is important to focus on all aboriginal peoples, which is what our government intends to do. As I said, we have committed \$3.7 billion to reach the needs of aboriginal people, \$450 million of that for improving water and housing on reserves, and \$300 million to the provinces and territories for off reserve and aboriginal housing. Along with that, we have committed another \$300 million for the territories for northern housing. Much of that money will be available to our aboriginal peoples, including the Métis.

I would also like to mention that all of our Métis, aboriginal, Inuit and first nations people will benefit from the other measures in our budget that were announced recently, including dropping the GST, the tax exemption for students and the apprenticeship grants for those who wish to take advantage of those.

All our aboriginal peoples are well cared for in the approaches that our government is taking as we move forward.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member spent quite some time on the Friendship Centres, which I know are important, but having been a member of the health committee when we studied aboriginal issues some years ago, I had a chance to visit a number of reserves and I can say that in terms of improving the quality of life of all first nations group, Indian, Métis and Inuit, they need the basic necessities.

The member did not mention much about basic necessities like water, housing, basic care and social services which I did not see on many of the reserves. Some were better off than others, but it must have been a very difficult time for our first nations to see that the first move on the government side was to throw out the Kelowna accord that was worked on so hard by the first ministers.

I wonder if the member has any good news to tell our first nations people concerning basic necessities and how the government will deliver on those.

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Speaker, many of the previous speakers on this side of the House have addressed the issues of the on reserve aboriginal people. It was my intent in my address to highlight that in the Kelowna accord many of the off reserve aboriginal people's needs were ignored. Many times when aboriginal people move off reserve or move from remote communities into urban centres, they are often lost within the system. They do not have the structural props to hold them up and help them survive and thrive within an urban community.

*Business of Supply*

The Friendship Centres are designed so that people who move off reserve, from remote communities to urban centres where they are facing a whole new world, are given the resources to cope with life and avoid the despair and hopelessness many of them would find if they were left there on their own.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little surprised by some of the statements made by the member concerning aboriginal people in Canada in that he keeps alluding to the fact that we belong to Canada and uses such phrases as “our aboriginal people, our first nations, our Inuit”. I find it a little offensive in that he also keeps talking about the difficulties that aboriginal people face.

I am well aware of the services of Friendship Centres in Canada and have known, through many generations of my own family, about the critical need for that service in terms of having an opportunity as aboriginal people to have our own place within this country.

Is the member aware of other needs in terms of aboriginal people within the urban settings which the Kelowna accord did address other than Friendship Centres and what those needs might be in urban centres?

•(1955)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Speaker, if I in any way indicated lack of respect, it would be the opposite. I was trying to point out the fact that our budget initiatives were available to all Canadians, including aboriginal people. That was my intent.

**Hon. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Churchill.

Last November in Kelowna, the leadership and representatives of the federal, provincial and territorial governments, the Métis, Inuit and first nations, both on and off reserve, met to strengthen relationships among themselves and to work in a more effective and collaborative working partnership with mutual respect toward beneficial outcomes.

The first ministers and national aboriginal leaders were launching a 10 year dedicated effort to closing the gap in quality of life that now exists between aboriginal people and other Canadians. The Kelowna meeting grew from a September 2004 special meeting of first ministers and aboriginal leaders. This meeting was dedicated to address the very serious conditions that contribute to poverty among aboriginal people and to ensure that they can more fully benefit from and contribute to Canada's prosperity in the years ahead.

Between the two meetings, all the participants worked extremely hard over a series of thematic meetings and working groups to focus in the areas which were felt fundamental to the overall purpose of closing the gap. All participants worked in good faith. Part of the process of working together was building the relationships as a foundation for success.

The aboriginal people of Canada were represented by the leadership from the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Native Women's Association of Canada. These organizations submitted working papers on the subject themes throughout the process.

They put their most talented people forward to work on concrete plans and ideas in the areas of education, health, housing, including drinking water, and economic development. As we worked on these themes, we also integrated the need for better and newer relationships. Many gatherings were held over 18 months across Canada.

We knew where the problems were. They had been studied, documented and studied some more. This was the journey for solutions, solutions attained by a collaborative, consultative and cooperative effort by all. It was never easy and probably very difficult for some. Trust had been violated before, but the former Liberal government was committed to turn the corner to strive together.

The provinces and territories of all different political stripes came on board knowing this was important and necessary in every corner of Canada. The Government of Canada, representing the people of Canada, gave its word that we would work to achieve the goals of Kelowna.

I quote the member for LaSalle—Émard in the House just a few weeks ago. He stated:

The Kelowna accord is a comprehensive 10 year plan to achieve a clear set of goals and targets. We provided \$5.1 billion for the first five years. Let me be very clear. The funds were fully provided for in the fiscal framework. The government has the money. It is a fiscal framework, incidentally, which has, since that time, produced a surplus substantially larger than was originally projected. We made it clear that for the second five years of the program, enhanced resources based on the success obtained would be provided.

The work of the Kelowna accord was televised nationally. It was no secret. Canadians were aware that there were needs to be filled, agreements to live up to. We keep hearing about the government's five priorities. A government should serve the needs of its people, not the needs of its own political partisan agenda.

There is a real need in education, health, housing and economic development. Eighteen months of work developed the plan. Ongoing work would provide the necessary detail. Kelowna did happen. It was real and it will not go away.

Canadians know that the new Conservative government, with budget surpluses sufficient to fully fund the Kelowna initiative, chose not to do so. Instead of a \$5.1 billion Kelowna accord, it offered \$450 million over two years for education, women, children and families, water and housing, some of which was provided by prior Liberal budgets.

Whatever way the government tries to sell its message, the delivery rings hollow. It is not what was agreed to and developed together. Unilaterally, it has cut off not just the money but the working relationships developed in good faith throughout this process.

*Business of Supply*

In the prior government there was a cabinet committee on aboriginal affairs. As a privy councillor and parliamentary secretary for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, I attended and participated regularly. The former Prime Minister had an aboriginal affairs secretariat. That has been discontinued.

● (2000)

We did the Canada aboriginal people round table process in the spring of 2005 and these resulted in accords between the federal government and the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Métis National Council, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Native Women's Association of Canada. These bilaterals enhanced the involvement of the distinctive people and their specific issues.

The Kelowna accord broke the money down into five areas: \$1.8 billion for educational initiatives, \$1.6 billion for housing and infrastructure, \$1.3 billion for health, \$200 million for economic opportunities, and \$170 million for relationship and accountability initiatives.

The Kelowna accord funding built on previous investments by the Liberal government in areas of urgent need for aboriginals including the \$2.2 billion compensation for the direct benefit of former students toward a fair and lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian residential schools. I could go on listing other moneys that were there, but this is about Kelowna.

For the current government to say it is moving when it absolutely knows that it is underfunding is even more shameful than if it had never had the knowledge. This was a transformative agreement.

Canadians now understand the needs in our diverse aboriginal communities. These needs are often complicated by ongoing treaty or specific claims negotiations that are longstanding, but nothing happens if there is little political will or nominal political will, or even if a minister wants to make headway and the Prime Minister has little interest and his finance minister has a clenched fist.

I read the transcript of the remarks made by the current Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs when he was campaigning for his party at an Assembly of First Nations meeting. The same minister now defends his government's abandonment of the procurement strategy for aboriginal businesses by allowing non-native companies to bid on contracts that would have been designed for aboriginal ownership. His relationships with the aboriginal peoples, he should serve, are now becoming strained.

Over the last number of years of this Parliament I have been fortunate to work with many first nations, Inuit and Métis leaders. The sophisticated legislation that was first nation-led and the self-government agreements completed during the time of our government was work that anyone in Canada would be proud of, and, in fact, was lauded around the world.

Kelowna's objectives really would have most benefited the younger generations, a demographic that is the inverse of the rest of Canada. While birth rates plummet in non-native populations in our country, they are skyrocketing in most of the aboriginal societies.

These young citizens could and should be educated, and be healthy contributors to the workforce in their future. They certainly

should get a productive life chance. Kelowna worked toward that goal.

We also had to deal first with the residential school legacy for their parents and grandparents. Thankfully, this was accomplished. Thankfully, the current government could not change that resolution, a court ordered agreement developed by all the parties after very intense negotiations.

From my viewpoint, which I hope is more knowledgeable than the day I stepped into the House because of my parliamentary experience on committee and in the department and through working with stakeholders, the Conservative government does not want to consider the reality of doing the right thing. The Conservatives often work with misperceptions and fears instead of facts. What is lost, what is being lost, in reality is their opportunity.

There is an opportunity to keep the word of the Government of Canada, to keep the faith with our aboriginal partners and the work undertaken together. We are all Canadians, but some of us were here first. They are our first nations, our Métis and our Inuit. There is diversity within us but we are all deserving.

If the Conservatives would embrace an equitable concept of government, they might have budgeted more for real needs in the society we could have. Why would one not want to improve the educational outcomes of all aboriginal learners to build a more prosperous and self-reliant future for all aboriginal people, whether first nation, Inuit or Métis?

We did commit to progress. There was accountability. Kelowna was a series of plans for a brighter future, and we need to implement the plans. Regions were to be further engaged. The implementation would be focused on developing practical approaches through existing tripartite or bilateral processes and creating new ones where required.

All Canadians must appreciate and respect the distinctions among first nations, Inuit and Métis. Inclusive means male and female, young and old, on and off-reserve, rural and urban, inland and coastal. Their experiences are different in Canada and they have different goals and outcomes. We hear their distinctive voices through the round table process. Kelowna was an outcome for the government and there is still time to listen to the united voices and their message.

● (2005)

In closing, Canada is a just society. For many of our aboriginal people, Kelowna would have made it more so for them. I implore the minister and the Conservative government to choose the better path of Kelowna. No one has been looking for something new or different. We need what was agreed to and what was negotiated through hard work, compromise and good faith. The Conservative government must live up to Canada's commitment.



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the hon. member's remarks. She made comments like, "The government's promises, the delivery rings hollow". She also spoke about the clenched fist.

I would like to share a short story about what happened in my riding of Langley. We have two first nations, the Katzie and the Kwantlen. The Kwantlen First Nation lives on McMillan Island in the middle of the Fraser River. For the last 30 years that island has been eroding, disappearing into the Fraser River.

A year and a half ago I began working with the Kwantlen to resolve that. That was working and speaking to the former Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, trying to find the dollars to stop the erosion of the Kwantlen's island into the Fraser River.

I also talked to the critic, who is now our minister. I made him aware of the problem of that island disappearing. There was acre after acre disappearing every year into the Fraser River and the Kwantlen First Nation was looking for help. All I received from the former minister was the runaround, a year and a half of broken promises, as the member talked about, hollow promises, that is all I received.

She talked about a clenched fist. That island kept disappearing which affected the health and environment of that first nations group. It was shameful how the Liberals treated the Kwantlen First Nation. Within a month and a half, the money was there, \$2.5 million. It came to Langley and the Kwantlen First Nation is being taken care of.

I ask that member, where was she when I brought it up in the House many times? Where was she then? She talked about a clenched fist. I would like her to answer why her government had a clenched fist against first nations in the last Parliament?

**Hon. Sue Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, many members in the House on opposite benches came to see me as the parliamentary secretary for INAC. That member did not when he had a problem. This is the first I have heard of that and I was there. I talked to some of his colleagues about other things, so he made that choice, not me.

The other thing I would say is that this is a debate about Kelowna. The Conservatives have a clenched fist when they have the money in the budget and it was booked in the fiscal update to fully finance the Kelowna accord.

There was a choice made by the current Prime Minister, his Minister of Finance and the cabinet because it should have been a full agreement inside the whole Conservative cabinet on what they funded in the budget. What they did not fund, knowing full well that the money and resources were there, was what was agreed to, not just by the federal Liberal government that led the exercise over the last 18 months but by all the governments of the provinces and territories of all political stripes and all the first nations.

We had everybody agreeing. The discordant voice and the clenched fist with not enough money comes from this government, the one the member belongs to.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to quite a few speeches today. I find it more than

passing strange that all of the former government members had an epiphany on the way to the election and they called it the Kelowna accord.

Even Grand Chief Phil Fontaine admitted in committee a short time ago that the Kelowna accord technically does not exist. There is no signatory page. So how could we, as a government, or anybody for that matter, put in place an accord that was all pipe dreams and, as I say, an epiphany on the way to the election? There is no signatory page; there is no agreement. How could we possibly put into play this Kelowna accord that does not exist?

● (2010)

**Hon. Sue Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the member obviously did not listen to my speech. I was at the 2004 meeting. I was a participant when I was parliamentary secretary for justice. Many people were at that meeting. The leadership from all the various areas across Canada was thrilled to get involved.

The hon. member did not listen to the facts. I told him about the bilateral agreements that were signed last spring in May 2005. They were bilateral accords with all of the group and there were plans there. The money came and was set aside.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Another Liberal promise.

**Hon. Sue Barnes:** If the hon. member does not want the answer to the question, I will sit down.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am especially proud to rise today to speak to the motion by the member for Winnipeg South Centre. It is a motion which reflects a commitment by the former Liberal government to continue the commitment to aboriginal people within our country. It is about the nations of people in our country whose nationhood and well-being was central through a process which spoke to a new partnership and a new vision and hope for aboriginal peoples including the first nations, the Inuit and Métis nations.

I am a Cree person. I am from the Norway House Cree Nation of the treaty 5 area in northern Manitoba. On my mother's side I am from the Muskrat Dam First Nation in northwestern Ontario. I am proud to say that I am descended from Chief Samson Beardy who was a signatory to the amendment to treaty 9. My paternal grandfather was Joe Keeper who represented Canada at the 1912 Olympics.

Many members may be wondering why I mention these bits of family history as it may not appear to pertain to what we are debating today. I do so because it is this personal history which is my testament to the strength, dignity and nationhood of who we are as first nations as one of the nations of aboriginal peoples in this country.

It is this knowledge which our elders carried. It is the knowledge of nationhood. This knowledge of nationhood is not a vague or academic concept, it is not a myth and it is not a cause. Nor is it nor should it ever be considered a political football.

*Business of Supply*

We represent distinct nations, cultures and languages from coast to coast, from the Maliseet of New Brunswick, the Inuit in Nunavut and the Haida of B.C. to the Métis nation of the Red River Valley in the heart of Canada. The relationship between aboriginal people and the Canadian government through most of our shared history has been one that has been inequitable, but our nationhood, our distinct identity, our livelihood and our history is of this land.

In Manitoba most of the first nations signed treaties in the numbered treaty process. Indeed their treaty rights have been entrenched in our Constitution, in section 35 respecting aboriginal and treaty rights. This relationship has not ensured that aboriginal peoples in Canada would benefit as Canadians do from the treaty relationship which was to share the land. What was entrenched in our Constitution for the Métis nation, the Inuit and the first nations in 1982 was a marker, a reference point of the basis of the relationship between aboriginal nations and Canada. It was a reference point of the effort by aboriginal people. It was a testament of the nationhood of aboriginal people. The relationship of aboriginal people is one of sharing in the wealth of this country, sharing the land of this country.

We all know that regardless of what has been entrenched in the Constitution of Canada, regardless of Supreme Court rulings to which the member for Churchill spoke, regardless of the goodwill of many Canadians, the well-being of aboriginal people has not improved over the last number of decades.

I would like to speak to this fact because that is what the Kelowna accord was all about. It defined in its process and in its goals a new relationship in which aboriginal people were working in partnership with Canada and the provincial and territorial leaders. It was historic. It was about equity and respect for all the nations involved.

This is the basis on which we need to move forward. It is the means in which we will meet the goals that we set in the Kelowna accord. It is through self-determination. It is the process which becomes the mechanism to achieve well-being.

In the past I worked in the area of suicide prevention in aboriginal people. There was a significant piece of research which looked at first nations youth in nearly 200 first nations over the period of a decade. It found that there is a direct correlation between the number of factors of self-determination within a community and a decrease in the level of suicide. Suicide is a health issue which has not been traditional to first nations people. In fact, first nations elders are the only population in North America in which suicide does not occur.

• (2015)

This is significant because it speaks to our nationhood. It speaks to who we were traditionally. It speaks to the strength and resiliency that have helped first nations, Métis and Inuit people overcome the difficulties of a colonial relationship. It is who we are traditionally and who we have been for thousands of years on this land.

The reclamation of wellness is what the Kelowna accord was about. It was about a vision of a new Canada. The Kelowna accord reflected a historic moment and marked a change in the nature of the relationship from the paternalistic approach of the past.

The Kelowna accord was a reflection not only of the Liberal government, but of the efforts of aboriginal leadership and aboriginal people. It was the culmination of efforts by aboriginal nations over

many decades to represent the best interests of their own people and the then Liberal government to change its approach to working with first nations, the Métis nation and the Inuit to ensure that Canada represented itself in the way it has been perceived on the world stage, in which human rights, dignity and justice are upheld for all time.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague represents the riding of my birth and the first 20 years of my life. I know that she is genuine in her approach and she intends to represent the people of Churchill well.

My colleague brought up the topic of self-government and self-determination quite often in her statement. The one element I believe that was missing primarily from the first ministers meeting was that topic. When she mentioned how we need to avoid propagating the “paternalistic approach”, does she not agree that this needs to be the primary approach and that the first ministers meeting did not make reference to this?

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member is from my riding. He referred to his Métis heritage in his maiden speech.

The Kelowna accord was vocal in terms of the vision that the Métis nation had in moving forward in terms of education and housing issues. One of the critical areas in the Kelowna accord was building capacity. The round table process has been mentioned numerous times today. The first nations, Métis nation and Inuit participated in the round table process for over 18 months. They spoke to their vision of moving forward. One of the key areas was building capacity because that is a necessary component to self-government and self-determination. All of the cultural groups within the Kelowna accord process spoke to the self-government process and a self-government framework. For all of those cultural groups, building capacity was a key area in terms of moving forward in that process.

• (2020)

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in 1991 the Progressive Conservative government under former prime minister Brian Mulroney launched the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. The commission was set up in recognition of the failure of the aboriginal assimilation policies Canada had been pursuing since Confederation.

The RCAP report issued 10 years ago was the result of the most extensive consultations and research ever undertaken on these issues. It set out a new approach to give life to the right of aboriginal self-government enshrined in Canada's Constitution. It put forward a 20 year plan to improve the lives of the Inuit, Métis and first nations people across the country. However, most of the recommendations were never implemented and the Conservative government was defeated by the Liberal government under Jean Chrétien.

Under the Liberals, the budget for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs ballooned over \$8 billion, yet the framework that was identified by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was never addressed, leading to further frustration and despair of the aboriginal peoples and their leadership.

Why was that abandoned by the Liberals back in 1993?

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, the RCAP was a significant process and a significant report in Canada. In fact on the issue of suicide prevention, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released a special report on suicide before it actually released the RCAP report because suicide was one of the most critical issues.

I am well aware of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. In fact, it was the Liberal government that moved forward on the RCAP report. The Liberals did not abandon it. They made it part of their government policy. They made it part of the framework in which they worked in collaboration with first nations. I am sure the member is familiar with the aboriginal action plan “Gathering Strength”. That policy framework was really important. In Manitoba it was through “Gathering Strength” that we initiated a self-government process.

I agree with the member that the RCAP report was significant, but I would add that it was the Liberal government which took that forward and worked in a non-partisan way to ensure that first nations and aboriginal peoples in Canada could benefit. It is my wish that the current government would do the same with the Kelowna accord.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this debate on the Kelowna accord.

I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Indian and Northern Affairs. Immediately after I was elected, I was deputy critic for Indian affairs together with a former hon. member, to whom I wish to pay tribute today, and that is Bernard Cleary. He was the first aboriginal person from Quebec to be elected to the House of Commons. He was a negotiator for the aboriginal community for over 40 years. Today, he still works with aboriginal peoples. What went on in the first nations communities was always important to him. He worked very hard for the Inuit, the Métis and so on. He is an extraordinary man with whom I had the great pleasure of working. I would often tease him and call him a great sage because he was a little older and he had a white beard. He thought that was quite funny. I always felt that he taught me a lot about the vision of the first nations since he himself was an aboriginal person, as I indicated.

If I may, I will reread this important motion:

That the House recognize the urgent need to improve the quality of life of Canada's Aboriginals, First Nations, Inuit and Métis, living both on and off reserve, which requires focused and immediate initiatives by the government in areas such as health, water, housing, education, and economic opportunities and, especially, immediately moving forward with the implementation of the Kelowna Accord with its full funding commitments.

It is important to put back on the table what we are talking about this evening. The first nations were keenly disappointed during the presentation of the first Conservative budget, which purely and simply annuls the Kelowna accord. The government chose to make piecemeal announcements. Take, for example, housing on reserves. The budget allocates only \$30 million in reality. If we assume that the government is also distributing the \$150 million that was promised for 2006-07, in the four priorities it established for reserves, this equals \$30 million for housing. When we consider the needs, this \$30 million is a drop in the bucket.

In Quebec alone, aboriginal people have an immediate need for 8,700 housing units, which would require an investment of \$1 billion. The Conservative government has spent the day talking about the investments provided for in the budget. I know because I listened to most of the debates. The Bloc has nothing against these investments—far from it. But the first nations in Quebec and elsewhere are extremely disappointed, even devastated. They were expecting to receive \$811.5 million for 2006-07. By turning its back on the Kelowna accord, the government is going back on the promise that was made. The fact that another government is in power does not alter the principle of the matter. Giving one's word—and, even more so, the signing of an accord by a government—is extremely important, especially to aboriginal peoples, who keep their word. As I mentioned previously when I spoke about my colleague, Bernard Cleary, these people place a high value on respect for individuals and on keeping promises. They are therefore convinced, and rightly so, that an agreement in due form was reached between their nation and Canada on November 25 in Kelowna, when the first ministers met. To the aboriginal peoples, seeing the government reject this agreement out of hand is another snub, another promise broken.

In Quebec, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women want the Kelowna accord, as ratified on November 25, 2005, to be implemented. The accord provides for investments of more than \$5 billion over five years to “close the gap between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians in education, health, housing and economic opportunities”.

Like any agreement, this one is not perfect. Earlier, I spoke about the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador and Quebec Native Women, which had set clear guidelines or expressed reservations about this accord. Today, because the accord was reached, they would like it to be implemented, in spite of everything. As I said, it is not perfect. We have found that it does contain some irritants—that frequently happens when the federal government sticks its nose into certain issues. For example, we have found intrusions into the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces over education, of course, where the agreement refers to off-reserve initiatives within the public school system

● (2025)

The federal government has no say in that, and even less in what happens off reserve.

The first nations have also identified some problems with it. The funds announced were not determined with the aboriginal peoples, nor were they equivalent to the required amounts estimated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. As everyone no doubt remembers, the commission estimated adequate funding to be \$1 billion per year for 20 years. That is a lot more than the government was planning to give.

This report was submitted to the federal government ten years ago. This is its tenth anniversary, but I do not think there is much worth celebrating because this is yet another report that the federal government has relegated to a dusty shelf. Not only is the new government keeping it there, it has decided to simply cancel the accord signed last November 25.

*Business of Supply*

This shows to what extent the federal government has abandoned first nations. The Kelowna accord was a step in the right direction—a small step. Unfortunately, the current government has taken a step backwards.

Before the agreement was finalized, the Bloc Québécois supported the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador's position and that of the Quebec Native Women, who, as I said earlier, were critical of the fact that the approach to narrowing the gap between quality of life for first nations and other groups did not address the root causes of the problems aboriginal peoples are experiencing, which causes include the lack of fair access to lands and resources and failure to respect their rights. Furthermore, the pan-aboriginal approach and the lack of community consultations to target certain issues was likely to maintain the first nations' cycle of dependency.

We have not changed our minds. Even though we support the Liberal Party's motion, we, the Bloc Québécois, feel that there must be concrete solutions adapted to the realities facing diverse aboriginal peoples so that the inequalities affecting their communities can really be fixed. As in all things, money alone will not solve all of the problems. The first nations must be part of the discussions so that we can break the vicious cycle of the federal government's paternalistic approach.

In spite of all this, and because we are committed to this issue, we have taken concrete action to ensure that the accord is implemented. At the beginning of May, my colleague for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, now the Bloc Québécois critic for native affairs, tabled a motion at the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which was adopted. We also supported Bill C-292, a private members' bill pertaining to the implementation of the agreement between representatives of the federal government, the Quebec government, provincial governments and national native leaders.

I repeat, implementing the Kelowna accord is taking a step in the right direction. This is why we should support—and I am calling on all members of Parliament to do so—the motion before the House.

Do I need to remind the House that the unemployment rate for aboriginal people is 19% compared to the national average of 7.5%? The unemployment rate on reserves is far worse—29%. The average income in Canada is \$25,000—not a substantial amount—but is only \$16,000 for aboriginal peoples.

What about the serious shortage of housing, estimated to be between 20,000 and 35,000 units? Despite claims by the government, which has presented projects or money to help, this housing crisis is actually worsening, with a shortage of 2,200 units per year. Off-reserve, basic housing needs are 76% higher for native peoples. In the north, the figure rises to 130%.

And what about health? Infant mortality is 20% higher among aboriginals. The suicide rate is three to eleven times that of other Canadians. The Inuit are particularly afflicted by this absolutely terrible tragedy.

Will the Kelowna accord solve all these problems, deal with all these inequities? Unfortunately, no. However, native leaders, invited for the first time to the first ministers' table, signed this agreement.

The provincial premiers and, of course, the Prime Minister of Canada also signed it.

Thus, it is a question of principle, a question of respect. What is at stake is the respect of aboriginal peoples, the first nations, the Inuit and the Métis for the promise made.

I encourage the House to adopt the motion.

• (2030)

[English]

**Mr. Dave Batters (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard numerous representations this evening that all parties had a place at the table at the first ministers conference. How can that be when both the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, CAP, and the Native Women's Association of Canada, NWAC, were not allowed to participate with full status? How can that be when representatives of the Quebec first nations boycotted the event?

The member who just spoke mentioned that representatives from the AFN in Quebec supported the accord, but Ghislain Picard, the AFN Quebec representative, was not in Kelowna. How does the member square that circle? How on the one hand can he say that the Quebec AFN supported the accord when Ghislain Picard, the AFN Quebec representative, was not in Kelowna?

[Translation]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

He may be outraged and get all worked up, but I clearly explained earlier in my speech that Ghislain Picard, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, and the Quebec Native Women's Association expressed their reservations about the Kelowna accord and decided not to participate.

I have here a press release issued on that topic. However, as the member is fully aware, once the agreement was signed, there was money on the table and this represented a step in the right direction.

One can express disagreement with an accord and then accept it after the fact, once it is a done deal. One moves forward and, building on this first step, one continues to negotiate to go even further and reach, quickly if one can, the best possible agreement.

Obviously, it is never perfect, but Ghislain Picard is now asking that the Kelowna accord be implemented. Perhaps the hon. member is not in contact with Ghislain Picard, but the Bloc Québécois is. Since we sit in Parliament, we asked that the accord be implemented, on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, and the Quebec Native Women's Association. We stay in touch with them, we know what they want, and they want us to support this motion. The hon. member should do the same.

• (2035)

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always good. I was listening to the hon. member from the Bloc and I think he is absolutely right.

*Business of Supply*

It is not always perfect, but if we expect perfection we will never do anything. I get the impression that the Conservative government decided to wait for absolute perfection. In that case we will never get anything; we will never do anything with the aboriginal people because it is not perfect. In my opinion, we have to start somewhere and this is an extraordinary start.

What does the hon. member think?

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the hon. member for her question.

I would not say it is extraordinary because for years the Liberal government could have done better and much more for the aboriginal people. It is unfortunate that they did not think to conclude such an agreement before the election. However, I agree with the hon. member when she says we must not wait for a perfect agreement, or perfect for the government in any case. This was an important first step for the first nations.

As I was saying earlier, in Quebec, it was felt that this was not a solution and that there should have been more consultation with all the stakeholders, namely the aboriginal peoples. However, once the agreement was reached, the premiers, the leaders of the national aboriginal peoples and the Prime Minister of Canada had nonetheless put something concrete on paper. For once it was concrete, it was real, there was money involved and efforts were made to advance the cause of the aboriginal peoples, the Inuit and the Métis.

Accordingly, I think the current Conservative government should not have torn up this agreement and reneged on its word. It should have kept this accord and even improved it, if it is seeking perfection, as the hon. member says. I think there was, in fact, room for improvement.

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the speech by the former member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

I would like to inform him that Ghislain Picard, of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador, is working closely with our government, and is open to dialogue, since he shares another objective of our government, which is to ensure that the funds to be invested in the first nations and aboriginal communities, both on and off reserve, are invested judiciously and taking into consideration the principles of accountability.

How can my colleague support an agreement that made no mention of accountability? What does he think of an agreement under which it is not known how the money will be managed and invested, or where it will go, an agreement under which nothing is known of the mechanisms for ensuring appropriate use of the funds by the first nations, so that they are used for the purposes intended?

**Mr. André Bellavance:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to learn that Ghislain Picard, the chief of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec, is in discussion and dialogue with the government. The opposite would be truly insulting for Mr. Picard. I hope that the government will continue those discussions.

Incidentally, what I said earlier responds to the hon. member's questions. I said, and I have not stopped saying, that this agreement was not perfect. He has just listed certain shortcomings of the

agreement. The Kelowna accord can be improved. We have always said so, as have the aboriginal peoples. The accord posed some problems for a number of them. However, I repeat for the benefit of the hon. member who may have missed parts of my speech: there was a concrete agreement on the table, signed by the first nations, the premiers of Quebec and the provinces, and the Prime Minister of Canada.

There is money and there are elements which advance the cause of the aboriginal peoples in education, in health, and even economically. So why would this government not improve on the accord?

The hon. member is part of the Conservative government. If he has any observations to make, let him make them to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. I am not the one he should be addressing them to. He is in the government; he appears to be on the right side. Let him go tell this minister and his prime minister that there are certain problems to be resolved in the Kelowna accord: let them correct those problems, let them improve that accord, and we will support them.

• (2040)

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to comment on the amount of money for aboriginal peoples this year. The budget suggested that the amount would be \$3.25 billion, but if we were take off the \$2.2 billion that we had already approved and committed for residential schools, the \$300 million for off reserve housing and the \$300 million for affordable housing in our Bill C-48, that would leave \$150 million. The Conservatives say that it is \$450 million but \$300 million is for next year, which leaves \$150 million. However, because of an increase in the population and inflation, the department's budget increases \$350 million a year, which is a minus \$200 million contribution.

Does the member think that minus \$200 million new contribution for aboriginal affairs is enough for this year?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. André Bellavance:** No, Mr. Speaker, that is not enough, and I said so in my speech. I gave quite a convincing example regarding housing. It is pointless to make impressive sounding announcements in the budget when in fact, when we look closely, not much is left, as the hon. member just showed. It shrinks, like when I do my laundry. Sometimes I get the wrong cycle and add water that is too hot or put my clothes in the dryer when I should not. There is what is happening here too, when things in the budget shrink a bit.

In the government's four priorities for reserves, there was maybe \$150 million for the 2006-07 year. In the end, all that remains for social housing is \$30 million. That is far from enough because just in Quebec aboriginals need an immediate 8,700 housing units, which would require a billion dollar investment. I could extrapolate for all the other priorities too, and the serious shortfalls would be obvious.

*Business of Supply*

As I have already said in other regards during interviews or here in the House, this government came in here after the election with its five priorities. I am our agriculture critic. However, agriculture is not one of these priorities, nor is the environment, and I can say as well that anything related to social programs also does not number among these priorities. It is the same, unfortunately, for the first nations. They too, apparently, are not included in the five priorities of the Conservative government. That is obvious this evening.

[*English*]

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and I want to assure the House that the committee is looking forward to recommending policies to the government that will improve aboriginal self-determination.

It gives me great pleasure to speak in the House today to the motion of the hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre. The debate today is one of utmost importance and allows our government to highlight the steps we are taking to improve the lives of aboriginal Canadians.

Over the last 10 years under the Liberal government we saw the living conditions of aboriginals decrease despite the constant rhetoric from the Liberal Party. During the Liberals' time in office they spoke constantly of concern for aboriginals and yet housing conditions declined and the water on some reserves became undrinkable.

The Conservative government has taken concrete steps to address these concerns. I want to talk about the progress this government made during the first 100 days in office toward the improvement of the quality of life of aboriginal peoples in all parts of Canada. This government is moving quickly to develop real solutions to real problems facing aboriginal people in this country.

During our first 100 days as government, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians has taken decisive steps on several fronts that hold the promise of better lives for aboriginal people, both on and off reserves and for northerners.

In March the minister launched a plan of action to address drinking water conditions in first nations communities. This plan of action includes implementation of the protocol of safe drinking water for first nations communities. The protocol contains standards for design, construction, operation, maintenance and monitoring of drinking water systems in first nations communities and is intended for use by first nations staff responsible for water systems.

This plan also includes mandatory training for all treatment plant operators, an important step that will affect the long term success of this approach to the problem of unsafe drinking water. The plan addresses the critical need for a regime to ensure that all water systems have the oversight of certified operators. Various initiatives, such as the remote monitoring of water systems and the contracting of independent certified operators to provide necessary oversight, will also be put in place. The plan also includes complete and specific remedial plans for first nations communities with serious water issues, starting with the 21 communities most at risk.

Just last month the minister announced that a panel of experts would advise on the appropriate regulatory framework. Its final

options paper for the new framework will be delivered by September 2006. First nations have been waiting for this kind of decisive action on water for a very long time.

As well, this government has given a clear commitment to report on the progress that is made on a regular basis.

The expert panel will hold public hearings beginning this week in Whitehorse. At these hearings participants will have the opportunity to provide their views and suggestions on what should be regulated and what legal framework should be used. The panel's interim report on regulatory options will be submitted to the minister by September 2006.

Our commitment to improve the lives of aboriginal people was stated in the Speech from the Throne:

Over the course of its mandate, and starting with the clear priorities set out today, the Government will work diligently to build a record of results. It will promote a more competitive, more productive Canadian economy. It will seek to improve opportunity for all Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples and new immigrants.

We followed up on our commitment with the federal budget, which will provide \$450 million over the next two years for initiatives for education, women, children and families, and water and housing on reserve. It will also provide \$300 million for aboriginal housing off reserve and another \$300 million for affordable housing in the territories.

• (2045)

Our first budget established a \$500 million fund. Over 10 years, this fund will be used to support initiatives from local communities to mitigate any negative socio-economic effects arising out of the Mackenzie gas project.

In total, our first federal budget in 2006 confirmed funding of over \$3.7 billion in support of aboriginal peoples and northerners. This was in addition to the many measures in the budget that will benefit all Canadians, including aboriginal peoples, such as \$3.7 billion for the universal child care benefit and \$370 million for apprenticeships, tradespeople and post-secondary education, which also embraces the aboriginal peoples.

This is in addition to the 2006-07 main estimates of \$6.3 billion, which includes approximately \$366 million or 6.2% more than last year's main estimates for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Not only has this government made substantial investments in programs and services that will affect the future, as I have outlined, we have announced a major investment to right some of the wrongs of the past.

In May, our government approved the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement and immediately launched an advance payment program. This is a \$2.2 billion program to address the legacy of residential schools.

As Minister Prentice stated at the time of the announcement, the settlement agreement—

*Business of Supply*

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

• (2050)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** If I may, I would like to advise all members of the House that we do not name other members of the House by name but by their title or by their constituencies. I have heard this a few times in the last hour and a half.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Thank you for the correction, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister stated at the time of the announcement, the settlement agreement proposes a common experience payment for all eligible former students of Indian residential schools, an independent assessment process for claims of sexual or serious physical abuse, as well as measures to support healing, commemorative activities and the establishment of the truth and reconciliation commission.

Cheques for residential school survivors have already started to flow. The government sincerely hopes that this agreement will bring closure to former students and their descendants.

We have also made progress during our first 100 days on the advancement of claims and treaties. In March, the Government of Canada signed an agreement in principle with the province of B.C. and the Yale First Nation under the B.C. treaty process. The agreement in principle lays the framework for final negotiations toward a legally binding treaty.

In May, the Government of Canada tabled an offer to the Deh Cho First Nation of the Northwest Territories toward the settlement of a land and self-government agreement. This offer provides the base for the negotiation of a fair and reasonable agreement that can meet the Deh Cho's interests.

We have been working on many similar agreements and projects that will be added to the economic development opportunities of these respective communities. The Government of Canada has signed trapping harmonization agreements with the Government of Ontario and the first nations of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse.

During the minister's first trip to the three northern territories, the minister pledged the federal government's support for the upcoming Canada Winter Games by announcing funding for the games' national marketing campaign under the strategic investments in the northern economic development initiative.

The minister also committed a \$2.5 million investment in geoscience to support mapping and scientific data collection activities in Nunavut, and more than \$1 million in funding toward the geoscience activities in Yukon.

It is the government's intention to work with our aboriginal partners, provinces and territories to build on these initial accomplishments.

I have given a quick overview of the highlights of our first 100 days. Compare this with the former government that delivered 13 years of scandal, indecision, damage control and broken promises.

This government is committed to improving the lives of aboriginal Canadians. We have already taken action and we will continue making concrete progress in the days to come.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will ask my hon. colleague opposite the same questions I have asked others before, with an additional one.

First, I want to acknowledge his comments about the residential schools agreement, which the previous government negotiated and booked. We are delighted the current government has implemented that. Also, I am very pleased that the new government has implemented the water strategy planned and developed by the previous government.

Does the member think it appropriate, and I have asked this question of other members before, that we drain the schools in order to fuel the water policy? We have heard much about education. We have heard about skills shortages. We have heard about lack of facilities in education. We know that moneys are being taken out of education projects and are being put into water facilities. Does he support that kind of activity?

The other question is for the member and his colleagues. I want to get some clarity from members opposite as to whether they agree with the statement made earlier in the day that just under four centuries Canada passed from an unsettled wilderness through agrarian and industrial revolutions. Do they agree with the concept that four centuries ago, this country was an unsettled wilderness? Would he comment on that?

• (2055)

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the hon. member that aboriginal peoples met the boats that came over from Europe and discovered the north American continent.

As far as sacrificing education for other programs our government has put forward, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has started work on looking at education as far as first nations. The minister is also pursuing that initiative. We are looking at post-secondary and the committee is looking at from K-12 needs for first nations aboriginal peoples.

How could one ever put a dollar amount before one had a plan? It is interesting that we are looking at this now to try to better understand what needs to be done, how we can facilitate better opportunities for first nations people in education, whether it be from K-12 or post-secondary. Yet a dollar amount was put to that process in the Kelowna accord by the former government.

Where are the estimates and why do we not see a breakdown of a plan. If we had that we can look at it what was to be done, what the outcomes would be and what the costs would be.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been a member in the House for almost 18 years. I have been in opposition, I have been in government and now I am back in opposition. The question of the aboriginal has always been an incredibly challenging one. None of us, Conservative or Liberal, during all of the years we have governed the country, has done a particularly great job of dealing with the aboriginals.

However, why when we finally have an accord, with 10 premiers and most of the aboriginals, why now after promising to uphold this accord, would the government change its mind on this? It is all well and good to piecemeal fund things, but this is the very first time we finally have an accord, where everyone has put party politics aside, where the means are there to do something, where we can work with the aboriginal communities so they can decide what they need and where they go from here.

I am incredibly heartbroken. When I speak to any of the aboriginal communities, I see their disappointment and their frustration. After finally having that accord, it is not being honoured. Shame on the Conservatives.

• (2100)

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Mr. Speaker, shame on all Canadians. I agree with the hon. member on the other side as far as this being an ongoing issue.

I recall when I was mayor of Dawson City, Yukon territory and the minister of Indian and northern affairs at that time was the hon. Jean Chrétien. There was a mandate at that time to do something about the issues confronting aboriginal people. Here we are some 30 years later. We recognize the progress that has been made through the discussions in Kelowna, but we are not a government of paper policy and paper programs. We are a government where the rubber meets the road. We are going to get things done.

I believe that some tangible results will be seen from the government. We will be proud to say that we have moved forward with some of the priorities set out in the agreement in Kelowna.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 9 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time. Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, June 20 at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL BRIDGES AND TUNNELS ACT**

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act, as reported (with amendment) from the committee.

**SPEAKER'S RULING**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** There are five motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-3.

[*Translation*]

The Chair has received notice that Motions Nos. 2 and 5 shall not be called.

Motions Nos. 1 and 4 have not been selected by the Chair because they could have been proposed in committee.

[*English*]

The remaining motion has been examined and the Chair is satisfied that it meets the guidelines expressed in the note to Standing Order 76.1(5) regarding the selection of motions in amendment at the report stage. Motion No. 3 will be debated and voted upon.

[*Translation*]

I shall now propose Motion No. 3 to the House.

[*English*]

**MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT**

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (for the Minister of Transport)** moved:

That Bill C-3, in Clause 15, be amended by replacing subsection (2) with the following:

“(2) Before recommending that a regulation be made under subsection (1), the Minister shall, if in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary having regard to all the circumstances, consult with the other levels of government that have jurisdiction over any place where an international bridge or tunnel is situated and with any person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has a direct interest in the matter.”

[*Translation*]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise this evening on Bill C-3, an act respecting international bridges and tunnels.

As the transport critic of the official opposition, I am very aware of how crucial bridges and tunnels are to the Canadian and international trade transportation networks. The vast majority of Canada's exports to the United States go by way of these bridges and tunnels and the crossings between Ontario, New York and Michigan have the highest traffic volumes.

It is hard to overstate the magnitude of the trade between Canada and the United States. Under NAFTA, the trade between our two countries grew over the last decade by an average of 6% a year. In 2005, our bilateral trade was valued at more than \$580 billion, with goods and services worth nearly \$1.6 billion crossing the border every day. Millions of jobs are involved, and our transportation infrastructure is crucial to enabling this trade to proceed efficiently. This is therefore an extremely important bill.

[*English*]

I would like to congratulate the government for bringing Bill C-3 to the floor quickly. This bill, for nearly all intents and purposes, is identical to provisions that productive and progressive Liberal governments brought to the House on two previous occasions.

If I might, I will take a moment to remind the House of the path that the bill has taken.



*Government Orders*

Amendments to the Canada Transportation Act along the lines of Bill C-3 were first tabled as part of Bill C-26 during the second session of the 37th Parliament. Unfortunately, the current Prime Minister and the rest of the Canadian Alliance, at the time, opposed these measures, voting against them at second reading.

We brought these amendments back as part of Bill C-44 in the 38th Parliament. Once again, the opposition of the day found absolutely no merit in the legislation being considered by the House at that point and chose, instead, to defeat the government, effectively killing the bill for a second time.

As I said, I am very pleased to see that the government has come around to supporting our work now that it has the responsibility of governing. Bill C-3 seems to respect, at its core, its origins as a low profile bill that strengthens Canada. It is about taking one step at a time.

The hon. member for Outremont, my colleague, when he was minister of transport, outlined several benefits of the legislation that I hear the government echoing today.

First, provisions in Bill C-3 give the federal government the legislative authority that is required for effective oversight of international bridges and tunnels to ensure that the interests of Canadians are protected. This is a very important affirmation, an appropriate one, of the federal government's constitutional powers as outlined in sections 91(29) and 92(10) of the Constitution Act, 1867.

Second, the hon. member for Outremont presented a bill to Canadians that provided the Governor in Council:

—with the authority to approve the construction or alteration of international bridges and tunnels, and to develop regulations pertaining to the governance, maintenance, safety, security and operation of these structures.

A broad power, but an important one.

This is a point worth re-emphasizing. Without fail, Liberal governments have invested appropriately in the safety and the security of Canadians. We can see, for example, the positive outcomes of our security investments, in general terms, with the successful apprehension of alleged terrorists in Toronto just several weeks ago.

• (2105)

[*Translation*]

Third, the hon. member for Outremont, when he was transport minister, stated very clearly that this new governance system for international border crossings “will help expedite the approval of new facilities and ensure the efficient and competitive flow of goods and people”.

The proposed changes concerning the power to issue letters patent will confer a new ability on the governor in council to establish corporations for the purpose of constructing new structures or operating existing ones.

[*English*]

The volume of trade at some of these crossings is simply mind-blowing. Over 23% of surface trade between Canada and the United States, for example, passes through the Detroit River area. One study suggests that if crossings are not properly maintained and developed,

Canada can expect to lose up to 70,000 jobs by 2030, foregoing \$21.5 billion in production.

In summary, Bill C-3 is yet another example in a long line of Liberal legislation to promote the Canadian economy and protect the safety and security of Canadians. While we may have differences about some of the details of the legislation, and amendments here and there, we cannot in good conscience thwart or stall what is in essence a very good bill.

With respect to the amendment itself, it does go some distance in ensuring that the federal government will consult, that it will consult with other orders of government, with the provinces and municipalities, for example, which have jurisdiction where a bridge or tunnel is situated or is to be built. It also goes some distance in ensuring that the federal government consults with anyone who has a direct interest in the matter, an appropriate balance, we believe, between government's responsibilities for safety, security and maintenance, while at the same time allowing for meaningful input from provinces and municipalities that might be affected and of course any proponent, any lending institution or any developer that might be in the business of building, maintaining or operating such bridges and tunnels.

In closing, when the government puts forward sensible legislation, we are happy to work in cooperation with it to achieve goals that all parties and indeed all Canadians hold in common. I congratulate the government for tabling the bill in such a speedy fashion.

• (2110)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Ottawa South for his comments. I have the pleasure of sitting with him on the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

In his speech, the hon. member mentioned the appropriateness of our government's action in bringing this bill quickly to the floor of the House, pointing out the speed with which we have acted. It is true that we act quickly compared with the previous government. We have also divided the bill so that bills that are more succinct and concise can be passed. That is what allows us to act more quickly.

In his speech, he also said he wanted to amend the bill so that it is possible to consult the other levels of government that might be involved in the management of bridges and tunnels.

How does he perceive the overlapping of provincial and municipal areas of jurisdiction? How is it possible to improve the bill in that regard?

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

First of all, I think it is important for parliamentarians to demonstrate to the Canadian people from time to time that they are capable of working together. In my view, Bill C-3 is a very good example of this.

Next, with the intensification—or urbanization—and emergence of new city-states in Canada, it is almost mandatory to engage in increasing consultation with those provinces and municipalities where a bridge or tunnel now exists or will exist in future.

*Government Orders*

In my opinion, the amendment will have a positive effect on planning. It will not affect the powers of the federal government as regards its planning with the provinces and with the parties affected by the development or operation of a tunnel or bridge. In 2006, more consultation with the parties concerned and the different levels of government is mandatory.

[English]

I would close by saying that in a time of increasing urbanization, at a time when we are seeing increasing densification of population and of Canada-United States trade and the benefits that have flowed under NAFTA in the last 10 years, it will be extremely critical for us to ensure that provinces and municipalities, as well as interested parties, are consulted during the process.

Whether it involves the operation of bridges and tunnels, the construction of bridges and tunnels or the question of security and emergency powers granted to the federal government in this bill, it will be important for the federal government and the minister named in the amendment to deal with other orders of government going forward.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the commentary and in particular for reminding the House that this is a bill that came from the last government, like many acts, such as the Aeronautics Act and certainly the whistleblower bill that is coming forward. There is quite a large number of them.

Clause 15 of the bill lists a number of purposes for which regulations could be made. One of them is:

(e) requiring any person or class of persons to provide to the Minister any information related to the operation and use of international bridges and tunnels.

I note in the amendment being proposed at report stage, Motion No. 3, that the consultation of the minister with stakeholders that have a direct interest is discretionary. It is at the minister's discretion, so I was wondering whether the member could enlighten the House as to when we have matters that may relate to the privacy issues of individuals. That would not be a matter of ministerial discretion but rather a requirement. Why did the committee not go that far?

• (2115)

**Mr. David McGuinty:** Mr. Speaker, I will first enlighten my colleague and let him know that I did not have the privilege of sitting on the committee when that particular amendment was brought forward and others were debated, but let me do my best to answer the balance that I think it is trying to achieve.

In the first instance, I think it is trying to give to the minister authority where it is required, for example, to have those consultations should they be required. There is the ongoing question of the trade secrets type of information and private matters. For example, we have a couple of instances in the country where these bridges are in private hands. It will be very delicate for the minister, for example, when the minister is seeking information, as the member points out.

It will be delicate and I am sure that ultimately flowing from the bill provisions will be made, and also in the regulations that will follow, to make sure that such information that is provided remains confidential. If it does not remain confidential, obviously that will be

quite detrimental to the case of private owners and operators. I am quite assured that the bill actually strikes that right balance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on behalf of my party, the Bloc Québécois, to the motion to amend Bill C-3, An Act respecting international bridges and tunnels and making a consequential amendment to another Act.

I am going to try and paint you a bit of a picture of this file on international bridges and tunnels. This goes back a long way because these infrastructures were under federal jurisdiction and have always been. How do we get today to a bill that specifies the jurisdiction of the Government of Canada respecting something that is granted under the Constitution? This is very Canadian. For the men and women listening to us, we are going to try and understand.

Over the years, for all sorts of reasons, and especially economic ones, the federal government has relinquished its structures and entrusted responsibility for them to other entities. A brief review and a little background are necessary, however. In Canada, as we speak, there are 24 international road bridges and tunnels between Canada and the U.S.: 14 in Ontario, nine in New Brunswick and one in Quebec. They are connected to the States of Maine, Vermont, New York, Michigan and Minnesota. There are also nine railway bridges and tunnels, all in Ontario, except for one in New Brunswick.

The bridges and tunnels are held in different ways: 22 are public property, seven belong to a federal authority, 13 to a provincial or municipal authority, one to a shared authority and one to an American authority, while the other two and the five railway bridges and tunnels are private property. That is the present situation. Of these 24 infrastructures, international bridges and tunnels, only seven are federal property. In a post-9/11 context, a context of high national security, the federal government has just realized that, for the sake of safety and security, we should legislate on this infrastructure, which in any case is under its jurisdiction. So we have to intervene to ensure citizens' protection and security. There is the rub. Today we are obliged to make major declarations. This motion before us is all fine and well, but action needs to be taken.

Amended clause 5 of this bill must state: "International bridges and tunnels are declared to be works for the general advantage of Canada", hence under federal jurisdiction. Section 92.10 of the Constitution Act, 1867, placed these works and undertakings under federal jurisdiction. The problem is that Canada has paid less and less attention to its infrastructure.

This began quite some time ago, as these bridges and infrastructure are not new. We can trace the history of each. Over hundreds of years, the Government of Canada, for monetary reasons, decided to no longer look after or to divest itself of these works. Some were transferred to private entities. The American company that owns one of these bridges told us that it dated back to the Depression and that it was a private property transferred from family to family over dozens of years. The Government of Canada at the time did not have any money and consequently a private enterprise decided to take it over.

*Government Orders*

This is causing serious problems today because various entities are involved, all with different standards and regulations governing the flow of goods and people. At a time when we are hoping that the federal government will deal with the fiscal imbalance, it is evident that the government did not look after what it owned outright, including international bridges and tunnels.

The government can certainly count on the support of the Bloc Québécois. One bridge is located in Quebec, under the responsibility of the Province of Quebec, which looks after it very well.

• (2120)

There are no justified complaints about that bridge.

We support this bill. We even support the government motion, which I will read, to amend clause 15. Clause 15 of Bill C-3 provides guidelines on operation and use. It is fairly easy to understand. I will try to explain it in lay terms so that the people who are watching can understand. It reads as follows:

The Governor in Council may, on the recommendation of the Minister, make regulations respecting the operation and use of international bridges and tunnels, including regulations (a) respecting the use that may be made of international bridges or tunnels by different types of vehicles;

So even though this was the responsibility of the owner or operator—private companies in some cases, provinces or municipalities in other cases, and the federal government in the case of seven of these structures—the federal government says that, because this is its responsibility, the minister can step in from now on to regulate the type of vehicle that can use the structures.

(b) respecting the tolls, fees and other charges that may be imposed by owners or operators of international bridges or tunnels for their use, to ensure the efficient flow of traffic;

It will be apparent that the Government of Canada, which did not own the structures, did not set the tolls, fees or other charges. The government just realized that in the interest of national security and safety, it should perhaps intervene.

This is where the amendments come in. The provincial and municipal governments and the private companies that manage these structures told us that this could put them at risk, because they pass borrowing by-laws when they make repairs or renovations to the structures. This can therefore affect their credit.

This is what gave rise to this motion for amendment put forward earlier by the government to regulate tolls by adding a subsection 2 that reads as follows:

Before recommending that a regulation be made under subsection (1), the Minister shall, if in the opinion of the Minister it is necessary having regard to all the circumstances, consult with the other levels of government that have jurisdiction over any place where an international bridge or tunnel is situated and with any person who, in the opinion of the Minister, has a direct interest in the matter.

This means that, if the federal government wanted to intervene in establishing tolls, this subsection 2 would make it mandatory to consult the other levels of government, including the provincial and municipal governments in question, before recommending any regulations or tolls to be paid by users.

I think that is fair since, in any event, the federal government never took care of it because it was not the owner. Even if this were its responsibility in accordance with section 92.10 of the Constitution Act, 1867, it did not take care of it. It got rid of it to the benefit

of other entities, municipal or provincial, or quite simply private industry.

It is rather logical that we here in the House today give our support, since public servants told us that it would facilitate fluidity, if the government ever decided to meddle in regulating tariffs, for all kinds of reasons. Public servants must at least be assured that the owner of a bridge can enter into discussions with the government before it tables a regulation for amendment. This is what we are supporting here today.

Since the Bloc Québécois always respects all jurisdictions, it hopes that the federal government will at least take care of this area of jurisdiction, because it was in the Canadian constitution. The federal government meddles far too frequently in areas of provincial jurisdiction. The government would not be criticized here today for trying to take care of its own areas of jurisdiction. We will therefore vote in favour of this motion and, naturally, for the bill as a whole, because the Bloc Québécois respects the federal government's areas of jurisdiction.

All we ask of the federal government is that it also respect the areas of provincial jurisdiction, which it has failed to do all too often in the past.

• (2125)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, my colleague from the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, for his comments on Bill C-3.

The NDP tried several times to improve this act. Indeed, consultation is not mandatory, although this is an extremely important element when it comes to bridges and tunnels. There are several bridges in Ontario, several in New Brunswick and one in Quebec.

In committee, we tried to amend this act to make consultation a mandatory process. Communities are deeply affected by what happens with bridges. The communities in question are not only Windsor and Sault-Sainte-Marie; other communities in Ontario, as well as communities in New Brunswick and Quebec are also affected.

My question is very simple. In the member's opinion, why did the Conservative government reject, in every respect, the mandatory consultation process that we tried to add to this act?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, it is because of stubbornness, pure and simple. Most likely, when the bill was introduced, they felt there was no real need to consult the stakeholders.

Personally, I hope they are still open to negotiation even though, as I explained earlier, this matter falls exclusively within federal jurisdiction. We have the utmost respect for this exclusive jurisdiction. However, the federal government has withdrawn from this responsibility, at least in the vast majority of cases. Except for 7 of the 24 structures, the government has handed the facilities or their management over to independent entities, such as provincial or municipal governments, or to private owners.

*Government Orders*

We are giving them the opportunity to consult other partners—the provincial and federal governments—before making decisions about fee structures, improvements, changes, permits and so on.

I think my colleague is right. I hope that we will manage to see eye to eye between now and when this bill passes. I know that my colleague and his team are working very hard to convince the government as the debate winds down.

I think that those who take over management of these facilities from the federal government deserve some consideration if the government has to make major decisions about something over which it has relinquished jurisdiction. The government is not taking ownership today. The owners are still the provinces, municipalities or private entities. The government has not said that it owns and will pay for all facilities. It has merely said that this matter is within its jurisdiction and that it wants to be involved in all decisions made concerning these bridges.

It would be wise for the government to agree to listen to the partners who own the facilities, including municipalities and the provinces.

• (2130)

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a major problem at the border crossing in my area with regard to toxic substances that are permitted to cross the international border, particularly over the bridge, but to some degree in the tunnel as well.

I am wondering if the member could indicate whether this section and the amendment will require the government to consult either the province or the local municipal level of government. If toxic substances of some significant danger were to be transported across that bridge or through the tunnel, would that require consultation with the municipal or provincial levels of government?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I will quite simply answer no to my colleague. This point was discussed by the committee but the government and the law clerks told us that, with regard to this bill, other acts applied including the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. Thus, this bill could not amend another act. It was not designed to do so.

We were prepared to support this motion or this amendment tabled by the New Democratic Party. Since the communities could not force the bridge owner to have an operation plan for the transportation of dangerous goods, we felt that in the matter of safety and security of citizens, the term “dangerous goods” would have to be included in the criteria to be observed by owners of the works.

The government did not accept this. We were promised that it would be debated in committee and that all stakeholders would appear as witnesses—even government officials—in relation to the Transportation of Dangerous Goods Act. We all agreed that that was fine. Except for one major problem: the law clerks told us that the amendment was contrary to the bill. As you know, that would have led to legal battles and debates. No one wished to delay C-3.

Thus, the answer to the member's question is no. Nevertheless, I hope that will be resolved one day.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the debate on Bill C-3, the international bridges and tunnels act.

This bill should not be too far back in the memories of members in the House as it was before the House only several months ago, but allow me to review a few general tenets of the bill. Members may remember from the second reading debate that the bill actually borrows from Bill C-26 and Bill C-44, which both died on the order paper as recently as last year. This is a very important bill. These previous bills proposed a significant number of amendments to the Canada Transportation Act, including adding provisions dealing with international bridges and tunnels.

In this case, Bill C-3, which is very important to this government and very important to members of this House, focuses only on international bridges and tunnels and the matters concerning these structures. Bill C-3 is the new and improved version from this Conservative government of what the former bills were proposing, plus two new provisions. The first actually is technical in nature and deals with the construction of bridges over the St. Lawrence River. The second is a requirement for government approval of all transactions that affect the ownership and operation of these structures.

The bill, when enacted, will be the very first law to apply to all of Canada's international bridges and tunnels. It is a great job by this Conservative government.

There are currently 24 international vehicle bridges and tunnels and five international railway tunnels with various forms of ownership and governance structures. The degree of oversight exercised by the federal government varies tremendously from bridge to tunnel to different crossings. By declaring these structures to be works for the general advantage of Canada, the bill confirms the federal government's jurisdictional authority to deal with international bridges and tunnels as attributed to the federal government under section 92 of the Constitution. This is part of our mandate as the federal government.

Currently, to everyone's surprise, the federal government does not have legislative authority to ensure effective oversight of these bridges and tunnels. That is why this government is pushing it forward so quickly. For example, the federal government is not able to obtain detailed information on security issues, which are so prevalent, from all of the bridge authorities. All existing international vehicle and rail bridges and tunnels will be subject to the proposed act, as will all future structures. That is very important.

It was mentioned in the House during second reading that many of the bridges and tunnels that exist today were created by special acts of Parliament, which was a tremendous amount of work. These special acts established not only the company that would be responsible for constructing the bridge or tunnel, but also set out the various terms and conditions that had to be met before the governor in council would approve the construction of any crossing.

*Government Orders*

For the most part, these special acts were enacted decades ago, in some cases almost 100 years ago, and did not address the modern day realities, such as security. Every time a new issue arose, such as amending the borrowing limit for these crossings, these acts actually had to be amended. Such procedures were very cumbersome and warranted a lot of time from Parliament and the organizations involved, much time for little result.

Reference was actually made by me during second reading to the Blue Water Bridge which connects Point Edward, Ontario with Port Huron, Michigan. The original legislation, believe it or not, was enacted in 1928 and since that time has been amended no less than 10 times, the most recent time being in 2001. In fact, until such time as the proposed act is in force, a special act of Parliament would still be required to approve the construction of any new international bridge or tunnel.

That is why I am hoping for all party consent to push this matter through quickly. I would suggest that was an ineffective use of time, when the approval of new construction could be dealt with much more effectively by an administrative process that could be set down so everyone understands where and how they are going to move forward. This is what Bill C-3 proposes, a Conservative reality check in setting out that the construction of all new bridges and tunnels requires government approval, as do alterations to existing structures. It is a great move by this government.

Our neighbours in the United States have adopted a much more streamlined approval process for the construction of international bridges and tunnels. Before issuing a presidential permit approving the construction of an international bridge or tunnel, the U.S. Department of State consults with other federal and state departments and the Canadian government to ensure that all required permits are obtained and all conditions are met.

● (2135)

Bill C-3 allows for the adoption of a similar process in Canada to streamline it and make it much more efficient. Bill C-3 also sets requirements for bridge and tunnel maintenance and repair and safety and security keeping Canadians safe as they travel. This will give the government the power to make regulations in this area and to provide for sanctions when these regulations are not followed. The bill does not differentiate between structures that are publicly or privately owned. It does not propose one set of rules for private and one set of rules for public. It provides one set of rules for international crossings because they are important to this government. They are important to our international trade, our tourism and of course, our economy which is so important to us.

It is proposed that the bill apply equally to all international bridges and tunnels, regardless of whether they are owned by the province, the state, or privately. Of course the government is interested in who owns and operates these structures. That is why the bill proposes that government approval must be sought each and every time there is a change of ownership. That way the government at all times will know who ultimately owns, operates and controls these critical structures that belong to Canada. That way the government will be satisfied that these persons are not only qualified, but have the structure's long term viability in mind in the best interests of Canadians.

Safety of the travelling Canadian public is job number one of this government. This legislation will ensure that our bridges and crossings are safe and that the federal government has the ability to ensure national security and protect the vital trade links on which our economy depends. Safety does not start and end when these structures are designed and built. As a result we must maintain the safety and security throughout the life of the structure.

This bill will permit public safety to be assured in the following ways: first, at the construction phase, to make sure that the bridge or tunnel is built in accordance with proper and appropriate safety measures; second, at the time of any major alteration, by making these alterations subject to approval by the government; and third, to make sure that these crossings are properly and regularly maintained. If this is not the case, the bill grants the government the power to order the owners to make repairs that are deemed necessary to keep the structure in good working condition.

We often talk in the House about Canada's aging infrastructure. We were reminded during second reading debate just how old some of these structures are. Many, believe it or not, were built in the 1920s. Some were built in the 1960s. While many have been renovated and some have received proper maintenance and repair, there are some structures that still have significant concerns. The bill will enable the minister to make regulations in the area of maintenance and repair to ensure that standards of best practices in these areas are being followed. The minister has taken a step to ensure that Canadians are safe on our international borders.

The bill also addresses security. Unfortunately, we all know that terrorism in North America is a reality. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, many security measures were put into place to protect Canada's critical infrastructure against terrorist threats. Many of the security standards or best practices that exist today are as a result of September 11. Our international bridges and tunnels did not escape scrutiny. That is why this Conservative government is putting this legislation forward as one of our main priorities.

In relation to international bridges and tunnels, many voluntarily took up the challenge and worked together to evaluate current levels of security and determine how this security could be improved upon. When it comes to security, the job is never done. We have to continue to make sure that new types of threats mean new types of security measures. There is no room for complacency. We must continue to be proactive in this area.

I would therefore encourage all members of the House to work cooperatively with this government to secure Canada's future, to secure Canadians as they travel across our international borders. I thank the member for Windsor West, the member for Ottawa South and the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for all their hard work on this file during committee and all the cooperation they have shown.

● (2140)

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his kind remarks at the close of his speech.

*Government Orders*

I would like to ask him a question that deals specifically with the amendment we are dealing with this evening, which is an attempt to achieve a balance in the bill. There are some fairly overwhelming powers here vested in the minister and the governor in council with respect to, for example, the construction, the alteration and the operation of a bridge or tunnel. This bill goes as far as saying that the governor in council controls completely the construction, the alteration and the operation of an international bridge or tunnel, that an elaborate system of approvals must be sought. It goes as far as creating letters patent and spells out in very detailed fashion what letters patent would look like in such a case. It goes as far as speaking about officers' and directors' liabilities, for example.

I want to come to the balance between these new powers being vested in the minister and the governor in council and the right of other orders of government to participate in the decision making. Our colleagues in the NDP on a couple of occasions have raised some concerns around this. I have found that the amendment as drafted achieves a relatively appropriate balance between new powers vested in the minister and access to input for other orders of government.

Could the parliamentary secretary comment on that, please?

• (2145)

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, we only have one amendment before us today and that amendment was proposed by the government. I would suggest that amendment is very good. It deals with the regulations and it deals with the minister consulting with other levels of government.

The other amendments were ruled out of order because they should have been brought forward at committee. At committee we could have dealt with them. We could have talked about them, but instead they were brought forward after committee and as a result were ruled out of order by the House. There is nothing more I can do.

I can say that the Liberal government, and the member was in that government, had the ability to regulate entirely any border crossing at its initiative with certain powers. In this particular case, we are going a step further. We are going to make sure that we have consistency in our border crossings, make sure that we consider the best interests of Canadians and keep them safe and secure. That is something the Liberal government did not do.

Quite frankly, we believe that this matter should be pushed through post-haste, as quickly as possible, to ensure that we can regulate border crossings internationally and keep Canadians safe. I would welcome the member opposite to support this initiative by this government to keep Canadians safe.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with some surprise I heard the parliamentary secretary talk about consultation within the bill. Very clearly the amendment continues that process of centralizing power within the minister and the ministry, rather than providing for the broad base consultation the NDP has been calling for, consultation with the municipalities that are impacted and also with the provinces that are impacted.

That was our concern with this bill from the very beginning. We raised it in the House at the introduction of this bill. We said that

there was a flaw. Even though we supported in principle the aspects and the direction of the bill, there was a key flaw, and that was in the area of consultation with the communities that are impacted. The NDP strove at the committee level to bring in those kinds of amendments so that there was an obligatory process of consultation, not decided on by the government or the minister deciding when to consult and when not to consult, but a process of consultation with the communities that are impacted.

We know how strongly our cities are impacted by international bridges and tunnels and changes that could be brought by the federal government, so we moved to bring forward a process of consultation that would be obligatory. We wanted to make sure there would be consultation with the communities that would be impacted by this bill, whether it was Windsor, Sault Ste. Marie or any other community in Ontario, Quebec or New Brunswick. We brought that forward and the government has refused that consultation.

My question is simple. Why refuse consultation with the communities that are impacted? Why could they not have some say in what happens?

**Mr. Brian Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it sounded good, but that is not the way it goes. The amendments put forward by the NDP member, and he has worked very hard on this file, should have been done earlier on so we could have debated them properly at committee and that was not done.

However, the power is already there. The power has been there for hundreds of years. Now we are trying to restrict the power and ensure we have consistency. What party could be against consistency and the protection of Canadians as they travel across the border? I have no idea why any party here today would object to pushing this bill forward.

Let us look at the amendments for a moment. They are asking for us to consult with all levels of government. They are asking for whatever government to consult with all levels of government. What does that mean? There is no restriction. Does it mean province? Does it mean a business community? What does that mean?

The problem is we never had the amendments in time because the NDP never brought them forward in time so we could debate them properly. As a result, we cannot just, at the last minute, push this matter forward post haste and put something forward that Canadians are not going to appreciate long term, and that would restrict Canadians. It just does not work.

• (2150)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to speak on this matter in the House of Commons and the amendments that have been proposed here tonight. I thank the parliamentary secretary for his work as well as members opposite. I enjoyed working on the transport committee and I thank those members too.

I am going to spend a few minutes correcting some misinformation. First of all, the notion of consulting municipalities and local governments was brought forth originally in a discussion in this chamber. We strongly objected to the fact that this was not part of the bill. Anyone can look up our objections in *Hansard*. This was raised continually in committee.

*Government Orders*

The parliamentary secretary is suggesting that this is a government amendment, but I would remind him that this amendment is standing in a government member's name only. An original amendment was put forth by the NDP which was debated extensively and there was agreement in principle. What we were looking for tonight were some additional amendments that would actually have provided consistency.

We have the situation where the operational elements of border crossings at an international bridge or tunnel have some vested partner input in the area, but the same situation does not apply for the sale, alteration or construction of the areas that affect border crossings, and these can be quite significant.

For the parliamentary secretary to give the impression here tonight that we are actually throwing something at the government is irresponsible, and I say that with all due respect. These amendments were tabled in this House of Commons on June 13. Despite the original discussion that we had over a month ago, despite the information that we traded at committee, and despite the fact that these amendments have been on the order paper since that time, the government is obviously not really interested in moving forward on due consultation with vested partners.

I think it is important to paint the reasons why as New Democrats we believe that this should move forward. There was an agreement between all parties here. I thank the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois for supporting a motion to move these amendments tonight. We have the power and the ability to do so, but the government has chosen not to at this moment. That is the reality.

The government has chosen to shut the door. It is shutting the door to other levels of government. It is shutting the door to the provinces. It is shutting the door on the people affected by these border crossings. People's lives are being affected.

Why is this important? It is important because border communities like Windsor, Fort Erie or places in Quebec have bottleneck problems with transportation. Often heavy-handed solutions are imposed on us. However, nobody wants the cars and trucks to move more freely through our municipalities than the people who live in these municipalities. They are choking on smog and pollution. They also have to face the heavy traffic congestion.

That is why these amendments are important and that is why they were put forward in this House. They were put forward to put consistency in the bill.

We are debating government Motion No. 3. It calls for the minister to consult with other levels of government that have jurisdiction over any place where an international bridge or tunnel is situated and with any person who has a direct interest in the matter. Why is this important? It is important because 24 international bridges and tunnels connect Canada with the United States. Of those 24, two are privately owned. There are no regulations or authority over them.

This is why we are looking at changing this bill in terms of having some accountability, which is so important as previous speakers have articulated. The daily transportation value between our two countries amounts to \$1.5 billion a day. About 42% of the nation's trade travels on a regular basis through my community alone.

I have seen what has happened in the past and this is why I believe in these amendments. The government should change its position and listen for a change because it is in a minority position. The government needs to be reminded of that fact quite often. This is a minority Parliament. Canadians need to understand that we need to keep the government on a short leash. If we do not do that, it will use its heavy-handed nature. It is important that the Conservative government be kept on a short leash.

We have had a situation over a number of decades in Windsor. Thousands of trucks per day rumble through the city streets and there is no solution. A proposal was finally made to remedy this situation.

• (2155)

There were two phases. The first phase was signed with every single level of government participating. There were projects to create a pedestrian crosswalk. We actually have a high school where mothers have been killed.

The member for Essex is now saying that people do not use it. That is not true. The member for Essex should remember what is most important, that students should have a right to have a safe crossing to get to their high school. That should be a right. The member for Essex should remember that. That project had full consent. We actually have a pedestrian crosswalk now that crosses at Huron Church Road.

There are other projects that are very beneficial. The Walker Road rail separation has been held up, but there is consent and it is moving slowly forward. This is a rail separation grade that will be very important for the nation's trade, next to the most successful manufacturing plant since World War II, which is the minivan Chrysler plant. We will have a separation grade in the future.

Other highway updates for safety such as LED signage and a whole series of things were all signed, together with consultation. The projects are moving very slowly, but they are moving together.

Phase two is a different situation. Phase two was an imposed solution on the municipality by the provincial and federal governments of the day. Phase two has met resistance. It has met bureaucracy. It has met a whole series of problems because people are offside. All this amendment is calling for and all we are asking for is consultation. Consultation is so important.

For example, if the Ambassador Bridge were to be sold in the future, it is important to have that consultation, not only with the municipality, the local government, and the province, but other businesses because they would be affected as the Ambassador Bridge is owned by a private American citizen. There is a series of connections of businesses that literally monopolize the crossing. That is a very important fact to remember.

Who will own that crossing in the future? We do not know if it is going to be the government. We still do not have any commitment from the government that the new crossing to be built between Windsor and Detroit is to be publicly owned and operated. We still cannot get that far as it has not been put to paper. If it is sold in the future, there will be an onus to discuss the situation with the local people and the local partners.

*Government Orders*

I know there is a concern being expressed. I do not diminish the potential of lawsuits with this type of consultation process. That is why, if we use due diligence, we will see a consultation process that will carry its weight at the end of the day and we will discourage any attempt to stonewall things and prevent them from moving forward.

However, we must have the best possible legislation. At the end of the day, is this the best possible legislation? No, not without these clauses and amendments.

It is important to recognize one of the amendments that deals with construction on both sides of a border crossing. It is very important to ensure that we have coordination. As things currently stand, on the Ambassador Bridge side, there will be construction on the American side for a plaza. Right now there are scheduling conflicts on the Canadian side at the Windsor-Detroit tunnel because there will actually be construction there.

We can have projects overlapping and construction to fix facilities to move traffic which will slow traffic. We end up having a clogging of the arteries without the due process.

I do not think the minister would have any ill will and would not want to consult with people in local jurisdictions. I do not assume that as a premise, but as a witness, as a member in the House, there has not been, with due respect, a consultation process.

Coming from my municipal roots and seeing what the traffic, the pollution, and the congestion has done, and the lack of investment, we need to ensure that border crossings across this country are done efficiently, in terms of the process of consultation. They must be done effectively, so that they are managed on a regular basis. Finally, they must be supported by good, grounded legislation. The bill is failing in that department at this time.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague a question.

In recent weeks, we have had an opportunity to talk about the bill we are debating this evening, and there has never been any question of adding a new amendment.

I would simply like to know what has happened in the last hour.

• (2200)

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, what had happened is that there was an agreement to actually unanimously move the NDP motions. There were four on the order paper that were tabled as early as June 13. We voluntarily withdrew two of those amendments because the government came up with logical reasons as to why Motion No. 2 and Motion No. 5 were not consistent with what the policy should be. I agreed with that decision.

From there, we were to work forward and get unanimous consent on amending Motions Nos. 1 and 4. That was agreed to by the government at that time. It was going to bring forward changes. What the government did at the last minute is withdraw that, and not only once, because the government withdrew that and our party tried a second time. We were told it was going to move forward and again the government withdrew it.

I know the government is concerned about lawsuits, but let us think of the lawsuits against the government with regard to changing civil marriage, for example. Let us think about the lawsuits on a whole series of things. If the government is going to be afraid of things and put out the lawsuit issue, that is not sufficient.

The amendments that were being proposed obviously would not lead to that situation. Everyone has seen them before. These amendments have been in the House before. If the government were serious about consultation, it would have actually come back to me at some point in time before tonight; it is not only ourselves. This is due process in this chamber. Everything that has been talked about is due process.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's passion and his comments.

First of all, obviously he speaks with great passion. His community is affected by the existing flow now in terms of the Windsor-Detroit crossing, but I have two very specific questions for the member.

First, leaving aside the merits of the process that has been followed to get us here this evening, question number one is the following: is he suggesting that the federal government somehow will be able to avoid or contract out municipal and provincial standards, for example on environmental assessment, should this bill become law?

Second, his colleague who sits on the committee just a few moments ago suggested that consultation ought to be between the federal and particularly the municipal governments, with a passing reference to the provinces, leaving out also, of course, the question of interested parties such as banks, financing companies, mortgage companies, those who are involved in sureties. Those who are financing the construction, expansion or operation of such international bridges and tunnels will be very big players.

If we make these consultation requirements any more onerous on the federal government, is there any merit to this question of making the whole bill more litigious in nature if we give interested parties more opportunity to proceed against the federal government for failure to pursue sufficient consultation, for example ?

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, no, absolutely not. That is why "levels of government" is part of the motion. Obviously the province is very much a part of this process. The mere fact that municipalities are creatures of the province is significant because that is bound by legislation itself. That covers this off fairly consistently.

In terms of other parties, of banks and whatnot potentially having an upset, then yes, if the government is not going to follow a fair due process and it is going to show favouritism to particular parties or interest groups or people it supports or has some connections to, as we have seen in the past, then they will bring on those lawsuits. This is calling for a greater scrutiny upfront for due consultation and due process. I think that is going to make a better bill and avoid lawsuits because those things will be scripted out very consistently.



*Government Orders*

What I think is important to remember is that it will be at the front end. The expectations will be there. That will alleviate the problem in itself. I believe in prevention. I think these clauses speak to an element of prevention that is very significant.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The question is on Motion No. 3. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

• (2205)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to thank the members for their cooperation in completing the report stage of Bill C-3.

Would the House be prepared to give unanimous consent to begin third reading stage of Bill C-3 at this time?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I believe the question was on the amendment and we will do report stage forthwith.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (for the Minister of Transport)** moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage with a further amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Pursuant to order made earlier today the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, June 20, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA ACT**

The House resumed from June 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-5, An Act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain Acts, be read the third time and passed.

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first note that I will be splitting my allotted time with the member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Bill C-5 deals with the Public Health Agency of Canada. This bill is not something new. I would like to review its history. This bill was announced to us in December 2003 by the Liberal government, the previous government. In February 2004, that government said, in its Speech from the Throne, that it would be establishing what it said would be a modern public health system, by creating a public health agency that would ensure that Canada is linked, both nationally and globally, in a network for disease control and emergency response.

At that time, the agency was allocated \$100 million to expand front-line public health services, as well as \$300 million for new vaccination programs, \$100 million to improve the surveillance system, and \$165 million over two years for other federal public health initiatives.

Under the bill, the Public Health Agency was given the mandate of focusing on more effective efforts to prevent injuries and chronic diseases—like cancer and heart disease—and to prevent and respond to public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks. The Public Health Agency would also work closely with the provinces and territories to keep Canadians healthy and help reduce pressures on “our” health care system. This is how the text read at the time, in 2004, about the creation of this agency.

First, I want to say that Canada does not have a single health care system, and that this last statement clearly denied the unique aspects of the provinces’ health care systems, in particular the health care system of Quebec, which is solely responsible for managing health care within its borders. And so, at the time, when \$100 million was made available to expand front-line services, there was a direct intrusion into areas under Quebec’s jurisdiction, because in Quebec, front-line health care is in fact provided by the CLSCs.

The agency was ultimately supposed to have the collaboration of six regional offices, one of them in Quebec. It was in November 2005 that the federal Liberal Health minister of the day tabled Bill C-75 creating this public health agency of Canada, a separate and autonomous agency which was granted immense powers. Fortunately, Bill C-75 died on the order paper when the election was called.

At that time, the Conservative government was against Bill C-75, because it was a Liberal initiative. Now the same bill is being tabled again, with a different name. Now it is numbered C-5. You will note that it is exactly the same bill.

It must be said that, in the beginning, the Liberal government took advantage of the fiscal imbalance—which it created itself—to increase its intrusions in the field of health, particularly through the use of its spending power. The Conservative government seems to be continuing down the same road. And yet, last April in Montreal, the Prime Minister boasted of his open federalism, his federalism of understanding, saying that open federalism was a kind of respect for the fields of provincial jurisdiction, while also providing a framework for the federal spending power.

*Government Orders*

• (2210)

One could create a list of the federal government's intrusions in fields of provincial jurisdiction, going back many years.

Under the Constitution Act, 1867, health and social services fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces, including Quebec. Yet from as far back as 1919, Ottawa has been intervening increasingly in those sectors, even forcing Quebec and the provinces to comply with so-called national standards and objectives, despite the fact that the Constitution Act states that health is a field of provincial jurisdiction.

I will cite the various laws we have been presented with since 1919: first, the creation of the Department of Health; in 1957, passage of the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act; in 1966, passage of the Medical Services Act; and in 1984, passage of the Canada Health Act.

The 1984 Canada Health Act is the most flagrant example of encroachment. It imposes conditions and criteria in respect of insured health services and extended health care services, which the provinces and territories must respect in order to receive the full financial contribution under the Canada health and social transfers. In other words, if the provinces want to receive transfers, they have to accept the Canada Health Act.

Quebec agrees with the principles of this law, but refuses to allow the federal government to impose national principles and standards on Quebecers. This would amount to prohibiting Quebec from making its own choices, when health is exclusively within the jurisdiction of the provinces, and of Quebec.

In April 2005, the Minister of Health at the time even questioned one province about the status of private diagnostic clinics, threatening Quebec and the provinces with a reduction of their share of the Canadian health transfer if they did not comply with Ottawa's wishes.

The Bloc Québécois will always protest the federal government's attempts to interfere in the management of health care in Quebec. We have our organization, our way of doing things and providing our health care and social services and we feel that it should be respected.

Then Roy Romanow proposed the Health Council. The result was an agreement between Ottawa and the provinces in February 2003. This agreement guaranteed federal reinvestment in health on certain conditions. The problem in health is that the provinces have so little money—there have been so many cuts at the federal level—that the federal government, which has money, has taken on the right to invest in health when this is not its jurisdiction.

Then there was the Public Health Agency of Canada, which we are discussing this evening. Within this agency, the federal government continues to impose its priorities for the sake of pan-Canadian objectives that deny Quebec's distinct character. In spite of the lack of Canadian expertise in the area, Ottawa wishes to play the role of coordinator of the actions of the various health systems. Quebec, however, already has its own public health agency, and has had it since 1998. This agency is the Institut national de santé

publique du Québec. Quebec does not need the federal agency, which will duplicate actions in this area unnecessarily.

• (2215)

Mr. Speaker, I see that you are telling me I do not have much time left, so I will conclude my speech.

It should also be mentioned that all Quebec governments have been opposed to these federal intrusions in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. We need only think of the governments of Maurice Duplessis, Daniel Johnson Sr., Robert Bourassa, Jacques Parizeau, Lucien Bouchard and lately Jean Charest.

I hope that my colleagues will understand and respect the position of Quebec by not giving this House the mandate to vote in favour of Bill C-5.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is obviously a great pleasure for me to speak on Bill C-5, An Act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain Acts.

As you know, this agency has been in operation since the fall of 2004, but there was no legislation giving it the powers and responsibilities that it currently exercises. Accordingly, the bill we are considering today proposes, finally, to give powers to the new Public Health Agency of Canada.

Like my colleague, I hope that the Conservative members who were elected in Quebec on a platform of respecting areas of jurisdiction will vote against this bill.

When the former Liberal government created the Public Health Agency of Canada, it assigned it the mandate of ensuring that Canada was connected at the national and global levels, in health matters, and that there was a network responsible for disease control and emergency response. As well, the federal agency has as its mission to focus on more effective efforts to prevent chronic diseases, like cancer and heart disease, prevent injuries, and respond to public health emergencies and infectious disease outbreaks, as well as providing for other federal public health initiatives.

Clearly, when the Liberals established the Public Health Agency of Canada, they were once again confirming that they did not respect Quebec's difference, by interfering massively in an area under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. By creating this agency, the federal government is showing its arrogance with regard to the powers of Quebec and the provinces, and insolently denying the unique aspects of the health care system of Quebec, which is solely responsible for managing health care within its borders.

It is important to point out that while this was an initiative of the former Liberal government, the new Conservative government has decided to reintroduce the same bill. It is now number C-5. By bringing forward the same bill as the Liberals, the Conservative government shares the vision of the federal Liberal Party: Ottawa knows best, and Ottawa will impose that on the entire country.

*Government Orders*

Just as the Liberal government used the fiscal imbalance it had itself created, as my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville was saying, to continue interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces by using its spending power, so the Conservative government now seems to be continuing that tactic for the same purposes.

This new government, however, claims in its speeches that it is practising open federalism that respects the jurisdictions of the provinces. It is not respecting Quebec when it brings forward a bill like this. The discrepancies between word and deed are glaringly obvious.

Plainly, and contrary to what it has said since it was elected, the Conservative government is not reluctant about invading areas under Quebec's jurisdiction, like health. It is as intrusive as the Liberals. Since it is a more right-wing government, we might even be more worried by this.

In my opinion, Bill C-5 raises a number of concerns that explain why we oppose it.

Not only does it have an arrogant attitude towards Quebec and the provinces, but the federal government has created a new health structure. The Conservative government must know that since 1998, Quebec has had its own national public health institute, and it does not need a new federal agency. Since it was created, Quebec's Institut national de santé publique has monitored public health trends, prepared prevention programs for the Quebec public and advised the Government of Quebec when the government is developing new health programs.

• (2220)

So it already does what the Public Health Agency of Canada is supposed to do under this bill.

The Bloc Québécois feels that since the Government of Quebec has the expertise and deals with the institutions in the health care system, it is the government that should determine the priorities and develop action plans in its own territory, making them compatible with the global objectives developed by the World Health Organization, for example.

For 20 years I worked in the health care system as a social worker. I was therefore able to see for myself all the skill and expertise that Quebec's public health care system brings to preventing and dealing with epidemics, for example, through vaccination campaigns against meningitis, as we had a few years ago, in which the CLSCs did a tremendous job, or all the prevention and intervention programs developed by the CLSCs, community organizations and hospitals. We have the necessary health care expertise and do not need the federal government to interfere.

I saw that Quebec's strategy was very effective and, most importantly, met the needs of Quebecers. I do not think, therefore, that there is any need for this new agency. It will only duplicate what is already being done by Quebec and the provinces, in particular by the Institut national de la santé publique du Québec.

Instead of interfering in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces, this new government should set as its priority the provision of adequate funding for health. Duplicating a system that

already exists in Quebec is not the way to solve the central problem of our health care system, that is to say, under-funding.

If the federal government really wants to help improve our health care system, it should fix the fiscal imbalance instead and give Quebec and the provinces the means they need to develop and further improve the services they provide their populations in their areas of jurisdiction and ensure that, when it comes to health, their populations have the tools they need to deal with the new challenge facing public health care.

By its massive cuts to health transfers in the 1990s, the federal government endangered Quebec's health care system. It is obvious that the cruel cuts to federal transfers helped destabilize the system because the Government of Quebec finds itself now in a financial situation that makes long-term planning very difficult.

Our health network in Quebec is under enormous pressure. Our aging population requires more and more hospital care, surgery, geriatric services and cancer services, not to mention home care provided by the CLSCs and proximal care provided by our community organizations. We need funding for our health network.

Instead of creating an agency that already exists in Quebec and can provide services tailored to Quebecers' needs, despite under-funding problems, the federal government should quickly correct the fiscal imbalance so that the provinces can develop their respective networks to ensure that their citizens will be well served. The people in Quebec and the other provinces are entitled to health services, not duplicated programs and repeated interference.

• (2225)

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, to start, I have a comment and then I will have a question.

My comment is that there are so many intrusions by the federal government into provincial jurisdictions that it has practically become a shameful disease. That is what it has come down to. That is my comment.

I would like to ask my colleague what is behind all this? Why does the federal government have to table Bill C-5 and what is the solution?

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, as a former colleague I have known for several years would have said, what we are talking about here is nation building.

I believe that, in order to justify its role and its existence, the federal government feels it must build the Canadian nation and create a system that, unfortunately, duplicates what is already in place. This is unfortunate for the people, because health care needs are enormous. We need all available resources to meet the people's needs. Neither our population nor our country can tolerate this duplication.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Sheer):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Pursuant to order made earlier today, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, June 20, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 10:30 p.m.)

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