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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, November 22, 2006

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 22, 2006

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Simcoe North.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some people talk about social justice, and some make it fiscally possible.

Under our government's first budget, Canadians have enjoyed a decrease in the lowest tax rate. For the riding of Louis-Hébert, this means that 1,243 people are now tax exempt.

Seniors will soon benefit from new tax measures. They will be entitled to a higher tax credit because of age and pension income splitting. These measures will affect nearly 16,000 retirees in my riding.

By reducing the tax burden by more than \$1 billion, Canada's new government is acting in the interests of seniors and retirees.

This is another example of the impotence of the Bloc Québécois, which will never, ever, be able to do as much, because it is a party permanently attached to the opposition benches.

Since the January 23 election, seniors in Louis-Hébert are no longer forgotten.

I am proud to be a member of a team that cares about the well-being of Canadians.

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[English]

CHILD CARE

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has not delivered child care to Canadians.

The choice in child care plan consisted of giving parents too little for child care that costs so much and tax credits for businesses to create spaces.

Parents still struggle to afford child care and businesses have not created the 125,000 spaces the government promised. It has been reported today that businesses are not creating spaces for child care because it is cost prohibitive for them to do so.

The Liberal government had signed deals with 10 provinces and had committed \$5 billion over five years to create over 600,000 child care spaces across Canada. Under the present government, parents have no choice in child care.

When will the government act and give parents choice in child care?

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

SHELTER SHOW

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, can we aspire to a more caring world? I hope so. I want to pay tribute to a songwriter whom I admire for his work and his human values, which I share. I am proud of this citizen of Vaudreuil-Soulanges, who works every year to produce a show to benefit a drop-in centre that helps street youth.

The famous *Show du Refuge* will return to Place des Arts in Montreal on December 6, 2006. I would like to thank all the volunteers who are giving of their time and talent to help this noble cause that often receives little attention.

I also want to thank Robert Charlebois, Nicolas Ciccone, Corneille, Alain Lefèvre, Richard Séguin, Marie-Chantal Toupin, Annie Villeneuve and Georges "Boule Noire" Thurston, who will be performing at the show, which is in its 16th year. The Refuge des Jeunes is a drop-in centre whose mission is to help young men between 17 and 24 who are homeless and in trouble.

The Bloc Québécois pays tribute to all those who are helping these young people who are so desperately in need.

Statements by Members

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago, Canada ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. We should be celebrating but we cannot because the Conservative government clearly does not support women's equality.

It has cut the Status of Women's budget by 40%. It has removed the word "equality" from its mandate. It has abolished the court challenges program. Funding rules for women's groups no longer promote equality. Women in my community and across Canada face severe repercussions because of the government's actions.

Canada had a reputation for upholding women's rights. We should forge a path forward, not march back in time.

The Prime Minister said that he would respect women's rights but, clearly, this was an empty promise.

I urge the Conservative government to honour the principles of equality and fairness that all Canadians value.

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HOBBEMA COMMUNITY CADET CORPS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the first anniversary of the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps program in the constituency of Wetaskiwin.

A year ago, when gangs and violence were causing havoc in this first nations community, RCMP constable Richard Huculiak started a community cadet program that has attracted over 800 young people from the Samson, Louis Bull, Erminskin and Montana bands. The program is closely associated with schools and supported by community leaders.

The activities are specifically tailored to the needs and concerns of native reserve youth. There is a strong emphasis on native culture, sports and a healthy lifestyle.

This incentive based program has proven to be an effective crime prevention initiative that draws from the same age group targeted by the gangs. Today, school attendance is up and there are fewer bullying issues, fights or other complaints.

The phenomenal growth and success of the Hobbema cadet program is attributable to the commitment of the organizers and the participants. It is an important step in engaging young people in a positive, life-enhancing experience that will help them make the right choices for their future.

I want to congratulate the cadets and thank the elders, chiefs, volunteers, RCMP and everyone else who supports this dynamic program.

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SRI LANKA

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Sri Lanka has seen internal conflict for some 20 years now. The period of relative peace that prevailed during the ceasefire and negotiations showed that life with peace is better than war.

This conflict cannot be solved with a military solution because the cost would be greater than Sri Lankans could afford. The many thousands killed and assassinated include children, journalists, members of parliament, academics, clergy, party leaders and government officials.

On behalf of the Sri Lankan community in Canada, the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and others, I plead with the Government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE to abstain from new hostilities and negotiate. Courage in embracing negotiated solutions to this political conflict is what the people want and is less costly than courage in a killing war without end.

I call upon Canada and Canadians to aggressively promote this approach in every way that we can.

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TOM MINHINNETT

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is often said that one can judge a man's character by what he says, what he does and what others say about him.

Tom Minhinnett, "Big Tom", who passed away on November 14, was such a man. He left a great impression with everyone who knew him. Big Tom was a tireless volunteer. For more than 20 years he gave his time to the Tuxedo Community Association of Calgary, raised funds for charities, sang in the Chalmers Presbyterian Church choir and served on the Boxing and Wrestling Commission, all the while working as an orderly at various care centres in Calgary.

His long-time friends, the "Tuxedo Gang", including Premier Ralph Klein, Don Phelps, Don Shaben, Roger Werth and Joe Yarrow, speak volumes about the importance of relationships to Tom.

Tom's wife, Margaret, and his family were his love and where his commitment stood. He would always put them and others before his own needs.

I want to thank Tom for caring. He made this world a better place and he will always hold a special place in our hearts. We will be seeing him in Heaven one day.

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●(1410)

[Translation]

AUDREY LEHOUX FOUNDATION

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this year, all of the recipients of the Audrey Lehoux Foundation awards, which were given out on October 14 in Saint-Bernard, are women. Every year, to promote agricultural training, the foundation gives graduation awards to students who meet the criteria.

This year's winners are: Marie-Ève Lehoux, Excellence/Agri-Marché award; Kelly Labonté, Grand Mérite-Expo du Bassin de la Chaudière award; Maryline Fillion, Grand Mérite Promutuel award; Isabelle Paradis-Faucher, Grand Mérite Desjardins award; and, in the baccalaureate category, Marie-France Blais, Grand Mérite UPA de Beauce-Nord and UPA de Beauce award.

These awards prove that women are making an ever-increasing contribution to agriculture.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates the next generation of farmers, these young women whose excellent work has earned them these graduation awards.

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[English]

CANADIAN HEALTH RESEARCH AWARDS

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tonight, some of Canada's most outstanding health researchers will be recognized at the fifth annual Canadian Health Research Awards. CIHR and its partners are hosting this event to celebrate our nation's health research superstars.

This government recognizes the importance of investing in health research, which is why in budget 2006 we increased funding to CIHR by an additional \$17 million. As a result, CIHR is now supporting over 10,000 researchers and trainees across Canada.

This past October, the Minister of Health announced \$348 million to support more than 1,600 health research grants.

In my riding of Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, \$13 million for health research was allocated to McMaster University. These strategic investments are making a positive difference in the lives of ordinary Canadians by furthering work in areas such as wait times, cancer, mental health and obesity.

I congratulate the health research community and all those who will be recognized for their outstanding efforts at this evening's Canada Health Research Awards.

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[Translation]

ELIMINATION OF INTOLERANCE AND DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, November 25, 2006, is the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.

[English]

This declaration, which has worldwide importance, is of particular interest to the Baha'i community. This is because of the continuing discrimination and persecution displayed toward the Baha'i in Iran. The Baha'i teachings focus on unity and equality of all peoples and all faiths with the elimination of discrimination of every kind, encouraging all peoples to have the benefit of higher education.

Sadly, the Baha'i youth in Iran are being denied many of these fundamental freedoms. Representatives of the Canadian Baha'is are

Statements by Members

deeply involved in the United Nations and are especially active in the areas of human rights.

[Translation]

I encourage Canadian UN delegates to make relieving the suffering of the Baha'i spiritual community in Iran one of their priorities.

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[English]

MILTON FRIEDMAN

Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week we lost a great defender of personal freedom. Nobel Prize winner Milton Friedman was truly one of the great economic thinkers of all time.

To Friedman, inflation was a product of too much government and very bad government monetary policy. In the midst of runaway inflation, big spenders like Pierre Trudeau and Bob Rae ignored his advice. Fortunately, there was more enlightened leadership in the U. K. and the United States and they had positive results.

Milton Friedman was always a critic of big government, big spenders and big taxes. He was always a great defender of the individual's freedom to make his or her own choices.

Dr. Friedman coined many phrases. Perhaps his most famous was that "there is no such thing as a free lunch". Today, only socialists, big spending Liberals and the foolhardy believe there is a free lunch.

* * *

● (1415)

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on September 25, the Conservative government announced draconian cuts that affected dozens of federal programs. Since then, the organizations affected have not stopped calling for what they are entitled to and proclaiming the need for federal funding.

Whether we are talking about the court challenges program, the Canada volunteerism initiative, investment in youth employment, Status of Women Canada, international youth internship or literacy programs, they all had a raison d'être and a valid mission in the eyes of Canadians. The consequences to the beneficiaries of these programs are heavy and will be felt for a long time if the Conservative government does not backtrack.

These organizations and the Canadian public feel abandoned by their government. Who will support them in achieving their objective? Who will contribute to the development of young people, women and the illiterate? Who will protect the rights of minorities without the court challenges program? Who? It will certainly not be the Conservative government.

Oral Questions

[English]

EID AL-FITR

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Eid al-Fitr is one of the major festivals in the Islamic faith. It is celebrated after the month of Ramadan during which Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown.

For Muslims around the world, Ramadan is a month of blessing, marked by prayer, fasting and charity. It is also an opportunity for social and cultural dialogue, enabling Muslims from countries around the world to interact and to develop better relations and understanding of each other's heritage.

On behalf of the organizations involved, I extend an invitation to all colleagues in this House and the other place to attend the 12th annual Eid al-Fitr celebration tonight on Parliament Hill in room 200, West Block, from 6 to 9 p.m.

On behalf of all parliamentarians, we extend to all Muslims best wishes for a happy Eid Mubarak.

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[Translation]

LITERACY

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during Literacy Action Day on Parliament Hill, I encountered some delegates storming out of the office of the Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages.

The government's explanation for the cuts to these programs is simple: literacy programs are ineffective, since there are still people who are illiterate.

The Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages and the Minister of Human Resources have to understand that by cutting the literacy programs, the illiteracy rate will only increase.

The Minister of Human Resources bragged about allocating \$2.5 million to new projects in the adult learning, literacy and essential skills program. And yet, she is unable to justify the \$17.7 million cut to that very program.

The Minister of Human Resources should have stayed a little longer at Literacy Action Day on Parliament Hill. She would have seen that the needs are still there and that we get results when we reward the good initiatives.

* * *

[English]

INCOME TRUSTS

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minority Conservative government dropped an atom bomb on income trusts and cost ordinary Canadians over \$25 billion.

Yesterday, unelected cabinet minister Marjory LeBreton said, "I have not seen any evidence that individuals have lost large sums of money". This is saying to let them eat cake: aristocratic indifference from out of touch Conservative senators while ordinary Canadians lose their shirts.

I say to all Canadians, let us send Marjory a message. Let us get out the pencils. Her telephone number is 613-943-0756. On the Internet, Canadians can send her a message at lebrem@sen.parl.gc.ca.

Let us send Marjory a message. Maybe she will quit stalling and apologize to Canadians for the Conservative broken promise on income trusts.

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[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as chair of the Standing Committee on Official Languages, I would like to thank the representatives from official language minority communities who appeared before the committee during its recent tour through the eastern provinces.

From November 6 to 8, 2006, the committee visited St. John's, Moncton, Sherbrooke, Toronto and Sudbury.

The purpose of the tour was to gain an appreciation of the vitality of official language minority communities, to better understand the issues they face and to assess the success of government programs.

The committee will visit the western provinces from December 4 to 8, 2006.

I would also like to point out that it had been over 10 years since the last time any official languages committee has traveled to meet the communities it serves. It took a Conservative government to do this.

ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1420)

[English]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since the government came to office, it has acted to worsen the situation of the provinces and territories by \$6 billion. It has off-loaded and downloaded and has broken agreements on child care, labour market development, environment money for Quebec and more than \$3 billion for the people of Ontario.

Could the Prime Minister explain why, due to his actions, today the provinces are out over \$6 billion in funding that they came to count on in previously signed agreements with the Government of Canada? Instead of trying to confuse Canadians with his illusory promises on fiscal imbalance, will he first restore the more than \$6 billion he has taken away from the people of our provinces?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, completely contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition has just said, this government has increased transfers to the provinces. They are now at record levels.

Oral Questions

This government has done what the previous government failed to do, indeed, what the Liberal Party still fails to do, and that is to recognize that there is a fiscal imbalance in this country and deal with it.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what the Prime Minister alleges, the provinces know that he needs to invest \$6 billion just for them to get back to even.

It is not governments we are talking about here; it is real Canadians who are being shortchanged and deprived. We are talking about money that the government has deliberately refused to deliver for aboriginal infants, university and college students, housing for the poor, immigrant settlement, climate change, workplace skills, apprenticeships and employment for those with disabilities.

Will the Prime Minister please tell the House today that he will end his shell game that is really hurting Canadians in need and restore their money before we belabour his question of fiscal imbalance?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, hearing the Liberal Party defend the provinces is like hearing the fox defend the chickens.

The reality, as I have said, is that this party has recognized the fiscal imbalance that the Liberal Party created. We are committed to dealing with it. Maybe the leader of the Liberal Party could tell us whether he even yet recognizes a fiscal imbalance.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we shall see who the chickens are in this House.

The Conservatives eliminated billions of dollars earmarked for child care. There was a signed agreement with the provinces. However, children still need these day care spaces. The Conservatives cut millions of dollars in transfers for university students. And, if the Prime Minister is suddenly truly concerned about the environment, why is he withholding over \$300 million from Quebec to combat climate change? These are concrete examples of this government's contempt. There is not a shred of social or economic justice.

Will it restore the \$6 billion that it has taken away from the provinces—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I repeat, this government has increased transfers to provinces and they are now at record levels. At the same time we have cut taxes and put money back into taxpayers' pockets. We recognize that the fiscal imbalance is a reality and we are taking action to deal with it. That is why Quebecers will continue to reject the centralism of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December the Prime Minister fooled Quebecers by promising to practice a so-called open federalism. Today, after he has deprived Quebec of some \$800 million by ripping up the day care agreement and refused to lift a finger to support the government in attaining the Kyoto protocol targets, not to mention the labour

market agreement, we see that Quebec has not received almost \$1 billion.

Will the Prime Minister undertake to restore the funding he has withheld from the provinces and territories, or is this another broken Conservative promise?

• (1425)

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): In fact, Mr. Speaker, the transfers to the provinces are \$40 billion this year, increasing to \$49 billion in 2011.

With respect to fiscal balance and the fiscal balance issue, yesterday we had this statement: "I recognize this is the first national government to acknowledge the fiscal imbalance and I am very pleased by that. This is a good first step." That is from Dr. Marie Bountrogianni, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs for the province of Ontario, before the Senate committee yesterday.

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister forgot to say that the money comes from the former Liberal government.

[*Translation*]

In order to win the last election, the Conservatives made promises that they have not kept. The Prime Minister promised to fix the fiscal imbalance, but has not yet done anything. He promised to increase post-secondary funding, but has not given the provinces one cent. His Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec promised a Marshall plan for the Quebec regions, but has done very little.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he has not been truthful with Quebecers and that he does not intend to keep his promises?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the party opposite can take credit for funding increases this year, next year and years up to 2011 since it is not the government.

Having said that, the party opposite reduced transfers to the provinces in the 1990s on the backs of health care for Canadians. The suffering of Canadians in health care is wholly attributable to the government of the day. That is how it purported to balance budgets in Canada: on the backs of health care for Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the eve of the economic statement, it is vital that the Prime Minister promise to put an end to the fiscal imbalance. Instead of going forward with concrete proposals to eliminate the fiscal imbalance, the Prime Minister prefers to announce targeted tax measures, the latest being income splitting on tax returns.

Why does the Prime Minister not focus on a general solution to the fiscal imbalance, as he promised to do during the last election campaign?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we increased transfers to the provinces in the last budget. We are holding consultations with the provinces and we will propose other measures in the next budget.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, the Prime Minister promised to resolve the fiscal imbalance. There seems to have been a shift in the Prime Minister's priorities since then. Rather than have the entire population benefit from a solution to the fiscal imbalance, the Prime Minister has decided to help the wealthy in society with targeted tax measures that do little to help the least fortunate and the middle class.

Why does he not show leadership and resolve the fiscal imbalance once and for all in the interest of the entire population?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we increased transfers to the provinces and we also cut taxes for taxpayers and for the middle class.

I want to thank the leader of the Bloc Québécois for supporting our budget.

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TAXATION

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance wants to give couples the option of splitting their income. He claims this will help the middle class. However, this measure, far from helping the majority of people, only benefits the wealthy.

Will the minister acknowledge that by taking this route he is trying primarily to benefit high income rather than low income earners?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only income splitting that we have proposed is income splitting for pensioners in Canada and I thank the Bloc Québécois for supporting our motion.

* * *

[Translation]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this measure may end up costing \$5 billion and, in the meantime, the government is denying the fiscal imbalance and is telling Quebec and the provinces to fend for themselves when it comes to health and education.

Does the minister admit that by introducing such measures he is favouring the wealthy instead of resolving the fiscal imbalance, as he promised to do?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, this is the first national government to actually recognize the issue of fiscal imbalance moving toward fiscal balance and that is a constructive discussion that is ongoing.

With respect to income splitting, we made the decision, which was announced recently, to permit income splitting. I thank the members of the Bloc Québécois for supporting that motion which certainly

helps seniors and pensioners in Canada. It will reduce the tax burden on many seniors and pensioners who are relying on one pension, or one pension plus another small pension, by thousands of dollars starting January 1, 2007.

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● (1430)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although there has been no official announcement, it looks as though Lockheed Martin has been awarded a \$5 billion contract to build planes for our troops. Of course, one has to wonder how come Lockheed Martin knows. Subcontractors and contractors apparently know already, but ordinary Canadians have not been told. In fact, a press conference was cancelled.

My question is for the Prime Minister. What is so secret about this deal? Why can Canadians not be told what is being done with their tax dollars when it comes to a major military purchase?

Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC): Mr. Speaker, no deal has been signed. The RFP has yet to go out. In fact, the contract will not be awarded until August 2007. Again, the leader of the NDP is barking up an invisible tree.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for that clarification.

How about this, will the government at least commit to bringing this contract in front of the Standing Committee on National Defence so that it can be reviewed, so we can find out whether or not this is actually going to be the best plane for the Canadian Forces, and so that we can find out whether it is actually going to meet the needs?

I know the peanut gallery heckling me at the moment does not like to hear these kinds of questions. Let those members support the idea of having this sort of discussion in front of a standing committee of this House, the way they used to say it should be done when they were in opposition.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government made clear in the last budget its intentions to re-equip our military. That will be done with the best interests of the Canadian military and Canadian taxpayers in mind.

What I find interesting is that no matter how much the NDP says it supports the military, as soon as we actually want to spend money on the military, the NDP objects. This party will give our military the best equipment.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last December, the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec announced with great fanfare that, if elected, he would implement a Marshall plan to kickstart Quebec's economy. He even had the gall to say that the region he was trying to win a seat in was getting nothing but crumbs from the federal government to support its economic development. Crumbs? Highway 175, the Aluminum Technology Centre, the Georges Vézina Arena, the Saint-Félicien Zoo.

But now he has changed his tune. Last weekend, he said, "I do not want to talk about a Marshall plan because it would cost billions, and I have a limited budget."

Will the minister acknowledge that he cannot deliver the goods and that he still has a long way to go?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was merely being humble. General George Marshall had \$14 billion and launched a massive initiative in Europe.

Compare that to the annual budget for the department responsible for regional economic development, which is \$200 million. We have been creative enough to implement six new tools to support regional economic development. We started by targeting vulnerable regions. The plan has been very well received in the regions.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not the Marshall plan; this is the marshmallow plan.

The minister should change his department's name. Now that he has submitted to the will of the Prime Minister's office, he should call himself the minister of regional under-development. The Prime Minister has often said that he thinks regional development policies waste money on perpetual losers and support a culture of defeatism.

Can the minister of regional development explain to his constituents why he is now breaking his word? Maybe it is because he has finally realized that André Harvey was a proper member of Parliament who delivered the goods.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is not a marshmallow plan at all; it is an excellent plan. Maybe the member is having some problems.

An hon. member: He eats too many marshmallows.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Maybe he eats too many marshmallows.

Maybe we should call this the Blackburn plan because we have created six new tools to support regional economic development. These tools have been designed to meet the specific needs of Quebec's vulnerable regions and RCMs that are having problems. I would encourage the member to read the Blackburn plan.

● (1435)

[English]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in very simple language fixing the fiscal imbalance means paying more money to the provinces. It does not mean taking more money from the provinces. Yet, despite the government's promise, that is precisely what it has done to the tune of \$6 billion in cancelled child care, cancelled labour-market agreements, and the cancelled Canada-Ontario agreement.

Is this \$6 billion hole what the government means by fixing the fiscal imbalance?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): I hate to disappoint the member opposite, Mr. Speaker, but transfers to other levels of government, provinces, territories and municipalities, are rising from \$40 billion this year to \$49 billion in 2011. That is \$9 billion more over that period of time. In addition, federal funding for health and social programs will rise, as part of that, from \$28 billion this year to \$36 billion in 2011. That is \$8 billion more.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister does not understand simple numbers. The fact of the matter is that it was the Liberal government that committed \$90 billion over 10 years and the numbers he is speaking about come from Liberal commitments.

I am talking about \$6 billion that he cancelled. He cancelled child care. He cancelled the Canada-Ontario agreement. He cancelled labour-market agreements. That is to his credit.

Why did he cancel this? Why is he wrecking the fiscal imbalance rather than—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. the Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): These are not just simple numbers, Mr. Speaker, they are single digit numbers: \$9 billion more in transfers, and for health care alone, \$8 billion more.

It was a lot worse in the 1990s. I knew, as the finance minister of Ontario, when we had to try to balance budgets, the Liberal government reduced funding for health care, reduced funding for education, and reduced money for social services on the backs of the people of every province in this country.

* * *

[Translation]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the shrimping industry is facing an unprecedented crisis with the collapse of market prices. The Minister of Fisheries and Oceans will have a good opportunity to propose solutions because an important forum on the future of this industry will be held in Quebec City on Friday.

Oral Questions

Will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans acknowledge that capping quotas and reducing licence fees could be a first step in solving the crisis affecting shrimp fishermen?

[English]

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member quite clearly stated, on Thursday of this week there will be a major meeting in Quebec hosted by the provincial government. We will be attending, as we did in Newfoundland and Labrador, and as we did in the maritime provinces. At that meeting, we hope the concerns expressed by the entire industry will be clearly aired and then collectively we can address the problems because there are many of them.

[Translation]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when will the minister realize that one of the solutions available to him is to depoliticize the allocation of fishing quotas and base his decisions on scientific facts? That is easily understood.

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will be in attendance at the meeting in Quebec on Thursday and I am sure he will bring forward any solutions that his party might have. This is a gathering so that collectively the entire industry can work together to find solutions to the tremendous amount of problems we have. Anything that can be done from a federal perspective, the hon. member can be assured it will be done.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, potato farmers in Saint-Amable have been suffering from the golden nematode crisis for over three months. The federal government claims that financial assistance is available to them through the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, or CAIS, although, as the government knows, this program does not apply to their situation.

My question is simple. Does the minister plan to implement a program that is specifically adapted to the situation facing the farmers of Saint-Amable? He can create an emergency program or ad hoc program—he can call it whatever he likes—but he must help them.

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the situation in Saint-Amable. We are very pleased that we were able to regionalize the problem very quickly. However, for those farmers who are left, we are moving ahead on negotiations with the Quebec government.

We moved ahead in our last federal-provincial meeting with a framework for disaster relief. This will help us get the funds necessary and get them out to those farmers as quickly as possible, hopefully within a few weeks.

[Translation]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a few days ago, the Quebec minister of agriculture, fisheries and food and the president of the UPA came to Ottawa to meet with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities to plead the case of the Saint-Amable farmers. They came to insist on the urgency of the matter.

Does the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food understand that, when there is an emergency, immediate action is required? I would like to know what he is waiting for to help the farmers of Saint-Amable in particular?

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that, in its 16 years of existence, the Bloc Québécois has not introduced a single program to help farmers in Quebec. Unlike the Bloc, we went to see the farmers, we are in the process of negotiating with them and we are going to find a solution for Saint-Amable.

* * *

[English]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minority Conservative government has not increased, indeed it has decreased, federal transfer payments to Saskatchewan. It took away \$109 million from labour market agreements and \$104 million from child care. Saskatchewan is worse off under the Conservative government.

Will the Prime Minister guarantee his long promised, but still undelivered, answer to Saskatchewan on equalization will be in addition to the money that he already owes Saskatchewan for labour market partnerships and for child care?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there seems to be some challenge on the other side in understanding the figures. Once again, transfers to the provinces and municipalities are increasing by \$9 billion, a very substantial increase.

With respect to the other point the hon. member raises relating to equalization, it is an ongoing discussion. There have been a series of reports released. We are on track in our discussions. Our plan from budget 2006 is being followed. There will be a meeting next month of the ministers of finance. Not long ago I met with the minister of finance from Saskatchewan in Ottawa. We are having useful discussions—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me advise the minister that under the Liberal government \$800 million extra was provided to Saskatchewan. Under his government in Ontario, he left a deficit of \$6 billion.

In 1995 the now Prime Minister said that the government then had not cut enough. Will the Prime Minister honour the very explicit promise that he made to Saskatchewan? That promise was to take non-renewable resources out of the equalization formula altogether. It was explicit. It was in writing, 100%. No ifs, ands or buts, yes or no?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite apparently is confused about the fiscal situation in Canada as between the provinces and the federal government. In fact, the total surpluses in the provinces this year are \$13.4 billion. In addition, the level of accumulated debt in the provinces is lower than that in the federal government.

The surplus in the provinces is higher than the federal surplus of \$13.2 billion. Nevertheless, we know we have to move forward on transfers to accomplish fiscal balance in Canada, something that the former government always denied existed.

• (1445)

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the list of broken Conservative promises continues to grow. Just weeks after the income trust flip-flop that cost investors \$25 billion overnight, we now know the Conservatives have slashed transfers to the provinces by \$6 billion.

Apart from the fiscal imbalance fiasco, another \$180 million was taken away from the Atlantic provinces, as a result of the government cancelling child care and infrastructure deals. No wonder Atlantic premiers have been seeing red since the government took office.

When can Atlantic Canada expect to see these signed agreements restored?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have fully funded the trust transfers for post-secondary education, for infrastructure, for aboriginal and off reserve housing and for public transit. We are providing \$2.5 billion per year directly to children and families through the new universal child care benefit plus \$250 million for child care spaces.

In addition to the transfers that I have already spoken about, which members opposite do not seem to understand, it increases from \$40 billion to \$49 billion over the course of the fiscal years to 2011.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these were provincial deals that were signed and booked by the previous Liberal government. The Conservatives only honour deals that are convenient or that fit their strict ideology.

On equalization, the Prime Minister guaranteed no province would lose out to the changes in the formula. Now that he realizes he cannot do this, he ignores the issue. In the meantime, he has taken away \$6 billion from the provinces.

A promise from the government is not worth the non-recycled paper it is written on. How anybody take it at its word?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, forgive me for trying to figure out which one of the Liberal budgets the member opposite is speaking about. Was it the budget that was first announced in the House, or was it the NDP budget that followed along? Was it perhaps the announcements that were made in November last year?

Oral Questions

One can select from three sets of figures that the former government had about potential transfers to real Canadians. We prefer our solid numbers in budget 2006, which are all increases in transfers to the provinces.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we learned today that police in Montreal had conducted a series of raids targeting organized crime.

Can the Minister of Public Safety give us the details of the operation?

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in Montreal, the RCMP arrested individuals linked to alleged organized crime activities.

Canada's new government made fighting crime one of its priorities. We promised to fight against organized crime and to make our streets safe.

I applaud and commend the courage and professionalism of the men and women of the RCMP, the Sûreté du Québec and the Montreal police, who are working to make our communities safe.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the finances of our country, working families in Canada want balance, something the government seems to know nothing about. After cutting \$1 billion from programs that help the most vulnerable, the minister is now musing about another \$5 billion reckless tax cut through income splitting, not pension splitting, income splitting.

How is he going to pay for it? Is he going to hike personal income taxes, or will he do what he did in Ontario: cut health, education, the environment and run a deficit?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows, since I had these discussions with her prebudget, we increased the funding for families with children with disabilities in budget 2006, fulfilling the recommendations from the technical committee in that regard.

We also appointed a panel, which will be reporting shortly, to study the issue of some sort of tax deferred savings plan for families with children with disabilities.

Oral Questions

I believe the hon. member supports those initiatives.

• (1450)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, another study on another pressing concern of Canadians does not make up for the fact that the government has been busy slashing funding and not investing in Canadians. Costs for families, on average, are on the rise. In fact, under the government, most are actually worse off. Child care costs are up. Tuition fees for college or university are up. Prescription drugs costs are up.

If the minister will not come clean on what he will cut or who will pay for the risky schemes that he talks about, maybe he will tell us what promises he plans to break to pay for income splitting.

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the only income splitting of which we have spoken was in the tax fairness plan announced a few weeks ago, to come into force January 1, 2007, not just for seniors who are pensioners, but also for pensioners who are not yet seniors. It is a major change in tax policy for pensioners and seniors, particularly for them, and it was supported by the member opposite, and I thank her for her support, and by her party.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has dropped the ball on wait times. Yesterday the minister admitted that he had no details on his pilot project for aboriginal Canadians. The fact is he only has band-aid solutions and no concrete plans to reduce wait times. The minister has given nothing but lip service, and has failed to fight for health care on behalf of all Canadians at the cabinet table.

How does he expect to reduce wait times for all Canadians without any money and without a real plan?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is quite mistaken. The announcement that I made earlier this week to help some of the most vulnerable Canadians in our society is very specific. It has the support of the first nations. They are excited about being the first place in our country to have a wait times guarantee, thereby fulfilling our promise to Canadians that we would move forward with this.

This is being funded because under our 2006 budget funding for health care has gone up by \$1.1 billion to the provinces. It has gone up for Health Canada. It is another promise kept.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member that as Liberals we signed the health care accord. We had a 10 year plan to strengthen health care in Canada and we invested \$41 billion; the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Nothing.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: The Liberal 2005 budget increased transfer payments by \$32 billion; the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Nothing.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: The Liberals invested \$5.5 billion to reduce wait times; the Conservatives—

Some hon. members: Nothing.

Ms. Ruby Dhalla: When will the Conservatives show some leadership, take some action and get to work on Canada's health care?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at the risk of being part of some sort of theatrical element, Canadians know that under this government they can expect more and they get more. When it comes to health care funding, Canadians are getting—

Some hon. members: More.

Hon. Tony Clement: When it comes to getting the job done when it comes to reducing wait times, we are doing—

Some hon. members: More.

Hon. Tony Clement: When it comes to keeping our promises and making sure we move ahead on health care, we are doing—

Some hon. members: More.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Perhaps we could have nothing more of that. Let us have a little order in the House.

We will now have a question with some order, please. The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

* * *

INCOME TRUSTS

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's income trust double-cross has cost Canadians over \$25 billion. However, do not tell that to Conservative Senate leader Marjory LeBreton. She actually said yesterday, "I have not seen any evidence that people have individually lost large sums of money". Apparently, the outcry of Canadians who lost their shirts has not been heard.

Could the Minister of Finance tell the House how many emails his office has received just on the income trust disaster alone?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I assume the member opposite is referring to his party's handling of this issue last year in terms of a disaster, of emails, of RCMP investigations, of half measures, of market fluctuations. We dealt with the issue clearly, decisively and without public disclosure, which is the way it had to be dealt with.

There have been a lot of concerns expressed. John Manley, for example, who used to be the minister of finance, acknowledges that this was the right thing to do.

Oral Questions

●(1455)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there must be something wrong with the sound system here. I asked a very straightforward question. Conservatives promised never to tax income trusts. Canadians invested based on that promise. The government broke the promise. How can a cabinet member be so unsympathetic and so callous?

The finance minister has received tens of thousands of emails from Canadians telling him the income trust double-cross was wrong. Will he at least forward those tens of thousands of emails to Senator LeBreton?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have received lots of emails, as the department has. I have meetings planned with people. I have discussed the issue of income trusts with people.

I welcome the member opposite to think about the best interests of Canada: to think about who is going to pay the taxes next year and the year after that; to think about tax fairness; to think about the duty of corporations to pay their fair share of taxes in Canada; and to think about Canada's place in the world and our economy being competitive with other economies in the world. This is the Canadian duty, the duty of a Canadian government that dealt with the issue fairly—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

* * *

[Translation]

WAGE EARNER PROTECTION PROGRAM ACT

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, even though Bill C-55, which seeks to protect employees' wages in the event a company goes bankrupt, received royal assent last year, it still has not taken effect. The Minister of Labour tells us that it is coming. In June, the minister said, "It is coming". In committee last month, he again said, "It is coming". And last weekend, the Minister of Labour even boasted in his riding that "it is coming".

Could the Minister of Labour be more specific and just give us a date, just a date, and meet that date?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is coming.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Gildan clothing company in Salaberry-de-Valleyfield has permanently laid off 155 workers. Sixteen of those workers are over 55. They have nothing to look forward to, and the recently announced retraining program is not going to be of any great assistance to them.

Does the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development not realize that implementing a program for older worker adjustment would have been, once again, by far the best, most effective way to financially support these 16 older workers?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to tell this House that the program we have established for older workers is one that we created after consulting the provinces. It is a program that the Bloc Québécois could have never delivered, because it is destined to remain an opposition party forever. We have a program that is adapted to the workers. We are helping them rise to the challenges of the future.

* * *

[English]

AUTISM

Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is shameful the heartless minority Conservative government is paying lip service to parents and children affected by autism. Surely the minister does not believe that telling parents to go to a website makes up for the fact that his government has put up no new money for autism research, no new money for program support and no new money for autism development and treatment.

The previous Liberal government invested \$16.2 million which supported 32 separate products. Will the Minister of Health stop turning his back on families with autism, put his money where his mouth is, and cough up some new money to support families with autism today?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that this is an important public health issue, which is why I made my announcement yesterday on behalf of the Government of Canada on additional support for families and children facing ASD.

I would only read the headline from the Autism Society of Canada website news release in reply, where the Autism Society of Canada welcomes the announcement from the federal Minister of Health in support of Canadians with autism spectrum disorders.

We are working with the stakeholders. As importantly, we are working with the families and their children, which is quite frankly more than was done by that member's party when in government.

●(1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for St. John's East.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Remembrance Day Canadians often reflect upon the sacrifices made by so many of our war veterans. However, over the years a small group of veterans has gone unrecognized.

The U.K. ministry of defence has identified about 200 veterans including soldiers from Newfoundland serving in the British army who underwent chemical agent testing in England. They have gone unnoticed.

Can the Minister of National Defence please inform the House what he is doing to rectify this situation?

Oral Questions

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour today to announce that our new government will be extending Canada's chemical warfare agent testing recognition program to account for those who volunteered as test subjects in Britain. These 200 veterans, or possibly their primary beneficiaries, are now eligible for a one time tax payment of \$24,000. They will finally be recognized for the personal sacrifice they made in the service of Canada.

Supporting our brave men and women in uniform means giving them the recognition and care they are due when their service is done. Those who served decades ago need our support today. Canada's new government is honoured to be able to give it to them.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has learned through access to information that a major fuel spill at the Canadian Forces installation at Alert went unreported at the time. The significant incident report which we obtained states that on September 6 of this year a flex expansion joint failed and 21,000 litres of jet fuel were spilled at Alert.

Why did the government fail to inform northern Canadians? What actions has the minister taken to ensure this never happens again?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as soon as that incident occurred, the defence department moved quickly to clean it up. All the necessary actions have been taken.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, current and former northern military installations have wreaked havoc on the environment.

Why did it take the NDP to have this information see the light of day? The government promised to be open, transparent and accountable.

The minister should apologize. This incident should have been reported to the hard-working people of the north. We are not second class citizens.

Will he immediately announce that any incident like this will be promptly reported to the Canadian people?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all the necessary actions were taken to clean up the spill. I should inform the member that DND is spending about \$60 million each year cleaning up residue that was left in the north for the last 30 to 40 years. We will continue to do that until all the areas are cleaned up.

* * *

[Translation]

TOURISM

Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a result of the decision to abolish the GST visitors' rebate program, with no consultation, Canada has become the only OECD country that does not reimburse tourists for some of their spending.

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada estimates that this will result in losses of several billion dollars for cities such as Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto, which organized conferences for companies based outside Canada.

How does the Minister of Finance plan to make up for the losses resulting from this policy worthy of a banana republic?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government invests more than \$300 million each year in the tourism industry in Canada.

This particular GST rebate was not being used by many people. It was being used by 3% of the 35 million visitors to Canada and was a very inefficient way of raising taxes.

Having said that, we are committed to the tourism industry in Canada. I look forward to further discussions with that industry as we move toward preparation of budget 2007.

* * *

HEALTH

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health made an important announcement with regard to health care professional human resources. Canadians know that there is not a sufficient number of health care professionals, especially in rural and remote areas of our vast country.

Can the minister inform the House what he has done in order to alleviate the pressure on the current human resources level, something which was not addressed by the previous Liberal government?

● (1505)

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Sarnia—Lambton is quite correct. Yesterday I was able to announce on behalf of the new Government of Canada an investment of \$18.3 million to help more health professionals trained abroad to be able to work in Canada. This is yet another example of Canada's Conservative government delivering on a campaign pledge that we made in the last election.

We are working cooperatively to ensure that the foreign trained professionals meet the Canadian standards and get them working in Canada quickly. This is another way to reduce wait times. We are on the job.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Her Excellency Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Croatia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Sean O'Neachtain, Chairman of the delegation of the 29th Interparliamentary Meeting of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

[*Translation*]

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during oral question period, in a heated moment I got carried away and made an inappropriate gesture. I apologize to the opposition.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Bourassa also have a point of order?

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to understand something. The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles said that he gave the finger to this entire House and that, for reasons of decorum, he should apologize. Is that what he means? He is apologizing because he made another gaffe.

Is that it?

The Speaker: I believe this matter is closed at this time.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the Canada-First Nation Education Jurisdiction Agreement.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PUBLIC SERVICE INTEGRITY OFFICER OF CANADA

Hon. Michael Chong (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table in the House of Commons the annual report to Parliament of the Public Service Integrity Officer of Canada.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

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, under the provisions of Standing Order 32 I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2003-04 and 2004-05 annual report on the state of Inuit culture and society in the Nunavut settlement area.

INCOME TAX AMENDMENTS ACT, 2006

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-33, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, including amendments in relation to foreign investment entities and non-resident trusts, and to provide for the bijural expression of the provisions of that Act.

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

* * *

FIRST NATIONS JURISDICTION OVER EDUCATION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA ACT

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-34, An Act to provide for jurisdiction over education on First Nation lands in British Columbia.

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

* * *

● (1510)

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the Bloc Québécois will present the House with an unusual request that we here at the federal Parliament define the Québécois nation. As a consequence, with the support of the government and with the support of our party, I will be putting on the notice paper later today the following motion:

[*Translation*]

That this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the real intent behind the motion by the leader of the Bloc and the sovereigntist camp is perfectly clear. It is to recognize not what the Québécois are, but what the sovereigntists would like them to be.

To the Bloc, the issue is not that Quebec is a nation—the National Assembly has already spoken on that subject; the issue is separation. To them, “nation” means “separation”. We saw its true intent on October 27, when it said that the NDP had recognized for decades that Quebec was a nation, but that every time there was a referendum its actions contradicted the positions it had taken.

In other words, if you recognize that the Québécois form a nation, you have to vote yes in a referendum on separation. The attempt by the leader of the Bloc to persuade Quebecers of good faith to support separation despite themselves brings to mind what his mentor, Jacques Parizeau, said about lobster traps. Quebecers are not taken in by these clumsy tactics.

Former PQ premier, Bernard Landry, asked this question:

Routine Proceedings

— once that recognition is achieved, you must know, in all honesty, that you will then be faced with the question: why should the nation of Quebec be satisfied with the status of province of another nation and forego equality with yours and every other nation?

Mr. Speaker, the answer is clear. Quebeckers have always played a historic role in Canada's progress, through their public spirit, courage and vision, by building a confident, autonomous and proud Quebec showing its solidarity within a strong, united, independent and free Canada.

When Champlain landed in Quebec, he did not say that this would not work, it was too far away, it was too cold, or it was too difficult. No. Champlain and his companions worked hard because they believed in what they were doing, because they wanted to preserve their values, because they wanted to build a lasting and secure country. That is exactly what happened nearly 400 years ago, when Canada, as a country, was founded.

Quebeckers know who they are. They know that they have participated in the founding of Canada and in its development and its greatness. They know that they have preserved their language and their unique culture, and that they have advanced their values and their interests within Canada. The real question is simple: do the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada? The answer is yes. Do the Québécois form a nation independent of Canada? The answer is no, and it will always be no.

Mr. Speaker, throughout their history, Quebeckers have always known who the prophets of doom are and who the true guides of their destiny are.

● (1515)

[English]

Once again, the leader of the Bloc and his separatist friends are not concerned with defining who Quebeckers are but rather what they want them to become, a separate country.

The separatists do not need the Parliament of Canada to define what is meant by the sociological term "nation". My preference has been well known. I believe this is not the job of the federal Parliament. It is the job of the legislature of Quebec. However, the Bloc Québécois has asked us to define this and perhaps that is a good thing because it reminds us that all Canadians have a say in the future of this country.

Having been asked by the Bloc to define the Québécois, we must take a position. Our position is clear. Do the Québécois form a nation within Canada? The answer is yes. Do the Québécois form an independent nation? The answer is no, and the answer will always be no because Quebeckers, of all political persuasions, from Cartier and Laurier to Mulroney and Trudeau, have led this country and millions like them, of all political persuasions, have helped to build it. With their English and French speaking fellow citizens, and people drawn from all nationalities of this earth, they have been part of making this country what it is, the greatest country in the world.

To millions more who live in a dangerous and dividing world, this country is a shining example of the harmony and unity to which all peoples are capable and to which all humanity should aspire.

I say to my federalist colleagues and to the separatist side that we here will do what we must and what our forefathers have always

done to preserve this country, Canada, strong, united, independent and free.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the applause in this House to the Prime Minister's words clearly indicates the devotion of all federalist members in this House to the cause, first and foremost, of Canada, beyond all partisan purposes.

Speaking on behalf of the Liberals, we have spent our lives devoted to building a stronger Canada, inclusive of Quebec. We believe that the present prosperity and the social harmony of our country are a testimony to the efforts of successive Liberal governments, following on the efforts, as the Prime Minister was good enough to say, of Conservative governments that were devoted, first and foremost, to our country.

● (1520)

[Translation]

We Liberals have spent our lives building our country, and our country has always included Quebec.

[English]

As I travel across this country or as I live in my great city of Toronto and see the multicultural experiment that is the modern Canada of today, I say to modern Canadians that multicultural Canada became a reality because it was a bilingual and bicultural Canada that was the foundation of our races, a foundation that was built on a sense of tolerance and respect for each other that has enabled us to be the envy of the world, a world which, as the Prime Minister has said, today is struggling with racial disharmony and sectarian differences.

People are looking for examples in a modern world that will give them hope. It is the duty of the members of this House to give them that hope. It is our duty to transcend whatever partisan issues we have in order to inspire not only Canadians but other people in the world.

[Translation]

For our part, we are devoted to this great country with its marvellous history and unlimited potential. We have committed ourselves to building a Canada with Quebec as a key component.

For its part, the Bloc Québécois is dedicated to destroying Canada. Although we have the greatest respect for the members of this House, we fundamentally disagree on this point.

[English]

The Bloc is committed to the breakup of Canada and, for whatever respect we might have toward individual members on this point, we must clearly and fundamentally disagree and fundamentally fight for the rights of Canada and the whole of Canada.

There are federalists and nationalists in Quebec who believe in Canada and who are deeply dedicated to a Quebec within Canada. There are women, young and old, immigrants and those born here, families and singles who believe with every fibre of a Quebec within Canada.

How could we ever support a motion on Quebec by a party that has zero commitment to Canada and which is blind to the greatness available for Quebecers within Canada, a country in which they are at home from coast to coast to coast because we have sought to make them at home because it is their home? It is not just Quebecers within Quebec. A Quebecer is a Canadian in British Columbia or in St. John's, and they are equally Canadian and equally welcome in that community, which is part of their community. It belongs to them.

[*Translation*]

I can only imagine what the future holds for Canada. I can only imagine the incredible opportunities for all Quebec and Canadian youth who live in a country that is the envy of the world. Francophone communities outside Quebec are asking for and want the participation of Quebecers in order to build a better community and a better life for themselves as well. It is our duty. We must also recognize this fact.

• (1525)

[*English*]

We think of those Quebecers, when we talk of our country, who fought for Canada in the past, and we think of those who are risking their lives in Afghanistan and around the world for Canada and for a better world for all Canadians and a better world for everybody in this world. They are risking their lives for that principle and we cannot let them down.

[*Translation*]

The Liberals will be pleased to debate any motion before this House if it will support Quebec and Quebecers, support Canada and realize the full potential of our country.

To do otherwise is a betrayal of future generations of Quebecers and also of Canadians. We are asking that Canada assume its responsibilities.

[*English*]

On behalf of my party, I say to the Prime Minister that we will work with all parties in the House, with all members who have the interests of all Canadians at heart, to adopt a solution that respects Quebec and Quebecers and gives them that future within our wonderful country.

It will guarantee to the world that an example will continue to be given to them. There are many who wish to follow our example, an example which, if we fail them, will make the world a worse place because there are many people who wish to move into a peaceful and socially harmonious 21st century and for whom Canada will remain a beacon and an example. We cannot let them down and we must not let ourselves down. We will transcend partisanship. We will be faithful to our country, to our principles and, in the end, in so doing, Mr. Speaker and Prime Minister, we will be faithful to humanity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, both the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition can make all the accusations they want and try to change the subject, but the question was very clear. We will be asking the elected members of this House to vote on a motion to recognize that Quebecers form

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a nation. Official recognition of the Quebec nation by the House of Commons is more than a symbolic issue. It is, in fact, the most fundamental issue there is for Quebec. It is also a fundamental issue for Canada.

For many years, Canada's elected representatives have wanted to avoid this disturbing issue and sweep it under the rug. Yet the issue keeps resurfacing. It came to the fore after the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party of Canada adopted a resolution like ours. It did so again when the NDP adopted a similar resolution at its convention. The NDP felt compelled to re-orient its position on this issue because it had changed during the 1995 referendum. That is why I said that things changed; they went back to their original position.

Since then, a lot of commentators and elected representatives in Canada have dug their heels in. Several polls have shown that the vast majority of Canadians reject the idea of officially recognizing the reality that Quebecers form a nation. This refusal to recognize the Quebec nation, to recognize an obvious reality, could be called a great Canadian mental block. It is this very refusal to recognize Quebec for what it is that explains why Quebec is not a signatory to the Constitution. This refusal to recognize the Quebec nation also explains why Quebec is considered a province like any other and nothing more.

In Quebec, in the National Assembly, sovereignists and federalists alike agree that Quebecers form a nation.

Nations have rights, including the right to direct their own development. The debate on Quebec's future hinges on whether, as some believe, Quebec is better off growing and prospering within Canada—and I respect that—or whether, as others like me believe, sovereignty is the only way for Quebec to reach its full potential.

This House will be called to vote on recognizing Quebec as a nation, and not on the two options, federalism or sovereignty. Thus, Quebecers will be able to see clearly where each of us stands and where the future of Quebec lies. Although, in the defence of one option or the other, the only attitude that shows respect for Quebecers is to recognize them for what they are, that is, a nation that continues to be a nation even if it is no longer part of Canada, obviously and unconditionally a nation, a nation because that is what we are.

It is not up to the Prime Minister to decide which option Quebecers will choose. It is up to Quebecers, under the rules of the National Assembly, to decide their own future. I repeat, Quebecers form a nation whether or not they remain within a so-called united Canada. They form a nation whether or not they become a country. Those are the two options, and both are worthy.

The existence of a Quebec nation must never be subject to which option we may choose.

• (1530)

We are a nation because we are what we are, no matter which future we choose.

That is what we are saying. That is how we see the future.

Routine Proceedings

The only democratic position is to not impose and not subject the recognition of what Quebecers are to the option we may prefer in the future.

Indeed, there can be a nation within Canada. That is what we are proposing to you.

That is not my first choice, but I would never insist that Quebecers form a nation only on the condition that they have a country, nor would I ever accept that we could be recognized as a nation only on the condition that we stay in Canada. We are what we are, period.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to represent a party that, for decades, has supported recognition of Quebecers' nationhood.

Quebeckers are an important people within Canada, a people with an amazing 400-year history, an extraordinary people, proud of their values, proud of their history, an important people not only here in Canada, but around the world and in la Francophonie.

We are proud of Quebec. I am proud to have been born in Quebec and to have grown up there, proud that my grandfather was a minister in the Government of Quebec. I am proud, like anyone who lives or has lived in Quebec and who knows that Quebecers form a nation.

We have long supported this concept, because it is a question of respect for our fellow citizens who live in Quebec. As well, we have found that there has been a huge lack of respect for Quebecers in past years. There are many examples of this: the scandals, when people sought support in Quebec with unacceptable behaviour or with a right-wing policy—not a social democratic policy that reflects Quebecers' values—a bellicose policy that does not reflect the sort of society in which the vast majority of Quebecers want to live.

• (1535)

[*English*]

What is needed at this moment in time is to show respect for Quebecers by helping to build across this country the kind of country that all Quebecers would want to remain a part of, and that is a social democratic Canada. A social democratic Canada that would put to the forefront values that we see so many Quebecers embracing, the concept of a society that builds on assisting one another, with child care, with affordable housing, and with advanced policies on the environment. This is the best way to build the kind of Canada in which Quebecers will find themselves a positive place.

Our party has been very proud to stand in support of the policy that supports the concept of the national character of Quebecers and we will continue to do so.

Now is the time for us to build on this concept, to show all Quebecers that they are respected in the heart of the greatest country in the world, a country that we all are attempting to build to be a model for the entire world. By showing that there is a place for Quebecers here, we can send a strong signal about how a nation like Canada, a people like the Canadian people, can work in all of its diversity to accomplish the goals that everyone in the world shares.

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association on its meeting of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development at the OECD in Paris, France, June 23, 2006, and the third part of the 2006 Ordinary Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, France, June 26 to 30, 2006.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian parliamentary delegation of the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, respecting the meeting of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, held in Paris, France, on May 12, 2006.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 10th report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women entitled "Cuts to Status of Women Canada".

• (1540)

PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security on Bill C-12, An Act to provide for emergency management and to amend and repeal certain Acts,

The emergency management act will allow the Government of Canada to improve its own preparedness for a coordinated response to emergencies. It will clarify the federal government's leadership role in coordinating a response to major emergencies. The emergency management act will enhance the Government of Canada's collaboration with provinces, territories and key stakeholders.

This bill will better protect Canada's critical infrastructure and will also protect the sharing of sensitive information between the private sector and government when it comes to emergency management.

I respectfully submit this report.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

The committee studied the alleged disclosure of the names of access to information requesters and among the conclusions that it came to, the committee states that based on the testimony that was given it cannot conclude that there was a violation or breach of the law.

The committee further calls on the Minister of Justice to make necessary amendments to his proposed Access to Information Act which the committee is hoping will be before it before the Christmas break.

* * *

AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR CANADIANS ACT

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-382, An Act to provide for secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing for Canadians.

She said: Mr. Speaker, the growing issue of homelessness and inadequate housing in this country is of profound concern. With billions of dollars in surplus there is no reason why any person should be faced with the reality of having nowhere to go, no place to live this winter. Yet, for more than 200,000 Canadians homelessness is a fact of life.

The purpose of this bill is to respect the dignity and worth of all women, children and men in Canada by protecting their human rights for the provision of adequate, accessible and affordable housing and security.

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

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-383, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Brant.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to introduce this bill to change the name of the riding of Brant to Brantford—Brant—Six Nations. I have spoken to many constituents in my riding who feel that this name change will better represent the composition of my riding.

I would like, in particular, to recognize the city of Brantford which is approaching 90,000 now in population and is the 38th largest city in Canada, as well as Six Nations of the Grand River which is the most populated first nations community in Canada.

I am honoured to table the bill with the support of my colleague, the hon. member for Churchill. I hope I will ultimately have the support of each member with respect to this bill.

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

* * *

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-384, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (mischief against educational or other institution).

Routine Proceedings

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table in this Chamber today a bill to amend the Criminal Code by making it an offence to commit an act of mischief against an educational institution or premises serving specific groups of persons.

It is essential that hate crimes motivated by religion, race, colour, national or ethnic origin or sexual orientation be punished in order to prevent such abuses.

The parliamentarians of this House will agree that the society in which we live must respect differences. I am introducing this bill for these reasons.

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

* * *

● (1545)

[*English*]

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour today to present two petitions signed by a number of people, primarily from Regina but some from across the province of Saskatchewan, indicating their very strong support for the child care agreement that had been negotiated between the Government of Canada and the Province of Saskatchewan prior to the last election.

The petitioners point out that there is a great need for a national system of expanding child care spaces that are high quality, affordable, accessible and developmental in nature. They call upon the government to reinstate the full program, the funding and the agreement vis-à-vis Saskatchewan.

AGE OF CONSENT

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present three very important petitions to the House. Two of the petitions ask that the age of consent be raised from the age of 14 to the age of 16.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Winnipeg South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the last petition asks that the Government of Canada restore the definition of marriage to its longstanding and traditional form.

These petitions are signed largely by constituents in my riding but also throughout Manitoba.

LITERACY

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the pleasure to present the following petition to the House.

The petitioners call upon the government to undertake a national literacy strategy so that all Canadians have the opportunity to learn or improve their literacy skills and to reinstate funding to the literacy program that was cut.

I respectfully submit this petition.

Routine Proceedings

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions in the House. The first petition was signed by many residents from across the country but mostly from Vancouver Island.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize that communities and ecosystems around the world are suffering from global climate change through warmer weather, more extreme weather patterns, warmer waters and rising sea levels.

They ask the government to recognize that the impact of climate change will become catastrophic unless we reduce our greenhouse gas emissions immediately, that Parliament honour its legal commitment to the Kyoto protocol and to further pledge to reduce Canada's gas emissions by 30% below the 1990 levels by 2020 and to 80% by 2050.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am pleased to present is signed by many people from across the country, but mostly from British Columbia.

The petitioners call upon the government to recognize that high quality child care is a benefit to all children and ask Parliament to achieve multi-year funding to ensure that publicly operated child care programs are sustainable for the long term and in a national child care act, much the same as the national health act.

The petitioners also call upon the government to help end poverty by ensuring that the \$1,200 allowance to enhance the child tax benefit is not taxed and not clawed back.

LITERACY

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit a petition signed by a number of New Brunswickers, most of whom reside in Fredericton, speaking to the question of literacy specifically.

They state that literacy is a prerequisite for social and economic development, that approximately 42% of Canadians and 60% of New Brunswickers aged 16 and over have difficulty reading and writing, that a lack of literacy skills costs Canadian society approximately \$10 billion a year and that successfully increasing literacy and numeracy proficiencies of adults is a key component in ensuring Canadian competitiveness in the global market as well as ensuring an improved quality of life for all Canadians.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to reinstate funding for literacy programs terminated by the Conservative government and to undertake a pan-Canadian literacy strategy to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to achieve these vital skills.

• (1550)

CHILD CARE

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition from a variety of people from across the country concerned about the lack of child care in their communities and the lack of opportunity for their children.

The petitioners call upon the government to reinstate the previous commitment to a national child care plan and to remove the condition that the child care funding that had been committed would be reduced after one year because there are many remote and rural communities with very unique needs that have plans in place that will now be destroyed and there will not be opportunities available for those children.

[*Translation*]

AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am tabling a petition in this House that was signed by Canadians from all parts of the country. It asks the Government of Canada to establish a new trade policy for the automobile industry.

The petitioners urge the Government of Canada to cancel negotiations with Korea on a free trade agreement that would increase the massive one-way flow of automobiles into our country.

The petitioners are also asking the government to develop a new trade policy for the automobile industry requiring Korea and other foreign markets to purchase equivalent amounts of North American finished vehicles and auto parts if they wish to continue to have access to our market.

[*English*]

CHILD CARE

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit close to 100 pages of a petition from thousands of parents across Canada who are desperate for early childhood learning services and have been desperately waiting for many years.

The petitioners are asking the government to support a national child care act, which everyone in the House will have an opportunity to do tonight. They are asking for a publicly operated child care program with sustainable, long term funding and an end to child poverty by increasing the child tax benefit.

LITERACY

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by many residents or constituents in my riding of Brant dealing with the literacy cuts recently announced by the government.

The signatories to the petition recognize that reading and writing is a difficulty for a significant percentage of the adult Canadian population and that those difficulties cost society billions of dollars on an annual basis. The petitioners wish the government to reinstate the funding cuts recently announced.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition on behalf of Canadians who wish the government to act immediately to bring back child care in this country. In fact, they want high quality child care to benefit all children, and, in doing so, to also commit to multi-year funding to ensure it will be here forever and not be taken away as it was before, and to help end child poverty by using the \$1,200 allowance to enhance the child tax benefit.

* * *

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.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-4, in the name of the hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, is acceptable to the government, subject to the usual reservations concerning confidential information, and the documents are tabled immediately.

Motion No. P-4

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before the House a copy of any request by foreign governments to send ships, boats or submarines through the Northwest Passage.

• (1555)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Subject to the reservations or conditions expressed by the parliamentary secretary, is it the pleasure of the House that Notice of Motion No. P-4 be deemed to have been adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all other notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SOFTWOOD LUMBER PRODUCTS EXPORT CHARGE ACT, 2006

The House resumed from November 21 consideration of Bill C-24, An Act to impose a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products to the United States and a charge on refunds of certain duty deposits paid to the United States, to authorize certain payments, to amend the Export and Import Permits Act and to amend other Acts as a consequence, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate. I understand the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre has eight minutes left in his allotted time.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to pick up where I left off yesterday in debating the Group No. 1 amendments to Bill C-24. At the time, I was reminding Canadians everywhere who have not been following the softwood lumber issue perhaps as carefully as those of us who have been seized with the issue, that it seems the government is moving at almost warp speed to shred any competitive advantage that Canada may enjoy over the United States in the case of lumber and, as I will develop further, in the case of wheat.

Just days before Ottawa bludgeoned Canada's lumber industry into this deeply flawed softwood lumber agreement, the *Vancouver Sun* published the details of a leaked letter from the Bush administration to the U.S. lumber lobby. This is not a conspiracy theory. This was accurately reported in the *Vancouver Sun* and its veracity has never been challenged. In the letter, the American administration, the Bush administration, confirmed that its objective was to hobble the Canadian industry for seven years. It is no longer paranoid to assume that this was their goal. This was a stated fact.

Nor does it end there. The most shocking thing has been pointed out in great detail and with great courage and strength, I might add, by my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster, who has been perhaps the sole champion on behalf of the Canadian public on this issue through committee stage and still is now as this plods through the House of Commons. Perhaps the most horrifying statistic that my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster pointed out is that fully \$450 million of the \$1.3 billion that we left on the table in illegal duties, which the Americans will get to keep, will re-grease the re-election wheels for the protectionist Republicans.

Canada's timber industry will thus be forced to subsidize the ongoing illicit attack on itself, all with the explicit consent of the Canadian government. Let us imagine it. We are fueling the administration by the \$450 million in this fund to continue these attacks, and not only on our lumber industry, because the Americans will have won that battle. Who knows what other industry sectors they will be targeting next? I will talk about the Wheat Board in a moment, and my colleague from Hamilton raised the issue of the steel industry, which is of course very concerned.

Government Orders

There is even more. The softwood deal is trade that is managed of, by and for the American lumber lobby. A supposedly sovereign nation, Canada, has signed on to an unprecedented clause in this agreement, a clause that requires provinces to first vet any changes in their own forestry policy with Washington. I say that with some emphasis, because I myself was shocked. I have not been following this softwood lumber agreement as carefully as have some of my colleagues, such as my colleagues from Skeena and Vancouver Island North, where the lumber industry is key and integral to the very viability of their economic regions.

I was dumbfounded, but what confused me even more is that my colleagues from the Bloc Québécois who are in support of the softwood lumber deal are the enablers that are allowing the Conservatives to ram this deal down our throats. On the issue of sovereignty alone, one would think that my colleagues from the Bloc would have blown the whistle on the bill and refused to participate in it to any degree. They, of all people, should acknowledge what an insult to the sovereignty of Canada it is to have to go cap in hand to Washington to make any substantive changes to the way we administer our own forestry industry.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Traditional sovereignists.

Mr. Pat Martin: Traditional sovereignists, as my colleague from Skeena says.

I am just stating this clearly for the folks at home who may be watching. I am not sure that Canadians fully understand the impact of this hastily thrown together sellout of Canadian sovereignty. It is not only the dollar figure; perhaps this clause I have mentioned is even more damaging than the \$1.3 billion we left on the table.

For the record, this is the second time that a Conservative government has snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory on a lumber file. For the historical record, I remind my colleagues in the House that in 1986 the GATT, the World Trade Organization's predecessor, issued a preliminary finding on the legality of U.S. lumber duties against Canada.

• (1600)

Brian Mulroney's government at the time, hell bent on negotiating a free trade agreement with the U.S., abruptly aborted the challenge that we were winning. The preliminary finding was issued in our favour, and even though we were winning and would have perhaps put this whole issue to bed at that early stage of this longstanding challenge, he aborted it, so the findings were never officially published.

It does not take a suspicious mind to assume that Mr. Mulroney did not want the ruling to become part of the permanent record. He did not want to offend the Americans in any way at that fragile stage of his newly crafted free trade agreement. I can only say that I cannot condemn enough that kind of sellout of Canadian sovereignty and well-being.

Let me make a comparison that I wanted to draw in my opening remarks. There is a connection to be made. The Conservative government is doing the Americans' dirty work for them, not only on this big trade irritant that was the softwood lumber issue, but also on the Canadian Wheat Board, which has offended Americans for

years. The Americans do not like this collective action on the part of Canadian farmers.

The Americans filed 11 separate trade challenges against the Canadian Wheat Board and lost every single one of them, but now the Conservative government has promised to do what the Americans could not do by any legal challenges. The government has served notice that it intends to do away with the Canadian Wheat Board in spite of all the empirical evidence that the Canadian Wheat Board serves the interests of Canadian farmers well and is an important prairie institution.

I will take members back in history again. We should take note of the fact that there was a dual market voluntary wheat board at one time. It failed in one of the most catastrophic bankruptcies that Canada had known to that time. It failed in 1935 in a spectacular bankruptcy.

We know that the dual desk cannot work for one simple reason, that is, if the initial offering price is higher than the market price, the Wheat Board will get all kinds of grain delivered to it and will have to sell the grain at a loss, and if the initial offering price is lower than the outside market, the Wheat Board will not get any deliveries. Then, boom, the board will be out of business in one or two years.

We know that it will be the death rattle of the Canadian Wheat Board to do away with single desk marketing, yet the government seems to be on a mad crusade to do the bidding of the Americans, to do their dirty work and do away with this great prairie institution.

Those of us on the NDP benches shake our heads and wonder why—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I apologize to the member, but the time for his speech has run out.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the time ran out so quickly because I know my hon. colleague takes these issues of intergovernmental relations very seriously. The defence of our national interests is of pre-eminent importance to the member.

I wonder if the member would comment on what type of precedent this sets, if in fact it is a precedent, because I believe the Conservative Party has a long and sordid history of selling out Canadians to our American neighbours. What type of precedent does this set and what type of message are we sending to our American partners in the way that we trade with them, in the way that we seek fairness in our trade?

Has the signal been sent by Canada that we will continue to fight unfair trade practices? Or are we simply going to draw up our own pieces of legislation, deeply flawed as this one is, and cave on every major issue that our American partners ask for?

• (1605)

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, it is troubling and worrisome that we have done such a terrible job of representing Canadian interests in the process of these negotiations.

Government Orders

I come from a trade union background. I have negotiated a lot of collective agreements. One thing I can tell members without any hesitation is that we are not going to get much of a package if we announce ahead of time that we give up.

That is virtually what our Minister of Industry did. Before the negotiations were even over, he announced that this was the best deal we were going to get. The Conservatives' bargaining strategy was to be on their knees, which is not a bargaining strategy at all. It is not coming from a position of strength; it is coming from a position of weakness.

I do not know who we sent down there to bargain on our behalf. I think the people who negotiated the free trade agreement should be dragged into the streets and shot, frankly, and as for the people who negotiated this agreement, it borders on economic treason to sell the economic interests of Canada down the river for God knows what other secondary objective they may be trying to achieve.

What I can tell members is that the one thing has been ignored in all this hype about how thankful we should be that the Conservatives get along so well with the Americans is this reality: Canada tossed away a significant victory that was won not just before the North American Free Trade Agreement panels but before the U.S. Court of International Trade. On April 7, the U.S. Court of International Trade ruled that the duties on softwood lumber were illegal. Within days of that very time, we were rolling over and accepting a deal that left \$1.3 billion on the table.

My colleague from Trinity—Spadina was itemizing what that \$1 billion we left behind could buy in terms of other necessary social spending. At a period of time when the Conservative government was nickel-and-diming all these important programs across the country, it was cavalierly leaving \$1 billion on the bargaining table in the United States. It does boggle the mind as to how they can be so cavalier and frivolous with massive amounts of money and so miserly, to the point of almost being cruel, with \$100,000 here and there that would keep an important program going in one of our communities.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member for Winnipeg Centre can draw some sort of connection or parallel, as he was doing in his speech, between Canada's new position on the Wheat Board and its dovetailing with what the Americans are hoping to achieve across all our economic sectors.

Is there some sort of game afoot, does he suspect, between Ottawa and Washington right now to break down the very tools and mechanisms that Canadians have relied upon for our own economic success?

Mr. Pat Martin: Mr. Speaker, that is a very thoughtful remark. If I could go back to my opening comments, it seems that the new Conservative government is hell bent and determined to shred any competitive advantage that we may enjoy over the U.S. in any industry sector where that may occur.

Whether the Conservatives are just yielding to pressure from the U.S. or whether they have ruled that we should harmonize in some way, why would we voluntarily give up our advantages such as those in the resource sector, where we are blessed with abundant natural resources? Why would we sign a deal that would actually encourage

the export of raw logs and discourage the value-adding of that lumber before it gets shipped across the border? It is inexplicable.

To put it in simple terms, when we strip down this agreement into a couple of pages of what it actually does, Canadians will be horrified. They deserve—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vancouver Island North.

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we are again standing in the House reminding Canadians what a bad deal the softwood agreement is for Canada and for Canadian forestry workers. My friend from Winnipeg was very clear in his comments and reminders to the Canadian public.

I first acknowledge the hard work and determination of one individual in the House, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster. The member has been tireless in his efforts at the committee, bringing forward amendment after amendment and speaking for hours, trying to get the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Bloc to understand what is happening in forest dependent communities across the country and why forestry workers are opposed to this very bad deal. However, all of his amendments were shot down by the other parties, amendments that attempted, in a strong way, to make a very bad deal marginally better. We knew it would not improve it much, but at least he tried.

On behalf of the many forestry workers in my riding and across the country, I thank the member for Burnaby—New Westminster for his commitment and for standing up in the House for Canadian jobs. It is something we do not see enough of, and that is what we are talking about here.

The Conservatives could have used our wins at the NAFTA and WTO tribunals as a bargaining chip to get full redress for Canadian companies and Canadian jobs. Let me once again remind us all that Canada won at every trade dispute, including the ruling on October 13, a mere month ago. The ruling confirmed that Canada was close to a decisive victory, as we had said. My colleagues have been pointing this out for a couple of years now. Instead the Conservative government sold us out. The Conservatives took those wins and they negotiated them away, which is ludicrous. It almost makes me speechless, but I will talk anyway.

These American tariffs have now been struck down by the U.S. courts as well as NAFTA panels, but under this deal Canadian industry will be paying more in punitive tariffs, not less, and that is a shame.

I come from the labour movement. If I were at the bargaining table and negotiated away a huge settlement for the members who I represented, I do not think I would be representing them much longer. In fact, I am sure they would be calling for my demise.

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I have to wonder, as many of my constituents do, what was the rush to settle in this way. When we were so close to winning and we knew it, why would we negotiate that settlement away? I know we all wanted to see an end to this trade dispute, but after so many years of stalling by the Liberals, with no negotiations, nothing going on, why would the Conservatives sell Canada out so quickly? Surely they must have known that we were about to win the final victory. It really shows an incredible lack of foresight on their part.

The deal discourages value added production in Canada. The export taxes are based on the value of the exported product. This is why so many forestry workers in my riding and across the country do not support the deal. They see the end of their jobs and their communities and they are very concerned. It is no wonder that in my riding, and probably in other ridings where there are forest dependent communities, we are seeing a massive increase in the export of raw logs and jobs.

Hundreds of thousands of cubic metres of logs are exported every day out of the north island. This means the end of jobs and the closure of mills. Communities are suffering as a result of this. It is a travesty, to say the least, that the communities, which are surrounded by forest, do not see any of the jobs related to them except the cutting down of trees. We support those jobs. Those people also understand and support the workers from the mills who are losing their jobs. Therefore, it is not a question of one worker pitted against the other. Most workers understand what is going on. I know the people who work in the bush and cut down the trees, the fellers, are very supportive of the mill workers and would love to see the communities thrive and grow.

● (1610)

I will talk a little about some of the small communities that I represent in Vancouver Island North, forestry communities that are struggling to make ends meet after their sawmills have closed because there is no value added. Also fishing communities are struggling with unemployment because they cannot get enough fish to keep their processing plants going. It is the same scenario in another industry.

These were once thriving communities. They are surrounded by oceans and forests, yet the bounty of these resource is heading south out of the country across the border to the U.S. or other parts of the world to be processed. This represents the loss of jobs and communities at a devastating level. It does not seem that there is any commitment on the part of the government to maintain these value added jobs in our communities any more.

The impact that it has on the people in those communities is devastating. They are in crisis. Their homes are devalued. They cannot afford to move, but they cannot afford to stay either, especially if they have children and the schools and the hospitals close. There are no services left and all the other businesses leave as well, and they become ghost towns.

To add insult to injury, because it is such a beautiful area and it is surrounded by the forests and the oceans, when homes sell in a lot of those little towns, at a very low price I might add, they are usually to wealthy Americans, looking for a cheap vacation home. It is a slap in the face to those workers, unfortunately.

It is not that we are against the U.S. and it is not that we are against trade. We want to stand up for Canadians, for our communities and for Canadian jobs. I thought it was our job, as members of Parliament, to stand up for our communities and to make good public policy that respects our resources, our jobs and our communities. I thought that is why we came here. Therefore, I am glad to speak on this ill-advised bill and hopefully convince members in all parties to stand with us and oppose this very bad deal.

I want to talk specifically about one industry that is struggling, a very small value added flooring industry in my community, in the Comox Valley. It is an environmentally sustainable industry. It goes out to get waste wood out of the forest after the logging companies have been there. Whatever is left on the forest floor, whether it is alder, cedar, maple and fir, it makes flooring out of it. It is a fabulous little business. It is doing so well, employing a few people in the valley. Unfortunately, it has been hit with high tariffs on the value added. It is losing over \$300,000 a year. For a small business, that is devastating.

The owner is wondering now how he can survive. He cannot set his prices with any certainty because he does not know what the cost will be in the future, and his market is mainly the U.S. He is really struggling with this. It is for him also that I speak, and other businesses. He is just one voice, but I know he has been representing others in opposing this deal. Not only forestry workers are suffering under this very bad deal, but small manufacturing is as well.

All the forestry workers and small lumber companies wanting to have their say are never going to be heard now. There were going to be hearings. The international trade committee had agreed to have hearings across the country. We were looking forward to having a hearing in Vancouver. Many of the companies and workers from my area were going to be witnesses. They wanted to tell the committee and all parties about how they would be impacted by the deal. However, those voices are never going to be heard because the hearings were shut down.

Unfortunately, another piece of our democracy has been taken away from us because we will not hear those voices. It is another tragedy. They want to tell their stories. They are really concerned about what is happening with the country, not only with the resource but with the our communities as well. I think it would have been valuable for all members of the House to have heard the impacts of this very bad deal at the ground level where people live. That is the most important thing that we can do in the House.

● (1615)

Again, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster, for his great work on the committee. He has done an exemplary job.

I would like all members in the House to pay attention to what is going on in small communities across the country. The resource industries are the backbone of our country and it is time we respected them.

Government Orders

• (1620)

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite made a compelling speech on what she terms the ill-advised bill. I have come to know the member opposite relatively well. I am honoured to serve with her on the natural resources committee. I have certainly come to understand how sensitive she is to the needs of her community and how, in a macro way, she understands issues facing Canadians.

She has described the bill as ill-advised. Could she comment on what she would like to see done to remedy or fix the ill-advised motion before the House?

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, there are many things that can be done, the first of which is for the House defeat this ill-advised bill. Once that is done, members can use their wins at every level, especially the final win, which said that Canada was owed every penny of the \$5 billion plus taken in illegal tariffs over the many years that this dispute lingered. That money should come back to Canada. The government would then be in a very good start and end position to ensure that our industry would get the money back so it could re-tool some mills to ensure we could do the value added here.

There is probably more we can do with regard to our natural resource forestry policy, which would see us maintain our forests for the benefits of Canadians. That is not to say we want to stop trade, but we want to ensure the trade is done in the interests of Canadian communities, industry and jobs.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very intrigued by the comments of my colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver Island North. Similar to my riding, the ability to attract investment, create an entrepreneurial spirit and add value to wood products is a struggle each and every day. She talked about examples of value added companies, the manufacturers that were able to get on their feet and put people to work.

Could she comment on what kind of message is being sent to small and medium size businesses that are struggling to make a go of it in rural parts of British Columbia and elsewhere in the country? What signal is sent by the government, without even allowing the possibility of hearings or any testimony to come from those communities and businesses, when it passes such fundamentally atrocious legislation as this one?

Ms. Catherine Bell: Mr. Speaker, I know the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley lives in an area similar to mine and he has many of the same issues. His riding is also surrounded by forest, water and beautiful scenery. I know he understands very well what the impacts are on industry and workers in his community.

The message the government sends to individuals, workers, communities and small business is that it really does not care what anyone thinks. Unfortunately, we will not hear their voices. They were shut out of the hearings and coming to the committee. This very bad deal, which will affect them in such an adverse way, basically tells them that they do not matter in society. To me, that is absolutely the wrong way to go.

It is time we stood up for our industry in Canada. Small business is the backbone of our country and we need to recognize that. We need to support it and ensure that the value added sector is able to thrive. We do not need to put restrictions on its ability to trade and

get its product out. It is ludicrous. We want to ensure that the industry can do business, employ people and keep our communities going.

I thank the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley for interest and commitment to his community.

• (1625)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while it is a pleasure to join in this debate, it is a sincere displeasure to have to again rail against a government's misguided, arbitrary and bullheaded position on the softwood lumber file.

For many years the region and communities that I represent have sought certainty, resolution, and some level of justice when dealing with the unfair illegal tariffs that our American neighbours were slapping on our value added products. For years communities sought some sort of support. The businesses and industries sought some measure of effort and strength from the federal government to say to them that they matter, that the communities in our country that produce the wood products that are used throughout our country and around our world matter enough for the government to fight.

Lo and behold, there was an election last winter and a government came forward with a new mandate. Unfortunately, it used the same minister that was bungling the file before and it produced a deal that was flawed completely. It is so flawed in fact that mill managers in my communities, people who are deeply invested in this industry, who have their own personal money invested as mill owners are turning to me and scratching their heads, and wondering for what possible purpose the federal Government of Canada sold them down the river.

They asked me whether there was some kind of horse trade that went on between Ottawa and Washington to arrive at such a deeply flawed deal. Challenge after challenge and finally we arrived at the international court in the United States, the last place of refuge for the scoundrels in the United States who were perpetrating this trade fraud upon Canada. When we arrived at a decision that was favourable and every single dollar collected illegally from Canada was to be returned to Canada, Canada caved, completely rolled over, and asked the Americans to beat us again.

This time it was wood. The next time it might be cattle, fruit or some sort of product that will affect another part of this country. I can only wonder what will happen to those members in this place who represent communities that are trying to survive and trying to make it in the international competitive market. When their time comes calling, the Americans will go after their products when a very narrow interest and lobby group, and a few members of congress will get together and decide to target the next product out of Canada because they had so much success and fun going after softwood. They were able to beat us so soundly that even though we won in the courts, we were willing to throw the whole deal away at the last minute for some narrow interest, some narrow political victory that the government of the day was seeking.

Government Orders

The government came into office and said it was going to strike new relations with the United States. I almost wish back for the bad relations because if the new relations produce deals that hurt the communities that I represent like this one does, I worry for the future.

I will speak specifically of those communities because a lot of members listening to this debate and citizens watching it on television have a hard time contextualizing this. Who are we talking about? What kind of communities are we talking about? We are talking about Prince Rupert, Terrace, Skidegate, Queen Charlotte Islands, and communities right across our country. These communities have, in their very DNA, the hewing of wood and hauling of water. These are communities that were formed on the principle that they can make an honest buck, that people can go out into the woods, knock down trees, mill them, and send them to a market that will be appreciative and pay an honest dollar for them. These are communities right across my region.

My region is over 300,000 square kilometres, the most beautiful area in the most beautiful country in the world. In these communities we rely on our ability to use the natural resources we are endowed with and sell them on fair terms to the marketplace. Under the NAFTA, something we negotiated our energy away in order to have, we were meant to have the ability to go and freely, and fairly, trade with our partners to the south.

Lo and behold, when the deal did not work for some in the United States, they threw up tariffs and our government somehow caved. It caved to the point where we self-imposed a tariff that we know is illegal. We will impose a tariff on our own products that we know is wrong and impact the communities that have added value to this wood, and have struggled over the years to maintain those jobs.

Through ups and downs, thick and thin, they have been able to keep those jobs going, paying into the coffers that pay the salaries of members in this place, that pay for the functioning of the government, and pay for the health care services and education that we all rely on.

• (1630)

When those people needed the government to stand up for them, it could not be found. It was so busy running around K Street in Washington hoping to make nice with the Bush government. It did not for a moment stop to think about the economic future of the communities that I and other members in this place represent, and for the economic future of our country.

It is in the DNA of the people who I represent and we must consider the forests, the trees and the endowment with which we are privileged to be blessed. The first nations communities, for millennia, have relied upon these resources to sustain our communities. When the white settlers first showed up, it was one of the first things we did. We opened up these small lumber mills and soon the industries grew in sophistication and size, but were always based upon our ability to access a market.

These are hard-working people. They are honest people. They get up every day, go to work and bring their lunch pails. I was curious in my first term here in this place to find out how much in fact we

contributed to the federal coffers, how much in fact we contributed just in economic terms to the health and well-being of this nation.

I asked the Library of Parliament researchers to do a little study for me. It turned out to be a long study, three months. I have boxes piled high in my office. I asked them to calculate, estimate as best they could, how much money was sent out of my region, out of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, into the federal coffers and then how much was returned in payments and services from the federal government.

After three months of study the researchers came back to me and said the very best guess they could make over the last 10 years was that there has been a 10 to 1 ratio every single year. For every \$10 our community sent out, \$1 came back in services. One would think we would be complaining about it, but these are honest hard-working Canadians who do not even mind a little bit. That is fair. We have the privilege of living in one of the greatest countries in the world and one of the best regions in which to live. That is well and good.

However, here we are working hard contributing \$10 for every \$1 that comes back. Money was sent from the good people of Skeena—Bulkley Valley to help pay for the negotiators, help pay for the lawyers, and the members of Parliament and cabinet minister who sit in the government to go out and fight on our behalf. What did they come back with? A complete and total failure.

They came back with the idea that we are going to leave \$1 billion on the table, half of which is going to get used by the very lobbyists who launched this case in the first place to fight against us again another day. There was over \$450 million left for that sole purpose, and another \$500 million in change left over for Mr. Bush to fight another election.

The economic base of my communities are absolutely ensconced in this sector. The forestry sector provides over \$120 million as an easy estimate annually to our region. The government response to the shutting down of mills, to the loss of jobs, and to the exodus of our young people across my region has been what? It has been to freeze the funds of Western Economic Diversification, to not allow any of that funding to go out that allows the communities to actually diversify their economies, to not in fact deliver on any of the pine beetle money because we have also had this near perfect storm created, an absolutely devastating infestation which according to the Forestry Council of Canada has been caused by global warming which the government refuses to address.

We have had a provincial government hell bent on providing as much raw log exports as is humanely possible and then ramping it up every year beyond that thereby eliminating any real incentive to add value to the wood products that we have in our communities. Add this to a promise made by the government to deliver more than \$400 million in economic development money to compensate for what has happened with the pine beetle, which has not shown up, but in fact has been reduced by \$12 million for some absolutely ludicrous reason.

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The perfect storm has been created for my communities, a storm in which it is absolutely of no value or purpose for anyone to enter into our communities, to bring the investment dollars, and to create those industries, small, medium and large to add value to the wood products with which we are endowed.

I worry deeply for my communities and I worry deeply for the future that it holds. When I speak to high schools and colleges and I look upon the young people and talk about what their future means in our region, there is not a lot of hope.

I stood in front of a class in Hazelton, B.C., which has lost all three of its mills. I asked for a show of hands among the hundred students as to how many were planning to stay, live and work in the community of Hazelton. A single hand went up amongst the 100 students. The government response to this growing tragedy in my region has been silence and a sellout deal. It must be rejected.

• (1635)

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we know that there have been two court decisions recently, one on July 14 where the top U.S. trade court, the Court of International Trade, ruled that the payout, under the so-called amendment, to the U.S. firms that launched the lumber trade actions was illegal. Prior to that there was another court judgment.

Would the hon. member describe to us why this trade deal not only wastes Canadian taxpayers at least a billion dollars but what does it do to the NAFTA trade dispute resolutions that were supposed to save all the different court challenges caused by NAFTA?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, here is an incredible scenario before us. When the NAFTA was being negotiated and when the FTA in particular was being negotiated, the Americans very much wanted access to our energy. They very much wanted energy to be placed within the FTA and then eventually into the NAFTA.

Canada resisted and for good measure. Under the principles of the agreement, once the pipeline is opened up to a certain level, under no circumstances, even our own national interests, can we ever lower that amount of energy going forward. More than 50% is now leaving the oil sands in Alberta to the American markets. It is heading toward 60% almost.

What we did in trading away that energy profile and trading away that access is we said, "Give us this dispute resolution panel". We realized and recognized there was at least some sense of sensibility within the trade negotiators at the time that there was an unbalanced relationship in power. The Americans knew that we depended so much on their market for our goods. Our negotiators realized in some small moment of brilliance that we needed to rebalance the power between the trade partners and establish this panel. This panel was meant to settle the disputes when one was overpowering the other, as is the case with the softwood lumber tariffs.

Lo and behold, the panel under this deal is absolutely null and void. There is no sense in even establishing it or having it any more because we have caved. We have said that even when the panel sided for Canada and even when the Court of International Trade sided with Canada, we are willing to take defeat. We are willing to accept

less than what the dispute panel and all the other courts have decided in our favour.

Canada is not even accepting silver. It is not even getting on the podium. When we had the gold in our hand and the victory was ours and every dollar was meant to be returned, Canada said, "We would rather not have that. We would rather have something else".

We thereby set a precedent that other industries within the United States who seek protectionist measures will follow and we have said as much because the practice has been borne out. If Canada is pushed hard enough, long enough, and far enough, it will cave. What we will do is offer up our future. What we will do is offer up communities that do not politically matter at this particular time.

It is a shame to be calling this negotiation a fair trade or free trade or anything. This has to be the greatest misnomer in economic trade history. It has allowed some pretence to Canadians to feel as though we actually have access to the U.S. market. Only 50% of our products actually fall under NAFTA. The rest fall under favoured nation status.

The illusion is perpetrated by the elites in this country, by Bay Street and others, that somehow this deal is a panacea. They say that it is a wonderful thing for Canada and that it also protects our access to the U.S. markets. This is even when we have completely lost, we have chosen the path of defeat, and we have chosen to not listen to the court hearings and to the decisions that have been passed down by U.S. and international courts alike.

Canada's willingness and determination to actually establish fair and free trade with our partners to the south, who we rely on and who we need for our future economic prosperity, will allow something else to take place. This will allow some absolute miscreation. This devilish deal perpetrates a complete apprehension of the idea of fair and free access to the U.S. market.

It is a shame and a travesty. I truly worry for the communities that I represent and for their ability to have any sense of representation from the government because it is gone under this deal.

• (1640)

Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past month I have done a great deal of reading and listening with regard to the government's softwood lumber agreement and I have come to only one conclusion, which is that this softwood lumber deal is a sellout and it is bad for Canada. There are many reasons why and I would like to take some time this afternoon to list a few of those reasons.

First, it is based on the falsehood that Canadian softwood lumber industries are subsidized. This falsehood was exposed and rejected in every NAFTA and U.S. commercial court ruling, all of which have clearly sided with the Canadian industry.

Second, it gives away \$500 million in funds owned by the Canadian softwood industry to subsidize the U.S. Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports.

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Third, it provides \$450 million in funds to the Bush administration that the President of the United States can use at his discretion, without congressional approval and without any accountability. One can only wonder at what George Bush will do with these ill-gotten Canadian funds.

If we put those two together, it is nearly \$1 billion. This is \$500 million so the U.S. Coalition for Fair Lumber Imports can come at us again and \$450 million in the hands of the President of the United States. I do not know about other members but it gives me chills just thinking about that.

In addition, this deal can be cancelled unilaterally at any time and does not provide stability and predictability to the Canadian softwood industry. It constrains trade unreasonably by applying punitive tariffs and quotas that hinder the flexibility of the Canadian softwood industry. It also infringes on provincial constitutional prerogatives by not just Ottawa but by Washington. It is bad enough that Ottawa can interfere in provincial jurisdiction but to have Washington calling the shots is just unconscionable.

The softwood deal also kills the credibility of the NAFTA dispute settlement mechanism which would have ensured a full refund to the Canadian softwood industry of the entire \$5.3 billion of illegally collected duties. Was it not just recently that both the Liberals and the Conservatives were delivering the siren call of the NAFTA deal and how important that was? To see it being scuttled and totally abandoned now is quite remarkable.

This deal sets a bad precedent not only for softwood lumber but for any other industrial sector in Canada. That should send shivers through this country, not just the softwood industry but every other industrial sector. It opens the door to U.S. attacks on all Canadian industries. They can target any industry and go after it because they were very successful with softwood. They will find a group and then follow the same plan as before.

The deal does nothing for the thousands of workers who lost their livelihoods over the past five years. There is nothing in the softwood lumber agreement to deal with the major disruption that the U.S. abuse of trade rules has caused to the working families in the communities of Canada. There is absolutely no compensation for people who have lost their jobs or for the communities that have suffered as a result of those job losses.

This deal will also potentially trigger significant job losses through further consolidation caused by the quotas and export taxes and by discouraging Canadian value-added production and stimulating raw log exports. Value-added industries are the key to our economic future. If we are to be hewers of water and those who can only use our resources to export, we will not progress at all in this modern economy.

The deal also forces a further downsizing of the Canadian softwood industry, with the accompanying huge impacts on softwood communities throughout Canada.

The deal discriminates against Canadian companies that refuse to sign the softwood lumber agreement by resorting to bullying and fiscal arm-twisting. This is an abuse of power.

● (1645)

This deal will not deter American litigation in the near future, as evidenced by the recent move of the Bush government to overturn the United States Court of International Trade, CIT, decision of April 7 and July 14 which ruled that the Byrd amendment could not apply to Canadian merchandise.

I believe I have given a significant number of reasons. In fact, I have just outlined 14 reasons why Bill C-24 is fiscally flawed. The payout is based on Canadian softwood exporters who are owed the equivalent of 95% of the total \$5.3 billion in illegal duties paid to the U.S. We know that the Prime Minister has not reached the 95% target, which means additional costs to the Canadian softwood industry and to taxpayers. Taxpayers should be watching this bill very closely because they will be the worst for its passing.

The 15th reason is that the participation process was flawed. While U.S. customs has put in punitive taxes on about 1,500 Canadian softwood companies, the minister responsible initially conducted secret meetings with a core group of about 25 large softwood companies. The consultation process must be far broader than that.

The Standing Committee on International Trade passed an NDP motion in support of further hearings on the softwood issue in northern Ontario, Quebec and B.C. More hearings are needed, not fewer. More hearings are needed by the committee to ensure the recommendations that need to be in place are indeed in place.

The deal does not account for the seasonal nature of the market. Companies are not allowed the flexibility to sufficiently carry forward export quotas to other months, which would lead them to consistently undershoot their export ceilings.

Also, at current or potential market benchmark prices, the Canadian softwood industry would pay more in punitive tariffs under the softwood lumber agreement of 2006 than the current illegal American tariffs. Can anyone imagine making a deal in which we pay more? It is like asking someone to hit us over the head with a mallet. If we pay more and have more charges, we will be less competitive. It is like being asked to be hit again.

The quotas will not replace the export tax until 2007. As of October 1, everyone, east and west, will pay a 15% export tax for three months. This is a considerable sum of money. Also, Canadian softwood companies that seek a refund through the EDC could be losing interest on their money. They could forfeit about 20% of their return and pay an additional tax of 19%. So much for Conservatives the tax fighters. This is astounding.

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Bill C-24 contains no contingency provision pertaining to entry into forest and softwood lumber agreement 2006. Consequently, when the tax of 15% goes into effect on October 1, a Canadian softwood company may still be paying an additional 10.8% to the U.S. on that day.

The 22nd reason, and we are logging up quite a few here if you will pardon the pun, Mr. Speaker, is that the Provinces of B.C., Ontario and Quebec are behind this deal for the wrong reasons. The reality is that the three provinces are overexcited about getting the money and have given little consideration to the longer term, broader implications of this deal.

I have many more reasons and I wish I had time to go through all of them but the current Prime Minister was clear on how the softwood lumber agreement should be negotiated. In *Hansard* on October 24, 2005, he said:

Most recently, the NAFTA extraordinary challenges panel ruled that there was no basis for these duties, but the United States has so far refused to accept the outcome and has asked Canada to negotiate a further settlement.

I will repeat what I have said before and I will be as clear as I can. This is not the time for negotiation or for compliance and that was before the final legal victories. I speak from the heart and for my constituents in the forest city of London when I say that this is a sellout. We cannot accept this deal. We must negotiate something that works for Canada and Canadians.

• (1650)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for London—Fanshawe has done a remarkable job of addressing the many problems, errors and botching of this bill and of this softwood sellout.

The member represents a proud city, the city of London, which is currently in a byelection. The Liberals are saying that folks in London should be voting for them so they will have a good representative in Ottawa. However we have seen here in Ottawa that the Liberals, when the camera lights were on, talked about opposing the softwood agreement and opposing the sellout because they somehow understood it, but the second the camera lights went out they worked behind the scenes with the Conservatives to ram the bill through committee. The Liberals and the Conservatives, working together, said there would be no debate on half the bill and limited time on provisions that include errors around double taxation, a double export tax for companies and other huge egregious errors, and the Liberals and Conservatives, the dynamic duo of the devils, worked together to force the bill through committee. It is now in the House because of the Liberals.

I would like to ask the member for London—Fanshawe how the Liberals could be so hypocritical and why anyone in London would want to vote for a Liberal when they have shown such poor representation in the House of Commons.

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the immediate response is practice. It is very clear that there have been unconscionable attempts in committee to silence the hon. member in his attempts to bring the bill to a point where it would actually works for Canadians and for the people who are depending on the softwood lumber industry.

In terms of the member's question about London—Fanshawe, it is not just on jobs where we see that the Liberals have failed London. It

is also in the realm of affordable housing. We had a Liberal minister in London North Centre who promised everything. He said that he could support the people who worked there but did the Liberals support anti-scab legislation? No. The same minister insisted that he would provide affordable housing. London, Ontario is second only to the city of Toronto in terms of homelessness in the province of Ontario.

This record is disgraceful. It underscores over and over again how the Liberals have failed Canadians, have failed Ontarians and have failed Londoners. I will tell the House that it will not happen again after November 28 because there will be another NDP MP in London and she will come to this place and she will make a difference.

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was paying close attention to my colleague's speech and one of the most compelling remarks she made was what she itemized as number six. I believe it talks about Canada as a sovereign nation signed on to this unprecedented clause in the bill that would require provinces to first vet any significant changes in their forest industry policy with the Washington, D.C. In other words, it is unprecedented that we would need to ask Washington if it were okay to change something like stumpage fees or our cutting levels.

What does the hon. member think of the significance of this dangerous precedent being set, surrendering our sovereignty and the Bloc supporting it?

Mrs. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has made a very salient point and has emphasized my concern. This is a sovereign nation and we make our own decisions when it comes to the determination of sovereignty in the north and to our industries and job creation.

We have lost a great deal in the recent past. We lost our Auto Pact. In my city, the automotive industry is a significant employer. Our economy depends very much on auto making and on the parts industry.

The Liberals signed away the Auto Pact and now we see the Conservatives signing away our authority, our autonomy in terms of the softwood lumber deal. One has to wonder what is next. When we look at our precious programs, like health care and the supports to our community, one has to worry about what indeed is next.

• (1655)

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 motions in Group No. 1, starting with Motion No. 4. 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.

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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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Accordingly, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motion No. 25.

[*Translation*]

The next question is on Motion No. 77.

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

[*English*]

The next question is on Motion No. 83. 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The recorded division on Motion No. 83 stands deferred. The recorded division will also apply to Motion Nos. 84 and 94.

I shall now propose the motions in Group No. 2.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 6

That Bill C-24 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (for the Minister of International Trade) moved:

Motion No. 7

That Bill C-24, in Clause 10.1, be amended by

(a) replacing line 27 on page 5 with the following:

“referred to in section 10;”

(b) replacing line 12 on page 6 with the following:

“underwent its first primary processing in one of”

Motion No. 8

That Bill C-24, in Clause 10.1, be amended by replacing, in the English version, line 32 on page 5 with the following:

“Territories or Nunavut; and”

Motion No. 13

That Bill C-24, in Clause 12, be amended by replacing lines 2 to 13 on page 8 with the following:

“who is certified under section 25.”

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 14

That Bill C-24 be amended by deleting Clause 13.

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (for the Minister of International Trade) moved:

Motion No. 15

That Bill C-24, in Clause 14, be amended by

(a) replacing line 38 on page 11 with the following:

“Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador, as provided in subsection 10.1 (2),”

(b) replacing lines 5 and 6 on page 12 with the following:

“responsible for excess exports as determined under subsection (2) shall pay to Her Majesty in right of Canada a charge calculated”

(c) replacing lines 9 and 10 on page 12 with the following:

“excess exports.

(1.1) The charge becomes payable at the time that the softwood lumber product is exported.

(2) A person’s excess exports shall equal”

Motion No. 16

That Bill C-24, in Clause 14, be amended by replacing, in the English version, line 2 on page 12 with the following:

“primary processing in one of those provinces from”

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 17

That Bill C-24 be amended by deleting Clause 17.

● (1700)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to correct you. You were talking about Motion No. 19. You are moving from Motions Nos. 17, 18, and then 19, clause 17 and clause 18.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Thank you. I appreciate the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster raising this. We will check into the accuracy of that previous motion, but I will continue reading the whole group of motions and then we can determine what the point of order is all about. Motion No. 18.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (for the Minister of International Trade) moved:

Motion No. 18

That Bill C-24, in Clause 17, be amended by

a) replacing lines 42 and 43 on page 12 with the following:

“product from the charges referred to in sections 10 and 14.”

(b) replacing line 3 on page 13 with the following:

“charges referred to in sections 10 and 14.”

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 19

That Bill C-24 be amended by deleting Clause 18.

Hon. Michael Chong (for the Minister of International Trade) moved:

Motion No. 22

That Bill C-24, in Clause 26, be amended by replacing lines 26 and 27 on page 17 with the following:

“containing the prescribed information;”

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 28

That Bill C-24 be amended by deleting Clause 50.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (for the Minister of International Trade) moved:

Motion No. 75

That Bill C-24, in Clause 99, be amended by replacing line 31 on page 86 with the following:

“imposed on those products under section 10 or 14,”

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are on to the second set of amendments of this badly botched bill. Anyone who is watching the House of Commons right now would have been able to see, as the Speaker reviewed all the amendments, how badly botched this bill has been.

The Minister of International Trade is now bringing in amendments to his own bill. Why? Because he screwed up, quite frankly. He botched it. He botched the negotiations. He botched the entire process. Now he basically has admitted to all Canadians that the bill itself is so badly flawed that he is bringing in amendments to try to fix some of his errors, but only some.

We have had no due diligence on this bill. We have had no due diligence at all. The government said it would consult. Back at the end of April when it announced a so-called framework agreement, the government said it would sit down and work with the industry to try to put together this softwood sellout, so even if we were very concerned about some of the provisions, we took the minister at word, and we should not have done this. Then we found out in the week prior to July 1 when this agreement was initialled that there was no consultation with the industry. The industry was told to take it or to leave it.

Subsequent to that, the NDP forced hearings this summer. What we heard from the industry throughout the summer were concerns about this bill, concerns about the impacts of giving away \$1 billion and having an import tax imposed on our softwood products.

The minister went into overtime. Being very concerned about his political future and his political career, what he tried to do was browbeat and bludgeon the companies into submission. He was able to extract, like a confession from a torture house, little letters saying they would support the deal if—and this is an important if—the minister got 95% support. He never got that support, so the government changed the bill.

The Conservatives changed the agreement. They rewrote what they said they could not do. They rewrote the softwood sellout, making even more concessions to the United States in the meantime, and then throughout that process. As one industry representative said, Canada had capitulated on everything. Another industry representative said that this was the worst negotiation he had ever seen Canada go through. At the end of a badly botched negotiation, the minister came up with an equally badly botched bill.

The bill was presented in the House. With the support of the Bloc, the Conservatives and the tacit support of the Liberals, the bill was taken from the House to the committee. I will come back to the Liberals in a moment because their attitude and behaviour have been absolutely disgusting throughout this whole affair.

The committee should have been exercising due diligence, but the Liberals and Conservatives on the committee refused to hear more than two witnesses. The first two witnesses already had raised serious concerns about the botching in the crafting of the bill. In clause 18, effectively what we have is a double tax on companies. The companies that go through the Export Development Corporation are not getting 80¢ dollars back. They are getting 67¢ dollars back. Those concerns were raised by the only two witnesses the Conservatives and Liberals would allow.

Then letters came in from across the country, from workers, communities and people involved in the softwood industry, letters saying that the government please must have hearings on this. People said the government must have hearings, but the Liberals and Conservatives shut that down. They had already worked together, the Conservatives and Liberals, the two devils working together in their teamwork to sell out softwood communities across the country. They had already killed the public hearings that the NDP had forced over the course of the summer. We were supposed to go to Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean. We were supposed to go to Thunder Bay. We were supposed to go to Vancouver. No, the Liberals and Conservatives killed that, working with the Bloc, of course.

Government Orders

The net result is that this bill, even though witnesses asked to come before the committee, did not receive its due diligence and was rammed through over a 12 hour period, with most of the bill not being debated at all. We now have a deeply flawed bill and a punitive bill. As one of the two witnesses allowed by the Conservatives and Liberals to appear before the committee mentioned, it is an extremely Draconian bill. One gets 18 months in prison if one violates the provisions of this bill.

• (1710)

One of the amendments we have brought forward addresses the whole question of assessments. The liability of a person to pay an amount under the bill is not affected by an incorrect or an incomplete assessment. The minister screwed up on the negotiation and on the bill. Now the government is giving itself a blank cheque to go after softwood companies that have either disagreed with it politically or that cannot keep up with these huge financial payments they are being forced to pay, the export tax, the double taxation on the refunds that should be coming back to communities.

What happened next? On October 13, Canada won in the Court of International Trade in the United States. It was an enforceable decision, and we were entitled to every penny back. Instead of saying it had taken the wrong course, that it should never have been that irresponsible, that it should not have thrown away \$1 billion when it did not have to, that it should not have imposed an export tax on our softwood companies, and I will come back to the mill closures and the job losses in a moment, the government decided to cover this up, not talk about the victory in the Court of International Trade and pretended that it was many years of litigation to come.

However, the minister and Michael Wilson were unable to say from where this litigation would come. They know the Court of International Trade is the last resort. They know it is a three judge panel. It cannot be overturned. They know all this, yet they are deliberately setting out to mislead the Canadian public because they cannot sell their badly botched deal.

The New Democratic Party will not stand for that. We will be out there talking to Canadians, as we have already. We have been to communities, such as Thunder Bay, which have been hard hit by this, by the Liberal betrayal and by the Conservative betrayal of softwood communities across the country. Since this deal with the devil was put into place, the Liberals and Conservatives working together, in the first week we saw, with that provisional agreement, 2,500 jobs eliminated.

[*Translation*]

Many of these jobs were in northern Quebec.

[*English*]

We have seen the loss of jobs. In a month we have seen now 4,000 jobs eliminated, including, as I mentioned in the House yesterday, at Western Forest Products in New Westminster, British Columbia, where 284 jobs were eliminated. Communities across the country, British Columbia, northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, northern Manitoba, where I was the week before last, have been hard hit by layoffs and job losses, as have northern Ontario and northern Quebec.

The job losses have been universal and all the Conservatives can say is that they are sorry, that maybe it is the Liberals' fault. The

Liberals say that maybe it was the Conservatives' fault. They are both at fault. They have both supported this badly botched deal, this horrible sellout of Canadian interests. As the member for London—Fanshawe just mentioned, it does not just affect softwood. The fact that we are throwing away litigation that we have won means that any other industrial sector can be targeted the same way.

What is worse is we are now giving half a billion dollars to the American softwood industry. It was dry. It did not have any legal funds to continue. Now it will have half a billion dollars to come at us again. For those 4,000 families that have lost their breadwinners, because of the incompetence of the Minister of International Trade and government and the betrayal of the Liberals, it is scant conciliation to know that Canada is right and that what should happen has not. What should happen is a reinforcement of our rights. We won in the Court of International Trade. The money has to be paid back. In fact, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has already been sending 100% dollars to softwood communities that did not sign on to the deal.

The minister did not get the required level of support. What did he do instead? He changed the deal, when he said all along he could not change it because the Americans were tough negotiators.

That is the situation we are in now. We have a badly flawed bill, the most egregious aspects of which the NDP has been endeavouring to fix. We have the Conservatives now admitting they screwed up on the bill by presenting all kinds of last minute amendments to try to save a bill that they know is bad. However, the members of Parliament in this House have a responsibility to softwood communities and a responsibility to Canada.

In all four corners of the House, members should be reading the deal and the bill. They should talk to the industry, which has said this deal is bad. In fact, they should talk to the independent lumber remanufacturers that wanted to appear before the committee, but were refused by the Liberals and Conservatives. They should talk to those 4,000 families that have lost their breadwinners because of the incompetence of the government.

We are putting forward these amendments because we, as the effective opposition in the House, are not going to stop standing up for softwood communities, even though they have been betrayed by the Conservatives and Liberals. The softwood workers will know that they have a champion in the House in the New Democratic Party. We will not stop. We will continue to fight for softwood communities and for softwood justice.

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• (1715)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the yeoman's work he has done on this file, pressing against all odds. There were motions and courses taken, which have not been taken before in parliamentary history, in an effort to shut down his voice in committee and to remove his ability to be an effective opposition member. It is quite remarkable. It brings to mind the ancient expression "methinks he doth protest too much". We have watched the government pull out every stop to end talks on this issue.

Usually when people associate themselves with the term "deal", there is something positive that happens. There is a good trade of terms. When we look at this deal, particularly from the perspective of hard-working softwood communities that rely on value added, they must wonder who is standing up for them in this place. They must wonder if they had the misfortune of voting for a Liberal, a Bloc or a Conservative member. They must wonder where their members on this issue. They must wonder if their MPs are defending their right to have a trade relationship, with the United States in this case, that is fair and equitable so they have the ability and a due right under a so-called free trade agreement to trade freely with our competitors.

Could the member comment as to the processes and the designs used, particularly by the Liberals and the Conservatives in conjunction, to circumvent and shut down the debate? Would the member speak about preventing the democratic right of a member of Parliament to speak to issues and speak to amendments?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, the member's question goes far beyond members of the House. It is a shutdown of softwood communities wanting to express themselves.

Softwood communities wrote to the international trade committee. Softwood workers wrote to the international trade committee. Steelworkers wrote to the international trade committee. Lumber remanufacturers and the Independent Lumber Remanufacturers Association wrote to the committee. This group is based in British Columbia and represents lumber remanufacturers in British Columbia.

First, the industry said no. The Conservative government browbeat those companies into submission and forced them to send in a letter that was meaningless, it turns out, because they never got the 95% support that was obligatory under this sellout.

After that, working together, the Liberals and Conservatives shut down the hearings. The Liberals did not want to go to Thunder Bay. They did not want to consult with people in Thunder Bay, Vancouver or northern Quebec. They did not want to hear from softwood communities. The Liberals actually moved a motion to shutdown the consultation. It is absolutely appalling to hear Liberals saying they are opposed to the deal. They have done everything in their power to force the deal along. They shutdown the hearings publicly. They refused to have hearings in Ottawa. They refused to do their due diligence.

Now the government is reacting in a panic mode. It is throwing in amendments left, right and centre. We have seen a half a dozen amendments today. The government now realizes how badly flawed the bill is.

The flaws and errors in the bill go far beyond what the government is prepared to fix. There are a whole host of errors, such as the double tax in clause 18, which the government just does not understand. That is a sure recipe for trouble when we have a government that does not even understand the bill or the impact of it. Not a single Conservative MP has stood up for softwood communities in the House.

The Liberal MPs only stand up when the TV cameras are there. Behind the scenes, they are driving that knife into the back of softwood communities across the country.

What has happened has been a betrayal of trust to the softwood communities, softwood workers and their families across this country from coast to coast to coast. It is deplorable.

• (1720)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question for my colleague, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, concerns one of the details he mentioned in his speech. I have heard him raise it a number of times.

I do not think Canadians fully understand the dangerous precedent that is set when we are about to pass an agreement that forfeits Canadian sovereignty. For us to make any significant policy changes about the forestry industry, we have to ask permission from Washington.

How does that make the member feel? Could the member explain to Canadians, if it is possible, how in God's name the Conservative government could think this is a good idea?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, basically anti-circumvention gives the Americans an oversight into any changes in provincial forestry practices, y incluant au Québec. What that means is we have given away the ability to change forestry practices without American oversight. It is unbelievable to me that three parties in the House would agree to it. It is another example of the appalling betrayal of softwood communities across the country.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I thank the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert for his courteous and parliamentary response when there was a personal and unparliamentary attack on me in my absence in the House yesterday. I think everybody understands that the House has rarely 308 members in it during every minute of every day. When people either do not understand the rules or deliberately choose to ignore them, we have the obligation to remind them when they cross the line and have regressed into some state of affair that is less than human.

For the past number of months, my outspoken criticism of the proposal has been well documented, and rightly so. We all have concerns. I believe everybody would agree that the legislation, as it would pass now, would be somewhat less than perfect. Nonetheless, even with its shortcomings, it is now in effect. Some of the concerns I have expressed with regard to NAFTA and the World Trade Organization and what implications this may have in the future are things on which we as parliamentarians will have to remain consistently vigilant.

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On the \$500 million going to the United States government, it really behooves this government to monitor it to ensure that it is not used against Canada and its manufacturers and suppliers.

There are many other points and they have been well documented. I am on the record and I stand by them. I have vocalized the concerns of workers, families and suppliers depending on this. Smaller communities, represented by their mayors, reeves, chiefs, associations and companies, have been involved in this, not only for the last six months but probably well before I was elected federally. They have been pressuring MPs to act on this issue. I have come to know it from many different angles.

When I was fortunate to be a member at the international trade committee, I was one of the persons who put forward an amendment for a hearing to be held in Thunder Bay. However, once we are past certain stages of delaying, obfuscating and holding things up for our own sake, whether one is partisan or not, why continue doing that? The goal is to ensure that we get the best possible legislation for people. In northwestern Ontario the goal is to keep people working.

Voting for this was a very difficult decision for me, especially as someone who has been so actively vocal. Over the past number of months, I had a number of meetings with individuals. I received phone calls, emails, faxes, all those kinds of things. I had meetings with union leaders, other labour groups and associations to try to find a way to ensure that whatever happened would be in the best interests of not only the people in northwestern Ontario but of all Canadians and for our future representations in dealings with the United States. This applies not only to forest products, but agriculture and other fields of trade as well.

I take the duty of voting very seriously. It has been a troubling time. When we think of the companies in northwestern Ontario, they have been on their knees financially. We know the deal that would have occurred last August 2005 would have been much better for them. However, it did not happen. On the legal front, we also know that our forest product companies and the people who work in them, had they been able to sustain themselves until the recent rulings, would have persevered, prevailed and overcome many of those objections. They would have had a much better deal for the future of the country.

● (1725)

I was very concerned about the pace at which we were trying to secure this deal. I spoke openly and often about its shortcomings. Now that it is in effect, those companies that were financially strapped really felt with the greatest reluctance that they had to accept this deal because they needed the cashflow. We have already seen the positive benefits of that. If I were asked for any one reason why I could agree with just about anyone in their consistent objections, their reasonable objections and concerns and need for improvements, I would not hesitate to say that they are correct and that they are making an excellent point. The bottom line is had we stopped this, the companies it affects in northwestern Ontario would now be out of business and we would never be in a situation where we could recover.

These are difficult times. The impact of the infusion of money I know firsthand. People know about my open door policy which I have had throughout my career both as a mayor and now as an MP.

An open door policy means meeting with people almost 24-7, always being available, accessible and approachable.

People's concerns varied considerably. There were concerns that we would be swept up by the President of the United States or that it would mean the end of communities in northwestern Ontario through implosion. The concerns really did run the gamut. People came to my office to tell me they are glad to be back at work, putting food on the table, and that the mortgage is being paid again. That is the kind of thing that I see firsthand. Smaller companies which supply many of the larger operations are also hiring people again. Companies can now re-employ and do the operational maintenance work. They can hire the tradespeople to do that work.

I also have to thank the members of my party for the freedom to express my opinion on this matter. As a party, members are making quite vocal objections which are reasonable and well put and I respect them for that. I also respect them for giving me the chance to speak with no attempt at stifling what I have to say. It is a sign of a truly democratic operation when we can rise above the partisanship and others understand why I have to support the companies, the workers, the families and the communities in northwestern Ontario.

The member for Kenora and the member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, myself and several others designed a response for the forest product companies and the labour movement. They asked us specifically when we were in government to address this question. Loan guarantees, modernization, environmental upgrades, and energy conversion systems were fundamental not only to the softwood lumber industry but also to the pulp and paper industry.

The \$1.4 billion that was booked last November but never had a chance to fly would have made a tremendous difference. When I tell people that had we been able to have that infusion of \$700 million of loan guarantees and had we been able to sustain the legal battles until this fall, we would not have had to rush into this agreement. We would have been in a much better position. People understand that and members in the House know that, but the fact is we did not. All of that support for the forest products industry was booked. I do not know where it was spent, but it certainly did not go to the forest industry.

● (1730)

In realizing that as a federal government we could have been the sustainer, the lifeblood, the continuance of the forest products industry, the softwood lumber industry, we realized just how much was lost.

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Today the Ontario Forest Industries Association itemized across Canada 5,000 lost jobs. I do not know what percentage that \$1.4 billion would have saved, but I believe it would have been significant. It also would have been an infusion that would have kept the bankers away. It would have kept many of the smaller companies viable. In capitalizing for energy conversions, environmental upgrades or modernizations, it would have kept many of the suppliers and small trades operations going too. We know they are all connected and they all need each other. I thank those people who piloted that through.

It also is quite interesting that when we determine that some kind of support system is necessary—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I was trying to give him some hint that his time was running out, but he never looks at the Chair. The member's time has expired and we will go to questions and comments. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member has provided clarity. The Liberal Party supports the softwood sellout. That is important for Canadians to know.

The idea that the Liberals are saying they do not support it, that somehow they would do it differently is wrong. The Liberals support the softwood sellout. That is good, because it gives Canadians a very clear choice between the Conservatives, Liberals and the Bloc and their proposal which has led to 4,000 lost jobs, and the NDP.

The member asked had we stopped this softwood sellout, what would have happened. We already know that we won in the Court of International Trade on October 13. Customs and border protection is already sending out 100% cheques to the companies. What the former Liberal government should have done and what the Conservative government we have been saying since January should do is provide funding to the companies. That is what has happened as well.

Through Export Development Corporation, taxpayers' money has gone to help support those companies. This deal with all of the sellouts involved, all the capitulations of the American government, the Bush administration, do not need to happen. The Export Development Corporation has already started using taxpayers' money to support the softwood industry as we said it should, and U.S. customs and border protection, as a result of the Court of International Trade decision, is already paying that money out. Had we stopped this; do we stop this now? What happens is we take off the export tax, we take off the punitive tax that companies are experiencing and we start to get back some of the 4,000 jobs we lost.

I have two questions for the member. The first is that for some time there has been an invitation for him to attend a public meeting on softwood lumber. I went to Thunder Bay with my colleague from Timmins—James Bay to debate the issue of softwood lumber. Why will the member not agree to a public meeting that the Steelworkers have asked him to have on softwood? Second, I have been tracking, certainly the NDP has been tracking, the number of lost jobs in northern Ontario. I would like the member to tell us how many hundreds of jobs have been lost since this deal was provisionally put into effect on October 11.

● (1735)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Speaker, just so it is known, over the entire course of my 30 year political career, I have never shied away from debating anybody, any time.

Sometimes in life there is a courtesy extended where if one is going to debate someone, one actually lets the other person know when the debate is going to be as opposed to holding it and then asking why the person did not show up. Just in terms of normal human relations, I was not extended that courtesy, but certainly we are making plans to enjoy a frank and open debate with the hon. member. We are working on a time for that.

Those who have read Winston Churchill's biography *The Will of the People* know there comes a time in one's political career, and certainly it should happen more often in this House, when one must look beyond partisanship and do what is best for one's community, one's riding and also for one's country. I know the member opposite is locked in some kind of dogmatic mind space that does not allow him to understand that when companies are on their knees and the workers are unemployed that if one has a chance to help them, then one sets aside one's dogma and partisan rituals and does what is best for the people.

Unfortunately I know that most of the rest of the Liberal caucus will oppose this legislation, but for my riding, my people and our companies to sustain themselves and continue to be a vibrant business for northwestern Ontario, I am compelled to ensure that there is no obstruction to the flow of money. Had it not been for the NDP, we would have \$1.4 billion to support the industry and we would have lost hardly any of those jobs.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think we have an open invitation to have a debate. The member's office was notified about a potential debate. Since he has now said he is open and amenable to it, will he commit right now in the House of Commons to engage in that debate in his own community prior to the House rising for the Christmas break?

It would be very good for him to suggest a couple of dates, but at the very least to commit that he will appear in public to debate the merits of this bill. Certainly the New Democrats would welcome the opportunity. He could immediately remove the delusion that the \$1.4 billion left on the table by the Conservative government has anything to do with our opposition to this bad deal.

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am certainly never afraid to debate you guys. That is not really fair, but I do not mind any time, actually.

We are working on the dates, as I said. Perhaps you do not have the schedule. Maybe you are not as committed to your own constituents as I am. Nonetheless, if you dare—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Unfortunately we are getting into a negotiation here in which the second person is being used constantly, so perhaps the members could negotiate the time of the potential debate in the lobbies. The time has expired in any event.

Government Orders

[Translation]

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we are discussing Bill C-24 for the third time, this time in relation to consideration of the second group of amendments that were proposed after the clause-by-clause examination.

The clause-by-clause examination of the bill by the committee involved some 132 proposed amendments. Some of them may have been proposed for the purpose of dragging out the debate. In any event, there were some amendments that did make sense, and it would have been in our interest to accept them too.

We are debating a bill in which there is still room for improvement. That much is obvious. The situation is complex. What Parliament is having to do is to legislate, to pronounce on a bill that has to be consistent with an agreement that has been signed, an agreement that, I am persuaded, any normal person would have simply rejected.

We must consider the context, however. The NDP is fond of telling us that the fact that the Bloc Québécois is in favour of and even supports Bill C-24 makes no sense. In his argument, my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster said that he was defending his constituents' interests passionately, forcefully, and that he has consulted them and consulted them again. We have done the same thing. The same consultations were done in Quebec, with the unions, the owners, the forestry companies and employees, with everyone who has been strangled, who has been suffocated by the situation. In one sense, this situation has virtually been created and encouraged by both governments: the Conservative government and the previous Liberal government.

From the beginning of the softwood lumber dispute with the United States, the Bloc Québécois had proposed that very specific things be done to assist this industry.

Our first suggestion was obviously that loan guarantees be instituted. If that had been done, we would not be where we are now. We would not be here talking about things that have happened and that may happen again. This agreement does not settle everything and it leaves the United States government ample latitude for getting out of it in a mere 18 months and for starting to impose duties all over again. Bizarre as it is, this bill operates to impose duties. Canada is imposing duties on its forestry industry.

The United States did that, and our industry in fact won every case it brought. We were just about to get a judgment, the final judgment, which would have required that the United States reimburse the Canadian industry, one way or another. If that had happened, they would have made the repayment without keeping a billion dollars for their own benefit.

In addition, the Liberal Party, which formed the government initially, did not want to take practical measures to help the forest industry. Hon. members will also recall that during the election campaign, the leader of the Conservative Party promised to help the industry by providing loan guarantees, a promise he quickly broke after the election. Then he reached an agreement with the United States, at the expense of the people who paid duties, which were collected illegally, it must be said.

● (1740)

As well, \$1 billion is staying in the United States and helping the United States far more than Canada and its forest industry. Obviously, we would have preferred that the government support its industry and help it through a rough time, that the forest industry be able to grow and become competitive, and that the United States not make new accusations that, of course, were unfounded.

The government backed away from its responsibilities, and as a result, we will have to live with an agreement that no one would have been willing to accept. Yet the government forced people to accept it. The Liberal Party and the NDP will probably come out against this agreement because they probably know that, in the end, the bill will be passed anyway in order to help the forest industry as soon as possible.

We are currently studying the two groups of amendments. We have finished studying the first group and are now analyzing the second group. Roughly 95 amendments have been proposed and only 19 have been kept. The Speaker will decide which amendments we will debate, and the list has been pared down quite a bit. In fact, some amendments that are no longer on the list were very interesting and could have made the bill better.

Obviously, we cannot improve the agreement, but we can improve the bill by ensuring that it contains more specific provisions and that Canada will not be taken advantage of in specific situations.

There are many different ways to help the forest industry, different measures the government could have implemented to protect the forest industry. Who will really benefit from this agreement? Yes, the industry will recover \$4.4 billion, but what about that \$1 billion that will stay in the United States?

What should we make of a government that lets people steal enormous sums of money?

What was the government thinking when it decided to give the United States a billion dollars? That money could really have helped the forest industry.

The Minister of Industry says that recovering these duties will give the softwood lumber industry the cash it really needs. He says it is a cash infusion, but it was the forest industry's own money in the first place. This is basically a refund.

In conclusion, I would like to remind the House that the Bloc Québécois supports this bill reluctantly. The Conservative minority government's concessions will put the forest industry in a dangerous position, especially in Quebec. Contrary to what the minister seems to think when he says this is a cash infusion, the return of illegally collected money is neither a gift nor a miracle; it is simply giving back what belongs to the forest industry.

● (1745)

We hope that in the future, the forest industry will never again have to put up with its own government pulling a fast one on it.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciated the speech of the member for Sherbrooke and I also appreciate the work he does in the Standing Committee on International Trade, as well as the work of his colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé. I very much appreciate their work.

I have to say, this House is in a critical situation. The money for the loan guarantees that the Bloc and the NDP have been demanding for such a long time and that the government refused to give has already been given. The Corporation de développement des exportations has sent the money to the Quebec companies.

We also know that in the United States, Customs and Border Protection is in the process of sending cheques to the companies as a result of the October 13 ruling. The money is already in the hands of the Quebec companies or on the way. It is not thanks to the government, nor to the agreement, but because the government finally took action.

Now that the money has been handed over, the anticipated penalties and massive job losses are on the horizon. We saw this happen in Abitibi, in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean and on the North Shore.

The threat of the Conservatives triggering an election on this issue is nothing more than a threat. They know full well that if they try to campaign in British Columbia or in other regions of the country on this ill-conceived agreement that is full of concessions, they will not be re-elected.

I want to know whether the hon. member for Sherbrooke would be prepared to convince his colleagues from the Bloc Québécois to vote against this agreement. This could cancel all the additional penalties of 15% imposed on the companies. The money is already going out because the government finally did what we have been asking it to do for so long. Would the Bloc be prepared to say no to this agreement and say yes to the sovereignty of the Government of Quebec in forestry policy, a sovereignty it lost because of this agreement? There are also all the other costs and all the other taxes that the companies—

● (1750)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

Mr. Serge Cardin: Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with one of my NDP colleague's views, namely that the Conservative Party will no longer be there after the next election and that it will no longer form the government. We are in complete agreement on that point. We even agreed on certain amendments.

It is true that there were job losses in the forestry sector. There was talk of tens of thousands of jobs lost. No matter the number, it is always too high. The countervailing duties to be paid by the industry and the U.S. competition were also against us. And there was also the significant downturn in the market.

We cannot say no to the agreement at this point. If I have understood my colleague's remarks, now that everyone has their money we could vote against this agreement and we will have recovered our money at any rate. That is an unacceptable way of doing things.

Private Members' Business

The agreement was signed. The bill only allows the government to implement it. We must live with this agreement. I hope it will be for the shortest possible time. What we believe to be important for the forestry industry is to return to free trade. We hope that the forestry and softwood lumber industry will be part of the free trade agreement with the United States in order for both parties to have real access to the market. Our industry could modernize, become more competitive and the money recovered could be used for that purpose.

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I am at the mercy of the House on this but given that there is only one minute left before the House is required to proceed to the taking of a deferred recorded division, I wonder if we might agree to see the clock at 5:55 and proceed. Is there unanimous consent?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1755)

[*English*]

DNA IDENTIFICATION ACT

The House resumed from November 9, consideration of the motion that Bill C-279, An Act to amend the DNA Identification Act (establishment of indexes), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:55 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-279 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 68*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Atamanenko	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Batters	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bezan
Black	Blackburn
Blaikie	Blaney
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Byrne

Private Members' Business

Calkins
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casson
Chan
Chong
Christopherson
Coderre
Crowder
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
Devolin
Dhalla
Doyle
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Finley
Flaherty
Gallant
Goldring
Goodyear
Graham
Guergis
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Hinton
Hubbard
Jean
Julian
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lauzon
Lee
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Manning
Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Merasty
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Nash
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pallister
Patry
Petit
Prentice
Priddy
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Sgro
Silva
Simms
Smith
Sorenson
St. Denis
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson

Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Casey
Chamberlain
Charlton
Chow
Clement
Comartin
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cummins
D'Amours
Davies
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dosanjh
Dryden
Easter
Epp
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Hanger
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Holland
Jaffier
Jennings
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Keeper
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre
Layton
Lemieux
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Mathyssen
Mayes
McDonough
McGuire
Menzies
Merrifield
Minna
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
Obhrai
Pacetti
Paradis
Peterson
Poilievre
Preston
Proulx
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rodriguez
Russell
Savoie
Scheer
Scott
Siksay
Simard
Skelton
Solberg
St. Amand
Stanton
Storseth
Stronach
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Toews

Tonks
Turner
Valley
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Watson
Williams
Yelich

Trost
Tweed
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Wasylcia-Leis
Wilfert
Wrzesniewski
Zed— 222

NAYS

Members

André
Bachand
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
Demers
Faille
Gaudet
Kotto
Laframboise
Lemay
Lévesque
Malo
Nadeau
Paquette
Picard
St-Cyr
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)— 39

Asselin
Barbot
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Freeman
Gauthier
Laforest
Lavallée
Lessard
Lussier
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Ouellet
Perron
Roy
St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

* * *

[English]

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

The House resumed from November 10 consideration of the motion that Bill C-290, An Act to amend the Electoral Boundaries Readjustment Act (Northern Ontario), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-290 under private members' business.

● (1835)

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

(Division No. 69)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra
Atamanenko
Bains
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bennett
Black
Bonin

Angus
Bagnell
Bélangier
Bell (North Vancouver)
Bevilacqua
Blaikie
Boshcoff

Private Members' Business

Brison	Brown (Oakville)	Hawn	Hearn
Byrne	Chamberlain	Hiebert	Hill
Chan	Charlton	Hinton	Jaffer
Chow	Christopherson	Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Coderre	Comartin	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Komarnicki
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Kotto	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner	Laforest	Laframboise
D'Amours	Davies	Lake	Lauzon
Dewar	Dhalla	Lavallée	Lemay
Dosanjh	Dryden	Lemieux	Lessard
Easter	Eyking	Lévesque	Lukiwski
Godin	Goodale	Lunn	Lunney
Graham	Holland	Lussier	MacKay (Central Nova)
Hubbard	Jennings	MacKenzie	Malo
Julian	Karetak-Lindell	Manning	Mayes
Karygiannis	Keeper	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Menzies
Lapierre	Layton	Merrifield	Miller
MacAulay	Malhi	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Maloney	Marleau	Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Nicholson	Norlock
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Mathysen	O'Connor	Obhrai
Matthews	McCallum	Oda	Ouellet
McDonough	McGuinty	Pallister	Paquette
McGuire	Merasty	Paradis	Perron
Minna	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Petit	Picard
Nash	Neville	Poilievre	Prentice
Pacetti	Patry	Preston	Reid
Peterson	Priddy	Richardson	Ritz
Proulx	Ratansi	Roy	Scheer
Redman	Regan	Schellenberger	Skelton
Robillard	Rodriguez	Smith	Solberg
Rota	Russell	Sorenson	St-Cyr
Savage	Savoie	St-Hilaire	Stanton
Scarpaleggia	Scott	Storseth	Strahl
Sgro	Siksay	Sweet	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Silva	Simard	Basques)	
Simms	St. Amand	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
St. Denis	Stoffer	Tilson	Toews
Stronach	Szabo	Trost	Turner
Temelkovski	Thibault (West Nova)	Tweed	Van Loan
Tonks	Valley	Vellacott	Verner
Wasylcia-Leis	Wilfert	Wallace	Warawa
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed- — 102	Warkentin	Watson
		Williams	Yelich- — 156

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
André	Asselin
Bachand	Baird
Barbot	Batters
Bellavance	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Bigras	Blackburn
Blais	Blaney
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boucher	Bourgeois
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Brunelle	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannon (Pontiac)
Cardin	Carrier
Casey	Casson
Chong	Clement
Cummins	Davidson
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Freeman	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harvey

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[Translation]

CANADA STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE ACT

The House resumed from November 20 consideration of the motion that Bill C-284, An Act to amend the Canada Student Financial Assistance Act (Canada access grants), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-284 under private members' business.

● (1845)

[English]

Before the Clerk announced the results of the vote:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. The Chair would like some clarification from the hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster to find out if he voted in favour or against the motion.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Gerry Ritz: I voted no, Mr. Speaker.

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

(Division No. 70)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	Allen
Allison	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bezan	Bigras
Black	Blaikie
Blais	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Dryden	Dykstra
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Freeman
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Holland
Hubbard	Jennings
Julian	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Keeper	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lapierre
Lavallée	Layton
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Lunney
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Manning
Marleau	Marston
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Mathysen	Matthews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merasty	Minna
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Nadeau	Nash
Neville	Ouellet
Pacetti	Pallister
Paquette	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Picard	Priddy
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard
Simms	St-Cyr
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stoffer

Stronach
Temelkovski
Basques)
Thibault (West Nova)
Turner
Wasylcyia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj

Szabo
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Tonks
Valley
Wilfert
Zed- — 156

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Blackburn	Blaney
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Bruinooge
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Emerson
Epp	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Gallant	Goldring
Goodyear	Gourde
Grewal	Guergis
Hanger	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Komarnicki	Lake
Lemieux	Lukiwski
Lunn	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Paradis	Petit
Poillievre	Prentice
Preston	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Skelton
Smith	Solberg
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Tilson
Toews	Trost
Tweed	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Williams	Yelich- — 102

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

* * *

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ACT

The House resumed from November 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-303, An Act to establish criteria and conditions in respect of funding for early learning and child care programs in order to ensure the quality, accessibility, universality and accountability of those programs, and to appoint a council to advise the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development on matters relating to early learning and child care, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-303 under private member's business.

• (1855)

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

(Division No. 71)

YEAS

Members

Alghabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blaikie	Blais
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Bourgeois	Brison
Brown (Oakville)	Brunelle
Byrne	Cardin
Carrier	Chamberlain
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Christopherson
Coderre	Comartin
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhalla	Dosanjh
Dryden	Easter
Eyking	Faille
Freeman	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godin
Goodale	Graham
Holland	Hubbard
Jennings	Julian
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keeper	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lapierre	Lavallée
Layton	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Lussier	MacAulay
Malhi	Malo
Maloney	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Mathysen
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinity
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)

Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Merasty
Minna	Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nadeau
Nash	Neville
Ouellet	Pacetti
Paquette	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Picard	Priddy
Proulx	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Robillard	Rodriguez
Rota	Roy
Russell	Savage
Savoie	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard	Simms
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stoffer	Stronach
Szabo	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Valley
Wasylycia-Leis	Willfert
Wrzesniewskij	Zed- — 144

Private Members' Business

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Allen
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Baird	Batters
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blackburn
Blaney	Boucher
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Brunoogoe
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)	Casey
Casson	Chong
Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Jaffer
Jean	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Manning
Mayes	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Pallister
Paradis	Petit
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Reid
Richardson	Ritz
Scheer	Schellenberger
Skelton	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Toews

Private Members' Business

Trost
Tweed
Vellacott
Wallace
Warkentin
Williams

Turner
Van Loan
Verner
Warawa
Watson
Yelich — 116

PAIRED

Nil

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

* * *

INDIAN ACT

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC) moved that Bill C-289, An Act to amend the Indian Act (matrimonial real property and immovables), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the bill in the House today.

Leona Freed is a friend of mine whose ex-husband physically abused her. However, she had three children so she stayed with him for five years before she finally walked out. For many women, finally leaving the abuse they endured marks a new beginning for them. Assets in family law court are divided equally and a judge makes the call on support issues.

However, that was not the case for Leona. Leaving her ex only sparked bigger problems. Family law did not apply in Leona's case and it still does not for many other women like her because of where the abuse took place, which was on a native reserve called Hollow Water, a couple of hours north of Winnipeg.

No one was there to protect Leona, not even the law. Only a handful of Canada's 600-plus reserves have established matrimonial property laws. On our largely patrimonial Indian reserves, that literally means every man for himself.

When a marriage dissolves, there are no rules to provide fairness or protection to the vulnerable, most often the female partner. Provincial codes apply only off reserve. Rules differ somewhat by province but at least there are rules in place, rules that guarantee rights are protected.

The federal government has jurisdiction on Canada's reserves but the Indian Act is silent on this issue and so we have a problem, or at least aboriginal women have a problem and therefore we in this place should concern ourselves with that problem.

When their relationships break down, they are caught in a legal no man's land where no woman should ever have to tread.

Is this a new problem? No, it is not. Manitoba's aboriginal justice inquiry recommended action on this issue back in 1988, as did numerous other studies, including but not limited to: the monumental Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1997; the 1998 United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights identified the lack of matrimonial property rights for aboriginals and

beseached us to act here; the interim report of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights in 2003, "A Hard Bed to Lie In: Matrimonial Real Property on Reserve", called for immediate action; and, in 2005 the House of Commons Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development recommended that action take place as well.

The Indian affairs minister and the government has commenced a consultative process with the cooperation of the Assembly of First Nations and the Native Women's Association of Canada. This is admirable, as have been all previous reports, studies, hearings, commissions, consultations, panels and committees. Unfortunately, none have resulted in any action and the injustices faced by Canadian aboriginal women endure. As well, despite the minister's good intentions, it is quite possible that other factors, such as another federal election, will result in further delays.

This is an issue of interest to columnists. Just this week there was a column in the *Globe and Mail*. In reference to the consultations, John Ibbitson said:

The most we can reasonably hope for is some incremental progress that the next government will pursue, leading to real reform some time down the road. What experience suggests is that failure will follow failure in unbroken succession.

There is justifiably some doubt as to whether action will actually occur as a result of the consultations. Bill C-289 is an attempt to change that inaction into action. The bill would extend provincial matrimonial property codes to reserves and provide interim rules until the federal government acts or until first nations develop their own charter-compliant codes. In other words, the bill would put the rule of law into place where it does not currently exist.

This is exactly the measure unanimously recommended by both the Senate and House committees and yet some will argue for further delays. Detractors of the bill will argue that the issue is complicated. They are quite correct. The complexity argument has long been used to undermine aboriginal equality and human rights. Surely, putting an end to the personal suffering experienced by aboriginal Canadians should be sufficient motivation to act.

● (1900)

Certainly the *Winnipeg Free Press* thinks so. An editorial on October 16 stated:

The practicalities of imposing the law are complex — many reserve residents live below the poverty line and do not have access to courts or lawyers. But it is high time First Nations men and women had the same basic claim through law granted other Canadians when marriages fail. It may be that decades of legal disputes and years of study are not enough for [the member for Winnipeg South Centre]. Native people have been waiting for such a law for too long.

That is its view and it is mine.

Private Members' Business

Certainly some first nations chiefs covet the control that now rests with them in the absence of matrimonial property laws. They argue that they are best positioned to make asset allocation decisions in the collective best interests of band members. But many other leaders know that formalizing and depoliticizing these decisions is in the best interests of individuals and of chiefs and councils. In spite of this, some want to play jurisdictional ping-pong with this issue. They would argue that the community should establish its own codes. I would say this in response.

First, this bill respects first nations' governance aspirations. It provides interim protections until communities can do just that, until communities can decide how they wish to proceed.

Second, this is not a new issue. This issue has been around the reserve for years and yet, very few have developed matrimonial property rules. Without action, aboriginal people, in particular aboriginal women, may wait many more years for justice.

Third, why reinvent the wheel? A number of first nations leaders I have spoken to recognize and have said they have many other priorities they have to deal with: water quality, economic development, social problems. They have limited resources. Using and enforcing provincial codes on an interim basis, or even perhaps permanently as some bands have said they would like to do is both cost effective and the right thing to do.

Some chiefs and councils are currently pushing for exemptions to provincial smoking bans. Certainly we know of cases in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and there are others I am told. In particular, this is relevant to gambling ventures that some of the bands have under way. These bands will naturally be concerned about the jurisdictional optics of accepting provincial codes in one category while opposing them in another. I would urge these leaders to consider the optics of prioritizing the equal rights of their band members beneath gambling profits. That is not a pretty optic.

This week's *The Hill Times* contains an article by Grand Chief Phil Fontaine in which he said:

—after a decade of research, Harvard University found that it could not point to one example of sustained development that, “did not involve the recognition and effective exercise of tribal sovereignty: the practical assertion by tribes of their right and capacity to govern themselves.

That is something many of us here support. But progress towards aboriginal self-government has been hindered by widespread concerns about accountability. These concerns are fuelled by stories of misspending, abuse of power and the often repeated examples of social malaise on reserves. These concerns exist both on and off reserves and these concerns are shared by both aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. The question is how to address these dysfunctional governance problems.

Mr. Fontaine went on to say, “Ultimately, authority spreads from the people”. But does it, can it, when people are afraid to speak up? The absence of property rights among aboriginal people hinders their willingness and ability to speak up when they see wrong being done, or when they experience it firsthand.

And rightfully, many aboriginal women will stand in the way of self-government unless and until their rights are protected. They and all Canadians need to feel confident that there are checks and

balances in place to offset any potential abuses of power by community leaders. Establishing matrimonial property rules on reserve is in the best interests of accountability because it replaces a decision making process which can be discretionary and arbitrary with one that is clear and is non-political.

Sovereign nations cannot exist without sovereign individuals. Five hundred thousand aboriginal women confident of their rights may be able to achieve what 5,000 federal bureaucrats will never achieve: better governance on the reserves of this country; more accountable governance on the reserves of this country.

I would ask members of Parliament, on behalf of the Canadians they represent, to support this bill when it comes before the House early in the new year.

● (1905)

When she was fighting for her children and her property, Leona Freed was standing alone. She was standing unprotected. This is our opportunity to stand with Leona and thousands of aboriginal women like her and acknowledge the matrimonial property rights of aboriginal people. With the passage of this bill, we would be standing together to protect and defend Canada's aboriginal women.

Hon. members may ask why I bring this forward when the government has already initiated a consultation process. I have been fighting this issue for a long time. I have travelled to over 100 first nations communities in my capacity as the critic when in opposition. I have heard firsthand the tragic stories, as I know other members of the House have as well, of hardship and of heartbreak directly from the people who have experienced those hardships, from the women affected, women who have been abused, women who have been thrown out of their homes, women who have been forced off of their reserves. As we debate this bill, these problems do not stop; they continue.

In a society where too many people claim unjustified victimhood, aboriginal women are real victims, victims of an intolerable inequity, a contravention of the equality rights in our charter, a contravention of section 35 of the Constitution Act.

I submit to my colleagues in the House that the choice for us here is clear: either we perpetuate the inequality or we end it by making this bill a reality.

● (1910)

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my hon. colleague's speech. I would recommend also that people read the Senate report on this subject which is excellent.

One of the things that came out of the Senate report was the effect on children by not having stability, by having family problems. I was wondering if the hon. member would comment on that and if he would speak to more of the personal stories. In many ways the personal speaks to those of us who cannot always understand all the legal complexities between the jurisdictions and the acts involved.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Brian Pallister: Mr. Speaker, yes, it is the personal stories that make it such a reality. For many of us here who represent constituencies where there are reserves or a high population of off reserve aboriginal people, we know personally of these types of situations developing and it motivates us to see a change. It motivates us to see action taken.

We are also aware, because we talk to the people who have been affected, of the urgency of the issue and the frustration that many, in particular the women, feel about the inaction on the issue.

I want to compliment the minister on the process of consultation. I do not criticize it. I do not mean to criticize it, but consultation has been ongoing for a long time and has not resulted in action being taken. We recognize there are a number of reasons that those actions have not occurred, some I think less legitimate than others, but nonetheless, there have been many things that aboriginal women have told me they feel are just excuses for inaction. They want us to send a powerful message that we believe this is important.

We know it is complex and we know that with 600-plus communities out there there are many different approaches that the communities want to take. That is why the bill is an interim proposal to put rules into place until those communities can arrive at the course of action that they want.

It is a heartfelt issue for many of us who know aboriginal people personally and who represent them. It has gone on long enough. The time for action is certainly long past.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my hon. colleague, and I would like to point out a problem and ask his opinion. I will get back to this in a moment when I address the House about the bill.

The Quebec Native Women's Association and the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador would have preferred that there were no debate concerning Bill C-289. They say that it consists of only a temporary program, a band-aid solution to a problem that could delay, once again, what the government is trying to do.

Does the bill proposed by my colleague not undermine the study that the government currently has in progress, the one being conducted by the minister and on which Ms. Grant-John is working so hard?

Passing this bill and taking the necessary time to enact it could delay the conclusions that should give rise to legislative action and an amendment to the Indian Act. I wonder about that, and I would like to ask the following question. Is he not undermining his own government, which means to move much further ahead than this bill appears to go?

[*English*]

Mr. Brian Pallister: Mr. Speaker, the argument is specious that somehow putting interim rules into place is in any way, shape or form going to delay action. If we have a desire to take action as a result of the consultations that are under way, we will take it, but I have listened to arguments being made for 20 years that there is a process under way. There was a process with the AJL. RCAP was a very extensive process.

Many of us here were part of Bill C-7 and remember the consultations around that. People have argued for many years and some chiefs always will argue that this is not any of our business. I do not think the arguments that this is somehow going to delay action coming from those sources have any credence whatsoever.

However, the argument that an interim action to provide rules for matrimonial property division until this or a subsequent government decides to take action is very strong, because it is either interim rules or no rules. If members knew the women who have been impacted by the absence of rules as I do, they certainly would support having interim rules as opposed to none.

● (1915)

Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Cree first nation woman from the Norway House Cree Nation and on my maternal side I am from the Muskrat Dam First Nation, I feel especially privileged to participate in the second reading debate of Bill C-289 sponsored by the member for Portage—Lisgar.

The objective of this bill is to amend section 90 of the Indian Act which focuses on matrimonial real property and immovables, insofar that it would extend the application of provincial matrimonial property law to include reserve lands.

Matrimonial real property describes the family home and the land upon which it is situated, and provincial laws determine how to divide the property in the event of a marital breakup or divorce.

At face value it sets out to carefully address a delicate matter. Instances involving conflicts in regard to matrimonial real property do, without question, affect all Canadians and, of course, first nations citizens as well.

This bill however seeks to amend a portion of the Indian Act and, therefore, I trust that my parliamentary colleagues will lend their attention to the complexities that surround Bill C-289.

The urgency to address matrimonial real property on first nations is by no means a recent issue. Over 20 years ago the legislative gap was brought to the fore by the Supreme Court rulings of *Derrickson v. Derrickson* and *Paul v. Paul*. The result of these rulings was that provincial and territorial laws relating to the division of matrimonial real property, upon marital breakdown, do not apply on reserve lands.

This is an issue that has been explored, as my colleague mentioned, in many reports and in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. In June 2005 the committee released a final report entitled "Walking Arm-In-Arm to Resolve the Issue of On-Reserve Matrimonial Real Property".

Since the report was finalized, the Native Women's Association of Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and the Assembly of First Nations have sought to seek a resolution on matrimonial real property.

Private Members' Business

I wish to remind the member for Portage—Lisgar that there are key considerations. First, there are aboriginal and treaty rights. The courts have affirmed aboriginal and treaty rights over reserve lands and, accordingly, they are protected by subsection 35.(1) of the Constitution Act. This is the fundamental starting point for discussions to address the legislative gap.

Recent court cases have confirmed that the federal government cannot unilaterally proceed with enacting legislation that has the potential to infringe on aboriginal and treaty rights or affect aboriginal interests without first consulting first nations.

There has been judicial recognition of first nations jurisdiction over land use on reserve lands. Additionally, in respect of the inherent right to self-government, there must be recognition of first nations jurisdiction over family law matters. To do otherwise infringes on the rights of first nations to be self-governing, as recognized by the Constitution of Canada.

Additionally, in May 2005 an agreement was signed by the Assembly of First Nations and the previous Liberal government of Canada. This agreement is known as the “First Nations-Federal Crown Political Accord on the Recognition and Implementation of First Nations Governments”. It laid a fresh framework for a collaborative federal policy development process that would guarantee first nation participation.

Bill C-289 makes absolutely no mention of these essential conciliatory processes and legal mechanisms.

Given the past and present hardships experienced by Canada's first nations, I think it would be considerably counterproductive to proceed any further on a bill that was not the outcome of a successful, cooperative and collaborative effort.

If indeed it is the intent of the member to address critical issues facing first nations women and children, then I find it difficult to understand why the member would not have supported the motion in this House put forward by the member who represents the Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River riding to honour the implementation of the Kelowna agreement, entitled “First Ministers and National Aboriginal Leaders Strengthening Relationships and Closing the Gap”. It was reached between the first ministers of this country and national aboriginal leaders, including the Native Women's Association of Canada, the Assembly of First Nations, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Métis National Council.

• (1920)

The Kelowna accord was a first step which would have provided over \$5 billion to address critical issues affecting first nations women and children, including the day to day urgent needs in: housing, safe drinking water, education, health care and developing capacity in the health care field, economic development, and addressing governance structures which is absolutely essential for aboriginal people to move forward in self-determination. That, I might add, is a key health determinant.

The answers must come from the people themselves and earlier this year, on June 21, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development announced a nationwide consultation process on matrimonial real property. These regional dialogue sessions are

necessary and they are a means toward achieving a meaningful and lasting solution.

I encourage the member to consider the impacts of attempting to supercede a process that is currently underway. In fact, I encourage all members of the House to consider how momentous this process is to involve first nations and aboriginal women in a cooperative and collaborative process with the federal government. In order to best reinforce the integrity and focus on the genuine intention of the regional dialogue sessions, and the good faith of the consultations, it is not judicious to pursue this bill any further.

Although I support the issue being resolved, I can assure the House that Bill C-289 is undermining the legal process that is currently being pursued. To reiterate and conclude my position, out of respect for the ongoing process that is currently underway between Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations, I cannot find any constructive purpose in supporting this bill.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague just said, and I would go a little farther than she did. First, I want to say that I agree with her completely. Still, there is something I would like to talk about.

The problem arose in 1986 when the Supreme Court ruled in two cases, *Derrickson v. Derrickson* and *Paul v. Paul*. To summarize these two cases: are assets belonging to aboriginals, assets accumulated by a couple on a reserve, seizeable?

The Supreme Court had to hand down a decision on that issue. It is written that:

The Supreme Court of Canada ... established the principle that because reserve lands fall under federal jurisdiction, as a result of section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867, provincial laws cannot apply to modify any individual interest in reserve lands. However, compensation orders that take into account the value of matrimonial real property on reserves and the provincial formulas used for division can be used and can be granted.

I will put that in plain English. They are saying that property on a reserve cannot be seized, but that compensation can be ordered, for instance, that the wife can obtain a court ruling based on the assessed value of the couple's assets. I said the wife because in 90% of cases, it is the wife who obtains the court ruling. Take, for example, a couple that owns a convenience store on a reserve, a business that is worth a million dollars and that husband and wife built together. The marriage breaks down. The court says that no order can be made to sell assets located on a reserve, but that the value can be assessed to determine the alimony or compensation to be paid by the husband.

The problem is that no order can be made to sell assets owned by a couple on a reserve. That is where the debate stands now. That is what I said in my question for my hon. colleague just now.

His bill is well-intentioned. We would like to support it, but we cannot. Not because we are acting in bad faith, but for the good and simple reason that we have to go farther and faster than my hon. colleague's bill would.

Private Members' Business

As I said earlier, this bill only camouflages the problem. What we need is a solution. I must say, for once here in this House, a government has followed through on recommendations it received. It has just created a commission led by Ms. Grant-John, and we must let it go ahead with its work. Furthermore, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development has set a deadline for the project to be completed. We will not let this drag on for 15 years. Unlike the Erasmus-Dussault report, which celebrated its tenth anniversary yesterday, recommendations must absolutely be reported to the minister's office, regardless of who the minister is, by June 2007.

It is an extremely complex problem. For example, the courts cannot invoke provincial and territorial legislation to issue an order for possession concerning a matrimonial home. They cannot order the sale or sharing of a matrimonial home on the reserve in order to execute a compensation order. They cannot prohibit the sale or charge of a matrimonial home. This is on a reserve. The lack of fundamental rights and recourse regarding matrimonial real estate located on reserves has raised and continues to raise concerns regarding gender equality. This issue is of concern to a number of Canadian and international organizations, including aboriginal women's organizations, the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights and certain United Nations agencies.

• (1925)

This is an extremely complex problem. The Bloc Québécois cannot support our colleague's bill, but it will do everything in its power to solve this problem. We are going to do what must be done in committee and even elsewhere, so that the recommendations that come out of the consultations currently being held by the aboriginal women of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations are implemented as soon as possible after they are presented to the government.

The Bloc Québécois believes that no one in this House is acting in bad faith on this issue. I would not want any hon. member of this House to score or try to score political points at the expense of aboriginal women. I say sincerely that this is not what our colleague is trying to do with this bill. This bill came out of a very good intention, but I would say that it is coming too soon. We do not often say that in this House, but this bill would not solve the problem. It would only raise more pressing problems, because there is a constitutional issue to address, a jurisdictional issue.

The minister, who appeared before the committee when he established the review panel to act on the recommendations of the senate committee and the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, said that he wants concrete solutions and, if necessary, even draft amendments to the Indian Act.

The Bloc Québécois is very aware of this situation. We are very aware of the position taken by our colleague who has tabled this bill. We are sensitive to the prevailing situation in aboriginal communities and the problems that have arisen in the absence of appropriate laws governing the division of assets and matrimonial property. However, the Bloc Québécois, and aboriginal peoples, believe that the government must take action to address this urgent situation. The Bloc Québécois reminded the government, and will continue to do so, of its obligation to consult and co-operate with native peoples on

this important issue. It will continue to do so with respect to all issues that affect the lives of aboriginal peoples.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bloc Québécois is aware that aboriginal women and the Assembly of First Nations are in the midst of consultations with members of the first nations. They would prefer, and are requesting, that the bill be studied when consultations have been completed.

Of course, there will probably be another government. We do not know what will happen in the coming months. Six months in politics is an eternity. Nonetheless, we know that even if this bill is not passed by this House, there is currently still work being done that will continue to be done and that the recommendations should be tabled before June 2007. In June 2007, we will make sure they are indeed tabled and debated quickly in this House.

The Bloc Québécois believes that the government should wait for the results of the consultations being held right now by the Assembly of First Nations and the aboriginal women of Canada, in order to integrate the recommendations into the bill in question.

The Bloc Québécois, together with the elected representatives of the first nations, is asking that the debate be postponed. We would have liked that, but now there is nothing we can do about it. We have to debate. We will do so, but, unfortunately, we will vote against this bill.

I will say again in this House that I am not accusing my colleague of wanting to score political points. He raised in this House a glaring problem that we must resolve, but this is not the right approach.

• (1930)

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this important issue but I will not be recommending that the New Democrats support the bill.

However, as the member who introduced the bill rightly pointed out, there has been excessive delay in dealing with this serious issue. It has been identified through the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, three parliamentary committees, seven United Nations human rights bodies, first nations women's leaders and the Assembly of First Nations.

It is actually unfortunate that this has been identified for 20 years or more as a very serious problem and yet we have not seen the resolution that men, women and children in first nations communities rightly deserve.

A number of members have mentioned the fact that there is a consultation process in place. I think that is really the crux of this.

Private Members' Business

In the past, we, as parliamentarians, have often gone about making decisions without the appropriate consultation in place. We have often gone about making policies and legislation without ensuring that the people who will bear the brunt of those decisions were included at the table, not just in consultation but in the decision making and in the solution identification. Oftentimes what consultation has looked like is a very cursory conversation and then we tell people to go away while we close the doors and make the decision.

I would argue that this is such a fundamental issue for first nations men, women and children that it is critical that the people who will bear the impact of this decision are at the table throughout the process. In fact, it is that kind of philosophy that actually underpins the way the New Democrats believe decision making should be made when we are talking about first nations, Métis and Inuit people. We are talking about decision making on a nation to nation basis. We are talking about having first nations people at the table in a meaningful way so they are truly partners in this decision making process.

In a letter that came from the office of the national chief, the chief himself talked about the fact that our work would be guided by the recognition and implementation of first nations governance and jurisdiction and that the key principle of that solution had to be first nations driven. Therefore, when we have a bill that comes before the House that is not first nations driven, I would argue that we are violating that fundamental principle.

In the event that people think women are not also asking for this, the Native Women's Association of Canada is involved in this extensive consultation process that is currently underway and it is a fairly rapid process. It was initiated in June. It needs to be completed with the Assembly of First Nations and the Native Women's Association of Canada by, I believe, December 2006. Ms. Grant-John is committed to sending a report to the minister by early spring and the minister has committed to, shortly thereafter, putting legislation forward.

Surely we can wait for this process to unfold to ensure meaningful consultation does happen. The Native Women's Association is saying that it is critical for women's voices to be heard and that those who are and will be directly affected must also be involved in the consultation process over the next couple of months.

The Assembly of First Nations has put out a very good resource handbook that has good background information. I would encourage members, who have some additional questions to which they need answers, to go to the Assembly of First Nations website and check out this material because it lays out some of the concerns.

There is some concern that even if the bill were to pass that the imposition of provincial laws on first nations land may not be constitutional. Therefore, that question itself has not been answered.

We must try to gain an understanding of why this needs to be done in such a respectful way. One of the things in the handbook concerns legislative gaps on reserve. It says that while first nations have traditional laws which could help couples to determine how to divide the family home and land when divorce or separation occurs, the federal government does not recognize these laws.

●(1935)

Therefore, it is not that many first nations communities do not have laws governing this; it is that the federal government does not recognize some of these existing laws.

The document goes on to talk about the importance of ensuring that people's voices are heard. It recognizes the legislative gap, but it also talks about the fact that this matrimonial real property is one factor in a wide gamut of factors impacting on people's lives in first nations communities. It is part of a chronic housing shortage. It is part of poverty on reserves. It is part of the fact that many women and children do not have access to transition houses that assist families when women are involved in domestic violence.

Certainly there have been recent announcements about 35 transition houses, but there are 633 first nations communities in this land and many of the women in many of those communities will not have access to those transition houses. Again, what we have is a one-off piece of legislation in isolation of the complex issues facing many first nations communities.

I talked about the chronic housing shortage and the lack of transition centres, but I am also talking about the lack of appropriate consultative processes. They have not been in place. As I talk about consultation, I note that the courts themselves have said that consultation must be undertaken with the genuine intention of substantially addressing first nations concerns and that first nations representation must be seriously considered and, wherever possible, demonstrably integrated into the proposed plan of action.

That is what the courts have said. In that context, I do not see how we could support the current bill before the House. It does not have that consultation process built in. If the consultation process were to take place in the context of this current bill, it would be many months before we would even begin to see a solution. In the meantime, this appropriate consultation phase that is under way will be finished, so I would suggest that we need to wait for this current process.

There are many issues that need to be considered. That is why, as the member opposite rightly pointed out, this is a complex issue. The Assembly of First Nations has identified a number of issues that need to be considered in this complex matter.

One issue is aboriginal title and treaty rights. Reserve lands are protected by subsection 35(1) of the Constitution Act. That cannot be disregarded in this.

I have spoken about consultation and accommodation previously, but I will note that any attempt to infringe upon some of the constitutional rights must be justified. I would argue that we cannot justify imposing provincial legislation without agreement from first nations communities.

There is judicial recognition of first nations jurisdiction over land use. There are collective rights versus individual rights. We need to recognize that people have different approaches to these things. My document says, "Custom allotments also form part of First Nations customary law, and it is questionable whether provincial laws can apply to this traditional form of First Nations land management of reserve lands".

Private Members' Business

Next is judicial recognition of first nations jurisdiction over family matters. Again, many first nations have laws that already are in effect around matrimonial breakdown. Those laws must be considered when we are looking at solutions in first nations communities. This relates to the federal recognition of first nations jurisdiction over family law.

I have touched on just a few of those issues, but I think these are the kinds of things that demonstrate the complexity of this issue. Various bodies, as I have pointed out, have taken a run at this, but nobody has actually taken on the necessary hard work to develop a solution.

When we talk about this consultation process that is under way, I note that it does not mean just gathering more information about what the current state of affairs is. The current consultation process that is under way will result in recommendations for solutions, so it is not just fact gathering. It is actually solution gathering. That is an important piece of this very complex puzzle.

● (1940)

When we talk about solutions, we must recognize traditional values. We must recognize the protection of aboriginal treaty rights. There must be no abrogation or derogation of collective rights, protection and preservation of first nations lands for future generations, strengthening first nations families and communities, recognition and implementation of first nations jurisdictions and community based solutions.

I suggest that members of the House should vote the bill down. They should be supporting the good work that is being done in first nations communities from coast to coast to coast.

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 acknowledge my colleague, the member for Portage—Lisgar, for all the efforts he has taken on this issue and continues to take on the important work for aboriginal families throughout Canada.

I rise today to discuss the bill before the House, Bill C-289, a proposal to address the issue of on reserve matrimonial real property through amendments to the Indian Act. Although I fully support the goals of Bill C-289, I cannot support the bill in its present form.

The issue of on reserve matrimonial real property, frequently referred to by its acronym MRP, is a fundamental injustice that tarnishes Canada's democracy and creates suffering for a number of first nations women, children and families. The government recognizes the pain resulting from this issue and it is determined to resolve it.

To enact Bill C-289, however, would be a mistake. The bill is not the product of a broad collaborative effort required to implement an effective, lasting solution. To develop an effective solution, we must understand and appreciate the complexities of this very serious issue. We must also ensure that we have a solution that reflects the concerns and input of all those who will be affected, in other words, first nations communities across the country.

Matrimonial real property is a legal term for a relatively simple concept. It refers to the fixed assets used for family purposes that are owned by one or both spouses. For most Canadians, matrimonial real property includes a house and the land on which it sits. In the event of divorce, the division of MRP is often contentious but legally straightforward. Provincial and territorial laws are in place to protect the MRP interests of both spouses, as per their jurisdiction under our Constitution. In the event of divorce, for example, one spouse cannot sell the family home without the consent of the other.

Aboriginal people living on reserves, however, face an entirely different legal reality. Federal legislation, the Indian Act, defines the status of reserve lands, and the Indian Act is silent on the issue of matrimonial real property on reserve.

This is not just a bureaucratic interpretation. The Supreme Court of Canada has twice ruled that provincial family law cannot alter any interest in MRP located on reserve lands. These rulings have determined that since reserve lands fall under federal authority, only federal law can enable transfers of on reserve matrimonial real property. Unfortunately, no federal law addresses MRP. This leaves a large loophole in Canada's body of legislation.

The loophole has a direct affect on aboriginal women and children seeking to escape failed marriages and few of them are even aware of the problem until it is too late. In all too many cases, an aboriginal woman has little choice but to leave the family home and ultimately her community.

Judges are usually powerless to intervene because they lack the legal authority to protect or transfer the MRP interests of spouses on reserves. Even in the most extreme cases, such as those involving spousal abuse, physical violence or custody disputes, no court can order a change in possession of an on reserve family home. The courts cannot order the sale of the family home, for instance, or prevent a spouse from selling or mortgaging the family home without the consent of the other spouse, regardless of the severe repercussions these actions might have.

This legal loophole often has devastating consequences such as homelessness, poverty and despair. The effects are serious, with a steadily growing number of aboriginal people marginalized from mainstream society, denied access to the opportunities the rest of us take for granted.

I believe all members appreciate that the current situation is intolerable. I hope they will join me in commending the good intentions behind Bill C-289. I also hope they come to recognize the value of the solution contained in the bill disappears quickly without the necessary consultation and input required for an effective and lasting solution.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-289 proposes to amend the Indian Act so provincial law applies to MRP cases, although appealing such an amendment would effectively transfer a significant burden upon the provinces. Have the provinces indicated a willingness to accept this burden? Can we expect the provinces to assume the additional legal aid and enforcement costs associated with MRP? Unfortunately, we do not know the answers to these questions because the provinces have failed to be consulted about Bill C-289. This lack of consultation is the substantive flaw in the bill before the House today.

● (1945)

The government is committed to finding a solution to MRP that works for everyone, for provinces and territories, for first nations communities, for aboriginal women and children and for all Canadians. To design and implement an effective solution will necessarily require the input of all parties. I am pleased to report that a collaborative process was introduced by the minister earlier this year.

As we are speaking, these consultations with all stakeholders are taking place across the country. These sessions examine and analyze potential legislative solutions to MRP. The sessions were designed and are led by officials from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, side by side with representatives of the Assembly of First Nations and the Native Women's Association of Canada. I have every confidence that this cooperative approach will lead to a lasting solution, a solution to a problem that we can all agree has remained unresolved for far too long.

Earlier this year, we were fortunate enough to retain a talented individual, Wendy Grant John, as ministerial representative on these consultations. Ms. Grant John is a former chief, a successful entrepreneur and a skilled negotiator. She has agreed to work with all parties to seek consensus on a solution to the issue of MRP. Should such a consensus not emerge, Ms. Grant John will recommend an appropriate course of action.

This government's actions on MRP are consistent with the strategy it has devised to address the full range of problems that face aboriginal people in our country. The strategy is based on taking immediate action on quality of life issues such as drinking water, supporting women, children and families in education, promoting economic development, job training, skills and entrepreneurship and revamping the legislative framework to address the archaic and tangled legislation and funding agreements that define the vast majority of relations between government and first nations, which clearly are not working. We are also speeding up the process for conducting treaty land entitlements, additions to reserves, comprehensive and specific claims.

The government will work collaboratively with aboriginal groups and the provinces and territories to design and implement better legislative frameworks and to accelerate negotiations and achieve fair settlements. Our commitment is evident in a number of areas where action is already under way, such as MRP and our plan on first nations water. In addition, in our first budget we invested more than \$3.7 billion over two years in support of aboriginal peoples and northerners, more than any previous budget.

I am convinced that we are ushering in a new era of prosperity and social justice for aboriginal peoples. We are committed to working

closely with aboriginal groups to design and implement appropriate solutions. To succeed we will consult and collaborate and not take unilateral action.

Bill C-289 calls for the government to act on its own without the consent of these stakeholders. I encourage my colleagues to support the government's collaborative approach to MRP and join with me in voting against this bill.

● (1950)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this bill. I congratulate the member for Portage—Lisgar for bringing it forward and the members who spoke to it, especially the member for Churchill.

It is good that we are debating this bill because, as all members have said, it concerns a very serious problem that needs to be dealt with. The government is working on it. The people at Indians Affairs and Northern Development have been working very hard for years on this very complex problem. Its complexity makes it a bit perplexing that this bill is before us. With such a complex issue one could not possibly deal with it seriously and fairly in a one page bill.

There are a number of aboriginal groups in Canada and the bill talks only of some very specific concerns on reserve. There are a number of aboriginal people in regions of Canada, for instance, virtually all of them in my riding, where there are no reserves. How would they be dealt with under this law?

To understand the depth of the problem, this is a great struggle between two rights which are guaranteed in the Constitution. We have spent the last three or four years debating the tension between the two rights, the rights of religious freedom and the rights of equality. Once again we have an almost intractable problem. There is a tension between aboriginal rights in section 35 and individual equality rights in section 15. That is why the issue is so difficult.

In Canada over the years we have been building very sensitive relationships with first nations people. We understand that they have inhabited this country for thousands of years. They have systems and laws that work quite effectively. We should respect those laws and rights. They may clash with the visions of society and the types of rights that we see. There is a tremendous tension and it requires consultation which the government just said it is undergoing, which is excellent. There needs to be a detailed consultation to come up with a plan that will deal with all the complexities, some of which I have mentioned.

Private Members' Business

To think that every complex problem has a simple solution is wrong. We have to go through all the different variations. We have to take into consideration the various aboriginal rights, treaties, land claim agreements and self-government agreements, which is the process that the government has under way.

I find it a little strange that a bill would be brought forward by a government member on an issue that has already been decided on twice by the Supreme Court and is basically unconstitutional. One cannot override aboriginal rights, rights dealing with family law on reserve, as outlined in the Indian Act, by a province or territory. I am surprised that when the government started the consultation the party opposite did not pick another bill to move up on the order of precedence so it could bring forward one of its other priorities. I am curious as to how the bill passed the legislative counsel in the House of Commons and how a bill that would not fit under the Constitution was allowed to go forward.

It is good that all parties are thinking about this issue, are directing their attention to it and are willing to cooperate in the process. One can imagine the pain that all women at some point in history have undergone by not having equal rights and the right of equality of possessions in matrimonial affairs. It can cause great problems. They often are left with children, which can cause great levels of poverty and an even more stressful situation because of the responsibilities that a woman has to deal with alone after a breakup.

It is certainly valid that we dedicate our resources to this issue. The last government was working on it intensely, and I am delighted that the present government is as well. I hope that when members of the House come up with recommendations, they will make sure that it is a high priority and that we deal with it quickly in order to come to some resolution of a problem which for so many years we have all agreed has to be dealt with.

• (1955)

I just want to close by mentioning what the parliamentary secretary said about the government's enthusiasm for moving on with things. I certainly hope its enthusiasm improves the treaty process—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry but I must interrupt the hon. member. He has four minutes and thirty seconds or so remaining in his time.

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.

It being 7:58 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7.58 p.m.)

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