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Monday, November 27, 2006

—
Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, November 27, 2006

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

The House resumed from October 27 consideration of the motion.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to complete my thoughts on Motion No. 172 addressing a national autism strategy.

There is no doubt that autism spectrum disorders have an enormous impact on affected families. As the parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorders have attested, the impact is often discouraging, both financially and emotionally.

As the member from the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, I have been hearing from constituents on this issue for some time now. I have heard from many parents who are concerned for their children's future and who are concerned about accessing appropriate treatment and therapy.

The primary concern many parents in B.C. have is the level of funding they receive for treatment. Currently, the Province of British Columbia pays up to \$20,000 annually for treatment for children up to age six. It pays \$6,000 annually for treatment of children six years of age and older.

However, depending on the amount of treatment an autistic child needs, some parents find themselves paying much more than the \$20,000 maximum the province currently covers. These parents look around and see some provinces, such as Alberta, covering the full cost of treatment. Other provinces address autism as a component of their public education systems, again, without imposing a financial burden on parents.

As such, many parents in my province have lobbied the B.C. government for additional funding. They have also gone to court to try to obtain more provincial funding.

Late in 2004, the Supreme Court of Canada addressed this issue in its unanimous ruling in the *Auton* decision. The chief justice, writing for the court, determined:

—the legislature is under no obligation to create a particular benefit. It is free to target the social programs it wishes to fund as a matter of public policy, provided the benefit itself is not conferred in a discriminatory manner.

The Supreme Court also found that funding for ABA or IBI treatment was not required under the provisions of the Canada Health Act. As such, the provinces are exclusively responsible for deciding on the level of funding they will provide for autism treatment.

Of course, parents with autistic children are not so much concerned with questions of legal obligation on the part of the provincial governments as they are with the question of whether their children are getting the help they need.

Motion No. 172 is important because it gives federal representatives an opportunity to consider and debate the contribution we can make to help families affected by autism. In doing so, our new Conservative government will continue to respect the jurisdiction of the provinces to make health care funding decisions. We will also continue to respect the judgment of the Supreme Court.

However, it is clear that even though the primary responsibility for funding treatment is an exclusive provincial responsibility, there are ways that our new Conservative government can, and already does, help.

First, our government provides general funding to the provinces and territories through the Canada health transfer for the provision of health services. This year we are providing nearly \$20.1 billion exclusively for health care, \$1.1 billion more than last year. Our budget commits to increasing that amount by 6% per year. Next year the provinces can count on \$21.3 billion and, the year following, \$22.6 billion.

Also, our new government gives families affected by autism direct financial support through the tax system. In budget 2006, our new government included a number of measures that either were proposed by the technical advisory committee on tax measures for persons with disabilities or that even go beyond its recommendations.

Private Members' Business

Among these measures were: increasing the maximum annual child disability benefit, effective July 2006; extending eligibility for the child disability benefit to middle and higher income families caring for a child who meets the disability criteria, effective July 2006; and, boosting the maximum amount of the refundable medical expense supplement.

While direct assistance for families is important, the federal government also plays a key role in medical research.

The search for a deeper knowledge into the causes of autism and for better treatments is an area where our new Conservative government believes it can make a meaningful contribution. For instance, the Public Health Agency of Canada funds Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being, two of which are doing important work on autism spectrum disorders.

We realize we can do more, which is why last Tuesday the Minister of Health announced some very important initiatives. These initiatives include: first, funding for a new research chair into the causes and treatment of autism; second, consultations leading to a national autism surveillance program; third, a stakeholder symposium to be held in 2007; fourth, a new Health Canada website focused on autism related information; and fifth, leadership by Health Canada in coordinating our government's response to autism related issues.

Families in my community and across Canada have been waiting a long time for a comprehensive federal response to the challenges posed by autism. I believe the leadership our government has shown in the past week will make a significant difference in the effort to better understand and treat autism.

Therefore, I would like to present an amendment to my hon. colleague's Motion No. 172. This amendment would further reinforce our government's commitment to build a strong, national strategy for autism spectrum disorders.

I move:

That, Motion No. 172 be amended by deleting all the words after the word "include", and substituting the following:

- (a) the development, in cooperation with provincial-territorial governments, of evidence based standards for the diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorder;
- (b) the development, in cooperation with provincial governments, of innovative funding methods for the care of those with autism spectrum disorder;
- (c) consulting with provincial-territorial governments and other stakeholders on the requirements of implementing a national surveillance program for autism spectrum disorder;
- (d) the provision of additional federal funding for health research into autism spectrum disorder.

• (1110)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 93(3) no amendment may be proposed to a private member's motion or to the motion for second reading of a private member's bill unless the sponsor of the item indicates his or her consent. Therefore, I ask the hon. member for Fredericton if he consents to this amendment being moved.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: There is consent.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what just happened in the House is extremely significant. It extends to the

whole House an opportunity to embrace a subject matter that is substantively to adopt a national strategy to address autism.

The member for Fredericton has been a champion on this file for a long period of time. I have known him since 1993 and I and many of his peers and many Canadians have come to know that when he champions an issue we can be assured that he will give it due diligence and his full attention. I know he has worked very hard with Autism Canada as well as with other NGOs who have been working so hard to get recognition here.

I take what has happened as a sign that the House will strongly support this resolution in principle to adopt or develop a national strategy to address autism. The member should be very proud of having brought this to the attention of the House and to have earned the respect and the support of the House in terms of taking this one step further.

I was here to speak on behalf of the resolution but the resolution has changed somewhat. However, the spirit of the resolution is still there.

What I thought I might do in lieu of that is to remind all hon. members, and those who happen to be watching the proceedings or who may read them in *Hansard* later on, a little about autism. As public education is a very important part of resolving social problems, I will briefly outline the characteristics of autism spectrum disorder.

Autism spectrum disorder is a complex biomedical condition that can affect the normal function of the gastrointestinal, immune, hepatic, endocrine and nervous systems. It impacts normal brain development, leaving most individuals with communication problems, difficulty with typical social interactions, prone to repeat specific patterns of behaviour and a markedly restricted repertoire of activity and interests.

Individuals on the autism spectrum tend to have varying degrees or a combination of symptoms and therefore the treatments will be as varied as the individuals. It shows that there is a difference in terms of maybe some of the other challenges that we face in terms of childhood diseases and issues such as autism. In fact, the research is actually trying to deal with a multiplicity of targets and it is very difficult.

In the early signs of autism, which become prevalent between the ages of 12 months and 24 months, a child may demonstrate only a few of the following symptoms. The child starts to develop language and then loses it or does not acquire language at all. The child may appear to be deaf or may respond unevenly or not to all sounds. It is sometimes difficult consoling the child during transitions, resulting in tantrums, which are a big challenge for parents. The child has difficulty sleeping or frequently awakens at night. The child does not point or look. The child fails to bond, reacts to vaccines, is on a self-restricted or selected diet, has limited imaginative play, has no interest in playing with other children, has chronic gastrointestinal problems and has repeated infections.

When we look at the list of the possibilities that a child may experience, one or several at any one point in time, it shows the enormous challenge that this presents to parents who are trying to provide that loving care to a child in desperate need of some help.

Individuals with autism do exhibit some strengths. Although some areas of development in a child are delayed, children with ASD often exhibit skills beyond their years in other areas.

• (1115)

These intellectual strengths may overshadow the developmental problem experienced by the young child. These strengths may include one or more of the following. Their non-verbal reasoning skills may be better. Their reading skills may be very good. Their perceptual motor skills may also be positive, as may their drawing skills and computer interests and skills. They may have exceptional memory, visual and spatial abilities, and music skills. These are important. These children have various pockets of skill sets in areas in which they can perform, but like most children with childhood diseases, they have many challenges as well.

Although there are these exceptional skills, there also may be significant delays in other areas. I will give just a brief summary. There is going to be an impairment in social relationships. Children need to interact and they need to play. They need to learn from others' experience and to have interpersonal relationships, but these children often demonstrate a lack of awareness and a lack of normal seeking of comfort when they are stressed, as well as abnormal toy play and an inability to form friendships. These are some of the things that may be observed in terms of social relationships.

There are deficits in communication and language and a lack of perseverance on interests and activities. They are not able to keep up that interest. When I see some of these, I also see some of the evidence of the symptoms of other childhood diseases. For instance, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder also has some very similar symptoms. There also may be a dependence on routine as well as abnormal responses to sensory stimulation, behavioural problems, variability in intellectual functioning, uneven developmental profiles, difficulties with sleeping, toileting and eating, immune regularities, nutritional deficiencies, and, of course, gastrointestinal problems.

These are the kinds of things that people should keep in mind. Many of us have received many communications from constituents all across the country who have asked parliamentarians to take a special interest in this autism spectrum of disorder. It is one that tugs at the heartstrings, but we should do things not because they tug at our heartstrings, but because they are right to do.

I believe that the good faith shown by all hon. members in the House in terms of making a concerted effort to ask the government to pursue a national strategy to address autism is an enormous step that we are taking. I again want to thank the member for Fredericton for his initiative and the leadership role he took to make sure that this will become a reality in this Parliament.

• (1120)

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and support the motion put forward by the hon. member for Fredericton.

Private Members' Business

There are a few points that I would like to make. Sometimes people do not think of these points unless they know families involved in this issue.

One of the things that was just said concerned the failure to bond. Any parent knows the great joy of coming into a room, having their child smile at them and put up his or her arms, wanting to be picked up and hugged. Parents recognize the fact that the child has bonded with them. I am thrilled and pleased to say that my 11 year old grandson still does that. It is very difficult and hurtful for a family if a child is not able to do that easily. Sometimes these children can do so with their parents, but often not with other people in their lives.

We need a national autism strategy. We are in the process of getting a national strategy for cancer, although one could say it is a health issue so therefore it is a provincial issue. We now have leadership on a national cancer strategy and we could have a national autism strategy, and part of this debate has been about whose responsibility this really is.

We know about early intervention leading to success no matter what challenge a child may have. The earlier we can identify that a child needs support and the earlier that appropriate support can be provided, at the right time and in the right way for that particular child, it is a thousandfold more likely that the child will be far more successful than he or she otherwise would have been. Because they have had early intervention, we see children who are now in the regular school system and we see children graduating from high school.

As with any other challenge a child faces, autism has a variety of effects. Some children, with early intervention, will do very well. In particular, children with Asperger's will go to school and participate with their classmates. They may have a challenge when it is a bit unstructured, but they will do very well.

Some children will always need ongoing support in a significant way. If we do not do that, if we do not pay for the cost of a national strategy, the costs that we will pay down the road in health care, in the education system, in foster care and in group home support are going to grow at a rate that I cannot even imagine. This is why I am a bit worried about the amendment. It does not talk about those nice parts, about what the strategy should do.

We do pay for treatment for people in Canada, and while I will admit that the numbers are not large, these people are on drugs that cost the taxpayer \$90,000 to \$100,000 a year. Without those drugs, those people would not be able to function. We spend that much money on these other people to enable them to be the best they can be during their growth. Therefore, I think the economic argument fails. If people have no moral support for this, then the economic argument should move them. I hope both would.

Private Members' Business

We are seeing increased numbers in regard to autism now. I am not sure that we know all the reasons for the increase. They are increasing dramatically, more in some places than in others. Sometimes we see more than one child in a family being affected. We have not figured out all of the pieces, which is certainly why research is so important, but the research may not be available to us for five or ten years. I do not know. I have no idea how long it will take.

● (1125)

However, I do know that today there are parents at home who cannot leave their home because they cannot find someone to care for their child. If someone says to them that there is a great movie on and they should go to see it, they cannot, because they cannot get a babysitter who is able to meet the needs of their child. Their world becomes quite insular, although they do amazing things. They were on the steps of the legislature and they were out advocating to every MP, MLA and municipal councillor, every place they could, and they have been doing so for some time.

They manage to do that, but they do it against such odds that I do not know if all of us would be able to do it. If we can support the needs of children with autism, not just with our good feelings or a strategy, but also with financial resources, then we help not only the child with autism, although that is the first and most important thing, we also help their brothers and sisters, because their brothers and sisters may then have a little more time with mom and dad.

Moms and dads have to spend a lot of time with their children who have autism, particularly if they are children who may not yet be able to go to the bathroom independently or feed themselves independently or even tolerate the feeling of most foods in their mouth because of their tactile defensiveness. So this support is not just for the child; it is for their moms, their dads, their grandparents and their siblings. They will all benefit from our ability to support families not just with a national strategy, which I do support, but also with financing.

There is another thing I would say about a national strategy. When we talk about children with autism, because we have been talking about it for 10 years, 12 years or 15 years at the most, we talk about children, and that is where we focus, but we need a national strategy that looks beyond when they are 12 months old, 2 years or 5 years of age, or in elementary school or high school. How do we get past that early age and successfully into the teenage years, which are even more difficult for any child with a challenge, and then into adulthood? These are children who will be adults in our communities and they need support. We need to look at that strategy about the kind of support or kinds of resources that will be needed, not just for them as children but lifelong.

As somebody who has worked with people with disabilities for 40 years now, I can say that if we do not do this for children with autism, if we do not do something now and those children and adults are not in our community, we lose too, because they bring something to us. It is not just about us giving. They bring their special gifts and talents into our community, so we lose if we do not provide support.

There are many families looking at us to see what will happen with this motion. I hope that every member of the House will be able to support this strategy but I hope too that members understand when

they support it that it is not only a strategy; it is a strategy with the pieces that were in the original motion, which I have to say I liked better.

If the member who proposed it agrees, then so be it, but the fact is that it will take funding for related services. It will be in cooperation with provincial governments that will have a surveillance program and that right now are probably desperate because we are seeing such increasing numbers of children with autism. The numbers are increasing in ways that I cannot imagine with any other kind of health or disability issue. Without proper surveillance and research, we will have no idea of how to stop this increase in numbers or about what it is in our environment that is causing this and then causing us to see it in a second child in the family.

I would hope that supporting the national autism strategy will also mean that people understand that what goes with that support is the costing for treatment, education, professional training and support for the parents.

● (1130)

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, I dedicate this speech to someone who has more impact on people than most of us could ever dream. As amazing as it may sound, he is an individual who does not have a mean bone in his body. He is incapable of hate. He is incredibly intelligent and never says anything he later regrets. He has taught me more about myself than I ever imagined there was to know, and he is only 11 years old. He is my son, Jaden, and he has autism.

Today I am not going to give the definition of autism. Members can look that up along with enough stats to make their heads spin. Instead, I want to share the story of our family's initial experiences and in my last few minutes relate them to the motion before us.

Before I do that, however, I want to commend the member for Fredericton for introducing a motion that goes beyond the political games we often see when we talk about autism in the House. His motion is actually designed to accomplish something for families and individuals affected by autism. I am thankful that we have been able to work together to come up with amended wording that we can all support.

To that end, I also want to thank the health minister and the parliamentary secretary for health for putting aside partisanship and finding common ground on which we can agree. I was particularly pleased to see the health minister begin to take action in the spirit behind this motion with his announcements last week.

Eleven years ago today I was 26 years old. I had been married for two and a half years and had a three week old baby boy. We named him Jaden, which means God has heard, something we did not know at the time, but which has tremendous meaning to us now. Jaden is almost completely non-verbal. He uses a special computer and sometimes a pen and paper to communicate.

Private Members' Business

However, going back to my three and a half week old son, like many new Canadian dads I had a clear vision for his future. It was certain that Jaden was destined for the NHL. I had it all planned out. I would not be a pushy father like Walter Gretzky. I would build a rink in my backyard upon which I would invent the most ingenious and fun drills that Jaden would enjoy for hours upon hours every day. When Jaden was not playing hockey, he would be studying hard to maintain his A-plus average.

As time went on during Jaden's first year or so, my wife Debi and I saw nothing to indicate that my carefully crafted plans were anything but on track. He was a very good baby and around the time he was one he seemed to be developing some typical first words, "dada, momma, bye-bye".

Between 18 months and 2 years old Jaden started doing some pretty amazing things. Like just about every kid his age, he had one of those foam alphabets that fit inside a foam frame. One day on a whim Debi took the frame away and left him with just a jumbled pile of letters. Jaden proceeded to put the letters in order just as fast as we would do it the very first time.

Then to our amazement, a friend of ours mixed up the letters in a pile and put out the letter Z. Jaden, without missing a beat, put the letters in reverse order Z, Y, X, W, V and so on just as fast as he had done forward.

As amazing as things like this were, during his second year we started to notice some other things that caused us some concern regarding Jaden's development. He was extremely content playing on his own with little or no interest in playing with other kids or interacting with adults. His speech was not really developing beyond the first initial few sounds and he was very focused on patterns, often spending an inordinate amount of time lining up his videos or stacking cups in perfect order. He paid little attention when we tried to talk to him or play with him. We would have thought he had a hearing impairment except for the fact that if he heard a video he liked start up in another room at very low volume, he would instantly stop what he was doing and go to watch it.

Debi brought up our concerns to Jaden's pediatrician at his 18 month check-up, a very well regarded pediatrician. She did not see overly concerned and suggested that some children, especially boys, simply developed their speech later than others. Debi filled out speech assessment forms with public health and she and I started attending classes to learn how to help him work on his speech.

During the summer of 1997, when Jaden was about 21 months old, we were at a family wedding when one of my cousins mentioned autism as a possibility. Debi and I had both heard the term autism, but we knew very little as to what it meant. We assumed that if this was what he had, surely his doctor would have recognized it.

Three months later at Jaden's two year old check-up, his pediatrician finally brought up autism as a possibility and put us on a six month waiting list to see a specialist in Edmonton. Shortly afterwards, we came across a book that changed our lives forever. *Let Me Hear Your Voice* by Catherine Maurice. My mom received it from a friend. After reading just a few chapters, she called us to tell us we had to read it.

It is the story of a mother whose two children have autism and undergo a form of therapy that helped them to overcome it. We now know the therapy as applied behavioural analysis or ABA. Sometimes it is referred to as intense behavioural intervention, IBI, but they are the same thing. As we read her description of her own son as a toddler she could have been describing Jaden word for word.

By the end of one evening with that book, we knew, with absolute certainty, that our son had autism. We had a pretty good idea what we needed to do to get started. We learned that the therapy was going to be expensive. Even then, we were looking at between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year. At that time, I was making probably between \$35,000 and \$40,000, so the numbers did not add up.

• (1135)

Beginning the next day, Debi started making phone calls throughout North America to find out more about ABA and what we needed to do to get started. We learned that the therapy was going to be expensive. Even then, we were looking at between \$50,000 and \$60,000 a year. At that time, I was making probably between \$35,000 and \$40,000, so the numbers did not add up.

We learned we needed to start as soon as possible, as the research showed the treatment had more effect the earlier it was started. We also learned there was a significant battle going on between parents of children with autism and provincial governments across the country over the funding of ABA therapy.

In 1997-98, in Alberta, the financial picture was not as rosy as it is today. As in other provinces, a dedicated group of parents had recently taken the Government of Alberta to court and won the right to have ABA funded. However, unlike other provinces, the Alberta government made a choice not to appeal the court decision, I believe, due to the conviction and leadership of a few key ministers. This must have been a difficult decision, given the dollars involved at the time, the questions surrounding ABA and the mystery of autism in general.

Despite these considerations, the province decided that autism and the families affected by it were a priority, and it has shown leadership in this area ever since.

Returning to Jaden, from November to April 1998 was a very frustrating time for us. We knew Jaden had autism, but we had to wait six months for an appointment to get the diagnosis, which we needed to access funding.

As for the funding, the practice of the government in those early months was to automatically reject everyone and then make them go through a rather stressful appeal process. Since we were not certain we would receive funding, we did what many parents across the country still do in the same situation today. We had no choice. We started making arrangements for the program and then lined up a loan to cover the costs.

Private Members' Business

Fortunately, at the same time that we were getting organized, the group of parents that had taken the government to court in the first place kept the pressure on. Shortly before our ABA program was set to start, we got word from Handicapped Children's Services, in Alberta, that we would not have to go through our appeal and that we would be funded 95% of the cost of our approximately \$60,000 program for the first year.

Time does not allow me to go into all the intricacies of Jaden's program. It has evolved over the years as the government in Alberta has fine-tuned the process. Parents no longer have to pay for a percentage of the program. Jaden's situation is now monitored by a multidisciplinary team on an annual basis to determine what his needs are and this helps to determine what the budget for his specific program will be. Since he is in school full time, his ABA time has been cut down significantly, to 10 hours to week from the 40 in the beginning. However, he receives some additional funding for things like occupational therapy and speech because of the multidisciplinary team approach.

Most important, there is no question in our minds that Jaden's life is better now because the province of Alberta made some courageous decisions almost a decade ago. The fact remains that where Alberta showed leadership and made autism treatment a priority, other provinces have not. That is why this motion is so important.

In my view, the preamble to the amended motion, which talks about a national strategy for ASD, is the most important part. It is obvious, for whatever reason, that the provinces are not taking appropriate action on this issue. To understand this, in part, one only needs to look at what has happened in Alberta over recent years. Because we have the programs in place, families have been moving there in droves to avoid taking out massive lines of credit or remortgaging their homes.

If, for example, P.E.I. were to decide to properly fund ABA without other maritime provinces doing the same, it would probably be overwhelmed by the influx of families moving there from surrounding provinces to get the treatment. The same rationale could be applied across the country.

For this, and many other reasons, we need to approach the issue at the national level, with the federal government playing a key role in coordination and facilitation. Everything else that follows in the amended motion is placed in the context of that national strategy. The wording throughout the motion rightly refers to cooperation and consultation with the provincial and territorial governments, which is where the responsibility for the delivery of treatment, the main area of contention in recent years, lies.

The first clause refers to the development of evidence based standards for diagnosis and treatment. The diagnosis part of this hits home with me. In retrospect, I think Jaden could have been diagnosed as early as 18 months of age, almost 14 months before his program started.

As for evidence based treatment standards, I believe we are beyond the point where there is any debate that ABA works for most kids with ASD. However, we need to learn more about the long term effectiveness of the treatment, how and when to withdraw it when a child has reached the stage where he is "indistinguishable from his

peers", and whether there are better alternatives for some individuals, for example, adults with ASD.

In regard to the development of innovative funding methods for care, we have talked a lot about children and ABA. I want to point out that thousands of adults in Canada require some form of treatment as well. Any discussion of care and treatment must not forget them.

• (1140)

In terms of surveillance, there is some question as to whether autism is becoming more prevalent. We need to find out if this is the case or if we have become better at recognizing it. We also need to look at the question of whether autism is more prevalent in certain areas of the country and if so, why.

Finally, on the research end, Canada is doing some amazing things with genetic research in connection with autism. While parents rightfully demand more than just research, this area is crucial to a national strategy as we try to ensure that both levels of government get maximum value for money on an ongoing basis.

I wish to reiterate my obvious support for this motion, as amended, and to give my thanks to all members who will be supporting it. What happened here today and what will happen when we vote on this is extremely important for my family and for all Canadian families who deal with autism every day of their lives.

I look forward to working with our health minister and members from all parties in the House to make Canada's national autism strategy a reality.

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I speak today in support of Motion No. 172 as the House has accepted the amendments just moved by the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale.

I would like to say how moving the words were from my colleague who just spoke. Talking about his son, and the joy and happiness his son has given him, his family and the people who know Jaden speaks to why we have all worked together in the House to bring forward this amended motion.

Motion No. 172 will pave a path to a better understanding of autism spectrum disorder or ASD. I want to begin by saying to all Canadians with ASD, their families and so many tireless activists, that this motion is far from marking an end point. I say this because initiatives in this motion call for a will to bolster Canadian research capabilities and, therefore, our overall knowledge of ASD.

For far too long Canadians with ASD and their families have been trapped in the dark. Today there is still so much we do not know. With knowledge, however, comes light. With greater knowledge, the more informed and effective future actions will be from the government, provinces, territories and stakeholders. In turn, more help will be provided to Canadians with ASD and their families.

Private Members' Business

I have worked in cooperation with the members for Fredericton and Sackville—Eastern Shore. We have taken action that crosses party lines for the good of thousands of Canadians and I am asking my fellow members to support this motion for the same reason.

Above all, this amended motion, if accepted, calls on the federal government to do what it can within its jurisdiction to lay the foundation of hope for all Canadians affected by ASD. It commits the federal government to launch a consultation on implementing a national surveillance program and calls on the government to provide additional support for research and to develop evidence based standards for diagnosing ASD. Finally, it recommends that the government work with the provinces to develop innovative funding methods to help Canadians care for their loved ones who have ASD.

This motion is consistent with the action and leadership that the health minister announced just last week. It includes a research chair that will focus on effective treatment and intervention for autism, a national symposium on autism that will be held in the spring of 2007, and a program on ASD that will be conducted by the appropriate branch of government.

A web page on autism has now been added to the Health Canada website. This web page will facilitate access to public information related to ASD. Finally, the minister also indicated that the health policy branch of Health Canada will be responsible in the future for the coordination of policy and program activities at the health portfolio level.

It is safe to say that I am not alone in hearing about the challenges posed by ASD from individuals and their families in my riding. The challenges range all the way from financial to emotional and the collective toll is enormous.

Canadians with ASD and their families deserve action. The motion before the House gives members the chance to take action. In supporting this motion, members can raise their voices in favour of laying the foundation we need for informed, effective future action. By supporting this motion members can further fuel our research down a path which may lead to finding the causes of ASD.

● (1145)

In conclusion, I want to add that this motion derives directly from parliamentarians successfully setting aside partisanship to help those in greatest need.

It is issues like this which attracted me to politics in the first place. I never planned to be a politician. I wanted to be an engineer like my father, grandfather and great-grandfather, and I actually became one. I worked in gold mines, but after my accident, a collision with a moose, I realized that my career as an engineer would be impossible. I had to make different choices.

It was after my accident that I realized that in our society we have a contradiction. We can and do invest enormously in treating illnesses, injuries and conditions like ASD, but then we do not invest enough in pursuing the actual causes or trying to ensure that these same individuals can live meaningful and dignified lives.

Canadians expect that everyone should have the opportunity to live the Canadian dream. This is a point related to public health and

public policy that I have raised whenever I can, and in fact, it is this contradiction that has brought me to public life in the first place.

On a day like today, when this House has an opportunity to increase support for research to learn more about the causes of ASD, where we can all put up our hands to lay the foundation for helping individuals and families in need, and when partisan politics are bowed to spur public policy with principle and purpose, it makes me proud to be a parliamentarian, and I think we are all proud today to be here.

This is the right decision. I would like to urge my fellow colleagues to support this motion before the House.

I understand there is an objection from one party because of the word “national” in the motion. This House should always put Canadians first, regardless of the province they may come from because we are here together. As Canadians, it is our role to work together for the common good. This motion is an example of how Canada works well, and I am proud to be a Canadian.

Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to join colleagues on all sides of the House and speak in support of Motion No. 172.

The issue of autism spectrum disorder is indeed an urgent problem that we all have to face. In the past six years the number of children with ASD has grown by more than 150%. While I stand here today in Ottawa in the House of Commons my mind goes back to my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador and indeed my own riding, where a few years ago I had the opportunity to meet a young boy by the name of Craig Walsh in a community called North Harbour in St. Mary's Bay in my riding.

Craig suffers from autism and he certainly opened my eyes to the challenges that he faces as a young person in society. He also opened my eyes to the challenges that his parents face and the community as a whole.

The reason we are here today and have the motion before us encompasses all those aspects of autism. Motion No. 172 addresses the concerns of the children themselves and hopefully the health care that is needed will be provided. It raises the concerns of the parents. As speakers before me have touched on here this morning, it raises how important it is that we as parliamentarians support the efforts of the parents of autistic children.

We stand here shoulder to shoulder giving the parents the tools and the research that they will need and indeed anything that we can do to make their life somewhat easier. We must also realize that their children too are an important part of our society. Their children need whatever we as parliamentarians can put forward. That is what we look forward to doing here today.

The fact that we are discussing this important topic in the House also gives us an opportunity to put autism on the front burner in the minds of Canadians from coast to coast. We have to address the concerns that Canadians have and also let the communities understand the importance of providing the proper assistance, funding and mechanisms that these children need and that these families need to address this very important concern.

Private Members' Business

It is estimated that anywhere from one out of 165 to one out of 200 children are now affected by autism and the numbers are growing. Autism spectrum disorders affect people in different ways and cause serious developmental disabilities in affected individuals and can affect all aspects of development. Each person with ASD will have different abilities, with symptoms ranging from mild to severe. Severe symptoms, such as compulsive behaviour and speech disorders can lead to isolation from friends, family and the community.

I congratulate the member for Fredericton for putting this motion forward. I have followed his work over the past couple of years. As previous members have said, this is not about politics. This is about children and their families. I congratulate the member for putting forward this motion and for giving us an opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder in support of this very important aspect of life in Canada today.

I mentioned the isolation from friends, family and community. As we go through our daily lives, healthy and secure, we are always concerned about isolation ourselves from time to time. When I arrived in Ottawa less than a year ago to a much larger political atmosphere than I was used to in Newfoundland and Labrador, I was concerned about isolation. We have all the ingredients here to learn from each other and become educated.

• (1150)

Then we look at the children who are afflicted with autism and we wonder about the isolation they suffer. We wonder about the isolation that their parents experience. We can assist today and begin down the road to making sure that these children and their families become inclusive in our communities, our schools and indeed, society as a whole.

Canadian families with children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders face serious challenges. They face the challenges of their child's development, behavioural issues and getting a clear diagnosis. I mentioned the young boy from Newfoundland, Craig Walsh. I have talked to his mom, Sherry, on several occasions about the diagnosis of children and the access to professional assistance. I certainly heard from that mother about her concern not only for her own child, but indeed, all children with autism. Professional assistance is what they ask for. I hope through Motion No. 172 that professional assistance will be on the way.

The cost of therapy and other services is an important issue, especially to parents of children with autism. I have heard the concern raised by parents back home about the fairness of making sure that these professional services, therapy and any other services are available to each and every child and that each and every child has the opportunity to avail himself or herself of those services.

The amended motion recognizes the challenges that many families face and suggests a comprehensive approach to addressing their needs. Once again, I am delighted that the member for Fredericton has accepted the amendments to the motion.

On November 21 the hon. Minister of Health announced a package of initiatives to improve knowledge and research on ASDs and to help children and families. In addition to the measures already undertaken, the federal government intends to sponsor an ASD

stakeholders' symposium in 2007 to further the development of ASD knowledge and dissemination of information among health care professionals, researchers, community groups, teachers, individuals and family members.

The federal government intends to begin exploring the establishment of a research chair focusing on effective treatment and intervention for ASD. The federal government intends to launch a consultation process on the feasibility of studying and developing an ASD surveillance program through the Public Health Agency of Canada to help shape appropriate ASD programming and research.

We also intend to create a dedicated page on the Health Canada website to guide the public to ASD information. We also plan, with the help of the policy branch of Health Canada, to coordinate all actions related to ASD taken by the health portfolio in the future.

It is important that Canadians be educated about autism. It is important that we understand the concerns of parents, caregivers and health care professionals themselves. Just a few moments ago teachers were mentioned. I realize the challenges in the schools system. Hopefully, by our actions here today through Motion No. 172 we can begin to address some of these concerns.

There is no doubt that we all feel concerns for—

• (1155)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time has come for the hon. member for Fredericton to provide his five minute summation of the debate.

Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me first thank the government for moving the amendment which allows the government to support the motion. I would like to thank the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale for moving the amendment. I would like to thank the Minister of Health, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, and the House leader as well.

I want to particularly mention the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont and say hi to Jaden who I am sure is watching. The intervention by the member as a parent was a very appropriate way to focus on this issue and it is much appreciated.

I want to reassure the member for Surrey North that the amendment in fact captures the spirit of the original motion, specifically that there be a national strategy and that the strategy involve evidence based standards, funding, surveillance and research. All of those elements are there. They are not nearly as prescriptive as they were in the original motion and that was what was necessary to give the government the latitude to do it in a way that it sees fit. All of the elements of the original motion are there. We will hold the government's feet to the fire to make sure it is done in the spirit in which it was intended.

The ultimate objective is that Canadian families with autism have access to the appropriate intervention regardless of their means and it means something covered under a public health insurance program and is usually referred to as covered under medicare. We understand that the jurisdictional issue is difficult, but we cannot allow the difficulty of that jurisdictional issue to stop us from doing what we know is right. It is appropriate for the federal government to show leadership, but it cannot be for the federal government to do alone.

I want to thank the families, parents, kids and adults who have written, called and emailed their support and the organizations across the country which have done the same. I want to thank a teacher at Leo Hayes High School in Fredericton, Greg Peters. He suggested to me last spring when I advised them that we were doing this that he wanted his class to participate in this exercise. It was remarkable to see students in a grade 12 class in a Fredericton high school give their spring to this issue. They were involved in workshoping it, bringing in people who work for the province of New Brunswick as drafters, parents, scientists and so on.

At Leo Hayes High School, Greg Peters and his two classes worked all last spring on this motion. After they graduated, in September when the kids returned to school the previous class instructed the new class on how to carry the ball. I am sure all members of Parliament have heard from Leo Hayes. As a Frederictonian I am very proud of them.

I also want to make another point. Some of the interventions we have all received speak to the challenge of finding a balance between identifying the value in the family members so that when we talk about intervention it takes nothing away from the human beings that we love just as they are, special, remarkable people. It has nothing to do with that. It has everything to do with people having the most options possible in their lives. It is a collective responsibility to provide that.

I would like to thank all colleagues who have worked diligently on this issue. The member of Parliament for Sackville—Eastern Shore participated in the negotiations with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, with the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, with the member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country and the member for South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale in this exercise. This has been a non-partisan, parliamentary initiative to do the right thing by a large number of Canadians.

• (1200)

It is a challenging file. There are jurisdictional issues which perhaps would get in the way of anybody taking responsibility to do the right thing. I do not think it would become us as parliamentarians to let those jurisdictional challenges stop us from doing what we know is right. We cannot let those difficulties get in our way. By doing what is right, Canada will be better for it, our consciences will be better for it, and a lot of Canadians will be better for it.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It being 12:03 p.m., the time provided for this debate has now expired.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Friday, November 24 the vote stands deferred until Tuesday, December 5 at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1205)

[*English*]

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

MOTION THAT DEBATE BE NOT FURTHER ADJOURNED

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the consideration of the motion under government orders, government business No. 11, I move:

That the debate be not further adjourned.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 67.1, there will now be a 30-minute question period.

[*Translation*]

I invite the hon. members who wish to ask questions to rise, thereby giving the Speaker an idea of how many members wish to participate in this question period.

The first question will be asked by the hon. member for Davenport.

[*English*]

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the government would like to move on this motion. All of us would like to have a debate and be able to speak to the motion. Given that this issue is very important for all members and given that many members wish to express their views in support or against it, I think it would be wise if the government did not bring closure so that we could have a full debate.

That is all I am going to say at this time. I would certainly like to hear what other members in the House have to say.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, there certainly will be a full debate on this particular topic and it is an important one, and that debate will take place at the end of this question and answer session.

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With respect to the comments made by the hon. member, it seems to me that the Bloc motion, which will also be voted on tonight, in effect does get closure. On the opposition day the Bloc had about the same amount of debate as the government is proposing today and at the end of that period of time there is a vote. In a sense the Bloc has had closure on its motion in the sense that it is guaranteed a vote after a certain period of time and the Bloc has had that period of time. It is appropriate for the government and all those who believe in the federalist cause, who believe in this country, to be able to participate in the debate. That is certainly what we will have at the conclusion of the question and answer session.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this motion would limit the rights of Parliament and parliamentarians. Typically, such motions are used only when absolutely necessary.

I would like to ask the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons if, before tabling this motion, he conducted the usual consultations to find out how many members wished to speak and whether it was necessary to limit their time, to limit the members' right to speak, as well as whether there was good reason to believe that the debate would not be concluded within the usual time.

I would really like to know because the government did not consult me, and no member of the Bloc will be speaking to this motion, although I have not had the opportunity to say this to the leader.

Did one party decide to filibuster on this motion? If so, which one? If not, we are voting on this motion for no reason.

•(1210)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, we take a very different view from the House leader of the Bloc Québécois with respect to this debate. We think it is very important that members of Parliament be given the opportunity to speak to this motion. At the same time, we are not trying to prolong the debate and, quite frankly, there has been no suggestion that we might be.

In as much as the Bloc had its motion, which I believe had about six and a half hours of debate, it seems reasonable to me that the government motion should have approximately the same amount of time.

All we are suggesting is that we give members of Parliament an opportunity to pronounce themselves on this important issue and hence the reason for getting this before Parliament. The hon. member will know that we do not have much time in this session before we break for Christmas. Although we have a heavy agenda and important issues to discuss, this issue is certainly one of them and I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing. We cannot even get the Conservatives to say that they are sorry or that maybe things they said in the past should not have been said. They could at least blush or show some sense of humility.

In the early 1980s and late 1990s under Mulroney, the Tories invoked closure many times and the Liberals went absolutely

ballistic asking how the Conservatives dared to shut down democracy. When the Liberals formed power, they did the same thing 50 or 60 times and every time they invoked closure the Conservatives went absolutely ballistic. In fact, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister said that it was an outrage. He had utter disdain for the way the government treated Canadians.

Now we have the same Conservatives invoking closure. If they can reverse themselves on floor crossing, on appointed Senates and on income trusts, they should at least have the courage to say that they are sorry.

Since the Conservatives are completely reversing themselves on the closure aspect, I want to give the government House leader the opportunity to tell Canadians that he is sorry. That would be suffice for us.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I am almost tempted to ask a question of the hon. member. If I did do as he suggests, does that mean they would support this motion? I am not so sure about that.

The hon. member described how the Conservatives acted when they were in power and the reaction of the Liberals. He went on to say what the Liberals did when they were in power and the reaction of the Conservatives.

I think there is one thing we can all agree upon and that is that we will never find out what the NDP will do in power because that will not happen. We will always be left with the mystery of how the NDP would manage the House business.

However, just as a point of interest, do members remember what the NDP members did back in May 2005 when the same sex marriage bill came forward? They were jumping up and down to shut down the debate on that one. They were just delighted. They wanted to get that one over. It was a national crisis. They did not want to have a lot of debate going on that one. There was certainly unanimity among the other three political parties in the House of Commons to get that one clamped down.

I guess it depends on the issue as to what people view as important. We believe this is very important and I think most Canadians would agree that this debate should take place this afternoon.

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 would like to hear the minister's comments on a situation that has developed over the past number of days with respect to this motion.

It seems that we have unanimity within this House and that all parties will be voting in favour of this motion put forward by the government. I find that to be somewhat of a juxtaposition in respect to the Bloc's position because it seems to me that the Bloc has had three distinct and entirely different positions on the whole question about the Québécois forming a nation within a united Canada.

Since we seem to have unanimity and members of all parties will be voting in favour of an excellent motion presented by the government, is it not reasonable to expect that we should get to this question as quickly as possible, and hence the reason for this closure motion?

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●(1215)

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for all the work he does to facilitate the agenda in the House of Commons on behalf of the government. He has my thanks and I think the thanks of all Canadians.

The hon. member pointed out that there is now consensus. This is what we strive for. It is a great thing when consensus is arrived at in the House of Commons. Regardless of how many positions some parties had prior to arriving at that consensus, it is wonderful that we have all come together. Quite frankly, that is what this country is all about. When people from different backgrounds and from different parts of the country come together and work together, the House of Commons works well and Canada works well.

From my point of view and on behalf of this government, we could not be happier that this consensus has developed. I appreciate that.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I will just respond to the House leader's question about what the NDP would do. We already know what the NDP would do because the Department of Finance has actually done a study on the NDP in power compared to the Conservatives and the Liberals. We know that in terms of financial management, the NDP comes out on top. The Conservatives and the Liberals have to admit that.

We are not perfect by any means but we do a far better job of managing the fiscal and financial house for Canadians than the Conservatives and the Liberals do. Most of the time we are in surplus when we run government. Most of the time, with Conservatives and Liberals, we see deficits. We already know that the NDP does a better job. Certainly in terms of parliamentary procedure and parliamentary respect, we know that right here in this corner of the House we have the most experience in the House of Commons. We would be respecting Parliament.

Given that track record, given the fact that we have a greater foundation of knowledge here in terms of parliamentary procedure, we know that closure is not something that can be just thrown out arbitrarily. We certainly saw that with the softwood sellout. At the committee stage, the Conservatives and Liberals worked together to impose closure. We now have a badly flawed bill coming before this House that will cause and wreak more havoc in the softwood lumber industry which saw 4,000 jobs lost in the last few weeks and yet the Conservatives and Liberals are not responding to it.

Here we have a question of responsibility. Closure is not something that we take lightly. Closure is a huge sledgehammer used to avoid any type of profound debate. Why do the Conservatives take closure so lightly? Why are they betraying all the commitments they made in January of this year when they went to the Canadian people and said that they would have a more transparent and responsible government? Why are they throwing all that out and betraying yet another election promise?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member made a very interesting comment about what it would be like to live under an NDP government.

I have only lived in the province of Ontario and we did have one NDP government. The five years of the Rae administration are actually still very vivid in my memory. While the memories of some administrations have faded, we remember very clearly what it was like under an NDP government. It seems to me that the first thing I always remember was despite good advice that it received from the then federal Conservative government, it immediately went into debt by \$10 billion in its very first budget. Unfortunately, it dug a hole that it was never able to get out of.

As the hon. Bob Rae has said on occasion, at one point one of his advisers was telling him that he should declare the province of Ontario bankrupt. This great province of Ontario, which has huge natural resources and had a record, spanning most of the 20th century, of good government by the Conservative Party, and we had those five years of socialist rule.

In any event, I am sure we will have the opportunity in the coming months to discuss that administration in more detail. I certainly do not have to do it today.

With respect to the NDP members' support for shutting off debate back in May 2005, that is a question only they can answer. I guess, from their point of view, they pick and choose when they want to shut down debate.

This afternoon there will be a healthy debate and I think there will be an opportunity for all members of the House to express themselves, which is as it should be.

●(1220)

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the things that must be coming to the attention of every member of the House as we approach the Christmas break is the large number of important items on the government's agenda and, indeed, on the agenda of all Canadians that need to get through the House of Commons in order that the nation's business can be carried on.

The primary reason that I am supportive of this motion is that it allows us to move on to these important items and not see the nation's business held up. I am hoping the House leader can explain to us some of the items that need to be dealt with prior to the time that the House rises for Christmas.

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I want to say how pleased and proud I am to serve in the House with a dedicated public servant like the deputy House leader. When we talk about a consensus, I am sure there is a consensus on how valuable he has been to this Chamber and what an outstanding job he has done on behalf of the people of this country and his constituency. Again, a consensus develops on these things and that is what is very important.

The hon. member makes a very good point. We are adjourning a couple of days early. Wednesday will be our last day of business. Tomorrow is an opposition day so we really do not have much time to discuss other aspects of the nation's business. There are a number of bills that we would like to see passed, one of them being Bill S-5 on tax conventions with Mexico, South Korea and Finland. I think there is a certain urgency in that particular piece of legislation that I think all hon. members would want to see passed by the end of the year.

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I would like to see the clean air act get sent to a legislative committee. This is important. This is part of the government's agenda. The softwood lumber agreement is another one that we would like to see concluded.

The government, in maintaining its campaign commitments and acting on the promises that we talked to Canadians about in the last election, provides a full agenda and to the extent that we can build consensus and get the cooperation from hon. members in the House, it is most appreciated.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, naturally, I am a little surprised by the type of answer given by the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and here is why. First of all, it is the first time in living memory that a closure motion has been moved regarding a motion that is supposed to have the unanimous support of the House. Also, it is the first time that a closure motion has been moved regarding a motion without the government House leader having consulted the House leaders of the other parties to verify whether they were hoping to extend the debate or to find out how many members still wanted to address the House. This is rather surprising.

Furthermore, it is the first time that a closure motion has been moved under the pretext that the recess for the holiday season is approaching, even though it is not even December and we have not yet used the days for extended sitting. Moreover, there is no indication that there will be a problem in the legislation, except that this Leader of the Government cannot seem to plan his work properly.

I hope this will be entered into the record and that, in the future, people who study parliamentary conduct will talk about the surprising case of November 2006, when the government moved a closure motion regarding a motion that had the unanimous support of the House, without consulting anyone, under the pretext that the holiday season was approaching, although it was not even December. I hope this will be carefully recorded.

• (1225)

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, to be fair with respect to the various positions, it is difficult to guess sometimes where these things are going to land. In the case of the hon. member's party, the motion that was tabled for an opposition day was perhaps a surprise to some and that party was certainly entitled to do that.

In terms of the various positions, the hon. member will agree with me that there have been a number of positions by the Bloc Québécois. It supported the original motion that it tabled and was against the motion that the government tabled the next day. The Bloc amended its own motion, supporting that one but disagreeing with the government, and then toward the end of last week it switched and now supports the government motion. It seems to me that there are a number of different positions.

I understand that Bloc members are entitled to do that and they are not consulting with me or any other member of the government. They have to make up their minds on their own. There is no attempt to surprise anyone. We want to have a full debate on this. In the case

of his own political party, how many changes have we seen over the last three days?

It seems to us reasonable that we would want to have some parameters on the debate and that is all we are trying to do. Let us have the debate today. It is an important debate. We want members of Parliament who represent Canadians across this country to have that opportunity. That is all we are trying to do. Certainly, I am looking forward to it and welcome the debate this afternoon.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, far be it for a member from this side to throw some support behind the comments of a member on the other side, but I am drawn to the member's Cape Breton roots as a matter of fact.

I find it far too cute. I am sort of blown away with the sanctimony coming from the NDP corner today. My experience in the House is not as vast as some of the members in that corner, but I recall going through the Kyoto ratification and each day in the House the then leader of the NDP, the member for Halifax, stood and pounded the table asking when the Liberals were going to get on with ratifying Kyoto, when were they going to do something about Kyoto. Everyday NDP members pounded the table.

The opposition at the time filibustered and the debate went on. Everyday the NDP pounded the table and so the government called for closure. What did NDP members do? Half of them did not show up for the vote and the other half voted against closure. They love to talk and they love to rail, but do they want to do anything? I do not think so.

Does the leader of the government agree that this is just another opportunity for the NDP to stall and do nothing?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, it seems to me there were two parts to that question. The hon. member asked me about the sanctimony of the NDP and whether the NDP is going to stall this, or any other issue.

I am sure there are better experts on the sanctimony of the NDP than myself, though I have been a witness to it in my public life. However, I want to thank the hon. member for his comments and his offer of support.

He alluded to my Cape Breton roots. I can tell him that I think perhaps most of the people in his constituency are probably related to me in one way or the other. So, when he returns there, I would ask that he please say hello to them on my behalf if he gets to them before I do.

In any case, I think this is an important debate for Canadians. Any time we talk about this country, it is worth taking time. I think that is a healthy exercise.

Most of us would agree that this is the greatest country in the world. I tell people again and again that we created it ourselves. We took the British system of government in the 19th century and we adapted it with federalism. We adapted it to our unique circumstances. What we have today is, in my opinion, the finest form of government and the best country in the world.

In my other capacity, I am the Minister for Democratic Reform. I make the point whenever we introduce legislation in this area that we are not condemning the system that we have. We are saying that we can continue to make improvements, however, keeping in mind that we have created a wonderful country.

I am very honoured and very pleased, and privileged to be in the House of Commons, as are other members of Parliament. I welcome the support and the comments of the hon. member.

• (1230)

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sanctimony is one thing, but as a member of the New Democratic Party on this particular issue, I have a resolution from our last convention that drives our support for it. We have taken that debate back to our constituents and they have heard it, at a convention, in a public place.

Judging by the emails that I have received and the correspondence that has come on this issue, Canadians want to know what we are talking about here. They want to know what the parties in this Parliament are talking about when they speak about nationhood, when they speak about Québécois as a nation. They want to know that. So, what better way than through active debate in this House?

The Prime Minister has brought forward this motion in a rather quick and, some people feel, unseemly fashion. But, really, we all want to speak to it because we all agree it is important.

So, let us have the debate, let us discuss it, and let us get everyone's position out on the floor in a good fashion where we can work with that discussion to assure Canadians that we are all thinking of the better interests of this country in the long term and not just simply short term political gain.

Does the hon. member not agree that debate will bring Canadians onside on this motion and will help this motion become part of the beautiful lexicon of Canadian politics as it develops?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, I would certainly agree with the hon. member in part that he wants to have a healthy and extended debate on this. Certainly, we have had that. This whole question was debated on Thursday during an opposition day and it became government orders on Friday. We debated it all day Friday, and I am proposing that we debate it again all day today. So, I think there will be a healthy debate.

The member indicated that the Prime Minister tabled a motion very quickly last week. That is called leadership. That is what we have in this country.

The Prime Minister stepped forward and indicated immediately where this government stood and what he believed was in the best interests of this country. I think the hon. member will find that people who believe in federalism in this country will support that kind of leadership. He will not get me apologizing for having strong, decisive leadership in this country because this is exactly what this country needs and this is exactly what the Prime Minister demonstrates on every occasion. I am very proud to be associated with him and with this government.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I had the occasion to have a town hall meeting in my riding on Thursday

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evening. The meeting was packed with people and we did discuss the Québécois nation motion at length during this town hall meeting.

At the end of that we actually had a vote. I tried to explain as best I could why the government had brought in this motion. I tried to explain as best I could what it meant, what the concept of nation meant in this particular context. We had a vote at the end of the meeting and the vote was 33 to 1 urging me to vote against the motion.

Then I decided that I would launch an online poll, which I did on Sunday morning, asking Canadians across Canada if they would actually come online and vote yes or no as to whether I as an individual member of Parliament should be supporting this particular motion or not.

So far there have been quite a number of people come online. The number of people who want me to vote against the motion is roughly 68% as opposed to 32%. I have also been deluged with emails, as I am sure many members in the House.

There are a few questions I would like to pose to the minister opposite, particularly in his capacity as Minister for Democratic Reform. These are questions I have been asked since I went home on Thursday night and had that meeting and it has not stopped since. People in my riding really want to know what is a nation. I think there is a fundamental element of debate here, a fundamental question that has not yet been answered.

When I opened the newspaper this morning and read that the Premier of British Columbia thinks that aboriginal people ought to be considered a nation, it made me think. It made me think about the uniqueness of many places in this country.

I have no problem with the particular notion of “les Québécois” constituting a distinct society, a distinct community or a “nation,” but there is the question as to what exactly the definition of that is. I have not heard it yet and I am looking forward to that because my constituents have asked me that. Second,—

• (1235)

The Speaker: I am afraid the time for the member's question has expired. I indicated there would be two minutes for questions during this period. Would the government House leader respond?

Hon. Rob Nicholson: Mr. Speaker, certainly, this is what this debate is all about. This is why we are having the debate and that is why we had it. I bet that if the hon. member asked his constituents how they liked the original motion from the Bloc Québécois the result may be 34 to nothing.

A motion whose intent was to try and drive a wedge into this country, or was not for the purpose of uniting this country, I am quite sure that in his constituency and my constituency would be unanimously rejected. People want this country to pull together. They want it to work together. They believe in this country.

The hon. member says he has questions and he wants to be able to explain. I certainly invite him to participate and ask questions, and listen to the debate that will be taking place this afternoon. This is why we are doing it.

Government Orders

The hon. House leader for the Bloc Québécois said we have a busy agenda. He is absolutely correct. Nonetheless, we are taking the time on this important issue to have this discussed. I am pleased that we are doing that.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

An hon. member: On division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*Translation*]

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

The House resumed from November 24 consideration of the motion and of the motion that this question be now put.

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

[*English*]

It is rare, indeed, that parliamentarians have an opportunity to speak about the fundamental character of their country. Today is one of those opportunities. Canada is indeed a great nation. It is our great nation, a nation with a long history of vibrant constitutional debates. Sometimes in our past, we have approached these debates with fear and fatigue, but we have always looked back with certainty that these open and honest debates are one of the central pillars upon which our nation is built.

Many Canadians are well versed in the terminology of the constitutional debates and can point to the milestones on the long road of Canada's constitutional history. Simply by mentioning the words such as the amending formula, Meech Lake and Charlottetown, one can revive both the focus and passion of previous constitutional discussions.

The constitutional history of Canada as we know it begins with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 in which France ceded to Britain almost all of its North American territories. A century later, the British North American Act of 1867, followed by the 1931 Statute of Westminster, cemented the concept of and the right to self-government by Canadians. Then in 1982, more than 200 years after the Treaty of Paris had first defined Canada as its own territory, the Constitution Act brought our constitution home to Canada.

Who can forget the day when the visionary Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau joined with Queen Elizabeth II at the signing ceremony just outside this very building? It was obvious to all that this event was a huge step forward. Today we are discussing what many of my hon. colleagues argue may be the next logical step forward in the evolution of this wonderful country. But is it?

I spent much of my last week consulting with eminent constitutional and international scholars on the nature of today's debate. One thing is clear: no precise or globally accepted definition of the word "nation" exists. Indeed, in January of this year 35 member states of the Council of Europe concluded that it was impossible to define the word "nation" at all in constitutional terms.

Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier, who worked tirelessly to strengthen our country through immigration, understood the word "nation" simply to mean Canada. In 1889 he stated:

We form here, or wish to form, a nation composed of the most heterogeneous elements...In each one of these opposing elements, however, there is a common point of patriotism, and the only veritable politics is that which dominates this common patriotism, and brings these elements toward a unified goal and common aspirations.

Laurier further stated that his countrymen included:

—no matter what their race or language—whom the fortunes of war, the twists and turns of fate, or their own choice, have brought among us.

Canada, for that great statesman, was a broad, great and single country.

By identifying les Québécois as a nation or as a sociological nation within a united Canada, we as members of Parliament, representing all 10 provinces and 3 territories of this great country, would extend to the people of Quebec the recognition of their unique identity within the Canadian federation and, indeed, within the North American continent itself.

Many other nations assign within their borders the concept of nationhood to people with unique cultures and traditions, which are reflected in their history, ethnicity, custom and language. The United Kingdom, upon which our parliamentary system is based, embraces the so-called constituent nations of Wales, Scotland and England.

Any casual traveller will have seen that the people of Wales consider themselves very much a nation, as do the Scottish people. In recent years they have seen powers devolved to them from the central government at Westminster. Many of their political and governmental responsibilities, while arguable different in scale, are not unlike those of our Canadian federation.

The example of Wales is relevant for us as it is a nation within the United Kingdom that has its own official language, a parliament with specific powers and rights, including input with respect to laws passed elsewhere that concern it.

As we objectively review our own constitutional history, we must conclude the sociological concept of les Québécois nation within a united Canada is something we neither fear nor resist. In fact, that very sociological nation has always existed in spirit. The concept of a les Québécois nation within Canada will not diminish or threaten the country with which Quebec is confederated and in which the people of Quebec are citizens, free, proud and loyal. They remain a vibrant part of Canada in spirit and in reality.

•(1240)

We have a clear and present opportunity to move our constitutional history forward and to, moreover, acknowledge the historic significance and culture contribution of the people of Quebec.

By 1000 AD, what is now the province of Quebec was the first destination of the Viking longboats, bringing the first Europeans to the Arctic shores of Ungava Peninsula. Some 500 years later, Jacques Cartier was the first French explorer to erect a cross in this new world. In 1603, Samuel de Champlain came to found the first permanent colonies in Canada, including the establishment of Quebec City itself in 1608.

Thus began the great French presence in the North American continent, with its rich tradition borne of exploration, enriched with deep culture and rapid social development.

In 1774 the Quebec Act was passed in London to ensure the continued growth and development of the French presence in North America manifest in the resilient Quebec people.

It was in 1880, during the St. Jean Baptiste Day ceremony, that our national anthem, O Canada, was penned in Quebec by the composer, Calixa Lavallee, who clearly had a love of this land.

Through the ensuing years, the people of Quebec, who proudly and rightly called themselves les canadiennes, continued to build the country and express their unique social experience in Canada, culminating with the quiet revolution of the 1960s. This was a period of profound social change in Quebec, and a significant leap forward in terms of their identity as a people.

It is crucial to acknowledge and affirm that all this rich history, vibrant culture and enthusiastic political expression flourished as a unique Quebec identity securely cradled within the Confederation of Canada.

We Canadians are an example to the world of the tolerance and understanding of the differences that make us unique, and our open, confident and forward thinking has helped to craft one of the world's truly great countries. We welcome newcomers with open hearts, recognizing that in our shared individuality we find our united strength.

My family came here 30 years ago from the misty islands in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean called the Azores, precisely because they believed that Canada was a nation of unequalled opportunity. My personal experience of the unbounded welcome and shared vision of Canadians has made it easy for me to love and celebrate our country, both here in Parliament and among my constituents of Davenport, most of whom are immigrants, working for their daily bread, and who give thanks every day for the country they now call home.

Many nations other than ours have sadly concluded that it was arms and armed conflict that bought them their freedom. We, on the other hand, are blessed to live in a country where we deal with our differences not by the sword, but by the word. In Canada our respect for one another has given us our freedom, and it is our laws that have given us liberty and justice.

Government Orders

We are a nation that does not fear differences, but rather encourages diversity. From our first nations, diverse in themselves, to the exploring peoples of Europe and Asia and other parts of the world, together we hail from ancestors who recognized the enormous strength to be found in our shared histories.

Through the motion we discuss today, Canadians outside of the province of Quebec will be able to openly recognize the unique nature of the people of Quebec within our broader confederation. As we have heard, some members of the House oppose this measure as being too much or too little, but neither of these polar positions appropriately reflect the reality of our history. Quebec is part of Canada and Canada is part of Quebec. History and geography have made us one. We are the new global standard of nationhood.

Ours is a country characterized by opportunity, understanding, compassion and service, both to its citizens and to the people of the world. Our nation is much more than a beautiful idea. It is a standard of perfection existing in the hearts and minds of our citizens. It is a profound reflection of the consciousness of time, beauty and the art of our collective humanity. So powerful is the essence of our nation that it is greater even than our imperfect definitions of ethnicity, language and creed. It is not our provinces, territories or fragments that make us great; it is our oneness that makes Canada the greatest nation on earth.

•(1245)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the motion that the Prime Minister has put before us reads as follows:

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

Before voting on a text that some of our fellow citizens believe will be of great significance, we have a duty to tell them clearly what that text means.

In French, according to *Le Petit Robert*, “nation” has at least three meanings.

First, there is the ethnic sense of the word:

Group of men presumed to have a common origin.

Second, there is the state sense of the word:

Group of people constituting a political unit, established in a defined territory..., and personified by a sovereign authority.

Third, there is the sociological sense of the word:

Group of people, generally large, characterized by awareness of its unity and a desire to live together.

[*English*]

The sociological sense of the word “nation” is also found in *Webster's Dictionary*.

[*Translation*]

In the first sense, the ethnic sense, Quebec and Canada are not nations, but French-Canadians are a nation, one that is concentrated primarily in Quebec but is present everywhere in Canada.

Government Orders

There are several other groups of people in our country that can also be considered to be nations in ethnic terms. I would therefore vote in favour of a motion that said: In Canada, including in the province of Quebec, there are several nations in the ethnic sense of the word.

In the second sense of the word “nation”, the state sense, the only sense that confers legal existence in international law, Canada and Canada alone is a nation. I would therefore vote for a motion that said: Canada forms a single nation which holds a seat at the United Nations.

In the third sense of the word “nation”, the sociological sense, we, the Québécois, are a nation, because we form a large group within Canada—nearly a quarter of the population—and we have an awareness of our unity and a desire to live together. In that sense, it is correct to say that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. I will therefore vote for the motion that is before us.

• (1250)

[English]

However, I add that the entire Canadian population is also a nation in the sociological sense of the term. As Canadians, we have the sense of our unity and the will to live together, and there is nothing that prevents the same individual to be part of different nations in the sociological sense of the term.

[Translation]

So I say, in this House, that I am a proud member of the Quebec nation and a proud member of the Canadian nation. I say that these identities are cumulative and indivisible, and that I will fight with every resource that democracy gives me against anyone who wants to make me choose between these two wonderful identities: Québécois and Canadian.

I know all too well the game that the independentist leaders want to play. They want to persuade us that we cannot be part of the Canadian nation because we, the Québécois, form a nation. In other words, they want to shift from the sociological to the state sense of the word “nation”: from the “community” sense to the “country” sense. As usual, they want to conflate the meaning of words in order to sow confusion in people’s minds.

Well, as usual, my country and my 33 million fellow citizens can count on me to counter confusion with clarity. I know all too well that in the politics pursued by some people, there is little regard for dictionary definitions.

[English]

Facing this motion, two quotations come to mind.

The first one is from the great Lebanese poet, Kahlil Gibran, who said, “Pity the nation divided into fragment, each fragment deeming itself a nation”. This is why members of the Bloc will vote for the motion. They hope it will help them to fragment Canada.

However, there is another interpretation of the motion, which is not only in accordance with the definition of the dictionary but also noble and generous. It comes from José Carreras, who said, “*Cuanto más catalán me dejan ser, más español me siento*”.

In other words, in proclaiming my identity as a proud Quebecker today, I am proclaiming my identity as a proud Canadian. Let us work together to ensure that this noble and generous interpretation of the motion that we will vote on today will prevail.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has given us thoughtful input into this very important question. Very often as people have spoken, they have looked to definitions. It is clear that when we look at definitions we can find a definition to suit our purpose. We are not surprised at that, but the motion before the House is a qualified definition. It states “nation within a united Canada”. That, to me, does not seem to have too many alternatives other than to say a nation in not a unified Canada. That would be the only difference.

I want to ask the member about how he feels since the Bloc leader has decided to support the resolution before the House with a view to using it to his advantage. Could the member please explain how the statement “a nation within a unified Canada” precludes a reasoned debate on the basis that the Bloc leader has suggested?

• (1255)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, the answer is that it does not preclude anything. This motion will not solve the problem of unity, and we need to make sure that it will not see the unity of Canada deteriorate. That is why I am saying that I will be in this debate to put clarity into the debate. Because what the Bloc, the PQ and Mr. Landry want to say is that since we Quebeckers are a nation, we cannot be the province of another nation. They want to switch from the community meaning to a statehood meaning. We will need to fight that.

But I urge everyone who is committed to Canada not to give so much importance to this kind of motion. I do not think it is the best way to promote our country. It is not what I want to do, but since this motion is facing me today, I am telling members that I will do my best to make sure that it will be the José Carreras interpretation that will prevail, that because we Quebeckers are Canadian, we are more Quebecker, that this Canadian identity is part of us. If we remove this Canadian identity from us, we will not be such strong Quebeckers as we are today.

Mr. Barry Devolin (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the member. I know that he is very experienced in these matters. I have a question for him. Today it is reported that a very high profile member of his party, given the chance, would vote against this motion today. He is a federalist. I am wondering if the member could explain to the House what rationale people might have for voting against this motion when they say they are strong federalists themselves.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will accept that we should not hammer each other when we have a disagreement on this, because we all agree on what is basic in this, which is, for those who are Quebeckers, that we are proud to be Quebeckers and Canadians, and that other Canadians are proud to have Quebec as part of their country.

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As for those of us who have a difficulty with this motion, except for my Bloquiste colleagues, all the others love Quebec. This is not the problem. The problem is with the word "nation". I would say that technically speaking the motion is accurate and I will vote for it, but I would invite everyone not to have too much hope for the effectiveness of this kind of strategy to keep our unity together.

Symbolic politics is something that we Canadians need to handle better, but the necessity to keep our country together will come when we are able to say, all of us, without playing games between each other, that there is nothing that justifies separation in Canada. If we are able to say so, then let the separatist leaders show that we are wrong. Let them try to find the compelling reasons that may convince people to do something as sad and as radical as to change fellow citizens into foreigners.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride and emotion that I speak today to acknowledge the historic motion that the Prime Minister tabled in this House last Wednesday.

November 22, 2006, is a day that will be indelibly marked in my memory and that of Quebecers.

I am from the Beauce region of Quebec, and I was touched by the Prime Minister's comments. By acknowledging that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada, he has shown, once again, that he is a great Prime Minister, one of the greatest prime ministers Canada has ever known. Our party has always been at the centre of the great moments and great challenges that have marked the history of this country. Last week was no exception.

It took the members of the Bloc Québécois three long days to finally see the light and support our motion. What an about face! Last Wednesday, as hon. members know, the leader of the Bloc Québécois expressed outrage in this House and harshly criticized our motion recognizing that Quebecers form a nation. I listened to him very carefully and I had a hard time understanding his point of view. I do not think I was the only one in the House who felt that way at the time. I wondered: how can he be against the idea of the government recognizing something so obvious? How can he be against this recognition he has been calling for loud and clear for so many years? I was thinking that several of his colleagues must disagree with him, but no, I was wrong: all the members of the Bloc Québécois gave him a standing ovation at the end of his speech last week.

I was stunned, and even more so the next day when I heard the House leader of the Bloc Québécois talking about a black afternoon. According to the comments by the House leader of the Bloc, it seemed that this motion was the worst thing that could happen to Quebec. However, it seems that on Friday, the leader of the Bloc Québécois received some telephone calls, perhaps from André Boisclair and even Bernard Landry, and this made him change his mind since even in sovereigntist circles, some had to admit this was a step in the right direction.

Now all Canadians can celebrate the Bloc's decision to support the Prime Minister's motion to recognize Quebec's historic role within Canada and strengthen Canadian unity. We can only hope that the

Bloc, which changed its mind on this issue three times in three days, will continue to support it until the vote.

Our motion is important for all Canadians because it is a gesture of reconciliation. It is important to recognize that Quebecers have succeeded in preserving their unique language and culture while remaining part of the Canadian federation.

Our government truly believes that Quebec society will have better opportunities for development, progress, prosperity and reaching its full potential as part of the Canadian federation than as the independent Quebec advocated by the Bloc Québécois, the hypothetical benefits of which are merely unfounded speculation.

Quebeckers know who they are. They know that they helped found Canada and helped build the great country it is today. They know that they have protected their language and culture while promoting their values and interests within Canada. They know that they can be both Canadians and Quebecers, that they can be proud Quebecers and proud Canadians, and that they do not have to choose between the two, as the Bloc would have them do.

Since becoming Canada's new government, we have advocated open federalism, and that has brought about concrete results for both Quebec and Canada. We have invited Quebec to participate actively in UNESCO debates and we respect provincial jurisdiction. We have also brought about many changes. We promised to fight corruption. We have done that by introducing the accountability act, which will restore the atmosphere of trust that is so vital between the people and their government.

• (1300)

We promised to put in place a real national child care program, and we have done so. Parents are receiving a cheque for \$100 a month for every child six years of age or younger. We promised to gradually reduce the GST, and we have kept that promise. We have reduced the tax burden on Canadians, and we will continue to do so. We promised to settle the softwood lumber dispute, and we have done so. That is what Quebecers want. They want action, they want a government that respects the Constitution and honours its commitments.

This motion, which was proposed by our government, shows once again that it is the Conservatives who best defend Quebec's interests, not the Bloc Québécois. And we are achieving these results with just 10 members from Quebec. Just think of what we could do if we had far more.

The Bloc members have decided to support a motion that strengthens Canadian unity. The Bloc no longer has any purpose in Ottawa. I repeat, the Bloc has decided to support a motion that strengthens Canadian unity, and it therefore no longer has any purpose in Ottawa. My honourable colleagues opposite, who advocate Quebec's separation, should follow the example of their former colleagues, who decided to get jobs in the National Assembly. They are totally useless here, in Ottawa, in this House. It is the federalists who recognized that Quebecers form a nation, and the Bloc members had to follow our lead.

Government Orders

In nearly a decade and a half in Ottawa, the Bloc has never achieved anything tangible for Quebecers. The Bloc members are wasting their time in Ottawa. They are hampering the development of Quebec society.

For nearly 30 years, the Parti Québécois and its allies, the Bloc Québécois, have been trying to convince Quebecers to become a nation separate from Canada. Quebecers rejected this option during two referendums. Why? Because they are proud of their historic role in this country's development. The federalist forces, led by the Prime Minister, are taking action in Quebec. The Bloc Québécois, on the other hand, is pulling back. It has not made any concrete decisions that would have any real consequences for Quebec. It will never be able to make any such decisions, since it will always be confined to the opposition benches.

During its last convention in Quebec City, the Bloc said that its mission was to introduce new ideas. That is not what Quebecers want. Quebecers want real results, concrete results. They want their federal representatives to take concrete action, not just spout rhetoric.

As the Prime Minister said in his famous speech in Quebec during the last election campaign, he wants to build a strong Quebec within a better Canada. The motion he moved in this House last week aims to do just that. It will help to strengthen Canadian unity and Quebec can only gain from this. The time for bickering is over. It is time to look forward and build a strong economy. It is time to overcome the challenges before us. Federalism has much to offer for Quebecers.

Quebeckers, just like the citizens of the other provinces, reap considerable benefits from this type of government. By creating a unified market, federalism allows greater movement of goods and services, labour and capital. This market has allowed all regions of Canada, including Quebec, to specialize in areas in which they most excel and to do business in world markets. Federalism gives us a common currency, which facilitates trading and the circulation of capital. It helps ease economic shocks, thus ensuring greater economic stability for all Canadians thanks to risk sharing, regional transfers and the pooling of this country's riches. It gives less fortunate regions a higher quality of life, and better health care and education services than they could otherwise enjoy.

Our federalism improves our ability to negotiate with other countries. We are not alone against the rest of the world. Together, we form a strong, united Canada.

● (1305)

The size of our market is such that we have considerable economic power and bargaining power on an international level. Canada is a member of the G-7, an influential member of the World Trade Organization and plays a key role within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the OECD. Canada has an important place on the world stage. It is a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, the Organization of American States and NATO. Geographically, Canada is open to three of the world's most significant economic markets, namely Europe, the Americas and Asia.

The advantages Quebec draws from Canadian federalism are also political in nature. Canadian federalism is a form of government that takes into account differences by fostering cooperation and compromise. Canadian federalism was not imposed on Quebecers. They have been instrumental in its creation and development. Its key advantages are its flexibility, its vibrancy, its pluralism, its emphasis on diversity and its adaptability to modern challenges. Federalism is not rigid. It divides up the political jurisdictions in a way that responds to the common needs of the public, while taking individual situations into account.

Quebec controls a number of jurisdictions, including natural resources, education and so forth. It has its own Civil Code, which makes its legal system unique in North America. It has its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms and it collects its own taxes. Canadian federalism is constantly proving its effectiveness. As I was saying earlier, the primary reason is that Canadian federalism adapts to change and to the major issues affecting this world. Federalism allows countries like Canada to redefine intergovernmental relations as they develop. Canadian federalism has demonstrated that it can be innovative and respond to the legitimate interests of Quebec within our constitutional framework.

For example, since the 1960s, a series of agreements between the federal government and the Government of Quebec have allowed the province to extend its activities into jurisdictions traditionally held by the federal government. As hon. members know, in immigration, Quebec selects its immigrants and has its own integration programs. In foreign affairs, the federal government has developed a series of mechanisms in order to integrate the interests of Quebec and allow it to take part directly in international activities. The summit of la Francophonie and, more recently, the announcement of Quebec's new role within the Canadian delegation to UNESCO are good examples of this.

Quebec enters directly into agreements with France and Belgium, and is a member of several international Francophonie organizations, as I stated earlier. It opens offices abroad to promote its interests in various areas. In short, federalism is advantageous for Quebecers and for the rest of Canadians.

In closing, I would like to thank all the members of the national caucus of our party, the Conservative Party, for unanimously supporting this motion and hence recognizing the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada. I know that it may be somewhat difficult for some of my colleagues to understand what this recognition means to Quebecers. I would like to thank my colleagues opposite, the Liberal members, and all the federalists in this House who unanimously supported this motion, both my Liberal and my NDP colleagues. Last week, it was very moving to listen to the speeches of the interim leader of the Liberal Party as well as of the leader of the NDP. I was filled with emotion and pleased to see that this Chamber and this government have the support of my federalist colleagues in the House. That is why I said earlier that we made history in the House last week.

Government Orders

I know that it may be somewhat difficult for some of my colleagues to understand what this recognition means to Quebeckers. As I mentioned, I would like to reassure them. With this gesture, my colleagues who represent the other provinces of Canada have contributed to strengthening the ties that unite us and reinforcing Canadian unity. This is a stand that we should all salute and I am very proud to be a member in this House in order to vote in favour of this motion.

• (1310)

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister's speech was interesting. There was a slight partisan side to it that I can forgive today but I noticed that he spoke of a motion that is really symbolic, that it is perhaps an opening gesture and probably an olive branch towards Quebeckers. However, his remarks did not go any farther.

I hope that the member and the minister do not take it for granted that with this motion the work is finished. Reconciliation with Quebeckers and Quebec's acceptance of the Constitution will require a great deal more work. In my opinion, we are taking a small step today. It is nice, but it is symbolic.

The minister did not talk to us about spending power; for example. I would have liked to have heard him discuss that. Does his government intend to take some action in that area? The minister did not talk about the fiscal imbalance.

Those subjects belong at the top of the agenda because beyond the symbol, there is a reality. I know that our fellow citizens have expectations concerning these subjects. One day, I hope we can be here together to celebrate the final and total acceptance by Quebec of our constitutional laws.

I would be glad if the minister could give some details of his thoughts beyond today's resolution.

• (1315)

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks.

Yes, it is true. It is a small step; but it is small step in the right direction.

I want to make it clear that the clarification of spending power is a commitment of our government that the Prime Minister formally stated in Quebec City December 19, 2005. It is an important issue for Quebeckers and for Canadians. I can assure my colleague opposite that we are working with all the provinces to ensure that at last the Canadian Constitution can make progress, and in the direction that all the provinces want.

Concerning the fiscal imbalance; that is a very good question. That is another commitment we made in Quebec City on December 19, 2005, and we repeated that commitment to deal with the fiscal imbalance in the last budget.

I know that on December 15 my hon. colleague, the Minister of Finance, will meet with his provincial counterparts to discuss the correction of the fiscal imbalance. Like my hon. colleague, I hope that can be settled as quickly as possible. We are a government that respects its commitments and we will act accordingly.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with most of the minister's remarks; in fact, I find I can associate myself with them to a large degree. I would like to ask him, though, about one issue that has come to our attention in recent days.

Technical difficulties make it impossible to amend the motion. However, given that the first Europeans to come to North America made contact with what they reported to be nations of indigenous people, would he agree if it were possible to amend this motion that we could and should in the context of this debate and the vote also recognize first nations aboriginal people in the same vein as we recognize the Québécois form a nation in this country?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I would simply say that the first nations are in the Constitution.

What we are debating right now is only Quebeckers as a nation and not Quebec as a nation. There is a big difference. I hope my colleague is going to vote with us on that, considering that the first nations have their recognition in the Constitution.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is adjacent to the province of Quebec. They are separated only by the Ottawa River but very much are connected to one another.

The area of Allumette Island was largely settled by Irish immigrants and therefore its residents are mainly English speaking. Many of the residents work and attend school on the Ontario side of the river. Indeed, prior to the election of the current Minister of Transport, many attended my office for assistance on constituency matters. They are asking what this motion means to anglophones. How is it going to affect their day to day lives?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, it will not change their day to day lives. It is a recognition that the Quebeckers form a nation, that Quebeckers are a nation within Canada.

I was in Calgary this weekend. I spoke with some of my colleagues from Calgary and Canadians from Alberta. They had that kind of concern. I can reassure people across the country and my colleagues across the floor that it will not change anything in their day to day lives.

What we are doing right now was not my first choice. My first choice is that Quebeckers know who they are and they do not need us to tell them who they are. But the Bloc Québécois brought this issue to the House and we had to respond. What we have brought forward is the right response. The most important thing in the motion is that Quebeckers are a nation within Canada. We will not give to Quebeckers more powers or other jurisdictions to the province of Quebec. We will respect our Constitution. That is why it is very simple for us as Quebeckers and for our colleagues to vote in favour of the motion.

Government Orders

• (1320)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the Bloc motion was initially debated, the leader of the Bloc said that the motion being proposed by the Conservatives in adding the phrase “within a united Canada” was a partisan condition. My view is that the addition of “within a united Canada” reflects a fact, a reality. I wonder if the minister would like to comment on whether he considers that addition to be a partisan condition.

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, no it is not partisan. It is a reality. Quebecers are proud to be Canadian and are proud to be Quebecers also. It is only the reality.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have watched the Bloc take three different and contradictory positions. Bloc members first said they defend provincial jurisdictions, but at the same time, they gave Ottawa the power to define what Quebecers are and to determine whether they form a nation. They gave this House that power. We therefore moved a motion to define Quebec as a nation, which upset the Bloc. It was against recognizing Quebec as a nation and was going to vote against this motion. However, the next day, it changed its tune again—for the third time—and said that it would vote in favour of defining Quebec as a nation and for a united Canada.

We now see that the Bloc has completely lost its *raison d'être*. It is completely pointless.

Can the minister tell us why Quebecers should keep this party alive? Why should the Bloc Québécois exist?

Hon. Maxime Bernier: Mr. Speaker, I believe that, as time goes on, the Bloc Québécois is proving more and more that its presence in this House is completely pointless. Bloc members cannot achieve any real results for all Quebecers. With some ten Conservative members, we have done so much for Quebec, which the Bloc Québécois will never be able to do because, as we all know, it is doomed to forever remain an opposition party.

I think my fellow Quebecers realize all this and, during the next election, they will make up their minds.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to join with my colleagues in support of the motion presented by the Conservative government. This is a historic occasion for our country. It is a time for all of us to reflect on who we are and to express our dreams for this country. In this context, the NDP supports the motion that recognizes the Québécois people as a nation within a united Canada.

For clarification purposes, I want to also indicate that the NDP will be opposing the original motion presented by the Bloc Québécois which very simply suggested that the Quebec people form a nation. Given all of the developments over the last few days, it is important to explain exactly why we feel this way and what is important about this occasion.

When this issue erupted on November 22, at first we felt considerable joy that there was this unity in the House over a longstanding matter that had to be resolved, that being the question

of how to recognize Quebec within the federalist family within Canada. That soon turned into a heated debate between politicians, through the media, and among premiers and other leaders in this country.

I am not sure the debate filtered too far down into our community level, but it certainly took on a whole new dimension, especially when the Prime Minister, over the course of this weekend, chose to start muttering out loud about further developments on the constitutional front. He suggested that he was prepared to look at opening up the Constitution to address spending powers. Canadians suddenly started feeling a sense of *déjà vu*.

We have had Meech; we have had Charlottetown. We have had numerous other federal-provincial meetings and discussions, and heated debates. And here we go again with another attempt to open the door, so that this country could actually start to lose its unity of purpose because the hidden agenda is one of ceding federal powers to the provinces. This debate has taken on a whole new set of values and a heck of a lot of interest on the part of Canadians because they truly are wondering what this means in real terms.

I want to start by saying what it means to New Democrats and what it does not mean to New Democrats. I want to ensure that the House knows how we address the questions of our aboriginal people in the context of this motion and how we celebrate the ethnocultural diversity of this land given this motion.

The unease and concern of Canadians has to do with definition. For me and for some folks who have worked and talked, and thought about the issue of the unique status and the distinct nature of Quebec society, it might be clear. We therefore have little trouble putting down on paper that we see the Québécois people as a nation within Canada. For us it is a description that defines a people. It reflects a history. It is imbued with all kinds of meanings and values. It is important.

It is important for people like me to stand and say it is long overdue that we resolve this historical impasse and that we come to some resolution that will not open the door further to any thought of devolving federal powers or opening the door to the Québécois people to separate. That is what we must be absolutely sure about today.

• (1325)

We in the NDP support this motion on the basis of recognizing the role, the culture, and the people of Quebec throughout our history. We have done this since our party began. Whether we are talking about Stanley Knowles, who was a member of Parliament from my area for many years, or David Orlikow, who also was part of this place for 25 years, or going back to David Lewis and Tommy Douglas. Our leaders, our politicians, and our representatives have always tried to recognize that which is unique about Quebec and to stand proud in describing our country in those terms.

More recently, we have grappled with this notion in the context of federalism and how we define federalism while recognizing that status of Quebec. We as a country have debated that and we have come to recognize that asymmetrical federalism is probably a doable approach, that it can in fact lead to that which we all desire, which is a united Canada that recognizes the uniqueness of Quebec.

Under no circumstances have we, at any point, intended that to mean the debate is wide open for further diminishment of our federal government in the nation state, or for further encouragement to the Québécois people to consider separation or sovereignty. No, our debates have been on how to ensure a united Canada, how we can accommodate the demands and the place of history in this country without putting us on a path of losing something which is absolutely important. We come today to say that we support this notion that Quebec people constitute a nation within this country.

● (1330)

[Translation]

The NDP has long supported appropriate recognition of Quebec's national character. We know, and it is important to say so with respect to the Bloc motion, that the Bloc is playing political games. In our opinion, that is the case. The New Democratic Party will not play these games.

[English]

Since this discussion evolved on Wednesday, we have seen and heard statements from both the leader of the Bloc and the leader of the PQ suggesting that this was just the beginning. They began to put a spin on the debate that this was the wedge, the lever by which the forces for sovereignty and separatism would be able to gain further support and make inroads in this direction.

It became pretty clear in the course of the last couple of days that in fact we were part of this bidding war. There was an attempt on the part of forces to actually distort the concept that was part of the resolution, when we talk about Quebeckers being a nation within a united Canada, or just dealing with it on its own, Quebeckers forming a nation.

[Translation]

The members of the Bloc and the leader of the Parti Québécois are only interested in the sovereignty agenda. We have decided to reconsider our position on their motion.

[English]

We support the present motion because we are recognizing the historical fact that Quebeckers form a nation and we have done so for decades.

We are a proud federalist party. We have worked over the decades to find a solution to this fundamental question: what constitutes a united Canada and how do we recognize the unique nature of Quebec?

We do not for one second consider the nation state as divisible or an entity that can be weakened gradually over a period of time by changing the powers and looking at the question of the role of the federal government. Nor for a second do we accept any wording, any notion, any rhetoric, any policies, or any programs that will take us down the path to a separate Quebec, to a Quebec as a sovereign nation, because we consider ourselves as part of a great nation. We will fight to the end to ensure that Quebec never has reason to leave this country.

That does not mean we disregard the notion of self-determination and the right of the Quebec people to have a say in their future.

Government Orders

Obviously, that is all tied up in this debate, but we have a role as federalists, we have a role as parliamentarians to ensure we have addressed all those questions and concerns. We have a role to ensure that we have taken away the debate, the arguments, the excuses, and the *raison d'être* to even consider a separate nation for Quebeckers. It seems to us that is what is fundamental here, why we support this debate and this motion, and why we cannot now support what the Bloc is proposing.

[Translation]

The objective of the Bloc and the Parti Québécois is clear: they want to see Quebec leave the great Canadian family. We will oppose this option.

We believe that ordinary Quebeckers will be better off staying in Canada. That is why we believe that despite our differences as federalists, we have to work together to create winning conditions for Canada and Quebec.

● (1335)

[English]

That explains why we support the motion, but we also understand what this debate is not even tapping into and that is our identity as a country. We are talking a lot about the identity of Québécois and Québécoises, but what does that leave in terms of this country? Part of this task rests in terms of identifying the original peoples.

Today we actually should have been amending this motion to reflect what first nations want, but we could not. We could not because the Liberals brought forward a deleterious motion and cut off all further amendments. We should be doing what the Assembly of First Nations has requested, which is to amend this motion with respect to ensuring that it in no way derogates from, diminishes or modifies "the unique status and rights of First Nations and their unique place in the past, present and future of this land".

That would clarify, would it not? That would ensure that through this process we were not leaving any impression that we were diminishing the significance of the people who were originally here, notwithstanding the fact of the founding nations later on who came to develop this country, the French and the English, and not to even touch on the waves and waves of immigrants who came to this country to build this country and to create a great future.

Let us be clear, I say, that when we support this motion we in no way apologize for the ethnocultural diversity of this great land. Instead, we celebrate it. Let us be clear that when we look at this whole complex issue we stand in the context of our recognition for Quebec saying that we celebrate Canada as a diverse nation, as a model to the world.

How many people have actually described this country as the window on the world? Others have said that we are the world in one nation. Those are beautiful sentiments reflecting a beautiful notion about this country, sentiments that we have to celebrate and stand up and say on a day like today.

Government Orders

The biggest worry the NDP has about this whole debate is that in fact it might be used as a way for the federal government to open the door wider, to devolve powers from the federal government, to review the spending powers under the Constitution and in fact weaken our nation-state.

It is certainly a legitimate concern after listening to what the Prime Minister had to say over the weekend when he talked about limiting federal spending powers in exclusive areas of provincial jurisdiction and when he talked opening up the Constitution, which requires two-thirds of the provinces and territories and half the population. There is every reason to be concerned.

So while we stand today in support of this motion, we do not for one second give any legitimacy, credence, credibility or validity to an agenda that the Conservatives may have to use this as an opening to slip in changes to the Constitution that would weaken our nation-state and change the very nature of federalism.

We only have to look to last week, when the Minister of Finance gave us his economic update. In his document entitled "Advantage Canada", he states:

To this end, the Government is committed to:
—Limiting the use of the federal spending power.

It is a fairly upfront, open agenda. We only have to look back to the federal budget address of May 2, 2006, when in fact the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance reflected on the issue of federal spending power.

The 2006 budget stated that initiatives may "have expanded the use of the federal spending power" and were "launched in areas of provincial responsibility" and:

Concerns have been raised that these initiatives have often imposed new conditions and cost pressures on provincial and territorial governments.

It is interesting to note that the government then used that as a legitimate argument for not advancing a national child care or early childhood development plan. It used that to argue why the federal government should not be involved in housing and homelessness issues. It used that, in fact, to explain why it should not be doing anything about literacy in this nation.

● (1340)

There are ominous signs on the horizon about which we must be very vigilant. We will not let the government take advantage in any way of unanimity and harmony in the House today around finally coming up with some wording that will address a longstanding historical unanswered issue.

Today we need to reflect on where we have come from and where we are going. I want to wrap up and say that we accept, as we have done throughout history, the notion of Quebec as a distinct society, and that, we believe, is reflected in this motion. We also recognize that there are many important influences in this country that have to be also acknowledged, whether they be aboriginal peoples or the many waves of immigrant populations who have come to develop this country.

We also recognize that hidden in this motion there in fact may be a power grab, as some have commented in the media, and that there

may be a tendency on the part of the government to set the stage through this motion to open the door to a dismantling of this country.

We are left today with wanting to ensure that all members agree on the need to establish very clearly the unique identity of Canada, one that recognizes the uniqueness of Quebec as a nation within this country on a united basis but that also understands what has built this country and has contributed to our greatness: that is, those values of cooperation and compassion, the desire among Canadians to care about one another and to share wealth and resources, those values that actually led to the creation of medicare, the best health care program in the world, one that defines who we are as a nation, and those values that led to numerous programs that bind us together and ensure that no matter where we come from, whatever region we are from, whatever ethnic group we are part of, whatever language we speak, we are part of this nation, and we are one people, strong and united.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in their discussions today, I noticed that a number of hon. members have been very careful to emphasize what they believe this motion is not about. I think that is a good thing to do when we deal with a motion that is as laconic in its language as this one is. It is necessary to make sure that no one understands us as having supported something for reasons that were in fact invalid and therefore imputes meanings to this motion that are not actually there.

I thought, therefore, that it was good and very valuable to hear the hon. member just a moment ago speaking about the things that she does not want to be understood as supporting when she votes for this motion. She is concerned about the government having an agenda to do a number of things to roll back the federal government's role in Canadian life.

I want to assure the hon. member that such is not the case. I think that is to some degree self-evident from the nature of the way in which this motion came forward after the Bloc Québécois had proposed another motion. This motion was introduced after that time.

I also want to be clear in indicating that my own support for this motion is based upon understanding it to have limited implications, on understanding it to be a reflection of a sociological fact and not to be understood as, for example, indicating that we are or I am supportive of some form of asymmetrical federalism, or for greater powers for one part of the country over another, or for having the kinds of implications that the distinct society clause had when it was introduced.

Some people here supported the distinct society clause back in the early 1990s. Others of us did not and campaigned against it. The distinct society clause had the implication that, among other things, the charter of rights would be interpreted in light of the fact that Quebec is a distinct society.

This motion, as I understand it, has no such meaning. The charter of rights and the Constitution apply equally. The equal status of the Canadian provinces is not changed. That is my understanding. My question for the hon. member is this: is this narrow reading of the motion also her understanding?

Government Orders

• (1345)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, it is important that we clarify what this motion is about. I want the motion to be about, and I believe it is, addressing a longstanding gap in our history's policy development process, which is a way to recognize the contribution and the qualities of the Quebec people and a way to meet their longstanding grievances in terms of being a part of this country.

The motion does not explicitly suggest anything more than that. Why I worry is that the ink was barely dry on this motion when the Prime Minister of our country came out publicly talking about opening up the Constitution and dealing with spending powers.

We know from past discussions that the Conservatives are very anxious to put limits on federal spending powers so that they do not have responsibility in many other important areas, which in my view does a complete disservice to what this nation is all about. We have a national health care act. We have medicare. We have the Canada Health Act because we got over this jurisdictional haggling and wrangling and said, "This is a shared responsibility that involves both leadership from the federal government and spending powers from the federal government in an area that is largely a provincial jurisdiction".

We need to make sure that we continue this part of our history. We need to do it in areas of education like never before, because in fact the federal share of education has dropped to less than 10% and we are struggling to find a way to make sure that all students have access to education. We need to do it in areas of child care and early childhood education. In fact, if we do not work together on the needs of children at a very young age, we are cutting off our nose to spite our face.

I know what the Conservative agenda generally is. I know what the Prime Minister said coming out of the discussion about national unity last Wednesday. I am worried. I want it to be clear that while we support this motion we in no way give any legitimacy or validity to a Conservative notion of decentralization or dismantling this country and eroding our nation-state.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during her speech the hon. member referred specifically to the motion and the full wording, including the reference to the phrase "within a united Canada".

She also talked about some of the historical positions of her party from way back when. She said twice, or in two different ways, that, first, we support the national character of Quebec, and that, second, we have long supported that Quebecers form a nation.

I am curious as to whether the member could advise the House whether in coming to those policy positions on behalf of her party there was the presumption that Canada was a united country. The way it was stated by the member in her statement would seem to be supportive of the initial Bloc motion.

As we know, and as I believe all hon. members who are federalist members here understand it, this is simply a question of the fact that there are those in this place who support a strong and united Canada and there are those who want to break up this country. I wonder if the member would like to clarify her statements.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to clarify my statement. In the course of a debate that is 20 minutes in length, one tries not to keep repeating oneself in terms of all the descriptions and adjectives.

At the outset, I said we were supporting the motion that says, "the Québécois are a nation within a united Canada", and that we rejected the Bloc motion which stopped short of saying "within a united Canada". I want to elaborate for a moment. As part of our history, we have always fought for that recognition within a united Canada.

I want to refer very quickly to the statements we have made over the years. Back in 1999, we said that Quebec was a vibrant, distinct society. It is a result of many historical developments and it is one that we respect and reflect in our policies in the context of a dynamic, varied, multicultural society which recognizes the first nations as our founding peoples.

Again, in our statement at our last convention in Montreal, in what has now been described as the Sherbrooke declaration, we very clearly described the need for recognition of Quebec's unique status or definition as a nation within a united Canada, as long as we were fully cognizant of the fact that federalism itself was something that must be nurtured, developed and worked on time and time again or we would be in danger of losing the very essence of who we were as a nation.

I hope that has clarified for the member what we feel, and to be absolutely clear that we only look at this question within the context of a united Canada.

• (1350)

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, very briefly, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for raising the issue of the first nations, brought to us over the weekend.

In the context of the debate, there has to be some kind of non-derogation recognition that what we do today will not derogate from or diminish in any way the status of first nations within the context of the Constitution or the debate.

Could the hon. member reinforce for us today how the first nations are recognized with this status within Canada and we, in this party at least, will not have anything to do with anything that derogates from that?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, we absolutely believe the motion should have included that qualifier, but the Liberals prevented us from doing so.

I commend the work of my colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, who brought to the House the words of Phil Fontaine—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Outremont.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for York Centre.

Statements by Members

I am pleased to take part in this debate, although we Quebeckers in the House find ourselves in a very strange situation. The House is being asked to define our identity. It is as if we had come here searching for it, and all that just because the Bloc Québécois wanted to play petty politics on the backs of Quebeckers. That is too bad, but while the Bloc claims to be their servant and the trustee of their interests, it actually wanted the House to say no to Quebeckers, to say that they do not constitute a nation.

Confounding their tactics, the hon. members of this House—the federalist members—decided to say that Quebeckers form a nation within a united Canada. Now that the federalist members have decided to join forces, we see the Bloc members going through contortions that could earn them a job with the Cirque du Soleil. They do not know which way to squirm and wriggle any more.

In light of this situation, I think that Quebeckers are being recognized here. I met a lot of people over the weekend who said it was nice, and that this helped them feel comfortable with their dual identity. It helped them say they are both proud Quebeckers and proud Canadians.

That is what this motion gives us today. I would not want people to nurse any illusions about the meaning or huge import—other than symbolic—of this motion. In addition, the issue of Quebec signing on to the Canadian constitution has not been resolved. In my view, that is on a future agenda. I know that the C-word, Constitution, is banned for now, but some day we will obviously want to find a way to bring Quebec back into the bosom of the Canadian family—if that vocabulary is not too antiquated—with honour and enthusiasm.

I think, therefore, that our colleagues realize today that they have to recognize the Quebec nation. I know that some are making an effort to do this because it is hard for them, and I can understand that. Ultimately, though, this is an olive branch extended from an outstretched hand.

Some day we will have to remember this. I may have too much personal experience in the House, but I remember the Meech Lake era very well. Looking back at the five elements we had at that time, ultimately we can say that things are quietly progressing. At the time, we spoke about a distinct society. Then, all of a sudden, the House passed a motion recognizing this wording. The vocabulary has evolved now: distinct society, people, nation. Who knows how our children will want to define themselves in 10 or 15 years?

Insofar as what we wanted in the area of immigration is concerned, it has been achieved and Quebec has power over the selection of immigrants. Some other provinces have taken on the same power because they think it is important.

Our discussion about spending power is still hypothetical, but this is an important element, nevertheless.

Perhaps the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities remembers former premier Robert Bourassa and the many speeches he made about spending authority. He repeated them so often we know almost all of them by heart.

With respect to the Supreme Court justices, that is a fact.

On the subject of veto rights, even this House passed a law saying that every region has a veto. As such, Quebec has a de facto veto right.

If we take a step back and look at the bigger picture, we realize that things evolve. Little by little, certainly, but this gives us confidence in the future.

When history judges the past few days we have experienced together, it may be said that on this momentous occasion, Canadian federalists were united as never before thanks to the Bloc Québécois.

• (1355)

I honestly did not think that such unity would happen during this session with a minority government and a very strong opposition, not to mention a party in the throes of a leadership race. In the end, it took a major catalyst to make this happen.

That being the case, I would like to thank the Bloc Québécois because it gave us the will to fight. It convinced us that we can have two identities—Quebecker and Canadian—and that those two identities can co-exist and help us grow.

I think that even though nobody wanted it to happen, this debate has strengthened Canada and will enable us to exchange ideas about our deep roots and the very nature of Quebec as it is today.

I know it is very hard for the Bloc to say it—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order please. I must unfortunately interrupt the member. When debate resumes, he will have four minutes remaining to finish his speech.

We will move on to statements by members. The hon. member for Wild Rose.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

SUNDRE PIONEER VILLAGE MUSEUM

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to pay tribute to an outstanding central Alberta sportsman, Chester Mjolsness.

Chester has spent the past many decades hunting big game around the entire world. He decided to share his massive collection of wildlife mounts and it is now proudly displayed at the Sundre Pioneer Village Museum.

The collection is made up of more than 150 animals from all the continents in the world. Planning for the museum began about 12 years ago and, through a little grant money, local donations and countless volunteer hours, this is a display not to be missed.

Special recognition must be paid to Lorraine Hughes who painted the background scenes and Povl Munksgaard who prepared the mounts for display.

Statements by Members

I was honoured to be part of the official opening of the Chester Mjolsness World of Wildlife Museum in my hometown of Sundre. I would like to invite every Canadian to take a trip to visit this world-class facility. That is Sundre, Alberta, my hometown.

* * *

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's motion to recognize the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada is ill-defined, divisive and sets up an acrimonious debate that is not in the best interest of our country.

Why must we declare the Québécois a nation so precipitously? Can we not listen to Canadian and Quebec voices before we rush recklessly into this new departure from our Canadian path?

What of our first nations? Have we not learned the lessons of Meech Lake?

I will not support this resolution because first, the House of Commons has not had adequate time to debate what it means; second, its most vigorous proponents are uncertain of its meaning; and third, this fundamental change to the definition of what Canada means is thrust upon Canadians who have had no chance to respond to this fundamental change in the way Canada defines itself.

* * *

[Translation]

LAVAL UNIVERSITY'S ROUGE ET OR

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 18, Laval University's Rouge et Or earned its third trip in four years to the Vanier Cup by routing the Acadia University Axemen 57 to 10 in the Uteck Bowl.

This win put the Rouge et Or in line for the challenge they had been waiting for all year, defeating the Huskies, their tough and tenacious rivals, at Griffiths Stadium in Saskatoon.

On Saturday, the dream came true in a brilliant 13 to 8 victory, the result of sustained effort, hard work and admirable and indomitable team spirit.

With this win, the Rouge et Or have contributed greatly to the national pride of Quebecers and thrilled their ardent fans not only in the greater Quebec City area but throughout Quebec as well.

Congratulations to all who contributed to this great moment in university sports.

* * *

[English]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nobody should be able to buy an election in this country or a politician for that matter. Our election finance laws were designed to get big money out of politics. Well, big money is still buying influence in Canadian politics through the loophole that allows huge so-called loans to politicians and their organizations.

When is a loan not a loan? Well, if it never has to be paid back it is not a loan, it is a donation. Even if it is paid back, it is still "who you know" politics. If one candidate can borrow millions and the other candidate can only borrow peanuts, it is easy to see the one with the rich sponsors will have an unfair advantage.

These massive Liberal leadership loans are tantamount to donations. They undermine the principles of equal opportunity and our election laws and they should not be allowed. If the Conservative government were sincere about getting big money out of politics, it would plug this last remaining loophole so that nobody could buy an election in this country ever again.

* * *

[Translation]

LAVAL UNIVERSITY'S ROUGE ET OR

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I mention today the Laval University's Rouge et Or football team victory on Saturday.

I would like to congratulate all the players and the coaching staff led by Glen Constantin, who contributed to their victory, and especially the players who will not be returning next year.

These players include pass receiver Nicolas Bisailon, who is completing his degree in psychology, and defensive halfback Alexandre Vendette, who is completing his masters' in administration.

Laval University played the Saskatchewan Huskies in the prestigious Vanier Cup. Eastern and western Canada both have excellent university football programs.

The Vanier Cup is the Canadian university football championship and this is the fourth title for the Rouge et Or since 1999. Such success would not be possible without the exceptional support of Mr. Jacques Tanguay.

This victory is a great source of pride for all residents of Louis-Hébert and the greater Quebec City area.

We sympathize with our friends from Saskatchewan.

* * *

●(1405)

[English]

UNIVERSITY OF PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week the University of Prince Edward Island's president delivered an address on the state of his institution. It is my pleasure to highlight some of the achievements that UPEI has seen over the past few years.

Statements by Members

In terms of attracting high quality talent from all around the world, UPEI is beating the odds. Today more than 4,000 students from 50 countries and every region in this country attend the university. This represents a 35% increase in enrolment since 1999. These world-class students are attracted by the recent growth of facilities and cutting edge research. A flourish of construction has covered the campus over the last several years, including a new National Research Council facility, a \$32 million expansion of the prestigious Atlantic Veterinary College and a new school of business.

In 2000, UPEI sat in 18th place on the *Macleans* ranking of primarily undergraduate universities. Today, as a result of these and many more achievements, UPEI now sits among the top five undergraduate universities in this country.

I ask all members to please join me in congratulating President Wade MacLaughlan and all students, faculty and staff of this great little university.

* * *

TERRY FOX HALL OF FAME

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have some good news to share with the House today.

The Terry Fox Hall of Fame is sponsored by the Canadian Foundation for Physically Disabled Persons to recognize the outstanding achievements of Canadians with disabilities. It therefore gives me great pleasure to congratulate the newest member of the Terry Fox Hall of Fame.

This individual made history when he became the first quadriplegic member of Parliament. As a member of Parliament, his efforts for hepatitis C victims helped win them long overdue financial compensation. This man's advocacy also led to a commitment to fully fund the Canadian strategy for cancer control. This individual is widely respected for his determination, passion and integrity. He has refused to let his disability define him.

For those reasons and more, I congratulate a very special person on the honour of being welcomed into the Terry Fox Hall of Fame. I ask all members to please join me in a salute to a great Canadian and our colleague, the hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec announced last week that it would provide temporary assistance for producers in Saint-Amable affected by the golden nematode. Meanwhile, even though he has been advised by a group of experts that the solution for Saint-Amable is to destroy all the potato stocks, the federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food keeps saying that producers who are destroying crops are doing so on a voluntary basis, without adequate financial compensation. The existing federal program cannot provide the necessary assistance, contrary to what the minister is claiming.

The producers in Saint-Amable are in an extremely precarious situation that is getting worse every day. If things do not change,

they are doomed to bankruptcy because of the quarantine of their lands. The distress messages sent to my office leave no doubt as to the depth of producers' despair.

For four months, this government has done nothing, preferring to take a wait and see attitude. The Bloc Québécois demands that the government do its job and introduce a specific measure to address this critical situation.

* * *

[*English*]

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, as we kick off AIDS Awareness Week, we stand in solidarity with those facing HIV-AIDS and remember its many victims.

It is a week where we can shed light on the true nature of this disease and dispel the many stigmas and false perceptions that stop us from taking meaningful action. Many of us, including my constituents, can speak personally of the destructive nature of HIV-AIDS. That is why the residents of Kelowna—Lake Country are committed to the cause, raising thousands of dollars for local HIV-AIDS services and supporting our local Rotary Clubs in their international efforts in Africa.

We cannot be complacent. In Canada, rising infection rates among youth and females show that we are not doing enough. Only 50% of grade nine students know that HIV-AIDS has no cure. We need to do better. We must educate our children and our peers to stop the growth of this epidemic.

This week let the red ribbon symbolize our perseverance. We can and we must continue to fight against HIV-AIDS in Canada and around the world.

* * *

● (1410)

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the national Liberal women's caucus has long served as an active and passionate voice for Canadian women. This morning we were proud to launch volume one of *The Pink Book: A Framework for Canada's Future*.

The policy recommendations contained in the pink book are a comprehensive strategy to repair the damage done by the Conservatives, including the reinstatement of the child care and early learning program, reversing budget cuts to social programs and the launch of a proposed national caretaker program.

A shocking 71% of spousal homicides involved rifles and shotguns and yet the Conservatives recently announced the removal of seven million long guns from the national firearms registry.

Statements by Members

As November 25 marked the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, I ask all Canadians to pause and reflect on the Conservatives' deliberate attack on the rights of Canadian women and question why the Conservative Party wants to turn back the clock on 40 years of social progress.

* * *

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATIONS

Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, George Marcello received a liver transplant in 1995. Soon after he received this precious gift, he devoted his life to helping improve the rate of organ and tissue donations in Canada by walking to raise awareness of the urgent need for donors.

After nine years, 15,000 kilometres, 500 communities, 4,000 events, many media stories and even a second liver transplant, George has been relentless in helping raise Canada's poor rate of organ and tissue donations.

His ultimate goal is to see Canada save everyone; over 4,000 Canadians who need these life-saving gifts. Recently he completed a 500 kilometre walk from Toronto to Ottawa and now he is prepared to once again walk across Canada for organ and tissue donation awareness.

On March 26, from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia, George Marcello will undertake his campaign called "S.O.S. 4 000—One more time, with a little help from my friends".

Let us all wish George luck and success in his quest to bring this perennially important issue to the attention of all Canadians.

* * *

HIV-AIDS

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week Canadians will don red ribbons to remind us all of the continuing fight against HIV-AIDS in our communities and around the world. December 1 is Global HIV-AIDS Awareness Day.

As we look at fighting the HIV-AIDS pandemic, we must not ignore the need to protect the human rights of people living with HIV. To respond effectively to the HIV epidemic, we must respect and protect the rights of those who are most affected and most at risk.

The Canadian government must find a way to more effectively ensure drug treatments are flowing from Canada to the developing world. This includes fixing the fundamentally flawed legislation allowing the export of generic drugs and meeting our dollar commitments to the global fund in the fight against HIV-AIDS.

Fellow Canadian Stephen Lewis is approaching the end of his term as United Nations special envoy on HIV-AIDS. I would ask all members of this House to join me in expressing our deepest gratitude for his incredible efforts to increase awareness of the HIV-AIDS issues here at home and abroad.

[Translation]

YOUTH INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the YMCA is an integral part of community life in Canada, serving people of all ages.

For nine years, in partnership with the Government of Canada, the YMCA has administered the federal public sector youth internship program.

[English]

Since 1997, over 9,000 young people have benefited from this program, including almost 300 in Nova Scotia, people like Chantel, a single mom who acquired new skills that helped her build a better life.

It was a shock to learn that future funding for the federal public sector youth internship program is now uncertain.

I strongly urge the minority Conservative government to commit to long term funding for this program today so the YMCA can help thousands more young people become prouder, more productive Canadians.

* * *

[Translation]

LONGUEUIL MUNICIPAL RETIREES

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Longueuil municipal retirees association is celebrating its 20th anniversary this week.

The association's more than 260 members work to ensure retirees' well-being by offering help and organizing various activities to improve their quality of life.

Those of us living in large cities too often forget that there are many people devoted to improving their communities and promoting their municipalities. Without their invaluable contribution, our society would be significantly poorer.

Today I would like to pay tribute to all of the people who have watched Longueuil grow, who have contributed to its success and who have served its population for many years.

I would like to thank them for their commitment over the years and say how proud I am to represent them in the House of Commons.

* * *

● (1415)

[English]

HENRY MURPHY

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Moncton lost an exceptional citizen when Henry Murphy, 85, died. A member of Parliament under Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent and a long-serving provincial court judge, he will be greatly missed.

Oral Questions

Proud of his Irish heritage and rural roots in Melrose, New Brunswick, as a young man he joined the merchant marines, was a miner in northern Ontario and served in the army during World War II before settling on law.

He met his “Irish rose”, Joan Barry of Saint John, and had four children, including Michael Barry Murphy, the current provincial health minister in New Brunswick.

As a judge for over 35 years, he was harsh when needed, and compassionate when it was best for the community. Respected by prosecutors, judges and defence lawyers, he was the ilk of judge the current government should learn to respect.

“He was a fair man”, said crown prosecutor Anthony Allman. “He always looked out for the average person and he was a champion of the little man”, said defence lawyer Wendell Maxwell.

May the rain fall soft upon Henry's fields and may the wind be always at his back.

May he rest in peace.

* * *

LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently Liberal Tom Axworthy, the man charged with leading Liberal Party renewal, revealed that the Liberals have been hiding a dirty little secret—get this everyone—that Liberals could not keep their promises to Canadians. That is like a flasher admitting to his victims that he is not wearing any briefs. No shock here.

Canadians figured out the Liberals back on January 23. It only took Mr. Axworthy 10 months and an impending Liberal convention to finally admit that Liberals are promise breakers. What does he propose the Liberal Party do? Make more promises of course.

Before they get caught up in their self-congratulatory lovefest and collective amnesia at their convention, let us remember what the Liberals will try desperately to forget this week. The Liberals promised to fix health care for a generation, and then did not. The Liberals promised to scrap the GST, and then did not. The Liberals promised to tear up NAFTA, and then did not. The Liberals promised a new era of ethics, Gomery. Then Canadians told them they did not.

It is no secret why Canadians kicked the Liberals to the opposition curb.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is getting a reputation for being economical with the truth. The Prime Minister claims internationally that he supports Kyoto while he winks at home to his friends as he kills programs to stop climate change.

This weekend the head of the UN environment program stated that Canada's step back from Kyoto was deeply regrettable and even dangerous. Having already killed 15 climate change programs this spring, why is the government now putting the boot to five key climate change programs for agriculture and then cynically demanding that public servants take the fall for the ending of the programs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition represents a government that had a record of putting Canada 35% above Kyoto targets and rising. The report of the environment commissioner suggested that it would even worsen over the next few years.

Our government has moved quickly to try to reverse that trend and to make sure that the money we spend on environmental programs, and we are spending a great deal, is spent effectively in the future.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is actually acting to plunge us deeper into the hole, not take us out of it. That is crazy.

While the Prime Minister has Canadians wondering about their environmental future, the finance minister is engaged in an exercise of bafflegab about the economy never before seen in our country.

The minister has made up something he now calls the national net debt, but there is no financial voice in the country that takes this malarkey seriously. The problem is that his deliberate confusion is not helpful for our citizens and it is not helpful for our capital markets.

Why will the government not be honest on the most basic facts about the economy? When will we get the truth from the finance minister, flim-flam Flaherty?

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition surely does not need lessons from the Speaker on using members' names in the House. He knows that he has got to refer to them by title. The rest of the stuff we have to do without. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the Leader of the Opposition is talking about. I can tell him as an economist that the definition of net debt is gross debt minus financial assets. That is what net debt is.

There is an OECD standard for that. The Minister of Finance has indicated that according to that OECD standard this government's target will be to have total government net debt disappear by the year 2021.

* * *

● (1420)

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, you will appreciate I was not naming a member; I was referring to a state of mind over there.

[Translation]

Canadians cannot trust this government when it comes to the environment and climate change. Now it has no credibility on the debt issue and every time it talks about taxes and priorities, it is trying to manipulate Canadians.

Why will the Prime Minister not admit that he could not care less about the environment or about the very foundations of our economy? Or is this just one more thing we have to accept in this government's cruel new world?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, quite simply, this government has reduced taxes for all taxpayers in this country. This government has invested in major social programs and is paying off the country's debt. The only reason the Leader of the Opposition is asking these ridiculous questions is that he has nothing better to criticize.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, criticism of the Conservative government is mounting. Today, the executive director of the United Nations environment program stated that the international community was disappointed by Canada in Nairobi, that the international community regrets that Canada has reneged on its commitments. Because of the Conservatives, our country is unfortunately lumped with the United States and Australia in terms of environmental policy.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to the voices speaking out against his environmental approach so lacking in credibility?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, actually the environment minister had very good meetings with her international counterparts and they were establishing a workshop that will be held within weeks. The EU, U.K. and United States will all be participating in discussions on carbon trading.

This government takes climate change seriously. The party that has zero credibility on environmental issues is the Liberal Party. For 13 years the Liberals did absolutely nothing and were a total embarrassment in Kenya.

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the UNEP executive director also stated that Canada's lack of a clear program with regard to the Kyoto protocol hampers the most disadvantaged countries by cutting \$5 million allocated to fight global warming. It also eliminates business opportunities for Canadian companies that could have benefited from this mechanism. Too bad for the made in Canada plan.

Why is the minister, with her smoke-and-mirrors plan, not doing anything to help developing countries, Canadian entrepreneurs and the health of our planet?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is hopelessly wrong.

Oral Questions

The environment minister stayed in Kenya for an extra couple of days and a MOU on conservation was signed with the Kenya government.

This government has a great reputation on the international stage. It is the Liberal Party that shamed Canada on the environmental issues because for 13 years it did absolutely nothing. We now have a report that it wants to increase the emissions by 47%.

This government is taking action on environmental issues.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last week the Prime Minister tabled a motion in the House of Commons recognizing that Quebecers form a nation. He also stated that he wished to limit federal government spending power in areas of jurisdiction belonging to Quebec and the provinces.

Accordingly, will the Prime Minister give Quebec its fair share of the \$260 million that he announced for his Canadian strategy for cancer control, a program in the field of health care, which is a Quebec jurisdiction?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as far as the Canadian strategy for cancer control is concerned, this government obviously intends to collaborate fully with the provinces.

That is the first question from the leader of the Bloc Québécois following his about-turn on the resolution. This is important, because after 40 years of the sovereignist movement, 16 years of the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons and two referendums, the people of Quebec have forced him to recognize that the Canadian identity is part of the Quebec identity.

• (1425)

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, that will be part of the debate. The Prime Minister will go down in history as the Prime Minister of the first country to have recognized that Quebecers form a nation. There will be others in the future.

That being said, the Prime Minister has recognized the Quebec nation and he has promised to respect Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, but he is incapable of taking concrete, consistent action.

Is the Prime Minister going to take action so that the federal government withdraws from Quebec's areas of jurisdictions and compensates Quebec financially, as Quebec has asked, for example, for the cancer control program, and to do so unconditionally?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have got this motion adopted in the House of Commons. I hope that this evening the House will adopt this government motion, because Quebecers want recognition, respect and reconciliation. This is all that this government delivered and this is what Quebecers want; they do not want another referendum.

*Oral Questions***SECURITIES INDUSTRY**

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister recognizes the nation of Quebec and, in the same breath, says that he does not want to interfere in Quebec's jurisdictions. But the federal government's intentions with respect to securities are clear: it wants to take over that sector.

Given that Quebec's Liberal finance minister does not want to transfer his responsibilities for the securities sector to the federal government, will the Prime Minister promise to respect Quebec's wishes?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of our discussions with respect to fiscal balance and the state of the economic union in Canada, the finance ministers have discussed issues relating to mobility between the provinces in Canada of goods, services and people. We have also discussed the reality that we have 13 securities regulators in the country which impedes the movement of capital. There is a plan among the provinces relating to the passport system that has some merit and with respect to which there has been some activity. I look forward to having further discussions concerning the efficacy of a common securities regulator with the finance ministers in December.

[Translation]

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to cloud the issue.

How can it boast about wanting to respect Quebec's jurisdictions at all costs and, at the same time, authorize the Minister of Finance to set up a common securities regulator, when securities regulation has always been Quebec's responsibility?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want the hon. member to understand clearly that what has been discussed and what has been put forward in some of the reports, including the report by Purdy Crawford which had representations from across the country, is not a federal securities regulator. It is a common securities regulator for our country, with representatives, equal representation from the provincial governments and from the Government of Canada.

* * *

HOMELESSNESS

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the homelessness crisis is growing right across the country. In the Prime Minister's own hometown of Calgary the officials are telling us that the number of people sleeping in the streets is up by 238%. There have been three homeless deaths in that community. The crisis is spreading everywhere, even as far as places like Fort McMurray.

Every Canadian has the right to affordable shelter, but the Prime Minister, like the previous one, does not seem to care.

Why does he come up with billions of dollars for tax cuts for profitable corporations, but nothing for the homeless who need a roof over their heads?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that the home-

lessness situation in our country is a terrible one. That is why one of our earliest moves was to extend the national homelessness initiative. To that, we added \$37 million that had gone unspent by the previous government.

This is a very unfortunate situation as cities grow. We want to work with those communities and the provinces to try to not only alleviate homelessness, but to eliminate it entirely by helping those people achieve what they need to achieve to keep them safe and sound and off the street.

● (1430)

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after 13 years of what we saw from the Liberals, the people helping the homeless are stretching absolutely every penny to try to prevent the tidal waves of deaths that happen when we have these cold snaps.

Contrary to what the minister has just said, where she claims that she has somehow extended the funding for programs for the homeless, the fact is there has been no extension. Those programs are closing right now in communities all over the country, right as the coldest weather is hitting. The latest one we heard about is in London, for heaven's sake.

Why will the Prime Minister not stand in his place now and say that there will be funding for the homeless and affordable housing in our country?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has his facts wrong. All of our national homelessness initiative programs have been continued through March 2007. Those organizations have received their funding, just as they have for the last several years. In fact, there is \$37 million more available to them this year.

We are working hard to ensure that this money makes a difference on the streets where it is really needed.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week in a piece of Enron accounting, the finance minister figured that instead of shooting for a real goal, he would simply move the goalposts. He decided to offset the government's debt with all the money in the Canada pension plan. This is the second time in a few short months that the minister has tried to monkey around with the CPP.

Does he still not understand that it is the people of Canada, not the government, who are the owners of the Canada pension plan?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe what the member is referring to is the idea of net debt, that is assets and liabilities being even. That is where we want to go. We want to accomplish the elimination of the net debt in Canada by 2021. That will mean we have to reduce taxes each year. We will do that with the savings we get by reducing debt each year.

Oral Questions

That is a tax back guarantee for Canadians, as has been done in Sweden, as has been done in Australia, as has been done in New Zealand, accomplishing the elimination of net debt.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the C.D. Howe Institute does not agree with that Enron accounting when it says that the CPP money is for pensions, not for government.

The *National Post* put it best when it said that the government is playing a dangerous game with the pension system.

Did the minister not learn last spring that Canadians get anxious when he messes around with their pension money? When will he stop putting his sticky fingers in the pensions of Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear the member for Markham—Unionville quote the *National Post*.

The concept of net debt is not foreign to the party opposite. In the fiscal update last year, on page 67, there is a table comparing Canada's total government net debt to other G-7 countries. The member's own government used those figures a year ago. It is a worthy goal for our country to eliminate net debt by 2021.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in the past, private sector firms established the federal government's financial projections.

This year, in order to conceal the truth from Canadians, the department is predicting higher surpluses than the private-sector experts.

The Minister of Finance will not balance his budget using Norbourg's accounting formula.

Why is the minister so determined to put the country back into a deficit?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is just the opposite. We are determined to eliminate the net debt and to guarantee tax reductions each and every year for Canadians.

What was new in the update was the Department of Finance offered its own government view, which had not been done before. This was in addition to the projections by the private sector forecasters. That is a new step in transparency, openness and accountability to the people of Canada.

• (1435)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians should be worried to see a government and a finance minister play with figures so skilfully.

The minister knows the recipe for a deficit by heart. In fact, he can whip up a deficit with his eyes closed.

The Minister of Finance should know that there is a very fine line between a surplus and a deficit.

Why did the Minister of Finance not learn his lesson when he was minister of finance of Ontario? Putting one province into the red was

not enough; now, he wants to put the whole country into a deficit. Why?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has his facts wrong. When I was finance minister provincially, we had a surplus and we ensured that we had a surplus, just as we do federally.

I do say to the member opposite—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I am sure the Minister of Finance appreciates all the help with his answer, but he seems to be managing and we have to be able to hear him.

The Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should look at the document we produced on Thursday and see that it is better to have more information for the people of Canada than less. We published the four private sector forecasters and we set out clearly what they said. In addition, for the first time, we gave the view of the Government of Canada. That is more information, not less.

* * *

[*Translation*]

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Department of Natural Resources must once again prepare for additional cuts to climate change programs, while emails from the Privy Council and Department of Natural Resources are calling on public servants to withdraw all references to the Kyoto protocol and to dismantle the climate change website.

Will the government finally admit that, contrary to what the Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment are saying about respecting the Kyoto protocol, those decisions speak for themselves and prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the government completely rejects Kyoto?

[*English*]

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just utter nonsense. I cannot believe Bloc members are getting down to which websites are referring to what.

If they would go to climatechange.gc.ca, they would see it states, "We appreciate your interest in the important issue of climate change", and it redirects them to an Environment Canada website or a Natural Resources Canada website.

This is getting beyond pathetic.

After 13 years of inaction by the previous government, when greenhouse gases skyrocketed to 35%, this government is looking to make changes. It will bring in real reductions, help Canadians and make a meaningful difference.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the United Nations Environment Program chairman stated that the Canadian government's sudden about-face regarding the Kyoto protocol could prevent Quebec and Canadian companies from accessing a carbon credit trading market that is expected to total \$100 billion dollars within 10 years.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that his stubborn insistence on pulling back from the Kyoto protocol could seriously harm the Quebec and Canadian economies, as well as marginalize us on the world stage when it comes to the environment?

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is absolutely wrong. The government is totally committed to the Kyoto protocol.

The problem is, after 13 years of Liberal inaction, we had a target that would have taken us 47% above the Kyoto target and sent \$20 billion out of Canada.

Why would the members of the Bloc support that philosophy? It makes absolutely no sense. Either they do not know what they are talking about or they really do not support environmental issues.

* * *

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, grain producers from Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean met this morning with the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food in order to show him that the farm income support program is not suitable for Quebec, which the minister acknowledged. Despite the existence of a subsidy program, the money is not getting to the producers in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Will the minister admit that he has to implement a specific and more flexible program that is better suited to Quebec's producers, in order to allow them to also benefit from the federal subsidies?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that grain prices seem to be on the rebound. This is good news for farmers from coast to coast.

However, federal and provincial ministers, at their last federal-provincial meeting in Calgary two weeks ago, acknowledged that there were gaps in the current BRM funding. We are working with the province of Quebec and the rest of our provincial counterparts to ensure we fill those gaps.

We are meeting with farmers in 25 open meetings this January to ensure that we get it right.

● (1440)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the minister's determination to implement a program coast to coast heavily penalizes grain producers in Quebec. Their situation has nothing to do with that of western Canada. The minister has a duty to also help the grain producers in Quebec.

Does he intend to do so by attending the next UPA conference, which will be held in Quebec City in early December, and making an announcement there?

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 remind my dear colleague that the Bloc Québécois will never create a program to help producers in Quebec. Currently, over \$280 million has been put into Quebec's coffers and, by the end of the year, there will be over \$400 million in total.

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[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, experts are using words like "flim-flam" and "skulduggery" to describe last week's economic statement.

By using total government net debt as their primary measurement, the Conservatives lump all governments together, federal, provincial, municipal, to obscure \$481 billion in accumulated federal deficits, and they are counting the assets of the CPP as if they could be liquidated to pay down those deficits.

Will the minister confirm that federal debt, a generation from now, will still total \$436 billion?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the net debt will be eliminated by 2021. That is exactly the same measure the member for Wascana used last year in his fiscal update. He should be careful about calling himself names.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister has just told a barefaced falsehood. The measure used last year was federal debt.

Last year we also announced \$25 billion in personal income tax reductions. In the minister's document, he claims \$5.6 billion in personal tax reductions over the next five years. He takes away \$25 billion and gives back \$5.6 billion. That is 400% worse. Why?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member, I am sure, has forgotten, and that must be why. He should look at page 67 of his fiscal update last year to see how he used net debt at that time.

On tax reduction, we will guarantee tax reductions each and every year going forward. About his purported tax reductions, I do not know if that was budget number one, or the budget that was done in the hotel room in Toronto with the NDP, or the wish list of last November.

The member should relax. He is going to hurt himself.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we know how this government has already spoiled our relations with China. In the past few days, the Minister of Finance has put out feelers about wanting to use harsh measures against certain foreign investment.

What legislative measures does he intend to introduce in this House to control certain foreign investment, and what type of investment?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are a trading nation. We are one of the great trading nations of the world and we intend to continue that practice. There are foreign investment reviews as the member opposite knows. There is concern from time to time, were it to happen, that a state controlled enterprise would be interested in acquiring assets in Canada. That is something that we would review in the normal course.

[Translation]

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot act on impulse and decide on foreign investment to suit his mood.

Will he ask the House for certain specific power? He does not at this time have the power to use this type of control. Will he ask this House for such power?

● (1445)

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I am sure the member opposite knows, the Minister of Industry has that power under the Foreign Investment Review Act to ensure the best interests of Canada and the net interests of Canada. It is important that we protect Canada and we protect Canada's assets in certain circumstances where foreign state controlled interests might be involved.

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HEALTH

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Health made a major announcement on Friday in regard to the fight against cancer in Canada. Pat Kelly, the national program director of the Campaign to Control Cancer, praised this announcement saying that the creation of the Canadian partnership against cancer was a good thing because the federal government had been missing in action in the war on cancer.

Could the Minister of Health share some details on why it was important to take action?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on Friday the Prime Minister indicated that there would be \$260 million over the next five years to help coordinate the efforts of the cancer community to fight this terrible disease and save hundreds of thousands of Canadian lives over the next 30 years.

Here is what others have said about this particular proposal. Dr. Barbara Whyllie, CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, said,

“Canada is taking action against cancer and we're excited”. The Prostate Cancer Research Foundation of Canada, along with more than 55 other leading cancer organizations, applaud the federal government announcement. We are delivering and we are proud of it.

* * *

BROADCASTING INDUSTRY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the CRTC is currently reviewing a proposal by Canadian private broadcasters to create a new viewer tax on television. This is unacceptable. This can slap an additional \$7 to every cable bill in this country. Canadians will not get better service, will not get better choice, and will not get better Canadian content. They will just have an extra bill at the end of the day. In fact, they are going to get nothing, zilch.

Will the minister kill this crazy TV tax right now?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the CRTC's deliberations are independent of the government. This minister will be monitoring those proceedings and we will act accordingly.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when it is a bad idea, it does not have to be monitored, it can be stopped. This TV tax is another Conservative cash grab from ordinary Canadians.

Speaking of letting working people down, when will the government announce a new CRTC chair? We know that it has met and interviewed candidates and I know one of those candidates, Mr. Perrin Beatty, seems like the perfect partisan match. This is the same Perrin Beatty who opposes the federal accountability act and the same Perrin Beatty who did nothing for our public broadcasters as Liberals removed millions from their coffers.

Will the minister admit that Mr. Beatty is going to be the new czar of the Conservative TV tax?

Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government believes in accountability and transparency. That is why we will allow the CRTC to do its job. That is why we wanted a proper appointments process, which the opposition parties did not support. We will, in an accountable manner, appoint a qualified CRTC chair as well as monitor the CRTC.

* * *

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada has world-class scientific research facilities, but the key federal program that has made that possible, the Canada Foundation for Innovation, runs out of cash today.

Since 1997 the CFI has leveraged more than \$11 billion in research. There was nothing in the budget, nothing in the economic update, and the minister has even dropped the word “innovate” from the department.

Does the minister have a plan to continue the Canada Foundation for Innovation?

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that my opposition colleague asked about that because it gives us the opportunity to say loud and clear in this House that this government believes in competitiveness. It believes in the mission of the organization she just mentioned. That is why we decided to conduct real consultations and, in the next budget, we will be allocating the necessary funds.

[English]

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that did not answer my question. It is not just the CFI that is at risk, but so is the community access program, a program that gives Internet access to the most remote communities in Canada.

Does the minister not know that if one does not have Internet access one is just out of the game? Research, innovation, education and Internet access, does the minister not understand the importance of these investments or does he just lack the clout at the cabinet table?

• (1450)

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we believe in the community access program and that is why we have funding until the end of next year. That is a good program and we are able to defend this decision to achieve our goal.

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has to do more than consult. The previous Liberal government took pride in being Canada's leader in innovation, information and learning. We made investments every year to expand research at our colleges and universities like Western and Fanshawe, and improve access to learning for all Canadians. However, that has all stopped now thanks to the government.

Why did the government kick the research community in the stomach by letting the Canada Foundation for Innovation starve to death?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, it is all false. It is not true what my colleague is telling the House today. We believe in competitiveness. We believe in the right funding and we are going to act like that. That is why we are having consultations with the university community and the research community. We will have a program that will adapt to their needs.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that if you do not fit the Prime Minister's definition of a voter, he could not care less about you.

Take, for example, the community access program, which is very popular across the country. This program makes modern means of communication accessible to Canadians, particularly those living in rural areas.

The government has already disappointed Canadians with mean-spirited cuts to research and literacy. Will it once again attack thousands of Canadians by cutting the community access program?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is strange that my opposition colleague should ask the question now, given that the program ended in September. The previous government decided to abolish this program. We brought it back, ensuring that it would be available for Canadians in the future.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a *Zone Libre* report on natural health products aired last Friday on Radio-Canada, Julia Hill, a director at Health Canada, reacted to journalist Luc Chartrand's revelations by saying, "I would need details to be able to launch an investigation immediately".

Does the Minister of Health not understand that it is high time to present Health Canada with its responsibilities and to demand that the department do its job with respect to controlling the health products market, given that public health is at stake?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in addition, a B.C. company successfully fooled Health Canada into granting it a licence for a simple amateur radio set equipped with an argon lamp, which is supposed to treat illnesses such as hepatitis C, the Gulf War syndrome and cancer.

How can the minister justify Health Canada's decision to authorize, without any prior testing, the sale of a device under a commercial licence? Again, does that not pose a concern where public health is concerned?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, protecting the health of all Canadians is a priority for our government, and I can assure the members of this House that I am looking into the specific situation raised by the hon. member. I would also like to give the assurance that I will take effective action, as required, if there turns out to be a problem.

* * *

[English]

CHILD CARE

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government continues to ignore the voices of Canadian women. It has refused to implement pay equity legislation. It has made multi-million dollar cuts to Status of Women and eliminated equality from its mandate. It cancelled a national early learning and child care program, slashing 25,000 spaces in Ontario alone, ensuring that Canada will lag behind other nations.

Why has the government not delivered a single space in child care?

Oral Questions

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we had three parts to our universal child care plan. The first was delivering on the money that the previous government promised but never delivered. There was an amount of \$650 million to help provinces create spaces. The second part was our delivery of the universal child care benefit. Canadians voted for that. The Liberals voted against it and now they are trying to take that away from Canadian families.

* * *

● (1455)

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the former Liberal government air policy agreements were done in a piecemeal fashion and kept Canadians from fully benefiting from more choices in air transportation. Earlier this morning the Minister of Transport announced the blue sky international air policy.

Could the minister inform the House how this will benefit the air transportation industry and all Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for that excellent question and he certainly raises some very good points. I will get back to the member as soon as possible.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Thursday the government announced in its economic update a requirement that provinces, territories and municipalities consider P3 options. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities said, "We are concerned that this new funding requirement may create unnecessary red tape and become a barrier to participation by municipalities".

Why is the government creating unnecessary red tape and even more barriers to addressing our urgent infrastructure deficit?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so that the member is clear in what is being proposed, in projects of national economic significance the proponents will be asked to consider public private partnerships which have been done around the world and are being done now in British Columbia, Ontario and other places in Canada. This is an obligation to consider an option in the best interests of the best financing available for large public projects in Canada.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt it is being done around the world, but it is also failing around the world. The *British Medical Journal* found that P3 hospitals were up to 60% more expensive than public hospitals. The Australian state auditor found that its P3 hospitals cost twice as much. The New Brunswick auditor general found that a P3 school cost over \$700,000 more than if the government had built it alone.

The world has learned that P3s do not work. Will the government learn that lesson and stop this disastrous policy before more Canadian tax dollars are wasted?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I regret the member's ideological opposition to public private partnerships, but they are a way of financing and a way of transferring risk that sometimes works well on large public projects. It has been done with respect to two hospitals in the province of Ontario by the Liberal government of the province of Ontario and they are being pursued with roads and bridges, and other initiatives by the Liberal government of the province of British Columbia.

* * *

STATUS OF WOMEN

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after months of trying, we still cannot get any answers or even any understanding of women's issues from the government and this minister in particular.

I have a question for the chair of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women. Could she tell the House what plans the committee has on its upcoming agenda to address the issues of early learning and child care and income security reform as outlined in the Liberal women's caucus pink book released today?

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we all know, women make up a very significant part of our workforce and continue to face enormous roadblocks.

In light of these challenges, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women will be conducting a study on what measures we can take to improve their economic security. We are also well aware of the need to provide choices in many areas to reduce the hurdles, as is evident in the Liberal pink book that was released today.

I can assure all members that the committee will come forth with some very progressive recommendations as we move forward in a very positive exercise.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many farmers in my riding of Selkirk—Interlake and other farmers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba have suffered severe spring flooding over the past two years because of above average rainfall. Because of this, many cannot plant anything or even maintain their land.

Could the Minister of Agriculture update this House on what the government is doing to help these farmers restore their land and get back on their feet?

● (1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there was extreme difficulty due to flooding in many ridings across the country. That is why on May 23 of this year we announced a \$50 million cover crop program.

Routine Proceedings

Over 10,000 farmers applied for that program. It has been a very successful program. On Friday, I announced another \$40 million to go into that program. Every one of the farmers will get the money that is coming to them.

* * *

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the Québécois motion is very concerning for many Canadians and word now is that the government's Minister for Sport and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has just resigned because of it.

Could the Prime Minister please brief this House on this development and tell us whether he is ready to withdraw this divisive motion?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government believes strongly that the time has come for a national reconciliation. That is why we put forward the motion before the House today. It recognizes the Quebec nation within a united Canada. We believe that this is the kind of respect and reconciliation that Quebeckers are looking for. We are pleased with the reaction that the motion has received across the country and urge all members of the House to vote for it this evening.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the right hon. Prime Minister would like to answer this frank and simple question. Has his minister resigned?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add to my previous answer. Obviously we will be watching to see how all members vote on this motion this evening.

* * *

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of Mr. Steve MacLean, a Canadian astronaut who has served aboard two space shuttle missions and who is the second Canadian to walk in space.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

* * *

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1), I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion to amend the Excise Tax Act, the Excise Act, 2001 and the Air Travellers Security Charge Act, and to make related amendments to other acts.

I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration of the motion.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1505)

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to three petitions.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan and the Old Age Security Act.

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

* * *

BANK ACT

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-37, An Act to amend the law governing financial institutions and to provide for related and consequential matters.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, related to Canadian museums.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. This report deals with Bill C-295, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

Further to the Speaker's ruling of November 7, the committee recommends the following:

—that the member for Vancouver Island North have the option of Bill C-295 being debated in the House for a second hour but the bill will be declared non-votable; or [the member] can advise the Speaker in writing within five days of the adoption of this report that she wishes to have

(1) Bill C-295 withdrawn and the order for second reading discharged; and

(2) that she be given a period of up to 20 sitting days from the adoption of this report to specify another item of Private Members' Business, and, notwithstanding any other Standing Order, such item shall be immediately placed at the bottom of the Order of Precedence; such item shall be entitled to two hours of debate and shall be votable, subject to the application of Standing Orders 86 to 99.

I intend to seek concurrence in this report later this day.

INVESTMENT CANADA ACT

Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-386, An Act to amend the Investment Canada Act (foreign investments).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table my private member's bill, which would give the government the power to reject a takeover of a Canadian company if it was deemed not to be in our national interest. This test would go beyond the current net economic benefit test and is prompted by me due to the recent spate of takeovers of some of our major natural resource companies, such as Inco and Falconbridge.

I believe that in Canada we need to consciously decide whether our homegrown industries, especially our natural resource companies, should be in the hands of non-Canadians. We need to have a debate in this country. We should not allow this to happen by default, which is what is happening now.

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

* * *

• (1510)

NATIONAL ECOSYSTEMS COUNCIL OF CANADA ACT

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-387, An Act respecting the National Ecosystems Council of Canada.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce my private member's bill. If passed, it would see the establishment of the national ecosystems council of Canada. The impetus for the introduction of this bill is based on my desire to see the health of Lake Winnipeg's watershed and other watersheds across Canada restored. If this council is established, watersheds across Canada would receive the necessary attention to restore their health.

In the case of Lake Winnipeg, it would ensure the viability of the economy it supports and ensure that it remains a gathering spot for Manitobans for generations to come. Lake Winnipeg was recently featured in a national magazine as a "forgotten lake". This national treasure must not be forgotten. It is beloved to most Manitobans. A plan for restoration and preservation is an imperative.

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

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CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-388, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to prevent access to child pornography).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand today in the House to introduce my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to prevent access to child pornography), a law that will come to be honoured as Holly's law, in memory of Holly Jones, a young girl whose life was taken at the hands of a man who admitted to being a user of child pornography.

Holly's law will further act to address one of the most hideous and unacceptable acts that we as a society rightfully deplore: child pornography. The intent of this bill is to hold these criminals further accountable for their actions. The bill would make it an offence for

Routine Proceedings

the person who possesses this material to allow for further distribution or to possess it in such a way as to possibly allow it to fall into the possession of another person. It is extremely important to note that the bill is only part of a more comprehensive approach to addressing the issue. The bill would act in conjunction with other laws that are in place and also with laws that are in the process of being brought forward to aggressively combat child pornography in our society.

I would like to thank those in my community of Davenport who have helped to fight against child pornography, including Virginia Novak and Jack Fava. As I have noted, I would also like to dedicate this bill to the memory of Holly Jones, a cherished and wonderful young girl who lived in Davenport. I hope my colleagues will support my bill so that we can more effectively fight child pornography.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 23rd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding Bill C-295, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers), presented to the House earlier this day be concurred in.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Cambridge have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

RIGHTS OF THE UNBORN

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions today from the wonderful town of Olds in my riding of Wild Rose. The first petition calls on Parliament to enact legislation which would recognize unborn children as separate victims when they are injured or killed during the commission of an offence against their mothers, allowing two charges to be laid against the offender instead of just one.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second petition from the same area calls upon Parliament to reopen the issue of marriage in this Parliament in order to repeal or amend the Marriage for Civil Purposes Act to promote and defend marriage as the lawful union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

Routine Proceedings

● (1515)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions, all of which are of the same nature. They wish to have marriage recognized as between a man and a woman. These petitions are from a variety of constituents.

UNDOCUMENTED WORKERS

Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again I rise in the House to present a petition signed by many calling on Parliament to immediately halt the deportation of undocumented workers and to find a humane and logical solution to this situation.

Last Saturday I had the opportunity to be at a protest organized by Victor Almeida of the carpenters union. The protest had to do with the fact that there are many undocumented workers being taken advantage of by employers and because they are not being regulated by the government the abuse continues to this day. Unless we find a humane solution, this abuse will not stop. The minister should put an end to this unjust situation that is taking place with undocumented workers.

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it does not matter whether one lives on East Hill or Cascade in my riding, on Ash Street or Swan Crescent, or in Broderick or Viscount, wherever one lives in Blackstrap, it appears that most people want to preserve the traditional definition of marriage. I would like to present this petition for those who live in my riding who have specifically asked me to present this to the House of Commons to preserve this precious definition of marriage.

* * *

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, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 101 and 102.

[Text]

Question No. 101—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With regard to the government's \$55 million cut to the Summer Career Placement Program, as announced on September 25, 2006: (a) how many jobs will be lost in the not-for-profit sector; and (b) how many jobs will be lost among small businesses due to the loss of such funds?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our unemployment rate, Canada is truly in an enviable position. We are in the midst of our best labour market in decades. Our overall participation rate for workers is one of the highest in the G-8 and our unemployment rate is at a 30-year low. Students are benefiting from the strong economy. Statistics Canada reported that in 2006, students had their best August of employment in three years.

Canada's new government is refocusing the summer youth employment strategy where jobs are harder to find, by spending \$45 million per year to help students who are having difficulty finding summer jobs.

We are also 100% committed to funding for the youth employment strategy, which is specifically targeted at youth at risk, aboriginal youth, and high youth unemployment areas.

This government has also led the way in encouraging Canadians to become apprentices, and we have invested \$500 million in these programs. Many young people will greatly benefit from this new initiative.

The facts are clear. When this government examined the spending in the summer career placement programs, we found that many employers would have provided these jobs even if they did not receive one cent in funding.

Canada's new government will instead focus funding where students need help, whether it is in rural communities, for new Canadians, or targeted at other barriers to employment. We will help students where they actually need it. The effect of our new program will be known when we evaluate the 2007 summer career placements applications.

I assure the member that the department will honour its ongoing commitment to help youth in need make the transition to the labour market.

Question No. 102—**Ms. Olivia Chow:**

With regard to the Toronto Port Authority: (a) what safety standards are being violated should the Q400 operated by Porter Airlines land at the Toronto City Centre Airport without the installation of an Instrument Landing System (ILS); (b) what directives have been given to NAV Canada to speed up the installation of an ILS system at the Toronto City Centre Airport; and (c) were any government funds used to support the purchase and installation of such a system at the Toronto City Centre Airport?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no regulatory requirement to have an installed and functioning instrument landing system, ILS, at Toronto City Centre Airport, or at any other airport in Canada, to operate the Bombardier DHC-8, Q400, aircraft.

The decision to install an ILS at Toronto City Centre Airport was undertaken by NAV Canada, Porter Airlines Inc. and the Toronto Port Authority. Transport Canada did not direct NAV Canada to install the system.

Federal government funds were not used to purchase or install an ILS system at Toronto City Centre Airport.

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

THE QUÉBÉCOIS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the motion that this question be now put.

The Speaker: Before question period, the hon. member for Outremont had the floor, with four minutes remaining.

The hon. member now has the floor.

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, four minutes is not very long, but I will use what time I have.

Before question period, I was saying how flexible Canadian federalism had been. In addition—and I am dating myself a little here—for those who have followed the constitutional issue and remember what we went through with the Meech Lake accords, each of the concepts has gradually resurfaced in the past 20 to 25 years. In recent years, we have witnessed another expression of this flexibility with the development of the concept of asymmetrical federalism.

During the term of the government led by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, we witnessed the signing of an agreement on health that the current government is forever boasting about. This Conservative government constantly wants to take credit for this wonderful agreement on health, which provided for a major transfer of \$41 billion over 10 years. When the agreement was signed, we saw that the government was able to play a national role, with what I would call jealous respect for the provinces' jurisdictions.

I want to pay tribute to my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie, who presided over the signing of many agreements with Quebec.

I will never forget the day we signed the agreement on parental leave, a long-awaited agreement that, once again, enabled Quebec to provide more generous parental leave for our fellow citizens, within the Canadian model, Canadian federalism, and at the same time respected Quebec's jurisdictions.

There was also an agreement on child care, which recognized the major progress Quebec had made and its leadership on that issue. Quebec was the inspiration for many other jurisdictions.

Again, this was a model of the flexibility of Canadian federalism, and here again, provincial jurisdictions were respected. Unfortunately, given the ideology of the party opposite, that party did not see fit to continue the program. This is now going to cost the province of Quebec \$800 million, and that is regrettable. It is regrettable because for a party that supposedly wants to restore the fiscal balance, it has dug an \$800 million hole. If we add another \$328 million hole, to bring us up to date in terms of the Kyoto protocol, that makes a hole of over \$1 billion. For a party that has made major commitments regarding the fiscal imbalance, its record cannot be said to be especially glorious. But with this we must recognize that federalism has evolved somewhat. We have managed to sign infrastructure agreements, once again amounting to over \$1 billion, while respecting provincial priorities.

So it is evolving, although too slowly for some. I too have had my impatient moments, but ultimately, I have to say that, today, this is

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the end result of a lot of discussion. It is the end result of a broad political will that has been expressed in various terms. Sometimes we have talked about distinct society; other times, we have talked about the Quebec people; and now we have come to the concept of nation.

At some point, when we may one day be ready to consider constitutional talks, who knows what terminology we will want to use to recognize Quebec's difference? Because basically, we can play semantics all day, but ultimately, the intention is to recognize Quebec's difference, a difference that can be reconciled with Canada's differences. Basically, it is the sum of our differences that makes this country a country respected throughout the world and a country where each one of us can be comfortable with our own personality, with our own history.

That is why I said at the beginning of my speech that this is not a debate we would have wanted, because basically, asking someone else to define one's identity is not necessarily the best thing to do. And it is surprising that it should be the Bloc Québécois asking for that identity to be defined. The most disappointing thing has been to see that the Bloc Québécois, which thinks that it has a different definition of Québécois identity from ours, would decide to come to the rest of Canada seeking that identity. It has been hoist on its own petard, and today, the three federalist parties find themselves offering their hand and saying that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada—

• (1520)

The Speaker: I am sorry that the hon. member's time is up, but there are now five minutes for questions and comments.

The hon. member for West Nova.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his very enlightened speech. This is the second time we have heard him on this matter.

The hon. member has a lot of experience, which he acquired under several governments, including the last government. He had already sat in this House before that. The members of this House know that often these issues are difficult within a government. This calls for discussion within caucus, the government itself, and between ministers. Rumour has it that some hon. members—and even some ministers—were just as surprised to hear the Prime Minister's statement a few days ago, last week, as we were and as Canadians and journalists were.

Can the hon. member imagine a prime minister making such a decision without consulting his ministers, namely his government's Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs?

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, I know that this debate does not lend itself to partisanship. However, when examining the Prime Minister's leadership style, this is not the first of his ministers who was totally ignored. I am told that in this government there are one and a half ministers, that is the Prime Minister who occasionally will deign to consult one of his ministers.

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In the case of this motion, I am told that even his Quebec lieutenant was taken by surprise, as was the Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec. I am told that, on that morning, the latter was wondering if he would still be a minister at the end of the day. I was even told that the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, the Quebec lieutenant, was writing an article for *La Presse* to explain why he was voting against the Quebec nation when all of a sudden he arrived in Parliament and the Prime Minister told him he was in favour of the Quebec nation. Thus, it was a surprise all around. I am under the impression that the federal-provincial relations minister was just as surprised.

In these circumstances, I can understand that a minister wonders what he is doing there. If he is not consulted in the least, if he is not in the loop, it is not worth being a minister. There are rumours circulating in the House that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs may tender his resignation. If he was completely ignored on such a fundamental issue, I can understand his sense of isolation. However, that does not mean that this motion does not have merit and, for my part, I hope that the majority of members in this House will vote for the motion without it bothering their conscience. We must also bear in mind the symbolic value of this motion, the message sent of openness and of reaching out, and that is all. For that reason, one day the country will want to reform its institutions and at that point we will draw inspiration from the discussions we have had these past days.

For the time being, I am not surprised to see that some ministers and some Conservative members are somewhat frustrated. This is not the first time. I am told that since this government was elected, they have been kept in the dark. The government is led by one minister, that is the Prime Minister. The others follow behind somewhat sheepishly, but they do not have a choice unless they wish to lose their jobs.

• (1525)

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member opposite. In particular, it was of great interest that he would suggest that this is a non-partisan debate and then launch into castigation of this government and speculate as to what may or may not have happened in certain caucus meetings. Of course, he would understand full well what it is like to have been in different caucuses. He is essentially saying, “Wash me, but don't make me wet”, but this is nothing new for the slippery member opposite when it comes to his changing positions on federalism.

As a founding member of the Bloc Québécois, he left a federalist party to join the separatist movement and then returned when it was convenient. When he speaks of flexible federalism, is he referring to his own political career of having had affiliations of convenience?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean Lapierre: Mr. Speaker, the difference between the member and me is that my word means something and when I make commitments, I honour them. As for him, everyone knows that his word has no value and that no one can have confidence in him.

I believe that in the development of federalism and the development of my own beliefs, I have remained consistent. I remember the period when the Bloc Québécois was established—the minister was here, I believe—it was a rainbow coalition. I remind him that throughout all that period, I had my membership card in the Quebec Liberal party and every week I spoke with Robert Bourassa. It was at his request, a request from the federalist premier of Quebec that I stayed here for two years. Personally, I had decided to abandon politics in 1990 after the collapse of the Meech Lake Accord.

I believe that this week I am the member who has been the most consistent in my position on the Québécois nation. Several of my colleagues have had to go through all kinds of contortions in trying to revise their positions. For my part, my position has always been consistent.

[*English*]

Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this feels wrong to me. It felt wrong when the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party passed its resolution and it felt wrong when passionate worried debate rose up across the country.

[*Translation*]

It felt even worse last week when the Bloc tabled its motion.

[*English*]

It did not feel less wrong but it felt more hopeful, as if the worst might pass, when the government then presented its counter motion.

[*Translation*]

However, the disease reached its incurable, treacherous peak when the Bloc announced that it would support the government motion—

[*English*]

—saying that Canada will become the first country to officially recognize the Quebec nation and that there will be many other countries that will recognize the nation of Quebec and the country of Quebec.

My country is more than this. Canada is centuries and centuries of aboriginal peoples, their respectful relationship to the land, their culture and history.

[*Translation*]

Canada is the French and the English struggling to survive in a new world filled with difficulties in order to build new lives for themselves. They were different in their languages, their cultures, their religions and their legal systems, but they were committed to the same struggle, to live together; and they succeeded in doing that.

[*English*]

Canada has people from almost everywhere coming here, changing us and themselves in ways exciting and unknown. Canada has immense resources and unimaginable possibilities. Our future is still in the making and still in the becoming.

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Canada is a great global experiment, a true global society that works in the only way our global world of the future can work. Canada matters. It matters to me. It matters to us. It matters to the world. Therefore, when we deal with constitutional change, with things that lay out what we are and shape our future, it matters and it matters a lot.

Meech Lake and Charlottetown, agree with them or not, we examined, we debated and we took time. Meech Lake and Charlottetown felt serious.

This feels wrong because it does not feel as serious as it must be. It feels like games, bad, manipulative, opportunistic games, political games. Box somebody into a corner so they say or do something they do not want to say or do just to get out of the corner, just to save face, for them to box the other guy into say and doing just the same. We all save face and all get into a bigger box, a bigger box called the future, except that box belongs to someone else.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

All these games and manipulations are not for us. They only create a slippery slope for later on.

[*English*]

The public has learned to accept most things political but not this. The stakes are too high. The public is saying that this is their country. The government got itself into this but why should they join it. Canadians want to know why they should let the government do this to them when this is their country.

This is pure politics. All this started with the ludicrous concept of having a debate fundamental to the country based on understanding different understandings of the word “nation”. In the last few days it has deteriorated into the ludicrous reality of such a debate in practice.

For those who want to engage in the debate honestly, seeking definitional clarity, they can forget it. Other parties to the debate want none of it. They want to say “nation” means whatever they want it to mean now and to change definitions whenever they decide they want it to mean something different. They can then go to the public and argue, spin and try to achieve by misunderstanding what they cannot by understanding.

[*Translation*]

When I first arrived in Montreal, what impressed me most was the pride of Quebecers. The English language and American culture had invaded the whole world. The Quebecers had no chance of survival. However, they said “No; not us, not here”. They know who they are and who they will be, forever.

[*English*]

Quebeckers know who they are. They have had to. They could not have made it if they had not. They do not need any official definers to tell them who they are. Some day all Canadians will get down on paper what Canada really is, what Quebec really is and what together we have made ourselves to be. However, it will not happen this way. It cannot happen this way.

[*Translation*]

Does the Bloc really want to convince Canadians outside Quebec to accept Quebec as a nation.? Not at all.

[*English*]

The Bloc wants the process to be so inappropriate that all such Canadians will reject the question. It wants to grease that slippery slope so that Canadians inside Quebec will reject those outside Quebec and the Bloc's cause of independence will be advanced.

The pawn in this game is the public. As Canadians, we feel deeply about our country. Politicians and political advocates for decades have been playing games with our emotions, manipulating them for their/our own purposes. They/we have completely poisoned the well of discussion and debate on this question. No side trusts the other and no citizen trusts any politician.

Though it does not seem this way, the problem is not really the languages of French and English. It is the language of spin, manipulation and bigger agendas. Neither the government's motion nor the resolution of the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party will do anything except create greater division and distrust.

My country Canada is more than this. For me, the motion has no precise language, no precise depth of understanding, no time and mechanism to work this through, no clarity and no support. The government motion should be defeated.

• (1535)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found my hon. colleague's speech rather baffling.

Having seen what has transpired over the past few days, with our Prime Minister, in a very respectful and honourable way, putting forth a motion that addresses and respects the Québécois and recognizes Canada as a united nation with all provinces together within Canada, does the member not agree that this kind of motion shows a deep respect and acknowledgement of the Québécois and the fact that as parliamentarians we are recognizing that Quebec is a nation but a nation within a united Canada?

Instead of playing the games that the member opposite is talking about, which I on this side of the House see as a big political game, with all due respect to the member, does the member not agree that acknowledging it in this way is a very Canadian and very respectful way of doing this?

Hon. Ken Dryden: Mr. Speaker, the problem with this whole debate has to do with the many different understandings of the word “nation”. All we needed to do, after the motion was introduced last Wednesday, was to clarify the statements by the Premier of Quebec in terms of what the motion would represent, in terms of the laws, the reinterpretation of laws and of the different understandings of Quebec internationally. The day after that was the Bloc's statement in terms of what all of this represented. The problem in all of this debate is that we cannot have a debate if we do not have a common understanding of what it is we are debating.

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The word “nation” has many different meanings outside of Quebec. Among most English-speaking Canadians the word “nation” is the same as the word country. My nation, my country. Canada is a nation and it is a country. For most francophones inside Quebec the word “nation” has a different meaning whereby we can have many nations within one country and there is no predetermined destiny of where a nation will become a country.

However, we cannot have the kind of national debate on a subject that is so important and so fundamental when there is no common understanding on what one is debating.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be interested in knowing from the member what it is about the term “united Canada” that he does not understand. Is it not very clear?

If the word “nation” is so difficult to define, why does the member keep using it? I know he uses the word in terms of first nations. Who then are the first nations within this united Canada?

• (1540)

Hon. Ken Dryden: Mr. Speaker, I usually use the phrase “aboriginal peoples” as opposed to “first nations”.

With the motion of last week that added the words “within a united Canada”, I had hoped that would represent a context that would help to more clearly define for average Canadians what nation meant and what we were really doing on this. In the subsequent days that followed that did not happen. In terms of the commentators, they would be using the word in whatever way it was most useful to them.

This question is important to all Canadians, as we have seen in the debate in the last three or four weeks. This is our country and this matters a lot to us. The way in which we get to debate it and resolve it is critical to what we end up resolving. The key to the whole thing is how we end up living with it out the other end.

The story the Bloc members will tell in terms of Quebec has nothing to do with the desire of creating a common understanding about nation. It is nation as a way of creating country.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to take part in this historic debate in this House.

I know that the members of all parties in this House have stated their positions with great emotion and passion for this issue, like the member who has just spoken. It is true, and he was right to do so, because this debate is so important and so fundamental to the future of our country.

[*English*]

This motion goes to the very heart of what makes up a country, what makes up a nation, what it means to be Canadian and what it means to be Québécois. The motion is perhaps an opportunity to remind ourselves how lucky we are to live in Canada and what is at stake when we embark on such a discussion. The motion is perhaps an opportunity to remind ourselves of what is at stake for not only the Québécois but for the entire country.

Many think of Canada as a young nation, a country that has, as has often been said, more geography than history, and yet it is more than a bit ironic that this young country should be one of the most respected, with one of the oldest democracies and one of the oldest and most successful federations on the planet.

As stated by the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, the support of this motion is a generous showing of solidarity. To paraphrase them both, it is a beacon of hope for other nations and a shining example of humanity and harmony. Those are weighty words from current federal leaders which, I think, are quite representative of the dominant view of this House and rare. It is in fact far too rare an instance in which we see a convergence of support in this chamber.

If there ever were such an important cause to rally around I would suggest this is it. National unity and the preservation of Canada are surely something all members of Parliament should agree upon without equivocation or qualification.

While I might take a position contrary to the member opposite from York, no one doubts anyone's loyalty to Canada and no one doubts anyone's passion for what they believe is important to this country.

While this debate may invoke emotions and, in some cases, the inkling of partisanship, we need to bring it back to the fundamental issue of how we preserve this great nation, this incredible fabric woven together over our country's history that is reflective of two founding nations.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

The truth is that Canada is a federation that works. The success of our country has not been achieved by accident, and is not something that can or should be taken for granted.

The Fathers of Confederation chose a form of government that was particularly well suited to the inclusion of regional, linguistic and religious diversity. The best example of that diversity is unquestionably the existence of two major linguistic groups. The presence of Quebec is one of the main factors that led to the creation of Canada as a federation. The founders wanted to build a country that would make room for our diversity.

[*English*]

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, stated emphatically:

I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that by any mode whatever there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or render it inferior to the other; I believe that would be impossible if it were tried, and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible.

Georges-Étienne Cartier stated in the Confederation debates of that time:

We could not legislate for the disappearance of the French Canadians from American soil, but British and French Canadians alike could appreciate and understand their position relative to each other....It is a benefit rather than the inverse, to have a diversity of races.

Let us not refute the intentions of the founders of the Canadian federation. They were all too aware of the need to recognize diversity, differences and specificities of all partners of the federation. They made it work, most important, and they did it under more trying and demanding circumstances than exist today.

Let us not give way to the politics of convenience or short-sightedness. Let us instead demonstrate the same characteristics of our founding fathers, perseverance, fortitude, honourable compromise and most of all, tolerance and mutual respect.

For their part, these traits have been bread in the bone, in the very marrow, in the DNA of Canada's genetic makeup. Canada was premised on the concept that diversity is a permanent characteristic. As the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney said:

Our approach to sustaining that prosperity is, first of all, an inherent flexibility in our Canadian federation that allows us to live together, to celebrate our differences and to understand, in a living way, that to be different does not mean that we are not equal, and to be equal does not mean that we must all be the same.

Mr. Mulroney further added:

Equality in Canada simply means that no one has the right to discriminate against us because of our differences.

[*Translation*]

From a historical standpoint, we learned long ago that we have to be mindful of the accommodations needed in a society where there are two major linguistic groups. Quebecers have always exhibited a constant determination to advance and defend their rights and to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. They have achieved fantastic success, and all of Canada, the whole world in fact, is the richer for it.

Federalism has served us well. Today, it is hard to imagine other arrangements that could have served us as well. A federalism that, 140 years later, is still a model for the rest of the world to follow.

[*English*]

The challenge of accommodating diversity is perhaps one of the most difficult facing the world today. The recent debate in Quebec on what constitutes reasonable accommodation for religious minorities is echoed in similar debates around the globe.

Diversity is a modern reality. Most states in Europe, Asia or Africa contain a variety of languages, religions and cultures. Many of the most successful in dealing with this diversity have chosen the federal system of government.

Looked at from a contemporary world viewpoint, it is apparently homogenous states that are the exception. The nation state, which implies the parallel occurrence of state and ethnic nation, is extremely rare. In fact, there are no ideal nation states. Existing states differ from the ideal in two ways: the population includes minorities; and, they do not include all national groups in their territory.

Today's Canada is a prosperous, politically stable country because we have made diversity an asset rather than a problem or an issue. We embrace and celebrate that diversity rather than refuse it or repel it.

In fact, the economic and fiscal update recently released by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, is a positive signpost in this

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continuum marked by strong economic growth, focused government spending, lower debt and reduced taxes. All of this prosperity is for the benefit of all Canadians.

The advantage Canada plan will further help Canadians build a strong economy by creating the right conditions for Canadians and Canadian businesses to organize, thrive and prosper.

Canadians are able, as a result, to make democratic choices based on respect for human rights. Today, more than ever we understand that accommodating pluralism is not merely a political necessity, it is also a source of pride and enrichment which reflect Canadian values.

Our capacity to adapt as a society, to build institutions that respond to demands of its citizens has served us very well. Federalism is a natural response to governing a large, demographically and regionally diverse country. With 10 provinces, 3 territories, 6 time zones and bordering on 3 oceans, Canada's regional diversity and geographic diversity is obvious.

Our diversity is also reflected in our two official languages. Almost all Canadians speak English, 85%, or French, 31%, and one in five also speaks a non-official language. These diversities do not reflect the intangible benefits of language and culture in our nation's rich fabric. It goes beyond far beyond language and culture. These are things cannot always be grasped, or seen or felt, but they are there and they breathe in every community throughout the land.

Canada is increasingly urban and multicultural. In 2001 nearly 80% of Canadians lived in cities of over 10,000. In today's Canada, immigration represents 41% of the growth, a 2004 figure, and new Canadians tend to settle in our major urban centres, including Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal to mention a few.

There is also no denying the enduring contributions of our earliest people, our first nations, Canada's aboriginal people.

As well, in many areas of the country, we have the contribution of the original pioneers who came to make their homes in this vast and often harsh land, the Prairies, the communities that dot our coastline and our majestic north.

Canada is made up of much more than large city centres. The small towns, communities, rural life in our country continues to be an important part of the fabric.

Ours is an enormous and awesome country in size and soul, one of governance and getting along, of balance, of benefit, of being benevolent, all Canadian personality traits.

Beyond accommodating regional preferences and diversity, Canadian federalism has provided an environment in which contemporary national, provincial and cultural identities have flourished. Federalism allows and encourages experimentation in political, social and economic matters.

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The open federalism approach of the Prime Minister is in keeping with that modern nation state, mature and confident in the overall desire to succeed in a united and strong Canada. The willingness to succeed with les Québécois as a nation of people among others within a strong and united Canada is the abiding and unbending part of the equation.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Canadian federalism is not—as the Bloc Québécois would have us believe—a yoke that has hindered the development of Quebec. Rather, it is an open and flexible system that is constantly evolving. Quebec is inextricably bound up in the Canadian dream.

Canadian values derive from the fact that we have to understand one another and adapt, with courage, generosity and sensitivity, to the presence of two linguistic communities.

All of the succeeding generations of Canadians have had to meet this challenge. The choices we have made attest to our common aspirations for the future of this vast country, choices that are the envy of the whole world.

Anyone who has travelled much outside Canada knows that Canada is still one of the most favoured nations. Our prosperity and our public-spiritedness have been achieved through hard work, but can never be taken for granted.

• (1555)

[*English*]

Canada is a pluralistic society, not just because of the diversity or the makeup of the population, whether linguistic, cultural, ethnic or regional, but, more important, because we have come to understand that these differences contribute greatly to our national community and our very identity. To use the symbolism of our great river system and source of natural clean water, of life itself, all the vast rivers of nationhood flow to one sea.

Across the country, Canadians work together in a variety of ways to build a better nation with no group building in isolation. As a result, Canada has become a model for other countries. In a world with some 6,000 languages and only 200 states, pluralism is the norm, not the exception. Its success requires a uniquely Canadian talent, the ability to work together and transcend that diversity.

This vision of Canada as a nation, inspired by generosity and tolerance, has repeatedly triumphed over narrow ethnic tribalism. Canadians in Quebec and across the nation are proud of our success. Our Canada includes a strong, vibrant francophone Quebec, les Québécois. We would not have it otherwise.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Diane Marleau (Sudbury, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his fine speech, but I noticed that he did not really talk about Quebecers. Rather, he talked about the French-Canadian nation. Now, I believe in this French-Canadian nation, because I am part of it, and I must point out that the French-Canadian nation does not end at the border between Ontario and Quebec. It was our ancestors who discovered a large portion of this country that is Canada. In fact, the first Canadians were French inhabitants. It was Aborigines who called them Canadians.

[*English*]

Therefore, when he uses the term Québécois, is he speaking of those first francophone settlers? If that is the case, where do I fit? I have the same ancestors as they do. By happenstance, maybe a few hundred years ago mine chose to move on and help build the country we call Canada. I still speak French. I still live as a French person. French is still my first language.

There are almost nine million Canadians who share what I have, but unfortunately, when the term Québécois is used, it does not include me. Nor does it include anybody else outside of Quebec. What is the definition of Québécois and why should we suddenly think of them as a nation? There is no real definition of it. Are we not just playing games to try to gain votes?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her question. I very much respect the member and her passion for this issue. I also respect her heritage.

In my opinion, the member is right. This debate is not a simple question about borders for Quebecers. This question concerns the hon. member and perhaps other people who represent those who founded this country.

[*English*]

I think this is a question that she can best answer for herself as a person who speaks French as her first language, views herself very much as a Canadian as I know she does, and is a strong federalist. We have other nations within this country that she has alluded to, as have others.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

We have the Acadians who live in the Maritimes.

[*English*]

They are one of the very earliest descendants of francophone origins who are very much a part of this great cultural diversity and who have a very tragic history in this country.

Yet, I think when we try to narrowly define any of these people, any of these founding people within the country, it becomes a dangerous and inflammatory debate.

Therefore, this is not about partisanship. This debate was sparked very much as a response from the government to the Bloc Québécois. I think it has exposed the true intent of the Bloc Québécois. It was to divide the Liberal Party who are in the midst of a leadership campaign. It was to divide this House of federalists and others perhaps, within the federalist ranks, who take a different view on the interpretation of the word nation.

[*Translation*]

In this debate and this context, the term “nation” refers to the Quebecers, the people who live in Quebec.

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[*English*]

I think that to that extent this issue and this particular debate will not end here. I suspect it will continue, but we do hope for, to quote an often overquoted phrase but one that I think is so important, “peace in our time” on this subject. No one wants to embark on a protracted, divisive constitutional debate and no one wants to get into the accusatory discussion around what the legal obligations are here. This is a government of generosity and inclusiveness. We see the Québécois as a nation within a strong and united Canada.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize how difficult this must be for the minister. Just today we had two soldiers killed in Afghanistan and tomorrow or the next day their remains will be brought home, draped in a Canadian flag and a nation will be very thankful of the work that they were doing in that part of the world, not a nation of nations, but a nation. I am sure that the minister will join me in recognizing that we are paying respect to them as a nation for the work that they are doing in fighting for human rights, justice and peace around the world.

I am wondering what we tell the parents of the two soldiers who are coming back. Do we say that this is a nation which is grateful to your sons and daughters or is this a nation of nations which is respectful to your sons and daughters? I am wondering if the minister will share with us the exact expression that he is going to use when he meets those two families.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I know that all members would share in our gratitude and our remorse, and our great thanks on behalf of a grieving nation to those families who have lost sons and daughters. It is the ultimate sacrifice in defence of not only our country but the values that we stand for: freedom, democracy, respect for the rule of law, and respect for human rights. These are the very motivations which led us to embark on this mission in Afghanistan with other UN countries as part of a NATO backed mission.

While tragedy has befallen these soldiers, this is not a time to mix the issues or to somehow skew our gratitude as a country. Quebec is very much a part of this nation, very much a part of the mourning that will follow. To that extent, I know I join the member opposite and all members of the House in expressing our great gratitude and share with the families our thoughts and our prayers at this most difficult time.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for the very concise and insightful speech that he gave today on a very important topic. I was very proud to hear in his speech how generous and how inclusive Canada is globally right now. In terms of any other country in the world, we stand very strong.

In the past year we recognized the redress of Ukrainian people during World War I. We have looked at the Chinese people and the head tax. With the Prime Minister's motion, indeed we are in a new era, a strong era where there is real leadership.

With the recognition of the Québécois as a nation within Canada itself, within a united Canada, it seems to me, from the hon. member's speech that, for the first time, Canada is recognized very strongly as a mosaic of different cultures, different people and

different strengths. However, it is also recognized in a very respectful manner.

I was wondering if my hon. colleague would comment a bit more about the generosity and inclusiveness, and the new era we have right now with the strong leadership under our Prime Minister, that will see Canada grow and see cultures feel welcome within our country.

• (1605)

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I take this occasion to express my appreciation as well to the member for Kildonan—St. Paul for the work she does, particularly when it comes to development and women's issues. She does a wonderful job.

With regard to her question specifically on the generosity of the motion, I think she is right. It encapsulates a willingness to embrace rather than push away concepts of our founding nation. This was very much an attempt, and I use this word respectfully, a conciliatory attempt, toward the Bloc.

What other country in the world would have a party dedicated solely to the breakup of the country represented here? Yet we have tried in a way to reach out to that party and it has in fact now embraced the motion that the government has put on the floor and we think that is a good sign.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

As you know, Wilfrid Laurier said that if we want to defend our ideas and principles, we have to fight for them, we have to let people know about them. This is an important historic moment today that transcends all partisanship. We must define ourselves and send a message defining what we want to be, who should be recognized as Canadians and what Canada is. I am really extremely proud to be part of this debate, on behalf of my colleagues and my constituents in the riding of Bourassa.

I have been a member of the Liberal Party for 25 years. I have been through seven election campaigns. I have fought to make sure that Canada remains united within this Confederation. I have fought to ensure that in Quebec we can show the importance of this value added, the way Quebec is a catalyst and a reality within this Canada, and what the development of this province has also meant in making that Canada is what it is today.

As a minister of the Crown, I have always worked very hard to make sure that we can in fact preserve this common tie, but always with respect for the specificity of each region. Today I salute all those taking part in this extremely important debate. I think it was appropriate for the government to put forward this motion in response to the manoeuvre by the Bloc Québécois. This motion, which recognizes that Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada, sends a clear message, namely that the word nation does not mean the creation of a country within the country.

I urge all my colleagues, when they vote this evening, to take up the defence of this discourse. Because I truly think that at some point we have to face the facts and realize what is happening on the ground.

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Quebec is a nation. However, that does not have a detrimental effect on other French-Canadians. I am French-Canadian and proud of it. The reality of the Quebec nation has meant added value for Canada. My nation is inclusive; it is not ethnic. It is a civil society and a sociological fact; it is the essence of Canada: a national plurality. We have first nations, the Acadian nation and the French-Canadian nation. Thanks to the first nations, we have a richness that enables us to epitomize Canada.

We must not try to make this motion say something it does not. That is why we have to be so careful. Quebeckers want that clear message: they want Canada to hold out the olive branch. The vast majority of Quebeckers want to remain in Canada. Twice, they have said no to referendums, in 1980 and 1995. Regardless of how people want to interpret them—we will not play politics on this—there are real numbers and a clear percentage. Quebeckers want to remain in Canada.

They have been told that they feel somewhat left out because they did not sign the 1982 Constitution, so they want some kind of recognition. Personally, as a Quebecker, I have always thought that we are a people, but that does not mean we define ourselves as a country. I have fought for 25 years to ensure that Quebec is and will remain in Canada.

We have recognized certain things: we have often boasted of Quebec entrepreneurship, Quebec culture, and Quebec literature and film. There is even a Quebec advertising market.

So acknowledging a fact and recognizing reality mean that Quebeckers will feel more included in Confederation. It is a sign of love. This is more than a symbol; it is recognition, which is essential for our country's well-being. Nobody is losing anything. We do not want to get caught in that trap like the Bloc did. Clearly, the Bloc introduced a motion in answer to that need and tried to divide us. This week, we will have the great pleasure of selecting a new leader.

●(1610)

I am very happy to be part of the team supporting the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore in the race for the leadership of my party. He is someone who talks about the real issues. He has dared to act so that we can break out of this vicious circle and find a solution together.

By this, I do not mean a new round of constitutional talks. When the time is right, we will do what has to be done, but today, we will examine and vote on a motion that recognizes what Quebec is, what Quebeckers are: a nation.

As I have said, that does not take anything away from the rest of the country. I believe that, by being inclusive, by recognizing that complementarity, we will be able to show that this is open federalism and it is growing and evolving.

When I was Minister of Immigration, we held the first-ever federal-provincial-territorial conference, a historic event. We did our utmost to ensure that we could respect regional specificity. We said that in Canada, there is a common link and a union of complementarity. For example, although we wanted to set policies on francophone immigration or regional immigration or policies that applied to certain regions, we also had to recognize every region's specific character. We said that Canada was more than Montreal,

Toronto and Vancouver. It is also Moose Jaw, Flin Flon, Gander and Chicoutimi.

What I mean is that we have a wealth of talents and knowledge. When we pool those talents and recognize what we are, we have a magnificent Canada.

Today, I salute the Conservative government's motion. It was a singular moment when the Prime Minister and then the Leader of the Opposition spoke. There were ovations. This heartfelt cry from all the federalist parliamentarians said that we would not fall into the separatists' trap.

●(1615)

[*English*]

We will make sure that this country, the greatest country in the world, will stand. And if we have to recognize what we already know, that Quebec is a nation and my Quebec is inclusive, the notion of nation does not take anything away from anybody else in any region of the country. It is just to recognize what we know already: that this is a tremendous catalyst to make this country work even better.

Members know as well as I do that self-esteem is what it is all about. If we recognize something that we know, and if we are inclusive, more people will come to us. We have had this taste in our mouths in Canada, this taste that we have the separatists who wanted to create another country and the only thing for us was the status quo, and that the only way to make sure this country works is to do nothing. I am talking about recognition. That is why it is so important.

Some people are saying that it is dangerous to talk about these things because we have failed in the past. Like the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore used to say, one does not define one's future on the experience of the failures from the past. Canadian federalism is a tremendous concept that evolves all the time and it is all about being inclusive. I urge all fellow members and colleagues to vote in favour of the motion because it is all about what we knew already: recognition and self-esteem.

[*Translation*]

I urge all my colleagues from Quebec and elsewhere to send this heartfelt message of recognition to all Quebeckers. Being inclusive like that does not take anything away from anyone. We are only ensuring that this country shows once again that it is the most beautiful in the world.

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I must applaud my colleague's very eloquent speech. I and members on this side of the House feel very strongly that this motion is very inclusive. This has put a very big mark on the global agenda, because truly all parliamentarians in the House who are supporting the motion are leaders in the world in showing that we work collaboratively.

Government Orders

Would the hon. member elaborate a little more on his insightful comment that it is not taking away from anyone or anything by talking about being united and recognizing the Québécois, within Quebec itself, in a united Canada. If he would be so kind as to comment further, I would eagerly look forward to it.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I would like to touch on some of my experiences that have enabled me, within a government, to create the exact same feeling as the one sought through this motion.

Whether I acted as the Secretary of State for Amateur Sport, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, President of the Privy Council or minister responsible for the Francophonie, emphasizing the unique beauty of each unique characteristic always resulted in added value for our country while at the same time being a success.

When we addressed cultural diversity and talked about bringing the World Anti-Doping Agency to Montreal, that was because we had worked together with the driving forces in every region and decided together to push in the same direction. By doing so, we demonstrated that everyone stands to benefit from highlighting the uniqueness of each region and recognizing individual strengths. Everyone has to be told that they are part of the richness, the family, the group, and everyone must be given the opportunity to show their strengths.

[*English*]

Of course, all the experiences are not always perfect, but I know one thing, which is that when we send out that kind of message that people are part of the family and it is all about recognition, it is more than just a symbolic approach. It is about saying that they are part of it and that we realize what they are and we want to say it to them. It is like what we do when we send a message that we are proud of our son or our daughter and we tell them that what they have done is great: we recognize their contribution.

That is what it all about. It is not about defining another country. I have been fighting for 25 years to make sure that this country stands united. I was a candidate in Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the same riding where the leader of the Bloc Québécois won. I was there after Meech Lake. I decided to run because there was no way I was going to send the message that Quebeckers were all separatists. I lost, but I proved my principle.

I am very proud to have been the member of Parliament for Bourassa for the last 10 years. I have been privileged and honoured to have a position as cabinet minister.

Quebeckers want to stick to Canada, but they also want to be recognized. We never know what can happen in the future. What kind of option do we want to give? Another country versus the status quo? I think this motion is a necessity.

• (1620)

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his very insightful comments from the perspective of his riding of Bourassa. I am sure he is speaking for many Quebeckers.

For the benefit of those Canadians who might be viewing this debate today, I wonder if he could help viewers understand what to some might appear to be somewhat of a contradiction in the sense that this motion is helping to define Quebeckers as a nation within a united Canada. How would such a motion help Quebeckers feel part of a united country? How does this help them to feel a greater sense of country when in fact we are speaking about Quebeckers as a nation within—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I would like to advise the hon. member for Bourassa that the clock has run out, but I will allow a few moments.

Hon. Denis Coderre: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that it is like any concept. When we feel a part of something, it is a catalyst by itself. To send that clear message, it is a recognition, and it has nothing to do with creating a new country. As for all my fellow Canadians from any part of the country, they can read my lips, like someone said: it is not about creating a country. It is about recognizing what we are. There is a national plurality in this country, but there is only one country called Canada.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise today.

A former prime minister, indeed, Mr. Chrétien, once told me that politics is about making tough decisions. Today we are asked to address a question and for some the answer comes easily: oui, Québec est une nation dans le Canada. For others, the question is much more difficult to answer.

An adequate response to today's matter requires more contemplation, consideration and consultation, which in an ideal world should be done over weeks and months. Today we are asked a question of highest national importance and we are given 72 hours.

For the sake of embarrassing the Bloc Québécois and the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, the Prime Minister has led all of us down a very precarious path. We are faced with it in Afghanistan and here again today.

The Prime Minister in recent times called the debate of the Québécois as a nation a semantic debate. I would suggest that he knows better than that.

It is obvious that any people declared a nation within a country could easily be called a distinct society. We all remember those words "distinct society". We remember the divisive results of those two words. We remember Meech. We remember Charlottetown. We remember Elijah Harper, and indeed, a historic day at the Legislative Assembly in Manitoba, when I was present. We remember 1995. We remember 50.6% saying no and 49.4% saying yes. Canada won that day, but for the sake of game of one-upmanship, we have embarked on a slippery slope that could well lead us back to 1995. Who knows the results this time?

There is another group of people who have their own language, culture and history. They have been on this land for longer than the English and the French, yet despite their own unique way of life and their distinctiveness we have heard nothing out of this debate about the nation status of the aboriginal people. Anyone who has witnessed this government's attitude toward our first nations and aboriginal peoples may not be surprised.

Government Orders

On this, the first anniversary of the Kelowna accord, this government once again appears to be passing by the aboriginal peoples, the first nations of this country. Two words: first nations. No debate there despite the Prime Minister seeming to overlook the people who inhabited this land before the English and the French came ashore.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I ask the Prime Minister, if the Québécois are a nation, why are aboriginal Canadians not afforded the same recognition by his government?

What are the similarities? Unique languages for both? Yes. Unique traditions for both? Yes. A long and storied history on this land for both? Yes. The first nations of Canada are being left out of the debate again despite the obvious parallels that exist between their situation and that of the Québécois.

Did we not learn or hear anything in the outcry when aboriginal Canadians were given short shrift at Meech Lake? Why are we not addressing this again? Let me cite the premier of British Columbia, Gordon Campbell, who said today:

Canada's First Nations, Metis and Inuit people should not be further marginalized by dint of this effort to unite Canada, which leaves them noticeably out of the picture. It is high time we formally acknowledge Canada's "third solitude"—the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. We should do that formally, proudly, and emphatically in a similar resolution that embraces our heritage as a nation of many nations.

Will the Prime Minister consider the words of Premier Campbell? Will he make it clear that declaring the Québécois a nation in no way derogates from and does not in any way diminish or modify the unique status and rights of first nations and their unique place in the past, present and future of this land? Will he affirm the first people to inhabit this land, develop this land, and govern themselves on this land as a distinct and vital nation unto this day?

• (1625)

Will the Prime Minister affirm that the status and rights of first nations have the inherent rights of self-governance recognized under the laws of Canada and international law, recognition and safeguarding of aboriginal, treaty and constitutional rights, and the right and capacity to continue to live on their traditions and treaty territories and to develop their own distinctive languages and cultures?

I speak on behalf of my leader and indeed the Liberal Party of Canada when I say that these are questions the Prime Minister must answer. They are matters that we support.

The first nations of Canada have never begrudged the Québécois their desire to be declared a nation. All they have asked for is equal consideration, an acknowledgement of their distinct languages, traditions, culture, and notion of collective rights.

What has the government done for first nations recently? It has cut funding for indigenous languages. It has said no to the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It has begun to plant the seeds of private ownership on reserve land. It scrapped Kelowna. It cancelled the procurement strategy for aboriginal businesses. It cancelled aboriginal literacy programs. The government cancelled aboriginal stop smoking programs. It has forced aboriginal business centres to close. It has cancelled capital projects to build schools.

The government does not appear to recognize the uniqueness of the collective. It has exhibited disrespect for aboriginal peoples and placed the honour of the crown in peril.

There is that word "unique". That is what this debate is all about. It is about the unique qualities of the Québécois. No one denies that they exist. But as they exist for the Québécois, they exist for the first nations of Canada. To grant the Québécois a unique distinction in this country without doing the same for our first nations, the first inhabitants of this country, is to repeat a mistake that this country has already made once during the debate on the Québécois as a nation question.

I have outlined my concerns regarding this motion. I am troubled by the fact that we are doing this at the tip of a bayonet, without proper time to fully understand and analyze the consequences of our actions. I am concerned with the impact it will have on the historical status, recognition and rights of first nations. I am concerned about the lack of knowledge about the ramifications of our actions. I am concerned about the potential this motion has for the devolution of powers to the provinces. I am concerned about the potential divisiveness of this debate.

Having said that, after much contemplation and after much consideration, I will be reluctantly supporting the motion. I will do so because I believe that the Québécois have always been able to reconcile their identity as Quebecers and Canadians. This resolution recognizes the Quebec reality and rejects the Bloc's attempt to divide us. I will be voting for the resolution with the understanding that it clearly affirms the principle of a united Canada.

In supporting this motion, I do remind the Prime Minister on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada that we will be watching closely to ensure the historical status, recognition and rights of first nations will in no way be harmed by the adoption of this motion. In fact, we strongly urge the Prime Minister to recognize the nation status of Canada's aboriginal peoples and to ensure that there are no adverse effects for first nations as a result of this motion.

• (1630)

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members opposite were in government for over a decade. If that strong belief was carried by the member's party, why were so few things done? Why was that conviction not carried through during that time? In actual fact, all we have heard is a lot of political foofaraw, if I may call it that. Since we have been in government more has been done for aboriginal people than happened in 13 years.

My daughter-in-law is a full blooded Ojibway girl. Her family is very well connected with some chiefs and people like that. They have told me very strongly that they are pleased with what our government has done.

Is it because the hon. member is the critic for aboriginal affairs that her speech was brought forth in the House today?

Hon. Anita Neville: I am not sure where to begin, Mr. Speaker. I do not think the first nations of Canada would describe this as a foofaraw. Let me begin by saying that.

Government Orders

Certainly I speak as the Liberal Party critic for the aboriginal peoples of Canada. I also speak as a proud Manitoban. We have a strong aboriginal tradition in our province. I speak as a Canadian proud of the aboriginal tradition from coast to coast to coast.

The aboriginal leadership in this country have very serious concerns about this motion. There are very serious concerns that there has been no discussion, no referral to the needs and aspirations of aboriginal peoples as first nations in this country.

I raised this question to make sure that these items are on the record so that governments that follow know that these issues were raised and will have consequences as we move forward with policy development in the future.

• (1635)

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too listened with great interest to the member opposite, who identified some of the shortcomings as we deal with our first nations people.

I have served on the aboriginal affairs committee for the last number of months and we have used the term “first nations” exclusively as we talk about our first nations people. I do not think that is a major issue.

My major concern with her comments was she pointed out the major shortfalls among our aboriginal communities. Recently the 10 year report on the RCAP commission certainly gave us a failing grade. That is after 13 years of continuing work that the Liberal government could have been working on.

Our government has moved ahead on many of the fronts addressing issues of structural change that are needed as we deal with our aboriginal people. Recently at the aboriginal affairs committee one of the aboriginal leaders said that if we were to have implemented the Kelowna accord, it would have taken the issues of the aboriginal people back many years. It would not have improved things.

The member pointed out that we are at the tip of a bayonet and we are being forced to make a decision. Would she rather have us vote on the Bloc motion at this point which does not call for the Québécois within a united Canada?

Hon. Anita Neville: Mr. Speaker, we will be voting on the Bloc motion. I probably should have indicated in my remarks that I will be voting against the Bloc motion. It is not an either/or matter.

The member opposite referenced the Kelowna accord. I want to remind the member that the Kelowna accord was indeed a response to RCAP. It was an integrated strategy that dealt with health, housing, economic development, capacity building and governance. It was an economic strategy endorsed by first nations from coast to coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

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 with pride and understanding that I take part in today's debate on a motion introduced by the Prime Minister, which reads:

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

What a historic gesture, in more ways than one!

It recognizes a fact that history has made indisputable. It constitutes the fair recognition of the specificity of a people, the people of Quebec, which is distinguished by its language, its culture and its own institutions, and the fact that Quebec is indeed one of the two founding nations of this country, Canada. As a member of the governing party, I am pleased that it was our Prime Minister who had the courage to acknowledge, through the motion before us, a reality that is an irrefutable fact, a recognition that leaves no one indifferent and that affects each and every one of us in this Parliament.

Not only do Quebeckers form a nation, but over the years we have shaped our own identity within this country, Canada, that we and our ancestors have contributed to building. This historical reality is nothing new. It is part of the history of Quebec society, of a community of 60,000 inhabitants who, scattered along the shores of the St. Lawrence in 1760, were able to assemble to make the most of a heritage of traditions that have been passed down over the centuries.

Every Canadian, from every region, benefits from this tenacity in developing that heritage because the country we live in is enriched by it in many ways. Canada would not be Canada without Quebec and Quebeckers would not form a nation within Canada without these generations of men and women who passed on to those who came after them a passion to develop the unique identity that is ours in North America.

As I was saying a moment ago, recognition under this motion does not change the socio-political landscape of Canada and Quebec, but it marks a change and a major evolution, in that the other nation that gave birth to this great country, Canada, now recognizes what we are. However, I am disappointed by the reaction from sovereignists in Quebec, and particularly our Bloc Québécois friends. They obviously did not expect the Prime Minister to table this motion. Last Wednesday, the Prime Minister had barely finished talking when the Bloc Québécois leader got going in one of his typical rhetorical outpourings, trying to explain to the House that Quebeckers form a nation and that there can be no condition attached to this reality.

In short, the Bloc Québécois showed its true colours last week, and the Prime Minister was right when he said the following, in his speech delivered on Wednesday:

It is to recognize not what the Québécois are, but what the sovereignists 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”.

What has happened over the past few days in this House? The Bloc Québécois tabled a motion in order to set a trap for us, in order to create a real disturbance in this House, in order to get us into a lobster trap, as we said.

Government Orders

The objective was to put us, ministers from Quebec, in an extremely difficult situation and to perhaps force us to take a sidestep toward the recognition of Quebec as a nation. However, our Prime Minister showed foresight. He is close to Quebec and aware of its expectations. It is in this context that the Prime Minister quickly took that motion and put in its proper context by saying that Quebec forms a nation within a united Canada.

● (1640)

What saddens me today—and this is unfortunately what the Bloc Québécois tried to provoke among us—is to see that one of our colleagues, the Minister for Sport and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, faced this difficulty today and had to decide not to acknowledge this reality. I speak about my hon. colleague with great respect because he is a man I like. What I find shocking is to see the members of the Bloc succeeding once again in sowing trouble in the House of Commons. That is always what they are over there for, to make sure that things do not work, to try to break up Canada instead of building it.

I know that, this evening, the overwhelming majority of the House will recognize the obvious fact that we Quebecers form a nation within a united Canada. That is why I am here in this House trying to build this country.

When their trickery was exposed through their reaction to the Prime Minister's motion, great nervousness spread through their ranks and the real face of the Bloc Québécois emerged. That is what we saw, the sight of the Bloc Québécois as it really is. The mere mention of the words “a united Canada” provoked a violent reaction from this party. Most Quebecers, on the other hand, do not respond in this way at all.

Our government, like the majority in Quebec, has a deeply held conviction that the development, advancement, progress and prosperity of Quebec society are better assured within the Canadian federation than in an independent Quebec, as preached by the Bloc, whose hypothetical benefits are just baseless speculation. Recognizing “that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada” is just recognizing a historical fact.

I had a chance to say this to some journalists a little earlier. Today is a great day for us Quebecers. It is not the first time that Quebec has tried to have certain things recognized by this House. We had Meech Lake, which certain people managed to torpedo, but now Quebec is taking another step forward. We Quebecers are managing to get our colleagues and all the parties in the House to recognize that we form a nation within a united Canada.

Quebeckers know very well that their interests are not served by isolation, semantics and symbolism. Contrary to what the Bloc Québécois says, it is not despite Canada that Quebec has become a strong society, richly diverse, and turned to the future. Our federation enables Quebecers to be themselves in their country, alongside Newfoundlanders, Ontarians, Albertans and the inhabitants of all the other provinces.

Quebeckers know who they are. They know they took part in the founding of Canada, and that they helped shape this country in all its grandeur. They know they have protected their language and culture, while promoting their values and interests within Canada. They

know that, in the end, they can be Canadians and Quebeckers, and that they need not choose between the two, as the Bloc would have them do. They know they are at the heart of Canadian identity.

The flexibility of our federalism has allowed Quebeckers to grow, and our distinctiveness has given us the development tools we need to prosper, to be present on the international scene and, above all, to create a modern state that could be considered in many regards the envy of other countries that have achieved full political sovereignty, as the former sovereigntist premier Bernard Landry recently suggested.

No, this evolution is not pure happenstance. Just like the other partners in our federation, Quebec benefits from the advantages of an economic union, which is the guarantee of our current and future prosperity. It also benefits from a social union, which, despite its many challenges, is still the envy of many countries. Lastly, it also benefits from a political union that binds together a country that shines on the international scene, strengthened by an enviable reputation and its associated values of generosity and solidarity.

Canada represents a winning combination and federalism has helped us become one of the most prosperous countries on the planet. Over the years, federalism has proven to be flexible and effective. It has allowed us to consistently achieve enviable results in terms of collective wealth, individual revenue and job creation.

● (1645)

Federalism serves us well. By creating a unified market, it makes possible a great mobility of goods, services, workers and capital.

Federalism provides a common currency, which facilitates business dealings and the flow of capital. It helps moderate the impact of economic shocks, and in doing so ensures greater economic stability for all Canadians through the sharing of risk, regional transfers and the pooling of the riches of our country. It ensures that less prosperous regions have a higher standard of living and better health care and educational services than they would otherwise be able to provide.

Our federalism also improves our ability to negotiate with foreign countries. We are not alone against the rest of the world. The size of our market means that we have considerable negotiating power on the international level. Canada has a seat at the table of the G-7; it is an influential member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and plays an important role in the Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development (OCED).

We are a member of the United Nations, the Commonwealth, la Francophonie, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Organization of American States (OAS), and NATO. Because of our geography, Canada has open access to the world's three biggest economic markets, Europe, the Americas and Asia.

Government Orders

The benefits that Quebec derives from Canadian federalism are also of a political nature, because federalism takes account of differences by encouraging cooperation and compromise. Federalism was not imposed on Quebecers. They, in fact, are the chief artisans of its creation and its development. The main benefits of federalism lie in its flexibility, its vitality, its pluralism, its development of diversity and its ability to adapt to modern challenges. Federalism is not rigid. It distributes political jurisdiction in ways that respond to the common needs of our population, while recognizing particular situations.

Quebec has control of several jurisdictions, among which are natural resources and education. It has its own civil code, which makes its legal system unique in North America. It has its own Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It collects its own income tax.

Canadian federalism consistently demonstrates its effectiveness. The main reason, as I emphasized previously, is that it is able to adapt to the changes that great modern issues demand. Federalism allows those countries that embrace it to redefine intergovernmental relations in the light of their development, as has been the case since the 1950s.

Canadian federalism has proven that it can innovate in order to respond to the legitimate interests of Quebec within our constitutional framework. For example, since 1960, a series of agreements between the federal government and the Quebec provincial government has enabled the province to expand its spheres of activity into areas traditionally reserved for the federal government. In the area of immigration, Quebec chooses its immigrants and has its own integration programs. In the area of foreign policy, the federal government has developed a series of mechanisms to integrate the interests of Quebec and enable it to participate directly in international activities. The Sommet de la Francophonie, and more recently the announcement of a role for Quebec within the Canadian delegation to UNESCO are good examples of this, and are part of a growing trend.

Another benefit offered by federalism is that it protects collective freedoms through the mechanism of autonomy. It permits communities to benefit from comparable services throughout the country while maintaining a degree of autonomy enabling them to express their differences.

Federalism represents one of the political structures that can best deal with the modern challenges facing present-day societies. The Canadian political and economic union, the appreciable influence of Canada on the international scene, its solid credit reputation on international markets, its quality of life and its ability to realign resources are all essential benefits enabling Quebec to retain control over its destiny without compromising its future.

Bombardier, SNC-Lavalin and Cascades—to name but three—are all Canadian companies that have penetrated international markets. Céline Dion, Robert Lepage, Robert Charlebois, Denys Arcand and Cirque du Soleil were able to develop their talent and to be equally successful on the international scene.

It is important to remember that the advocates of separation have never been able to prove that Quebecers would be more prosperous and in a better position were they to separate from Canada.

● (1650)

That is the fundamental dilemma of Quebec sovereignists. They are unable to convince us that Quebec would be better off, more prosperous or even happier. They are determined to break up this country that has served us so well instead of building it and helping it grow with respect for its two founding nations. On the other hand, Quebecers know what Canadian federalism has to offer. That is why most of them remain opposed to separation and that is why they want to remain both Quebecer and Canadian.

Canada is prosperous, technologically advanced, economically and politically stable, a place where wealth is shared and respect and tolerance are common values. Our two nations are complementary and enrich each other.

The current debate is undeniably useful. It shows the true face of the Bloc Québécois, to whom the term “nation” is equivalent to “separation” rather than “potential to develop within Canada”. It sheds light on the need for a united Canada, a country in which Quebecers have prospered by contributing significantly to the development of our country.

Since Confederation, Quebec's identity has been one of Canada's historical and political characteristics. As I was saying at the beginning of my speech, the purpose of this motion is simply to recognize an irrefutable fact: Quebecers indeed form a nation, which has developed and flourished and continues to do so within a united country called Canada. Furthermore, Quebec's National Assembly recently affirmed that Quebecers form a nation.

I want to remind this House, all parliamentarians, that it is up to us today to learn from the wisdom of our ancestors and recognize this step, and that our future within this country called Canada is a promising one. I want to say again to the Bloc Québécois: leave this House. You no longer belong here. You want to break up this country, while a majority of Canadians and Quebecers want to stay in it. Leave this House. You no longer belong here. You are sowing provocation and discord in this House when we should be moving forward and building this country.

● (1655)

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his remarks. I agree with most of what he told the House. Like him, I intend to support the motion, because it is obvious that Quebecers form a nation within Canada and that they are part of this great Quebec nation, whether they live in St. Mary's Bay, in my riding, in British Columbia or in Quebec. But there are other nations as well.

The minister said something that got me thinking. He said that, while this is sometimes described as a symbolic change that may give rise to debates in the future, it marks an important evolution. In proposing a change in the evolution of a country, a nation, Canada, any government has a responsibility to consider the ramifications and impact. Normally, there would be much debate.

Government Orders

I assumed that there had been discussions within cabinet before a decision was announced in the House. But I learned earlier, on the television, that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs had not been consulted. And if he was not consulted, I guess the provinces and the communities across the country were not either.

Without any prior discussions with his caucus or ministers, the Prime Minister rose in this House to propose significant changes, an important evolution, as the minister responsible for the economic development of Quebec put it. I find it odd nonetheless. I support the motion because I think that what it states is obvious.

I would like the minister to tell me, however, how it is that the Prime Minister made such a decision without any prior discussions with his ministers, and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs in particular? Was this minister consulted, he who hails from Quebec, particularly since this is a very important issue to Quebecers?

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Mr. Speaker, my hon. opposition colleague from the Liberal Party can also recognize the Bloc Québécois' objective. It was trying to stir up discord among Liberal Party representatives and especially at first, among us, the ministers from Quebec, who had already publicly announced our support for recognizing the principle that Quebec is a nation. Fortunately, our Prime Minister, who now joins the list of great prime ministers of this country, understands very well what Quebec is all about. His openness was evident and he quickly found a way to resolve the situation.

For this reason, I hope my hon. colleague understands the importance of the issue that has been before us for the past week. It was an attempt to trigger bickering in this House, to cause the members to provoke one another. However, we here this evening, in a large majority from the Liberal Party, the NDP and Conservatives, will stand behind the Prime Minister to recognize that Quebec forms a nation within a united Canada.

This is a big day for us. Naturally, I was sad to learn that one of our colleagues is having difficulty with this. It is very upsetting. Nevertheless, we must join together and continue advancing towards our shared objective, which is to build this country.

In response to the hon. member's question, the Liberals have a caucus and so do we. Indeed, our Prime Minister talks to us and we have discussions. We are able to get our points of view across. It is in this context that this resolution is before us here today. This is a very positive step for Quebec.

[English]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his very eloquent speech. It was very insightful.

He has made the comment that Canada shines like a bright light in the globe because of federalism. The recognition of the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada is a very generous and respectful way of recognizing the Québécois and the culture within Quebec. We did that earlier in the year in various ways with different nations in our country.

Could the minister please expand on international trade and the kinds of things that have happened because of Canada's federalism and the generosity with which this motion has been put forward, its

respectful nature which has gained confidence within Quebec and within all of Canada?

• (1700)

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Mr. Speaker, we understand of course that we are witnessing an historic act today with this recognition of the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada, given the past failure of the Meech Lake accord and given that everything has been extremely difficult in the last 15 years.

All of that will ultimately be expressed in what we expect to see: that we will eventually have more constitutional negotiations, and one day Quebec can be brought back into the Constitution with honour and enthusiasm, as the former prime minister, Mr. Mulroney, expressed it.

Given that our Prime Minister has put this motion before the House and that we also recognize—or allow—Quebec's presence at UNESCO, or given our desire to continue to establish limits on the federal spending power in areas under provincial jurisdiction, I believe that an effort is now being made. What we do today is important, but we must not make assumptions about when those negotiations will take place; certainly the circumstances must be right for negotiations to be initiated.

If this motion had been the opposite, if the motion had been: That this House recognize that English Canada forms a nation within a united Canada, everyone in this House would have risen and said that this is obvious, because it was with us when this country was founded. The same is true for us. This is recognition of what we are, and this evening we will take this great step, do this historic thing, together, when we vote at 8 o'clock.

[English]

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have no problem with most of the remarks of my colleague, the Minister of Labour.

Would he join with me and urge all members of Parliament to at least acknowledge and recognize what has been asked of us by the Assembly of First Nations? It has asked us to make it abundantly clear in our remarks and comments today that nothing about this motion, recognizing the Québécois forming a nation, in any way derogates from or undermines the long-standing recognition of the unique status of first nations in the Constitution of Canada and within the Canadian framework.

Would he add that to his comments, that this recognition does not diminish the status of first nations within Canada?

[Translation]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Mr. Speaker, having had the opportunity to work on constitutional issues in the past, I would say that the first nations are already recognized in the Canadian constitution. I would like to point out that the Prime Minister, who brought this motion forward, has been an extremely unifying influence for everyone in this House.

Government Orders

I would like to pay tribute to him for having the wisdom and foresight to find a motion that would unite the Liberals, the Conservatives and the New Democrats, whose support we expect to have this evening.

I want to say again that we must live in the present, we must experience this day to the fullest. The other steps will come later, but today we must experience something that is obvious to Quebeckers. It is obvious and that is why it is more difficult to see than some other things, this obvious thing that is not obvious.

Nonetheless, we are making progress today, thanks to the motion brought forward by the Prime Minister who has been an extremely unifying influence.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister stated that a decision had to be made quickly without consulting the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. I learned that from statements made at a press conference by the former minister. Although I plan to support the motion, I am concerned by remarks that this represents significant evolutionary change. This motion and these changes were not debated across the country.

What does this mean to the other provinces?

If the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was not consulted, then who was?

• (1705)

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn: Mr. Speaker, today I would like to say to all parliamentarians that this is a historic moment. Let us enjoy the moment, we will deal with the other aspects another day. In my opinion, today, all of us together, are finally telling Quebeckers that we recognize that they form a nation within this country.

Is this not a wonderful gesture by all of us, to finally say it, acknowledge it and make a resolution of it? Everyone will stand tonight to recognize Quebeckers.

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Centre.

It is with pleasure that I stand in this place to discuss the future of our country, a country that is the envy of the rest of the world, a country that has welcomed wave after wave of immigrants to its shore, a country that other countries hold as a beacon to follow.

Our country is made up of four pillars. The first pillar is the aboriginal peoples. The second and third pillars are the two founding peoples, the French and the English. The fourth pillar is the immigrants who have come to our country to establish themselves and to start a better life. Wave after wave of immigrants have come to the shores of Canada either fleeing religious and/or political persecution or just wanting to start a better life.

The rest of the world watching this debate today is perplexed. The rest of the world is asking why are we even discussing this issue? However, before we go down this avenue, I want to tell member what Canada means to me.

When I was just 11 years, old one day my father came home and said that we were emigrating to Canada. I thought my world was

coming apart. Why did my father want to uproot us and take us to a country, which I did not even know how to pronounce its name? I did not have an idea on which continent it was. It was a few weeks later that I saw a movie at school about Canada and I fell in love with the country and could not wait to get here.

I will not say that the beginning was easy, however, our country grows on people. It grew on me. It became my country. I see this effect on many new immigrants who arrive on our shores. I see the same effect on every new Canadian who takes the oath of allegiance to Canada when he or she becomes a Canadian citizen. I see this effect on people when I travel to other parts of the world and tell them I am Canadian. I see smiles on the faces of people and I sense they envy me because I live in the best country in the world.

For years Canada has been the best place in the world to live. To this day it continues to be the best country in the world of which to be a citizen. Our country has had successive leaders who led us from one milestone to another: Lester B. Pearson and his peacekeeping initiatives. It was his dream for a better world, which made Canada a beacon for the rest of the world to imitate. Every country wants to send peacekeepers to troubled parts of the world to be beside Canadian peacekeepers.

However, today we are discussing the future of Canada. We are here to discuss the word nation and how it relates to Canadians. We are asked by this Conservative Prime Minister to acknowledge that there are a number of nations within a united Canada. We are asked to discuss the particular nation, the Québécois, within a united Canada. Tomorrow the Prime Minister will ask us to discuss other parts of the country as nations, yet again within a united Canada.

It is at the expense of political expediency that this Prime Minister is playing Russian roulette with the term nation. To him and others who want to get votes from the separatists, they play around with the word nation as if it were like being in a restaurant and dividing a pizza. The word nation is not like a \$5 bill and we decide how to divide it. The word nation is not like discussing how to mix and match different ingredients when ordering takeout at McDonald's.

To many of us, the word nation has a great meaning. To many of us it means the country of Canada. The word nation means from coast to coast and north of the 39th parallel. The word nation means from St. John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, B.C., to the North Pole. The word nation means Canada, one nation, and not a number of nations. The word nation is what men and women of our armed forces give their lives for.

This fall I had the opportunity to visit the Battlefields of Vimy Ridge. I read the words of Brigadier-General Alexander Ross, commander of the 28th Battalion of Vimy Ridge, who said:

It was Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific on parade. I thought then that in those few minutes I witnessed the birth of a nation.

• (1710)

I realized that the struggle for the freedoms we enjoy today began there. I thought of the young Canadians on that cold and wet Easter Monday fighting together for the first time. They forged the nation; they forged our nation. I later visited the cemeteries where rows upon rows of young men were buried fighting for our country, fighting for a nation.

Government Orders

Three years ago I visited Afghanistan and saw firsthand the work which our troops are doing fighting for freedom in Kandahar. Today, the remains of two of our soldiers will be sent home from Kandahar with Canadian flags draped over their coffins. Our nation owes them gratitude. A nation owes them gratitude, not a number of nations. The Canadian nation owes them gratitude.

Yet, we are putting all this aside and we are playing politics in order to win seats away from the separatists in the next election. I cannot help but remember how in 1987 yet another Conservative prime minister, Brian Mulroney, brought back from France his friend and got him elected after spending millions of dollars buying the byelection in Quebec. It was that individual, Mr. Bouchard, who started the Bloc Québécois.

It is another Conservative Prime Minister today who is also playing with fire and wants to appease the separatists and brings us to this discussion that we are having today.

In the last few days since we have started this debate, I have received thousands of letters, faxes, emails and phone calls from my riding and right across Canada. People are expressing their support for the position which I have taken. A constituent told me that Mr. Trudeau would probably be rolling in his grave after hearing what we are discussing right now.

Many people are upset with the way this is being handled. Many people are saying that this is yet another political milestone, how this minority Conservative government disrespects Canadians and their view of what makes Canada a nation.

Let us be perfectly honest with ourselves. This is not a discussion about the future of our country. It is simply a discussion of who gets the most votes away from the separatists in Quebec. Many Quebecers themselves are not impressed with what we are doing here today. Many are asking, why are we tinkering with the best nation in the world?

I will not be supporting this motion put forth by this Conservative Prime Minister as he plays politics with my country. When the Prime Minister is ready to have a serious discussion about the nation of Canada, I will be there to listen and participate. However, today he is failing us. Canada is a nation first, Canada is a nation last and Canada is a nation always.

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments made by the hon. member. He talked about his Canada, the Canada that is the best in the world. No one is questioning that at all. As a matter of fact, the motion recognizes that the people he is talking about have contributed toward building this country.

What is more interesting and what is partisan about the member's whole speech is that it was the Liberal leadership candidate who started this debate, a gentleman who spent 30 years out of this country, totally out of touch with his party, but who came to this country and brought his notion about recognizing a nation. It was the Quebec wing of his party that passed a resolution to do that. It was his party that started this debate.

Yet, what is very interesting is that the member never uttered a word when his party was talking about the same notion that is now

before us. At least we have said that we are recognizing diversity in this country under a united Canada, a Canada that is strong and will be strong in the 21st century.

● (1715)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, it is very important for us to take a partisan role in this debate. However, since my friend wants to go down that route let me rephrase what I said.

It was the Conservative Party under Brian Mulroney that brought back Mr. Bouchard when he was Canada's ambassador to France. He then paved with gold the roads in Quebec where he was running in order for Mr. Bouchard to become elected. Then, when Mr. Bouchard did not have his way, he ran away and formed the Bloc. It was that party that back in 1984, with the then prime minister, reached out to the separatists and forged a government. It was that party that got us into the mess that we are in today. Maybe my friend should take the wax out of his ears and start listening to what Canada is all about.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that was a different kind of approach and I thank the hon. member for his speech. I was surprised that the member received thousands of faxes and emails. That was quite a response. In my office I think I received two. In talking to people in my riding they are really supportive.

From this side of the House and from my point of view I think that we are made up of a mosaic of cultures and a mosaic of different kinds of people from all different walks of life whether Chinese, Ukrainian, Mennonite or whoever. Clearly, many people, and even the papers, have responded in a very supportive way in regard to this very generous recognition of the Québécois within a united Canada.

There was mischief afoot trying to cause discord within Parliament with the Bloc's motion, but the Prime Minister put forth a motion that was very strong.

I ask the member opposite, who is impatient to hear my question I know, could he comment on why he feels that this is not a respectful outreach to yet another segment of Quebec, the Québécois?

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, representing Canada's most ethnically diverse riding, I know a little bit about what minorities and ethnic representation means. One of the things that we must remember is that these minorities, the immigrants who came to this country, did not come to a nation of nations. They came to a nation and that nation is Canada. Many times, when they take the oath of allegiance, we have seen how bright their faces become, how they smile because they are joining the best family in the world, the nation of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, we the members of the House of Commons are debating an important motion tabled by the Prime Minister:

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

I find this motion troubling. I have studied it over the past few days. I have spoken to some voters—there are many francophones in my riding—and to lawyers, professors of Canadian history and my colleagues, and I continue to be troubled.

Government Orders

I believe that the fusion of the culture, history and language of French-speaking Canadians is a special characteristic unique to Canada. I think that the motion on a “distinct society” that was accepted by this House in 1996 shows the respect of Canadians for French-Canadians who played a major role in the history of our nation.

• (1720)

[English]

While I agree that past contentious debates on the Victoria charter, the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accords highlight the need for recognition of the founding contributions of the two colonial powers and aboriginal people, a sign of respect for our history and a symbolic testament to our beginnings, the motion on the floor does not do that. Its very ambiguity makes it dangerous.

Across Canada arguments over the interpretation of the word “nation” have already begun. The Council of Europe struggled to find a definition of the word “nation” and it eluded it. In fact, the ambiguity of this motion has created division, threatening the social cohesion of this very diverse nation.

Some respected political scientists like Michael Bliss and Tom Axworthy believe that this motion can put in place conditions that will lead to the breakup of Canada. Yet, there are those who shrug off the very mention of any unintended consequences that could arise from this motion. In fact, the Prime Minister has insisted that his motion, by referring only to Québécois and not to the province of Quebec, cannot be seen as a basis for extending more powers to Quebec's provincial government. Yet, within 24 hours of the tabling of his motion, the delighted premier of Quebec, a purported federalist, stated:

It changes the way our laws are interpreted. It changes the way Quebecers will see their future. Because the recognition of Quebec as a nation is a way for us to occupy the place that is owed us in Canada and elsewhere in the world.

Already, the premier of Quebec has interpreted the word “nation” as more than mere symbolism. He sees it as the beginning of a new deal for his province, for new and expanded powers specific and different from other provinces.

This two nations theory has always been espoused by Conservative federalists from Stanfield to Mulroney and now our current Prime Minister. Indeed, the current premier of Quebec comes from that same political ideology, so why should we be surprised at his interpretation?

When we do not clearly define what we mean, others will do it for us. If a professed federalist premier can so interpret the word “nation”, how much more will the Bloc Québécois or the Parti Québécois which are political entities dedicated to an autonomous, self-determining, independent Quebec? Yet, there are those who say “Nonsense, we did not say Quebec would be a nation. We said Québécois”. I ask the House to consider the meaning of the word “Québécois”.

To those living in Quebec who are not francophone, the word refers to ethnic French Quebecers exclusive of francophone immigrants and other linguistic and ethnic groups. Therefore, the word “Québécois” has sparked a semantic debate that now divides the people of Quebec. I thought our Charter of Rights and Freedoms

had dispelled that notion of different rights for different groups but let me read what a Quebec resident wrote to me two days ago. He said, “There are many other languages and cultures in Quebec besides the French. We live, work, pay taxes, not only in Quebec but also to Canada. We do not wish to be treated like 'second class citizens' nor made to feel subordinate or inferior to another linguistic nor ethnic groups who, in their right mind, supports the castration of the hopes, dreams and freedoms of some Canadian citizens in Quebec who were under the impression that they were protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms”.

There are others who say that the word “Québécois” really refers to all residents of Quebec, regardless of language and ethnicity. If that is true, what makes Quebec different from other provinces? Each can claim unique histories, multicultural demographics and various languages. Therefore, according to that definition, other provinces also have a valid claim to nation status.

When the designation of nation applies to territories or to geographical areas, we begin a slippery slope. As well, if we mean to confer by this motion a respectful symbolic distinction to French Canadians, then why have we left out the Acadians in New Brunswick, the Métis or the francophones living outside of Quebec for one or two generations? In fact, one such francophone living in British Columbia recently said to me, “What are we, chopped liver?”, or as another more eloquently put it, “Please amend the motion to include all of the Francophone nations of Canada: Métis, Acadian and Francophones outside of Quebec”.

Why have we not as well similarly recognized the aboriginal people of this land who played a historic role in the origins of Canada? They are now seeking this designation.

• (1725)

When this motion divides, with clever words, province against province, francophone against francophone and ethnic groups against each other, the unintended consequences of a hastily conceived motion, a short term solution, a quick fix, a political gotcha, then we are in trouble.

Am I mollified by the fact that the Bloc Québécois now supports this innocuous motion? No. I am even more suspicious.

Am I reassured by the protestations of the Prime Minister? No. This is the same person who wrote papers and theories on firewalls, who mused about the separation of Alberta and who advised that province to follow Quebec's clever example.

What will future parliamentarians make of this ill-defined and ambiguous motion? Will they define it according to their own agenda? What if they favour a weak central government and more powerful provinces? Will they use it to balkanize the nation of Canada? We have already heard the Prime Minister muse about placing limits on Ottawa's powers, even if it means reopening the Constitution.

Government Orders

What would be the ramifications of this motion if the Prime Minister chooses to open the Constitution? What would be the legal consequences when future courts are asked to rule on the special privileges and powers of nationhood by a separatist Quebec provincial government?

When a motion raises more questions than it answers, as this one does, when the answers are as conflicting and ambiguous as they seem to be and open to interpretation, and when a solution that seeks to unite has more potential to divide, then the long term side effects pose too great a risk for the future of Canada.

As an immigrant, I was drawn to Canada, a strong Canada envisioned by George-Étienne Cartier in 1865 during the Confederation debates when he said:

If we unite, we will form a political nation, independent of the original nation and of the religion of the individuals....As for the objection that we cannot form a great nation because Lower Canada is mainly French and Catholic, Upper Canada is mainly English and Protestant...I see [that as a futile argument].

I support the Canada of Sir Wilfrid Laurier who, 25 years later, said:

We...wish to form, a nation composed of the most heterogeneous elements, Protestants and Catholics, English and French, German, Irish, Scottish, each...with its own traditions and prejudices. In...a common point of patriotism...toward a unified goal and common aspirations

I support the Canada that embraces one nation in which the French-speaking and the English-speaking peoples, aboriginal peoples and minority groups of Canada are enshrined in the bilingualism and multicultural provision of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Today this motion has been successful in resurrecting old fights and old controversies, clothed in the guise of symbolism. By its very vagueness and ambiguity, it raises more questions than solutions and it divides more than it unites. It seems to me to be nothing more than a piece of political artifice, with the dangerous long term side effects of a fragmented Canada and endangering its future cohesion and integrity.

I have no choice but to vote against it.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member makes the assertion that this motion has widespread potential implications. She is incorrect. I want to set things straight by pointing out a number of things to her.

First, the kinds of meanings she is imagining as being there would apply only if this were some form of constitutional amendment or something that had some form of legal meaning beyond being a symbolic motion. It is in fact a motion of the House of Commons and motions are understood to represent a will of the House with regard to what is said by those who are advocating the motion.

The speeches of those from all sides of the House who have advocated the motion are on the record and they clearly indicate that this is meant to be a recognition of the sociological fact that the Québécois form a nation within Canada, as distinct to a political nation.

I am glad the hon. member raised the point of George-Étienne Cartier's quote from 1865 during the Confederation debates when he said, "If we unite, we will form a political nation...". She raised the

great distinction between a sociological nation, an ethnicity, a people and a political nation.

It is very clear that the motion deals with the Québécois as a sociological people, an ethnicity that is recognizing a sociological fact and that deliberately puts a wedge between that sociological fact and the political nation that the Bloc Québécois wants us to deal with and wants to conflate those terms. We are separating those terms.

I say thank goodness for this motion because it would end that terrible game that the separatists have been playing for years in this country, seeking out some way of driving those two terms together and causing the disruption of this country. I am thankful that the member's interpretation is so very wrong.

● (1730)

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member really believes what he says, why did he not have a motion that says sociological nation? Why did he not clarify that term? If he means sociological nation, the term sociological can therefore mean that any province can claim to being a nation.

If the member thinks that the term Québécois is clear, does the term Québécois or Quebecers in this motion refer only to French-speaking Quebecers or does it refer to any and all people living within the province of Quebec? Does it refer to the francophones living outside of Quebec? This motion is so ambiguous, so cleverly written and so politically cute that it is causing more problems for many of us and most people in Canada than the hon. member would love to have us believe.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me commend the hon. member on a very fine speech. She captured much more than speeches given in this House on how this motion is being received by the rest of the country.

I am just amazed that we have an issue of great importance but not all members of Parliament will be able to speak to it because it is under time limitations. We are repeating the mistakes of Meech Lake. We all know where that went when the elite in this chamber and in cabinet thought they knew better than Canadians. Maybe that is why the Conservative government wants to keep Canadians out of this.

The member for Sudbury, who is a Québécois and a Franco-Canadian, would not be recognized as a Québécois under this motion. Surely to God we in this House do not want to be excluding people from right across the country who are Québécois. Surely we want to ensure that all Canadians are in an inclusive country. I wonder if the member could comment on that.

Hon. Hedy Fry: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question because when the hon. member for Sudbury asked it I do not think she received an answer.

We still have not heard any answers to these questions. What does Québécois mean? What does nation mean? I hear sociological but then why not say so? Why not say a sociological nation? The motion does not say sociological nation because that is not what it means. I am concerned, as is the hon. member, about the elitism in this House. If they believe that this motion is what they say it is, why will they not let it stand up to the test—

Government Orders

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Calgary East.

The debate that the Bloc Québécois has initiated in this House has special importance, in my view. That is why I wanted to take part.

The motion we have proposed asks the House of Commons to recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada. We have been allotted a few hours to discuss the unique place that Quebecers hold within our country.

The history of Quebec is distinguished by the desire, reaffirmed by successive generations of women and men, to build a better society while defending their rights and to preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. Quebecers can be proud of the society they have built and their extraordinary contribution to building Canada.

Quebeckers' distinct character is already recognized in several ways in Canadian institutions. For example, Quebec controls its own education system; it has its own Civil Code, which makes its legal system unique in North America; it has its own charter of rights and freedoms; it collects its own income taxes; it selects its immigrants and has its own immigrant integration programs; and it has a presence on the international stage.

Quebec has numerous delegations and offices abroad. It sits, with Canada, as a participant in the Francophone Summit and on other bodies of la Francophonie. It is part of the Canadian delegation to UNESCO. In addition, under framework agreements between Canada and foreign powers, Quebec can sign agreements directly with those foreign governments in certain areas.

Quebec has put in place its own pension plan, a deposit and investment fund, a general investment corporation and Hydro-Québec—key strategic tools in its economic development. It created its own television network, Radio-Québec, which is now known as Télé-Québec. It has its own student financial assistance program. It has passed its own language laws, enabling it to protect and promote the French language.

There can be no doubt that the assets I just listed are not characteristic of a paralyzed society incapable of taking charge of its own development and promoting its culture around the world. Rather, these assets are proof of a flexible federalism that takes into account and develops differences across the country. Quebecers themselves can form a nation within a united country called Canada.

Quebec benefits from Canada's political and economic unity in many ways, including the following: the movement of goods and services across internal borders is facilitated by our common currency and significant harmonization of the laws, regulations and tax systems affecting businesses; interprovincial mobility of labour is guaranteed by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; mobility of capital between regions is supported by federal regulation of the financial sector and by the existence of a common currency; free

movement increases the flexibility of regional economies; unemployment rates are lower because Canadians can look for work where there are a lot of jobs; free movement of goods and services contributes to the short-term stability of businesses because they can gain easy access to markets and resources across the country; and our economic structure's long-term adaptability is supported by the free movement of capital, which can flow to regions experiencing economic growth.

Interprovincial trade is a fundamental part of Canada's economic reality, and Canadian enterprises make the most of the special advantages offered by Canadian economic unity.

● (1735)

As illustrated by the agreements signed between the provinces, the remaining challenge in this area is precisely to eliminate the barriers that slow down this commercial activity, and to prevent the creation of new obstacles that could impede it.

The important thing here is that all these economic tools available to Quebec under the Canadian federation have allowed it to strengthen its specificity and to promote conditions that help it preserve its language, culture and institutions. Far from impeding their march towards progress and prosperity, the benefits of the Canadian federation have helped Quebecers collectively move forward.

As members of the House of Commons, we are privileged to take part in this debate, which is unquestionably of historical significance.

Today's achievement is a source of pride, but there are other issues currently confronting us that also require our attention. These challenges involve Quebec, like the other regions of the country.

At a time when international relations are influenced, among other things, by a globalization of the economy, it is important to establish a plan and a strategy that will allow Canada and Quebec to face this demanding reality. This is why, last week, our government released its economic plan entitled *Advantage Canada*. At a time when the world economy is changing, when new stakeholders are emerging as economic powers and when baby boomers are preparing to retire in large numbers, thus jeopardizing our ability to maintain our quality of life, we must collectively face this new force which will test our ability to adjust like never before.

Our long term economic and strategic plan aims at improving our country's prosperity, now and for generations to come. It will strengthen our country and show to the world a modern, ambitious, dynamic, diverse and united Canada.

Government Orders

The very strength of our political system rests on our country's unity, which will also bring progress and prosperity. Another strength lies in our flexibility and ability to recognize the differences that exist between the various groups that make up the Canadian population. I am fully confident that recognizing Quebecers as a nation within a united Canada will contribute to this objective of national unity, which we must never lose sight of, and which is deserving of all our efforts.

• (1740)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his remarks.

He spoke about the nation of Quebec while the motion of his government says that it is the Québécois who form a nation. Is there reason to correct the text or is this a distinction that the member is consciously trying to make?

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his question.

Perhaps, I should insert a short historical note about Quebec. It is a history that took place especially in my riding and in the whole Chaudière-Appalaches region.

In the years between 1800 and 1850, there was a great immigration by Irish communities that came to settle in our region. These were poor people who left their own country looking for new land, a new country where they could settle with their families. In our region, the Francophone community welcomed many needy families and we began a great tradition of cooperation between that Irish community and the Francophone community. We grew together in partnership.

Today, I am proud to say in this House that I and my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse are direct descendants of those families who believed in a united Canada, a welcoming land of happiness and prosperity. Today, my colleague and I are very proud to be in this House and to say loud and clear that the Québécois are recognized as a nation in a united Canada; and that affects me very deeply.

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the member's speech he made reference to how Canada and Quebec would have to deal with reality. Maybe the language is less precise than it should be, because clearly Quebec is part of Canada. That is one of the reasons why we are debating the motion: to beat back the threat that the separatist Bloc Québécois presents to Canada.

I want to ask the member a question. If we had a debate today about recognizing the Métis as a nation within a united Canada, would it be any different from the resolution that is before the House today?

• (1745)

[Translation]

Mr. Jacques Gourde: Mr. Speaker, today I prefer to talk about the recognition of the Québécois. What affects me so profoundly is that my children, who are between 10 and 16 years of age, asked me "Why has the Bloc Québécois caused this debate?"

Why, here in Canada, should we think that there could one day be a separation? That essentially is the reason why I am involved in

politics. I wanted to assure my children and future generations that this was a false debate. I believe that debate is now over. This question wearies simple people like me, representing Quebecers who work morning to night, who pay their taxes and who in the end want only peace and quiet. They are tired of seeing the Bloc Québécois always creating uncertainty in their lives. It is clear and simple; after the adoption of this motion a great majority of Quebecers can say to themselves, "Mission accomplished. Let us move on to other things and build a great and beautiful country of happiness and prosperity."

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this opportunity to rise today to speak to a motion that goes to the heart of what it means to be a Canadian and a Québécois. Today's motion is an opportunity to remind ourselves of what is at stake for the Québécois but also for all Canadians.

The success of our country did not happen by accident and it is not something that can or should be taken for granted. We think of Canada as young country, a country, as has often been said, with more geography than history. It is therefore ironic that this young country should also be one of the oldest democracies and one of the oldest federations on the planet.

Canada represents a paradigm shift from the nineteenth century nationalism of a nation-state based on cultural, linguistic and ethnic homogeneity. Canada was premised on the concept of diversity as a permanent characteristic.

The Fathers of Confederation chose a form of government uniquely suited to expressing and accommodating regional, linguistic and religious diversity. The most important example of this diversity was undoubtedly the existence of the two major language groups. One of the major factors in the creation of Canada as a federation was the presence of Quebec. The founders of our country wanted to build a country that embraced our diversity.

Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, said emphatically:

I have no accord with the desire expressed in some quarters that by any mode whatever there should be an attempt made to oppress the one language or to render it inferior to the other: I believe that would be impossible if it were tried, and it would be foolish and wicked if it were possible.

George-Étienne Cartier stated in the Confederation debates:

We could not legislate for the disappearance of the French Canadians from American soil, but British and French Canadians alike could appreciate and understand their position relative to each other...It is a benefit, rather than the inverse, to have a diversity of races.

From a historical perspective, we have a long tradition of dealing with the accommodations necessary in a society with two important language groups. The federal structure is perhaps the most obvious, but is by no means the only one.

In the context of a North America that is overwhelmingly English speaking, the Canadian federation has had to provide the framework for an effective commitment to the continuity and survival of the French speaking society centred in but not limited to Quebec. Today it is hard to imagine any other arrangement that could have served us so well and which, 140 years later, is still a model for the world.

The challenge of accommodating diversity is perhaps one of the most difficult facing the world today. The recent debate in Quebec on what constitutes a reasonable accommodation for religious minorities is echoed in similar debates across the globe.

Diversity is a modern reality. Most states in Europe, Asia or Africa contain a variety of languages, religions and cultures. Many of the most successful in dealing with diversity have chosen a federal system of government.

Looked at from a contemporary world viewpoint, it is the apparently homogenous states that are the exception. The nation-state, which implies the parallel occurrence of a state and an ethnic nation, is extremely rare. In fact, there are no ideal nation-states. Existing states differ from this ideal in two ways: the population includes minorities, and they do not include all the national groups in their territory.

Today Canada is a prosperous, politically stable country because we have made diversity an asset rather than a problem. Canadians are able, as a result, to make democratic choices based on respect of human rights. Today more than ever we understand that accommodating pluralism is not merely a political necessity but also a source of pride and enrichment, which reflects Canadian values.

• (1750)

Our capacity to adapt, as a society, and to build institutions that respond to the demands of its citizens has served us very well. Federalism is the natural response to governing a large, demographically and regionally diverse country. With 10 provinces, 3 territories, 6 time zones and bordering on 3 oceans, Canada's regional diversity is obvious.

Our diversity is also reflected in our two official languages. Almost all Canadians speak English, approximately 85%, or French, 31%, and one in five also speaks a non-official language. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 98% have English as their mother tongue. In Quebec 81% have French as their mother tongue. In Nunavut 79% speak Inuktitut, a language spoken by less than one in a thousand Canadians.

Today, nearly one million Canadians report an aboriginal identity. This is also a rapidly growing segment of our population.

Canada is increasingly urban and multicultural. In 2001 nearly 80% of Canadians lived in cities of more than 10,000 people. In today's Canada, immigration represents 41% of the growth, in 2004 figures, and new Canadians tend to settle in our major urban centres. Between 1996 and 2001, Toronto received more than 445,000 immigrants, 180,000 settled in Vancouver and 126,000 settled in Montreal.

Beyond accommodating regional preferences and diversity, Canadian federalism has provided an environment in which complementary national, provincial and cultural identities have

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flourished. Federalism allows and encourages experimentation in political, social and economic measures.

Quebec is inescapably at the heart of the Canadian dream. Canada's values have been shaped by the challenge of understanding each other and responding to the presence of two major language communities with courage, generosity and sensitivity. Each successive generation of Canadians has had to face this challenge.

The choices we have made express our shared hopes for the future of this vast land and have made us the envy of the world. Anyone who has travelled extensively outside of our borders knows that Canada remains one of the world's most favourite nations. Our prosperity and civility are the product of much hard work and cannot be taken for granted.

Canada is a pluralistic society not just because of the diversity in the makeup of the population, whether linguistic, cultural, ethnic or regional, but, more important, because we have come to understand that these differences contribute to our national community.

Across the country, Canadians work together in a variety of ways to build a better nation than either group could build in isolation. As a result, Canada has become a model for other countries. In a world with some 6,000 languages and only 200 states, pluralism is the norm, not the exception. Successes require a unique Canadian talent, the ability to work together and transcend our diversities.

This region of Canada as a nation, inspired by generosity and tolerance, has repeatedly triumphed over the narrow ethnic tribalism. Canadians in Quebec and across the country are proud of our successes. Our Canada includes a strong, vibrant Francophonie Quebec. Canadians have every reason to be proud of our Francophonie heritage, which is centred in Quebec and very much alive across Canada. It enriches our public life, arts and culture and is a source of cultural enrichment for millions of Canadians who speak French as their first or second language.

Canada's diversity is a source of strength from which all Canadians benefit. Our respect for diversity has, in no small manner, contributed to the enviable reputation we enjoy throughout the globe.

This great country, with its new economic plan, advantage Canada, unveiled last week by the finance minister, is fully assuming its role in world affairs and we stand on the best economic footing of any G-7 economy.

We are an emerging energy superpower and we are taking action to improve our environment. We are building a country that is a formidable economic player in the world. That is why I am proud today to speak in support of the government's motion recognizing the Québécois as a nation within a united Canada.

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• (1755)

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I consulted with my constituents quite at length over the last three or four days at a town hall meeting in my riding. There were a few questions that emerged, which I would like the member to address if he could.

Also, we have been conducting an online poll over the last 48 hours. It is interesting that the polling results have been running 70% of people urging me to vote against the motion tonight and roughly 30% asking me to vote for the motion. We are getting about a thousand people ever few hours voting online.

I know Internet polls are notoriously unreliable. It is, however, an indication of where Canadians perhaps are on this issue. In the town hall meeting in my riding, people voted by a ratio of 30:1, asking me to vote against this particular motion.

I will pass along to the hon. member the questions my constituents have asked and perhaps he could answer them.

First, what is a nation? In the context of this motion it is rather ill-defined as to whether we are talking about a population group, an ethnic group, a culture group, a geographic group or a civil government. What would be the member's response to a definition of a nation as contained in the motion?

Second, why the rush? This is a very salient point. People want time to debate and understand exactly what is going on and right now people feel that they do not have that. They would like to know why the House is rushing to a decision in two hour's time and how are we possibly going to deal with something so fundamental in that period of time.

Third, what are the consequences? Do we know if there will be consequences in the long term?

I think our friends from the Bloc Québécois are rather happy that we are about to pass the motion in the House. They obviously are one step further along the road to sovereignty when the Parliament of Canada declares that the Québécois are a nation within Quebec. I can understand completely why they would support that.

Would the hon. member answer my constituents, please, frankly and without platitudes and drop the speaking notes? Could answer those three questions?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I will drop my speaking notes and address what the member asked.

Our nation was built by two founding societies, French and Canadian. Recognizing one society as a nation does not mean we are giving some special powers. The motion specifically states that it is within a united Canada.

The reason we are discussing this today is because the Liberal Party started this notion in its leadership debate. The Bloc Québécois wanted to exploit it. As a responsible government, we recognized that fact.

I agree that many Canadians would question whether special powers would be given by passing the motion. Is special status being given? There is no special status being given. It is a recognition that the Québécois, the people of Quebec, have contributed to the diversity of this nation and have made this nation such a strong one,

one that is the envy of the world. That applies to every Canadian, new and old. That is why we are so proud of our country.

Nothing else changes the fact that this is a united country.

• (1800)

Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member on the other side. He mentioned that Canada was based on two nations. In fact, when we look at Canada, did he mean to include the first nations in that? If not, would the member consider amending the motion to include the first nations as well?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member that the first nations have made many contributions to enlighten our country. They are as much a part of Canada as are the Québécois as are the rest of Canadians.

We ultimately still remain a united Canada.

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to address this issue as well. There are two issues for me. One is the substance of the matter and the other one is the way in which it has been foisted on us.

I am very unhappy, as I know all other Canadians are as well, with the fact that we would be dealing with such an important item as this motion in such a brief period of time. I realize the Prime Minister has wanted to put his stamp on the issue because he feels, I imagine, that it tests the fibre of a united Canada. He has taken pains to consult with my esteemed colleague, who has given him some counsel, about how best to put this language together.

However, nothing takes away from the fact of what the Prime Minister and the government are doing with this motion and what government members are arguing. We are moving away from the concept of citizenship and we are talking about something completely different.

We are barking up the wrong tree, looking for the semantics, the words, those little perceptions that will suggest, no matter what happens in the House with this debate, we will maintain unity. Of course we should, we must and we will. However, it will not be because people are looking for ways in which to differentiate one group from another.

We talk about the Québécois being a nation in Canada. I do not think anyone in the House would be able to tell a Québécois how he or she must be defined. We have said that every citizen in our country deserves the dignity that comes with being a member of this great society, this great country Canada.

We all acquire that equality through one common denominator, citizenship. With that citizenship, we are given the opportunity to nurture as well those diversities that make us unique. It matters not what our origin, our language, our religion, our personal preferences might be on anything. As long as we are citizens of this one great country and recognize the values that make us similar, we have nothing else to consider.

[*Translation*]

Personally, I have always liked the province of Quebec and the people of Quebec, be they francophone, allophone or anglophone. That makes no difference to me. Why? Because they are all equals as citizens of this country. Each and every one of them is a Canadian.

There should be no discussions about differences, becoming a nation or gaining recognition where such recognition entails rights that are different. Assimilation was mentioned, when there is no such thing in Canada.

I am not an anglophone; I speak English. I am not an English Canadian. I was not assimilated by anyone. In this country, what is sought is always integration in a citizenship in which each man and each woman are considered as equals. That is the foundation for building a real country, a country for everybody.

Personally, as an individual who came to this country 51 years ago, I am dedicated and have always been dedicated to the unity of this country, Canada. My province, Ontario, is a province like any other, and it allows its citizens to be equal to those of Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia and so on.

● (1805)

This is why I think that motions like the one we are debating today and will be voting on later give people a certain impression.

[*English*]

Down the road, whether it is legal, constitutional or otherwise, it is absolutely counterproductive. It is counterproductive for all those reasons that every Canadian, every Québécois feels in his or her heart is against Canada.

We are here in the House as members of Parliament of one great country to build a country and to recognize the dignity that goes toward individuals as members of that country, not anything else. This is no disrespect to anyone else's culture. Lord knows, we all think of this place as our own, all of us. To say that no, this motion means nothing because it does not accord any rights is, as one of my colleagues in the leadership for the Liberal Party said, to have a debate simply for the sake of discussing semantics.

Why would we raise an issue like this? Why would the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party want to raise an issue that is divisive? We should be building unity. There was no reason for the government to present such a motion. I certainly will not be a part of it.

I dare say the vast majority of Canadians—I exclude of course those who have a different view, the sovereignists, the separatists, who would prefer to have a different perception—but there are so many Canadians who know there will be no difference other than to establish a climate where there is an incremental approach toward sovereignty and toward separation. It is no accident that the chief architects of the separatist movement in Canada have embraced this motion. For that reason alone we should look askance at the merits of such a motion. If in fact all of the separatist movement leaders in Quebec favour this motion, can we honestly say it is something that helps to unite the country?

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The motion says that we recognize les Québécois et les Québécoises as a nation within a united Canada. I am sorry, I do not think that is being bought by any of them. If it accords them nothing more than an indication that they are who they are, they do not need us to tell them that, but if it gives anyone an opportunity to inch a little bit closer to providing disunity and counterproductiveness in this country, then they will applaud it.

My understanding is they will be unanimous in their support of the motion. That speaks volumes about the direction we should follow. The Prime Minister has done them a great favour. I do not want to share in the granting to any separatist the opportunity to advance his or her cause.

● (1810)

Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

The Deputy Speaker: I would want to say to hon. members that there have been a couple of occasions recently where members have not indicated they were sharing their time and we have had to make it happen, shall we say, outside the rules. We will just assume the hon. member said that earlier in his speech. We will hear from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, but we will first have questions and comments. The hon. member for Cambridge.

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been here pretty much all day throughout the debate on this issue, except of course for the odd committee meeting and other meetings that I have had. It is awfully nice to hear the Liberal leadership candidates come forward and take one last shot at getting a speech out.

I just want to ask the hon. member if we are not over-analyzing this thing and forgetting the historical evolution of this particular motion, which was in fact that the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore made a comment to the media about this issue of the nation, which allowed the separatist party to jump on the bandwagon and bring forward a motion that would force the House to make a distinction. I think frankly they underestimated the intelligence and the quick leadership skills of the Prime Minister.

I would like the hon. member to acknowledge the historic outcome of this motion. Perhaps he would like to comment on his own colleague's comments in the first place.

Hon. Joseph Volpe: Mr. Speaker, regarding his leader's ability to handle political issues, nobody on this side of the House, at least in the seats over here, would ever put political skills ahead of the country's interests. This is not a question of discussing the political skills of the Prime Minister and his opportunity to seize on an issue raised by the separatists to my left when they said they did not want the kind of conditions that the Prime Minister put forward. There is no question on our side that we should not be discussing this issue in such a short period of time. It is an issue that is going to carry great weight in the rest of the country for decades to come.

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I am not sure whether decades is a limiting number. I have been here for 18 years and I have seen many of these issues come and go on an incremental basis. I took part in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown accord debates. I took part in the debates on the second referendum and the clarity act. We have been through all of these things before. We have talked about the devolution of authorities to provinces and we have seen some of the outcomes.

If the Prime Minister wants to reverse all of those, I applaud him. But if he thinks that this particular motion is a reflection of political acumen and skill and nation building, then I think he is sorely wrong.

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened by the fact that I have to speak to this motion, but at the same time I wish to make it clear that I will be supporting the motion. I think that the motion was not necessary, the same as I felt that the resolution that was brought within my own party was unnecessary. However, the motion is before this House and as a Canadian and as a Québécoise, it is my duty to speak to it and to explain why I will be supporting it.

The member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville expressed it better than I ever could when he explained the three definitions that can characterize the term “nation”. He said that when one looks in the dictionary, for instance, and when one researches documents from researchers and experts who have looked at the whole issue, three definitions come forth.

One is a definition of a group of humans who share a common ethnic origin. He gave the example of French Canadians. French Canadians within Canada form a nation. Primarily the majority of them are within the province of Québec, but there are French Canadians outside Québec. That is the ethnic definition of “nation”.

There is a second definition of “nation” which is that of a group of humans constituting a political unit within a defined geographical territory and personified by a sovereign authority.

[*Translation*]

As he very clearly explained, that is the definition of nation-state.

•(1815)

[*English*]

In fact, Canada falls under that. In the second definition of “nation”, that of a state, the only nation within the geographical territory of Canada that has a legal and judicial existence within international law is that of Canada and only Canada.

There is in fact a third definition of “nation” and that is the definition of nation in the sociological sense. That term refers to a group of humans who are characterized by their desire to live in common and a collective conscience.

The Québécois and Québécoises form that nation. Is it symbolic? Yes, it is. Is this motion symbolic? Yes, it is. Will the separatists attempt to use this motion, voted on and I hope adopted in the House this very evening, in order to fragment and divide Canada? Yes, they will. We just heard it from one of the Bloc members. They definitely will, in the same way that they used distinct society. The separatists have one goal and one goal only. That is to divide Canada, to create an independent country which may or may not have the name of

Quebec, which is completely sovereign, which is recognized on the international scene. That is their sole goal. The Bloc and separatists have no desire, no wish whatsoever to work to ensure that the nation-state Canada remains united. They have no interest in that whatsoever.

The fears and preoccupation of some of my colleagues are well founded but my answer to these very same colleagues is that it is up to us, and me in particular as someone who identifies as being a Quebecker, a Québécoise, and who also identifies just as strongly with the Canadian nation and with my Canadian identity, to ensure that Canada remains united. It is up to us to ensure that the separatists' discourse has to make it clear that they wish to fragment our country and that the separatists have to justify why that should happen. It is up to them to justify it. Because Canada is a great country. It is a great nation-state and it is a nation-state within which we find other nations.

In my personal view, one of the most enriching characteristics of our country is the fact that we can belong to various nations within one nation. It allows us to do that and it does not in any way diminish our attachment for instance to the Québécois nation or to the Canadian nation in any way. That would be like saying to me and to many other Canadians, Quebeckers who live within Québec, many French Canadians, that they have to choose. They will either be a member of a nation or they will have a certain gender. They will either have to choose between, in my case, being a woman who is of African descent, or a woman who is of aboriginal descent, or a woman who is of French descent, or a woman who is of Belgian descent.

I do not have to choose. All of those identities are found within me and they all make up who I am. I believe that they enrich my life in the same way that having a nation within Canada, and it is not the only one, but we are talking about the Québécois nation right now, enhances the Canadian nation and Canadian nation-state, but the Canadian nation and the Canadian nation-state enhance the Québécois nation.

•(1820)

Our duty is to ensure that the separatists are put on the hot seat to explain and justify why they would want to fragment Canada by removing the Québécois nation from Canada. It is up to them, not up to us.

I urge my colleagues in the House, those who have these preoccupations and worries, to vote in favour of this motion. I also wish to reassure Canadians from coast to coast that we federalists, whether we be francophone, anglophone or allophone, are committed to a united Canada that is in no way diminished by support for this motion.

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I would simply like to say to Canadians who are listening to this debate that before they allow their anxiety to overtake them and before they sweep this motion away in a negative way, that they actually read, if possible, the speeches that have been given, in particular the speech given by the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, who is the father of the clarity bill, the bill that ensured that neither Canada nor Quebec would ever again be subjected to a referendum with an unclear question, a question that tried to hoodwink the Québécois into thinking they were voting to remain in Canada but with a special status, when the objective of the separatists was to divide Canada and remove Quebec and Quebecers from Canada. Never again can that happen. The clarity bill was the result of the courage and intellectual rigour of the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

I urge members in the House to read the blues and read what the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville had to say on this motion and to support it this evening.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member gave an interesting and intelligent speech. If we were to go to Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, and type in a request for something that has more than one meaning, it would take us to what is called the disambiguation page. We would then signify whether we wanted to look up the member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington or Scott Reid the former public relations person for the former prime minister, and so on.

The member has done an excellent job of disambiguating between the multiple meanings of the word “nation” as they are used internationally and in the Canadian context.

This is a great service because she is doing what this motion is attempting to do, which is to disambiguate the different meanings that the separatists have deliberately attempted to conflate in order to cause situations in which Canadians of goodwill become reluctant to recognize the sociological facts of nationhood out of fear, on the one hand, that they will be giving recognition of an incipient national statehood to Quebec, but on the other hand, may cause Canadians to give their approval to that incipient statehood out of fear of causing another unity crisis over that misunderstanding.

The member is doing an excellent job of explaining why it is that one can support the notion of Québécois nationhood without giving any special status, aid and comfort to the overall separatist goal. I thank her for doing that.

• (1825)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Marlene Jennings: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member across the floor for his comments. In my opinion, it is very important to underscore once again that the indépendantistes, the separatists, will vote in favour of this motion. However, they clearly did not hide the fact that they tried to shift the meaning of the word “nation”. Rather than forming a nation in the sociological sense of the word, Quebecers would form a nation in the state sense of the word.

The hon. member agreed earlier, by shouting “yes” when I made this point. I think it is very important that we, as federalists from Quebec and federalists from elsewhere in Canada, do not allow the indépendantistes, the separatists, to create confusion in the minds of

Quebeckers and other Canadians about the sociological sense of the word. They will claim that, if Quebecers form a nation, they can no longer remain within the country called Canada. This is absolutely not at all the case.

I thank the hon. member for his comments.

Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will share my time with the member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

To begin, I would like to read a quotation:

The waters of the Ottawa River unite with those of the Great Lakes to join with the waters of the St. Lawrence. Yet, though they unite, they do not blend; rather, they follow their parallel paths, easily distinguishable one from the other. Nevertheless, they form a single current flowing between the same banks, the powerful St. Lawrence, steadily making their way toward an ocean that carries much of our trade. This is a perfect metaphor for who we are.

These words were spoken 100 years ago by Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier.

I found these words very inspiring because, from the beginning, he talked about two currents, two of our nation's founders that followed the same path, working together and going in the same direction but maintaining their distinct character.

Over the past few years, I have travelled a lot. I carried a Canadian passport that I was proud to show. Yes, I was a Quebecker, but I was Canadian. Every time I showed my passport, I was treated with respect and dignity, but I also felt the responsibility that I bear, as a Canadian and as a Quebecker, to be the best possible representative of what it means to be Canadian.

I would also like to say that, contrary to what the Bloc Québécois representatives have tried to show, Quebecers are not victims. We are in fact partners, pulling together for Canada to achieve progress.

In recent years, I recall a famous prime minister who said that Canada was “the best country in the world”. Since the advent of the Bloc Québécois and the internal upsets we have had, we have lost the title of best country in the world. This provides confirmation of the idea that we have to work as a team. When everyone works in unison so that a country can progress economically or socially or in terms of security, failure is impossible. We have always done things together.

I hear my Bloc Québécois colleagues laughing. They may well laugh, because so far they have changed their minds three times in a single week. It can be easy to change one's mind when one comes from the Bloc Québécois because ultimately they have no direction, other than the duty to cause problems. They are hoping to create arguments, but there will not be any.

I would also like to quote something else. This is a passage from an article by Mr. Pratte in *La Presse*, written on November 25, 2006. I found it quite amusing. He said:

That is why Quebecers must not allow the sovereignists to set the standard for the success of Canadian federalism. When it comes to that, they have zero credibility, because whatever gains are made by Quebec it will never be enough for them.

What a fine quotation.

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I am pleased, because that comes neither from me nor from the Prime Minister, nor the Conservative Party. It comes from an independent journalist who has raised this question. I am pleased to repeat it for you here in the House. Thank you, Mr. Pratte.

In recent days we have solved a number of problems, whether we are talking about UNESCO, intergovernmental relations or an attempt to solve the problems that arise in respect of the areas under each province's and each government's jurisdiction. I am proud to have participated in this.

• (1830)

I heard my Bloc Québécois colleague saying that we were Quebecers going after Quebecers. We are not going after other Quebecers; we are simply trying to achieve progress in this country without constantly arguing; we are trying to achieve progress in this country and not simply to ask questions; we are trying to achieve progress in this country rather than trying to destroy it.

I am sincerely proud to be Canadian and to speak in this House today for Canada, but as a Quebecer.

We are also talking about respect and the fact that the Prime Minister, together with the Liberal Party and the NDP, is reaching out to Quebecers. I am pleased that, despite everything, the Bloc Québécois decided to support this motion. What more is there to say? I am pleased that we can now count this as another issue resolved, while we wait, of course, for the Bloc Québécois to raise the next issue, which could be the fiscal imbalance. However, given that that issue will also soon be resolved, specifically, in the next budget, we will not have much left to say. I heard my colleague the Minister of Labour say earlier that the Bloc Québécois will no longer have any purpose in this House. I was so pleased to hear him say that, because I share the same view. When it comes to false representations, the Bloc Québécois are the masters.

I found another quotation from Mr. Pratte interesting:

As they do every time Quebec makes progress in the Canadian federation, the indépendantistes did not waste any time before upping the ante, hoping to provoke new crises that might further their cause. In the past, they cited the exploitation of French Canadians and linguistic insecurity. When those problems were resolved, they moved on to the federal government's debt. When Ottawa pulled through that one, it was immigration, skills training, parental leave, UNESCO—

All of these impasses have now been resolved and overcome. Soon there will be nothing left to say to my Bloc Québécois friends, except for hello. We must certainly not allow them to tell us how to correct the fiscal imbalance.

In closing, I am proud to be Canadian. I am proud to be a Quebecer. I have always known who I am and we will pass a motion here today that finally recognizes that I am part of a nation. I am pleased. I am proud to be taking part in this historic moment.

• (1835)

Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we hear and read here and there in the book of history and on the news all around us these days about quests for liberty and quests for respect ending in wars.

This is not at all the case in Quebec and Canada. I heard my colleague speak earlier, and I quote, about internal wars. Would he like to say what he means by that?

Mr. Luc Harvey: Having visited the country of origin of my hon. colleague from the Bloc, I was talking about relations that can be difficult. I know that in his country of origin there are nearly 60 different nations, tribes or ethnic groups—whatever they are called—that live together in the same country.

Historically, the borders of this country have changed over the years because Cameroon has not always been exactly what it is today. To define an internal crisis or war in a way that is acceptable to the House, I would say that it is a crisis caused by a virus, a sickness, a senseless crisis that people take pleasure in perpetuating. In my view, it is something of this kind, generally speaking.

[*English*]

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has given an insightful speech. From this side of the House it is very good to hear a Quebecer talking about how important it is to recognize every segment of our society, every segment of Canada, and within Quebec with the recognition of the Québécois. It has been very respectful of the Prime Minister to put forth a motion that recognizes the Québécois. It is very inclusive.

In the member's speech, he asked a question about internal wars. I think what we are trying to do is make a very inclusive Canada. Clearly our Prime Minister has taken a very strong leadership role in ensuring that all Canadians are included and in very respectfully recognizing the Québécois within a unified Canada.

Could my hon. colleague please comment as a Quebecer on how refreshing this is? I have heard this over and over again from people from Quebec. They have said that this should have happened a long time ago. There is real true leadership here in Canada right now.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Harvey: Mr. Speaker, the translation service may have missed a few words in the question. However, I will try to answer.

For me, the words “Quebec nation” mean something a little different from what is usually meant in Quebec.

I am married to a woman who immigrated to Canada. She was originally from St. Lucia in the Caribbean. She was raised in English in Ontario. I therefore married an immigrant Ontarian. We have four children.

I believe that the Quebec nation is more inclusive than exclusive. Earlier I quoted Mr. Laurier. I have always been proud to be a Canadian, even more so when I travel abroad. The work we have done over the last 100 years summarizes the history of Canada very well. Its national anthem is an example. Canada has always had values that should be universal, such as integration, a welcoming attitude and generosity toward others. These are values that are shared by Canadians and Quebecers.

As I was saying, I am proud to be a Canadian, even more so when I am abroad. My family is Canadian first, then Quebecer. We are Quebecers though.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying how proud I am to take part in this important debate on the motion that is before us. The motion reads:

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

That tells me that we are trying to unite Canada by this motion, even more than it is united now.

[Translation]

Today, I would like to give several examples of administrative and constitutional measures that have been taken over the years to recognize Quebec's specificity and take it into consideration within the Canadian federation.

[English]

These tangible examples demonstrate that Quebec's specificity is already very much a reality that is taken into consideration within Canada's federal institutions and that the federal system contributes to Quebec's development by taking account of its unique characteristics.

Our government has also undertaken a series of measures since we took office. I believe it is important today to present the real Canada, which is a work in progress but which has from its founding taken Quebec's specificity into account.

I would first like to list some of the most important examples of how Quebec is recognized in the Constitution. Let me first turn to examples of existing recognition of Quebec in the Constitution of 1867.

The province of Quebec was created in 1867 out of the former united colony of Canada. A federal system was chosen in 1867, rather than a unitary system favoured by many, largely in recognition of the fact that federalism fit Quebec's aspirations best.

Section 92 reserves property and civil rights to the provinces in order to protect Quebec civil law. Section 93 protects denominational schools in Quebec and the 1997 constitutional amendment now protects schools organized along linguistic lines.

Section 94 provides for uniformity of laws relating to property and civil rights procedure, but it does not apply to Quebec in recognition of the fact that these matters are dealt with in the Civil Code of Quebec and the Code of Civil Procedure of Quebec.

Section 98 provides that Quebec judges shall be selected from the Quebec Bar.

Section 101 allowed Parliament to create Courts of Appeal for Canada, including the Supreme Court, under the Supreme Court Act. The law and conventions regarding the Supreme Court of Canada have always reserved a prominent place on the court for Quebec judges. Section 6 of the Supreme Court Act reserves at least three places on the court for judges from Quebec.

Section 133 protects the use of the English and French languages in the federal Parliament and Quebec legislature and the Official

Languages Act provides a more expansive protection for the French language.

• (1845)

[Translation]

All these examples clearly show that Quebec's specificity is already taken into account in many ways in Canada's Constitution.

Canadian federalism is flexible enough to meet the needs of Quebec and Quebecers. Federalism is an asset to Quebec's development, not a barrier, as the Bloc Québécois would have us believe.

For the Government of Canada, the issue goes beyond partisan considerations.

The two parties that have formed successive federal governments have signed a number of agreements with the Government of Quebec over the years, in order to recognize Quebec's specific character and to address Quebecers' specific needs and concerns.

[English]

In 1964, the Canadian and the Quebec student loan programs were established. In 1966, the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan were established.

In 1991, the Canada-Quebec accord relating to immigration and temporary admission of aliens was signed, giving the government of Quebec a range of powers. In 1997, the Canada-Quebec labour market agreement was signed.

In 2005, an agreement was reached on establishing Quebec's parental insurance program. In 2006, under the present federal government, an agreement was signed on Quebec's role at UNESCO.

All of these agreements were signed to respond to Quebec's specificity, for the benefit of its entire population.

In sum, by virtue of these agreements and the powers conferred on Quebec under the Constitution, the government of Quebec controls major economic and social levers to assist its development.

The government of Quebec plays a predominant role in the fields of health, education, culture and social services. In addition, Quebec, in cooperation with the federal government, has been able to increase its presence in such fields as immigration, taxation and international relations.

[Translation]

Over the years, Canada has promoted Quebec's distinctness, and federalism continues to serve Quebec's interests. Quebec also plays a significant role in the Canadian federation and is present and active in all federal, provincial and territorial forums.

Our government is determined to work closely with all its partners in the federation. The open federalism we practise calls for a pragmatic approach.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Les Québécois, like other Canadians, are calling on us to work to strengthen our federation, while respecting the specificity of each region of the country by working more closely with our partners, fully respecting the jurisdictions of each. Among other things, this approach involves clarifying the roles of both orders of government, setting limits on the federal spending power and restoring the fiscal balance.

We are making progress and our relations with our partners are productive on many fronts. We are taking tangible measures to respond to the ever evolving needs of Canadians in all regions of the country. In the specific case of Quebec, we have already given tangible expression to our desire to highlight the unique place it occupies within Canada by concluding an agreement on its role at UNESCO and supporting the celebrations of the 400th anniversary of Quebec City.

•(1850)

[Translation]

Under an agreement signed by the Government of Canada on May 8, 2006, the Government of Quebec will be fully represented, as it sees fit, in Canadian delegations at debates, meetings and conferences of UNESCO. This agreement not only shows that the current government is making good on its promises to Quebec, but it also shows clearly that open federalism is producing tangible results, and it illustrates the excellent relations between the governments of Canada and Quebec. These two government are determined to work together.

[English]

In light of these constitutional and administrative examples, whereby Quebec's specificity is recognized in Canada, I am sure the House will agree that the Canadian federal system already reflects the recognition that the Québécois form a nation and our approach makes Canada more united. As I said at the beginning, this motion is all about promoting the unity of Canada.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question of the hon. member. I have been trying to get an answer to this question for a little while in this chamber today.

Could I please get from the hon. member a definition of the word “nation” in English or “nation” in French. It is important to my constituents to understand exactly what it is I am about to vote on in an hour and 10 minutes after a very short and unsatisfactory debate.

It is important to my constituents because I had some meetings in my riding and they peppered me with this question over and over again. They asked me for an explanation of exactly what is it we are conferring upon the Québécois. What is the definition of “nation”. Only when people know what the definition of that word is can they then reasonably understand what the consequences might be down the road of having granted nationhood status to the Québécois.

What does this mean? Is it purely symbolic as some members have said? It means nothing; it is semantics. They said it is only a collection of words to make the separatists go away.

Other people have said it is consequential. This is an important matter. It is so important that all the members on the Conservative

side are under a three line whip. They do not have the ability not to vote for this motion. If they do not vote for this motion, they are out of the caucus. Gentlemen, there is a warm chair right beside me here. It is empty at the moment. They are all welcome to come and visit me, and live here if they would like.

It is interesting that a member of the Prime Minister's government was lost this afternoon. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, whose riding abuts mine, an honourable man, and whose honour was so great as a matter of fact that he could not sit on that side of the House tonight under a three line whip and subjugate the will of his constituents and his own moral compass, his own sense of honour, his own duty to Canadians, and vote for this motion. I am sure that he does not know what a “nation” means either, other than our nation of Canada.

I ask the hon. member, and I know you cannot vote against this even if you wanted to,—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I want to remind the hon. member for Halton, what he has already realized, that he has slipped into the second person a couple of times now. Please do not do it anymore.

Hon. Garth Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for pointing the errors of my ways.

As I was saying, I know the hon. member cannot vote against this motion. I understand that. He made that choice. He is a part of a team. There is no *i* in team. We both understand that. However, I would like him to explain to my constituents, because I cannot answer this, and he believes in these things, so tell them—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. We did want to leave some time for the hon. member to answer the question. We will go to the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Mr. Guy Lauzon: Mr. Speaker, there is an expression in French that says that we must not get tripped by the flowers in the carpet. That is about the best I can do in translating it from French to English. That is what is happening here. We had a sequence of event.

We had a Liberal leadership candidate who pronounced on whether Quebec should become a nation or not. It caused all kinds of trouble within Quebec among Quebeckers. Actually, it caused problems within his own party. The Bloc Québécois saw this as an opportunity here to see if it could make some hay with this and so it came up with a motion.

Thanks to the wisdom of our current Prime Minister, he saw the folly and damage that could happen with this and the Prime Minister reacted. I do not care how many line whips there are on this, I will vote for this any time and I will do it proudly because Quebec is part of this nation.

It has nothing to do with the province of Quebec. My mother was born in Quebec 93 years ago. She is lying in a nursing home, as we speak, close to death. I can tell members that I will vote for this motion because of her. The Prime Minister has given my mother a dying wish and I want to thank him for that.

Government Orders

• (1855)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that every time the word Quebec is mentioned in this place and in fact even outside of this place, it congers up a lot of language and a lot of debate. Let me suggest to the House that there is a reason why it does.

On November 16, 1976, the separatist party, Parti Québécois, stunned the country by winning the provincial election making René Lévesque premier, a very significant event.

On May 20, 1980, we had a Quebec referendum on what? It was on sovereignty association. Does anyone remember sovereignty association? It was not a clear question. It was not, "Do you want to separate from Canada?" It was something nebulous that no one had any idea what sovereignty association meant. Did it mean that one would still belong to Canada but one was separate? One could still enjoy passports, the protection of the army and a few other things.

That took us on a road which I suspect has been the genesis of much of what has been said in this place today. Just to remind all hon. members the vote was 60% opposed and 40% in favour and it was Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau who was the lead campaigner for the no side.

On April 17, 1982, Queen Elizabeth signed into law the new repatriated Canadian Constitution but without Quebec's signature. This was very significant. I remember watching the proceedings and seeing Prime Minister Trudeau basically conclude that we had better take what we could get because it was the best we were going get. However, it is not over. We need to have Quebec to be a signatory to our Constitution.

On June 3, 1987, 11 first ministers including Prime Minister Brian Mulroney reached an agreement called the Meech Lake accord in an attempt to bring Quebec into the Constitution and declare it a distinct society. It needed approval from all provincial governments within three years. It is not over yet.

On June 23, 1990, the Meech Lake Accord died when Manitoba and Newfoundland legislators fail to ratify it. The accord died on the same day that former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien is elected Leader of the federal Liberal Party.

On August 28, 1992, my wedding anniversary, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the provincial premiers signed the Charlottetown accord. The Charlottetown accord was another package of constitutional amendments that would have recognized Quebec as a distinct society.

If we want to have a debate, let us have a debate on what constitutes a distinct society and I think we will hear much of the same arguments that we have heard in this debate since last Friday

On October 26, 1992, the Charlottetown accord died when five provinces including Quebec voted against it. The accord was narrowly approved in Ontario by a margin of 50.1% to 49.9%.

On October 30, 1995, Quebecers voted to reject sovereignty again with 50.6% voting no and 49.4% voting yes. The then premier Jacques Parizeau blamed the resulting loss on money and the ethnic votes.

Again, there are more elements of history in this debate. In the discussions that have been held in this place for many years, there is history.

• (1900)

On March 15, 2000, the House of Commons passed the Clarity Act which put strict rules on any future Quebec referendum, including a provision for a clear question on sovereignty. I believe the legacy of our former prime minister, Jean Chrétien, is defined in many ways for many achievements, but the passage of the Clarity Act by the Parliament of Canada was probably the most significant event that occurred during his prime ministership.

A number of members, who have spoken in this place on all sides of the debate, have raised some interesting questions. What better place to debate the subtleties and the nuances of issues than in the Parliament of Canada, on the public record and in front of the people of Canada, issues that have been the subject of Ph.D. theses for at least 30 or 40 years? We are dealing with issues that people have studied extensively.

The bottom line is that we must remember who the Bloc Québécois members are and what they represent. Fundamentally, that is what this debate comes down to for me. The Bloc raised a motion in this place on an opposition day that basically said that Quebecers form a nation. Some changes were made and there was talk about whether it would be with the phrase "within a united Canada at this time". We have had some iterations on what is going on but the leader of the Bloc said that the motion was without a partisan condition.

As we know, the government presented its own motion, "that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada". The leader of the Bloc Québécois said to Parliament and to Canadians that the condition was a partisan condition.

However, to suggest that we are talking about this matter in the context of a united Canada is not a partisan opinion. It is a fact and we must remember that. We must also remember why the Bloc is here.

The Bloc members are here to fundamentally oppose anything that would support, protect or defend a united Canada. They want to break this country up. They want to take Quebec outside of Canada. The Bloc members were elected to this place under the rules that guide all elections across the country. They are entitled to be here. I am sorry they are here but they are entitled to be here and to hold their positions. We know that when they vote they vote in favour of anything that enhances the conditions or the circumstances as they relate to Quebec. They oppose anything that goes into the realm of possibility of infringing on provincial jurisdiction. They certainly would vote against anything that would not be in the best interests of Quebec. We know that. We know why they are here.

Government Orders

We know why the Bloc members have thrown this issue on the floor of the House of Commons. It is because they saw an opportunity to see what they could do to enhance the prospects of the Bloc Québécois in the next federal election. This was a political decision. It was a partisan decision. It was a decision to take advantage of the rights and privileges of this place to enhance their political objectives, and that is to separate Quebec from Canada. That is why the Bloc raised the motion. All members here know that. The federalist members of this chamber are here to ensure that never happens.

Part of our job is to defend the Constitution, to defend this country and to defend its people from sea to sea to sea. Quebec is often talked about as Quebec and Canada in the Bloc parlance but in this place Quebec is part of Canada. It is part of my Canada and I am here to defend and to protect my united Canada.

• (1905)

Let me remind all hon. members of what was said in this place when the government motion was put on the table. The motion, as members know, reads:

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

I would emphasize the word “recognize”.

Unfortunately, it may be too simplistic because it does not have a lot of detail. It leaves open to interpretation, which many members have done in their speeches, the word “recognize”. Questions have been raised by the hon. member for Halton as to what nation means. In this motion I know exactly what “within a united Canada” means. When Liberals support this motion, that is what we are supporting, a united Canada.

The Prime Minister stated:

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

The meaning is clear. The motion reminds us of why the Bloc Québécois members are here. They are here to break up this country.

The Prime Minister went on to say, “if you recognize that the Québécois form a nation, you have to vote yes in a referendum”, according to the Bloc. That is the way the Bloc members would like to spin it because that is what they are telling us.

The Bloc has abandoned its motion and it will now be supporting the government motion because it sees it as a way to spin it, just like people have been spinning it in the debate today and last Friday. It can talk about nation without worrying about the part that says “within a united Canada”. It can talk about nation because the Parliament of Canada recognizes Quebec as a nation.

However, it is not up to the Government of Canada to determine and establish that Quebec is a nation. That is up to the province. The province has done it as a matter of fact. It passed it unanimously. All of the separatist and federalist members of the Quebec National Assembly passed it unanimously. Quebec is a nation. They understood.

If we look at the debates of that resolution that Quebec is a nation, we and the member for Halton will see clearly what the definition of

“nation” was when Quebec debated it in the national assembly. It was not country. If the member wants an answer, he will get an answer. He can look at it for himself. If he looks at the debates, they were to recognize the distinctiveness of Quebec, the language, the culture, the identity and the civil code.

One can paint a picture of Quebec but I can paint a picture of the Métis, the Acadians and the first nations. I could do that and we could have resolutions in this place to recognize the Métis, the Acadians and first nations. Would it raise the ire of some members of Parliament the way this has? I do not think so but I know why this has raised the ire of some members. The legitimate concern of some members is the fear of what it means and the fear of the consequences down the road?

We need only look at the history and, yes, there is history and there is a threat to this country. I was watching the night the result of the referendum was so close. I remember the reaction of Canadians. They were absolutely scared that we almost lost the country. They were hurt that somehow somebody let us get so close to something we did not understand what it really meant and how it would be done. They did not understand but they knew they came so close that they never wanted to be there again.

• (1910)

Parliament, I believe, and all federalist members of Parliament since then and I hope in the future, will continue to come to this place to protect, defend and speak out on behalf of a united Canada and not to let any opportunity go by in this place to remind the Bloc that we are here to protect Canada.

The Prime Minister went on to say:

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 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.

The members in this place have to repeat it, time and time again, to their constituents, to the Bloc and to the media. If we are here to fight for Canada, then we must stand up for Canada at every opportunity.

I am sorry but sometimes I think some members are nervous Nellies when it comes to talking about tough issues. Yes, this is a tough issue but this is the place to talk about it. If we are not prepared to defend our country in this place, if we are not prepared to remind Canadians that we are here fighting against the Bloc Québécois members who want to separate this country, we should not be here. We have come here to fight for Canadian unity and to fight to make this country a better place.

Government Orders

The intent of the motion is clear to all federalist members. We needed to take action on this. The members rose in this place at the end of the Prime Minister's comments in unity and said that we would be supporting the motion because the motion has to do with one thing, and that is to remind Canadians that we are here to fight. It reminds Canadians that we will say no to the Bloc. We will say yes to Quebec within a united Canada because we love every part of our country from sea to sea to sea and it includes Quebec. When the Bloc suggests otherwise, I will rise in this place and I will fight that.

I ask all hon. members, whenever they see the opening, whenever they feel the threat and whenever they know that the separatists are firing themselves up to take another run, to stand in this place and say no to the separatists. Tell the separatists that Canada is united, that it is the best country in the world and that we will keep it that way.

I commented on the Clarity Act, which is an important act. I believe it will ensure we do not run into the same problems as we did with the previous referendum but we will have another referendum. Let us not ever be afraid to talk about Quebec ever again. Let us not show some reticence to deal with this issue. We must deal with it every time it comes up. We must reaffirm our commitment to Canada and to Quebec, reaffirm the commitment we made when we came to this place and swore an oath to be in this place and to protect Canada. It is all about protecting Canada and to make it an even better place, not only for us but for the generations to come.

• (1915)

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am reminded of an old Japanese proverb which says, "It is more difficult to raise a family than it is to raise a nation".

I think about my mother, who is 87 years, with 10 children, 60 grandchildren and, at the last count, about 70 great grandchildren and the unity that we have experienced in our family. If we ask her what binds us, she will tell us two things: love and respect.

Does the hon. member feel that this motion puts forward those two basic principles that would bind this nation together?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, love and respect can be applied to many things and certainly Canada is one. However, after the federalist members support the motion tonight, this Parliament assures all Canadians who have some concerns that the passage of this motion will not give any special constitutional status. It will not make any new concessions nor will it lead to a further devolution of powers. This is a recognition of a reality and it is our effort, I believe, to make absolutely sure that the love and respect that we have for this country continues to be reflected in our support for this country.

Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member on the passion with which he has expressed his support for the motion, but there is one thing that does concern me, and I am sure it concerns many, and I would like the member to comment on it.

The member has made it very clear that he is willing to fight in the House with every ounce of enthusiasm and commitment that he has. He certainly has convinced me and I know he has convinced others that he really means that, but I wonder if the member would comment on the fact that the fight is not in this House in the sense

that even under the clarity bill the issue will be one for Québécois to decide.

I would like to ask him whether he thinks that support for the motion in fact will be a step in the direction of winning the minds and hearts of Québécois, and if it is, whether he on the other hand believes that through some misunderstanding we might lose the minds and hearts of other Canadians. I think there is an element of risk, at least in the minds of some people, that this might happen. I would like the member to look at both sides of this and give a response.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, this is an important issue in the historical context of our country. The country was shaped by two founding peoples as well as our aboriginal nations, our first nations, and we know there are others who could be included. I am absolutely convinced if this motion were to be defeated it would be Parliament turning its back on Quebec. Passing this motion says to Quebec that it is part of Canada and that we will fight to keep it part of Canada so that all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, from sea to sea to sea, will enjoy the benefits of the best country in the world.

• (1920)

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, first I would like my hon. friend from down the 401 to know the results of an online poll regarding whether or not we should support this motion. The latest results as of a few minutes ago are running basically 70% to 30%, suggesting for members of the House, if they care about what the voters think in terms of polls, that 70% want us to vote against the motion and 30% want us to vote in favour of it.

First, I am wondering if the member might be able to comment on that, on whether he takes that into consideration at all in determining how he is actually going to cast his ballot 40 minutes from now or whether he does not care.

Second, we have a great example here of the suck and blow school of government, where people are saying on the one hand that this motion does not really matter that much. They are saying that it does not confer any special powers on the Québécois or give any special powers to the province of Quebec, that it is just semantics, just words. On the other hand, we are told that if we do not pass this tonight, if we do not rush to judgment, we are turning our backs on the people of Quebec.

Then, of course, we have the argument about our friends from the Bloc Québécois. If we do not pass it, they are going to go willy-nilly into another referendum and win because we have turned our backs on Quebec. However, if we do pass this motion, it gives them no tools to campaign with. If I were those guys sitting here, I would be rubbing my hands in glee waiting for the clock to hit 8 p.m. so that I could have this finally behind me. There they go. They are doing it already.

They are happy because this motion plays right into the hands of the people the hon. member just made an impassioned speech about wanting to foil. Suck and blow: they cannot have it both ways. I fear that right now we are going down the wrong path. Would the hon. member please comment?

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I know that the member enjoys surveys and polls. I thank him on behalf of all the House in regard to knowing how his constituents feel.

Government Orders

I have been a member of Parliament for 13 years. I first ran in 1980. I have been involved actively. I know my community. I have lived there for over 25 years. I know the people. I know what they believe. I do not need a poll to tell me how the people in my riding feel about their country.

Maybe the member has missed it. I really was not talking about the next referendum. I talked about the next election. If we do not recognize the Québécois reality, the Bloc Québécois will go into the next federal election and pound federalist candidates into the ground because of it. That will give the Bloc members the strength they need to make absolutely sure they have every advantage when, if, as and when another referendum comes.

The member has to be either with Canada or against Canada. If he is going to support a united Canada, he should be in this place and stand in this place and support a motion that supports a united Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me first to emphasize how proud I am today as a Quebecker—and I repeat, as a Quebecker—to be able to express my views on the motion of the government that this House recognizes that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada, a fact that has been too long denied. I must say that this is a great day for all the Quebeckers in this House.

Unfortunately, today's debate has been fed for too long by political players with debatable goals. The facts are clear: Canada is a federation that works and it works because of our heritage, the heritage of a decentralized country, of a federation that recognizes the differences and special character of our provincial and territorial partners.

All our regions and all of the provinces have benefited from the decentralized nature of the Canadian federation, which in turn has contributed to the progress of all Canadians and Quebeckers.

Our first economic and fiscal update shows this. The economy is strong, government spending is targeted, our debt is lower, and taxes are going down.

I am proud to take part in this debate today and to have this opportunity once again to remind the Bloc Québécois that it is wrong to depict the Canadian federation as a straitjacket restricting Quebec's development.

It is natural that Quebeckers live and flourish in a province with its own distinctive character that enables a majority of francophones to affirm and gain recognition of their special identity. It is also natural that this rich and special society accepts the presence and growth of multi-ethnic communities and pluralist identities. It is a true success story.

I would also like to say that I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

The Québécois are Canadians and they do not have to choose between two identities. They have them both at the same time. I am Québécois and I am Canadian and proud to be so.

If we adopt the reasoning of the Bloc Québécois, the conclusions we reach are ones that I find troubling. If we adhere to the Bloc Québécois credo, we reject all of the achievements that make Canada a decentralized federation founded on respect for differences, as it was established in 1867. If we share the Bloc's ideas, we also admit that since that time, the exceptional language, culture and institutions of Quebeckers have never found a home within a federal system. Nothing could be further from the truth. What this amounts to is saying that respect for differences and respect for the spirit of federalism are purely imaginary and have nothing to do with how Canada has evolved and with how Quebeckers have flourished. That is false. History tells us the complete opposite.

Quebeckers are distinguished by a rich history and a desire, constantly reaffirmed by generations of women and men, to promote and defend their rights and preserve their cultural and linguistic heritage. We have done a tremendous job of this.

Must we say otherwise? No. Quebeckers also belong to a collective entity that has adopted effective instruments for its development that promote progress and prosperity. Should we say otherwise? Absolutely not.

I would note what was said by Mr. Landry, who himself admitted that Quebeckers had achieved noteworthy development and flourished remarkably, because they enjoyed legal and financial advantages.

I am persuaded that it is precisely the Canadian federal system that has made it possible for Quebeckers to make such strides and flourish in their difference, in the richness of their culture, language and institutions. Our federation is hugely flexible and hugely adaptable. Let us not deny the achievements of our history and our traditions.

● (1925)

Let us not reject the intentions of the founders of the Canadian federation. They were aware of the need to recognize the diversity, the differences, the uniqueness of the partners in the federation. We owe that intention to the very fact that Quebeckers were here in this very House.

Quebeckers participated fully in the creation of Canada and joined Canada because they knew that their differences and their uniqueness would be respected. And in fact that flexibility, which is characteristic of a federation, has worked not only for Quebeckers but also for Canada as a whole, because all of the provinces, all of the territories and all of the regions have benefited from it and through it have helped their people to flourish.

Within a federal framework, Quebeckers have succeeded in achieving economic development and affirming their uniqueness. They have flourished not only within Quebec, but the whole world over, through the influence of a unique culture that has achieved recognition and respect around the world.

How can we possibly not change as new circumstances and many new situations arise? How can we possibly not recognize the importance of new, emerging issues that could affect the quality of life and well-being of Canadians and Quebeckers, issues to which we must respond in a globalized world that is moving faster and faster?

Government Orders

These changes revolve around the concept of open federalism. We have already seen some applications of this new approach based on respect for differences and the spirit of federalism, as the founding fathers wanted. There are, for example, Quebec's full participation in Canada's UNESCO delegation, our objective of restoring the fiscal balance, and our desire to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various levels of government.

It is through this concept of open federalism that we wish to ensure that our heritage will be preserved and perpetuated. It is through our support for open federalism that we try to ensure that the spirit of federalism endures, that it will continue to be based on decentralization, which is its very essence, and that thanks to it, Quebecers and Canadians will continue to flourish.

While the vast majority of Quebecers are justly proud of their Quebec identity, they are also proud of their Canadian identity. What they want above all, though, like most Canadians, is that their governments act in the interest of all our fellow citizens and agree to build a true partnership across the entire country, a partnership based on solidarity and respect for our diversity. For Canada to function well, all levels of government have to consult and work together.

Our government is well aware of the role that Quebecers have played in building our country. They obviously still play a crucial role in the Canadian federation.

Last January 23, the Quebecers in the greater Quebec City area understood. They accepted our invitation to "change for real"—and changed in order to advance, changed in order to build, changed in order to unite and, most of all, changed for real results. The results were that 10 Quebecers were elected to build and not to divide. They want to build in order to grow, to grow within the beautiful country that is our Canada, with their home in the magnificent province that is the province of Quebec.

• (1930)

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents, who is opposed to this motion, wrote me an email this evening.

A few hours ago her minister stepped down because he had not been consulted on this motion. Was the parliamentary secretary consulted on the motion before it was introduced or was she kept in the dark just like her former minister?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I was consulted and am happy to say in the House that I am proud to be a Quebecer, proud to be a federalist, and proud to work for a government that wants to be a government of builders.

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the debate in which I have the pleasure of taking part is, in many respects, of a historical nature, and I am proud to support the motion, which reads as follows:

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

First, I would like to say something to those who feel this motion is of little significance. In the eyes of Quebecers, the political will displayed by the Prime Minister during this debate is not at all

insignificant. On the contrary, they see it as a recognition of what they are, and of the unique place that is theirs within the Canadian community. I should even say the unique place that is theirs within a continent where the language of the majority is different from that of most Quebecers.

There are days that are of real significance in a country's history, days that have a very special significance and that history remembers in a special way. Today is one of them. It is not only about recognizing Quebecers' specificity: it is also another proof that Canadian federalism can evolve, be flexible and recognize what distinguishes a significant portion of Canada's population.

This recognition is not triggered by fear. It is an awareness of a fact that no one can deny. In recent months, not to say in recent years, reference was often made to Quebec's specificity and its make up. So, there is no need to get back to this. However, I want to stress Quebecers' role in the building of our country. The recognition that they form a nation within a united country called Canada seems to me to be the perfect time to do so. Quebecers are deeply attached to Canada. They understand our mutual need to remain united and to work together to promote progress for a country that believes in tolerance, compassion and cooperation.

Canada's history is a testament to that success and to the essential role Quebec has played in building it. Like other Canadians, Quebecers' role is to carry on building that success. This country must remain united for future generations who deserve to inherit a strong and prosperous country. Recognizing that Quebecers form a nation does not undermine that unity, which is vital to the country's progress. On the contrary, it sends a clear message to Quebecers that their history, their culture, their language and many of their institutions are a prominent part of the portrait of Canada, a country rich in diversity.

Quebecers' pride in their identity as Quebecers has never diminished how they feel about being Canadian and has never taken away from their deep attachment to their country. That feeling of belonging to both Quebec and Canada has never stopped Quebecers from thriving and developing as a nation within Canada. That is clear on days like today, days that give Quebecers a special opportunity to reaffirm their attachment to Quebec and Canada. It has been said many times during this debate: Canada has never gotten in the way of Quebecers' reaching their full potential; on the contrary, it has been an asset. The Canadian federalist system has been crucial to Quebec's progress.

• (1935)

Quebec already has all the powers it needs to preserve its uniqueness and to protect the French language and promote its culture. Quebec has its own language laws which guarantee that French is used in public signs, which make French the language of work and which mean that a very large majority of young Quebecers attend French schools.

Government Orders

Quebec has its own government culture department and its own public television network, Télé-Québec. As well, under agreements signed with the federal government, Quebec selects and settles its own immigrants. It has a seat at the Sommet de la Francophonie as a participating government and a seat on the Canadian delegation to UNESCO. It may enter into international agreements in cultural and scientific matters. Through its delegations abroad, it is able to promote Quebec culture on the international scene.

Quebec's uniqueness is already recognized when it comes, for example, to the Civil Code and the numerous agreements signed with the federal government over the years in relation to taxation, pensions, immigration—as I was just saying—and regional development, student loans, family allowances and foreign policy.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the federal government has contributed greatly to defending, promoting and expanding the influence of French language and culture in Canada, and that it continues to do so. Through the work done by federal institutions, Quebecers have a place on the national and international scenes, and play a role and exert an influence that is the best guarantee that French and the culture of the Quebecers will be protected. On the other hand, it is also undeniable that Quebec brings to Canada a contribution that is particularly apparent on the cultural scene. Through its uniqueness and its support for francophones in the other provinces, Quebec is a key part of the diversity of Canada.

We need only consider the history of Quebec to see that Quebecers have reaped benefits from the Canadian federation that make it possible for them to put their uniqueness into practice, to achieve their full potential and to make a wonderfully rich contribution to building a country that is the envy of the world. This integration was not achieved at the expense of either party. Everyone benefits from it.

It is within Canada that Quebecers want to take up the challenges they must face. That is the basis of our government's policy, which is summed up in this formula: open federalism.

We want to improve the functioning of our federation. We want to work together on promoting the fundamental Canadian values of freedom, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are unifying and Quebecers share them as much as other Canadians do.

We have set out to put order back into the government and to reduce taxes. In that respect, hon. members will not mind if I refer to the recent publication of Advantage Canada, which is an economic and strategic plan that will build a strong economy for all Canadians, improve our quality of life and our success on the world stage, and that is based on the following four fundamental principles: focusing government; creating new opportunities and choices for people; investing for sustainable growth; freeing businesses to grow and succeed. Our government wants these principles to shape public policy today and for generations to come, and to allow Canada to become a leader in an ever-changing world.

Quebeckers share these objectives and want to achieve them.

• (1940)

I will close by saying that the Canada of the 21st century absolutely needs Quebec.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his remarks. He spoke at length of the possibility for Quebecers within Canada to maintain their language, promote their culture, counter the effects of more linguistically powerful cultures, like the United States, which continue to have a devastating impact.

It is good to listen to all these institutions within Quebec. Francophones outside Quebec seldom enjoy equal opportunities. They often have a harder time, having to resort to challenges and to contend with provincial governments which may not be as prepared to offer as readily services in the language of the minority. We also have to contend with school boards, health boards and all the institutions responsible for serving people in their mother tongue. It is often a different story if you are a francophone outside Quebec.

This motion which, like the hon. member, I will be supporting, states that Quebecers form a nation within Canada.

Here is my take on the issue. People, regardless of where they live, whether they live in my riding, Montreal, Quebec City, Edmonton or the Lac-Saint-Jean region, are equals. As such, they should have an equal opportunity to have access to similar opportunities and similar services to preserve their language and culture, as requested by Acadians, Franco-Ontarians and all French-speaking Canadians in a minority setting.

The fact of the matter is, however, that the government to which the member belongs cancelled the court challenges program, this long-standing tool of choice to improve the lives of francophones outside Quebec. That tool has now been taken away, and people have to rely on the kindness of the provinces, local health boards or school boards, which have been known for 100 years to refuse to provide the services requested. Services were obtained through constant battles, large and small, fought with the help of funding from the court challenges program which has now been cancelled. In so doing, a component which the member considers important to the development of these communities is being removed.

What does the member have to say to that?

• (1945)

Mr. Daniel Petit: As far as the court challenges program is concerned, pursuant to subsection 92(14) of the British North America Act, this depends on the provinces.

I also want to point out that the government did not abolish that; it simply removed the surplus that was used, but did not go back to those who used the program. That is all I have to say on the matter.

[*English*]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recognize the unique status and rights that first nations, Métis and Inuit people have in Quebec and throughout Canada as the first peoples to inhabit, develop and govern themselves on their lands and as distinct and vital nations onto this day.

Government Orders

Does the member agree that this motion in no way derogates from or diminishes or modifies the unique status and rights of aboriginal people in our country?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her question. I want her to know that the motion takes absolutely nothing away from the Métis or aboriginal peoples.

[*English*]

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, right now many surveys are being done around the country that seem to be either pro or con depending on where one is. Could the hon. member tell the House if he feels this is a welcoming gesture, one that would be helpful toward sending the signal of unification to the rest of the country?

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): A 20-second response from the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Mr. Daniel Petit: Mr. Speaker, this is a gesture of reconciliation.

[*English*]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to speak about the advantages for the people of Quebec in continuing to play their rightful role at the heart of a broader country that they themselves have helped to build, and that is our country of Canada.

We are continuing to build on Canada's economic success story and it has benefits for both the Québécois and for all other Canadians. Federations, such as Canada, operate not only to preserve and promote plurality and allow for the harmonious co-existence of nations, but also to bring concrete benefits to all its members.

The benefits flowing from Canada's political and economic union are among the most concrete of these. The government's advantage Canada plan, tabled last week in Parliament, highlights this very well. Advantage Canada is a long term plan that creates the right conditions and opportunities for Quebeckers and other Canadians alike.

[*Translation*]

When world events disrupt economic activity, our strong, solid and integrated economy has a major advantage. In hard times, it is always good to be able to count on the mutual aid that Canadians from all regions are capable of.

This is especially true today with globalization and the new rules of the fast growing international economy.

● (1950)

[*English*]

These new developments are placing a premium on the ability of nations across the globe to achieve a degree of economic integration that safeguards and promotes their prosperity. Economic integration is no longer a vague concept that only economists talk about. It has become a reality. Our economy is a global economy. The benefits of economic integration have been clearly demonstrated, and those

countries that pay attention to the lessons to be learned reap the rewards of prosperity. Canada is one of those countries.

Only last week, the government presented a plan called advantage Canada. That plan builds on Canada's strengths and seeks to gain a global competitive advantage. We are an emerging energy superpower that is taking action to make concrete improvements to our environmental sustainability. Our economic plan will make a strong Canada even stronger by building a country that is a formidable economic player in the world.

The focus on economic policy is not an end in itself but a means to broaden the range of choices to all members of our federation, including the choices on how to improve our quality of life. Those choices are made by individual Canadians themselves. They are made by the larger communities of shared interests and national identity to which they belong, which includes Quebeckers, and by their federal, municipal and local governments.

[*Translation*]

Quebeckers and other Canadians have long shared the same basic values, in other words, sharing between regions, the universal commitment to offer the best possible public services, and respect for diversity, innovation and independence across the country.

What is more, for Quebeckers and other Canadians, it is particularly important to live in a country that is healthy, safe and prosperous.

[*English*]

Canada is a model for how countries can amplify the strengths of their component parts into a sum that is far stronger economically and speaks with a far stronger voice in international economic forums than those component parts could ever do on their own.

However, we do well to remember that Canada is not the first country where the weaving of strong economic and political ties have led to economic prosperity. Nor is it alone in today's world. Throughout history, there have been many examples of successful countries that have united the economic interests of their diverse constituents and prospered. One of the great examples is that of Great Britain. Great Britain was, and remains today, a union of nations.

Canada's first prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, one of the principal architects, along with George-Étienne Cartier, of not only our political Confederation but also of the Canadian economic union, viewed himself as a Scot, as well as a member of a larger nation that was Great Britain, as well as viewing himself as a Canadian.

Sir John A. knew something about nations. He was also not afraid of words. On one occasion, he said, in referring to the people of Quebec:

Treat them as a faction, and they will react like a faction. Treat them as a nation, and they will react like a nation.

Government Orders

Like many Scots in the history of both Britain and Canada, members of the Québécois nation have contributed greatly to Canada's economic development. Recognizing Quebecers as a nation is simply recognizing what they are and the historic role they have played, and continue to play, in advancing Canada's economic advantage.

Examples of nations weaving ever closer economic ties under shared political institutions are not limited to the past either. Today's Catalonia within Spain, today's India, all are clear success stories of different nations and nationalities prospering under unifying political institutions.

Where does Canada's economy stand today in comparison? According to the OECD, Canada's economy is one of the strongest among OECD countries. In the OECD's view, Canada has worked steadily to become one of the world's most open economies.

As the Minister of Finance stated last week in his economic and fiscal update, Canada's economy is among the fastest growing in the G-7. Canada's job creation has been the strongest in the G-7 over the past decade. In fact, we are on the best economic footing of any of the G-7 countries.

Recent public consultations and commissioned experts' work on Canada's internal market indicate that when compared to similar efforts to reform the economic union in Australia and in the European Union, Canada is considered to be ahead of the European Union and comparable to Australia in terms of economic integration.

The advantages of pooling our economic strengths within a united Canada are as relevant today, in a globalized market and unstable world, as they ever were. In the various international forums that are increasingly important in securing economic prosperity, it is as crucial as ever to speak with a strong, united voice.

After all, there is a world of difference between having the right to speak out and having the influence to make oneself heard.

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

In my opinion, Quebecers benefit a great deal from being part of the Canadian voice and, accordingly, they are better understood. Certainly all Canadians also benefit from the fact that the voice of Quebecers joins with that of other Canadians to speak on behalf of Canada on the world stage.

[*English*]

Advancing our common interests and values is best done by binding together. As history has shown, a strong and united country provides the best conditions for societies and economies to flourish. Let us think of how deeply integrated our economy is. Let us think of how much stronger our voices are when speaking in unison. This is what allows Canada as a whole to remain at the global economic forefront.

I have had the great privilege in my life and my working career to spend time in all parts of Canada and I love all parts of Canada. I have spent a great deal of time in Quebec and I love all parts of Quebec. I have enjoyed its people, the language, the food and the culture. I have great friends from Quebec. Serving 30 years in the air

force, I developed many strong relationships with mates on my squadrons or mates in the army and navy from Quebec. They brought with them a great sense of love for the country and a great sense of commitment to Canada that went way beyond anything they would commit to a particular province, whether it is Quebec, Alberta or Manitoba, where I came from.

It was a commitment to Canada first and foremost. They retained their Quebec roots, their language, their culture and the Quebec *joie de vivre* that I enjoy being part of every chance I get. Next week my wife and I are going to Quebec City to celebrate our 38th wedding anniversary, and I cannot think of a better place to spend it than in Quebec City on the shores of the St. Lawrence River in such an historic spot, one of the places where Canada started. I am going to be very proud to do that. We are going to have a heck of a time. We are going to leave a lot of money in the economy of Quebec.

What it comes down to is faith. One of my colleagues talked about love and respect. I love and respect Quebec. I love and respect Quebecers. My Canada includes Quebec and my Canada will always include Quebec. I have faith in the people of Quebec. I have faith in Canadians. It is time tonight that we put that faith to a vote and showed that. I invite everybody in the House from every party, including the Bloc, to put faith in Canada, to put faith in themselves and to put faith in the people that they were elected to represent and support the motion. Once and for all, let us quit talking about breaking up Canada. Let us talk about a united Canada once and for all and be done with it.

Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed the speech because it really praised the economic performance of the Liberal government, which brought the economy around after it was destroyed by the previous Conservative government.

Let me say that I have been in the House since 1993. I recall sitting on that side and looking over at this side. I remember then that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food used to be the whip and he used to say on every vote that the Reform Party was voting a certain way except those members who were instructed by their constituents to vote otherwise.

I noticed today that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs resigned. I applaud that. I also note that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs is not going to vote against the motion. He is going to abstain. When I resigned as parliamentary secretary, not only did I resign but I voted against the government. Could the member tell me that it is a three-line whipped vote over there and has nothing to do with what the constituents have to say? Could the member please confirm that any member on that side who votes against the government will be kicked out of the party?

• (2000)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I am not going to satisfy my hon. colleague's love for partisanship. I am not going to lay blame or credit for anything that may have happened in his government, the government before that or this government. This is not a night to be talking about that. This is a night to be talking about one Canada. This is a night to be talking about a united Canada.

Government Orders

I think I can say, and I know there are constituents watching tonight, that I am going to apply the best judgment that my constituents gave me. That is to come here and fight like my friend from Mississauga, who spoke so eloquently a moment ago about this. I am not going to get into partisan politics. I am just going to say that I love Canada. I am here tonight to stand up for Canada and that is standing up for my constituents. I assume the hon. member across will do the same. If he does not, shame on him, and he does not belong here.

Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I rise again tonight for the third, fourth or fifth time. I am trying to get an answer to a very simple question. I am going to ask the member opposite, as I have asked a number of other members tonight, if he could please define the word “nation”. It is something that my constituents have asked me to define. I was unable to do it. I have met with them over the last four days. It is a very critical issue for them so that they can understand how I should be voting on it and understand the consequences of the vote that we are going to take in a few minutes.

Could the member please, with some precision, describe to us what “nation” means? We are about to confer that status on an entire group of Canadians. I think it is extremely important before we do this in the next few minutes that the member try to answer that question.

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague well knows, there are many definitions of the word “nation” and anybody in the House and anybody at home can take any definition they want that fits their ideology and their point of view. They are going to apply that no matter which definition I give the member.

The definition that I have for a nation, in one word, is Canada. Canada is made up of many other what can be called nations, whether they are socio-economic groups, linguistic groups or cultural groups. The hon. member is shaking his head. He spends a lot of time shaking his head and I do not wonder why. He asks a lot of questions that I think he knows the answers to, but they are not fitting the poll that he has taken on his laptop computer with a direct link to his supposed constituents.

That is not the way we operate. We operate with, in my view, one nation and that is Canada. It is made up of 10 provinces and three territories and it is always going to be my Canada. Whether he likes it or not, it is always going to be that member's Canada too. I would invite him to come along and be part of the Canadian party.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 8:04 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motions now before the House.

The question is on the motion that this question be now put. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.
(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The next question is on Motion No. 11 under government business. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Call in the members.

● (2035)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 72*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Angus	Arthur
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Baird	Barbot
Batters	Beaumier
Bélanger	Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevilacqua	Bevington
Bezan	Bigras
Black	Blackburn
Blaikie	Blais
Blaney	Bonin
Bonsant	Boshcoff
Bouchard	Boucher
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruinooge	Brunelle
Byrne	Calkins
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)	Cannis
Cannon (Pontiac)	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casey	Casson
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Clement
Coderre	Comartin
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Davies	Day
DeBellefeuille	Del Mastro
Demers	Deschamps
Devolin	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Duceppe
Dykstra	Easter
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Faille
Fast	Finley

Business of Supply

Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Folco
Freeman	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godin	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gourde	Graham
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guay	Guergis
Guimond	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ignatieff	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Julian	Kadis
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kotto
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Laforest
Laframboise	Lake
Lapierre	Lauzon
Lavallée	Layton
Lee	Lemay
Lemieux	Lessard
Lévesque	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
Lussier	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Manning	Marston
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Mayes	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Mourani	Nash
Nadeau	Nicholson
Neville	O'Connor
Norlock	Oda
Obhrai	Pacetti
Ouellet	Paquette
Pallister	Perron
Paradis	Petit
Peterson	Plamondon
Picard	Prentice
Poillievre	Priddy
Preston	Rajotte
Proulx	Redman
Ratansi	Reid
Regan	Ritz
Richardson	Rodriguez
Robillard	Roy
Rota	Savage
Russell	Scheer
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Schellenberger	Shipley
Sgro	Silva
Siksay	Smith
Simard	Sorenson
Solberg	St-Hilaire
St-Cyr	St. Denis
St. Amand	Stoffer
Stanton	Strahl
Storseth	Sweet
Stronach	Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les
Szabo	
Basques)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Thibault (West Nova)	Tilson
Thompson (Wild Rose)	Trost
Tonks	Valley
Tweed	Van Loan
Van Kesteren	Verner
Vellacott	Wallace
Vincent	Warawa
Wappel	Wasylycia-Leis
Warkentin	

Watson
Williams
Wrzesnewskyj
Zed— 265

Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich

NAYS

Members

Bains
Chan
Dryden
Karygiannis
Matthews
Minna
Steckle
Turner

Bell (North Vancouver)
Comuzzi
Fry
Marleau
McTeague
Simms
Telegdi
Volpe— 16

PAIRED

Members

Hinton
Loubier

Lalonde
Skelton— 4

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[*English*]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—QUEBEC NATION

The House resumed from November 23 consideration of the motion and of the amendment.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred division on the motion of the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie relating to the business of supply. The question is on the amendment.

Hon. Jay Hill: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the motion just taken to the motion now before the House, with the Conservative government members present voting no.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, Liberals will be voting no on this motion.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Guimond: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois members will support this motion.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, members of the NDP vote against this motion.

● (2040)

Mr. André Arthur: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting no.

Hon. Garth Turner: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting no.

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

(*Division No. 73*)

YEAS

Members

André

Asselin

Business of Supply

Bachand
Bellavance
Blais
Bouchard
Brunelle
Carrier
DeBellefeuille
Deschamps
Faille
Gagnon
Gauthier
Guimond
Laforest
Lavallée
Lessard
Lussier
Ménard (Hochelega)
Mourani
Ouellet
Perron
Plamondon
St-Cyr
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
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Barbot
Bigras
Bonsant
Bourgeois
Cardin
Crête
Demers
Duceppe
Freeman
Gaudet
Guay
Kotto
Laframboise
Lemay
Lévesque
Malo
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Nadeau
Paquette
Picard
Roy
St-Hilaire

Kadis
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki
Lake
Lauzon
Lee
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKenzie
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McCallum
McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nash
Nicholson
O'Connor
Oda
Pallister
Peterson
Poilievre
Preston
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Savage
Scheer
Scott
Shipley
Silva
Simms
Solberg
St. Amand
Stanton
Stoffer
Strahl
Sweet
Telegdi
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson
Trost
Tweed
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Volpe
Wappel
Warkentin
Watson
Williams
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Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Kram (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre
Layton
Lemieux
Lunn
MacKay (Central Nova)
Malhi
Manning
Marston
Martin (LaSalle—Énard)
Masse
Mayes
McDonough
McGuire
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville
Norlock
Obhrai
Pacetti
Paradis
Petit
Prentice
Priddy
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rodriguez
Russell
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Sgro
Siksay
Simard
Smith
Sorenson
St. Denis
Steckle
Storseth
Stronach
Szabo
Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tonks
Turner
Valley
Van Loan
Verner
Wallace
Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis
Wilfert
Wilson
Yelich

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Albrecht
Allen
Ambrose
Anderson
Arthur
Bagnell
Baird
Beaumier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bennett
Bernier
Bevington
Black
Blaikie
Bonin
Boucher
Brisson
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calkins
Cannis
Carrie
Casson
Charlton
Christopherson
Coderre
Comuzzi
Crowder
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
Davies
Del Mastro
Dewar
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Easter
Epp
Fast
Fitzpatrick
Fletcher
Fry
Gallant
Goldring
Goodyear
Graham
Guamieri
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill
Hubbard
Jaffer
Jennings

Ablonczy
Alghabra
Allison
Anders
Angus
Atamanenko
Bains
Batters
Bélanger
Bell (North Vancouver)
Benoit
Bevilacqua
Bezan
Blackburn
Blaney
Boshcoff
Breitkreuz
Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Barrie)
Byrne
Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannon (Pontiac)
Casey
Chan
Chow
Clement
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cuzner
Davidson
Day
Devolin
Dhaliwal
Dion
Doyle
Dykstra
Emerson
Eyking
Finley
Flaherty
Folco
Galipeau
Godin
Goodale
Gourde
Grewal
Guergis
Harris
Hawn
Hiebert
Holland
Ignatieff
Jean
Julian

PAIRED

Members

Hinton
Loubier

Lalonde
Skelton — 4

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

Business of Supply

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen.

• (2050)

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

*(Division No. 74)***YEAS**

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Barbot
Bellavance	Bigras
Blais	Bonsant
Bouchard	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Crête
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Duceppe
Faille	Freeman
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gauthier	Guay
Guimond	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Lussier	Malo
Ménard (Hochelaga)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Mourani	Nadeau
Ouellet	Paquette
Perron	Picard
Plamondon	Roy
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent— 48	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Albrecht	Alghabra
Allen	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Arthur	Atamanenko
Bagnell	Bains
Baird	Batters
Beaumier	Bélanger
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bennett	Benoit
Bernier	Bevilacqua
Bevington	Bezan
Black	Blackburn
Blaikie	Blaney
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown (Oakville)
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Barrie)
Bruninooge	Byrne
Calkins	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cannon (Pontiac)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chan
Charlton	Chow
Christopherson	Clement
Coderre	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davidson
Davies	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal

Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Dryden	Dykstra
Easter	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Fast	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Flaherty
Fletcher	Folco
Fry	Galipeau
Gallant	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Graham	Grewal
Guarnieri	Guergis
Harper	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Holland
Hubbard	Ignatieff
Jaffer	Jean
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lapierre
Lauzon	Layton
Lee	Lemieux
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Malhi
Maloney	Manning
Mark	Marleau
Marston	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Matthews
Mayes	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McTeague	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy (Charlottetown)	Nash
Neville	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pacetti	Pallister
Paradis	Peterson
Petit	Poilievre
Prentice	Preston
Priddy	Proulx
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Savage
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Scott
Sgro	Shipley
Silva	Simard
Simms	Smith
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Stanton	Steckle
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Stronach
Sweet	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Tilson	Tonks
Trost	Turner
Tweed	Valley
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Verner
Volpe	Wallace
Wappel	Warawa
Warkentin	Wasylcia-Leis
Watson	Wilfert
Williams	Wilson
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Zed— 233	

Business of Supply

PAIRED

Members

Hinton
Loubier

Lalonde
Skelton — 4

It being 8:52 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

[*English*]

(The House adjourned at 8:52 p.m.)

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