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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 10, 2011

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 10, 2011

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to the study of Bill C-511, Proactive Enforcement and Defect Accountability Legislation (PEDAL) Act. The committee recommends an extension of 30 days to consider the bill.

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a) a motion to concur in the report is deemed moved, the question deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, February 16, 2011, immediately before the time provided for the consideration of private members' business.

* * *

HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS ACT

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-618, An Act to amend the Hazardous Products Act and the Textile Labelling Act (animal fur or skin).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to table a private member's bill, An Act to amend the Hazardous Products Act and the Textile Labelling Act (animal fur or skin), and want to thank the member for Vancouver East for seconding the bill.

The bill would prohibit the sale and import of products made in whole or in part of dog or cat fur. It would also require all animal skins to be labelled and full disclosure of fur fibres on labels.

Many Canadians are very concerned about the use of cat and dog fur and strongly support a ban on its use in imports. Should the bill pass, Canada would join Australia, Switzerland, the United States and the European Union in banning products that contain dog and cat skins and fur.

As well, animal pelts and hides do not currently require to be noted on labels. Under the Textile Labelling Act, products can simply be labelled fur "fibre", no matter what quantity is involved without an explicit listing of all the type of fur fibre in the product.

I have been proud to work with Lesley Fox, executive director of the Association for the Protection of Fur-Bearing Animals, on this project. We believe the bill will give consumers who wish to avoid fur products clear and confident choices.

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

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CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD ACT

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-619, An Act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act (notice of opting out and licence for activities).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce a bill today entitled an act to amend the Canadian Wheat Board Act, and delighted to have the bill seconded by my colleague, the hon. member for Westlock—St. Paul.

The bill proposes to bring marketing choice to western grain farmers, giving them the opportunity to opt out of participation in activities, such as transporting, exporting and selling, that are now the exclusive domain of the Canadian Wheat Board.

In the interests of western farmers, I commend this bill to the consideration of all hon. members.

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

* * *

FAIRNESS FOR VICTIMS OF VIOLENT OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-620, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (parole review and victim impact statement).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, over the years I have had many calls from constituents regarding their concern with the imbalance between victims' rights and those who are convicted of very serious and heinous crimes. However, all of that was eclipsed last summer when I sat for hours in a parole board hearing. A multiple murderer was there. The victim was there. Her sister and her two children had been killed years ago. The murderer had never taken responsibility for his act.

In consequence, my concern has grown into a great personal conviction, and I produce the bill today regarding the Corrections and Conditional Release Act that would give more freedom to victims, more access to information, as well as more discretion to the Parole Board. I would ask all of the members here to support the bill.

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

* * *

• (1005)

BROADCASTING ACT

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-621, An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act (loudness of television advertisements).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to introduce a bill to amend the Broadcasting Act.

Canadians are sick and tired of having to reach for the remote control every time a commercial comes on TV at a higher volume than the normal programs they are watching. It is a common complaint to be watching a show at a comfortable volume and then the program breaks for a commercial and one is suddenly jolted out of one's seat by the loudness. While it may seem a small irritant, it is a daily stress that could and should be relieved from the shoulders of Canadians.

This bill will help to stabilize the volume of TV commercials down to the same average level of other programs by requiring the CRTC to make regulations under the Broadcasting Act to limit the loudness of advertisements broadcast on television. The regulations would follow the best practices of the Advanced Television Systems Committee, the standards agency for North American broadcasters, and would establish a target dialogue level for all programming.

My bill, when passed, will provide everyone a noise pollution-free and comfortable environment for enjoying a TV program at home.

I would like to thank the member for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for seconding my bill.

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

* * *

CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT, 1999

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-622, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 and respecting the On-Road Vehicle and Engine Emission Regulations (emissions labelling for newly manufactured vehicles).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for seconding my bill.

This enactment amends the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, to require that no company shall transport a prescribed newly manufactured vehicle within Canada, and no person shall import into Canada a newly manufactured vehicle of a prescribed class, unless it has a clearly visible label displayed on it that informs the consumer of how much CO₂ is emitted from that vehicle in grams per kilometre in both highway and city driving.

It would also require the Governor in Council to amend the On-Road Vehicle and Engine Emission Regulations to include the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions as part of the purpose of those regulations.

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

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I missed presenting reports from committee and I would ask that the chair of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage be able to present a report to committee.

The Speaker: Is it agreed we revert to presenting reports from committee?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 6th report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, congratulating Denis Villeneuve and his team for receiving an Academy Award nomination for the film *Incendies*.

• (1010)

[*English*]

I also congratulate Adrien Morot, from Montreal, for his nomination for the best makeup artist for his work on the movie, *Barney's Version*.

* * *

PETITIONS

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by dozens of Canadians that calls for an end to Canada's military involvement in Afghanistan.

In May 2008, this Parliament passed a resolution to withdraw Canadian Forces by July 2011. The Prime Minister, with the agreement of the Liberal Party, broke his oft-repeated promise to honour the parliamentary motion and, furthermore, refuses to put it to a parliamentary vote in the House.

Committing 1,000 soldiers to a training mission still presents a danger to our troops and an unnecessary expense when our country is faced with a \$56 billion deficit. The military mission has cost Canadians more than \$18 billion so far, money that could have been used to improve health care and seniors pensions right here in Canada. In fact, polls show that a clear majority of Canadians do not want Canada's military presence to continue after the scheduled removal date of July 2011.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to honour the will of Parliament and bring the troops home now.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Francis Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of many people in the riding of Guelph, I am presenting a petition urging the federal government to immediately cease negotiating a free trade agreement with the EU until nationwide public consultations have been held.

The EU is seeking to have the Government of Canada implement changes to a number of important policy areas, including municipal and provincial procurement, copyright, telecommunications, cultural rules, postal services, management of our municipal services and banking, as well as financial regulations. They all stand to be affected by signing on to the comprehensive economic trade agreement with Europe.

In order to ensure that our industries, services and regulations operate in Canada's best interests, the signatories of this petition implore the federal government to undertake public consultation so that Canadians have a say before signing this potentially damaging agreement.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of Mr. Saeed Malekpour, who has been detained in a prison in Iran for two years, subjected to torture, forced to make false confessions and deprived of legal counsel. He is a permanent resident of Canada.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to urge the Minister of Foreign Affairs to intervene on Mr. Malekpour's behalf and appeal to the government of Iran.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Business of Supply

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FORILLON PARK

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ) moves:

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated, and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured, and also very humbled, to rise today to speak about the people who were expropriated from Forillon. They were treated without justice, respect or dignity.

I would also like to point out that today marks a rather unusual anniversary. Another injustice occurred on February 10, 1956. On that date, Wilbert Coffin was hanged. Today, the members of his family are holding a very special ceremony in the Gaspé region.

Injustices have occurred, both in the case of Wilbert Coffin and in the case of the people expropriated from Forillon. Again this week, another case of injustice involving employment insurance was brought to the attention of my office. Recently, as we know, changes were introduced to reduce the number of hours of work required for employment insurance eligibility from 910 to 840 hours. That is 70 fewer hours, but this can still mean the difference for two particular young people. One is six hours short of being eligible. He has 834 hours of work to his credit instead of 840 hours, and according to the rules, is not eligible for employment insurance. This was the first time that he had ever applied for employment insurance. The situation was the same for the other young person who was short 20 hours of work. I can think of many unfair situations happening in the Gaspé region, the Magdalen Islands, elsewhere in Quebec and in the world.

Thus, fundamentally, when we talk about an injustice like the one the people expropriated from Forillon were victims of, we are talking about all injustices. When we fight one case of injustice, when we fight for respect and human dignity, we are fighting for all human beings who have faced similar situations in the past, are facing them now, or will in the future.

Getting back to the issue at hand, I would like to mention the co-operation and involvement of two individuals. The first is Lionel Bernier, who wrote a book in the early 2000s about the fight for Forillon. He served on a commemorative committee in 2010, which somewhat eased the pain of those who were expropriated. Another individual, Marie Rochefort, is still fighting today on behalf of a group of expropriated persons. These people, their committee and supporters are keen to meet with anyone interested in the plight of those expropriated from Forillon.

Business of Supply

The story of Forillon is the story of the creation of a national park. I will give a bit of background information. The park was created in the late 1960s or early 1970s by Jean Chrétien, who at the time was the minister responsible for parks. At that time, a number of people—225 families to be exact—lived on the land that was slated to become Forillon Park. These families had cleared the land and built their homes there. Another 1,200 or so people had title to land in what was to become Forillon Park. There is the basic context.

This was not a park carved out of an uninhabited area. It was already home to a community. People were led to believe that the creation of a park would bring tremendous wealth to the Gaspé. There was talk at the time of 3,000 jobs, of many jobs down the road for a lot of people. There was also talk of major economic spinoffs. Sadly, however, the realization dawned in 2005 that Forillon Park had created the equivalent of 70 full-time jobs. A total of 70 people work at Forillon National Park which lies at the tip of the Gaspé Peninsula.

●(1015)

So this is what happened. People had been living on their land for years. They thought they would continue to live their lives on this magnificent peninsula. Suddenly, they were swept away by a tsunami similar to the high tides we have seen strike elsewhere. The tsunami was supposed to bring with it development, growth and benefits, but the sad truth became apparent with the passage of time. These people were caught in the middle of a chain of events.

I represent the riding of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, but back then, there were other elected provincial and federal officials representing the same region. They were complicit in these events and in the sad story of these people.

When these people originally settled on this land, they were thinking about growth, the future and their families. Suddenly, the bulldozers arrived and their lands were expropriated to make way for a park, with the promise of tremendous growth in the Gaspé region. Moreover, they were paid very little for their land and properties.

Caught in the middle of these events, some people accepted their fate because they could see a glimmer of hope. They were told that they would have to leave their land, move into town or go somewhere else. But at the end of the day, they found themselves in a situation where they were offered very little for their land compared to going market rates.

Just think of it. When Forillon National Park was created, the 225 families who lived on this land were forced to find somewhere else to live. Those with very strong ties to this region wanted to stay in the Gaspé region, in the town of Gaspé in particular. However, property and home prices had risen because of the anticipated increase in development. These people had to find other pieces of property to purchase, and that with very little money. They had to spend substantial sums of money to purchase another piece of property and a home. Many of them had to go into debt.

Many could not accept this ridiculous state of affairs. They fought back. To use once again the analogy of a tsunami, they were engulfed by a giant wave. Those who were unable to accept the creation of Forillon National Park, with its promise of wealth and development, were forcibly expropriated.

How is a person supposed to react to a government official in a nice suit? We have talked a lot about white-collar crime these days, but other kinds of crime are committed as well. Back then, these people were caught in a no-win situation. Roughly 1,000 people in five municipalities were affected. We are talking about 214 residential properties, 355 buildings, 1,400 woodlots and 8 factories.

And what of the famous promises I alluded to earlier? I can give the House some idea of the exact numbers involved. The park was supposed to generate tens of millions of dollars in investments and create 3,000 jobs, including 700 permanent jobs. The creation of the park was also going to lead to an exponential increase in the number of visitors each year.

●(1020)

In 2005, the town council of Gaspé reported that the park employed 35 persons all year and 100 more during the summer, or the equivalent of 70 full-time jobs per year. At the time, 3,000 jobs were promised, but in reality, only 70 jobs were created.

I will not sing you a song about the fate of these people. There is, however, a song by Paul Piché, and another lesser known one, *La chanson de Forillon*, or Song of Forillon, with lyrics by Maurice Joncas, a Gaspésien, and music by Pierre Michaud. There are almost enough people here to sing it as a choir, but that is not what we are here for. I will read the lyrics to you:

For generations, they lived on this land
To live or die was the law of the people of Forillon.
Fishing boats in summer, axes and stoves in winter,
Sharing happy times, that was more or less their world.

But others came to survey, to measure and trample on the land.
From Ottawa they sent bulldozers to clear it all away.
Québec agreed and told the people to leave it all behind.
Now bid goodbye to your land, your home, your family, your friends, your Gaspésie.

Leave your homes for Montreal, Gaspé, Québec or someplace else.
Even with your broken hearts, everything will work out fine.
Go and die in the big city; it's not so hard to do.
A tree uprooted always dies.

Our land, our Gaspésie, will be transformed one day,
Of that we can be sure.
Strangers will come to Forillon and not remember
The ones who cleared this land a hundred years ago.

For generations, we lived on this land,
To live and die, that was the law of the people of Forillon.
Fishing boats in summer, axes and stoves in winter,
We no longer share those happy times.

Now everyone pays at the gate.

Those lyrics accurately reflect the spirit of the day. The last line says it all, "Now everyone pays at the gate". There used to be a village, a church, a community and a cemetery. The descendants of those who lived in Forillon National Park had to pay an entrance fee just to be able to visit their family's roots and pay their respects. That is the sad reality. When we think about what happened to these people, we get the clear sense they were not shown an ounce of respect.

That is the battle we are fighting today, the battle for recognition of what happened. Another battle needs to be fought in Quebec City, but that will take place in another theatre, the National Assembly. Quebec was complicit in this situation, but we have work to do here in Ottawa.

That work has been done in certain circumstances, particularly the cases of Mirabel and the Indian residential schools. Now it is the turn of those who were expropriated to create Forillon National Park. Now, 40 years after the fact and many painful memories later, the people are asking for something. They have been given access passes for the three generations of descendants living in the area. This gives them free access to the park and means they do not have to pay at the gate to visit the park to pay their respects to their families or reconnect with their roots. But they want five generations to receive these access passes, not just three. That is one part of the issue.

In addition, these passes should not be limited to just the 225 families who owned homes or property located in the park. I mentioned woodlots and other properties. We are talking about roughly 1,500 people. Although it would not cost a lot to give them all passes, that small gesture certainly would mean a lot, and therefore not be so small, after all.

●(1025)

So I obviously urge parliamentarians of every stripe to stand united in the House of Commons on this motion. In fact, it is merely a first step. For Parliament to make a formal apology is one thing, but we also want the government to formally apologize to each and every person to whom this kind of thing has happened, is happening or will happen.

I met with these people, and I visited Dolbel-Roberts House in Forillon National Park. The museum tells some of their history. People have shared their stories on video, on tape and now on DVD. With heavy hearts, they describe what they went through and the tremendous pain of it all. And for that pain, we owe them our consideration today.

I want to commend my leader and my political party, the Bloc Québécois, for taking the time to look into this issue and allowing it to be our focus for an entire day. As I said before, by devoting a day to one particular injustice, we are actually tackling all injustices. And there are plenty to choose from. There is no shortage of injustice, we might say. This is an initiative the Bloc Québécois is proud of, but it is also taking a non-partisan approach. I hope it will be taken in that spirit. I am the first to speak, and others will follow, including members from the Conservative Party, the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party. I hope we will unanimously support this motion.

This motion is not intended to fix everything. Keep in mind the situation I described. Today, all these people who have come here would, on one hand, prefer not to remember what happened, to forget completely, because nothing in the world could possibly right the wrong done to them. But on the other hand, they have a little voice inside telling them this would nevertheless be helpful, just as it could be helpful to those who are and will be watching us today. They may appreciate the fact that we are telling them what happened, making them aware of the injustice that occurred, of the

Business of Supply

disrespectful and undignified manner in which some people were treated. It helps to hear what happened. In any case, it helps me to talk about it.

As a native of the Gaspé region, I know very well that we have endured all kinds of situations throughout our history, which continues to unfold. Given what we know about the creation of Forillon National Park, about those who were expropriated, about the sad anniversary of Wilbert Coffin's hanging and about all the other injustices, the very least we can do today is to recognize what happened. When you make a mistake this big, the least you can do is to consider apologizing.

The former member of Parliament for my riding made some mistakes, and I apologize for that to all those who were expropriated in connection with Forillon National Park. Had I been the member at the time, there is no doubt the situation would have been much different.

●(1030)

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for informing the House of a matter that had its genesis some 40 years ago and affects up to, I believe he said 225 families, but with other properties about 1,000 persons.

This comes up from time to time with events from the past for which there has been an injustice or the issue had not been dealt with in a manner wherein if we were in the same position we would have felt there was a better solution.

My question for the member is to inquire whether this issue has been raised at any time before with the current government or with other levels of government and has there been any uptake in terms of consideration of the well-founded point that has been raised today by the hon. member?

●(1035)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for that question. It gives me an opportunity to say that there has indeed been some correspondence, particularly from representatives of the commemorative committee, such as Lionel Bernier, whom I mentioned earlier. I myself have written a letter to the current Prime Minister, requesting the same things we are asking for today on behalf of the people concerned. I met with the former acting minister for Parks Canada, who is now in another position—House Leader, of course. I hope to have a chance to meet with the new minister one day to move this issue forward.

We have a wonderful opportunity here. We had a great opportunity last year, with the commemorative events, but we have an even better one today. The government has a chance to respond positively to these requests.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for his motion today and I certainly indicate that the NDP caucus is strongly supportive of it.

Business of Supply

The motion calls on the House of Commons to issue the apology. Why does the motion not indicate that the government should issue the apology?

I would also like to know what the Liberal government did regarding this situation, because it was in power for 27 years from the time the park was established. Were the Liberals asked to do anything over those 27 years?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Elmwood—Transcona for his question. As I mentioned earlier, this happened on Jean Chrétien's watch; he was the minister responsible for parks at the time. Unfortunately, no government has taken any tangible action.

We need to discuss what happens here, but we must not forget that there are also people responsible in Quebec City, people who need to acknowledge their mistakes, even though they were made by the government or governments of the day. The Union Nationale was the party in power when all this took place, by the way. In Ottawa, it was Trudeau's Liberal government, which included Jean Chrétien. Then, in Quebec City, it was the Union Nationale government.

Unfortunately, no one has made a formal apology or taken any meaningful action so far. I am very aware that the current Liberal Party leader has had a chance to meet with these people and spoke publicly on the issue. Today is a perfect opportunity for him to take an even stronger stand, not only as a show of support, but in a genuine attempt to help heal the wounds of those who were expropriated from Forillon National Park.

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as a member of Parliament, one of the aspects of my work I most appreciate—and that is our role, of course—is defending citizens who are victims of injustice, especially in a case like this one, Forillon Park, where people are waging a battle like that of David against Goliath. It is easy to understand that when you uproot a tree, it is painful and difficult, but uprooting a people is something truly agonizing. It is an attack on the people's identity, on its life and on everything around it.

We feel that this has enormous repercussions, on several generations in fact, as we can see in this case. It is certainly incumbent upon us to extend our apologies to all of the Quebec men and women who were affected.

The member spoke to us of the Forillon Park battle, and this immediately brought to mind images of the military, even though I understand of course that this is not what we are talking about. But I would like him to tell us a little about how people resisted this decision. There was surely some resistance.

Mr. Raynald Blais: Mr. Speaker, they resisted with a lot of dignity. I think it is important to talk about this again, to go back to this story.

In the face of this tidal wave, they decided that this was unacceptable and that they were going to have to fight. They fought before the courts. They finally managed to win their case, but after several years. The errors were recognized. Those people were given money and told that they had not been paid sufficiently at the time

and that there was now a willingness to give them three or even five times what they had been offered back then.

All of a sudden, some people who had accepted those offers realized that this was not right and that they should also fight. In fact, they wondered why they should accept peanuts and recognized that there had been a mistake regarding this expropriation. These people fought and they also triumphed.

So there was a type of battle. It is unfortunate that summarizing all of that struggle in a few seconds is extremely difficult. When people encounter this lack of respect and have to fight against an enormous machine, the slightest bit of support—and today's support is highly important—surely helps to salve the wounds.

● (1040)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate.

Canada's national parks, national marine conservation areas and national historic sites were created for Canadians by the federal government in order to allow them to discover the diversity and natural and cultural riches of our great country.

The Parks Canada Agency has been given the mandate to manage these exceptional sites on behalf of Canadians. Thus, the agency is the steward of a network of protected natural and historic areas that is among the most beautiful and most vast in the entire world.

Parks Canada manages this array of 42 national parks, 4 national marine conservation areas and 167 national historic sites so as to allow everyone to have memorable experiences there, while ensuring that the parks' resources are protected for future generations.

Parks Canada has from its inception continued to evolve. Today, the agency is reaching more and more people, allowing them to have more and more memorable experiences and becoming more relevant in the eyes of Canadians, while continuing to protect our heritage, celebrate our history and encourage the population to explore, wonder and dream about the future.

As the parks are protected and managed on behalf of Canadians, Parks Canada recognizes that the public must be actively engaged in dialogue when the time comes to define the future of these unique sites.

This approach is part of a profound change within Parks Canada and has led to concrete action that is facilitating the reconciliation process with regard to Forillon, and also having an impact throughout the country. By sharing leadership with people from the community, we are obtaining mutually beneficial and more satisfactory outcomes for everyone.

In the case of Forillon National Park, in 2006, when the public consultation on the management plan took place, Parks Canada heard the heartfelt cry of people who wanted their park to listen to them, recognize the past and carve out a place for them in its history. Since 2007, Parks Canada personnel have expended considerable effort to ensure that this page in Forillon National Park's history will be told with respect and to get closer to the expropriated families.

Business of Supply

It was in that spirit also that in early 2007, Parks Canada set up an advisory committee to create a setting conducive to communication between area residents and the park's management. One of the top priorities was to tell the story of the expropriation, which is a key chapter in the park's history. To do this, Parks Canada got together with people from the area and some of the expropriated residents, with whom it worked closely in order to determine the best way of telling their story, as a gesture of reconciliation.

Another tangible act by Parks Canada was the organization in 2009 of a reunion day, which was a first step in that reconciliation. Parks Canada made a formal commitment at that time to tell the people of the Gaspé and all Canadians about the events that preceded the creation of Forillon National Park. For many of the 300 people in attendance, that was the first opportunity they had to come back to the place where they had grown up and had lived.

Parks Canada repeated the gesture in 2010 by inviting all of the expropriated people and their families, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the creation of Forillon National Park, to come and rediscover their park and take part in reunion activities.

On that occasion, my colleague, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, on behalf of the hon. Jim Prentice, who was then the Minister of the Environment and the minister responsible for Parks Canada, inaugurated the exhibit “Gaspésians from Land's End” at Dolbel-Roberts House, located in Forillon National Park. This exhibit is one step in the reconciliation work undertaken by Forillon National Park in order to reconnect with the expropriated owners, their descendants and the former residents who lived on the land when the park was created.

• (1045)

It reflects Parks Canada's desire to underscore the contribution these families and these communities made to the history of the region and the country. This exhibit stands as a permanent record of the life of the families that were expropriated when Forillon National Park was created. A group of expropriated owners took part in all of the steps in the preparation of the exhibit, from the concept to the final product. To respond to their wish to share their story, some moving accounts were recorded and are presented in the hall that is dedicated to them. The exhibit and the work that went into it proved to be a positive exercise, and the group repeatedly expressed its satisfaction with the co-operation of the Parks Canada team.

Everyone feels that the exhibit is dynamic and that the expropriated families are given a large role in it, having enriched its content by adding family photographs, objects and archives. There was a call sent out to the public on community radio, and over 400 photographs were lent and integrated into this exhibit. In the exhibit hall dedicated to the expropriated families, cultural activities and reunions may be held all season long. Various events are planned, such as meetings to share genealogical information, musical evenings and family reunions.

This exhibit is more than a cultural product; it is a social contract entered into by Parks Canada and the Forillon expropriated owners committee. The commitment, openness and sincerity of all parties have constituted a real cornerstone, a solid basis for this project that promises continuity.

The Government of Canada invested close to a million dollars in this exhibit. In addition, this new exhibit will enhance the experience of the many visitors to Forillon National Park and improve the tourism offering of the park and the whole region.

This gesture of reconciliation allows more than 225 families to revisit the area where some of them grew up and where an important part of their history has been brought back to life.

Since 2006, Parks Canada has done much to reach out to the people from the area and work closely with them, particularly the expropriated owners. The actions mentioned previously constitute a solid foundation upon which Parks Canada intends to continue building. Moreover, Parks Canada wants to maintain an ongoing dialogue with all of those who have a strong connection with Forillon National Park. In closing, Parks Canada is very proud of everything that has been achieved up until now and intends to continue its efforts in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the work that has been done in Forillon National Park, and this is a beautiful chapter in the Gaspé region's history that we must continue to tell.

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, what I just heard is practically unbelievable. Unbelievable! A beautiful chapter? That is amazing. Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds.

I want those who will be speaking on this to have a little respect for those who were expropriated, please. Let speakers address the matter at hand. The question is quite simple. Are they ready to support the motion we are discussing today, yes or no?

• (1050)

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, we and Parks Canada worked closely with those who were expropriated. This was done with the greatest respect, with the Government of Canada, the Government of Quebec, the Forillon National Park representatives and the expropriated people. We have always done everything with respect, and I expect that to continue.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I still have not heard an answer from the government side to my colleague's question. I do not want to hear about everything they did with Parks Canada and whether they went gallivanting around there. I want to know whether they will be supporting the motion, yes or no.

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I would say to my colleague opposite that it is a good thing our government decided to act on this, because for their part, they have done nothing over the past 40 years.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would also like to hear the answer to the question asked by previous members, which is whether the government will be supporting this motion. We still have not received an answer.

It has been four years since Parks Canada initiated the projects commemorating the expropriations through interpretive panels and picnic tables. Why has the government not moved beyond token gestures and why, after years in power and over 40 years since the expropriations, has the government not offered an apology?

Business of Supply

[Translation]

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that we have always been the ones to offer apologies for the blunders of the former Liberal government. I am willing to take some blame, but I do so with respect for everyone. The first people who should apologize for this expropriation are the members of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is probably consulting her BlackBerry to figure out how to answer me. I too would like to ask a simple question that requires a simple answer. When she is through fiddling with her BlackBerry to get the answer, perhaps we will hear a reply.

The Conservative Party of Canada could have avoided referring to events that occurred 40 years ago, as the Liberals are continuing in any case to pay on a daily basis for the sponsorship scandal. But that is not the issue. The Conservatives are in power and make up the government. I want them to answer this clear question with a yes or a no and we will accept their reply. Will they be supporting the motion, or will they not?

Mrs. Sylvie Boucher: Mr. Speaker, I would like to answer my colleague. We have always supported the people of Forillon. We have always maintained a dialogue with them. I will speak on my own behalf. We have always done everything with respect for everyone concerned, and I see no problem with voting in favour of the motion.

•(1055)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to stand to address the Bloc Québécois motion, which reads as follows:

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

I would first like to say a few words about Forillon Park as such and then say a few words about the history involved before getting—because I will get to it—to the matter at hand. All of those who have gone there know—and those who have only heard about it also know—that Forillon Park is recognized for its wilderness and natural beauty, and in fact all of the Gaspé is a very beautiful place. On this topic, as my Bloc colleagues surely know, the *National Geographic Traveller* magazine has ranked the Gaspé among the 20 top destinations to visit in the world in 2011. It is an absolutely extraordinary region that I love very much, just as I admire the men and women who live there or come from there.

For its part, Forillon Park itself is also an absolutely extraordinary place. The wild beauty of its landscapes, the fact that man, the land and the sea exist there in harmony, the diversity of its plant and animal life—as I have said before, all of that is superlative.

All that being said, everything is not rosy, nor has it been in the past. Dispersed here and there among the bushes, one can see the foundations of houses that were demolished and bear witness to a turbulent past. For the children and grandchildren of the displaced families, this is a harsh reminder of their collective history. Up until the creation of the park in 1970, several communities and many

families derived their livelihood from the land and the resources of that region of the Gaspé. Some families fished, and had for generations, and I also remember seeing a documentary showing families settled in some small coves who worked in all of the stages of the fishery, be it the actual fishing or the landing or processing of the cod; they then sold it to the big companies, and much of the final product was exported to Europe. So there was still a deep-rooted fishery tradition there. Others farmed or raised livestock, and often they did both. This traditional way of life had been passed on from generation to generation.

Everything changed, everything was turned upside down when the area was designated as a national park. The designation as a national park and the new requirement to protect the ecosystem, put a stop to the commercial activities that those communities relied on for their survival. So the impact was significant. As a result, almost 225 families were forced to leave their land and their homes. The houses were destroyed or burnt down, often as their owners looked on, which is very sad. All in all, an estimated 1,200 dwellings were destroyed or burnt down. The lives of those people, those families, those men, women and children completely and drastically changed overnight.

•(1100)

This difficult, I would even say dramatic, situation lasted for a number of years. There was the beginning, and then there was the aftermath. First of all, those families would have received little or no compensation if they had not fought for five years, if they had not gone to court to have some of their rights recognized. That should never have happened. They were already going through trying and painful times, and being expropriated was already difficult enough to live with. At the very least, those families should not have been forced to go to court to claim what was rightfully theirs.

In addition, I am not sure why, but for part of the time that followed, the information provided to visitors about the history of the park stopped at 1942, which in a way hid 30 years of the existence and lives of the individuals most affected by the creation of the park. Not only were their requests ignored, but their own past was also denied.

For decades, their presence was forgotten and their collective history was hidden, in a way. For a long time now, these families have been calling for an official apology from this House for the injustices they suffered. I personally agree that they should receive an official apology, and my party, the Liberal Party of Canada, also agrees that they should receive an official apology, simply because these people deserve it.

When we talk about a situation like this, it is clear that we are not commemorating or remembering a proud moment in our history, but rather, just the opposite. So we must pull our heads out of the sand, face the issue and talk about it. As we know, an apology for the people whose properties were expropriated is long overdue. Their descendants—their children and grandchildren—have been calling for and hoping for an apology. This apology, as I said, is not only overdue, but it is also deserved.

Business of Supply

All governments, regardless of their colour, regardless of whether they are red or blue, are far from perfect. They can make mistakes, regardless of their colour. But the biggest mistake that a government or a political party can make is not having the courage to acknowledge its mistakes. When we make a mistake, we must have the courage to admit it. If we create a situation that produces injustices, we must have the courage, decency and humility to apologize.

●(1105)

In supporting this motion, the Liberal Party of Canada acknowledges its share of responsibility for certain errors of the past and issues its official apology to all of these men and women who were affected by what happened in the expropriation.

The significance of this motion may be symbolic, but our vote on it is nonetheless important. It is a matter here of granting those who were expropriated and their descendants what they have been seeking without success for far too long now. It is a matter of demonstrating to them that we understand them and respect them.

In adopting this motion, we are saying that we are sorry, but we are also saying “never again”. This should never happen again in the Gaspé, elsewhere in Quebec or anywhere in Canada.

We support this motion to show our most sincere respect to those who have suffered, but there are also lessons for us to learn from this. Let us demonstrate humility and learn from this mistake, and let us make sure that it never happens again.

To those who might oppose this motion, I say that there is nothing extravagant or exceptional about it. It does not ask for anything that has never been done by this House. We know that the House has apologized on certain occasions, whether to Canadians of Japanese origin for the wrongs done to them during World War II or, more recently, to our first nations for certain unacceptable treatment they suffered. This has been done and may be done again, certainly in the present case.

That being said, we must also take concrete action that, in a way, is self-evident. Action that is easy to take and represents a hand extended to those people who were expropriated, as well as their children and grandchildren.

Recently the sitting government granted a pass to the families so they could enter the park free of charge for the next three generations. This is a step in the right direction, but the families were asking that this pass be granted to the next five generations. We agree with them that this is the way to go.

These families were uprooted from their ancestral land. They were on that land for generations. Later, for years, if they wanted to go back to their land, to go and meditate at the gravesites of their dead, these people were forced to pay admission to the park. That is a situation that should never have happened.

I said a little earlier that the vote on this motion is intended as an official apology to those who were expropriated and their descendants, but another of its purposes is to ensure that this never happens again. In that regard, a number of measures have been put in place, including by the Liberal government, to ensure that it never does. Thanks to certain of those measures, there are today rules and

agreements to be complied with when national parks are created, so as to avoid similar cases in future.

●(1110)

I urge all members and colleagues in the House to vote for this motion. Through it, we are sending a clear message to those who have suffered so much. In a way, we are helping not only them and their children and grandchildren but all those who live in this magnificent area to turn the page on the sad events of the past.

In saying that, I am in no way minimizing their suffering or their desire to be heard and respected. Quite the opposite, the vote on this motion regarding the past enables us as well to take a fresh look at the future, a future that can be filled with promise.

I read recently that despite the events surrounding the creation of the park, the local community recognized from the outset how important it was to preserve the extraordinary natural and cultural heritage that is Forillon Park. From the beginning, it has played a major role in tourism, attracting more than 175,000 visitors a year. It is an extremely valuable asset in terms of tourism and the economy.

Forillon Park is one of the reasons—there are others as well—why the Gaspé Peninsula placed third in 2009 in the most beautiful destinations in the world. In the world! Just recently in 2011, as I was saying, it was included on the list of the 20 most beautiful destinations in the *National Geographic Traveler* magazine. We need to look to the future as well and consider the mounting popularity of ecotourism. The park and its surroundings will obviously become an ever more popular tourist destination, to the great advantage of the entire region.

When I speak of that, I am not at all avoiding the subject, because the issue we are addressing today may be rooted in the past but it affects the future as well. The people who were expropriated in Forillon do not want to live in the past any more than we do. They want us to do something today that flows from what was done in the past. They want formal apologies, and we are giving them those apologies. However, the people of Forillon and the Gaspé Peninsula also want to face the future. They want to pave the way for a better life for themselves and especially for their children and grandchildren. We are doing what needed to be done in regard to the past. But let us also do what needs to be done to build a better future along with them.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have often been impressed with the speeches made by this member from the Liberal Party. He manages to be straightforward and eloquent at the same time, and he has been that here today.

I was very pleased to hear that he and apparently his party are prepared to accept responsibility for the transgressions of Jean Chrétien and others at the time.

I do not think he was off topic when he talked about the importance of our parks system, and how we need to move into the future and build upon those parks for ecological reasons, for social and cultural reasons, and for economic reasons. I thought all of his comments were quite relevant.

Business of Supply

I was going to ask him the hard question, that after 27 years of Liberal rule since these unfortunate instances, why an apology was never forthcoming before, but we have heard it here today and I thank him for it.

My question for the hon. member is, will he join the Bloc, myself and the NDP, in encouraging the Conservatives to make this a unanimous motion, so that we can leave this unfortunate past behind and move to a much more prosperous, thoughtful and better future?

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, to begin, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his kind words. In all sincerity, I thank him.

I have often heard him speak in the House, particularly on environmental issues, and I must say that I have enormous respect for what he is doing on that file.

Like my Bloc and NDP colleagues, I would obviously like this vote to be unanimous. Unfortunately, the government has not been sending any clear signals when it talks about this issue.

I want to emphasize my party's belief that an apology should be offered. This apology may be coming late, after many years, but it is sincere. I would like the government members to stand and support this motion, so that we can be unanimous in our apology.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I also want to applaud the member for covering the bases on all of the issues that surround this matter before the House today. I believe it was done sincerely, eloquently and in the best interests of all the stakeholders concerned.

There have been at least three or four attempts to ask the government how it intends to deal with this matter. The opposition parties are in agreement and would like this to be a unanimous motion.

My concern is that the member who spoke on behalf of the Conservatives ultimately broke down and said that she was speaking on behalf of herself and that she supports it. It appears the government is sidestepping a fundamental question which is extremely important to the people involved and, of course, of interest to the whole House.

Does the hon. member agree that it appears the government is having difficulty accepting the facts? Will it do the right thing, join the rest of the House and pass the motion unanimously?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

It seems clear that the government has not yet taken a position on the motion or that it is not comfortable with the position it has taken; we will soon find out which is the case. Questions from the opposition forced the member to finally admit that she, personally, would most likely support the motion. But we do not know whether her government will do the same. That is sad because this motion is

giving us a unique opportunity to offer an official apology and say that we are sorry about how all of this happened.

I am saying it now, I will keep saying it over and over again, and the other parties will repeat it as well: it would be good for those whose land was expropriated, for their descendants and their grandchildren, if this message were unanimous, if we were all saying the same thing. I think it would do them good to hear that. It would not right the wrongs or fix the past, but it would be a positive gesture for the House to reach out to them. And that gesture would be even more meaningful if the message were unanimous and included the government.

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member on his excellent speech and the way he spoke on behalf of the Liberal Party to ask that an apology be given to the people whose land was expropriated for Forillon Park.

Recently, the people of Forillon and the three subsequent generations were given a pass granting them free access to the site. Some will go and see their houses again, and others will visit the cemetery to pay their respects to their ancestors. In the past, they had to pay to visit Forillon Park.

Now, they are asking that the government extend the pass to the 1,500 families whose land was expropriated and their descendants, up to the fifth generation, and not just to the 225 families who were owners. In fact, 225 families were owners, which amounts to over 1,500 people.

I would like my colleague's opinion on this request.

•(1120)

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question that touches on another aspect of the story. For years, decades, the children and grandchildren of people whose land was expropriated had to pay to visit the very place where they had lived or to meditate at the graves of their deceased relatives. They had to pay to go there, which is completely unacceptable, and I said so in my speech. I also said that the government's gesture of offering this pass, which should have been a given from the start, is a step in the right direction. However, as the hon. member said, the families have asked that it be valid for five generations. I am in full agreement that the privilege of this pass should be maintained for five generations of descendants.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to this opposition motion. It deals with what happened over 40 years ago when the federal government and the government of Quebec came together to create Forillon National Park.

The park is located in a beautiful part of a spectacular region. It is on the tip of Gaspésie in eastern Quebec. Unfortunately, as we have heard today in this House, the way the park was formed was not beautiful. It was rather ugly.

In 1969, over 1,000 people were forced to leave their land to make way for the park. There were 225 families who were made to leave. The fact that this was done in more than 20 cases to make way for various parks across Canada does not make it any more right.

Business of Supply

The Bloc opposition motion seeks an apology from the House to the residents there who had their homes, land and businesses expropriated by the government to make way for the park.

This kind of thing should not happen. People should not be forced to sell their homes and land to make way for government-created parks in a draconian way. It is hard to leave land one loves and have loved for generations.

Many years ago I helped to create many parks in northern Ontario. The largest was Wabakimi Wilderness Provincial Park near Lake Nipigon in northwestern Ontario. It is a beautiful area of almost 9,000 square kilometres that should be preserved for future generations and it is.

I worked hard for many years, not only to create that park, but to make sure that the rights of trappers, first nations people, hunters, tourist operators, nearby residents and other local and traditional users were respected. In helping to create the park, there were no expulsions of residents.

I can only imagine what it would be like for families who have lived in a spectacular setting such as that for generations to have to leave against their will.

One of the worst situations occurred at Kouchibouguac National Park in New Brunswick which was expropriated the same year as Forillon from the people who lived there. There were 250 families comprising over 1,000 people who had their homes levelled to create that 250 square kilometre reserve. There were 10 Acadian villages affected.

Governments were as insensitive to the Acadian residents of Kouchibouguac as they were to the inhabitants of Forillon. But it was not just the Acadians who were impacted. The Mi'kmaq people have a centuries-old spiritual and cultural connection with Kouchibouguac. The park lies within traditional hunting and gathering territories for the Mi'kmaq.

At the time, the minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, someone named Jean Chrétien, said that the new development would allow accommodation for more urban people and ease demand for other parks in the Maritimes.

In 1980, the federal environment minister and the New Brunswick premier established this special inquiry for Kouchibouguac National Park to examine the social and economic impact the establishment of the park had on former residents.

A court ruling in 1979, in favour of the expropriation, led to some 200 people actually rioting in the park. Following a second riot several weeks later, a special commission was created which criticized the government's actions and granted expropriated residents an additional \$1.6 million in compensation.

One resident, Jackie Vautour and his family, refused to leave the park and turned down several offers from the government. He endured violent confrontations before being forced to leave. Vautour challenged the expropriation in court, but eventually had to move into a motel where he was tear-gassed by the RCMP when he refused to leave after the government stopped paying for his room.

This situation, coupled with what happened with the Forillon expropriations that same year, shamed the government into changing its ways, thank goodness.

• (1125)

National parks created since then are mostly in sparsely populated areas, like Canada's north.

The Canada National Parks Act was amended in 2000 to prohibit the expropriation of people's land in order to create new national parks. However, despite those steps, the fact remains that the government has only taken tentative steps to rectify the wrongs committed.

This year, the government is introducing a special entry pass for families for several generations whose properties were expropriated during the creation of these parks. It will allow former owners kicked off their land to go back and enter it for free. The government may think it is being magnanimous by waiving entry fees for people to visit the land taken from them, but it is not making it very easy to get these entry passes.

Individual parks and historic sites will be responsible for the distribution of the passes. Eligibility will be based on existing historic records, if any still exists, or a committee has to be struck and a committee process navigated to determine whether or not someone can get a pass.

Last year, the environment minister received a petition from hundreds of people whose property was expropriated at Forillon. They asked for five generations, not three, to be given free access to visit their ancestral homes. That is a very reasonable request, given what has happened. That is a first step. People do not just need to be able to visit their family homes once in a while, but also their parents, grandparents and ancestral families who are buried in three cemeteries inside the park.

By and large, the way the whole situation has been handled by the government has not been very good. The 2010 Forillon National Park management plan recognizes that the government has not been sufficiently attentive to the families whose homes it expropriated.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my remaining time with the hon. member for Churchill.

The Forillon National Park management plan states:

The current commemoration of the former residents – particularly those whose lands were expropriated – of their history and their contribution to the park's identity does not meet the community's expectations. Finally, the local population's sense of ownership of the park is still finding opposition due to the memory of the expropriation.

Finally, in view of the 2010 celebrations for the park's 40th anniversary, a commemorative site will be created in the park especially dedicated to those whose lands were expropriated, and an exhibition dealing with their history and that of the settlement of Forillon will be presented there.

One of the expropriated homes in the park was made into an exhibit, telling the stories of 17 people who were forced out. Some plaques will be placed around the park to commemorate places where families used to live. In many places we can still see the foundations where homes stood before they were bulldozed or burned to the ground.

Business of Supply

The government is giving out passes and making commemorative plaques and picnic tables but so far it has not offered an official apology. Knowing the history of expulsions in this country, particularly with our Acadian peoples, one would think the government would have more sensitivity about expropriations and expulsions.

What the exiled residents of Forillon want is a simple gesture of civility and an admission that something was done that should not have been done. They want an apology. Many suffered financially from the expulsion and most suffered emotionally to see their homes and lands taken away from them. An apology is the least the government can give.

Members may notice that the motion does not ask anything of the government. It asks this House to issue that apology instead. I am interested in asking the members of the Bloc why they are asking the House of Commons rather than the government to issue this apology. I can hazard a guess. After waiting so long for an apology from the federal government, the surviving exiles from Forillon who lost their homes are getting fewer in number and they probably have little confidence that the government will issue an apology in their lifetime.

We, the members of this chamber, are being asked to fill that void of leadership and show the compassion that the federal government has not. I am pleased to be given the opportunity to oblige. This is basic decency. I will be supporting the motion and I urge all parties and all members of the House to do so in order that it will pass unanimously.

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank and congratulate the hon. member for his speech. At the end, he mentioned that the motion calls for the House rather than the government to issue a formal apology. I have already said, on my own behalf and on behalf of my party, that we agree to do it, that it is quite normal and that it is the least we can do. An apology will not correct past errors but it is another step in the right direction. I have also said that this motion would be stronger and more meaningful if the government also supported it, if the government would stand with the Liberal Party, the Bloc Québécois and the NDP and vote in favour of this motion.

I would like the hon. member to tell me why, in his opinion, the government refuses to support this motion.

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I have often been disappointed that we now have a government in power that either apologizes but seems not to mean it or just does not apologize. I hope this time it will share the responsibility and apologize on behalf of all of us and really mean it, as we all mean it.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House and express our party's support for the Bloc opposition day motion before us today.

The motion asks for the House to issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated. As well,

it asks that the Speaker of the House send their representatives and descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

Given the speeches here today, it is clear of what happened to the people who used to live where Forillon Park is today. They went through a very traumatic event. It was truly a tragedy. It is unconscionable that the people in the communities that were impacted were not consulted, their views were not heard and their wishes regarding their land were not respected, the land being one of the most fundamental connections to their roots. Unfortunately, this is a pattern we have seen time and time again in Canadian history, a history marred by forced relocations, a failure to consult and work with people and communities and to listen to what they have to say regarding how they want to live and contribute to their communities and to our country.

It is critical for me to support this motion, not just because of what the people in the region of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine have gone through, but also what it means in terms of setting a precedent for other peoples who have been forcibly relocated, as well as others whose voices have been silenced by the present government and preceding governments, such as Liberal governments of the past.

I have the honour of representing Churchill riding in northern Manitoba. Northern Manitoba has a very tragic history regarding the federal government's treatment of First Nations people. Unfortunately, there is also a history of forced relocations as well as relocations which, in many ways, while not said to be forced, if we look at the patterns that had taken place was in fact forced.

While some of that history has been recognized, there still remains a denial for other historical claims put forth by people who had been most adversely affected. One of those peoples are the Sayisi Dene who today live in Tadoule Lake, which is one of the most northern communities in the constituency I represent. It close to the border of north of 60.

Business of Supply

Tadoule Lake is a Dene community and the people have shared their stories with Canada for some decades now. They spoke of a forced relocation from a nomadic lifestyle in northern Manitoba where they followed the caribou herds and lived and thrived off the land. Because of a decision made by officials of the Government of Canada, a decision that was approved by the political leaders of the day, the Dene people were forced into some of the most egregious living conditions in what is Churchill today. They were forced into a life of poverty and a life to which they were not accustomed. They had depended on the hunting and trapping seasons and being able to move and fend for themselves. Those patterns were crushed by the Government of Canada when it refused to listen to the cries for help from the Sayisi Dene people. Even when the lifestyle in which they were forced brought about alcoholism, drug addiction and the kinds of abuse that many Canadians cannot even imagine, they still were not heard. It took decades for them to fight for access to reserve land on which they could relocate to, which is now called Tadoule Lake.

• (1135)

The Sayisi Dene people of Tadoule Lake have said that they want true recognition from the Government of Canada when it comes to the tragedy that they faced. It was a tragedy in whose path they still live with some of the highest suicide rates and addiction rates and a real sense of trauma exacerbated by the fact that the Government of Canada is continuing to fail to recognize their wishes, which is not just an apology but also compensation for what they have lost.

When we look at monetary figures, it is impossible to put down in numbers the cost of the lives that have been lost, the cost of the futures that have been lost and the continued impact on future generations. However, the Sayisi Dene people have said that this relocation needs to be recognized, and not just in terms of monetary compensation, but a commitment to healing on behalf of the Government of Canada.

Still, in the year 2011, they have been denied that wish. There have been movements on the part of the government that have been seen as very positive from the community but the continued failure to deal with the relocation and bring closure to the community's wishes is something we are still waiting for.

We do not need to keep living with this kind of history. We need to respect the wishes of the people who have gone through this trauma. It is not the government, it is the people on the ground, the communities that make up our country. That is why we should be looking at today's motion and supporting it unanimously. We should be listening to the wishes of the people whose history and wishes has been ignored.

I find it interesting that the motion asks for something as fundamental as an apology from the House. It certainly speaks to a recognition that we all ought to have regarding this issue. It is also very much in line with Canada's increased consideration of the method of apologizing as a way of moving forward.

One of the moments I will never forget in my life was the historic apology made toward residential school survivors by the Government of Canada and supported by the House. It was an honour to share in that moment with so many survivors in my home community of Thompson, Manitoba. It was powerful to hear the government, the House of Commons, apologize to people whose

lives were so negatively impacted and whose lives were destroyed during of a shameful part of our history.

However, in that moment of apology, people saw hope that would allow them to move forward, to heal and to work with communities and say, "They have heard us and they know what this has meant to us. Now we can begin to move forward".

In light of that apology, there was also hope that we would not stop there, that we would continue in the spirit of that apology and move forward with tangible pieces that would contribute to the well-being of survivors and their communities. I believe that a critical consideration for us as members of Parliament and representatives of the Canadian people is to hear those voices.

In the context of our debate here today, we in the NDP hope that the wishes of the people of the Gaspé region, with which many of us across Canada re familiar , will be heard, and not just today in this House but that moving forward, they, their families and the people who will come later will know that we care and that we are sorry for what was done to them.

• (1140)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the comments of the member were thoughtful. It is a change for the House to have such a civil dialogue in a very sincere and open way, acceptance of responsibility and clear support.

What seems to concern a number of members is we still have not heard from the government. The member talked about the aspect of hope and promise for the future. My concern is the government does not have a position that it is prepared to share with the House, to lead off its debate with a clear statement of intent with regard to the motion, and I believe that is telling. Does the member share that view?

• (1145)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I am also concerned by the government's failure to express a clear position on this important motion. I am not sure what the tone of discussions might be in shaping that decision on behalf of the government. As I pointed out in my comments, it has apologized to a number of people, not just in the residential school apology, but to others who have been relocated. I think more recently of the people of Grise Fiord.

I know many Canadians will be looking for an apology on this relocation. For example, the Sayisi Dene people whom I represent would like to hear an apology come their way and a resolution to their tragic history as well.

I truly hope the government sees this as an opportunity to listen to a group of Canadian people and to give hope to so many others who we know have not been heard. They would like to move forward with the support of the government.

Business of Supply

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are many valid reasons to create parks in Canada, for ecological reasons, historical reasons and preserving aspects of our culture. However, a big reason is Canada was one of the signatories to the biodiversity convention at Rio de Janeiro. We committed to protecting 12% of representative ecosystems throughout Canada. We have not yet met those targets, so we still need to create more parks and protected areas. Hopefully, as we go forward, we will learn from this bad lesson of the past and do it differently in the future.

The hon. member for Churchill works hard with first nations people. What ideas does she have on how we could best move forward to give that kind of protection and do it in a way that is sensitive to aboriginal and other peoples?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North also works closely with first nations people in his area and, like many of my colleagues in the NDP, knows that the only way to move forward is to work in partnership with first nations, where first nations give direction when it comes to the treatment of their lands and the stewardship them.

It is based on a history. When the first Europeans came to what is today Canada, they found a land that was sustained, respected for centuries and millennia by first nations peoples.

As we look at the development of national parks, we need to remember to protect the biodiversity of our country and take guidance from first nations people who are the experts. I believe that is the only way, moving forward.

I know specific examples in my area. One is the Misipawistik Cree Nation, “Grand Rapids”, which has offered that guidance to officials from the government seeking to build a park. I would hope we learn from the past and move forward working in partnership with first nations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion, which I will now read to the House.

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated, and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

It has already been 40 years since the people were forced out of Forillon. Such injustices are not uncommon. For instance, consider the seniors who for years were cheated out of the guaranteed income supplement. I hope that in the next few years—and it should not take 40 years—the government will issue a public apology for the fact that some seniors were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement for many years.

The same thing goes for employment insurance. Once again, the government should one day issue a public apology for having often deprived unemployed workers. Very recently in my riding, an unemployed worker from Saint-Barnabé-Nord needed 595 hours in order to receive employment insurance benefits. He complained about the fact that he could not receive benefits because he had accumulated only 581 hours. He was only 14 hours short of the number of hours required, while everyone knows that there is an

accumulated EI surplus of between \$50 billion and \$60 billion. Still, the government deprives people who work very hard to be able to access those funds.

These situations are unfair, which is also true in the case of the people who were mistreated and are the subject of this motion. They feel strongly about the fact that, for over 40 years after the expropriation, the federal government never publicly apologized for the major inconveniences they suffered as a result of the government's decisions.

Before I explore the matter any further, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

The current government could have committed to making an apology in this matter. Instead, it made do with half steps. The initiative came about when the then federal minister responsible for national parks, Arthur Lang, floated the idea to the mayor of Gaspé of a national park on the Forillon Peninsula. In the 1968 framework agreement, the federal government earmarked \$8.3 million to develop Forillon National Park. Negotiations with the Quebec government dragged on, and in April 1969, Jean Chrétien, the federal minister responsible for national parks, made known his impatience regarding the refusal of the Bertrand Union Nationale government to cede the Forillon land to the federal government.

This is a clear example of the contempt shown by the Liberal government—in the person of Jean Chrétien—for Quebec and its institutions. The Quebec government caved in, however, under federal government pressure, and came down on the side of nature conservation. The land was expropriated by the Government of Quebec and then ceded to the federal government. In keeping with the National Parks Act, the federal government stipulated that the land be returned to its natural, undeveloped state. The creation of Forillon Park therefore meant that land had to be expropriated from at least 983 people in five municipalities.

The experiences of those who had their land expropriated at Forillon are well documented and unambiguous.

● (1150)

I have been lucky enough to make a number of visits to the magnificent Gaspé countryside, for many one of the most beautiful regions in the world, with views of the sea, forest and mountains. Of course, people in this region have their own culture, poetry and songs, and they are good-hearted. Thousands of people visit the Gaspé and many stop to see Forillon National Park. Most of these people are undoubtedly oblivious to the fact that over 225 families were pushed off their land and evicted from their homes in the early 1970s in very trying, unfair circumstances.

In fact, across the entire area, from Cap-des-Rosiers to Grande-Grave, L'Anse-au-Griffon, Penouille and Rivière-au-Renard, the establishment of Forillon National Park in 1970 led to the complete expropriation of each and every one of these families, who were uprooted from their homes. This does not include the thousands of other Gaspé residents who lost part or all of their land. It was a terrible injustice.

Business of Supply

After the residents were brutally cast off their land, their homes, barns and outbuildings were burned. Residents had been backed into a corner and there was widespread outrage. There was anger and revolt in the face of what amounted to government-mandated injustice. That is why we are calling for an apology to be made to these people, who were treated unfairly.

Still today, although some Gaspésians will talk about it, this is a taboo subject that has been concealed by the federal park authorities, hidden and ignored for years. Since the creation of Forillon Park, there has been no human presence there apart from interpretation activities. Visitors to Forillon Park were not told about the lives of the residents of Forillon before the expropriation, let alone about the tragic expulsions that happened in 1970. It was a hidden tale; no one wanted to talk about it. The government was ashamed to talk about the truth of what happened in the 1970s.

Yes, last year Parks Canada did decide to present an exhibition about the residents of Forillon and their lives before the unfortunate expropriation. And recently, the people of Forillon have received a three-generation passport allowing them to enter the site free of charge. It was not until very recently that they were able to see their homes again or go to pay their respects to their ancestors in the cemetery. But this is not enough.

They are asking for an official apology from the government for each person whose land was expropriated. They are also asking that the passport be extended to the 1,500 families whose homes were expropriated and their descendants to the fifth generation, not just the 225 families who owned land.

● (1155)

For five years now, the government has been boasting about its glowing record, including on the economy. The facts are quite different. The government has a very poor record on social and environmental issues. I am sure the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie will be able to say a few words about this. As I said, the facts are quite different and this case is one illustration of that.

The Conservatives could easily have agreed to offer an apology. Instead, they have made do with inadequate measures. This morning, there is nothing that tells me officially yet, after hearing a speech from a Conservative member from Québec, that this government will vote in favour of this motion. The people of Forillon whose homes were expropriated deserve better.

In conclusion, we have here an opportunity for all members from all parties to do what has to be done, to have this House offer its official apology to the people of Forillon Park whose homes were expropriated, for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated.

It would not be the first time that a government agreed to reform and offer apologies to people who have been affected. It was done for Canadians of Japanese origin who were interned and stripped of their property during the Second World War. It was done again recently for those whose land was expropriated for Mirabel. It is now time to do it for the people of Forillon who were uprooted from their community, who lost their homes and their land. These people are entitled to a public apology. They should be given their place in the official history of Forillon Park.

● (1200)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with great joy and much sadness that I speak today to this opposition motion moved by the Bloc Québécois—more specifically by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

This morning, my colleague expressed his sadness about this human tragedy involving hundreds of Quebec families from the Gaspé region. These are families that went through a human tragedy: their properties were expropriated and they were stripped of their homes, their land and in some cases their sugar bush.

It was time for an apology, and I want to thank the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for moving the motion we are debating today. This motion calls on the House to issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated and calls on the Speaker of the House to send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

It is important to realize the significance of today's debate. This House cannot brutally expropriate property from the people of Quebec. These were brutal expropriations. That is the right word, since the motion talks about the unconscionable manner in which the property owners were treated. We could also talk about the brutal relocations by our government authorities. We have no choice but to seek an apology from the government.

We have no choice. This idea to create a national park was born in the late 1960s. A minister responsible for national parks was visiting eastern Canada, Quebec in particular, when he saw the magnificent beauty of the Gaspé region as he was flying over. The region is still just as magnificent today. The minister got the zany idea to create a park where people were living and had been proudly living for generations.

The federal minister at the time, a Liberal, came and told the mayor of Gaspé that it would be tremendous to establish a park, perhaps to be called Forillon National Park, and to set aside that part of Quebec territory to establish the first national park in Canada. At the time, it was already known that the then-minister, Jean Chrétien, wanted to establish the first park on Quebec soil and to tear the people from their land in order to create a park under federal jurisdiction. That was well known.

Then negotiations began with the Government of Quebec. Starting in 1968, the government started to put money on the table. It set aside \$8.3 million to establish the park. Money talks. That is when it told the communities and the mayors that it was ready to put money on the table as part of a framework agreement. The Government of Quebec resisted, but the federal government had more up its sleeve and started to dangle the prospect of significant economic benefits in front of the people and the communities. It told them that, if the federal plan came to fruition, the region would see economic benefits.

Business of Supply

●(1205)

Once again, money talks. What did the feds say? They suggested—it was a federal government commitment—that the park should bring in tens of millions of dollars in investments. They talked about \$30 million to \$40 million per year, 3,000 new jobs, 700 of which would be permanent, and a threefold increase in tourists, with the number reaching 600,000 per year. That is the impression that the federal government left with the communities of the Gaspé: “Yes, we are going to establish a park, but it will bring you major economic benefits”.

And what are the results today? Certainly nothing like what the federal government promised 40 years ago. The mayor's office in Gaspé conducted an assessment and, in 2005, it calculated that the park employed 35 people year-round and another 100 or so in the summer. This is the equivalent of about 70 full-time jobs per year, whereas the government had said that there would be 700 permanent jobs and a threefold increase in the annual number of tourists. But the number of annual visitors has stalled at about 146,000, a long way from the 600,000 per year that the federal government projected 40 years ago. It can also be seen that visits are dropping steadily by 9%. The economic benefits that the federal government dangled in front of people 40 years ago have not materialized. A number of questions must be asked.

It is also important to remember the position taken by the Government of Quebec in 1970 when it was time to move forward with the project. Dr. Camille Laurin clearly indicated that these issues were related to land-use planning, which was an area mainly under Quebec's jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the project was carried out, resulting in the displacement of populations and the expropriation of families. The record speaks for itself: in five municipalities, at least 983 people, 225 families, 214 residential properties, 355 buildings, 1,400 woodlots and 8 manufacturers were expropriated. We are talking about an area of 154,675 square kilometres. These are the results. This is the harm that the federal government caused to the people and damage it did to the region.

In order for the park to be established, under the Parks Act, the area had to be returned to the most natural state possible, which is what made what I will refer to as this “cleanup” necessary: populations were displaced, buildings and houses were destroyed and, in some cases, houses were burned. This event was a loss of human heritage. We did this. Some might say that generous compensation was provided in exchange for the demolition of these buildings and the destruction of this cultural and human heritage. But such is not the case. According to witnesses—I have at least 10 pages of statements—there are citizens who had 50 acres of land with houses and sugar bushes and they were offered only \$1,400 in compensation. This is the type of compensation that the people of the Gaspé received. People who owned sugar bushes were stripped of their inheritance, which was earned through the hard work of their families for generations.

●(1210)

These people deserve compensation. These people deserve an apology. These people deserve an acknowledgement that they have lost an important part of their cultural heritage. That is why we cannot accept the federal government's response, which has been

limited to providing passes to 225 families who owned homes there, but limits free access to the park to only three generations. It must do more.

The government must listen to the legitimate claims and demands of these Gaspé residents, who have come together to form a committee called *Regroupement des personnes expropriées de Forillon et leurs descendants*. They have three demands: first, provide passes to all expropriated families and five generations of their descendants, effective this spring; second, install five signs in Forillon Park indicating the number of families who lived in the area before the expropriation, as well as the names of the families; third, and the basis of our motion today, have the federal government apologize for the unfair treatment of these families, who had to leave their part of the country under duress and because of government harassment.

A few months ago, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse dared to stand up and say that the government acknowledges the type of pass demanded by the group, but that it would limit its use. Why will this government not apologize to the people expropriated? Apologies have been made for other reasons, in other contexts. It would be simple. The people expropriated to make way for Mirabel received an apology, as have others who were treated badly in the past.

This Parliament has been asked to assume its responsibilities on other occasions. Why can we not do so today for the people of Gaspé? Why? That is what we have been trying to find out all morning. All the parties in this House have asked the government why it is refusing outright to agree to the motion moved by my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. The member from Quebec City spoke on her own behalf only, and not on behalf of her government.

This injustice has gone on long enough. Forty years of Gaspé history is a good reason for us to pause, reflect, conduct a debate in this House, and apologize. We have to ensure that justice is served and that we remedy the harm done.

I would like to say that this is part of our heritage, part of the history of Quebec. Earlier, I was reading the lyrics of a song written by one of our Quebec songwriters, composer Paul Piché, who put pen to paper when these communities were going through their ordeal. He wrote:

●(1215)

St-Scholastique or Forillon Park
Forced to leave in the early morning
For the tourists and their planes
We are always in the way

People lost their homes
Their land and then their country
All I could do was
Write this song
That can do nothing more for this place

Although nothing more could be done 40 years ago, this Parliament must do more. It has a historical responsibility to the communities to ensure that the parliamentarians who are gathered here today, and who have agreed to debate this motion, will vote in favour of my colleague's motion.

Business of Supply

We must do so because this is not the first time that the government, with its heavy-handed approach and its completely phantasmagorical ideas, has shown that it could not care less about communities, as we have seen with Mirabel and Forillon Park. For the government, these lands are just commodities, and the people and communities on these lands have no history. For the government, it is as though these lands were never farmed or worked, as though families never lived on them.

We need to look at what happened. We are talking about five municipalities. It would be like the government deciding to demolish the Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie borough in Montreal to make it a federal jurisdiction. Imagine what that would mean for the people, communities and families who live in a region and, as Paul Piché says, in a corner of the country. I think that if we were not able to fairly compensate these families for the damages they incurred, the least we could do would be to apologize and acknowledge that we made a mistake.

This morning, the member for Honoré-Mercier told the House, hand on heart, that the Liberals were sorry. We are happy to see that the Liberal Party acknowledges the harm that was done 40 years ago, but we have not heard anything from this government. This government has a hard time listening to the claims of people whose property has been expropriated. This government refuses to participate in a debate when it is its responsibility. We have to wonder what this government is doing. We have to wonder because the government had been trying to buy the communities since 1968. That is more or less the situation.

Since 1968, the federal government had been saying that it would set aside \$8.3 million to create this park. It was already starting to tell the communities that there was a little something in it for them, a carrot on a stick. This phantasmagorical idea to create a park on Quebec territory was completely irresponsible. The government tried to sell the idea of jobs and economic benefits. It was supposed to create structure. That term was not used in the 1940s, but if the then-parks minister were in the House today, he would claim that the Forillon Park project would “structure the community”. He would also tell us that this project would create jobs in the regions. Unfortunately, that never happened.

• (1220)

The benefits have not materialized. What is more serious is that federal power is being extended further.

To wrap up, I hope that the government takes responsibility and votes in favour of the motion that was moved, because it is time that the people who lived in that part of the country get some real restitution.

[*English*]

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Madam Speaker, I was very interested in hearing the sad story about Forillon National Park. We had, around the same time, a similar park development in Newfoundland and Labrador, the Gros Morne National Park. At that time there was an attempt to expropriate and destroy several communities along the west coast of Newfoundland.

The people reacted to that, formed their own opposition group, and made a very strong case. They were supported by the

Government of Newfoundland and those communities were saved. Those communities are still there and are an important part. They are excluded from the boundaries of the park, but they have been enhanced by the existence of the park. They even kept their rights to traditional hunting, whether it be for rabbits, subsistence hunting, gathering of wood, et cetera.

It really shows that it is possible to develop a park, a very successful and magnificent national park such as Gros Morne, which has been designated a UNESCO world heritage site, without the kind of damage to people's cultures and livelihoods as has been experienced here.

The request seems to be fairly simple. I wonder why the member thinks that the government cannot join in this expression of apology for what happened in this particular instance. Because as is clear from the case of Gros Morne and other cases, it did not have to happen. It should not have happened even then, let alone in modern times.

I wonder whether he cares to comment on why the government members do not seem to be willing to join in this expression of apology.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, on this side of the House, we are wondering why they are really refusing to apologize. We can only assume that they are refusing to apologize, and we will find out when it comes time to vote. But we cannot accept what I call partial apologies. The presence of the hon. member from Lévis—Bellechasse a few months ago cannot be considered by the communities as a full apology. The government expropriated these people's land because the Canada National Parks Act stipulates that the space must be returned to its natural, undeveloped state. There is already a problem in this act. The federal government at the time wanted to enforce this act strictly, and it dispossessed, displaced and expropriated communities. This is not how things should be done.

We would not accept such a thing these days. A project like that one must take into account the fundamental principle that we call social acceptability. Before such a project is approved, the communities must be in agreement. Had the project been presented 40 years later, it is very likely that it would not have passed the social acceptability test. Economic and environmental repercussions must be taken into account in a development project, but it is also important to have the consent of the people who will have to live with it.

The simple fact of acknowledging that, in 2010-11, such a project could not be carried out without passing the social acceptability test, which is an important factor in governmental decision making, should encourage the government to get behind our motion and acknowledge that a simple thing needs to be done. The House and the government must offer an apology to the communities affected in the Gaspé region.

Business of Supply

•(1225)

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Madam Speaker, could the hon. member tell me why the Conservative government, and the Liberal government before it, did not meet the quite simple request of the people from the Gaspé who were affected the most by this tragic episode? Why is it taking the government so long to speak to this issue?

Mr. Bernard Bigras: Madam Speaker, the government did something else: it launched a permanent exhibit at the interpretation centre highlighting the tragedy from 40 years ago. By doing so, the government is trying to show empathy for the affected community, but it has a great deal of difficulty taking the step that would be more than symbolic for the communities: genuine redress. The federal government must stand in the House and apologize for the damages caused by this decision 40 years ago.

The community is requesting that passes be granted to five generations. They are not asking for an exhibition centre. Rather than a token member going to the communities and offering partial solutions, they are asking that a real minister show up in the communities. They are waiting for a responsible minister to stand in the House, go to the communities and acknowledge the harm done to the communities. It's simple.

We have done it in other situations. Could we not do it in the next few days in the House? The ball is now in the government's court. We hope the government will come back to its senses and not announce partial solutions. We want a comprehensive solution to this human tragedy. The government must extend the passes to five generations and recognize the harm caused. It is the only proper way for the Gaspé community to get true redress for the harm done 40 years ago.

•(1230)

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in response to the motion by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine concerning Forillon National Park.

The park was created in 1970 to protect and showcase an example of one of Canada's unique and most beautiful natural regions. Few Canadians would disagree with that intention. In fact, in this year in which we celebrate the centennial of the creation of the government organization which later became Parks Canada, we cheered Canada's outstanding accomplishment in protecting some 360,000 square kilometres of land. This is an astonishing achievement.

We can also celebrate how far Parks Canada has come in learning how to balance the need to protect our natural spaces for future generations with the need to sustain the communities that lived in harmony with these spaces for generations past.

I appreciate the hon. member's concerns for the families who were required to leave their lands when the park was created in 1970. They were asked to leave a place of astonishing natural beauty, a place where, for several generations, they had clung proudly to a way of life that depended upon the salt cod fishery.

The world turns, the times change, and perhaps the descendants of those early families would not care to exchange the quality of their

lives today for the lives of those generations ago salting cod on the pebble beaches of Gaspé. However, we honour those generations for their fortitude and resourcefulness, and celebrate the memory of the communities they built. In fact, in 2009, Parks Canada organized a reunion for the families who were required to leave their homes at Forillon.

The House may be interested to know that more than 300 people attended the event. Parks Canada hosted similar events at Kouchibouguac National Park in 2007, 2008 and 2009, with up to 700 people attending. Equally important, Parks Canada has taken steps to honour those families by telling the stories of their communities and the event that led to their departure. This is a significant change after 40 years in which the park's interpretation programs paid little attention to the events that led to the park's creation.

However, last year Parks Canada launched an exhibit called "Gaspésians from Land's End" that addresses the theme, and that park management has committed to work with former residents and their descendants to tell their stories and celebrate their heritage. The exhibit will showcase the cultural richness and diversity of the residents who made the Forillon Peninsula their home. The Government of Canada invested close to \$1 million to reconstruct the Dolbel-Roberts House and to create "Gaspésians from Land's End".

The exhibit was developed by the Parks Canada team, which included the members of committees representing both the families who left the land and the communities that continue near the park to this day. Some 60 people contributed by providing documentation, photos and first-hand accounts.

One of the special features of the "Gaspésians from Land's End" exhibit has been a montage featuring 13 videos in which former residents give first-hand accounts of everything from childhood and day-to-day life to family ties and social relations. The interviews for the montage illustrate the rich lives of the people who inhabited the peninsula.

The exhibit is a way for Forillon National Park to reconcile with the families who were required to leave their homes to make way for the park. The national park wants to renew ties with those families and their descendants, and wishes to highlight the contribution these families and communities made to the history of the region and, of course, to Canada.

Parks Canada has further plans to commemorate the persons whose homes were expropriated so that the national park could be created. It will design and install interpretive panels to show the names of the families who lived there before the park was created.

It will continue to work with the committees that have been created to pursue further activities. One of these is the Forillon expropriated persons commemorative committee, which is composed of Parks Canada employees and representatives from the Gaspé community. Its mandate is to commemorate and highlight the presence and contributions of Forillon's former residents, along with their rich history and way of life.

The other committee consists exclusively of people who were required to leave the area that is now Forillon National Park, as well as their descendants, and was established in 2009 as the Forillon expropriated persons interim committee. One of its activities is to organize various reunion meetings in various sectors of the park.

In the meantime, Parks Canada is taking steps to count and assess the buildings of the former residents. These buildings are now 40 years old and of the 16 buildings submitted, 12 have been recognized as cultural resources. Parks Canada has taken action to protect and preserve them.

• (1235)

The “Gaspeians from Land’s End” has been set up at the refurbished Maison Dolbel-Roberts. As well, St. Peter’s Church has seen major restoration and is now in very good condition. At Grande-Grave, the Hyman store and its warehouse, the Anse-Blanchette buildings, and others were restored, and with the exception of the barn are rated in good condition. Parks Canada has been examining the possibility of preserving and restoring other buildings, including sheds and barns, to help showcase and maintain the region’s beauty and historic character.

All these steps have been taken to commemorate a community that once made the Forillon Peninsula its home and developed a deep and rich cultural legacy, a legacy we now honour. We can learn valuable lessons from how Forillon Park was created and we can find better ways to work with communities in creating national parks.

That is what we have done. We can see it in so many of the new areas that this government has made its intention to protect. But we do so not against the wishes of the local communities but in partnership with them. We can see this process at work across the country.

On the east coast, for example, we can see in Labrador where we worked with a steering committee to examine the possibility of creating a national park in the Mealy Mountains. The Innu nation, Nunatsiavut government, and Labrador Métis nation were involved in the steering committee. It recommended that the park continue to maintain traditional land use activities by Labradorians from the surrounding communities, because the Mealy Mountains are not just home to wildlife. Like the Forillon Peninsula in 1970, they are home to people who have lived in harmony with this land for generations.

The proposed national park reserve will continue to accommodate traditional land use activities for Labradorians in the surrounding communities. We continue to work together to manage these activities in a way that ensures the long-term ecological integrity of this land as a national park reserve.

That is what we have done in Labrador. We have done something similar in the Northwest Territories where we expanded the boundaries of Nahanni National Park, so that it is now six times its original size. It is roughly the size of Belgium.

We could not have done this were it not for the co-operation and collaboration with local communities, including first and foremost the Dehcho first nation, the government of the Northwest Territories, and the mining and hunting industries of the north.

Business of Supply

The Dehcho people were steadfast and tireless in their support for the expansion of the park reserve because for them it is a place of mystery, spirituality and healing. The new national park reserve will commemorate and reflect their culture. The Dehcho will participate in the management of the park reserve. The Dene and treaty rights of the Dehcho members and all aboriginal groups will be fully protected within the boundaries of the expanded park.

But at the same time, the park reserve excludes areas of highest potential for mineral and oil and gas extraction. We want to improve the prosperity of the Northwest Territories with its vast resource potential. We have been working with all partners on the creation of the Nahanni National Park Reserve. We know better how to work with communities so that everyone benefits from the creation of a national park.

Finally, for a third example, let me remind the House of what we have accomplished on the west coast where we established the Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Canada has become the first country to protect a region from the alpine meadows of the mountain tops to the depths of the ocean floor beyond the continental shelf.

To make this happen we worked with the Haida people to protect some of the world’s most abundant and diverse marine habitats. For hundreds of generations, the Haida Nation has lived in harmony with this environment. Today, this wealth of marine resources continues to sustain local communities as well as a recreational and commercial fishery. This new national marine conservation area reserve will ensure that this can continue.

What these three examples have in common and share with other examples such as Lancaster Sound is that we work with local populations to make sure that the creation of national parks serves their needs as well as the need for protecting the environment. We do not just preserve habitat for wildlife, we can protect a way of life, one that has sustained humans for generations. If we are wise, it will continue for generations to come.

I am pleased that the former residents of what is now Forillon National Park are working with Parks Canada to preserve their legacy. I am also pleased that from their experience 40 years ago, Parks Canada has learned valuable lessons that it now applies to help maintain the way of life in communities across Canada where national parks are being created.

We cannot turn back the clock. But we can give the people who lost their homes, and the descendants of those people this assurance: Parks Canada will keep the memory of their communities alive and will continue to work with other communities so that never again will a people have their homes expropriated where we can achieve so much more if we work together.

Business of Supply

•(1240)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ): Madam Speaker, the first Conservative Party member to speak was the member for Beauport—Limoilou. In response to a question asked by my colleague from Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, she said—not without looking at her BlackBerry though—that she personally would not have an issue voting in favour of this important motion by the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

My question is very simple and is for the member who just spoke. Generally speaking, will the rest of the Conservative Party members be in favour of the motion by the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse announced that people who had their homes affected by the expropriation of land to create this national historic site are given free access to their homes and their houses that were expropriated. We have taken steps to recognize those communities and we do agree with the intent of what the motion calls for.

It is important to remember that while those expropriations were conducted legally, there is no dispute of the fact that the displaced people were affected by the decision to create this park.

Forillon's 40th anniversary in 2010 marked a major procedural change. Twenty years ago, the co-operative spirit surrounding recent actions taken in Forillon and Kouchibouguac National Parks have been unthinkable. So the sharing of leadership of both communities is having mutually beneficial and gratifying results for everyone involved. Parks Canada is working with and will continue to work with the affected communities to respectfully commemorate these events and ensure that the former residents have free access to these areas of personal interest.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, as I have listened to the debate today, the three opposition parties have been in solidarity on this important matter on the principle, the hope, and the commitment to see that the motion is passed and in urging that the government would fall on side and make it unanimous so that not only this particular community, but Canadians as a whole would understand that when a wrong is done we admit it and do the right thing.

The Conservatives have yet to answer the question that has been asked several times today, so we will pose it to the member. It is not a matter of the spirit of the motion. The question is whether the Conservative government will finally have a spokesman who will stand up and answer the question for Canadians and the members of this community, and whether they will be making this unanimous, that is, whether they will be supporting the motion now before the House.

•(1245)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, the member stands and talks about something that happened 40 years ago. We cannot turn back the hands of time. If we could, I wonder if the Liberal Party, which was in power that day, that made this decision to expropriate the land and create this national park, if Prime Minister Mr. Trudeau would

be prepared to have done something differently. However, the Liberals displaced the families and shut down that community and the fishery. I wonder if the Liberal Party is going to apologize.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, NDP): Madam Speaker, those who were in the House earlier today know that the Liberal Party has already apologized for this, and for that we thank them.

On a more positive note, I would like to compliment the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake for his well researched and thoughtful comments here today. I would also like to compliment and thank our former minister of parks, whom I can name now that he is no longer a member of this House. Jim Prentice did a very fine job as our minister of parks and really moved the yardstick forward in terms of parks creation, not only in the area of the Nahanni but in other areas as well. I want to compliment the former minister, Mr. Prentice, on that.

My hope is that we will have unanimous agreement to vote in favour of the motion, partly so we could move forward and so the new Minister of the Environment could do an effective job in continuing to build our system of parks and protected areas.

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my hon. colleague thanking Mr. Prentice, our former minister of the environment responsible for Parks Canada for the extremely great job he did in protecting natural spaces in this country.

I take some offence that he mentioned I was not in the House earlier today when the original motion was presented and the debate started. I was at committee. I am the chair of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development. We are dealing with important legislation there from his colleagues, so I could not be in the House to observe the speech that was taking place. I do take offence with that comment.

The way parks were created over the last 100 years was that a lot of parks were established in areas where there were communities and land was taken away from people. Expropriation happened in my province of Manitoba in the creation of Riding Mountain National Park. That was done in the 1950s. For the creation of Hecla Island Provincial Park, under the Schreyer government, land was expropriated and many people were forced off their farms. That area is now one of the greatest places to visit in Manitoba. The same can be said for Birds Hill Provincial Park and Duck Mountain Provincial Park.

Provincial governments have done this. It has been done by NDP governments, provincially. It has been done by Liberal governments, federally. It has been done, I am sure, by Conservative federal governments, historically.

However, we all realize that process was the wrong way to go about establishing these parks and creating those types of hardships on the families and communities that were impacted. We have learned from that. As I said in my speech, Parks Canada has taken a much more collaborative and co-operative approach in dealing with those individuals and communities to ensure that we never make those mistakes again.

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Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Madam Speaker, this is more of a point of order to correct something the previous member said. He suggested it was the NDP that was involved in expropriating land for the Hecla Provincial Park. The fact of the matter is when Ed Schreyer became the premier in 1969, that government inherited the Walter Weir Conservative government's two-year old plan to turn Hecla into a provincial park. The process was well under way when Ed Schreyer became the premier. I know the member would not want to put misinformation on the record, so I wanted to correct that for him.

• (1250)

Mr. James Bezan: Madam Speaker, I would encourage my friend from Elmwood—Transcona to actually go to Hecla Island and speak with the members of the community who live there and former residents of Hecla Island. Everyone I have ever talked with blames the Schreyer government for its expropriation. It happened under his watch. He had a chance to change any plans that may have been in the works.

However, like any government that inherits a plan, it does not have to go ahead with it. The thing is, it probably did change it. There was collaboration and discussion taking place before 1969 when the Schreyer government came to power. There was ample opportunity to ensure that there was collaboration and co-operation, but no, it decided to expropriate instead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Guimond (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Madam Speaker, before I begin my speech, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie and thank him for his wonderful speech earlier. I also want to congratulate him on his eloquence. My colleague represents a Montreal riding, but his speech clearly demonstrated that he fully understands Quebec and its dual nature, with its large centres and its regions like the Gaspé and all the others.

For some time, the Conservatives have been trying to divide us, to show that there is a difference between the Bloc members from Montreal and those from the regions. My colleague's speech proves that the Bloc Québécois is a tightly knit team. And that is why I am proud of this team. All of its members fully understand this situation and understand Quebec and its regions. I just wanted to point that out before I begin.

I would also like to thank my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for the motion we are discussing today. This story of what happened 40 years ago in the Gaspé has touched me deeply.

We are all defined by our origins, our pride and our sense of belonging to a family, a community and a nation.

Some 40 years ago, this sense of belonging and the pride the residents of Forillon felt for having worked their land and built their homes were stolen from them. They were forced off the land they had been living on for generations. The Government of Canada expelled them to create a national park. They left behind not only their history, their roots and their ancestors, but even worse, part of their identity.

Overall, 1,800 residents, 225 families, suffered this injustice. The tragedy surrounding the Forillon expropriation also includes the

1,200 buildings that were demolished or burned and the countless memories that were left behind.

Does it seem normal to expropriate the property of 225 families, to burn their houses, restrict access to their land and force them to start over somewhere else, and with such paltry compensation to boot? I do not find that normal. It is absolutely unacceptable.

Every time I have the opportunity to rise in the House, I am proud to tell anyone who may be watching or listening that I am a farmer from Sainte-Blandine, a small community in the Lower St. Lawrence region. My family has been on that farm for two generations and perhaps a third generation will one day live there. My family has lived in the village for four generations—four generations of farmers. As farmers, we know very well what it means to be uprooted from one's land. It is absolutely unacceptable.

I have been involved in regional development, the development of my little village and the development of agriculture in Quebec, for about 30 years. What happened 40 years ago is evidence of a gross misunderstanding of what regional development should be. It would be impossible to make a decision regarding the development, occupancy and habitation of the land just because someone flies over it in a plane, finds the scenery beautiful and decides to turn the area into a park. That is not how things are supposed to work. The people who live on that land must be involved in the projects and must be consulted regarding the development of the land.

• (1255)

Moreover, the compensation offered was grossly inadequate. Many testimonies confirm the unconscionable manner in which the expropriation process was conducted. One simply has to do a little bit of research to find countless statements to that effect. According to some of those testimonies, people were no longer allowed to cut wood on the land to heat their homes. They could not even recover a window or a doorknob from their houses, otherwise they could end up in jail. That is truly unbelievable. There is also the tale of a powerless grandfather watching his house burning. Surely, such experiences must be traumatic. Many talk about the meagre and even degrading pittance that they received as compensation. What a way to promote development.

These few testimonies confirm the unfair expropriation process, the unjustifiable harassment, the unacceptable pressure and the inhuman social uprooting suffered by those who were expropriated from Forillon Park.

Today, the Bloc Québécois is demanding that this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated. Again, we believe that things could have been done differently in the interest of these people, of the Gaspé region and of Quebec.

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The Bloc Québécois has always advocated values such as respect, tolerance and compassion. Today, if those whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park are the topic of our opposition day, it is because the values that the Bloc Québécois stands for were not respected, and because justice must be done. It is a matter of dignity, fairness and integrity. As the previous speaker said, we should do more than set up booths and build museums. We are simply asking for an apology from this House.

While the intention behind the creation of Forillon Park may, in and of itself, have been laudable, we can now state loud and clear that the government failed miserably, not because the park is not fulfilling its primary role of boosting the region's economy, but because the expropriation process was done in a sloppy and disrespectful manner towards the people who had been living there for generations. This was their place, a place that they had built to raise their families. That is truly inhumane. This episode caused a great deal of worries and sorrows to thousands of people and hundreds of families.

Why were the residents not included in this plan? Why were they not consulted, made part of the project by keeping their properties intact, as the Government of Quebec had suggested at the time? Although these past mistakes have nothing to do with the current government, it has an opportunity today to make amends and answer the call of those whose properties were expropriated, namely, I say again, by giving them an official apology. It is the least the government can do. These people are not seeking compensation. They just want an official apology for how this was handled 40 years ago.

Imagine the suffering of these men and women who had to pack their bags and start their lives over, to find new homes, new jobs and, in short, a new way of life. What a tragedy.

● (1300)

If only they had received acceptable compensation instead of getting crumbs. A number of them had to take out new loans, rebuild their financial health and start over from scratch. As a society, we should be embarrassed that we let such a thing happen to these people.

For nearly 40 years, the people whose properties were expropriated in Forillon have had to pay the park entrance fee to visit the graves of their ancestors. It is simply immoral. How can we allow something so absurd? Last summer, after hearing the complaints for many long years, during which the people whose land was expropriated were asking for free access to their land for them and the four generations after them, the federal government finally gave them a pass, which only partially satisfied their request. In fact, they were given a pass to allow them and the two generations after them free access to the land they had owned for generations. It is embarrassing!

Today they are again asking that, effective spring 2011, the passes be offered to the 1,500 families whose properties were expropriated and their descendants up to the fifth generation, and not just to the 225 families whose properties were landowners.

The Bloc Québécois believes that this was a right that should have been readily granted. The federal government's decision to give these

people restricted passes is nothing but a token gesture of reconciliation given the extreme nature of the wrongs committed. I would even go so far as to say that it borders on mockery. It is just not right.

In addition, in the years following the expropriation and until very recently, the existence of these men and women who once lived in Forillon Park was ignored. Neither the guided tours nor the display panels made any mention of these individuals or of the heritage they left for the region and the tourists who today visit Forillon Park. They are not even acknowledged. Once again, this is completely unacceptable for these people who built this corner of the country, who cleared the land and developed it.

Ignoring the existence of a people and of a community means ignoring its pride and destroying it. Unfortunately, this is the situation that these people have been living in for 40 years. They have quite simply been wiped out. The events that occurred in Forillon 40 years ago had dramatic consequences for hundreds of families and the scars of this tragedy are still visible on those who were expropriated, as well as on their children and grandchildren. It takes time to heal.

It is true that an apology from the Government of Canada will unfortunately not return lost possessions to those who were expropriated, restore the thoughts they left behind or their scattered memories, but it will bring some solace to those whose rights were abused. An apology will also allow them to forgive and to look to the future with a little more peace of mind.

It is not right for people who have been cheated by the government to have to fight the government for the simplest form of redress: an appropriate apology for the major harm suffered as a result of tragic and inconceivable government decisions.

● (1305)

So, on behalf of the people who lived through a difficult, unjust, humiliating and painful time after those expropriations, we are asking the Government of Canada, in this House, to show some compassion and offer an official apology to those expropriated from Forillon National Park.

For five years now, this government has been patting itself on the back for having a brilliant record. The truth is quite different, as this matter clearly shows. The Conservatives could easily have made the commitment to apologize. But instead, they made do with small and insignificant gestures.

What is worse, they fell in line behind phony excuses and technicalities, dismissing the possibility of an official apology by saying how complicated the matter was or how long things would take. They are still laughing at those people. The expropriated people of Forillon deserve better. That is what the Bloc Québécois firmly believes and that is what we are demanding today.

The expropriation makes for a tense climate in the area even today. Since Forillon National Park was established, the people who were expropriated have been trying to have respect shown to the memory of those who went through that shameful time, which, regrettably, is also part of the hundred-year history of Parks Canada that we will soon be celebrating. What a tragedy.

History also shows that other parts of Quebec have also tasted government medicine administered by the federal Liberals. Take, for example, downtown Hull, where hundreds of homes were demolished in order to make room for office buildings.

These abusive expropriations reached their height, in Quebec once more, in Sainte-Scholastique, where 3,000 families were affected by massive expropriations to make way for the construction of Mirabel Airport. Almost 100,000 acres of land—believe me when I say that it is the best agricultural land in Quebec—were seized by the government. That is ten times the size of the largest airports in the world. We like big projects in Canada.

Fortunately, as it turns out, Ottawa returned 80% of that land to its astonished owners. But it was too many years too late.

Allow me to state that it is high time for the government to take responsibility for the mistakes of the past and to convey to the victims of such tragedies nothing less than the official apology they deserve.

So here is an opportunity for all members from all parties to do what is right, to agree that this House should offer an official apology to those expropriated from Forillon National Park for what they went through 40 years ago.

• (1310)

[English]

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, the hon. member has carried on an extraordinarily important dialogue on a specific incident which, in my view, raises a concern about other cases of expropriation of property. It is important for us to understand the injustice done to the owners and their ability to maintain links with heritage-type properties. It is important not only for parliamentarians to understand, but for the people of Canada to understand there is a sensitivity.

However, the sensitivity does not exist in the government members who have spoken already, and that concerns me somewhat. They have been very coy and very circuitous in their wording and still have been unable to answer the simple question about whether they will support the motion.

It is not enough that the government has subsequently done some things to remediate the situation, but there are still outstanding matters. The right thing to do would be to admit the mistake and, as asked by the motion, make a sincere apology and commit to learn from the mistakes of the past so they will not be repeated in the future.

Does the hon. member believe the Conservative government is being disrespectful of the motion before the House simply because it refuses to indicate whether it will support the motion?

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Speaker, I thank the member for Mississauga South for his question. As we sit here, at 1:15 p.m., I am not surprised that we have not yet heard the Conservative government announce that it will issue an official apology. As the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie said earlier, we must give them the chance to think on it until it is time to vote. We must give them the time to make this decision. I hope it will make the right

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decision, because as I mentioned in my speech earlier, there were some very serious consequences.

Today, we are talking about Forillon Park, but I am sure that some very serious things happened in Sainte-Scholastique, for example, in the history of Mirabel Airport. People were torn away from their land, their community, their memories and from the home they had built. I hope that in 2011, we can all agree to apologize to the people of Forillon and that we can acknowledge these events so that they do not happen again.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to what my colleague had to say.

Some of the comments made by my Liberal colleagues in the House are interesting and fairly outrageous. This happened under the Trudeau government when Jean Chrétien was the environment minister.

Since we became government, my colleague from Lévis—Bellechasse has moved forward on this issue to get passes for families so they can get back into the historical settlements to be part of that history.

After 13 long years of a government, to which some of those Liberals belonged, could my colleague from the Bloc tell the House what it did to acknowledge this travesty that happened in the past? What did the Liberals do to bring some closure to the families that were affected? We are all aware that decisions were made in the past and our government is taking action. We are trying to do what is right.

Could the member let the House know what the Liberal government did for the families that wanted some closure?

• (1315)

[Translation]

Mr. Claude Guimond: Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the parliamentary secretary, for his excellent question and excellent comment.

Obviously, what we are talking about today is Forillon Park. Earlier I mentioned Sainte-Scholastique and Mirabel. Yes, at the time, it was Liberal governments that carried out unfair expropriations, particularly in the case of Forillon Park. At least today, the Liberals are apologizing. I only hope that the parliamentary secretary's party will do the same.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Madam Speaker, it is a great honour for me to participate in this debate on a historic event, but it is also our duty because of the government's actions and our philosophy on the environment. We used to think that we had to choose between the environment and the economy. Now, in modern days, everyone understands that we have to achieve a balance and solve this problem without having to make this type of choice.

The way people in the Forillon Park region were treated, unfortunately, is unacceptable and hard to understand today. As the Liberal Party's official environment critic, I want to say that our party will definitely be supporting this motion.

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The government also has to have a clear understanding of the new approach to a challenge like this. Families and the community have suffered greatly and we have to express our empathy. We are not asking that the House make only a simple gesture, but rather a meaningful gesture. I repeat the request or invitation from the other members in the House of Commons, to all the members here, to make a unanimous gesture towards the people affected by the creation of Forillon Park.

[English]

It is very important for us today to reflect on how things were done in a different era and what that means. It should not be done in condemnation in the sense of not understanding some of the context where there were laws and executions by the provincial government. Things were done by the two governments of the day that created an outcome, which I do not think anyone in this place would say was intended. However, everyone in this place can say that this was not acceptable and should not stand on the historical record without some kind of recognition that is sincere, rooted in an understanding of what people have gone through in being displaced in that fashion by their official governments.

Most people in this place have difficulty relating to that. There have obviously been experiences around the world with that, but, luckily, few in our country. It led to a change in policy by the government of the day shortly thereafter, or at least in the years that followed, but only after a great deal of difficulty for the families. It is incontestable that we would years later, with the benefit of the perspective we have today, let this stand.

● (1320)

It is not just sustainable development; it is really about how we come together fundamentally around preserving the environment and then looking at the benefits and the impacts on people. We cannot do just one or the other.

In this case, it was the thrust, an honourable thing, I suppose, in its intention, to create a park and so on. Without doubt, that somehow went awry and caused the degree of hardship, both actual, in the sense of buildings being destroyed, tensions between authorities and citizens and so forth, and also in terms of the sense of isolation and grievance the people affected feel. That reaches forward even to today.

On the tenor of this debate, for this to be an official apology, for this to give respect to the suffering of the people, which is real, which we can relate to it and which may touch a few members of the House, we cannot and should not try to take away or say we can excuse it. To do that, we need to minimize the amount of partisan advantage we try to take in being able to bring this forward.

If I were a family member reading the transcripts of what came forward today, I would want to know that this was put in a context that actually told me something genuine took place, that this was not political football or somebody trying to make points on the backs of what was a terrible thing to have happen, having a government take something away from us in a manner with which, by all the reports of the day, people fundamentally did not agree, did not understand and did not have perhaps the rights of recourse. They had to seek those in the courts and only received some kind of compensation years later.

We are here today for a different kind of compensation. It is not about financial compensation; it is about respect. Respect cannot be offered if we simply go around the House pointing fingers at our respective past administrations or at the moral superiority we might all have in hindsight. I do not think it is about condemnation so much as it is there is a learned experience, that whatever the reluctance have been of governments or of parliamentarians or houses of commons in years past, that we will get over that today. Again, that legacy does not belong to us. It belongs to the families that are affected.

Going forward, we need to see a parks policy that not only gets rid of the egregious things that happened there. I believe that was taken care of in 1979 around the expropriations, negotiations and all those kinds of things. The law of the day that required people to not have any commercial businesses in the park and so on has been changed and modified so we are less prone to have these kinds of problems. However, beyond that, there has to be something meaningful about what we are doing today.

I want to believe that is the intent of bringing this forward, and I believe it is. To have it turn into anything else would be a bit sad, a bit more of a reflection on us than on any of the actual events of the day. There are very few of us who can say that we were part of those decisions. I have had occasion to hear from a few of the people who were involved before, at least peripherally. I think no one intended this to take place.

However, we are not here to offer any excuses for it, only to say that we have learned from it for parks going forward. Our ability to try to reconcile our desire to have a certain amount of nature protected and available in perpetuity for our children and our grandchildren, and those noble purposes, cannot be done on the backs of local citizens who have not had adequate means to access their rights.

To me, this is at the heart of the change that has to happen. Certainly our party thinks we are closest to it, where sustainable development is really a principle. It is something to use in every decision we make. It is not, as we sometimes hear, that we have to choose one over the other and then there are losers and winners. I guess that is what formed the standoff, unfortunately, in the case of Forillon Park.

I have heard at least a good degree of openness in the House today, but we have to understand the sensation, the honest experience that people have gone through. I do not think it takes a lot for us in 2011 to reach back and know what it must have felt to have the weight of official organizations working against average citizens in this fashion. That is not to say there was not a perspective on both sides, but that the preponderance of what happened is something we do want to identify. It is the only way to give honour to that experience. We have to walk in the shoes of the people, their children and so on.

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●(1325)

I appreciate the government saying that it would continue or expand some of the access rights of people and their families. I think we have to look at practical expressions going further than that. It is perhaps not the purpose of the motion, but it would be consistent with it. This is not just about free access so people can visit gravesites, but about some honouring of the people for the sacrifice they made, recognizing that they lost in a couple of ways. They not only lost the territory they made their homes on but also a sense of belonging.

Both levels of government were there and seen to be hostile to them. That is something we have to heal. We have to be part of that. I think that is the main reason we are discussing this today.

What has been requested is neither money nor material things. It is simply an honest and sincere and, hopefully, widely shared and unanimous apology to say that those events were regrettable and that we have a sincere regret in this House for their having taken place, because we represent that same officialdom today that seemed to have abandoned the folks there before. The sensation felt by the people is something we can all relate to. It still informs some of the things people feel today and we rightfully owe it to people to be able to express that in our discussions here today.

We know that the government has talked somewhat about parks and having new ones established. It would behoove whoever sits on the government side to make sure that before we go forward with the establishment of other parks, we deal with this much less admirable part of our heritage, the manner in which this park was created. We have an anniversary that has passed, but one that we are still in a position to recognize 40 years after these events took place.

I believe it is in the capacity of everyone in this House not to see this as any kind of political jousting or exciting of old animosities, or even a condemnation, but one where have the benefit of seeing what happened. We are not superior, we are not having a better outlook, but we have learned. We have the benefit of mistakes. A very great part of what happened with Forillon Park was a mistake, and that is why we have to be here today in this House in explaining this to the families that were affected and the children and grandchildren of the people who were disrupted in that way. This disruption took up many years of their life.

Once we have an apology from this House, then there are other things that could be contemplated and concrete things that could be done to effect a better reconciliation between the park that is there on our behalf and the people who were expropriated. When we create a public park, it is similar to our forcing kids to go to school and our doing other compulsory things, in that we are trying to do these things for the greater good. However, that benefit to the many cannot be at the expense of the rights of any small number of people. In hindsight, that is clearly what happened with Forillon Park. There is a management plan in place, and some of it reflects outreach to local citizens and people nearby, but while it acknowledges what happened, it does not quite jump the gap that exists.

It acknowledges the sensation that has arisen from the expropriation of the use of forests and so on, which has meant that the people who are living next to the park and who should have the most benefit

from the park and who should feel the most sense of ownership instead have this lingering sense of loss and of displacement and injustice. The number of people affected does not matter. This the only body they can come to for redress. So it is a good way for us to move forward, if there is consensus.

In another vein, the government was supposed to create many more parks. The Government of Canada was in Nagoya, Japan and was a signatory to an agreement to put aside 15% of our land mass, a 50% increase over what we have today, and 10% of our coastal areas. We have less than half of one per cent in marine parks today, far behind those of other areas.

●(1330)

The pledge that every party and every member needs to make, in the spirit of non-partisanship, is that we will work to ensure that we find ways to reconcile local populations and the interests and rights of people in these areas in a way that honours the bad experiences that took place in Forillon National Park and the Gaspé.

The establishment of these parks will be a challenge. We have made some progress over the years. In Canada we think of ourselves as having infinite amounts of space and people sometimes bristle that we would put a park so close to other people, but there is that need, too. We have to form a stronger sense of stewardship with nature in Canada.

We are the largest per capita stewards of nature anywhere in the world. I know that other members of the House were in Nagoya, and I know that Canada has not maintained its reputation as a green country. Members know that the Canadian government was given a booby prize in Nagoya, a type of backwards award as the dodo, the government least likely to conserve plants, animals and nature simply because of the way it behaves.

This entire episode causes us to contemplate some fundamental principles. We could treat this as an unfortunate incident, but it arose out of the attitudes of the day, where if one wanted to make something in the public interest, then everything else became secondary. We need to find a better way of going forward.

The environmental issues of today are, if anything, quite a bit more urgent. There is pressure on us that no one in the House can really escape when it comes to climate change. I say biodiversity and climate change are very much linked. Dealing with how much nature we can conserve so we can do the good job of keeping the atmosphere clean and safe is very important, but we have to deal with questions from the past like those prompted by Forillon, including, how are we going to move forward?

None of us can duck those questions, not if we believe that part of the reason for our being here as representatives and for being people with privilege and power is to make sure that the next generations will be in better shape than we are. We have to be able to do that using methods that are quite a bit more effective and more amenable to nation-building than the ones used at Forillon.

Business of Supply

However, we need to make progress. We have not done that lately and, hopefully, this debate will cause people to reflect on why we are not in a position of having learned and having been able to move things forward and having the possibility of consensus. If we size up the issues, whether they be the creation and setting aside of parks or dealing with people in a way that is honourable and just, we would think those things would supersede any other interests we would have, because they are now recognized as fairly fundamental.

We are going to have to create a lot more parks in the future and do a lot more things to change the way we use nature: it is not disposable. We are seeing the impact not just of carbon use but also of a whole range of things that we in this country have taken for granted. Somewhere in that attitude is what informed the mistakes that were made in Forillon. It is an attitude that is well recognized, and I think that many people in the House are open to adopting something quite different, an outlook that will move the country forward.

I look forward to hearing from all members of the House who are going to speak in this debate. I say this not out of partisan entrapment but with sincerity from having looked at this issue, which is not one that I was very familiar with in advance.

[*Translation*]

I feel that it is crucial that all members of the House make both a unanimous and a sincere gesture towards those people. Otherwise, this will continue to be a black mark for everyone.

[*English*]

The people of this region were failed once, at least. It would be very important not to fail them again. I do not hear from the government side any legal or other barriers to this, nor from this side, even though there were Liberal governments in place at the time.

We are not reaching back and saying that we have to defend every action at all costs, especially when we have the benefit of hindsight. There are many rooms that have to be made here, if we are to find a really good expression toward the people of Gaspé who were affected by the Forillon Park expropriation.

I look forward to seeing the outcome of the debate over Forillon Park and, even more, to seeing whether we take it in the spirit that is intended and find more common ground on how to approach our very big challenges when it comes to the environment, to protecting nature, and dealing with climate change. Not only the people of Forillon but also the people of Canada are looking at this chamber and wondering where the capacity for that is. Do we have the capacity to rise above partisanship? Will everything here be seen as partisan?

Whether members like it or not, everything we do for our partisan stripes is seen as self-interest. It is not seen as being done for the glory of a greater cause; it is seen as our being unable to put aside partisanship for the public. The public out there is hungry for us to move forward on these issues. It is not about big or small government, but at some level about integrity. We are asked not to make up for a lack of integrity but to assume the integrity that is available to us today.

Certainly, it is well within our bounds to ensure that we give a sincere and fulsome apology to the people affected by the Forillon Park expropriation. I am very happy to support this bill on behalf of the Liberal Party.

• (1335)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, my Liberal colleague had some very appropriate words to say about the nature of the motion before us. I would like to hear a little more from him regarding two concerns he expressed. Let me summarize one of them. He did not say it in these terms, but the meaning was the following. The action we take in supporting this motion to apologize to the people who were expropriated should not be in a spirit of rancour or revenge but in a spirit that reflects our compassion and desire to ensure that this never happens again.

He argues that at times bigger interests prevail over others, which may justify past actions. He said we should not judge the attitude people had in the past. I would like to understand more exactly what he meant by that. I remember that at the time, I and most of us thought this was unacceptable. So it was not considered more acceptable in the past. I would like to hear him on that.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I am just saying that it was unacceptable then and it is unacceptable now. I do not pass judgment on the motivations of the people involved. It is possible to do that today because there are no other considerations constituting a kind of barrier.

It is a moral issue having to do with the power the government exercised over some of our fellow citizens. It is certainly unacceptable and inexcusable, both then and now. However, it is possible to have a clearer perspective today. I encourage all members of the House to embrace this perspective in a spirit free of all other interests. I hope that all the people living in that area will be freed from the suspicion that someone may be opposed to their interests or their full participation in society.

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Madam Speaker, it was interesting to hear my colleague say that this should not be partisan. I agree with him. Unfortunately, we all heard his speech and it seems he cannot make one speech in this House without being partisan. It seems that it is only when the Liberals are guilty of a misdeed that he does not want to be partisan. However, I digress.

The member talked about honour, sacrifice and the rights of individuals to their property. He said that the consequences of this were not intentional. I put forward to the House that expropriation is very intentional. It is something that the government does intentionally.

The member said that it happened in another era. The Liberals were last in power in 2005 and 2005 was not a different era. The Liberals were in power and did not offer any gestures, much less an apology. Why?

Business of Supply

● (1340)

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Madam Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member at least coming part way to the invitation to non-partisanship.

I am not totally familiar with the efforts that were made to bring the issue to this place. As I was not a member of this House at the time, I literally do not have a good answer for the member. In absence of that, the member could stand in some kind of condemnation but I do not think it helps us today.

I think we are here today, each of us elected in the old British parliamentary system, to stand in our place and do what is right. It is not convenient that this happens to be the Liberal governments, provincial and federal, but we are, many years later, being asked to apply and are applying our perspective. I only ask the same of the member and of every member of this House. I hope I did that in a way that did not infer any moral superiority to this generation over that. However, we should know the perspective and, if we have a chance to exercise it, we should do it in a way that gives honour to this place and to that loss that took place. That is what I am recommending.

[Translation]

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. I myself said something to that effect this morning, and I issued an official apology on behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada to the people who were expropriated, their children and their grandchildren.

Today's motion is not an end in itself, but a step in the right direction. It does not reverse the decisions or mistakes that were made in the past. That can seldom be done, but at least we are reaching out, we are asking for forgiveness from those who were expropriated and suffered so much. We are apologizing to them. To the extent that it is possible, this should be a non-partisan exercise. It should involve everyone. Of course, the Bloc Québécois is on board, because this is its own motion. The Liberal Party will be supporting the motion calling for an official apology, and the NDP will do likewise. I am asking my colleague whether this motion would carry more weight if the Conservative Party were to join us and make it a unanimous decision.

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Madam Speaker, that is an important objective today and, indeed, it should be a unanimous decision. Each member should do some soul-searching. We have an official government and it is very important to enlist its support today. I am asking all hon. members to recognize the message sent a long time ago. What will the children and grandchildren's reaction be if we are not all prepared to support this request? I hope that, all together, we can assume our responsibility today.

Mr. Yves Lessard: Madam Speaker, I have a short question for the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

We remember the operation conducted in the old days to get rid of Eskimo dogs. This was a rather revolting practice in the north, which I think everyone condemns today. We also see what happened in Forillon. Out of respect for those involved, has the hon. member thought of a way to ensure that such a thing does not happen again? Is there a way to ensure that such a situation never occurs again?

● (1345)

Mr. Gerard Kennedy: Madam Speaker, I talked about developing a sustainable development philosophy, which is something that the members of our party share. Increasing respect for nature is now part of our Canadian identity. We can take such an approach. For example, we are contemplating the idea of recognizing the value of nature in our national accounts. We should recognize that there are always benefits related to nature, wildlife and the environment. Moreover, there must be a core reason for dealing with the issue, correcting it immediately and recognizing the value of our choice.

[English]

I hope there is a way to change the whole way we approach these problems. I hope a shift in philosophy will not be restricted to any one party but that it can be shared by all around sustainable development. Things like natural capital and so on are concepts other countries are adopting. We need to admit our mistakes, pay for them in real time and then we become a better society because of it.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Madam Speaker, I would first like to advise you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Joliette, who will be also be speaking on the same subject.

Allow me also to congratulate our colleague on his exceptional work, the work that he has done to allow us to have this debate for an entire day. We are trying in some small way not to correct the injustice, but at least to honour the people who had to suffer that injustice and to offer them an apology. May the apology come from those responsible, the Government of Canada.

I would also like to offer special thanks once more to the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his work on the Wilbert Coffin case, clearly another injustice—at least, work is being done on it—but most of all for the work he is doing for the marine industry, for fishers and for his riding. I am making that aside—something I rarely do—because there are members from all parties in this House who do exceptional work, and today, I would like to draw attention to the work done by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

That work has made it possible for us to debate his motion today, and I am going to read it for the benefit of those who are watching. The motion moved by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine reads as follows:

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated, and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

My Liberal colleague previously made the point well: this does not correct the injustice, but, out of respect for the people who suffered it, it allows this House to express regret for what happened. It also allows those who represent it through our civic activities to demonstrate the regret officially, as we are preparing to do. I join my Liberal colleague in his wish: it is essential that the Conservatives vote for the motion as well.

Business of Supply

It is more than a symbol. It is the expression of a will to demonstrate than an injustice occurred. The only way to do so with no political colours staining our gesture today is for the Conservatives to vote with us, with the opposition parties.

My colleague rightly said that we must not needlessly recall the past, but often the past sets us back in a particular context. It is a mark of respect that we owe the victims.

It all happened in 1970, but the process was set in motion in 1963. In 1969, there was an agreement involving the government at the time, headed by Mr. Trudeau. And Mr. Chrétien was the spokesperson on the issue for the Canadian government. So Mr. Chrétien came to an agreement with his Quebec counterpart in the Union nationale, Gabriel Loubier. There was already one major dissenting voice in the National Assembly at the time, and that was Marcel Masse. He felt that this was something that was unacceptable. He saw it and he pointed it out.

I found our colleague's comments about the past interesting, when he spoke a bit earlier: if this were to happen again today, there would be the same concerns as there were then.

• (1350)

At the time, however, nothing was done to put a stop to this initiative, which is why it is so important to go beyond regret and apology. What will we do in the future to prevent such a thing from happening again?

For the benefit of the people watching, I will summarize the brief that the Forillon expropriated persons commemoration committee submitted last April to the environment minister at the time, Jim Prentice. In 1970, under Mr. Trudeau's government, over 1,500 families were expropriated, and 225 families lost their property. The expropriated properties were burned by the federal authorities, and in some cases the owners were hired and forced by the government to personally burn their own property, which they had built through their own hard work.

Many of us come from small communities, often rural communities, and our home is where we belong. It situates us in life, and for a family, it is the secure foundation that allows us to develop and build our lives. Suddenly these people were told that they no longer had their home and that if they did not want to burn their house, they would be forced to do so. Then, gradually, their telephone service was cut off, then the electricity. They were prevented from going to fetch the wood on their farm for heating. That is what happened.

We have an obligation to remember such a thing. It was terrible for the people and their descendants to have to go through that. Parents at the time were powerless, and unable to provide this security for their family. The children and grandchildren were witnesses to this. Today they are 60 or 70 years of age, and they have carried this with them all their lives. Out of a sense of obligation they have told their children and grandchildren about this, as any self-respecting people would do.

A great Quebec poet, Gilles Vigneault, once asked what fruit can grow when one does not know the tree from which one descends.

We all have the duty to pass on where we are from, who we are and what we have experienced. Some will say that this is over. But no, it is not over. They cannot even go back there, to their homes, their property that was turned into a park, without having to pay to go and honour their ancestors.

One woman told me that to go and pray at the graves of her husband, her family and her two children, she had to pay. But it was their land.

To this day, these people are feeling the after-effects. To this day, these people are living with this memory, this trauma that will live on, and rightly so, given that we have this responsibility to pass on who we are.

Today, we are talking about a gesture that is symbolic to us, but very important to them. We must tell them that we know what happened to them. We know what that decision was rooted in, and we must make sure that it does not happen again. We are particularly aware of the impact that it had on them and we are apologizing to them for it.

• (1355)

And it is the motion from the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine that is urging us to do it. Let us not miss this opportunity. Our Conservative friends from Quebec who are the same age as us lived through it. The whole of Quebec remembers. It was far away from where I lived, because I was on the other side of Quebec, in Abitibi. Even though it happened in the Gaspé, I can almost tell you the entire story because Quebec's consciousness was awakened by this abuse of the people of Forillon.

Today, I think that our colleagues, particularly the Conservatives from Quebec, are duty-bound to raise the awareness of their colleagues from the other provinces about the situation and to vote with us so that we can finally tell the people of Forillon that we are sorry, that we ask their forgiveness and that we are going to make sure that this does not happen again.

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest. My congratulations to the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas. The number of injustices was outrageous. There was the expropriation itself, and then the people had to fight in court until 1975 to assert their rights. There is also the fact that, for years, for decades, they had to pay to go into the park to be able to mourn their loved ones. It is a series of injustices that we are acknowledging in a way today. We cannot fix the mistakes of the past, but at least we are extending an olive branch. We are formally telling them that we are sorry and that we are asking their forgiveness. With this motion, not only are we apologizing, but we are also saying that we want to make sure this will not happen again. Once again, all parties here in the House should unanimously vote in favour of a motion like this.

So does the hon. member have a final point to make to the Conservatives so that it can be unanimous?

Statements by Members

Mr. Yves Lessard: Mr. Speaker, I greatly appreciate the comment made by the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, and I thank him. There can never be a final point on this. There is only one, and that is the importance of rectifying an injustice. Someone who does not see an injustice in what happened cannot understand how painful this was for the people who lived through it. That is why I call on the Conservative members from Quebec in particular, because for the most part they are the same age as us and lived through that. They cannot remain insensitive to this situation today, and they certainly cannot miss the opportunity to help remedy this injustice in some small way.

• (1400)

The Speaker: It being 2 p.m., we will now move on to statements by members. If needed, the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas will still have three minutes for questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADA WINTER GAMES

Hon. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on this coming weekend in 1975 the Canada Winter Games Sportsplex in Lethbridge was the venue for the opening ceremonies for that year's Canada Winter Games.

This Sunday, 35 years later, the Winter Games will kick off in Halifax. Teams from across Canada will descend on Halifax to continue this great Canadian tradition. Alberta will send one of its largest teams ever with 337 participants from 49 communities, competing in 20 different sports.

I would like to congratulate the athletes and coaches heading to Halifax from Lethbridge and southern Alberta: Don Cowan, coach and Holly Henderson, manager for figure skating; Tim Cooney, manager for speed skating; and the athletes: Ryan Chenoweth, hockey; Jazlyn Tabachniuk, figure skating; Paul Cooney, speed skating; and Taylor Evans, judo.

They, along with all the athletes, will do their best, showcase their skills, and use good sportsmanship as their guide to success.

The 1975 Winter Games left great memories and a lasting legacy in southern Alberta and I am sure the 2011 games will do the same in Halifax.

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate this special and inspiring celebration, Black History Month in Canada, a time when we recall the long march of African Canadians for freedom and human dignity, and the singular contribution and legacy of African Canadians to the building of a plural Canadian identity and a diverse Canadian mosaic.

This year's Black History Month honours the efforts of people of African descent to abolish slavery, and begin the long march toward equality and liberty. It calls upon us to study and reflect upon the value of their contribution to our nation.

[Translation]

In remembering and reaffirming the historic contribution of the African Canadian community, we affirm the building of a plural Canadian culture, one in which, in the words of Martin Luther King, people will not be judged by the colour of their skin, but by the content of their character.

* * *

LUC PLAMONDON

Mr. Roger Pomerleau (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the organizers of the seventh annual Canadian Songwriters Hall of Fame Gala have now released the prestigious list of artist inductees. Included on this list is one of Quebec's most prolific authors and lyricists, Luc Plamondon.

Such is the reputation of Mr. Plamondon in the cultural community of Quebec and la Francophonie that some have no hesitation in labeling him one of our most influential and creative musicians.

He has been writing lyrics for many of the greatest artists of Quebec and French song since the 1970s, and their works are forevermore part of our cultural heritage. He is also the creator of the famous rock operas *Starmania* and *Notre-Dame-de-Paris*.

Luc Plamondon is certainly one of Quebec's greatest ambassadors and one of the staunchest proponents of our language and culture.

My Bloc Québécois colleagues and I are proud of his success and we congratulate him on this new honour.

* * *

[English]

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that my city of Victoria has been named the most sustainable small city in Canada, the same week as we host municipal leaders from across the country at FCM's sustainable communities conference.

From the world-leading Dockside Green development to our sea to sky greenbelt, Victoria is demonstrating political will and creativity to achieve a sustainable economy, and to fight climate change at the same time.

Expanding public transit, including light rail along the Douglas corridor to the western communities, is a key strategy in our vision. But municipalities cannot do it alone. That is why we New Democrats devised a national transit strategy that would get the federal government to step up and support local efforts like ours, so that soon Canadian municipalities and cities will be the most sustainable in the world.

* * *

WINE INDUSTRY

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow our federal Minister of Agriculture will meet with his provincial and territorial counterparts to talk about an important issue, interprovincial trade barriers.

Statements by Members

Last November, I placed on the order paper Motion No. 601, which supports direct to consumer purchasing of Canadian wine.

Greater access to Canadian wine is a direct benefit to our agriculture community and to the consumer. Smaller wineries across Canada have limited sales channels and the best opportunity for their growth lies in direct marketing strategies. Just ask the wine makers in my riding of Kelowna—Lake Country in the beautiful Okanagan or grassroots organizations like the Alliance of Canadian Wine Consumers that has created the website freemygrapes.ca.

I call on the respective provincial agriculture ministers to give direct to consumer purchasing their full consideration and support Canadian wine producers.

I thank members from both sides of the House who support this change and the member for Fleetwood—Port Kells, and her staff, who has also tabled a motion on this issue.

By working together, we can break down the barriers and support a vibrant Canadian wine industry.

* * *

• (1405)

[*Translation*]

BAKER LAKE POND HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on February 4, I was lucky enough to take part in the official opening of the Baker Lake pond hockey tournament.

For the second year in a row, the pond hockey tournament wowed the residents of Baker Lake and the surrounding area with a total of 21 teams competing. The festivities were an opportunity for the residents of Baker Lake to enjoy the benefits of our Canadian winter. I would like to thank everyone who came out and took part in the event.

I would also like to take a moment to mention the remarkable work done by the organizing committee for this, the second annual ice hockey tournament. I would especially like to thank Danny Nadeau, the chair of the 2011 committee, for his unflagging perseverance and dedication. Your efforts to make this event a success are much appreciated.

Thank you for making the Baker Lake pond hockey tournament an all-round success. We will see you again in 2012.

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[*English*]

SURREY, B.C.

Ms. Dona Cadman (Surrey North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw your attention and that of my hon. colleagues to Surrey, British Columbia. We are now the 12th largest municipality in Canada and a port city as well.

In my riding of Surrey North, 27% of the population is of South Asian descent. Multiculturalism is a thriving success story in our community.

Surrey city council and our charming and forward-thinking mayor, Dianne Watts, are implementing a broad-reaching plan for a new downtown city core.

We have Simon Fraser University literally on the new city square. We are already cranking out exciting start-up companies like Nanotech Security and MAPT Media, a company whose product is so good it is being used on campuses everywhere.

I encourage all my fellow Canadians to keep an eye on Surrey.

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[*Translation*]

QUEBEC TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, again this year it is my honour to tell the House about Teacher Appreciation Week in Quebec. I am a veteran of the wonderful world of education, and I would like to reiterate my full support for the people who work in the amazing profession of teaching.

Every day, we entrust them with the things we hold most dear, our children. They pass on their knowledge and know-how to the generation of tomorrow. Teachers are examples for our youth, and we must tell them they are all indispensable. Our children are privileged that they can count on people like them, who give and expect nothing in return. Our teachers embody everything a nation like ours can hope for from our knowledge crafters.

On behalf of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, I want to congratulate the teachers of Quebec on their dedication and professionalism and thank them for all they do.

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[*English*]

JEROME JODOIN

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to pay tribute to a special constituent of mine and World War II veteran, Mr. Jerome “Jerry” Jodoin who, I note with great sadness, passed away this month at the age of 87.

In addition to being a decorated seaman, he was a husband and father and was well known for his tenacious spirit and his “diamond blue eyes”.

Notably, when five legionnaires decided to form the brand new Legion Branch 641, Jerry, then 81, jumped in with both feet. People would say that it could not be done, but he did it. He was a true comrade, friend and Canadian hero.

I stand here in Parliament to honour Jerome for his dedication to his family, his community and his country. Lest we forget, lest we forget.

•(1410)

COAST GUARD

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke just revealed a secret Conservative plan to end Coast Guard rescues for Atlantic Canadians lost at sea.

She said those who find themselves in trouble in the North Atlantic should save their own lives because, get this, when folks from Ontario go canoeing on the Ottawa River, they do not rely on the Coast Guard when they get into trouble. Perhaps the member failed to notice that the closest coast to her riding is a thousand kilometre drive.

The same member issued a press release that pictured her in Newfoundland standing in front of, get this, a search and rescue helicopter.

The member believes sending herself to Newfoundland on the taxpayers' dime to pose for a classic Conservative photo op is a good use of public funds, but she thinks sending that same chopper out to rescue a crew of fishermen lost at sea is a bad use of public money.

Would somebody on the government benches rescue this member? Throw her a line, or show her a map and let her know that even though the Glebe and Byward markets are close to the canal, they are not coastal communities.

* * *

[Translation]

MEMBER FOR PAPINEAU

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it seems that the member for Papineau is getting paid for giving speeches when he should have been performing his duties to taxpayers and his own caucus.

On February 9, the *National Post* reported what was said by the member for Papineau at an advertising industry conference. He said, and I quote: "I'm here today at a moment when I'm actually supposed to be with my colleagues in Ottawa at a caucus meeting." He also said, and I quote: "Knowing when to be silent is as important as knowing when to say the right kinds of things."

Maybe he could tell us today how much he charges per speech, who his clients are, whether he does even a little work in Parliament or with ministers to represent his clients, and how often he works for his clients rather than for his constituents and Canadians.

* * *

[English]

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, February 5 was the 30th anniversary of police raids on four Toronto bathhouses, all of them important gay community institutions. Almost 300 men were arrested, one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history.

The response to these raids was immediate and angry, with thousands taking to the streets. This marked a turning point for the queer community and for Canada's human rights history. Not only

Statements by Members

did our community organize, but strong allies also emerged, including the member for Toronto—Danforth. Margaret Atwood famously remarked at one rally, "What do the police have against cleanliness?"

The raids were a low point in the history of relations between the gay community and the police and the state, but change resulted. The Right to Privacy Committee began many years of defending those arrested and raising civil liberties and privacy issues. Toronto's first pride parade was held later that year.

Bath raids did not end in 1981, but the Toronto raids changed the politics of gay liberation and pushed many to come out politically. We remember those arrested and outed, sometimes with tragic consequences, and those inspired to work for full human rights.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan is simple: hike taxes and spend like a kid in a candy store and kill jobs. It is little wonder that the Liberal leader calls himself a proud tax and spend Liberal, but even more shocking is that the Liberals are actually trying to tell Canadians that small businesses actually want to pay higher Liberal taxes. Let us set the Liberals straight: the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is against Liberal tax hikes.

The Liberals should, for once, open their ears and listen to what the head of the CFIB had to say: "I'd just like to clarify that the corporate income tax reductions are not exclusively a big business issue.... Our very competitive corporate tax climate...has already brought investment to Canada and naturally that's a win for everyone".

It is clear Liberal tax hikes will kill jobs and hurt the economy and that is bad for businesses and families. Perhaps the Liberals should join with me and the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and stand up for small businesses, communities and families once and for all.

* * *

[Translation]

HIGHWAY ACCIDENT IN SAINTE-GENEVIÈVE-DE-BERTHIER

Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I were saddened to hear about yesterday's tragic accident on Highway 158 in Sainte-Geneviève-de-Berthier, a municipality in my riding.

This loss reminds us just how fragile life is. Events such as this seem unreal, incomprehensible and, above all, unfair. At times like these, words fail us. However, my Bloc Québécois colleagues and I would like to offer our deepest sympathies to the families and friends touched by this tragedy.

Oral Questions

My colleague from Joliette and I invite everyone to take a moment to think about all those who are directly and indirectly affected. Our warmest thoughts, most comforting words and sincerest condolences are with you. May life grant you the serenity you need to get through this difficult time.

* * *

● (1415)
[English]

THE ECONOMY

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the Conservatives, Canadian families are being squeezed by record debt levels and rising costs for everything from education to family care. In the past five years, household debt in Canada has grown by 50%.

The Liberal Party believes in and supports financial literacy education in Canada, but the Conservative finance minister is not qualified to lecture anyone on financial literacy. After all, this is the minister who brought in 40-year mortgages with no down payment, helping to create a debt and housing bubble in Canada.

He gutted the federal contingency reserve and spent Canada into a deficit even before the recession began. Because of him, Canada now has a record \$56 billion deficit. He spent \$1.3 billion on the G20 photo op, wasting money on everything from mini bars to glow sticks. Now he is borrowing even more money to cut taxes for Canada's richest corporations.

At the first class on literacy, we hope that this borrow and spend finance minister will sit in the front row and take plenty of notes.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal tax hike plan is worrying more and more Canadian businesses. Businesses both large and small know that Liberal tax hikes will stifle economic growth and slow job creation. Despite what the Liberals would have us believe, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is very worried about the Liberal tax hike plan. It knows it is entrepreneurs and businesses, and not governments, that create the long-term high paying jobs on which Canadians depend.

This is what the CFIB had to say about Liberal tax hikes: "As to any confusion over CFIB's support of continuing the corporate tax cuts, we unequivocally support them! The plan should be continued". It then states: "—we considered them a done deal, not subject to change".

I say to the Liberals that their tax hikes are bad for the economy and will kill jobs. Only the Conservative government has a credible plan to grow the Canadian economy and support job growth.

* * *

HEALTH CARE

Hon. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, Ind. Cons.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I had the opportunity to meet with Darryl and Trevor Lewis from my riding. We are all aware of the significant shortage of family doctors across Canada, especially in rural

underserved areas like Simcoe—Grey. The Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada is calling on the federal government to support strategies to increase enrolment in Canada's 17 medical schools.

In other countries, these strategies have increased the proportion of medical students from low-income and rural origins by 15% and, in turn, doctor representation. Students from rural backgrounds are 2.5 times more likely to stay and practise family medicine in rural communities.

The government needs to recognize these valuable groups and establish an application bursary program to cover the significant cost of applying to medical school. Recruiting and supporting low income and rural students in a career in medicine through education, mentorship, and research opportunities will have a tremendous impact on the quality of health care for all Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the clear will of Canadians was expressed in this House last night.

The vast majority of Canadians are saying no to expensive risky schemes like the government's \$6 billion tax cut for big business, a corporate tax cut on borrowed money, a tax cut only for those who have already had their taxes cut by 35% and are not the primary job creators.

Canadians are focusing instead on the needs of average families, on learning, caregiving and pensions. Will the government now do what the vast majority of Canadians have asked?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary. The vast majority of Canadians are saying no to the Liberal plan to hike taxes in this country.

Specifically, yesterday the Liberal Party claimed in the House that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business supported its plan to hike taxes by \$6 billion on 100,000 Canadian businesses. The president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business came out and said that was absolutely false.

I would like the Liberal Party to use the opportunity to correct the record and apologize for misrepresenting the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, \$1.3 billion. That is how much more employers and employees will pay this year because the Conservatives increased job-killing payroll taxes on January 1. And that is not all.

The extra payroll tax next year will be \$3 billion, then \$5 billion and then \$7 billion. If the government is looking for jobs, why this escalating Conservative tax on jobs, punishing small business? Why waste \$6 billion every year on big corporations, which is the least effective way to get jobs?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all that bluster cannot escape a simple fact, and that is that small business in this country supports our government's low tax plan and is absolutely opposed to the high tax plan of the Liberal Party.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said so yesterday after it was blatantly misrepresented by the Liberal Party in this House, and it is waiting for an apology from the Liberal Party.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, 100% of all Canadian businesses will pay billions more in higher job-killing Conservative payroll taxes this year, next year and on and on.

However, only about 1 in 20, 5%, will get an income tax rate cut and they are the biggest and the wealthiest. They already had globally competitive tax rates. They are not the primary job creators.

Every nickel of those big corporate tax cuts are on borrowed money. Why them? Why not small business? Why not families struggling with caregiving, learning and pensions?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, small business said yesterday that it does not support the Liberal plan to raise business income taxes.

Let us also talk about payroll taxes because payroll taxes, specifically employment insurance premiums, are set to cover the cost of the EI fund. What small business has said is that it supports our decision not to adopt the Liberal plan to put in a 45-day work year under EI and raise EI premiums by 35%. Small business supports our decision not to adopt the Liberal high tax plan.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the F-35 procurement process is so good, then why did the government waste \$200,000 on a publicity tour to try and convince those who think it is not? It makes no sense.

The only way to stop wasting money is to hold an open, Canadian competition to determine the best option at the best price.

Why do the Conservatives prefer to waste money travelling across the country instead of saving money that belongs to Canadian families?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the member for Beauséjour has against the truth or his previously held position.

His previously held position, as a Liberal parliamentary secretary to defence, was to support this procurement back in 1997.

We are going to proceed with the best aircraft at the best price, which is the best for the Canadian Forces and the best for the Canadian aerospace industry. This is a fifth generation aircraft that will replace an aircraft now approaching 40 years old.

Canadians need to know that the government is behind their Canadian Forces. The member should get back on board with his previous position.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative's phoney accounting on the F-35 simply does not add up: \$200,000 on a bogus communications exercise; cost overruns, which have almost doubled the price per plane to \$90 million from the \$50 million originally; and software delays, which we learned of that now make a mockery of the minister's delivery date.

Why waste \$200,000 on a publicity road show when holding an open Canadian competition would cost nothing and save taxpayers at least \$4 billion?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will just to put a few facts forward.

Back in 1997, the Liberal Party started the procurement plan and spent almost \$150 million on that plan. Why would the hon. member now suggest that we should do anything less than proceed with a competition that has occurred to buy the best aircraft available for the Canadian Forces to ensure mission success and follow along the track that he laid out with his government?

This is what Secretary of Defense Gates said about the air force variant that we are purchasing. He said that it was progressing quite well and that the price was coming down.

* * *

● (1425)

[Translation]

SECURITIES

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, following the merger of the Toronto and London stock exchanges, political and economic players have been very clear: the derivatives-based Montreal exchange should remain as it is and even grow.

In light of this major transaction, does the Prime Minister realize that, now more than ever, a Canada-wide securities commission based in Toronto and influenced by the Toronto business community is harmful to Montreal, and to Quebec and its economy?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that these markets are international. Our initiative has the support of 10 provinces and territories, but we are clear: we have turned this controversial issue over to the Supreme Court and we will always respect federal jurisdiction.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at last count, four or five provinces were against this plan. The government should take note.

In response to the announcement of the plan to merge the stock markets, business people in Toronto have spoken out in support of a single securities commission based in Toronto, which would mean that all decisions would be made in Toronto, even decisions affecting the Montreal Stock Exchange. Will the Prime Minister face the facts and stop playing into Toronto's hands at Montreal's expense?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the federal proposal is for a decentralized commission. That is the nature of our country; we do not want a centralizing agency. This issue has been handed over to the Supreme Court and we will respect its decision. We will move forward only in accordance with our jurisdictions.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the London Stock Exchange's potential acquisition of the Toronto Stock Exchange will mean that the new stock exchange will operate in many countries and territories. This new entity will be accountable to several regulatory authorities. Thus, the Conservatives' desire to eliminate the Autorité des marchés financiers du Québec no longer makes any sense. The financial community is accustomed to dealing with multiple jurisdictions.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that this plan for a new stock exchange calls into question the relevance and pertinence of his Canada-wide commission?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regarding that merger, we are looking into how the Investment Canada Act applies to the proposed transaction.

Mr. Daniel Paillé (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but notice that the Minister of Finance and the Minister of State for Finance still remain silent.

Several financial authorities would regulate the new stock exchange. The passport system exists in Europe, as it does here. Although the minister may not like it, that is the solution and it works very well.

Will the Minister of Finance abandon his predatory project and leave in place a passport system among the various financial market authorities, a system that works just as well in Europe as it does in Canada?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for pointing out the fact that there are actually 10 provinces working with the federal government to protect Canadians. The whole role behind securities regulation is to provide a mechanism for investment to come into this country, investments that do not have to go through 13 different processes coming into this country.

We need to protect Canadians as they put their money away for their retirement. That is the most important thing we need to do for Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister likes to say that the reason the banks of Canada weathered the recession so well was that Canada has strict rules, particularly with regard to controls on foreign ownership, and that banks have major strategic importance here in Canada.

If they are so important, why not apply the same concept to the Toronto and Montreal stock exchanges?

● (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, there are procedures for reviewing this very complex proposal. The provinces will have a decision to make under the Investment Canada Act and so will we. I cannot comment without conducting a thorough review of this transaction.

[English]

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister may still be having trouble figuring out whether this investment needs to be reviewed or not but experts do not have any problem with it. The executive director of the Rotman School of Management says that this is a takeover, not a merger.

According to the Investment Canada Act, the Conservatives must agree to review the proposed takeover.

When will they stop dragging their feet and actually conduct a full review and make it a public, transparent process, the way it should be?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the review will take place according to the laws that we have. That is what has been done in the past.

As this government has made clear, both in words and through its actions in past transactions, we will approve only transactions that are in the net benefit of this country.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he spoke of words. We all remember the bizarre remarks of the Prime Minister with regard to the Potash takeover.

New Democrats raised the issue first and he first dismissed the claims saying that it was an American company, for heaven's sake. Luckily, Canadians brought him to his senses on this and eventually the Prime Minister agreed with New Democrats that the Investment Canada Act actually needed to be rewritten.

Canadians do not want another decision about our economic future made behind closed doors. That is clear. Will the Prime Minister commit to Canadians that we will have an open and transparent process?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, there is a law on the books and that law will be respected.

We have a couple of parties opposite. We know the Liberal Party approved every transaction that was ever put before it. The NDP we know would oppose every transaction that was ever put before it. Our position has been clear. We will only approve those transactions that are in the best interests of this country.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' drug bill is a textbook example of Reagan's failed war on drugs. When 12 church groups and 500 health care professionals oppose the bill, the Conservatives ignore them. They refuse to admit how much it will really cost Canadian taxpayers. It just does not add up, not their failed war on drug policy and not their phoney numbers on the costs.

Will the minister finally come clean about the real costs of his failed war on drugs bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and her party are unbelievable. This bill targets drug traffickers, the people who are out to exploit people and sell drugs to children. It deals with date rape drugs.

The hon. member and her colleagues stood in this House and supported this bill. If we cannot trust them on that, what can we trust them on?

Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives war on drugs bill is not tough on crime, it is dumb on crime. A young person with six pot plants would be treated the same way as a mob boss. An 18-year-old who abuses Tylenol 3 just once could face a minimum of two years in prison.

Estimates peg the real costs of this bill at over \$200 million just for B.C.

Will the Conservatives finally reveal what the real costs are to the Canadian taxpayers because they are the ones who will pay the bill?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we did not hear from them why they supported the bill.

I am going to tell this hon. member that I would hope she would at least read the bill. That bill deals with traffickers in every single paragraph. That is completely lost on the Leader of the Opposition. It is lost on this member. The dumbest thing I have heard in this Parliament is the Liberal policy about fighting crime. That is what is dumb.

* * *

•(1435)

RIGHTS & DEMOCRACY

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the issue of rights and democracy is at the heart of politics in Egypt and the Middle East, we now have the spectacle of the government admitting that Rights & Democracy in Canada has spent \$1 million on gumshoes connected to the Tory party, on accountants, and on lawyers.

Oral Questions

How does the minister justify this gross waste of public money at a time when there is a crisis in world democracy? What is the minister going to do to finally restore credibility to our own approach to rights and democracy?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind my hon. colleague that Rights & Democracy, of course, is an arm's-length organization. It is a government-funded organization, mandated to promote human rights. If the hon. member had done his homework a bit, he would realize that among the projects that are being supported by Rights & Democracy is a project in Egypt, specifically, to support democracy.

[Translation]

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that we are witnessing a ridiculous spectacle; Rights & Democracy is spending \$1 million of a \$9 million budget on unjustified private investigations and lawyers' fees. There is no reason for this.

How do you explain the fact that the government reappointed to their positions on the organization's board of directors the two men who were responsible for the witch hunt that so greatly affected this organization?

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again remind the hon. member that Rights & Democracy is an arm's-length organization that does work all over the world to promote democracy. In fact, I just reminded the hon. member, since he did not do his homework, that Rights & Democracy is currently involved in supporting democracy in Egypt.

Unfortunately, I have to help remind the hon. member to indulge in a little humility.

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TRANSPORTATION OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, experts agree that the authorization given to Ontario company Bruce Power to transport a set quantity of nuclear waste on the St. Lawrence could create a dangerous precedent that may encourage others to try.

Does the Minister of Natural Resources realize that this authorization could be the first in a series of others that would eventually transform the St. Lawrence into a highway for the nuclear waste of Ontario and the United States? Is that really what the minister wants?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the health and safety of Canadians are our top priorities, and that is why we have an independent commission that is examining this issue from a scientific perspective. After having heard from 77 stakeholders, the commission concluded that the use of the St. Lawrence to ship such waste was safe.

I asked the commission to provide a technical briefing to members of Parliament, the media, the Government of Quebec and interested communities, which it has agreed to do. Thus, I encourage all interested parties to attend this briefing.

Oral Questions

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, opposition to this idea keeps growing. Over 100 municipalities, including the City of Montreal, those of the Communauté métropolitaine de Québec, the Government of Quebec and the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, are all opposed. Now aboriginals, who were not consulted, are calling for a reversal of the decision of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission.

Will these people have to become evangelicals to be heard by this government?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the health and safety of Canadians are the top priorities of this government. This commission came to an independent, scientific decision.

Once again, I encourage my colleague not to miss the briefing that the commission has offered to give members of Parliament, the media, the Government of Quebec and all interested municipalities. I hope that they will attend this technical briefing so that we can have an intelligent debate here in the House of Commons.

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QUEBEC CITY ARENA

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Quebec and the City of Quebec have announced funding for the construction of a multi-purpose arena. We know the timeline, we know where the complex will be built, we know that the cost will be \$400 million, we know that the Government of Quebec will be responsible for up to 50% of the cost, and we know that the private sector will contribute to the project. There is only one unknown: what is the federal government's contribution?

• (1440)

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we also know full well is that the Bloc members will not be helping to fund this project. That is for sure.

I have had conversations with Minister Sam Hamad and Mayor Labeaume regarding the announcement made earlier today. Mayor Labeaume promised to send me all the information about the announcement made this morning. We will wait for it.

Having said that, when we receive the document, we can look at how the federal government could provide funding for this project, if it chooses to do so. If it does, the process will be fair and accessible across the country.

Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec City area is not looking for charity. We just want some of the taxes paid to Ottawa to be returned. The money will not come out of the minister's pockets.

Rather than creating obstacles for the promoters of this important project, what is the government waiting for to commit to funding the project, instead of just having MPs wear the Nordiques jersey?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since they were elected,

the members of the Conservative caucus from the Quebec City area have shown beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are able to keep the economy moving in that area. The only thing that the Bloc members have managed to move are the wheels on their office chairs.

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[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my father-in-law was lost to the sea. Many others have suffered the same fate. The Atlantic waters are treacherous. Seconds count, the Coast Guard and the auxiliary count, helicopters count.

A Conservative MP has said those who make their living from the sea should take more responsibility for their own lives. The government consistently shirks its responsibility. It is every person for themselves.

The Prime Minister has said that Atlantic Canadians have a defeatist attitude.

Is that why Conservatives are telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, "You're on your own"?

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member in question has apologized for her comments. A lesson I learned when growing up was if someone recognizes they have made a mistake then sincerely apologize. The honourable thing to do would be to accept that apology and move on. That is certainly in the best traditions of this House.

That said, the issue of improved search and rescue capability is very important, especially in the very dangerous waters of the north Atlantic. We have done a lot and we are committed to doing even more.

Ms. Siobhan Coady (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government should give more than an apology; it should give resources. Search and rescue is a federal responsibility.

It is outrageous that Conservatives will cut corporate taxes and spend billions on fighter jets, but they shirk important lifesaving responsibilities.

The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has said to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that they should take responsibility for their own lives. That viewpoint is degrading. It is insulting. It is wrong.

Will the Conservatives commit today to provide adequate Coast Guard services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, no government in decades has invested more in equipment for the Canadian Forces, including search and rescue, than this government.

Each and every year the Canadian Forces and its Coast Guard partners respond to more than 8,000 incidents, tasking military aircraft or ships to over 1,000 cases, saving on average 1,200 lives, and assisting in some 20,000 lives.

This is an issue that this government takes very seriously. We continue to invest in our Coast Guard capabilities as well as our search and rescue capabilities.

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[Translation]

APPOINTMENT OF JUDGES

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in December, Brian Abrams announced his resignation as Conservative candidate for Kingston and the Islands. What a coincidence. Last Friday, Mr. Abrams was appointed judge. The Conservatives do not want to reveal the cost of their megaprisons, but Canadians know how much this partisan appointment will cost them: \$260,000 a year.

Will the Minister of Justice admit that this is a blatant case of cronyism?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the Liberal Party does not spend too much time on the justice file, so the member may not be aware of the fact that anyone applying for a judicial appointment in this country goes through a process by which that application is vetted by representatives of the provincial government, the Bar Association, the law association, and members of law enforcement agencies.

All of the appointments that we have made have been of outstanding Canadians who are doing their best to serve this country, and they should have the thanks of the hon. member and every member of the House.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative gravy train became even more crowded Friday as a number of prominent Conservatives took their seats on the bench. Since the last election, they have appointed 39 Conservative insiders to federal courts, but one name stood out this time. Just weeks before Brian Abrams was named a judge, he was still the nominated Conservative candidate in Kingston.

How could a nominated candidate ever get a sign-off from a non-partisan committee, or did the government just ram this appointment through to pave the way for its preferred candidate?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member does a disservice to the process that has been in place. This is a process which involves representatives, again, of the Law Society and governments, in this case the Government of Ontario.

I have been very proud as justice minister to make recommendations for over 300 individuals to the bench. These are outstanding Canadians prepared to serve and, again, they should have the support and thanks of everyone in this chamber.

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JUSTICE

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberals informed Canadians that they had changed their minds on Bill S-10, which would crack down on serious drug

crime in this country. Last session, the Leader of the Opposition stood in this very House and supported this very same legislation. As a father of three, I find it unimaginable that the Liberals no longer support, among other things, having those who sell drugs near our children's schools face mandatory jail time.

Can the Minister of Justice please update the House on how the Liberals have once again turned their backs on victims and law-abiding Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can understand why people who bring drugs into this country would oppose this bill and I can understand why people who want to get into the grow op business would not be too happy, and I can understand why organized crime and illegal gangs would not support this. What I cannot understand is the Liberal Party's problem when it comes to fighting crime in this country.

That is the difference between our two parties. Canadians know that they can count on this party and this government as the only ones to stand up for law-abiding Canadians, and we are proud of that.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have just reached new heights of irresponsibility by giving the unelected Senate the mandate to review the 2004 health accord. That accord should be reviewed by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health, not by the Senate.

Why do the Conservatives want to prevent elected representatives from reviewing such an important accord for all Canadians?

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to a universal and public health care system, and the Canada Health Act. Unlike the previous Liberal government, we will not balance a budget on cutting health care. We continue to work with the provinces, territories, and health care professionals to look for ways to improve the health care system.

Two weeks ago I sent a letter to the Senate committee co-chairs requesting them to undertake a review of the health accord and report back the work accordingly.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was stunning. Let me try again.

The Canada health accord is up for mandatory review and the government has decided to bypass the elected House and, instead, ask unelected senators to do the review. It is undemocratic and irresponsible. Conservatives have refused to start public consultations on the next accord and are using their unaccountable Senate majority to bury the official review of the last accord.

Will the minister withdraw this request of the Senate and hand it over to the elected members of Parliament, where it belongs?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have asked the Senate to look into this issue. The House health committee of elected representatives is certainly free to look into any matter it wishes. We have a minority on that committee.

One of the things that is important with respect to health care is that this government, instead of cutting health care by \$25 billion like the previous government did, has increased health care spending by 30%. That is a great accomplishment of the federal government.

* * *

[Translation]

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a report from the show *Enquête* uncovered the close ties between the Conservative Party and fundamentalist ministers, some of whom—as we saw in the program—are verging on hysteria. We learned that a number of evangelical leaders have privileged access to Conservative members and senators, and use that access to influence federal politics.

Is it not worrisome to see all these fundamentalist groups circling around the Conservative government, trying to change legislation to impose their religious values?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every Canadian is entitled to be heard by our government. That is why our government is very proud to hold literally thousands of meetings with Canadians from coast to coast.

In the last few months, I have had the pleasure to meet with Jewish groups, Muslim groups, Hindu groups and Sikh groups. I have had the pleasure to meet with Buddhist groups. And I want to tell you something remarkable: I have even met with a few Christian groups.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problem is that the evangelical churches are the fringe of the Conservative Party. We have seen it a number of times in the Conservatives' many attempts to reopen the abortion debate here and on the international stage. Each time a bill is deemed to go against their religious doctrine, the Conservatives bustle about to get it rejected. We need only think of our bill on the right to die with dignity. Even the Conservative government's science policy is directed by a creationist minister.

When will the Conservatives understand that there needs to be a separation between church and state?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know where to start with that question, but let me say this. As Canadians, people of faith, certainly have every right to be heard by their government. We respect their positions and their views. We think it is tremendously important in a pluralistic society like Canada to always reach out to people of different backgrounds, and we make no apologies for it.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates it will cost Canadian municipalities billions to conform to new waste water regulations. In fact, one in four waste water plants will need to be replaced. Where will the money come from?

Is the government preparing to download this cost onto municipal taxpayers? Is that how it will increase taxes on Canadians, by stealth? What will it be: corporate tax cuts for banks and oil companies, billions for prisons and bloated jet purchases, or clean water for Canadians? We know where Canadians stand.

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can tell the member where the Conservative Party stands. To deal with exactly this type of problem and the needs right across the country, we doubled the amount of money that municipalities got through the gas tax. Then we made it permanent so they could make long-term plans.

There is up to \$2 billion a year. From now on and from here on in, they can go into things like clean water, sewer treatment plants, green energy and other things. More than that, we have put a record amount of money into both short- and long-term funding for infrastructure, the type and amount of which the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has said is unprecedented.

[Translation]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week, the EPA, the U.S. environmental agency, announced that it was going to update its standards on drinking water to impose limits on at least 16 toxic materials and carcinogens found in water.

What is the government doing to tighten Canadian standards, given the growing scientific capacity to detect harmful substances in the water we drink? Why is the government dragging its feet?

[English]

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the first question the hon. member asked was why Canada had raised the standard for drinking water right across the country. We did that. We put in the highest standards we possibly could because Canadians deserved it. They want to know they have clean drinking water. They want to know that the groundwater is protected through sewage treatment systems. We have put in the regulations through Health Canada and Environment Canada to ensure it stays that way.

We have done a tremendous job, from coast to coast, on improving our water systems and we will maintain that into the future.

•(1455)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the negotiations on the agreement with Europe are going on behind closed doors. We already know that the Conservatives like to sell off Canadian interests at bargain-basement prices, and we are seeing the results. Softwood lumber? Botched. The agreement with Panama, that haven for tax evasion? Botched. The buy American agreement? Botched.

For the agreement with Europe, where are the impact studies on health systems, public procurement, supply management and the environment? Will he provide them to us as soon as possible, or is he going to botch another agreement?

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, we are undertaking these negotiations because of the positive impact on Canadians and the Canadian economy.

A study was done in advance of these negotiations. It indicated there would be a benefit to the Canadian economy of \$12 billion annually, a positive benefit. We continue to consult with Canadians across a broad range of sectors.

That is why, when we talk to any business group in Canada, almost any chamber of commerce, any groups of Canadians that come from Europe and recognize the tremendous ties we have and see the potential there, they realize this is a huge opportunity to create jobs and prosperity for Canadians from coast to coast.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives said that before. The government has a reputation for not doing its homework. For softwood lumber, that cost Canadian \$1.2 billion and 50,000 lost jobs and counting.

The demands of the E.U. multinationals are clear: changes to our laws to make it harder for affordable generic drugs to come on the market. This could cost \$2.8 billion a year, taken out of our health care system.

The Conservatives have just never met a trading partner they were not happy to sell out to. Will the minister for once come clean with Canadians and let Canadians know how much he has given up at the table this time?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of negotiating and the issues the member addresses have not even been tackled yet. The negative results he talks about are simply not there.

We do know, though, that under the NDP we would not have a single free trade agreement with another country in the world, this for a country of 33 million people that is two-thirds dependent on trade internationally. Canadians understand that. They realize the NDP is misguided, living in the past and wants fortress Canada separate and apart from the world. That is not the Canadian way.

We will engage with the world, trade with the world and compete with the best in the world because Canadians can, and they do and

Oral Questions

they succeed. That is why Canada is successful today economically, ahead of all our competitors.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while Canada is responsible for only 2% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, we as Canadians are determined to contribute toward alternatives like biofuels. We take very seriously our responsibility to do what we can to ensure a cleaner, greener future.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment please explain the next step in the government's biofuel strategy and why it is good news for both the environment and the economy?

Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is well on track toward meeting our targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 17% by 2020. Today the Minister of the Environment announced the next step in our government's ambitious plans by moving forward with our promise to mandate a 2% average renewable fuel content in diesel fuel and heating oil. Along with the 5% renewable fuel content and gasoline, this is equivalent to taking one million vehicles off the road. We are getting it done again.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday I hosted MPs and senators to learn the latest science regarding CCSVI from three of the leading physicians and researchers in North America. They came to advocate on behalf of Canadian MS patients who have been flocking to clinics around the world because they cannot get treated in Canada.

Will the minister show leadership and commit today to doing the science, that is, to collecting the evidence through clinical trials and a registry?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we recognize the difficulties and the heartbreak faced by many thousands of individual MS patients in our country. Our government is committed to moving forward as quickly as possible on the best available science. It is working with the MS Society, the MS clinics and the provinces and territories to ensure that all Canadians living with this disease receive scientifically valid information.

We have established a scientific expert working group to monitor and analyze the results from the seven MS Society-sponsored studies already under way in Canada and the U.S. When the experts advise in favour of clinical—

•(1500)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

Business of the House

[Translation]

SENIORS

Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, according to the Task Force on Financial Literacy, the federal government is saving billions of dollars at the expense of the least fortunate who do not claim the benefits to which they are entitled. As many as 160,000 people who are eligible for old age security and 150,000 who are eligible for the guaranteed income supplement are being cheated.

What is the government waiting for to simplify those programs, to make registration automatic, and to increase its efforts to reach these people in need?

[English]

Hon. Ted Menzies (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question considering the Bloc voted against us putting in place a financial literacy task force to which she is now referring. It was in our last budget.

We set aside money for these individuals to go out and consult with all Canadians to find out the literacy level of Canadians, to find out how we may be able to help them, what level of education system we may be able to help to educate people to protect themselves and to plan for their future.

We welcome the Bloc, finally, to this serious issue.

* * *

CANADA BORDER SERVICES AGENCY

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, recently we heard the border services office in Windsor, Canada's biggest border gateway, is being boarded up and shut down. We have learned that an impartial, independent study recommended that centralized CBS office stay in Windsor.

What possible explanation is there for it to be moved to a Conservative minister's riding? Well, there is only one answer, and that is shameless partisan political interference.

Will the minister table the study and explain his actions to the 100 people and families in Windsor and Essex county who are having their jobs ripped away?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the efficiency and security of our shared border remains our priority. This is an administrative shift. I am happy to put it into perspective for the member opposite.

CBSA has assured me that there will be absolutely no effect on any border crossing. They are confident there will be no job losses due to this merger. Taxpayers want to ensure that CBSA protects our borders effectively and efficiently.

I might add that there has never been more infrastructure put into the area of Windsor than by our government.

CANADIAN COAST GUARD

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is no greater sacrifice Canadian citizens can make than when they put their duty ahead of their own safety in service to our country.

Could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans inform the House of the latest steps taken by the Canadian Coast Guard to honour our Canadian heroes?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm for the House that this morning our government announced that seven new Hero Class Canadian Coast Guard vessels would be named in honour of fallen Canadian heroes. These red and white Coast Guard vessels, currently under construction in Halifax, are iconic symbols of safety, security and sacrifice.

It is a fitting tribute for our Canadian heroes who dedicated their own lives to protecting others.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is addressed to the government House leader in anticipation of the business for the remainder of this week and, of course, next week.

I wonder if he might, in his response to the question, answer specifically where the government is with respect to two bills: Bill S-10, which my colleague, the justice critic for the official opposition, referred to earlier during question period as the "dumb on crime" bill; and Bill C-49, which the Prime Minister and his cabinet continue to herald as a solution for our refugee and immigration challenges, particularly on our borders. We have not seen that particular bill since it was discussed some months ago.

● (1505)

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before I address the specific question by my friend from Ottawa South, I would like to say that today is a very sad day in official Ottawa.

This week, Richard Brennan, who is affectionately and sometimes unaffectionately known as the "Badger", and who works in the National Press Gallery for the *Toronto Star*, will leave the Parliamentary Press Gallery and return to the *Toronto Star* headquarters in Toronto.

The Minister of Finance, the Minister of Industry, the member for Toronto Centre, the member for Hamilton Centre and I all thought we had escaped the wrath of the Badger when we left Queen's Park or, in some cases, were asked to leave Queen's Park. He returned like gum on a shoe that one just cannot get rid of.

However, we want to wish him very well. To paraphrase John Diefenbaker when he talked about Jack Pickersgill: "A scrum without the Badger would be like hell without the devil."

We do wish him the very best as he returns to Toronto.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Business of the House

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, boy, have I mellowed. I would not have said such nice things about the Badger even just a few short years ago, but I have mellowed and have become so quiet and soft-spoken since I arrived on Parliament Hill.

I would like to thank the House leader for the official opposition for his questions.

With respect to Bill S-10, it is an incredibly important piece of legislation that goes after people who traffic in drugs, sell drugs to our children and who traffic in date rape drugs, which is something that is incredibly serious in many parts of the country. We want to see that bill passed and we will move forward on a path to allow it to be passed.

With respect to the bill on human trafficking, we want to see that passed. Again, it is an important piece of legislation. We do not want to provide the Liberal Party with an early opportunity to kill that good piece of legislation. I know they are anxious to kill legislation that is tough on crime, but we are going to stay focused.

Getting back to the business of the House, we will continue today with the Bloc opposition motion.

The parties are currently negotiating a way to proceed with Bill C-59, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accelerated parole review) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. This is a modified version of what makes up part of Bill C-39, a bill that has been at the public safety committee since October 20, 2010. This is an important piece of legislation. The thrust of it has already received agreement in principle from this House. We will be continuing the negotiations on it, or dances, depending on how one defines that, with all parties on this issue.

Given that Bill C-59 will prevent fraudsters from getting out of jail after serving only one-sixth of their sentence, I hope there is sufficient support to move on this initiative without further delay. Tomorrow, therefore, we will either debate Bill C-59 or a procedural motion relating to Bill C-59.

Following Bill C-59, the government intends on calling Bill C-42, Strengthening Aviation Security Act; Bill C-46, Canada-Panama Free Trade Act; Bill C-55, Enhanced New Veterans Charter Act; Bill C-20, An Action Plan for the National Capital Commission; Bill C-8, Canada-Jordan Free Trade Act; Bill C-57, Improving Trade Within Canada Act; Bill C-50, Improving Access to Investigative Tools for Serious Crimes Act; and Bill C-12, Democratic Representation Act.

I could come back with more if we could get all of these bills passed on Monday.

That is the agenda for next week.

Hon. Bob Rae (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House leader, in his comments, made some remarks completely out of character about the retiring president of the press gallery and reporter for the *Toronto Star*, who is returning to Toronto. If I might, I just want to add one or two words on that subject.

When I was in Queen's Park, not exactly parallel to the time that the House leader was there, both while I was in opposition and while

I was in government, Mr. Brennan was a very dogged and determined reporter for the *Toronto Star*.

I must confess that when the people of Ontario thought it would be a better idea if I took a sabbatical from political life in 1995 and I decided to step down as leader of the party in 1996, I thought that I would be saying goodbye to politics and also be saying farewell to Mr. Brennan from the *Toronto Star*. Imagine my surprise, not to say something else, when I returned to the world of scrums, of impossible questions and aggressive interrogations outside this place, and found that no one but Mr. Brennan would be there acting again on behalf of the *Toronto Star*.

He is a terrific person and terrific reporter, a person whose integrity and good humour have stood him and all of us who are involved in politics in good stead.

We wish him well on his departure from this place. However, I certainly would not want him to leave without at least saying goodbye this one time and reminding him, as I have in personal correspondence, that 1 Yonge Street happens to be at the very southern point of the riding of Toronto Centre. Thus, once again, I am locked in this very unhealthy embrace with Richard Brennan of the *Toronto Star*.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Maria Mourani: Mr. Speaker, I seek the unanimous consent of the House to adopt the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-59, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (accelerated parole review) and to make consequential amendments to other Acts shall be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee of the whole, deemed considered in committee of the whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Ahuntsic have the unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

[*English*]

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I might very briefly follow the government House leader and my colleague from Toronto Centre to say a couple of words on the departure of the Badger.

As has been expressed, those of us who have experienced him at the provincial level have fond memories and scars to prove it.

I remember specifically my time as the Ontario solicitor general in an NDP government. If ever there were a ready-made political target, that is one. It was during that time that I learned why exactly he has the reputation and nickname of "the Badger".

Business of the House

I am also know of his deep commitment to the professionalism of his craft. At a time when journalism is in a state of flux and is changing as much as politics is, he is someone who I believe always remembers every day why he chose to be a journalist. It is about the people, the public, getting the truth and the message out, but he has always done it with such great humour. He works hard. He is honest. When one had his word on something, it was kept.

Hence, I would just like to take a moment to express my appreciation for his dedication to, and professionalism in, his career and to the craft of journalism and the importance of professional media to what we do. An open and free press is an integral part of democracy. However, it is only about words and a structure if we do not actually have professionals in that profession. I believe that Richard Brennan is very much the gold standard of what it means to be a hard-hitting, hard-working, honest, professional journalist.

I wish him and his family the very best and hope that he continues to provide his part to public service as much as we try to provide ours.

I wish the Badger the best of luck.

* * *

●(1515)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Hon. John Baird (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order on something that arose during question period with respect to the issuing of an apology by the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

The member for Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte made a number of sexist comments with respect to the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, wondering if she was back in her riding organizing some sort of a bake sale. After I tried to point out the nature of his comments, these continued to the effect that she was having a bake sale in a Christian Church.

Such statements that stereotype women and malign their role in government and politics are unacceptable to all of us in this place, as are such comments with respect to a Christian Church. I am not just not sure why degrading someone who might be involved in fundraising activities for charities at a Christian Church has any place in the House as well.

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the issue at hand is the comments made by the member from Ottawa Valley, I understand, regarding search and rescue activities. The member decided that it would be in the best interests of everybody if community groups funded these search and rescue activities themselves.

When community groups fund activities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, quite often bake sales are the method they use to raise those funds.

The question arises from a statement that I hold dear, that this is stupid. I said to the local media that, apparently, the federal government was considering a new method of funding search and

rescue missions in the North Atlantic: putting on a bake sale. That was the gist of the Conservative MP who was visiting our province on a parliamentary study tour of the country's search and rescue capacity.

To a captive audience that included family members of those who tragically lost loved ones to the perils of the high seas, the Ottawa Valley MP pronounced that her constituents did not expect the services of the Coast Guard when they are boating on the Ottawa River or while cruising on the Rideau Canal in summer, so why should fishermen and mariners of the North Atlantic expect anything more?

It was an absolutely astonishing admission. The outspoken Conservative MP said it plainly for everyone to hear, that no crew of any fishing vessel operating 200 miles out to sea should expect or deserve emergency backup from trained, professional, military SAR technicians in a timely fashion.

Community groups should take more of a role in all of this, she said, implying that the cost of purchasing and operating dual-engine rescue copters and fast rescue craft could easily be managed by bake sale profits held in church basements.

Her message could not have been interpreted otherwise. It could not have been interpreted as anything than saying to the families of the victims of the sea's cruelty and to those who wish to prevent further tragedy that they were being greedy by asking for such services.

Provincial minister Shawn Skinner put it right: it was insulting, and the insult could be felt on many levels. Why would she say such a thing when the families of those who lost their lives were sitting in the very same room while she said it? Why would she say such a thing and then, as if the issue were not being taken seriously by anyone, not at least acquaint herself with the fact that the primary aerial responder to offshore search and rescue is Canada's military, the Department of National Defence, not Fisheries and Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

As a member of the defence committee studying search and rescue activity, that is a basic fact that the member should have understood before she started talking about how the coast guard should be providing these services.

Attitudes within the government must indeed change. Our Canadian government must show a respect and understanding of my province's needs. That would begin with the Prime Minister of Canada publicly stating that the MP, by her own careless words and comments, was no longer suited to being a member of the parliamentary committee studying an issue as important as this. He must immediately remove her as a member of the committee and replace her with another MP from his own caucus, someone this time who has a little bit of respect and understanding of the issues the committee is studying. If he fails to do that and do it immediately, he is endorsing her careless, thoughtless words and the prejudice they reveal.

That decision is now for the Prime Minister. He can show that he is the Prime Minister of all Canadians or he can continue to show his contempt for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker's Ruling

Would the member like to continue this discussion?

● (1520)

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, the member in question was wrong and the member has apologized. The government does not condone those comments in any way, shape or form. That member has apologized. The member Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte should apologize for his sexist comments.

The Speaker: I did not hear the comments but I will look at the record in the House and see if they are there and get back to the House if necessary on this point. However, it appears to be more a matter of debate than a point of order at this stage but I will look at the record and come back to the House.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTER AND THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY REGARDING KAIROS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on a question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood on December 13, 2010 concerning allegedly misleading statements by the Minister of International Cooperation and the former parliamentary secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood for having raised this matter, as well as the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, and the members for Kootenay—Columbia, Guelph, Laurentides—Labelle, Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, Toronto Centre, Ottawa Centre and Scarborough—Rouge River for their interventions.

[English]

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood charged that the Minister of International Cooperation and her former parliamentary secretary made statements in the House that were deliberately misleading with regard to who had been responsible for a government decision to reject a funding proposal for the Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, known as KAIROS.

He measured those statements against a response to a written question, testimony in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and an internal CIDA document obtained through an access to information request. Guided by *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand, Third Edition* at pages 653-4, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood stated at page 7,144 of *Debates*:

In order to establish a prima facie finding that a breach of privilege and contempt has occurred, three elements must be present: one, it must be proven that the statements were misleading; two, it must be established that the member at the time knew the statement was incorrect; and three, in the making of the statement, the minister intended to mislead the House.

In response, the hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia apologized for his statement, made in the House on March 15, 2010, that “CIDA thoroughly analyzed KAIROS' program proposal and determined, with regret, that it did not meet the agency's current priorities”. He characterized his statement as a mistake and that he

had not known that it was misleading and concluded that he had not intended to mislead the House. I thank him for his timely apology, and I consider any allegations against him to have been satisfactorily addressed.

For his part, the parliamentary secretary to the government House leader maintained that the matter was not one of privilege but rather of debate as to the facts. As to the proceedings of the standing committee referred to, the parliamentary secretary emphasized that as no report had been made to the House on this matter, it would be inappropriate for the Chair to take note of those proceedings.

[Translation]

In a ruling I gave on January 31, 2008, I stated at page 2,435 of *Debates*:

...before finding a prima facie breach of privilege in situations such as these, the Speaker must be convinced that deliberately misleading statements were made to the House.

[English]

For the question of privilege now before us, the Chair is, in essence, being asked to assess the accuracy of the minister's answers to questions in the House. In any such circumstance, it has been well established over time that the Speaker has a limited authority. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 510 clearly explains it by stating:

[Translation]

The Speaker ensures that replies adhere to the dictates of order, decorum and parliamentary language. The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

● (1525)

[English]

It was based on this practice of ours that, on January 31, 2008, at page 2435 of *Debates*, I stated:

...any dispute regarding the accuracy or appropriateness of a minister's response to an oral question is a matter of debate; it is not a matter for the Speaker to judge.

[Translation]

This is not to say, however, that there are not circumstances when the Chair could determine, given the proper evidence, that statements made to the House have indeed breached the privileges of the House. In fact, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood neatly laid out the standard of proof that would be required to demonstrate that the House has been deliberately misled.

Business of Supply

[English]

It was with these principles in mind and ultimately the need to determine that there was intent to mislead that I undertook to review all of the evidence that could be taken into consideration in this case. Again, however, the Chair was limited in its ability to act on the full range of that review since much of the proceedings referred to in member's submissions were never officially placed in the hands of the House. The parliamentary secretary to the government House leader was not mistaken in his assertion that any and all statements made in committee, even when those have been repeated verbatim in the House, remain the business of the committee until such time as it elects to report them officially to the House. This is a long-standing practice and I would refer members to a ruling I made on June 14, 2010, at page 3778 of *Debates*, where I stated:

...if there are issues about the proceedings in the committee, it is incumbent upon the committee itself to deal with them and, should it deem it necessary, to report to the House on the matter.

Furthermore, while a copy of an internal CIDA document obtained through an access to information request was provided to me, it was not tabled in the House and, thus, is not officially before it.

As a result, in this particular circumstance, the Chair has been left in a delicate position.

As noted earlier, the Chair reviewed all the documents available. In doing so, to fully grasp the allegations being made, particular attention was paid to the committee testimony of the minister and senior CIDA officials and to the internal CIDA document obtained through an access to information request made available to me by the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood. The full body of material gives rise to very troubling questions. Any reasonable person confronted with what appears to have transpired would necessarily be extremely concerned, if not shocked, and might well begin to doubt the integrity of certain decision-making processes. In particular, the senior CIDA officials concerned must be deeply disturbed by the doctored document they have been made to appear to have signed.

However, despite the obvious frustration expressed by many of the members who have intervened in this case and the profoundly disturbing questions that evidently remain unanswered in the view of these same members, the Chair is bound by very narrow parameters in situations such as this one. It may sound overly technical but the reality is that when adjudicating cases of this kind, the Chair is obliged to reference material fully and properly before the House. With regard to statements made by the minister, this material is limited to a few answers to oral questions and one answer to a written question, not to any comments in committee.

In the circumstances, with this key limitation in mind and in the absence of a committee report on this matter, the Chair cannot find evidence in documents properly before the House to suggest that the minister's statements to the House were deliberately misleading, that she believed them to be misleading or that she had intended for them to be misleading. Accordingly, I cannot rule that the minister deliberately misled the House and, therefore, I cannot find that there is a *prima facie* question of privilege.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1530)

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FORILLON PARK

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Before question period, the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas had the floor. He has three minutes remaining for questions and comments following his speech.

I see the hon. member for Joliette, and I will hear him now.

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, your ruling was so short that I was still caught up speaking with a colleague.

Before I begin my speech on our opposition motion here today, I would like to extend my sympathies to all the families affected by the serious accident that took place on Highway 158 near Joliette, in Sainte-Geneviève-de-Berthier. Five workers from Saint-Côme in my riding were killed in the accident. On behalf of all members of this House, I would like to offer my sincere condolences to the families affected by this tragedy.

Speaking of tragedy, expropriating the land needed to create Forillon Park was also a great tragedy. Through this Bloc Québécois opposition day motion, we are trying to make restitution, at least in part, for the damage that was caused some 40 years ago. I would like to read the text of the motion moved by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine and which I had the honour to second:

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated, and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

First of all, it is important to recognize that, just like previous governments and especially successive Liberal governments have done previously, the federal government has turned up its nose at this situation and has refused to acknowledge the problems that have been caused by this unconscionable manner in which many families in the Gaspé have been treated. If the federal government, whether Liberal or Conservative, is incapable of assuming its responsibilities regarding the apology that needs to be made to the people of Forillon whose land was expropriated, we thought it was important that this House issue an official apology to those people, to their families and their descendants 40 years after the fact.

That is the first step for us and an apology in due form will complement in a much more tangible way what the Conservative government has already started to do on a technical level. Indeed, and I will come back to this later, the government has allowed those whose properties were expropriated, their families and their descendants, for three generations, to have access, free of charge, to the national parks. That was an initiative we acknowledged at the time, but it does not go far enough. First, it was only logical since the land once belonged to them and was their home. Second, that does not constitute an apology. For now it is just extremely limited and very technical redress by the Conservative government. It needs to go at least so far as to issue an apology, as I was saying.

Business of Supply

When we look at this entire saga, we see that these things never should have happened. Now, I am sure lessons have been learned and such things will never happen again. The results of this expropriation also apply to other expropriations. I know that the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel will have a chance to come back to that. Those whose properties were expropriated in Mirabel are seeking redress from the government without going as far as asking for an apology. That hon. member, who is much more knowledgeable than I, will have a chance to elaborate on that.

In 1963, the Bureau d'aménagement de l'Est-du-Québec mentioned for the first time in its report the creation of a national park at the end of the peninsula. Those who are familiar with the history of the Bureau d'aménagement de l'Est-du-Québec know that this bureau made or rather suggested a number of decisions—because it did not make decisions; it only told the government what to do—that were rather questionable. For example, shutting down a number of villages to try to concentrate the populations did not have the desired effect. On the contrary, doing so resulted in tearing the social fabric.

It was within this context, in the 1960s, that the idea of a park came into being. At that time, the government had a fairly bureaucratic vision, which unfortunately still exists today, and it adopted a top down approach by imposing measures it thought were good for people. In 1968, a federal-provincial agreement was signed regarding the development of the park in Gaspé. In 1969, a preliminary agreement was reached between Quebec minister Gabriel Loubier and the well-known federal Liberal minister Jean Chrétien. At the time, the end of the 1960s, this resulted in a major debate within the Union Nationale government. Moreover, Marcel Masse, who is well-known in the Lanaudière region because he currently lives in Saint-Donat, opposed the fact that so much land belonging to Quebec was being given to the federal government. Nevertheless, the project went ahead and the final agreement was signed on June 8, 1970. It was then decided that area residents would be expropriated and that the federal government would control the land for 99 years.

On July 22, 1970, the expropriation act was tabled. Negotiations began with those being expropriated and it became apparent that the attitude of the Government of Quebec, and that of the federal government, toward what was happening to these people was extremely casual. In fact, the word “casual” is not strong enough; pressure was put on people who did not technically know their rights. When they became aware of what those rights were, they were subject to legal harassment until one by one they gave up and accepted the small amount of compensation they were being offered.

Let us take, for example, the case of Lionel Bernier, a lawyer who may have been the one who helped those being expropriated from Forillon the most. He was, at the time, a young lawyer who had grown up in the community of Forillon. He took the case at the request of his father and began to read the case law.

● (1535)

He wrote this himself. His words were reported in *Le Soleil* on May 14, 2001. “I read all the literature I could. It was clear that the government negotiators were saying whatever they liked. I defended those people practically by myself.” It was fortunate that Lionel Bernier was there.

In 1973, Justice Dorion, of the Régie des services publics du Québec, held that the assets of those expropriated had been assessed at far too low a value and directed Quebec to give them more. In April 1973, Jean Chrétien stated that residents would no longer have to move when a national park was established, a policy that was put into effect for Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland. Unfortunately, in 1973, Jean Chrétien, as minister, could have done things differently. But the hand was already stuck in the grinder, the arm was on its way through, and the rest was to follow. Though a number of court decisions favoured the expropriated people, nothing really ever came together for them.

As I mentioned, on March 5, 1973, Justice Guy Dorion ruled in favour of the expropriated people. The ruling was very harsh for the government and the compensation awarded was three to five times higher. The government filed an appeal, and, quietly, one by one, those who had been expropriated became discouraged and took absolutely paltry settlements.

I will close by mentioning that the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse was present on August 21, 2010, the 40th anniversary of the establishment of Forillon National Park, to announce the action on park access that I described earlier. But he refused to raise any possibility of an apology from the federal government, the Conservative government. In fact, he spoke in very harsh terms. Government actions do not happen overnight. It seems to me that, 40 years later, it may be time to take this step out of simple decency. Of course, we are asking for the support of all parties in the House in passing our motion and offering a proper apology to the people who were expropriated from Forillon and to their descendants.

● (1540)

[English]

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it has been a while since I have had an opportunity to rise in the House. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to this issue put forward by my colleague on the fisheries committee, the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

The hon. member's motion refers to the properties that were expropriated to create Forillon National Park at the eastern tip of the Gaspé Peninsula.

I have travelled to the Gaspé as a member of the fisheries committee. It is a beautiful area. I have no doubt that this is indeed a magnificent national park. It is made up of 244 square kilometres of cliffs and mountains where the northeast tip of the Appalachian Mountain chain meets the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, including a 160 meter-wide marine component that extends along the shoreline.

This is spectacular country, carved by erosion of the pounding sea, where sheer cliffs plunge into the sea and pebble beaches line the coves. Inland streams tumble out of the rugged hills. The park is covered mainly by boreal forest, but also many tundra species of plants live along the limestone cliffs.

Business of Supply

The park is home to black bears, red fox, moose, and massive colonies of seabirds. Some 245 bird species have been sighted in the park, many of them nesting on the coastal cliffs, including razorbills, cormorants and kittiwakes. Puffins, gannets and petrels feed in the fertile waters. From the shore can be seen many species of whale, pilot and minke, blue and humpback. Harbour porpoises play off the shoreline, and harbour and grey seals clamour out of the icy waters to sun themselves along the rocky coast.

Below the surface swim cod, herring, mackerel and salmon, and the wealth of these fisheries attract not only the animals that feed there but for 200 years they attracted European settlers.

As the hon. member's motion attests, this land was also once home to communities of people who fished the teeming waters, people with names like: Bourgaise, Fruing, Gavey, LeBoutillier, Lemesurier and Simon. They caught cod, and dried and salted it into what was known in the markets of Italy, Spain and the Caribbean as Gaspé Cure.

Many of the people who settled these shores came from the Channel Islands of Jersey and Guernsey. Others were United Empire Loyalists who had fled the United States after the revolution. Still others were Irish who came to escape the potato famine.

When the government in 1970 expropriated the houses to create the park, a way of life that had sustained the population for several generations came to an end. The land became part of what is now grown to be a network of 42 national parks, 5 national marine conservation areas, and 167 national historic sites across Canada.

People who lived in this area faced a challenging way of life, fishing for cod in the cold waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and then drying the cod on the beaches through the short Gaspé summer and having small forest plots in the woods around the park.

Let us not forget that elsewhere on the coast of the gulf and the Atlantic Ocean many similar communities have disappeared due to the changes in the global economy and the marine environment. New technology for catching and preserving fish for the markets of the world have replaced the drying racks that once stretched out along the pebble beaches.

Parks Canada has taken measures to commemorate and to honour the people who plied the cold waters and built their homes, and raised their families on the Forillon Peninsula.

In the meantime, what about the economy of the region? Given what we now know about what became of the cod fishery and the little villages it sustained in Atlantic Canada, has there been a benefit to the people of the Gaspésie as a result of the decision more than 40 years ago to create a national park at Forillon? The answer, I believe, is yes.

In considering the hon. member's motion, we should look at that as well, not just what was lost as a result of the expropriation but also what has been gained.

This year after all marks 100 years since Canada created the first national parks service. Last year we celebrated 125 years since the creation of Canada's first national park, Banff National Park, in my home province of Alberta. Over that time Parks Canada has been a

world leader in the protection and preservation of natural and historic heritage.

● (1545)

These parks and national historic sites have left a rich environmental and cultural legacy, but I also want to emphasize that they create economic opportunities and add to the prosperity of nearby communities.

Each year, millions of tourists visit the national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. In 2007, for example, some 137,000 people visited Forillon National Park. They come to hike, ride on horseback and explore the coastline and the rugged interior. They marvel at the magnificence of the scenery and the abundance of wildlife. I am confident that once visitors have seen the beauty of Forillon, they will go home and tell their families and friends that a national park like Forillon is an economic and natural treasure and will continue to enhance the economy of the Gaspésie.

We must look at the other side of the equation when we consider the hon. member's motion. What has been gained as a result of Parks Canada's administration of the region? In fact, Parks Canada is Canada's largest provider of natural and cultural tourism products and encourages visitor spending of nearly \$2.7 billion in national parks and historic sites. About \$1 billion of that spending comes from foreign visitors. That is new money added to our Canadian economy.

I remind the House that while the fisheries of Atlantic Canada have declined from their former glory, the tourism industry worldwide represents one of the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy.

Increasingly tourism is an important industry that supports small businesses and provides employment to Canadians across the country, particularly in regions renowned for their beauty, such as the Gaspésie. Tourism contributes about 2% of Canada's gross domestic product and is crucial to the bottom line of key industry sectors, everything from airlines to restaurants, hotels, and so on.

Parks Canada itself spends significant amounts of money in goods and services, wages and salaries, but more important than their direct investment is the spinoff economy that sustains communities across our country. The activities Parks Canada undertakes across Canada create nearly \$2 billion in paid labour that supports nearly 42,000 jobs. These jobs are often in remote communities, such as the northeastern tip of my hon. colleague's riding.

Business of Supply

When we look at Quebec, Parks Canada activities create in the surrounding communities approximately \$201 million in labour income, which supports more than 4,500 jobs. That is year after year, but I would also point out that under Canada's economic action plan, an additional \$48 million was invested in 28 projects in the province of Quebec. These included some \$3.25 million invested in Forillon National Park. For example, \$1.6 million was spent in the park to counter shoreline erosion on the Route du Banc to help ensure that visitors would continue to enjoy this magnificent site. Another \$1 million was invested to refresh and make improvements to the campsite.

Does Forillon National Park contribute to the economy of the Gaspésie? Of course it does. In fact, the total economic impact attributed to Forillon National Park on gross domestic product is estimated at about \$13 million each year, including the provision of some 326 full-time jobs in the region.

When the families moved from the region to make room for the national park in 1970, they helped create the foundation for a different kind of economy on the tip of the Gaspésie. No longer is it a region of catching and drying cod, but a vibrant tourism destination that will continue to attract visitors for many years to come. That is what we are celebrating in this year when we mark a century of Parks Canada.

Today, Parks Canada administers about 360,000 square kilometres of national parks, national historic sites and national marine conservation areas. In total, this is an area bigger than all of Germany. No wonder foreign visitors are impressed by the vastness of our beautiful and wonderful parks system.

Canada has protected these regions in a series of individual steps to set aside lands for future benefit for future generations. Some of these acquisitions have been very large, such as the agreement a few years ago to increase the Nahanni National Park reserve in the Northwest Territories to six times its previous area. The park is now about the same size, in fact, as the entire country of Belgium.

Over the past few years, we have moved quickly to protect more land, water and historic sites. We have taken steps that will increase these areas by over 30% and reintroduce wildlife to their traditional habitats. Along the way, Parks Canada has learned valuable lessons about how to work with local communities to help ensure they benefit from the economic activity that will come about as a result of the park designation.

• (1550)

Parks Canada no longer expropriates land, as was the case in Forillon some 40 years ago. Instead, in places Nahanni, as well as the Mealy Mountains, Lancaster Sound, Sable Island, Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area reserve, and the Haida heritage site, we worked with the local communities, the landowners and local governments.

That is worth celebrating. This is a year for us to celebrate, the centennial of our Canada's national park service, 100 years in which Parks Canada has protected our natural habitats and places of incredible beauty, as well as so many of the heritage sites that represent the creation of our nation. One hundred years, as well, of contributing to Canada's economy and the economies of regions far

from the big cities, regions such as the Gaspésie, and a hundred years of learning how to create these protected areas in a way that will sustain the communities that have grown up within and around these marvellous regions.

We learned lessons from the creation of Forillon, lessons that have helped Parks Canada work more effectively with communities. We have helped contribute to the economy of the Gaspésie. That is worth celebrating.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels. Our government has done much for the protection of natural landscapes in Canada.

Notwithstanding the wrong-headed way in which Forillon and Kouchibouguac National Park lands were taken from property owners some 40 years ago, there have been significant changes in the way national parks have been created.

One example that I wish to talk about is a national park in western Canada called Grasslands National Park. The website shows that the area has been identified as a potential national park by virtue of a 1988 agreement between the Governments of Canada and Saskatchewan. This agreement replaced a 1981 document when disagreements between the two levels of government arose concerning oil and gas exploration and water management in the park area.

However, Grasslands National Park will eventually cover 900 square kilometres, or 350 square miles, in two blocks along the Canada-U.S. border in southwestern Saskatchewan. The federal government purchases land on a willing seller/willing buyer basis. There will be no expropriation for the acquisition of these lands.

As of 2005, the national park owns a total of 497.3 square kilometres, or 192 square miles, a little over half of what it is looking for in both the east and the west blocks. It may be several years before the park is completely established, however, there is sufficient land base to pursue formalizing Grasslands National Park by including it in the schedule of national parks. This was achieved within the new Canada National Parks Act that received royal assent on October 20, 2000, and a proclamation on February 19, 2001. It also goes on to talk about the draft management plan and so on.

The important thing to note is that the way national parks and the Government of Canada is now engaging in the acquisition of lands is significantly different than it was 40 years ago. This is a much more reasonable way to approach the issue of land acquisition. Fair market value for the property is paid to the landowner when the landowner is ready to sell. It may make things inconvenient for governments that would like to otherwise hurry up the process, but it seems to strike the fair balance of achieving the desire to preserve and protect the natural habitat, while respecting the rights of property owners, such as they are in our country today.

Had this method been approached in 1970, perhaps we would not be having this debate in the House of Commons today.

In order to correct some of the wrongs of the past, Parks Canada has offered to install placards and other interpretative signs in places like Kouchibouguac National Park.

Business of Supply

As we can see from an article, Parks Canada admits the pain of expropriation. This is an article that appeared in the *National Post*, October 9, 2007. We have seen some of the wrongs documented, as we look back in history. There were threats and clashes with police, crusades to save the New Brunswick Kouchibouguac National Park in 1969. A public inquiry and a change in how the federal government reserved land for parks came after.

Now nearly 40 years after some 250 families had their homes expropriated to create this 238 square kilometre reserve, Parks Canada is discussing the installation of interpretation panels and picnic tables as one way to recognize the more than 1,000 people who were dislocated from their small piece of paradise.

The article continues and goes on to say how the landowners, the families and the descendants of those landowners are pleased that this initial step happened in 2006, but it is not going far enough just yet.

•(1555)

The same can be said also for our government's response in Forillon. On August 21, 2010, my colleague, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, announced that those people, whose houses were expropriated in the creation of the national park or historic site, and their children and grandchildren would have free access to locations where their houses were once expropriated.

In recognition of the expropriations that took place at Forillon National Park 40 years ago, the Government of Canada has extended access privileges to three generations of those whose houses were expropriated to facilitate their connections with areas of personal interest within the national park.

My colleague, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, also inaugurated the exhibition titled, “The Gaspésians from Land's End at Forillon”. This is a new permanent exhibition which presents the richness and diversity of the ancient inhabitants of Forillon and also tells the stories of the families living on this land before the creation of the park and the expropriations of 1970.

Parks Canada will continue the work begun with the affected communities and commemorate these events with respect and ensure that former residents have free access to places that evoke personal meaning for them.

I have other examples of wrongdoing in the past that need to be corrected. Some of those things have been corrected, but given the fact that I am probably not will not get through the example I wanted to discuss in the time I have remaining, I will conclude by saying how much I appreciate the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. It is an important thing to consider.

All members, no matter what level of government they are elected to, whether it is municipal, provincial or federal, should always keep in mind the tensions that arise during the expropriations of land. This serves as a good reminder of some of the failings that have happened in the past and why we should be ever mindful of respecting people's personal property.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I see that the hon. member has fully understood that a gross injustice was done to the residents of Forillon. In April 1973, the Canadian government adopted a policy under which residents would no longer have to move when a national park was created. It gave examples for the new parks that would be created. People would no longer be forced to move. The problem is that, in one instance, they were. In today's motion, we are asking that the members of the House of Commons apologize to those residents.

But I did not hear the hon. member's position. Will this Conservative member and his party support the present motion, which asks that members of the House of Commons apologize for this serious error that was made in the past?

[*English*]

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, I will get to the crux of question of my hon. colleague in a moment, but I used to be a national park warden for the national parks service. I used to be a conservation officer, a park ranger, when I worked in the province of Alberta. In fact, I was a ranger in charge of a provincial park. I worked at a place called Miquelon Lake Provincial Park. During the establishment of that park, there were several cottagers and landowners who did not want to leave. That is fine and it is the way it should be.

We can always argue through history whether something was done correctly or incorrectly, or for the right reasons or the wrong ones. Miquelon Lake Provincial Park is well used by the residents, most notably from the Camrose area and the city of Edmonton. However, during the creation process, those who had property there were allowed to stay and keep their cabins. There was an interesting mix that is not often seen of private property owners completely circumscribed by a provincial park.

We see these examples during grandfathering clauses, where many of these kinds of agreements are taken when there is a change in the purpose of or ownership of land. These are very difficult things. They are very tenuous and create some ill will and bad feelings for those involved.

Our government has already, as I mentioned in my speech, made some concessions to the people of Forillon, allowing them access. As to whether Conservatives will support the motion, the hon. member will have to wait and see how we vote.

•(1600)

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, basically that was to be my question for the member as well. I have been listening to the debates today since 10 a.m. and there have been very few government representatives who have stood, but those who have managed to speak for 20 minutes without saying at all where the government was planning to go on the motion.

As a matter of fact, a Liberal, I believe it was the second speaker, apologized on behalf of the Liberal Party for its 27 years of ignoring this problem. The Bloc and the NDP obviously support the motion. Why is the government so reluctant to come clean and indicate whether it is in favour of the motion or not? What is the big secret?

Business of Supply

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, some very notable things have happened under the leadership of the Prime Minister when it comes to correcting some of the injustices of the past.

Notably, we have had an apology for the Indian residential schools. That was one of the most historic things that has happened in decades. I was in the chamber the day when leaders of aboriginal communities from across the country sat in the House of Commons and acknowledged and accepted an apology on behalf of the Government of Canada.

We have apologized for the Chinese head tax; a wrong-headed policy from years ago.

When it comes to making apologies that are appropriate, the current Prime Minister and our Conservative government have done very well.

However, there is always caution that needs to be taken.

Another example of where we had some corrections of inequities in the past is the expropriation of land at Mirabel. In the 2005 election campaign our party promised that we would try to rectify some of the problems of the past. In 2006, under the government of Prime Minister Mulroney, the landowners adjacent to Mirabel were given an opportunity to acquire a certain block of the land back.

In 1988, the establishment of Grasslands National Park was done correctly under a Conservative government in Ottawa and a Conservative government under Grant Devine in Saskatchewan, so that we do not have these kinds of problems in the future.

Frankly, it is difficult for me to say how we are going to vote. I will be having those discussions and we will see what comes about as a result of this motion when we do vote on it. However, it is a little tiring, from this side of the House, apologizing for mistakes that have been made by the Liberal Party on the other side of the House.

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the matter of apologizing, we have been doing a lot of apologizing for mistakes in the past. The hon. member mentioned several examples. We might also add to that list the *St. Louis* monument that just opened in Halifax at Pier 21, the immigration pier, recognizing the travesty of another era.

It is one thing to judge with today's standards governments of another era. As the discussion has come forward today, this goes all the way back to 1963-69, when it was started. I think 1974 is when the ribbon cutting took place. The prime minister of the day was Mr. Trudeau from Quebec. The environment minister of the day who brought this policy in was the Liberal environment minister, Jean Chrétien. The provincial government was engaged at that time, as was the practice, to assist in the expropriation. That is the history of the day. Thank goodness those policies were changed and it does not go on in that manner any more.

It is important to recognize that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse has been there on behalf of our government to open up possibilities for the families to be recognized. A centre has been opened recently by our government which recognizes the contribution of those families. Our government has taken action on this file, in spite of inaction from previous governments.

● (1605)

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague, who is a good friend and a good representative for his constituency, is absolutely right. We have had difficulty apologizing for some of the inequities of the past, particularly when dealing with situations of land expropriation.

I come from a farm in rural Alberta. Any time there are expropriations it is always very difficult. We have had these discussions at the provincial level as well as land zoning issues when I was on municipal council. As I said at the conclusion of my remarks, we in the House should always be very careful when it comes to making decisions that concern other people's private property.

I will point out that technically the letter of the law was followed by the provincial government that expropriated the land. My understanding of how it worked is that the province expropriated the land on behalf of the federal government in order to turn it over to create a national park. We have beautiful national parks today. I do not believe that anyone would dispute that. They are certainly a treasure to behold. From time to time we do encounter issues with them concerning disputes with adjacent landowners and other barriers during their creation. However, we must say that on a net basis the benefits certainly outweigh some of those costs.

As I said, the law was followed at the time, however it was wrong-headed. I certainly have a lot of empathy for the landowners who had a magnificent way of life and basically were evicted from their properties, albeit by the letter of the law.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Child Care.

Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Gatineau.

Today, as the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, I am pleased to participate in this debate on the motion moved by the Bloc Québécois. I will reread it:

That this House issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park for the unconscionable manner in which they were treated, and that the Speaker of the House send the representatives of the people whose properties were expropriated and of their descendants an official copy of the Journals of the House of Commons indicating the adoption of this motion.

One of our popular singers wrote a song about Sainte-Scholastique and Forillon Park. As you know, it is a metaphor. When he wrote the song, Paul Piché was describing two major events, two abusive, large-scale expropriations carried out by the federal government on Quebec soil.

Naturally, an expropriation is never easy; it is difficult for the families who have to go through it. I will try, in the ten minutes at my disposal, to tell you about the two expropriations—Forillon and Mirabel, which was known as Sainte-Scholastique at the time. Municipalities were amalgamated by force, by decree.

Business of Supply

In the case of Sainte-Scholastique, the neighbouring municipalities of Saint-Hermas, Saint-Benoît, Saint-Augustin, Saint-Janvier, Saint-Canut and Sainte-Monique were affected.

In 1969, the federal government decided to build an airport. Many citizens who lived in these municipalities had to leave their homes when their villages were merged into a single legal entity, a city known today as Mirabel. I will talk later about all the stress and the major debates caused by expropriation that citizens have to endure.

Forillon Park covers an area of 244 km² located entirely within the City of Gaspé, and which includes the Forillon peninsula, located between Gaspé Bay and Honguedo Strait. It was a decision made by the federal government in 1963. This led to the Governments of Quebec and Canada, in 1970, to issue decrees that resulted in the introduction of the Expropriation Act on July 22, 1970, to the consternation of the landowners and the 225 families living there. In addition to the families who lived within the boundary of the proposed park, there were also families who lived elsewhere, but who owned land and woodlots on which they continued the work of their ancestors. The government wanted to create a national park. In the case of Mirabel, they built an international airport, but that is another matter.

In 1973, the Government of Canada even decided, again by order in council, that inhabitants would no longer have to move when a new national park was created. That applied to Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland and Labrador. It began in 1963, but the expropriation order came into force in 1969-70.

Starting in 1973, the Government of Canada decided that inhabitants would no longer have to move when a new national park was created. My Conservative colleague gave some good examples earlier. Today, all of the members in this House should be well aware of the Bloc Québécois motion. We should apologize for this expropriation, which led to an amendment of regulations so that it would never happen again.

We have been talking about this expropriation since 10 a.m. and I find it hard to understand why the Conservatives still do not know how they are going to vote on the Bloc motion.

The motion asks the House to offer an official apology. Why? Because, as responsible members, we should apologize to the 225 families and their descendants for blatantly abusive expropriation. The fact that regulations were amended proves that it was an abuse. Now when national parks are created, people do not have to move.

•(1610)

The Bloc's motion is in response to these people, who have been asking for an apology for many years. They made other requests, which the Conservative government made an effort to respond to, it is true; announcements were made. But the fact remains that a grave injustice was committed and the House should apologize. I believe that the Bloc motion makes sense today.

And that brings me back to the subject of Mirabel. The Forillon expropriation began in 1963; Mirabel began in 1970. In 1969, the Liberal Party of Canada announced that an international airport would be built in Mirabel. In Forillon, 244 km² were affected; in Mirabel it was 97,000 acres. And the outcome was that Mirabel

airport is the biggest white elephant ever constructed by the federal government on Canadian soil.

Only 6,000 acres were used for the actual airport. Six thousand acres surrounded by fences. It is true that the Conservative government agreed to give back 80,000 acres in 1985. They kept 11,000 because they were not sure of the future of Mirabel international airport at that time.

The decision was made by the Liberal government. All domestic and international flights were to be transferred to Mirabel in 1995. That same year, the decision was made to keep Dorval open. That is what the Liberals decided. In 2002, it was decided that international flights to Mirabel would go back to Dorval. In November 2004, all domestic flights and international passenger flights to Mirabel were closed. There was a motion. I will read the text because at the time, the government refused to provide an apology with respect to Mirabel.

The then federal Minister of Transport, Jean Lapierre, a Liberal minister—he is on television from time to time—, refused to apologize to those whose properties were expropriated in Mirabel. At the time, Prime Minister Paul Martin acknowledged that these people had suffered; there was an acknowledgement. Today, the Liberals tend to have a slightly different opinion about Forillon. Is the prospect of an election beating some sense into them? We will see. The fact remains that the issue of expropriations is a harsh reality.

As far as Mirabel is concerned, in 2005, we supported a motion put forward by the Conservative Party at the time. I was a member of Parliament and we were aware of the situation. We were talking about initiating the process to return the 11,000 acres of land that remained. Just before the 2006 election, the Prime Minister went to Mirabel to make a grandiose election promise. The Conservatives are celebrating five years in power and there are still 8,000 of the 11,000 acres left to transfer back. It is not over yet.

The Conservatives, who are in power today, are reluctant to apologize. In the case of Forillon, that is what the people are asking for, an apology, but the Conservatives are in government. In the case of Mirabel, it was the Prime Minister who made an election promise and went to Mirabel to say that all the land would be returned. There are roughly 8,000 acres left to return and 97 files that are still open, but there is a willingness to work on them.

The purpose of the motion put forward by the Bloc is to acknowledge this injustice. It is our primary role as politicians to do so. We are here to pass legislation, but when bad legislation has been passed by our predecessors, regardless of the political party, we have to be able to acknowledge it and know when to apologize for the decisions made by our predecessors. That is the beauty of the Bloc Québécois motion. We are calling on this House to issue an official apology to the people whose properties were expropriated to create Forillon Park. I hope that all the political parties understand that we owe it to the 225 families and to all those who use these lands, who have suffered a serious injustice and deserve our apology.

Business of Supply

•(1615)

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the hon. member thinks about the position taken by the Conservatives, who do not have the courage to recognize that the people of Forillon lived through hell. They must be familiar with the word “hell” since it describes their strategy, their view of the world, their way of managing everything, and all of their policies. The people of Forillon were made to go through hell. There have been three or four Conservative speakers in this debate today and we still do not know what their position is on this important issue of respect. Perhaps, further to the wise words of my colleague, the word “humanity” will elicit more of a reaction from them.

Mr. Mario Laframboise: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Gatineau for his question.

Throughout its remarks today, the government talked about the good things it has done. At the request of the families, it has offered passes for three generations. The families had actually asked for passes for five generations, but they were granted passes for only three. The Conservative Party's problem is that it never finishes anything it starts. The same is true of the Mirabel airport situation. It is good that the government has begun and is continuing to give back the land. The government must give back what it unfairly expropriated. I think that this goes without saying. However, above and beyond that, when the government realizes that it has made a mistake, it must apologize. As politicians, we must not be afraid to apologize. That is the problem with the Conservatives. They never make any mistakes and they refuse to acknowledge that other politicians, perhaps other Conservatives before them, may have made mistakes. For all those watching, once again, I believe that what is great about the action that will be taken today is the government's acknowledgement of the mistakes that were made in the past. Today, the Conservatives acknowledged in their remarks that serious mistakes were made in the past. They should therefore be polite enough to apologize to the people who were wronged.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Gatineau said they went through hell. I think that is an apt description, since the houses there were systematically burned and the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse went to open an exhibit to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the massacre that occurred in what is now Forillon Park. He stated that the celebration represented reconciliation with the families of Forillon. At the same time, he claims he cannot apologize because a government does not make that kind of decision overnight. I think the member for Lévis—Bellechasse should realize that after 40 years, it is time to do something for those families. What are my colleague's thoughts on that?

•(1620)

Mr. Mario Laframboise: My colleague is quite right. The member for Lévis—Bellechasse, like any good Conservative, has the annoying tendency of always trying to score political points. In this case, he is celebrating the 40th anniversary. He is calling it a reconciliation and using it as opportunity to score political points. The Conservatives are making a huge mistake by always trying to score political points. We are asking all parties in the House of Commons to join together to adopt this motion here today. We would like it to be unanimous and hope that we will not even have to vote

on it. If all parties give their consent, this motion could be unanimously adopted and we would be very pleased.

So I ask the House: do I have the unanimous consent of the House to adopt this motion here today?

Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today, the Bloc Québécois is making a very simple request: that the federal government issue a formal apology to the people expropriated from Forillon Park.

My colleague, the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, just mentioned Sainte-Scholastique. Let us remember Kouchibouguac in New Brunswick and the saga the Vautour family had to endure. Here, in the Outaouais region, the National Capital Commission expropriated the people of Lac Philippe to create Gatineau Park. It is important to note that it was francophones who were living in that area. They were all expropriated. The people who were living in the Meech Lake area were all anglophones who were more well off and who were well connected with the Liberal government that was in power at the time. They were not affected. It is not that they deserved to be expropriated, but the people from the Lac Philippe area are still suffering as a result of this incident.

There are other stories, like the story of Hull, for example. Why were federal buildings put up in Hull, just across the bridge, where the people of Hull lived? Why were they not built on the outskirts of the city to let those people stay in their homes and their community? No, they were cavalierly expropriated. They had to leave and go live somewhere else, like Baron or Pointe-Gatineau. They were expropriated and paid peanuts for their houses. Some of them still live in trailers today because they were not given enough money to build houses like they had in Hull.

At that time, Hull's social fabric was destroyed just so that the federal buildings would not be too far from Ottawa, from the capital, from Parliament. Once again, Liberals, Liberals, Liberals; Trudeau, Trudeau, Trudeau. That is what the federal government did to those people then. They really suffered.

Are the Conservatives like a bunch of Trudeaus? Will they take on the mantle of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and follow in the Liberals' footsteps by not apologizing? That is what we are hearing today. The Conservatives' silence is deafening. They did not rise to say that they were going to apologize to the people of Forillon because the government put them through hell.

The government did the same thing to the Métis. After Louis Riel was hanged, the Métis became corner people or road allowance people. They were not even recognized as human beings. In places in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, the way to evict them was to burn down their peat moss houses, because they did not pay municipal taxes. That was another form of expropriation by the federal government. It is time for us to come back down to earth and show some humanity.

Consider the deportation of the Acadians. Of course, that was under British rule, before Canada. Consider what happened to them. They were separated and sent to New England, the Falklands and Europe. On some ships, far out at sea, children were thrown overboard so that the Acadians would have no descendants.

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Canada has a very dark history when it comes to expropriation. We took people's property; we uprooted them from land that belonged to them. Forillon is another example of this.

I will not go into detail about the hell the people of Forillon went through and are still going through today. They are still alive and they are watching us today. They are hoping to see something other than a bunch of little Trudeaus who continue to perpetuate the insult against them. I see the serious look on your face, Mr. Speaker, and I am convinced that you are going to talk to the people in your caucus so that they stand up and acknowledge the horror and hell that we made the people of Forillon go through.

There are testimonies. We expropriated these people and burned their houses down right in front of them. When they wanted to go back to their community later to visit one of the three cemeteries in Forillon Park and pray at the graves of their loved ones, we made them pay because they were entering a Canadian national park. Nice!

• (1625)

Is that what Canada is about? Will the caring federalists who so love their big country stand up one day? Will they stand up one day and say that they did something wrong, admit their mistake and present the people of Forillon with tangible, official apologies from the House of Commons? Elderly people had to dig around in their wallets to find change so they could go and pray at their child's or spouse's grave inside Forillon Park. It is one example, but I hope that it raises their awareness and that they will not ask how much it is going to cost the Canadian treasury. If the government members are human beings, they will show it. This is a golden opportunity.

"The government sent a subpoena to my father telling him that his house now belonged to the Queen. He never would have believed that they would come to take him out of there. Well, the RCMP forcibly turned him out of his home", remembers Charles Bouchard, the son of one of the expropriated residents. His father, Édouard, or Eddy, who is deceased, was the last person expropriated to leave his house on the Anse-Au-Griffon trail, one of the areas ceded to the federal government. "He did not want to leave, but he had to resign himself to it. To force him out, the Liberal Government of Canada cut off his telephone and other services."

Charles Bouchard remembers receiving \$1,400 for his 50-acre parcel of land. And his father was given the meagre amount of \$20,000 for the house, other buildings, land and two sugar bushes he owned. That gives us an idea of what transpired, and it did not take place in 1622, but in the 1970s. Few members of this House had not yet been born in 1970. About one hundred of those expropriated rebelled against the paltry compensation from Pierre Elliott Trudeau's Liberal government, and they went to court. They managed to get a little bit more.

Jérémie Dunn has provided another account of the events. The program *Enquête* will be featuring a story about this tonight at 8 p.m. on Radio-Canada. My colleagues should watch it as they will learn a few things. The Radio-Canada program *Tout le monde en parlait* recently discussed the 225 Gaspé families that were expropriated. The program showed the houses before the expropriation and as they were burning. The houses were burnt down.

We understand the situation. It would be very easy to offer a sincere apology. In fact, we are sincere. We must promote all forms of respect, and our sense of humanity must inspire us when dealing with these people who suffered and continue to suffer—and who have suffered enough—because of the horrible act perpetrated by the Liberal Government of Canada against the people expropriated to create Forillon Park.

Mr. Speaker, I am counting on you to convince your people to rectify the situation.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the motion by the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine is asking for the government to issue an apology. It was a Liberal government back in those days that initiated this action. The Bloc motion is asking for the House of Commons to issue an apology instead of the government.

I asked this question earlier this morning and did not get an answer, so perhaps that member could answer my question. Why does the motion call on the House of Commons to issue an apology rather than the government? I am sure there is a good reason for it.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Speaker, the answer to my NDP colleague's question is simple: governments represent the Canadian federal state.

Governments need to answer for decisions that were made, no matter what colour tie the party in power was wearing when the decisions were made.

That is why today we are asking all 308 representatives in the House of Commons to stand and apologize for what the government at the time did in the name of the Canadian state. The government was responsible for the decisions of the Canadian state concerning the Forillon expropriations.

That is why we are asking the members of the House to act humanely and make sure their hearts are in the right place.

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Gatineau. We saw how passionate he was in talking about the expropriations. Quebec has seen a number of expropriations and the member spoke about some of them, but Forillon was one of the largest and most insulting for Quebec. Forty years have come and gone with no formal apology, excluding the one from the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, who announced that a monument would be erected in Forillon Park.

I would like to ask my colleague about the Conservative government's position. Those whose land was expropriated were recently told that a small monument would be erected, and that they should be happy and shut their mouths. They need more; they need a significant apology. I would like to hear my colleague's thoughts on that.

Mr. Richard Nadeau: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles for his question.

This is a heartfelt appeal. We must acknowledge the horrible act that took place and apologize to the people who have suffered.

These people saw all kinds of things happen: their homes, land, lives, communities and even their cemetery were taken away. There was no respect. All that for whose benefit? For Jean Chrétien, who was a minister under Pierre Elliott Trudeau, and who desperately wanted a park in Gaspésie, in Quebec. He was prepared to do anything to get his name in the history books. His name is in the books, but now we want it erased.

The House of Commons could do that by offering a clear, official apology to the people of Forillon Park. These people were living in their village, their region, their community, their bit of land, and they were simply uprooted, removed, torn away, kicked out of their region. For whose benefit? For a minister who desperately wanted a national park in Quebec, a federal park to boast about how beautiful and powerful Canada is.

We destroyed these people and put them through hell. The Canadian government needs to go through purgatory, and the way to do so is to issue an official apology. I know that people understand that language.

• (1635)

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Bloc opposition day motion. The Bloc's rationale for wording the motion the way it did, demanding that Parliament express the apology, is well placed given that expecting the government to do it is likely never to happen. We saw that today in the few opportunities government members took to speak to the motion.

They have given 20 minute speeches, and in questions and comments have been asked repeatedly whether they are voting for the motion, and they cannot answer that question. That would indicate to me that they are probably not supportive of the motion. Were they in favour of it, I expect they would be eager to let us all know at this point.

The fact that the three opposition parties are supporting the motion guarantees that the motion will pass and at the end of the day, the Bloc will get what it wanted in terms of getting it through. The apology will be made, regardless of the reluctance on the part of the Conservative government.

Conservative members have indicated that they have been quite forthcoming with apologies since they have come to power and cited several examples. It is a mystery to me why they would be reluctant to vote for this apology, when they have been fairly forthcoming in other situations.

In terms of the Liberal members, I know the member for Honoré-Mercier spoke this morning. I believe he was the second speaker. He made it clear right up front that he was apologizing on behalf of the Liberal Party for its 27 years of neglect on this file. But he did not indicate, at least I did not hear it, whether that apology came from his leader or whether it was his personal opinion that an apology would be in order.

He also did not indicate, nor has anybody in the House so far that I have heard, what the Liberal government actually did during those 27 years to solve this problem. I would have expected that the government, which is always eager to take a whack at the Liberals,

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would have come prepared and, rather than giving us vivid descriptions of the flora and fauna of the park, would have provided details.

If the Liberals had done nothing for 27 years, the government would have been keen to point that out. I waited to hear that and did not hear that being expressed by government members.

Their positioning so far is very curious, but the new member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette will be making his first major presentation in the House today and will be taking questions. I am sure that the member for Winnipeg North, myself and others, will be very eager to ask him whether he has the answer to the secret that we have been waiting for all day as to whether the government is going to support this motion and make it unanimous. That is, in fact, the right thing to do.

As I had indicated, the Bloc opposition day motion calls for an apology to the former residents of Forillon National Park whose property was expropriated in 1969. A little later I will get into an explanation of many other expropriations, including in my home province of Manitoba, that occurred during that period of time. It certainly was a time when there was a lot of activity in the establishment of new parks, both federal and provincial, as was the case in Manitoba.

In 1969, the Quebec Union Nationale government led by Jean-Jacques Bertrand and the Pearson federal government agreed to create a new national park in the Gaspé region. I believe that was the first national park in Quebec, as one of the Bloc members mentioned. Between 1969 and 1972, over 1,000 residents, about 225 families, living in the area had their properties expropriated to make way for the park.

• (1640)

A similar activity happened in Manitoba with Hecla Island. In reading of the histories of the two, they are very similar and the time frame is reasonably similar as well. According to the histories, it was a sign of the times. People were moving in to the cities. The high school in Hecla was closed down. I think the schools were closing down because there were not enough school-aged children.

It is an island, and it has to be kept open. The causeway had not been built at that time, so it required winter roads and attention. The population dropped and there were fewer and fewer school-aged children.

The people on Hecla Island were promoting the idea of economic development through the establishment of a provincial park. I believe that happened in this situation as well. One of the speakers earlier on today pointed out that there was an expectation that the Quebec and federal governments sold the people on the idea that if they turned the area into a provincial park, there would be jobs.

Like what happened on Hecla Island, the jobs did not materialize. People were stuck selling their property. In the case of Hecla Island, they were not all expropriated because a fairly large number of them voluntarily sold. When they sold, it was sold at low levels and people had to move to places like Winnipeg where property values were triple.

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The landowners were at a very big disadvantage and they started having second thoughts. Those who waited to be expropriated, who were fewer in number, ended up getting more for their properties. That led to a lot of acrimony between these groups.

What subsequently happened was a later Conservative government attempted to resettle the people. That ended up in a big mess as well. In fact, police and fraud charges were brought against several people for forgery and so on. I will get to that issue later.

The 220 families were living in the area and had their properties expropriated to make way for the park. Once again, this has to be pointed out. A member, who I get along with very well, has committee hearings right now, but he gave the impression that people were not compensated.

My information is that the residents were compensated for their properties. However, when they had to move, they had to start over. They had to buy properties. They could not replace their property at the price they received. They were at a disadvantage from day one. They were living under this assumption that somehow there would be all these jobs, which never materialized.

The former residents have been calling for this formal apology for 40 years now. We have asked the question many times about where the Liberals were on this. Once again, I would have expected it to be wall-to-wall Conservative speakers today, dumping on the Liberals for their lack of action for 27 years and being eager to be onside. It really is a mystery to me as to why they are holding back.

Parks Canada has created an interactive exhibit in one of the expropriated homes, detailing the experiences of some families that were forced to leave. Commemorative plaques have been placed around the park where the communities once were. All of this is very well and good. It has taken a lot of years for Parks Canada to do it. It is something it did not have to do, but it was the right thing to do.

The government has announced that in 2011 it will issue special entry passes for families up to third generation. Our critic indicated that this should be expanded to five generations. It does not just include this park. I believe it includes all the parks in the system. Those passes are to be given to people up to third generation whose principle residence was expropriated for the national parks or national historic sites.

● (1645)

The member for Gatineau indicated that people who wanted to go back to visit their ancestors in the graveyard would have to line up and pay to get into the park. I believe there are three graveyards in this park. It is hard to comprehend.

Eligibility for lifetime passes would be based on existing historic records, if any still exist. A committee would determine whether someone could get a pass.

These committees are part of the reason the Conservatives got into trouble in Manitoba with the resettlement of Hecla. They had a committee, but some of the people on the committee ended up getting them into trouble, as I had indicated before.

Despite expected difficulties in getting these passes, many former residents see this as a promising first step.

A petition from 750 former residents and their descendants was presented to Minister Prentice in 2010. I join my colleague from Thunder Bay—Superior North in complimenting Minister Prentice who did a very good job in the many difficult spots he found himself in with that government.

The 750 former residents were asking for free park access for five generations instead of the three the government was promising. There are three cemeteries in the park. Most of the generations of 225 family ancestors are buried there and most buildings in the park were burned down or bulldozed in the creation of the park. However, the ones that remained were preserved.

We see this as a relatively non-controversial motion. We feel the apology should have a very limited financial implication because court cases have already ruled the expropriations were within the law.

There are expropriations all over. Governments have to expropriate. Duff Roblin, when he was premier in Manitoba, had a floodway built, and he has almost approached sainthood for having done so. It saved the province of Manitoba billions of dollars. Just recently the floodway was expanded, costing quite a bit more money. However, it is expected to save a lot of grief in a few months from now when the flood waters are at historical highs. To build that floodway, he had to expropriate.

Let us not delude ourselves. Governments of any stripe involved in construction projects, like a floodway to save billions of dollars in damage, have to expropriate, but that is a different situation than a national park.

As with Hecla, the fact is the government basically killed the park when it got rid of the people. There needs to be activity in the park with people living there. Then the Conservatives went full circle and decided, in 1998, they were would try to bring people back and repopulate it.

How nice is that? We go to all the trouble of expropriating and forcing people out of the park, then 15 years later decide to try and bring them all back to restore the mess that was created in the first place.

We have seen all kinds of inconsistencies with governments over the years, for example, the nursing shortage. The Conservative government fired 1,000 nurses in Manitoba at a time when the population was aging and we needed the nurses.

● (1650)

The member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel talked about the Mirabel airport. The best brains in the country developed the concept for a new airport in Mirabel and expropriated all the land and what happened? It turned into a big boondoggle. At least the Conservative government did the right thing back then and gave the land back to the original people who wanted it.

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The government did the right thing then, so we want it to do the right thing in this case. It is not that difficult to join with the rest of the members of the House. The motion will pass anyway, so why not make it unanimous? Why not do the right thing and admit that governments can make mistakes. No one is above admitting a mistake and correcting the problems that come about as a result.

In the four minutes I have left I want to deal with some of the issues coming out of the Manitoba situation. Other members have talked about how this parallels situations in their provinces. It was not a federal park in the case of Manitoba, although I believe the government tried at one point to make it a federal park. It was a provincial park. Many articles have been written on this because it was a long-standing saga and it mirrors the situation with Forillon Park. It is the same story but a different environment.

Interestingly enough, this happened during the same time period. We are not talking 20 or 30 years separation. We are talking about the same time that the park in Quebec was being set up. There was the park in New Brunswick as well that had a more violent end to it. All three of these situations happened at the same time.

The settlement on the Hecla Islands was founded by Icelanders in 1876. There is just too much information for me to try to get it in my remaining two minutes so I will try to cut it short.

The island had a population of 500 people who were served by two schools and two stores. A few people eked out a living on farms plagued by poor soil conditions. Most islanders were commercial fishermen and captains who took to the lake to earn an adequate livelihood.

The island's fortune began a downward spiral in the following decade, which resulted in many fleeing their communities to places such as Gimli and Winnipeg to seek better opportunities. In 1966 the last remaining school closed, giving islanders another reason to abandon their homes. The islanders could no longer support themselves as an isolated community. They were served by an ice road in the winter and a tiny ferry when there was open water. The causeway was not completed until 1972.

I want to make this clear for the member for Selkirk—Interlake who put some misinformation on the record this morning. When the NDP became the government in 1969, it inherited the Walter Weir Conservative government's two-year old plan. The Conservatives had already been planning to turn Hecla into a provincial park for two years. The process was well under way.

When Premier Schreyer looked at the plan devised by the bureaucrats, he did not like what he saw. The bureaucrats wanted all the people gone. The premier, however, envisioned a park with some of the original inhabitants and he proposed to expropriate the land for needed infrastructure and any private homes. To have no one living there was a flight from common sense he believed.

Evidently there was a plan to leaseback, but very few people took advantage of the province's proposal because the island was economically depressed, according to a federal-provincial rural agreement. Of the 99 properties expropriated, 56 of them were voluntarily given up, 18 were eventually voluntarily ceded after negotiations, 17 cases were decided by the courts and 3 properties were not considered for expropriation.

● (1655)

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the NDP for supporting our motion today. I believe that he has the sensitivity to understand what happened to the people of Forillon who were expropriated. I would like to come back to a point that he raised, which is that the people were compensated for their expropriation.

Being compensated is all well and good, but these people were compensated according to the conditions imposed by the federal government. In addition, we are talking about farms that had been passed down from generation to generation and were part of the family heritage in these rural areas. The government threw 225 families into a state of major social turmoil. That is what we must consider. It is not just a simple matter of property being expropriated and compensation being given in return. Does this not give members further reason to vote in favour of our motion today?

[English]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. Whatever compensation was given, whether in this case or in the Manitoba case, we are talking about land that, at least in Manitoba, was in an economically depressed area and the schools had closed down so the landowners were given almost nothing. When the government expropriated the land, it brought in real estate appraisers who said that the land was not worth anything. Families were given \$5,000. Where could a family relocate and buy a house for \$5,000 in the town of Gimli or the city of Winnipeg? It just could not happen.

In Manitoba's case, 99 properties were expropriated and, of those, 56 were voluntarily given up, which means that 56 landowners thought the compensation was fair when they signed on. Seventeen cases were decided by the courts.

The landowners believed the government's story that somehow things would get better and they would have all these jobs. It was sort of a false promise, as it turned out, but the people actually believed that they would have a brighter future and that they would get all these jobs but the jobs did not materialize. They did not materialize in the Quebec situation and they did not materialize in the Manitoba situation. By the way, the jobs still have not materialized because this saga in Manitoba continues after all these years.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am a very privileged Canadian who has been to Forillon National Park. I spent a week there camping with my family in the mid-1990s. We enjoyed our time there so much so that we postponed our tour of Prince Edward Island to stay a little longer and enjoy the wonderful environment.

Some years before I was there, the federal government had made a considerable investment in Forillon Park because of the Canada Games that took place in Quebec. The government put in swimming pools. There is a hiking trail that goes out to the lighthouse. There is a museum that has the story of the cod fishing that took place around the Gaspé years ago. There are a number of walkways that go down through the park to some beautiful waterfalls. So jobs have been provided.

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Has my colleague been there?

• (1700)

Mr. Jim Maloway: Mr. Speaker, the member totally misses the whole point of the Bloc motion. I would suggest that she read the Bloc motion. The motion is asking for Parliament to apologize to the residents of the park whose property was expropriated. She is talking about visiting the park 30 years after the fact. We are waiting for some direction from the government.

Who is in charge over there? There has to be somebody over there who is in charge of that crew who can say that yes, we are in favour of the motion or we are not in favour of the motion. How complicated is this? We have had speaker after speaker stand and talk about flora and fauna and talk about what is in the park but never once deal with the issue at hand, which is an apology for what was done by the government 40 years ago.

Could the member not read the motion and understand what it is all about?

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have been following the debate very closely and as a result of that I actually want to follow up on the last comment made by my friend and colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

The fascinating thing, both about the motion and about the debate that has been happening here in the House all day, is that we really do not have a sense of what the government members will be doing on this motion. As the member for Elmwood—Transcona has expressed, they have gone all over the place in the debate. They have expressed their support for parks. They have said how lovely Canada's national parks are, which is all really wonderful, except we have motion before us that actually puts the question to the House about whether we support an apology for the expropriation and to the people who have been expropriated and their families.

The other thing I have not been able to figure out in the debate is why the motion before us requests an apology from Parliament. We may well be in a position where the Liberals would support an apology. In fact, the member for Honoré-Mercier, earlier on in the debate, expressed an apology on behalf of the Liberal Party, which is appropriate since it was the Trudeau government that began expropriations. As it is a Bloc motion, obviously Bloc members will be supporting it and we in the NDP will be supporting it.

However, would that apology be enough? It may pass in the House with the support of those three parties, but will it be enough if the government actually votes against the motion?

I wonder if the member could explain why this motion asks for an apology from Parliament as opposed to an apology from the government specifically, so that the members opposite would have to take a firm position and be accountable for that position.

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, it was a very wise decision on the part of the Bloc members when they crafted their motion to make certain that it was a resolution from Parliament, as opposed to a demand on the government to issue an apology. They probably knew what would happen here today, which is that government members would stand and basically talk about flora and fauna and all kinds of other positives about the park but not say at all whether they agree with the apology.

This was a beautiful opportunity, which the Conservatives never seem to miss when it comes to taking a whack at the Liberals, to spend the whole day taking all their speaking spots and levelling the guns at the Liberals for their 27 years of neglect on the issue, but they did not do that. They want to talk about flora and fauna but not what they will do in terms of the vote on this particular motion.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Luc Desnoyers (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ): Madam Speaker, the Conservative member was talking about investments and the creation of employment in Forillon Park. The federal government had indeed promised that 3,000 jobs would be created, including 700 permanent positions, and that the park would attract over 600,000 visitors and tourists. In 2005, it was noted that jobs had been created for only 35 people per year, or the equivalent of 70 jobs including part-time positions, and that the park attracted approximately 146,000 visitors per year. This is a far cry from the number of jobs and visitors promised.

I would like to hear more about what the hon. member has to say regarding the comparison between Manitoba and Forillon Park.

[*English*]

Mr. Jim Maloway: Madam Speaker, this was a perfect opportunity for the Conservatives to toot their horn and indicate all the bad things that the Liberals failed to do over the last 27 years but they failed to do that. I can only come to the conclusion that they think that somehow this issue will go away.

After all these years, these people are still determined to get justice from this Parliament. If this issue was going to go away, they would have forgotten about it. If they were happy with the jobs that were provided and with the situation that developed, we would not be debating this issue right now.

I suggest that the Conservatives bring themselves to current reality and join us and support the motion.

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Madam Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the motion by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine concerning Forillon National Park. Right off the bat I will apologize for my Manitoba high school French and hope my friends across the way will indulge me.

This is almost my first speech in the House, as I have said a few words before, but I would like to thank all hon. members for the wonderful and warm reception that I have received, members opposite as well. I do not think that will last very long but, for the time being, it has been truly wonderful. I also thank members opposite for their help, as well my friends on my side.

I know we all think Canada is a wonderful country, but in my case it has a special poignancy for me. Both my parents, Joe and Ida Sopuck, were born in eastern Europe and came to Canada as immigrants in the 1920s, arriving at Pier 21. For those who have not been there, it is a very moving experience to visit it. I and all my colleagues in the House can appreciate what a wonderful land of opportunity Canada is. Not only is it a land of opportunity, it is a wonderful land with beautiful landscapes.

I have not been to Forillon National Park, but I understand it was created in the 1970s to protect and showcase examples of one of Canada's most unique and wonderful regions.

However, I have experience with local people and their relationships with national parks. My constituency has within its boundaries Riding Mountain National Park. Therefore, I will be pleased to answer members' questions when they want to learn more about Manitoba.

I happen to live right next to a national park. My wife and I have 480 acres of land about five kilometres away from the park. I live in the middle of a farming and resource community and my neighbours make a good living off the land right next to a national park.

I appreciate the hon. member's concerns for families who were required to leave their lands when the Forillon National Park was created in 1970. We had a similar experience near Riding Mountain National Park. We had generations of people who had come from faraway lands and first nations communities who made good livings in the area and they, too, were forced out of the area.

The riding that I represent, Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, is a very large riding consisting of 52,000 square kilometres. It has a number of provincial parks, as well as a national park. I would like to thank the constituents of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette for electing me and placing their trust in me.

I know that my constituents who live around Riding Mountain National Park and the constituents who live around Forillon National Park would have a lot in common. Leaving aside the bitterness about national parks, they have a rural way of life based on natural resource harvesting and a deep concern for the land and the landscape.

The people in my constituency have a deep and abiding stewardship ethic. My entire constituency is covered with what are called conservation districts where people look after the land and make a living from it at the same time. There are various conservation organizations that work very hard to keep our landscape in great shape.

Agriculture is the backbone of my constituency. What has developed over time is something that I like to refer to as the culture of agriculture. Not only do people in my constituency care for the land but they strongly care for family and community. We have logging, commercial fishing, trapping, tourism and a budding oil industry.

The point I am making in terms of Forillon National Park and Riding Mountain National Park, is that I agree that the people of Forillon National Park have an issue with the park, as do my constituents, and I deeply sympathize with them.

●(1710)

Riding Mountain National Park started out in the late 1800s as a dominion forest reserve and became a national park in the 1930s. Here is where the story gets interesting. In the 1970s, under the Liberal government of the day, I will continue the great tradition, one by one the resource uses in the park were phased out. First, the logging was phased out. Then the grazing was phased out. Then the haying was phased out. Not a bit of compensation was ever paid to

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the people who were eliminated from that park. Whole farms were destroyed. Family farm operations were destroyed because of that.

I have a very deep sympathy for what happened in Quebec with the creation of this national park. I do agree with my colleague from Elmwood—Transcona, when he said that we cannot create parks in this way any more. I can assure members that one of my jobs as an MP will be to look out for the interests of my constituents who live around Riding Mountain National Park. I do intend to speak with the Minister of the Environment and the parliamentary secretary on a regular basis about this particular issue.

In conclusion, I would like to thank members for this opportunity. However, let us never forget that rural Canada is the backbone of this country. One of the things that I am very gratified to see happen in the last few years is how our natural resources industries are carrying the entire country. We as a country have an opportunity to have thriving natural resources industries: agriculture, forestry, mining, fishing and so on. We have the opportunity to have beautiful parks and wild places conserved. I think we can do both.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the supply proceedings.

The question is on the motion.

[*English*]

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Call in the members.

And the bells having rung:

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The vote will be deferred until Monday, after government orders.

●(1715)

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Madam Speaker, I ask that you see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Private Members' Business

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will proceed to the consideration of private members' business, as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES ACT

The House resumed from November 3 consideration of the motion that Bill C-530, An Act to amend the Northwest Territories Act (borrowing limits), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Shelly Glover (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak against this somewhat disrespectful, paternal and unilateral NDP proposal.

Before discussing this proposal, I would like to emphasize that our Conservative government has been a strong supporter of the Northwest Territories and all territories since taking office in 2006.

Indeed, federal support for territories under our Conservative government is at an all-time high. For the territories, this totals almost \$3 billion in 2010-11, a significant increase of nearly \$800 million since 2005-06 under the former Liberal government.

This long-term growing support helps ensure that territories have the resources required to provide essential public services, such as health care, post-secondary education, and other services that families depend upon.

We have done much more to benefit the north as part of our ambitious northern strategy. For instance, we created the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, headquartered in Iqaluit, with district offices located in Whitehorse and Yellowknife.

This landmark new regional development agency has a specific mandate to deliver federal programs specifically tailored to the needs of northern Canada. This is helping ensure a stronger more dynamic economy for northern families and businesses by directly empowering northern workers and businesses to take advantage of the resources and opportunities that exist in our own backyard.

I note that the creation of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency was very well received in the north. For instance, the Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce applauded the move by stating:

This is a huge step forward that will place us on an equal footing with the rest of the country.

Regrettably, the NDP member for Western Arctic voted against this landmark development. This followed his equally stunning opposition to increased tax relief for his constituents, when he voted against increasing the northern residents deduction. Little wonder more and more northerners are becoming more and more disillusioned with the NDP.

For many, this was cemented with the NDP's decision to ignore and punish northerners by rescuing the flawed long gun registry.

Today's paternal proposal will only further contribute to that disappointment with the NDP among northerners.

Let me be clear from the outset, what the NDP is proposing here is an outmoded and paternalistic approach to federal-territorial relations that is more characteristic of a long ago era. For what the NDP would do with today's proposal is unilaterally have the federal Parliament in distant Ottawa impose a new borrowing limit framework on the Northwest Territories through a private member's bill.

The NDP would do this with absolutely no consultation with, and no input from, the territorial government itself. The member did mention to me just before this speech that he has since spoken with someone, however, to my knowledge, I cannot confirm that.

This is no way to address federal-territorial issues. This is not consistent with modern federal-territorial relations. More importantly, this is not consistent with our Conservative government's collaborative approach to federal-territorial relations.

We have worked and will work in partnership with our territorial partners when addressing issues that directly impact them, such as borrowing limits. Indeed, in a concrete demonstration of that, last year our Conservative government actually initiated a joint review of borrowing limits with the territorial governments.

As I mentioned, this review is underway and, unlike this flawed NDP proposal, we are focusing on the borrowing limits of all three territories, not just one territory in isolation.

I find it troubling and bizarre, frankly, for the NDP to suggest that Yukon and Nunavut be excluded for a review of territorial borrowing limits. To endorse this questionable NDP proposal would toss aside this joint, collaborative effort for a unilateral approach imposed by the federal Parliament in Ottawa.

I would hope all parliamentarians would have more respect for Canada's territories than to endorse such a dismissive course of action. I ask parliamentarians to respect the ongoing review. Respect and allow the collaborative and positive work with all three territorial governments to continue. Not surprisingly, there has been exceedingly little support in the north for the NDP's proposal since it was unveiled last year.

● (1720)

I note and underline for parliamentarians that the Northwest Territories government has refused to lend its support for it. Even more damning, many other regional politicians are publicly questioning the NDP's unilateral action here.

I want to share with this Parliament in Ottawa what MLAs in the Northwest Territories are actually saying about this NDP proposal word for word, as reported in their *Hansard* of last November.

First, I ask you to listen to Dave Mackenzie, MLA for Kam Lake. He said:

Private Members' Business

—I'm surprised that our Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic is down in Ottawa trumpeting Bill C-530...The residents of this Territory would like to know who gave him his marching orders or, Mr. Speaker, is he marching to the beat of his own drummer?...To my knowledge, our government has never talked about a percentage of expenditures as a debt limit. The federal government is currently analyzing and reviewing the debt limits of all three northern territories. Please, let's let them do that work.

Here are the words of Robert Hawkins, MLA for Yellowknife Centre:

Who had given the Member of Parliament marching orders to act on our behalf?... Who has he talked to in this particular government? My concern is, of course, he has not talked to me and I've looked around and only heard of one person he has specifically spoken to, and I'm not sure if that was any more than water-cooler talk at the time.

Finally, listen to what the NWT's own finance minister, Michael Miltenberger, had to say:

—we have indicated to the Member of Parliament for the Western Arctic that it's his right to pursue a Private Member's Bill...But we have made it clear that we have embarked upon a process with the federal Finance department and the other two territories to review our borrowing limit. That's the process we're engaged in. That's the process we are committed to. That's what we are paying attention to. That's where we see the issues with our concern of the borrowing limit being addressed and it's the one we're fully engaged in...The Member of Parliament has a track that he's on but we're not involved in that.

Before concluding, I would like to take a few moments to delve in more detail into some of the NDP proposal's many shortcomings from the policy side.

Mainly, the proposal would set the NWT's borrowing limits at 70% of its estimated revenues for a given fiscal year, beyond which governor in council approval would be required.

This sounds simple enough, but there is one glaring problem: the NDP does not speak for the elected NWT government.

How do we know the NWT government actually supports a 70% limit? How do we know they do not support maintaining the current limit? Or, getting rid of the limit altogether?

Again, we have no idea as this made-in-Ottawa NDP proposal was concocted with no formal consultation with the NWT.

The member for Western Arctic's paternal and unilateral NDP approach to relations with NWT and the other territories is something Parliament must reject.

I ask Parliament to stand up for a more principled and appropriate approach on this issue by supporting the ongoing review being conducted collaboratively between the federal and territorial governments.

• (1725)

Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP): Madam Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity this afternoon to speak to this very important motion by my colleague from the Northwest Territories, the member for Western Arctic. I say that because I have watched him work over the last two sessions of the House as he has represented so ably and actively his constituency, all those who live there and all those who govern that wonderful territory. I have nothing but admiration for the efforts he has made to gather all of the background documents, statistics, and information that were necessary to place the bill in front of us here today.

In the member's own words, from the speech he made introducing the bill, "It is one of the keys to building a better north, a more prosperous north, a north that can better share its wealth with the rest of Canada".

I am disappointed in the speech that was given by the member for Saint Boniface a few minutes ago, particularly the way she maligned and tried to lessen the importance of the work the member is doing and to somehow suggest it is less than in keeping and in tune with what the Northwest Territories wants for itself. She had some misinformation in her presentation. For example, she mentioned a member of the Northwest Territory government as Dave Mackenzie when in fact that member is Dave Ramsay.

I know that the member for Western Arctic has the support of the Government of the Northwest Territories and he is working in consort with them as they work with the government on devolution. I was there when he spoke to the finance minister, Michael Miltenberger, and I know of the support and enthusiasm of that very important member of that government for this initiative and how he sees this as adding to its ability to make those investments that will be necessary if it is actually going to be able to take advantage of the devolution that is taking place.

I want to speak for a few minutes about the member for Western Arctic to make sure people understand that this is a member who did not just by chance somehow arrive here, through some fluke of an election. The member has worked long and hard. He was born and raised in the Northwest Territories, knows the Northwest Territories, knows the people and communities of the Northwest Territories intimately, having served for over 10 years as the mayor of the wonderful town of Fort Smith. He served on the green funds council of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities which worked with him to better the lot of municipalities in the territories. He served as a special adviser on energy to the premier of the Northwest Territories. He also served as a board member on the Northern River Basins study and as a federal government representative on the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board. The member who has introduced the bill before us that we debate here today also served as a former chair of the constitutional development steering committee for the Western Arctic, and as co-chair of that committee, where the member learned how passionate northerners are about increasing their autonomy and becoming a jurisdiction equal to the provinces.

Bill C-530 is a small but very important step in this increased autonomy. It is something he has thought long and hard about, worked very hard on, and believes in passionately. He has consulted with and has the support of some very important officials in the Northwest Territories government.

• (1730)

As background for the people listening, in case they were put off by the member for Saint Boniface in her diatribe before us here today, the Northwest Territories has a government which evolved from a committee of bureaucrats at Indian and Northern Affairs to a full-fledged, democratically elected government with full ministerial responsibility.

Private Members' Business

From 1897 to 1905, the Northwest Territories had an elected government resembling a province, but in 1905, after the provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta were created, what was left of the Northwest Territories slipped back to the status of a colony. The member wants to remove it from that. For the next 60 years a commissioner and an appointed territorial council ran the territory from Ottawa.

In the 1950s, a return to an elected government for the territories began. In 1951, the Northwest Territories Act was changed to permit three elected members from the Mackenzie district to join the four appointed members and the commissioner on the territorial council. At this time the council also began to alternate its sittings between Ottawa and the Northwest Territories.

Between 1955 and 1966 the powers of the territorial council were gradually increased, and by 1966, elected members formed the majority on the council.

In 1967, the administration of the Northwest Territories moved from Ottawa to Yellowknife. In 1975, the territorial council became a fully elected body and its member began to call it the legislative assembly the following year.

In 1965, following consultations across the territories, the federal Carrothers Commission recommended a gradual increase in territorial responsibility through the setting up of a working territorial government. The Carrothers report had a lot of influence. In 1967, Yellowknife was made the capital of the Northwest Territories and the first commissioner to be permanently based in the territories was appointed.

Many province-like responsibilities were taken over from the federal government in the following years. This included such things as education, housing and social services. Other responsibilities like health care, forest management and fire suppression were taken over in the 1980s. Crown lands, oil, gas and mineral resources continued to be administered by the federal government.

Responsible government gradually developed after 1975. In that year the first two MLAs were appointed to the commissioner's executive committee. The executive committee later became the executive council or cabinet of the territories.

In 1986, Commissioner Parker turned over his last cabinet responsibilities to elected MLAs, a step that was authorized by the minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development under the Northwest Territories Act. This step marks full, responsible government.

Since the 1980s, the government of the Northwest Territories and the other territorial governments have gradually won the right to attend federal-provincial meetings along with the provinces. The GNWT now also participates in the western premiers conference and the annual premiers conferences. However, territorial governments are not counted for purposes of a formal amendment to the Constitution of Canada under part 5 of the Constitution Act, 1982.

Why the need for Bill C-530? The requirement that a mature government, like the Northwest Territories, must come to Ottawa, cap in hand, requesting permission to borrow is a holdover from the

days when the territories were administered by a committee of bureaucrats from Indian and Northern Affairs.

The territories government has a long history of balanced budgets and being responsible. Today it prudently administers \$1 billion-plus budget. It is time Canada treated the Northwest Territories like the mature jurisdiction it is.

I urge members of the House, as they do all other provinces and jurisdictions in this great land, to trust this territory. Trust the member of Parliament for Western Arctic who has been sent by the people of the Northwest Territories to this place to speak on their behalf, as he does so well, day in and day out in this place. He asks us to allow the territory to have borrowing power so it can make the investments it needs and the infrastructure that will be necessary when devolution finally and ultimately takes place.

• (1735)

I hope that members of the House will ignore what was said by the member for Saint Boniface previously and look at *Hansard* to see what the member for Western Arctic said when he introduced this bill and what I have said here today, and vote in favour of this important initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The hon. member for Western Arctic, for the sponsor's right of reply.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP): Madam Speaker, I will comment briefly about my participation with the Government of the Northwest Territories prior to my mission with respect to this bill. This bill was given to the Government of the Northwest Territories. I attended meetings with the premier of the Northwest Territories and the finance minister.

When we talk about what is going on here in terms of the dialogue over this bill, we must remember that the Government of the Northwest Territories has a gun to its head with respect to an improved borrowing limit. The NWT legislative assembly has talked about this issue. If the Northwest Territories does not get its borrowing limit approved because all of its borrowing powers are taken up with self-liquidating loans. Most of it is self-liquidating, but it still counts against its borrowing limits. This is a problem.

Under my bill, the Northwest Territories would be able to borrow up to 70% of its estimated annual revenue. This would give it an ongoing increase as the government increases in size.

My bill proposes a process that is a common practice in other jurisdictions that exist under legal statutes in Canada, like municipalities exist in provinces. That is where the Government of the Northwest Territories is at. All of its authority comes out of the NWT Act.

Discussions are underway with the territorial government concerning the borrowing provisions in the Northwest Territories Act. Unless these discussions lead to an amendment to the act, they are nothing more than a continuation of the current colonial process. The federal government does not have the authority to give the Northwest Territories more autonomy with the process it has entered into. The NWT Act needs to be amended. My bill, taken in a non-partisan fashion, would provide that authority to the federal government if it wants to participate in it.

The parliamentary secretary argued in the first hour of debate that my bill could not be supported as the government prefers to treat the three territories the same. That is not a defensible position considering that in the last two weeks the Minister of Indian Affairs signed a devolution agreement in principle with the Government of the Northwest Territories while refusing to talk with Nunavut about a similar devolution agreement. Yukon has not expressed the need for a change to its borrowing limit. We all have different requirements. We are three different territories, three completely different jurisdictions.

It has never been clear to me why the federal government must approve territorial borrowing. The letter from the Parliamentary Budget Officer indicated quite clearly:

With respect to Bill C-530, our review indicates there will be no incremental costs arising from adoption of these legislative amendments.

This is not an issue of cost to the federal government. This is a political issue about the nature of the type of control that the federal government holds over the territories.

With a gun to his head, what can our premier say to the government if we do not go ahead with this? The NWT is in a very difficult position. If we can come to grips with what the real issues are, what the real needs are for our three territories, then we could come to better solutions for the people of the north.

There is no solution for the people of the north other than amendments to existing legislation. Without this bill, the Conservative government does not have the legs to do what it needs to do for the Northwest Territories.

I plead with all members to send the bill to committee where officials of the Government of the Northwest Territories could tell us about its borrowing limit problems. The NWT government can tell parliamentarians where it stands. By approving this bill at second reading we would accomplish that. We would give a voice to the Government of the Northwest Territories here in Parliament.

I plead with all members to support this bill and get it to committee.

• (1740)

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The time provided for debate has expired.

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.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those in favour of the motion, will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 16, 2011, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

CHILD CARE

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Madam Speaker, last week I had an opportunity to ask a question in the House about early learning and child care. We have talked about that a number of times in the House.

What made that such an important question was that at that very time the government's human resources department had a lawyer in a tribunal citing evidence that cast disrepute upon the extended parental leave that was brought in by the Liberal government of 2000. It was cited as evidence.

My questions for the Minister of Human Resources were: Was that the position of the government now and was that a new part of its tough-on-families agenda?

I did not get an answer to that question. What I and all Canadians did get were insulting comments from the minister who suggested that not just the Liberals but also parents who use child care were not taking the best care of their children. I believe that was particularly insulting to many Canadians.

The issues of early learning and child care go far beyond parental leave. As members in the House will know, a study by UNICEF ranked Canada as tied for last position out of 25 nations on the 10 major benchmarks for early learning and care.

Adjournment Proceedings

The fact that the government believes learning begins at the age of six and not before is a woeful condemnation of the government's record and is somewhat crazy. In fact, learning probably begins *in utero*, I would suspect. Certainly, as soon as children are born they begin to learn. Anyone who has children knows that, and we are not doing a very good job in this country. We have wonderful parents and are fortunate to have fabulous people working in early learning and care.

I had the chance to visit Bow Valley College a few weeks ago and meet a class of many new Canadians and others who are studying early learning and child care in preparation for providing this service to Canadians. We have great people in the system. We are just not treating them with enough respect. We are not putting enough money into training and accreditation. We need a national system of early learning and care. We have gone through all of the reasons why it is good for families and society, but on occasion the economic argument gets lost.

I want to inform the House of a 2009 government-funded study conducted by the Centre for Spatial Economics. Economist Robert Fairholm found that investing in child care provided the greatest economic benefit of all sectors of the Canadian economy by being the single biggest job creator. Investing each million dollars in child care would create 39.54 jobs, almost 10 times the number of jobs generated by a million dollars invested in construction spending. In other words, a billion dollar investment would create 40,000 jobs in this country. Every dollar invested in child care would increase the economy's output by approximately \$2.30, meaning the sector has one of the highest GDP impacts of all the major sectors.

This is not just an issue of educating our children and allowing them to be more socially adjusted. That is part of it. However, this is an economic argument as well.

I want to quote from the National Crime Prevention Council of Canada:

Studies have repeatedly shown that high quality ECE reduces the delinquency rate among disadvantaged children. It also increases their likelihood of completing high school and obtaining employment—which are strong protective factors against criminality.

On any measure we can use, investing in our children and in early learning and care, or investing in the future of Canada, pays off not only socially and for the individual family but also for the country of Canada from an economic as well as a social point of view. That is why it is so important to people.

For the parliamentary secretary, is it the position of the Government of Canada to get rid of that one-year parental benefit and go back to six months?

• (1745)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is no question that this particular government has looked after families and people who have children. In fact, we invested \$5.9 billion in 2009-10 alone in early learning and child care, the largest investment by a federal government in Canadian history. We actually walk the walk.

The Liberal Party and the hon. member have made promises of all kinds, but have never delivered. They said that with one more term in office, they would have delivered, but they did not. They had 13 years to do it and they failed.

The question he also asked of the minister was with respect to child care, and the minister was quite clear about the differences between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. Our Conservative government believes that families are the foundation of our great country. When it comes to child care, there is no question that there is a clear distinction between the Conservatives and the Liberals.

I know they would like to impose a one-size-fits-all national daycare system. That is what they have been talking about a lot in the last number of days. When it comes to children, they believe government knows best. They do not care what parents want. They do not think parents are capable of making their own decisions when it comes to their children. Our Conservative government could not disagree more with that.

We believe that parents know best when it comes to how to raise their children. That is why our government is providing them with choice in child care. We support all choices, whether for the mom and dad staying at home, institutional daycare, grandparents, or trusted neighbours. What matters is that parents are the ones who choose the child care that works for their families, not big government.

Through the universal child care benefit, our government is providing \$100 a month, \$1,200 per year, for every child under the age of six. That benefit goes to 1.5 million families on behalf of over two million children every year. Families appreciate that. Just ask any family. People in many small rural communities get thousands of dollars in that regard.

I know the Liberal Party wants tax increases for businesses, but our tax cuts mean that the average family of four has over \$3,000 more in its pocket than under the previous government, not to mention our enhancements to the national child benefit, the child tax credit and a number of other initiatives that have put more dollars in parents' pockets.

Our record is clear. Our Conservative government has done more for families than any other government in Canadian history. We take concrete steps, unlike the Liberals who are good on promises but short on delivery. In fact, in every election since 1993, they have promised a national daycare system but have not delivered on it.

Former Liberal deputy prime minister Sheila Copps had this to say about the failed Liberal record on daycare. She stated:

The last [Liberal] agreement saw some provinces rake in millions without creating one day-care space.... The Liberal plan is a cash cow for government while families are cash poor.

That is one Liberal speaking to another Liberal. Even current Liberal MPs do not agree with the Liberal leader's plan for daycare. The Liberal member for Markham—Unionville had this to say:

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I am strongly opposed to any new national day care program with the cost running into the tens of billions of dollars. Given economic realities and competing demands on government resources, these are programs we cannot afford.

That was the fact then and is the fact today. I know the Liberals are all for tax hikes and new spending, and that is why the leader called himself a “tax-and-spend, Pearsonian...Liberal”.

He has already said he will have to raise taxes on Canadian families. Families do not need that. They need a government that takes concrete action to put more dollars in their pockets to give them choice with child care, and one that invests in early childhood learning. We have and our record proves it.

• (1750)

Mr. Michael Savage: Madam Speaker, when the parliamentary secretary speaks about never instituting a plan, that is factually wrong. In 2004-05 the Liberals negotiated a deal with all of the provinces and territories in this country that allowed for provincial jurisdiction to be respected and for the unique needs of provinces.

I would remind him that an ancestor of the current Conservatives, Mr. Mulroney, campaigned on early learning and child care back in the 1980s. He did not have a chance to deliver on that, but he was a Progressive Conservative and, hence, the difference.

My question for the parliamentary secretary, who I work with in committee, is for him to put away the talking points that some apparatchik gave him in the lobby. I ask him to put that stuff away and just look over here and answer one simple question. It not a difficult one, but a very easy question. Can he assure me that it is not the position of the Government of Canada to cancel or change the one-year parental leave, which I think Canadians have come to value hugely across this country, but the very program on which his

government was in court citing evidence and casting disrepute about?

Is it the position of the Government of Canada to change that parental benefit? Yes or no? It is a simple question.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Madam Speaker, let me ask this hon. Liberal member one simple question. Did the Liberals, in their 13 years in government, create a single day care space anywhere? In the elections, they promised on at least five or more occasions to create an international daycare system. Did they create it? The answer is no.

Does he not think parents can make the choice as to the caring of their children? I know some Liberals have said that the parents will spend the money on beer and popcorn. Do they believe that to be true?

The member from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel recently said that parents do not provide. They may have the money, but they use it for their own purposes.

In fact, last year the member from St. Paul's held that parents who stayed at home were not really doing a real job. Does she still believe that?

I would like answers to those questions.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Denise Savoie): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:52 p.m.)

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