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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 22, 2005
Part A

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[*English*]

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

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[*English*]

MILTON FARMERS' MARKET

Mr. Gary Carr (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House to recognize a unique and long-standing tradition in my riding of Halton. Operating weekly for over 33 years, the Milton Farmers' Market has been bringing traditional homestyle baking and farm fresh crops to the constituents of Halton. With family fun and locally grown fruits and vegetables, the streets come alive with vendors.

The Milton Chamber of Commerce operates the weekly Saturday morning event from May through October. With over 40 vendors, this certainly is one of Ontario's best outdoor farmers' markets.

I encourage all members of the House and residents of Halton and Milton to come to the Milton Farmers' Market for a wonderful experience. Try a mouth-watering bacon on a bun, my favourite, a crisp locally grown apple or purchase a beautiful handmade craft.

I ask everyone to show their Canadian spirit and Halton pride and come visit Milton Farmers' Market.

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VETERANS

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in conflicts from World War I to Afghanistan, Canada's veterans have risked their lives in the defence of our country, the freedom of Europe and Asia and for liberty itself.

Last year thousands of our veterans passed away with insufficient recognition from the government. Not one of the caskets of the heroes who departed this world in 2004 was covered with a flag provided by the Government of Canada.

The governments of many other countries provide flags for the caskets of their departed veterans. This practice would do honour both to our fallen heroes and to the flag itself.

In 2005, the Year of the Veteran, I call upon the government to give long overdue recognition to the heroes who still walk among us by immediately initiating a program to bestow upon each of them a Canadian flag as a symbol of the appreciation of a grateful nation.

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BRAIN INJURY AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the fine work of the Four Counties Brain Injury Association based in Peterborough which had a fundraiser last weekend. This is an organization which works with those who have brain injuries, their families and caregivers. They raise awareness of the implications of brain injury in our communities, focusing strongly on injury prevention.

One of its major projects year round, especially in Brain Injury Awareness Month, is promoting the use of helmets for people using bikes, scooters, roller blades and skateboards. The association conducts helmet clinics through which children learn the value of helmets and how to wear them properly.

I thank all those associated with this fine association and all the sponsors and volunteers who assist the Brain Injury Association in its fine work.

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[*Translation*]

SPORTS IN COMMUNITIES

Ms. Denise Poirier-Rivard (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from July 3 to 30, some 30 young francophones, anglophones and Mohawks from the region near Châteauguay will take part in an extraordinary athletic and cultural experience.

On the heels of the Jeux de l'Amitié in May, which sought to promote exchanges among these young people so they could learn more about each other, sports will once again bring together the various communities in my region.

S. O. 31

For almost an entire month, these 30 amateur cyclists will travel almost 1,500 km across Quebec, from Kahnawake to Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

This athletic and cultural event will strengthen their organizational, leadership, listening and sharing skills. I will be eagerly watching them bike together to build a future in their style: fair, mutually supportive and Québécois.

* * *

[*English*]**PROTEST BY TAXI AND LIMOUSINE DRIVERS**

Hon. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, taxi and limousine drivers at Pearson International Airport in my riding are requesting that the Greater Toronto Airports Authority issue licences to individual drivers on the basis of seniority. Despite their fair share recommendation, however, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority continues to only hand out licences to three limousine companies.

In today's *Toronto Star*, drivers complain that these companies are "little more than middlemen who profit off the backs of drivers by leasing the licence while offering little or no service".

While drivers regret that the public has been affected this week by their legal protest at the airport, they promise to continue to fight for justice on behalf of the longest serving drivers among them. I would encourage all MPs in the GTA to listen to the concerns of drivers and to lend them their support.

Due to this situation's impact on travellers and concerned citizens in the GTA and across Ontario, I would strongly urge the Minister of Transport to—

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● (1410)

NICKOLAUS MEYERS

Ms. Rona Ambrose (Edmonton—Spruce Grove, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in 1936, General Franco installed a Fascist dictatorship in Spain, overturning the democratically elected Spanish Republic.

While Fascist Germany and Italy sent massive military aid to supply Franco's forces, western democracies failed to officially support the Spanish loyalists.

However, over 1,300 brave Canadians left their families and friends to travel halfway across the world to fight in the International Brigades against Franco for the causes of freedom and democracy.

If records did exist in Spain about the war, we would come across the following name: Captain Nickolaus Meyers, a Canadian whose real name was Nickolaus Myroniuk but, like many others, had to travel under an assumed name because of the opposition of their government to the war. Captain Meyers, my great uncle Nick, recently passed away, on January 21, at the age of 89.

Today I am rising in the House to pay tribute to my uncle who understood that evil cannot be escaped by ignoring it. My uncle and the many other Canadians who volunteered in an inspiring story of courage, conviction and determination, pressed forward and made sacrifices for freedom and liberty.

VERA LOOSE

Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the city of Brantford is a lesser place today as I rise to pay tribute to a great lady, Vera Loose, who died yesterday in her 79th year.

Vera was the loving and devoted wife of Paul and together they raised children who benefited tremendously from their caring nature and thoughtful ways. Six young persons had the privilege of calling Vera their loving grandmother.

Her taste in unimportant matters was ordinary. She wanted comfort, not luxury. She was drawn to genuine substance, not transparent style. However, she was anything but ordinary in matters that count. Rather, she was extraordinarily kind, uncommonly generous and exceptionally decent.

Vera was a person of very strong faith and achieved what we all aspire to do. She made a profound difference in the lives of her family and her community.

As the philosopher Proust said, "Let us be grateful for people who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom".

Vera Loose brought happiness to the lives of many, particularly her family, and made many souls blossom. She fought the good fight and has gone to her just reward.

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[*Translation*]**LACTIC ACIDOSIS**

Mr. Robert Bouchard (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, for a number of years now, one of my constituents has been battling a hereditary disease that is quite prevalent in our region. I am talking about Pierre Lavoie, the president of the Association de l'acidose lactique du Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Mr. Lavoie is working hard to raise awareness of lactic acidosis, encourage research, and involve our young people. The Pierre Lavoie challenge was held last week for this very purpose.

Since May, over 25 schools in my region and over 5,000 students have taken part in the inter-school challenge. Last weekend, the Pierre Lavoie challenge reached its apex, thanks to massive public support, with the collection of over \$280,000.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates this courageous athlete for his perseverance, along with my entire riding, which is supporting him in his fight against this terrible disease.

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FÉDÉRATION DES FRANCOPHONES DE LA COLOMBIE-BRITANNIQUE

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the Fédération des francophones de la Colombie-Britannique on its 60th year of existence.

Francophones have been an integral part of the economic, social and cultural fabric of British Columbia since 1793. There are over 60,000 of them, living in 37 communities in our province.

The federation has been so successful in keeping these communities in contact with each other and in preserving their vitality and influence that British Columbia now ranks second only to Quebec in the number of students taking French as a second language.

I have had the pleasure of working in close collaboration with the federation for the past 12 years, on the Canada-communities agreement, the new francophone affairs office of Simon Fraser University, and RésoSanté, a health service for francophone immigrants.

As our commercial links with the Asia-Pacific region expand to the francophone countries of Asia, the strong francophone presence in British Columbia will become an even more valuable asset.

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[English]

ALBERTA FLOODS

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past two weeks, Calgary and southern Alberta were hammered by torrents of rain, with creeks and rivers rising to levels not seen in decades.

Thankfully, the worst seems to be behind us and the efforts of countless volunteers and emergency workers helped to reduce the damaging impact.

With both the Bow and Elbow Rivers flowing through my riding of Calgary Centre, I saw firsthand the risk that the rising waters posed. A state of emergency was declared.

True to our western heritage, these challenging times also brought out the true spirit of Calgarians. It was truly inspiring to see neighbour helping neighbour, pulling together to lend a hand.

As a Calgarian, I offer my sincere thanks to all those who volunteered their services, as well as the numerous city officials, Mayor Dave Bronconnier, Alberta Emergency Measures and Premier Klein, for their leadership and support throughout.

* * *

●(1415)

[Translation]

ONTARIO'S FRANCOPHONE COMMUNITY

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as part of the City of Ottawa's 150th anniversary celebrations, the Société franco-ontarienne d'histoire et de généalogie and its partners will be unveiling a plaque to commemorate the contribution of francophones to the growth and development of Ottawa.

The plaque will be permanently displayed at the Institut canadien-français, which is located at York and Dalhousie streets in the Byward Market. The unveiling ceremony will be held on Friday, June 24, Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day, celebrated by all French Canadians. Representatives of all sectors of activity in the francophone community will be in attendance.

S. O. 31

On behalf of all the Franco-Ontarians of Ottawa-Orléans, I wish to commend this initiative to immortalize more than 150 years of francophone presence in Ottawa. We are immensely proud.

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[English]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was National Aboriginal Day. It served as a reminder that every day we must continue to speak up on social and economic issues faced by aboriginal people.

Earlier this month, the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development tabled a report about on reserve matrimonial real property. There are strong recommendations in the report for action on behalf of aboriginal women from coast to coast to coast.

The report calls for the government to immediately draft stand-alone legislation dealing with matrimonial property and that this be done in partnership with the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations.

The NDP supports the report. This issue and other issues that impact the lives of aboriginal women in this country have been studied over and over. It is time for action, action on rights for aboriginal women when it comes to matrimonial property, action on violence against women and action on access to health services.

Rebecca Bruce, Raven Thunder Sky's sister, died today. Where is the action on issues like Zonolite? These are real issues that affect aboriginal women and their families and we need action now. It is time for the government to deliver.

* * *

CRYSTAL METH

Mr. Randy Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberals must have heard by now the urgent cries of Canadians who want the government to take action to combat crystal meth.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and western ministers met recently to discuss this problem. They have made strong recommendations to the federal government to take action.

Municipalities and provinces are serious about fighting this deadly drug, but the federal government only says that it will look into it in the fall.

The Conservative Party, however, is committed to fighting crystal meth and has formed a crystal meth task force, of which I am the chair. I have submitted a motion calling on the government to develop a nation crystal meth strategy. The member for Palliser and I are working on a bill to move crystal meth from schedule III to schedule I, something we have been calling on the government to do for months. The member for Yellowhead has introduced a private member's bill to restrict access to precursors.

The Conservative Party will continue to pressure the government to take action against this drug. Every day that goes by is another day that crystal meth traps another Canadian in its deadly grip.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Sergio Loreto first came to Quebec in 1987, and has worked as a machinist at Pratt & Whitney for 16 years. Last September, he was living in Saint Hubert with his wife and three children, who are all Canadian citizens, when he received a deportation order for allegedly being an accomplice to war crimes in Guatemala.

Sergio Loreto says he did not commit any war crime or even take part in the civil war.

His CAW friends will tell you that he is a model employee who lives an exemplary life and that he has settled well into Canadian society.

Recently, leaders of the Saint Hubert community asked the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to use section 25 of the Immigration Act to lift the deportation order and grant Mr. Loreto permanent resident status on humanitarian grounds. This would allow him to leave his sanctuary in Toronto and return to live freely in Saint Hubert with his family, who need him very much.

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[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, members on this side of the House have been adamant in insisting that the Government of Canada demand that Syria get out of Lebanon and permit the democratic process to proceed.

As usual, we have seen foot dragging and reluctance on that score. Nevertheless, the Syrian armies are out and the people of Lebanon are now choosing a new parliament. The process of forming a government is far from complete, however, and it appears that the Syrian dictators are still convinced that Lebanon belongs to them and not to the Lebanese people.

In this morning's papers we read of yet another assassination of an eminent politician in Lebanon.

I am asking the Minister of Foreign Affairs if he is supporting the demand of the elected leaders in Lebanon that the mandate of the UN team investigating this and earlier assassinations be expanded and accelerated.

I am asking the Minister of Foreign Affairs if he is taking other measures to let the people of Lebanon know that we stand with them in their desire to at last rid themselves of state sponsored assassinations and terror.

It is time for Canada's government to speak out in every forum and at every opportunity to let Syria know they need—

● (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pontiac.

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. David Smith (Pontiac, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, at the signing of the new deal for cities and municipalities, the Premier of Quebec called on the support of Quebec MPs. Premier Charest urged Bloc Québécois MPs to support the budget bill that we will soon be called to vote on. He said:

They have a responsibility that goes beyond party lines: to make sure funding is available. The current government made a promise to make it available. Now it is up to Quebec MPs to act in the interest of Quebecers and vote in favour of the budget to make the funding available.

Upon leaving the House yesterday, the leader of the Bloc Québécois said he could not support the bill because of some other provisions. In other words, the Bloc opposes the additional \$4.6 million investment in education, the environment and housing.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner's shady grey report on the former minister of immigration is black and white about one thing: issuing of temporary resident permits by the former minister during the election campaign was a clear violation of the conflict of interest code.

The commissioner writes that "the permits themselves seemed available...to the relatives and associates of those who were assisting the re-election campaign".

Manipulating the process is the Liberal way. Why has this ethically challenged government allowed our immigration system to be abused in such a crass and partisan political way?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I reject outright that there was any partisan political intervention. I gave an indication yesterday that over 1.1 million decisions are made every year. At this time of year, there are many more requests.

The minister responds to the constituent's requirements in the context of 1.1 million decisions made by the department. If the member opposite is telling us that 76 interventions by a minister in the context of 1.1 million is an undesirable action, then he has a—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Nova.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. Prior to the election, the former minister vowed she would never use temporary resident permits for election purposes. Au contraire: it comes to light that during the campaign 128 permits were granted by the minister, 74 of 76 were supported by Liberal MPs, 43 were authorized in the last week of the federal campaign alone, and four of those permits were issued to friends of the minister's campaign worker.

Why, I ask again, did the government so blatantly abuse the ministerial permit process for partisan purposes during the last campaign? Why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess those of us who actually serve our constituents are going to be accused of doing things for partisan purposes.

The fact of the matter is, and the member would know, that there are many parts around the country that are looking for an enhanced immigration service. This is part of an entire system where we are looking at the large range of people who we are going to take into the country and looking at both the quantum and the quality of immigrants who are coming in. Ministers who do their—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Central Nova.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Andrew Stark, a University of Toronto professor and noted expert on conflict of interest, said it was puzzling that the Ethics Commissioner was not investigating the Prime Minister's chief of staff for his involvement in MP vote buying for rewards.

Mr. Stark noted that the commissioner has just completed a report that investigated both the minister and her ministerial staff and that his refusal to investigate PMO chief of staff Tim Murphy is “inconsistent with what he's just done”.

Given the latest ethics report on Liberal wrongdoings, can the Prime Minister clarify whether he and his staff are subject to the conflict of interest code, and if so, why are they not being investigated? Why the special treatment? More who you know in the PMO?

• (1425)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner is an independent officer of this Parliament. In fact, his appointment was approved by the House. There is no special treatment for anyone. The Ethics Commissioner can decide and does decide on who he investigates and on the terms of those investigations.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today a senior columnist wrote that “the culture of government secrecy still rules Ottawa and warps the way our democracy works”. As an example, the government was asked about the allocation of visitor permits. The House was told the information was not available, but the Ethics Commissioner's report shows that such records do exist.

How does the Liberal culture of secrecy around visitor permits square with Liberal promises of openness and transparency?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the member can stand up and pretend to be absolutely dumbfounded by this. All she needs to do is read the parliamentary report that was tabled in the House to know exactly how many visitor visas are given every year and how many are presented at which posts. If the member wants to say that she

does not read the reports provided for parliamentarians, I can understand her desire to wallow in ignorance.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows very well that he is hiding who got the permits and at whose request.

Another journalist wrote today:

During the 2004 federal election campaign, the Liberals gave out visitor's visas as though they were mints.

They did it to help their re-election prospects, by making sure Liberal ridings benefited and opposition ridings did not.

The government tells Canadians it is committed to openness and transparency, so will it today make public the number of temporary resident permits issued to each MP?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suppose that some of the lawyers on the opposite side would know that temporary visitor visas are issued to applicants who want to visit. Presumably none of the members of Parliament on that side consider themselves to be visitors. We do not issue temporary visitor visas to members of Parliament. We issue them to applicants from abroad.

* * *

[*Translation*]

TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal education minister in Quebec says that Quebecers are increasingly aware of the tangible impact of the fiscal imbalance and contends that the scenario remains unchanged from one budget to the next: conservative forecasts, a surplus, surplus applied to the debt or creation of foundations. In the meantime, the province is having a hard time maintaining services.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that Minister Fournier is reaching exactly the same conclusions as the Standing Committee on Finance and that the time has come to substantially revise—

The Speaker: I regret to interrupt the member, but his time has expired. In addition, it is difficult to hear the hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Finance.

[*English*]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the questions of my hon. friend and I think I can surmise the point he was trying to make. I would reply by pointing out that, because of decisions of this government, over the next 10 years we will be transferring an incremental \$100 billion in federal resources to the provinces to help them meet their obligations at the provincial level. In addition to that, the statistics show that for the last 20 years provincial revenues have exceeded federal revenues and—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean.

Oral Questions

● (1430)

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, will the finance minister admit that the money currently transferred by the federal government is actually money that it has significantly over-collected? The fiscal imbalance is acknowledged by all the premiers of Canada and by all the parties in this House, except the government. If the fiscal imbalance were settled, it would mean the federal government would free up \$3.5 billion annually for Quebec alone.

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, provincial revenues exceed federal revenues. Federal debt exceeds provincial debt. Federal transfers to the provinces are going up by \$100 billion over the next 10 years. The hon. gentleman could help just a little bit by passing Bill C-48.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the report of the Standing Committee on Finance recommends an end to the piecemeal agreements and an increase in transfers for education and social programs, like health, to 25%.

Does the Minister of Finance realize that piecemeal agreements resolve nothing and, on the contrary, perpetuate the fiscal imbalance? Could he at least admit for once that the solution involves these two measures, which are the first move in a frontal attack on the fiscal imbalance?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously the Government of Canada wants to seek equity and fairness across the country for all provinces. That does not, however, mean that it is necessarily a case of one size fits all or that we can apply a cookie-cutter approach right across the entire nation.

For example, in the matter of dealing with immigration arrangements, the province of Quebec has enjoyed a particularly favourable arrangement there. I wonder if the hon. gentleman would put that in the category of things that he would like to see cancelled.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the comprehensive solution involves not only these two solutions, but also a review of equalization, reflecting the rule of 10 and the transfer of tax points in order to permit the governments of the provinces and Quebec to fund their activities independently.

Is the Minister of Finance capable of understanding this reality, in light of the comments by Minister Fournier, who says that the provinces are having difficulty maintaining a complete range of services for their residents?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we all want to make it possible for all governments to deliver adequate services to all of their citizens.

I would note on the review of equalization that Dr. Lacroix from the University of Montreal is one of the country's leading experts on this matter. He is in fact on the commission that is examining this

very matter. I understand that he was even the hon. gentleman's personal professor.

I would also point out once again that to help this situation just a little bit, Premier Charest of Quebec has urged the Bloc Québécois to pass Bill C-48.

* * *

ETHICS COMMISSIONER

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is a follow-up to the question by the deputy leader of the Conservative Party with respect to the Ethics Commissioner. Mr. Shapiro appears to be able to do the impossible now, which is to make Mr. Wilson look good.

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister about this. She made the point that Mr. Shapiro is an officer of this House. Would she therefore be prepared to say on behalf of the government that it would respect a recommendation by this House that Mr. Shapiro be removed for incompetence?

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as has been said earlier, the Ethics Commissioner is an independent officer of Parliament. Dr. Shapiro's appointment was in fact confirmed by all parties in the House of Commons in May 2004. I understand that a committee of this House is also seized with the member's concerns. I understand that they will be looking to address the motion on Thursday, that being tomorrow. I am not going to prejudge the work of the committee.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second question is on a completely different topic. It has to do with health care. The question is for the Deputy Prime Minister, also a former minister of health.

She may be aware that the doctor who successfully challenged the ban on private insurance in Quebec is now being feted by conservatives in America. He is probably being quietly feted by Conservatives here, but they are not as open about it. He has gone to the United States and he says:

I would like to make a team with American entrepreneurs and go to Canada and create a private parallel health-care system.

This is exactly the kind of thing the Prime Minister has said he is against. What is the government plan to do something about this before it happens?

● (1435)

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear. There would be no Americanization of the Canadian public health care system. The Prime Minister has been very clear. All of us have been very clear. Private health care is no panacea with respect to the difficulties we have. Let me quote two specialists from here:

It appears that countries with two-tier systems appear to have longer, not shorter wait times.

The majority judgment assumes that new physicians—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

*Oral Questions***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last month the member for York West tabled a letter from the Ethics Commissioner claiming that she had been cleared of all charges in the matter of the Romanian stripper.

What really happened is that the government altered the facts to whitewash the whole scandal. Why did the government mislead the House when it knew full well that the former immigration minister was guilty as charged?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ethics Commissioner has issued his report. The Ethics Commissioner, as far as I am aware, does not conclude that there was any personal wrongdoing on the part of the member for York West.

The Ethics Commissioner has made a number of recommendations. We are reviewing those recommendations. The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and PCO are reviewing those recommendations. I guess I do not understand what problem the hon. member has with the work the Ethics Commissioner has done.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's guru thought he could fix the minister's mess by publishing this fabrication. This is the same Scott Reid whom the commissioner describes as an accomplice with full knowledge of this conspiracy, and he answers directly to the Prime Minister.

How can we believe a Prime Minister who claims not to know about a cover-up concocted by his own communications director and in his own office?

[*English*]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it very hard to follow that question because I am not sure whether it contains baseless allegations that are being thrown around by the hon. member as we have seen so often from the official opposition.

Let me go back to the fact that the Ethics Commissioner is an independent officer of Parliament. He studied this matter. He issued a report. He has made recommendations. We are studying those recommendations. I actually do not understand the problem.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister should really read that report. It has been two days now.

Every time the price of gas goes up at the pump, the government's GST take on gas also goes up. Even worse, the government also charges the GST on federal and provincial gas taxes. In other words, it gouges drivers by taxing the tax.

How can the government justify taxing the tax on gas when Canadians are paying record high prices at the pumps?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the phenomenon referred to by the hon. gentleman was carefully examined last year. It was determined at that time that it would be incredibly inefficient to try to eliminate the issue that he refers to.

Accordingly, we did two things. To the extent that there was revenue flowing from that situation, we applied it to the purchase of health care equipment by provinces. Now we are sharing the federal gas tax with Canadian municipalities, as soon as the budget passes.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister taxes the tax. Now he is taxing our patience here. Is there anything he will not tax? I am asking about the government's practice of charging the GST on federal and provincial taxes.

How does the minister justify gouging taxpayers by over \$300 million a year with his tax on tax at the gas pumps? Why the gouging?

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman knows very well the method of taxation with respect to the GST and the objective is to keep the administration of that program as simple as possible. Making the kind of exception that he refers to would add a very large administrative expense.

What we try to do is an alternative. We want to ensure that the revenues raised are put to the most useful purpose possible. In the circumstances now, we are sharing that revenue with municipalities so that they can build their infrastructure and create a better quality of life for all Canadians.

* * *

● (1440)

[*Translation*]

INTERNATIONAL AID

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first Bono, U2's lead singer, and now singer Bob Geldof has reminded the Prime Minister that Canada has a special responsibility when it comes to international aid, since it was Lester B. Pearson who proposed the 0.7% objective over 35 years ago. Mr. Geldof also said that if the Prime Minister does not double Canadian aid to Africa, he need not bother coming to the G-8 summit.

Will the government finally understand that it has to reach the 0.7% objective by 2015?

[*English*]

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has made it clear that he too wants to reach the 0.7%. He recognizes that it is a benchmark. It is very laudable and one that he hopes Canada will be able to attain. However, he also makes it clear that he will not give a date or give a commitment until we can come forward with a plan that says exactly how we will get there.

This country is renowned that when we make a pledge, we keep it. We disburse immediately our pledge. We do not make pledges we cannot keep, and we will not do so now.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister realize that Canada, which is the only G-8 country with a budgetary surplus, is projecting a very bad image to the rest of the world and that if it increased international aid by 15% annually, it could attain the objective put forward by Lester B. Pearson and the United Nations by 2015?

Hon. Aileen Carroll (Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I fully comprehend the member's concerns. At the same time, I am a bit confused, because her party has decided to vote against the budget. Much work has already been done in order to reach this very goal.

* * *

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Industry said that the Competition Bureau has reviewed the price of gasoline on numerous occasions over the past 10 years and has never found any evidence of collusion.

Does the Minister of Industry realize that the reason no evidence was found is that current legislation does not give the bureau the authority to conduct the formal investigations into the industry that the competition commissioner has called for?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the House would be interested in some facts. One interesting fact is that every time the price of gasoline rises, the members opposite allege some sort of a conspiracy to fix prices. They also allege that the conspiracy breaks down when the international price of gas falls. There have been five investigations by the Competition Bureau since 1990 with no evidence of collusion or anti-competitive conduct.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. In actual fact, the minister does not really want to take action. The amendments he is proposing only increase the penalties but do not give any new investigative authority to the Competition Bureau.

If the minister is serious about wanting to monitor the oil industry, then is he prepared to vote in favour of the Bloc amendments to give teeth to the Competition Act, which would allow the bureau to bring the oil industry into line?

[English]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do have amendments to the Competition Act before Parliament. If the Bloc has something constructive to add, we will be happy to have a look at that if it is a useful amendment. If it is not a useful amendment, we will not support it.

* * *

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS CANADA

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the industry minister admitted that consulting fees have been paid to some lobbyists as a reward if their clients were successful in securing a grant from Technology Partnerships Canada.

Media reports state that at least \$3.7 million in commissions have been paid to certain lobbyists, yet rewarding lobbyists for getting government grants is a breach of contract under TPC's own guidelines.

Will the industry minister reveal how many millions have been paid to lobbyists for securing government grants and which lobbyists have received this money?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has finally figured out that this is a matter of a breach of contract by private companies that are being supported through TPC grants. TPC grants are not bank deals. These are risk-sharing agreements to help private sector companies implement technology for the betterment of the Canadian economy.

We are investigating the matter. We will be releasing our forensic audit. We will be releasing further audit details in the fall. We will be restructuring the technology partnerships program, but we will not throw the baby out with the bathwater.

● (1445)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, TPC's own guidelines say that this is a breach of contract. Certain Liberal lobbyists seem to have a very good track record in obtaining TPC funds for their clients. For instance, Ken Mackay, a lobbyist who has donated thousands of dollars to the Liberal Party, has a phenomenal record of obtaining TPC grants for his clients when compared to other lobbyists.

If the government were serious about cleaning up TPC, it would immediately release the audit results. When will the industry minister come clean and release the results of these secret audits?

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here we go again with the mud pies.

These are consultants who are hired by smaller companies typically, because they do not have the resources themselves to determine where opportunities exist for those companies with government programs. There are many ridings held by members opposite where TPC grants have been issued and there are several members opposite who have done their own lobbying.

* * *

*[Translation]***HEALTH**

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, despite the favourable Supreme Court ruling, the Minister of Health said on Monday that private clinics would not reduce wait times for patients.

Yesterday, David Levine, an experienced health care administrator, announced seven new private clinics for Montreal. According to him, these new clinics will help cut wait times.

Who is telling the truth: the Minister of Health or the true experts on the front lines?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, here are some experts who agree with what I said yesterday. Colleen Flood and Terrence Sullivan from the University of Toronto said:

It appears that countries with two tier systems appear to have longer, not shorter wait times. The majority judgment assumes that new physicians and nurses will materialize out of thin air to staff the private sector when, of course, they must come from an already taxed public system; when they are treating private patients, they will not be responding to queues in the public system.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the minister is all talk and no action. When the Supreme Court struck down the ban on private medical insurance, it drew a direct correlation between the necessity of the ruling, given that “the public system fails to deliver reasonable services”.

When will the minister acknowledge that the announcement of yet more private clinics is a direct result of the failure of the government to provide quality health care to Canadians?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I quoted from the Reform Party's 1995 taxpayers' budget yesterday. It said that the funding in the Department of Health ought to be phased out, and that Health Canada responsibilities that are undertaken by the federal government ought to be phased out.

Those people opposite are now taking the position of the majority who say private health care is acceptable in Canada. I say we want to strengthen the public health care system. We will fight and defeat the Americanization of the health care system in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was a historic day for communities in Quebec, because an agreement was signed on sharing the gasoline tax and public transit funds. The Quebec premier described this agreement as the most important agreement they had signed with the federal government to date.

In my region, this agreement will enable us to invest in water management, sewage treatment and public transit.

Can the minister tell us about this new deal for cities and communities, concluded in the interest of Quebec?

Hon. John Godfrey (Minister of State (Infrastructure and Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud of the agreement signed yesterday to share \$1.8 billion with the Province of Quebec. In keeping with provincial jurisdictions, the agreement will promote the sustainable development of cities and communities.

As the Premier of Quebec said yesterday:

—members of the Bloc Québécois... should recognize that the real interests of Quebec require this budget be passed and the money reach the right place, that is, the municipalities.

● (1450)

[English]

BELL CANADA

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the federal government is clearly taking sides in one of the most contentious labour disputes in Canada.

While Bell Canada's Subco workers have been on a legal strike fighting for better working conditions and wages, the company has resorted to using scabs to undermine its workers. Now the Liberal government is helping Bell by advertising scab positions on its HRSDC job bank without even telling applicants the true nature of the job.

Why is the HRSDC minister aiding and abetting Bell's union busting activities?

Hon. Belinda Stronach (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that this is within provincial jurisdiction and we should not be promoting replacement workers. From time to time we need to review the programs to ensure that they do not have unintended consequences.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in one year four reports have come out condemning the practices and policies of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

Today the respected David Suzuki Foundation has issued yet another damning report saying that the west coast wild salmon could end up swimming the same fate as the east coast cod fishery.

My question for the Minister of Fisheries and Ocean is quite simple. When will he restructure, refocus and rebuild this dilapidated department?

Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government has shown that it takes the management of B.C. fisheries very seriously.

A little bit later this week, I will be making my eighth trip to B.C. as minister to announce the wild salmon policy. Last week I announced comprehensive policies to address issues in the Fraser River salmon fishery.

Are there still problems? Is there still work to be done? Yes. Will we get that work done? Absolutely.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates adopted a motion forcing the government to impose fines in connection with the rental scandal. The Liberals broke the law by paying millions of dollars in rent for an empty building.

Oral Questions

Is the Prime Minister going to force his Liberal buddy to pay up or is he going to sweep one more Liberal scandal under the rug?

[*English*]

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again Alexis Nihon provided the building as per contract, on time and within budget. Beyond that, my department wrote to Alexis Nihon recently stating, "Please inform us what corrective measures you have taken to arrange your affairs in such a way that you are not in breach of section 25(10) of the lease".

Furthermore, section 25(10) of the lease referred to section 14 of the Parliament of Canada Act. Also, section 14 has been replaced by the Senate code of ethics, which was approved by this House in 2003. Currently, the Senate ethics officer is reviewing this issue. We look forward to his response. He is the person who is qualified and entitled to respond appropriately to this issue.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that same public works minister admitted that his Liberal friend broke the law. He admitted it twice even though he does not admit it now.

Now our Commons committee wants that law enforced and wants those fines paid. The only question that remains here is whether the government is going to cover up this scandal or whether it is going to enforce the law and ensure that Liberal lawbreaker pays his fines.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: I only heard the tail end of the hon. member's question, but I have warned him before about being very careful in speaking about members of the other place in a disrespectful way. If his question said what I thought I heard at the end, he is going to have some difficulty after question period in dealing with me, but the Minister of Public Works and Government Services can answer the question now.

•(1455)

Hon. Scott Brison (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again, the discussion is now before the Senate ethics officer. He is the individual who is obligated, entitled and ought to be looking at this. I would urge the committee and the hon. member to respect the role of the Senate ethics officer and to let him do his work.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the primary function of the military ombudsman is to protect and defend the individual against any unfair treatment from the Department of National Defence.

When the minister selects an individual for the position of ombudsman, that person must be prepared to fight the system. However, the minister's hand-picked choice, Mr. Côté, does not appear to fulfill this requirement. He is a classic organization man always having defended the government, not the individual.

Does the minister intend to carry on with this appointment in spite of the committee's decision to reject him?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure members of the House that the selection of Mr.

Côté was made after a fair and open process. Applicants were heard and we selected, in our view, absolutely the best applicant.

I have heard the objections of the members of the committee and I will consider them. However, I have to tell members of the House that this is a gentleman who has served Canada well and who has been an exemplary public servant.

I do not think it helps either what we are trying to do as a government or what we are doing in the House to attack him for his personal qualifications, which I suggest are quite impeccable as a public servant of our country.

Mr. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, so much for the respect of Parliament.

The government set up a process to choose the military ombudsman that guarantees the selection of an advocate for the organization rather than the soldier. Representatives from the highest levels of government, including the PCO, DND and the PMO, were all involved in the selection process.

To exacerbate the problem, the questions used by the selection committee were vetted by the JAG, the organization which its main job is to protect the interests of the department.

Why does the minister persist in using a selection process that is so biased against the needs of the individual soldier, sailor and aviator?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the selection process was open, transparent and fair. Everybody who wanted to apply was able to apply and we selected the best person we could.

Having the people who know something about the system comment on what they think is a good way to get the best possible result. We do not necessarily have to follow all advice. However, I ask the hon. member not to ask the government to ignore the advice of people who know what they are talking about in order to get some blind decision that does not respond to reality.

* * *

[*Translation*]

GASOLINE PRICES

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Industry made a decidedly odd statement, "the last people in the world who should be trying to figure out what a competitive market looks like are politicians".

Does the Minister of Industry realize that, by refusing to investigate, by refusing to give the Competition Act more teeth, he is siding with the gas and oil companies, and that in the end it is partly his fault if we are forced to pay more than a dollar a litre for gas?

[*English*]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is just demonstrating that he is another one of the neanderthals who think that every time the price of oil goes up there is an international conspiracy to fix prices.

What about when the price of oil goes down? I was referring to the politicians opposite, not the members of this party.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Boulianne (Mégantic—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we see that not only are the minister's statements odd, they are also very surprising.

This laid-back attitude by the minister and the government is, moreover, shared by the Minister of Transport, who wants to leave it up to market forces. What kind of signal is an attitude like this sending the oil companies other than they can do whatever they like, and the government will not do anything about it?

[*English*]

Hon. David Emerson (Minister of Industry, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have a very good Competition Bureau in our country which is rated among the top four in the world. It has investigated the oil and gas industry five times since 1990 and found no anti-competitive conduct.

The hon. member can blather on all he likes. The facts are the facts.

* * *

• (1500)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence continues to deny any link between agent orange and cancer related diseases. I refer to yesterday's testimony by his officials. In fact, they dismiss medical evidence from the United States and other jurisdictions which acknowledge that link.

Having awarded two compensation packages in at least two cases, the Minister of Veterans Affairs recognizes that link. Why does the Minister of National Defence continually deny that link? Why is there the disagreement between the two ministers?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are not denying the link. What we are trying to do, despite the efforts of the hon. member, is to get some facts into this debate so we can understand exactly what happened some 40 years ago.

We know there was a limited amount of testing over seven days, over the course of two years, in certain areas within Gagetown. We are seeking to find out exactly all those who were exposed.

As the hon. member said, the Minister of Veterans Affairs has ensured that anyone who shows their exposure has been compensated with pensions. We are working on this. We do not minimize anything. We will find solutions and we will work with everyone to find the proper solution.

Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister still denies the cause and effect. In fact, he ignores his own information. The record will show that 300,000 gallons of defoliant were sprayed on Camp Gagetown in the period of which we are speaking. He continues to ignore medical evidence.

They are suggesting that in the new studies they are going to come up with, these ongoing studies, nothing new is going to be found.

Oral Questions

How can he ignore medical science, especially medical science that comes from the United States on this issue? The minister is not making himself very clear.

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my precise point is that we are not ignoring medical science as I have assured the House. The hon. Minister for Veterans Affairs has ensured that her department is examining carefully anyone who was exposed to agent orange. In those cases where that has been proven, pensions have been awarded.

We treat this very seriously. Our officials will be down there now explaining to the local population that we want to get to the facts. I can assure the hon. member we are not minimizing it. We will give those people who have been affected by agent orange what they need and what they require and that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

* * *

HOUSING

Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, co-operative housing is an important part of the housing continuum. It provides a secure, affordable option for low and moderate income Canadians. However, in recent months many federally administered co-ops funded under section 95 of the National Housing Act faced a subsidy shortfall when their mortgages came up for renewal. This problem was threatening the financial viability of many projects.

Could the Minister of Labour and Housing tell the House what he has done to fix the problem and to assist the people in that situation?

Hon. Joe Fontana (Minister of Labour and Housing, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for Beaches—East York, as well as the Liberal caucus, has been very supportive of co-operative housing. In fact, as I committed in April and delivered in Edmonton this past Saturday, for those co-ops that have suffered the negative impacts of reduced interest rates on subsidies, we have committed dollar for dollar \$72 million over the next five years to fix this problem.

It is a commitment made and a promise kept. We also have waived the insurance premiums and we will do more for cooperatives—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cambridge.

* * *

TAXATION

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, school boards in Ontario and Quebec took the Liberal government to court to prove they should be exempt from GST on the cost of transporting our children. The courts agreed and a final settlement was made, and all sides accepted it.

Guess what? The Minister of Finance then retroactively changed the law and now refuses to respect the ruling of the courts.

Why is the minister playing games with the rules of law in the country instead of paying the school boards of Ontario and Quebec what the government owes them?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the costs of education are paid for in a variety of ways across the country. The Government of Canada assists in a number of ways through transfers to provinces. Quite frankly, it is our view that systems of direct support are better than those other kinds that the hon. gentleman is suggesting through the tax system.

● (1505)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Lauzon (Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the school boards in my region and in Quebec are the victims of fiscal injustice.

Despite the favourable and final judgment they have obtained, Revenue Canada is demanding millions of dollars in GST.

When will the Minister of National Revenue return to money that is owed to the students of Quebec and Ontario?

[English]

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, the methods chosen by the Government of Canada to offer support to provinces to cover the costs of education follow a different route than the one suggested by the hon. gentleman. However, the Government of Canada tries to be as helpful as it possibly can, while maintaining the integrity of our tax base.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INQUIRY RELATING TO MEMBER FOR NEWTON—NORTH DELTA

The Speaker: Pursuant to section 28 of the Conflict of Interest Code for Members of the House of Commons, it is my duty to present to the House the report of the Ethics Commissioner on an inquiry in relation to the hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, a copy of the government's first annual report on democratic reform.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 32 petitions.

[Translation]

CANADA MARINE ACT

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Minister of Transport, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-61, an act to amend the Canada Marine Act and other Acts.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 44th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning a question of privilege relating to mailings sent to various ridings.

Also, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented its 43rd report last Thursday. Since then, the committee has decided, pursuant to Standing Order 109, to request that the government table a response to this report.

I would therefore seek the unanimous consent of the House to table a revised copy of this report requesting that the government table a response, and for this revised copy to be substituted for the report presented last week. The committee agreed to this unanimously yesterday.

* * *

● (1510)

[English]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In accordance with its order of reference of Friday, December 10, 2004, your committee has considered Bill C-27, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency Act, and agreed on Tuesday, June 21 to report it with amendments.

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 14th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on mining in developing countries, entitled "Corporate Social Responsibility."

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests a comprehensive government response to the report.

I also have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 15th report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade on the "Elements of an Emerging Market Strategy for Canada."

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests a comprehensive government response to the report.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker: The hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell. I misunderstood what he said and regret my mistake.

[English]

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to seek unanimous consent, as I indicated a while ago, to present the revised copy of the 43rd report that I referred to a moment ago. I would like to substitute that report for the one already tabled in the House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the proposal of the hon. member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The report is therefore substituted.

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Mr. Raymond Bonin (Nickel Belt, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-416, An Act to change the name of the electoral district of Nickel Belt.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour that I introduce this private member's bill, an act to change the name of the electoral district of Nickel Belt.

This bill will substitute the name Sudbury—Nipissing for the name Nickel Belt, which will geographically reflect the constituents that I represent and will realistically illustrate certain community factors in terms of how the communities wish to be identified.

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

* * *

PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT ACT

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-417, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act and the Public Service Employment Act enacted by section 12 of chapter 22 of the Statutes of Canada, 2003 (area of selection).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce my private member's bill, which is seconded by the member for Blackstrap. We want to stop the offensive practice of the Government of Canada's only hiring people for Ottawa jobs from people with postal codes in the immediate area of Ottawa. This restricts hundreds of people across the country, everywhere from Truro, Nova Scotia to Coquitlam, B.C. from applying for these jobs, even though they are fully qualified.

It sounds like a third world policy when a country says that the citizens of the country cannot even apply for a job in their own national capital.

If this bill passes, we will resolve that problem once and for all, that practice of discrimination by postal code.

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

● (1515)

[Translation]

HIGHWAY 30 COMPLETION BRIDGES ACT

Hon. Jean Lapierre (Outremont, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill S-31, an act to authorize the construction and maintenance of a bridge over the St. Lawrence River and a bridge over the Beauharnois Canal for the purpose of completing Highway 30

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

* * *

PETITIONS

PALESTINIAN RIGHTS

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the honour to table a petition signed by people from the island of Montreal on the rights of Palestinians.

[English]

NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition signed by some 150 residents of Calgary Southeast calling upon Parliament to protect freedom of choice for consumers of non-drug medicinal products such as health foods. They essentially want to ensure that these products are not overly regulated by the government, and that they are free to choose to use these naturopathic remedies and natural health products.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to present a petition on behalf of my constituents, in particular, constituents from the towns of Munster, Middle Lake, St. Benedict and particularly the town of St. Brieux. It appears almost that whole town has signed this petition.

The petitioners are requesting that Parliament consider that marriage is exclusively heterosexual in nature, a truth respected by every major culture throughout all recorded history. Therefore, the petitioners humbly call upon Parliament to pass legislation that will protect the traditional definition of marriage as it has before affirmed.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of presenting, in both official languages, a petition signed by over 100 residents of West Nova calling upon all members of Parliament to support Bill C-38, an act respecting civil marriage.

COMMUNITY ACCESS PROGRAM

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present on behalf of the people of Tofield in my constituency a petition regarding the community access program, which provides Internet and computer service for people who otherwise would not have it available. They are calling for that program not to end this year as scheduled.

S. O. 52

NAPPAN EXPERIMENTAL FARM

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a very substantial petition with 2,667 names on it. The signatures were gathered by the Cumberland County Federation of Agriculture in support of keeping the Nappan Experimental Farm open. The petition is signed by 30 MLAs, including Premier Hamm, many MPs, including the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Warden Keith Hunter, and many other concerned people.

It demands that the government keep the Nappan farm open and for once support agriculture in Nova Scotia, keep the beef research and maintain this as a federal operation.

• (1520)

GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to present a petition to the House from residents in the greater Toronto area who support the spiritually gifted Bryan Farnum on issues such as foreign ownership. They would like a restriction of 20% on oil and gas, also control of Canada's natural water resources. They state that issues such as family values and general health care should be put to a national referendum. They promote peace and obviously are interested in the issue of nuclear disarmament.

MARRIAGE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Fleetwood—Port Kells to present a petition calling upon Parliament to use all possible legislative and administrative measures to preserve and protect the current definition of marriage as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, and to recognize that marriage is the best foundation for families and for the raising of children.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 78 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 78—**Mr. Cummins (Delta—Richmond East):**

With regard to programs and all other special expenditures for aboriginals in the riding of Delta—Richmond East, what was the total expenditure by each federal department, agency or Crown corporation for fiscal years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, 2002-2003, 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 for each band, aboriginal organization, aboriginal society and corporation?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-11, in the name of the hon. member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar is acceptable to the government, subject to the usual reservations concerning confidential information and the documents are tabled immediately.

Motion No. P-11

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, briefs, reports, memorandums and statistics regarding the recording and tracking of inquiries made by the staff of Members of Parliament within the Public Health Agency of Canada since its inception.

The Speaker: Subject to the conditions expressed by the parliamentary secretary, is it the pleasure of the House that Motion No. P-11 be deemed to have been adopted?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that other Notices of Motion for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is it agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

ALBERTA FLOOD

The Speaker: The Chair has received an application for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Lethbridge. I will now hear the hon. member for Lethbridge and his submissions on this point.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today under Standing Order 52 to ask for leave to move a motion for the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing the flooding in southern Alberta and across the southern Prairies and the disaster that has resulted, and the threat to human life, to safety and to property posed by continued flooding.

Although the rain has stopped and the flood waters are starting to recede, many across the eastern slopes of the Prairies, out across the foothills, across Alberta, Saskatchewan and even into Manitoba, have experienced flooding of a magnitude that has not been recorded in hundreds of years.

I know we are already sitting until midnight every night, but I think it would bode well if the House could allot a couple of hours within the next few days to allow members of Parliament the opportunity to bring forward the situations that exist in their ridings. It would also be a good opportunity for the government to bring forward some of the programs and opportunities that are available to people who are affected. It would be time very well spent.

Government Orders

Mr. Speaker, I hope, when you deliberate on this, that you do approve the application that I am making right now for an emergency debate on the flooding across southern Alberta and the southern Prairies.

The Speaker: I want to thank the hon. member for Lethbridge for his submissions. I assure the hon. member that I will take the matter under advisement and get back to the House in due course.

* * *

• (1525)

POINTS OF ORDER

QUESTION PERIOD

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as you noted during question period, following a question from the member for Nepean—Carleton, you acknowledged what many on this side of the House felt when you said that you had formally warned the House I believe on two occasions to tread very carefully with respect to this issue while there is an investigation going on in the other place by the appropriate ethics officer.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will carefully review the blues of this question period. That particular member has, in our view, on a number of occasions ignored your formal warning. We are hoping you will get back to the House as to what course of action would be appropriate once you have had a chance to review the blues. Maybe, for the benefit of that hon. member, you could, for a third time, remind the House of the need to be careful.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is a very touchy issue for members of the government, after all the public works minister has admitted on two occasions that his Liberal colleagues actually broke the law.

The point I am making is this and after making this point—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: The hon. member is getting himself into more difficulty. I would suggest that we simply leave this matter.

The hon. parliamentary secretary has asked that I review the blues, which is fully my intention. I am waiting for the blues and have asked that they be brought to me. When I get them and have reviewed them I will deal with the issue that has been raised. My intention is to do it but I have not received the blues yet. The hon. member for Nepean—Carleton was just asking me if I have had a chance to review the blues and I have not because they are not here yet.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

EXTENDED SITTING PERIOD

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice, when the House adjourns on June 23, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until June 27, 2005; at any time

on or after June 27, 2005, a Minister of the Crown may propose, without notice, a motion that, upon adjournment on the day on which the said motion is proposed, the House shall stand adjourned to a specified date not more than 95 days later; the said motion immediately shall be deemed to have been adopted, provided that, during the adjournment, for the purposes of any Standing Order, the House shall be deemed to stand adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 28; commencing June 27, 2005 and concluding on the day on which a motion that the House stand adjourned pursuant to this Order is adopted, the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays shall be 12:00 midnight.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Government Business No. 17 respecting the extension of the sitting of the House. Members are aware that the House is scheduled to adjourn on June 23.

Mr. Speaker, I would draw your attention to Marleau and Montpetit on page 347, which states:

There are times when the House may wish to temporarily set an adjournment time earlier or later than the time prescribed in the Standing Orders.

The process for a motion to extend the sitting was set out in a June 13, 1988 ruling by the Speaker.

First, the Speaker ruled that it was acceptable for the government to place such a motion under government notices of motions. This is because the Standing Orders themselves do not define what is to be in a motion from the government, nor do they limit the government's ability to place such a motion under government notices of motion.

Second, the Speaker then ruled that the government could initiate a motion to suspend the sitting provisions of the Standing Orders, and the Speaker noted that precedents and procedural authorities enabled the government to put forward a motion to suspend the sitting provisions rules.

Third, the Speaker ruled that such a motion can be adopted by a majority decision of the House. The Speaker stated that "there is no doubt that the House can amend or suspend its rules by unanimous consent and the House can also do so by a simple majority decision".

Fourth, the Speaker then reminded the House that parliamentary reforms had not changed the practice of the House and had not rendered prior precedents inapplicable.

Therefore I would submit that the motion in Government Business No. 17 is consistent with the Speaker's June 13, 1988 ruling. It is also consistent with a motion to extend the sitting of the House which was adopted following the Speaker's ruling.

The purpose of the motion that is before us is quite simple. Urgent legislation that is before the House is being obstructed. I point to Bill C-48, the budget companion bill, that would provide for \$4.5 billion in urgent funding for the environment, including public transit and an energy retrofit program for low income housing, training and post-secondary education to benefit, among others, aboriginal Canadians. Also in that bill are moneys for affordable housing, including housing for aboriginal Canadians, and foreign aid.

Government Orders

Yesterday the premier of Quebec asked the Bloc to support the legislation which would give more than \$1 billion to Quebec. The government agrees with Premier Charest that the bill is clearly in the interests of Quebecers and, indeed, in the interests of all Canadians, and needs to be passed. I would urge the Bloc members to support the interests of Quebec and to respect the request of the premier of Quebec and support the passage of Bill C-48.

In order to ensure that we have an opportunity to pass Bill C-48, we also need to consider what the official opposition is now doing. The leader of the official opposition is blocking passage of legislation that would benefit Canadian workers, students, the environment and foreign aid. Bill C-48 maintains the principles of the government's budgetary policy. It includes balanced budgets and expenditures in priority areas, and yet we have the example of the official opposition moving concurrence motions or other dilatory tactics for the simple purpose of looking to run out the clock until the scheduled adjournment of the House on June 23.

The opposition is also preventing the House from dealing with Bill C-38. The government is prepared to support an amendment to the bill at report stage that would provide greater certainty for religious institutions under the Income Tax Act. The amendment itself would be beyond the scope of the bill and it would require unanimous consent of the House. However I would hope that members across the way would give the House the opportunity to hear that amendment and that all members would wish to support such an initiative.

The government recognizes that the purpose of debate in the House is to help people make up their minds on issues. All members have clearly made up their minds on Bill C-38 so debate itself should not be used to delay Parliament from deciding.

• (1530)

If we were to look back to the work done by the justice committee, although I know hon. members across the way and others would disagree, but the justice committee had detailed cross country hearings on civil marriage in 2002 and 2003. We have had extensive debate in the House on Bill C-38 at second reading. I indicated to my hon. colleague, the opposition House leader and other House leaders, that every member who wanted to speak to Bill C-38 should be allowed and will be given the opportunity to speak at second reading. I think that has happened. In committee we have heard from all sides on the bill.

I want to draw to the attention of members that an editorial in today's *Globe and Mail* stated:

There is nothing materially useful to add. It's time for Parliament to vote on the bill, and for all parties to let the Commons have its say.

The government agrees with that and I think it is important that parliamentarians deal with this issue. Canadians elected members to the House to work in the interest of Canadians. It is not time to adjourn. It is time to look at how we can better serve the interests of Canadians. We should continue to sit until we pass Bill C-48 and work toward passing Bill C-38, which is why the government put forward the motion to extend the sitting.

I have indicated publicly that I am giving the opposition the opportunity to show that Parliament can work. If the members

obstruct the motion, I certainly think that closure is always a possibility, as provided under the Standing Orders, but I certainly hope that will not be necessary and that all members would take the opportunity to support the motion so that we can continue the work in the House and continue to serve the interests of Canadians.

• (1535)

Mr. Ken Epp (Edmonton—Sherwood Park, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions for the House leader. He indicated to you, Mr. Speaker, that this is a matter of great national interest and great urgency.

The fact of the matter is that Bill C-48 and the provisions thereof contain, to my knowledge, nothing that will be done within the next year. All of these expenditures are subject to there being a surplus of at least \$2 billion at the end of the fiscal year 2006. The urgency of this is just simply not there.

How can the House leader claim this urgency when clearly we will have more than enough time in the continuation of Parliament in the fall to debate this, to vote on it and hopefully to hear from more Canadians who are very interested in ensuring that the economy of the country stays strong and that the democratic process in this country is preserved, namely that budget speeches are not changed on the fly after they are made, destroying a long time tradition in the House?

With respect to Bill C-38, I venture again to say that this is an abuse of democracy and is one in which we ought not to be engaging. We have had literally thousands and I would suggest probably even close to a million names on petitions on this particular issue.

For the government to use an extension of a session to go in violation of what the clear majority of Canadians want in this matter and an issue which, in the words of the Deputy Prime Minister, can be solved without changing the definition of marriage, all of this can be done in a timely and normal fashion when we return in the fall session.

Calling this an emergency to extend the session is just so specious it is almost unbelievable. I would like the House leader to try to justify his move on this particular issue.

Hon. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the hon. member's questions, I would only draw his attention to premiers and mayors across the country. They have all indicated the need to ensure that the legislation passes immediately to ensure their planning process is at play and to ensure they are able to plan effectively, knowing full well that the federal legislation has passed the House and they can continue.

I also would draw attention, for instance, to the Premier of Quebec who talked about the more than \$1 billion of funding that would go to Quebec and how there is a need to pass the legislation.

Government Orders

While the hon. member might have disagreement with this legislation, he is perfectly able to put forward his argument. In fact, I would argue that the opposition has done that at report stage with numerous speakers. I do not know the actual number, but I think close to 70 or 80 of the members got up and spoke to report stage. I may be incorrect, but there were certainly a lot of members on the opposite side who put forward their positions, offered amendments and we dealt with report stage. Now at third reading, I am sure more speakers will get up.

The point is that the bill itself is in the public interest and that is a consideration we should all have with respect to what other levels of government are doing.

Bill C-48 needs to pass the House. It is one of the reasons for extending this sitting. If the hon. member, on reflection, would look at what is in Bill C-48 and look at the impact it has across the country, he would support the motion to extend the sitting.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gérard Asselin (Manicouagan, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to understand more clearly. In his presentation, the House leader is asking the House, in a motion, to extend the sittings past June 23. In other words, the House will resume on June 27.

When the House leader was reading his motion, I thought I understood that at any time during the extended sittings, on or after June 27, a minister can rise in the House and propose a motion to call an end to this prolongation by proposing adjournment for a maximum of 95 days.

I would like to know whether, on or after June 27, it is possible for a minister to propose a motion to adjourn for up to 95 days?

• (1540)

[*English*]

Hon. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, the motion is worded in such a way that if the House does sit an extended period of time, there would be an opportunity for the House to start back at a later date to compensate for the fact that we sat during this period of time. It is up to 95 days. It is the way the motion reads. It is quite fair to members of Parliament who might be in this place for an extended period of time during the summer, and that opportunity to do so is in the motion if the House passes it.

The purpose of the motion is to extend the sitting to deal with urgent matters with respect to the legislation before us. Once the House is adjourned, it allows for members of Parliament to go to their ridings to meet with constituents or go to different parts of the country to meet with Canadians.

I would think the opposition members would probably go around the country and talk about the fact that Bill C-48 itself should not have been supported. They are welcome to go to different cities to speak to different mayors and tell them how the money for transit should not go them, or the money for the new deal with respect to the gas tax should not flow to municipalities.

I am trying to provide ample opportunity for members opposite, once the House adjourns, to meet with their constituents and to travel the country so they can convey their message. I am sure they will

find that the majority of the people whom they meet will disagree with their message.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everyday I see the government stooping to new lows. Today we see threats against members of the House of time allocation and using closure to prevent appropriate debate. It goes on and on and it is getting worse, quite frankly.

The member is talking about Bill C-48, which was so unimportant to the government that none of it was put in the original Liberal budget bill. We are talking about the NDP-Liberal budget bill. Now the Liberals have to ram it through somehow. Besides that, the budget implementation bill for last year was only passed in the House a couple of weeks ago.

As my hon. colleague has already pointed out, none of the spending in the bill would take place immediately. It would be at least a year from now before the Liberals could calculate the level of surplus, overtaxation and increase in tax and spending that the government has gone through in the past few years which makes it difficult for my children and the children of people across the country to make their mortgage payments and pay off their students loans.

The Liberals keep taxing and spending more and more and now they want to spend this extra \$4.5 billion that would be added on to their insane increases in spending in Bill C-43. The member should reconsider what he is trying to do. He should in fact back off on this. I am sure that is exactly what the House leader will do.

Hon. Tony Valeri: Mr. Speaker, I will respond directly to the hon. member's question. When he makes reference to a budget implementation bill that just passed the Senate, what he is referring to is a budget finance bill which contained housekeeping tax measures. The budget implementation bill from budget 2004 passed within months, not a year. In fact, it was presented in March and passed before the House recessed in June of last year.

I must correct the member. While he makes his argument, the argument is incorrect. I would also encourage him to look at the facts to see that the budget implementation bill itself was passed quite expeditiously, much along the same lines that Bill C-43 was passed. We hope to have Bill C-48 passed expeditiously.

With respect to disagreeing with Bill C-48, I accept the member's ability and right to disagree on legislation. I have no qualms with that at all. That is what this House is about. I think that debate is about changing minds. I do not think the debate should be about stalling the question so Parliament can decide, and the opposition members have done a very good job of trying to do exactly that.

Editorials across the country are asking why members continue to stall, why they do not allow the question and why they do not allow Parliament to decide. That is democracy in action. Members should be able to oppose, but I do not think they should be able to use debate just to delay.

Government Orders

• (1545)

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it just gets more and more peculiar, the longer I have been here. It has been almost 12 years that I have been an elected member of Parliament. I always say to my constituents in Prince George—Peace River that it is 12 good years in the sense of having the privilege to have served them and to have been elected and then re-elected to come to this place and express what I believe to be in their best interest. However, it gets more and more peculiar when we look at what the government is setting out to do.

Today, we are debating a motion to have us sit beyond the normal day of adjournment for the summer break.

Right here I want to stop and represent not only myself but I think all members of Parliament. There is a misconception, and it is often repeated by the media, that somehow when the House rises members of Parliament go on holidays, they have this three-month summer break. I think I can speak for all members of Parliament from all four of the recognized parties, and even the independents, when I say that nothing could be further from the truth.

I say this in a non-partisan way that members of Parliament work extremely hard. I think I can speak with some experience on that. Before I got into politics I farmed and I worked in the oil and gas field. Very seldom in my life, except for I think for about a one-year period, did I have a nine to five job. I think it was more accurately 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. However, it was a job that had defined hours of employment. Other than that, I have worked at jobs where one worked until one got the job done. My experience has been with members of Parliament from all political persuasions that this is the way they work.

If there is work to be done they do it. It does not matter whether it is in Ottawa or in their constituencies, the job changes and the dynamics of the job change considerably. When the House rises, members of Parliament put on a slightly different hat. Instead of being legislators, they are constituency members of Parliament but they still work hard to interact with their constituents back in the ridings. If they get any break at all, usually it would be in the order that most Canadians get, a couple of weeks off in the summer.

I wanted to put that on the record because what we are debating today is having the House extend its sitting. There might be some people out there who will ask why members of Parliament should not work or what is wrong with extending the sitting? That is why I need to point out that members of Parliament work even when they are not in this place, in this chamber, even when they are not in their office in Ottawa and even when they are not meeting with lobbyists, that terrible word we have come to know all so well, who try to persuade us and educate us. Even when members are in their ridings, they are working and oftentimes all hours of the day and night.

An hon. member: How about those functions in the ridings that are planned?

Mr. Jay Hill: Exactly. One of my colleagues is prompting me a bit here about functions which they have committed to in their ridings. Many of those will be for next week.

Again I think I am not just speaking for the Conservative Party of Canada and our 98 members of Parliament. I think I could speak for

all 308 members. I am sure they have events planned to which they have committed. Some might have been committed to some months ahead of time expecting, before this extremely abnormal request on the part of the government, that the House would rise on schedule tomorrow night at midnight. That is not going to happen.

I wanted to put that on the record just to clear any misconception there might be that we are talking about going on holiday on Friday. That is not the case. We are speaking to Motion No. 17 put forward by the hon. government House Leader, which states:

• (1550)

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice,—

And I just talked about the usual practice.

—when the House adjourns on June 23, 2005, it shall stand adjourned until June 27, 2005; at any time on or after June 27, 2005, a Minister of the Crown may propose, without notice, a motion that, upon adjournment on the day on which the said motion is proposed, the House shall stand adjourned to a specified date not more than 95 days later; the said motion immediately shall be deemed to have been adopted, provided that, during the adjournment, for the purposes of any Standing Order, the House shall be deemed to stand adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 28; commencing June 27, 2005 and concluding on the day on which a motion that the House stand adjourned pursuant to this Order is adopted, the ordinary hour of daily adjournment on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays shall be 12:00 midnight.

That sounds extremely convoluted to anybody that is trying to follow it. I could not even follow it and I was the one reading it.

What does it basically say? This motion allows the House to begin sitting again next week. Then, once the government is satisfied that it got everything it wanted, a minister can deem the House adjourned to a date 95 days into the future.

We have a situation where a minister can wave his magic wand and deem that the House is adjourned. Why would we support that?

Obviously, depending on when the government gets what it wants, the House could be conceivably out until November or December or whenever. Once the government gets the bills that it wants, and we have seen this happen and certainly I have seen it happen in the almost 12 years that I have been here, the government could use prorogation. The government would prorogue the House until it deemed it most advantageous for it to have the House sit again.

I do not think it is a huge secret, that I am about to reveal, that this particular government is the most scandal plagued government in the history of our Parliament. Obviously, the Liberals would just love to have some method whereby they would not have to face the opposition daily for question period and have to answer questions in this place.

I do not think it is beyond a reasonable assessment that if the government were to be granted this and were it to pass all the legislation that the government House leader said was “urgent legislation”, there would be at least in theory no reason for the House to sit much longer.

In fact, one of the things our party has been saying, with the exception of the same sex marriage legislation, is that there has not been a heck of a lot on the government's agenda for a year now.

Government Orders

Something else I always want to point out to people is that the Conservative Party of Canada is not in the business of opposing just for the sake of opposition. We are called the official opposition.

We assess each and every piece of legislation that comes before this place. We weigh it on its own merits. We determine whether or not it is in the best interests of the majority of Canadians. Then we determine whether we are going to support it or oppose it, whether we can support it if it is amended or oppose it unless amended. We take these positions.

We believe that is a responsible way that a political party in this place should operate. It is not a position that just because we are opposition we oppose for the sake of opposing.

It might come as a bit of a surprise not only to yourself, Mr. Speaker, but to the viewing public, that in the almost 12 years I have been here the parties that I have represented have supported more government legislation than they have opposed, even though they have been opposition parties and that continues today.

Of the current bills that are before this place, leading up to the dying days of this session, there are about 15 that are not tied up in committee or have not gone on to the other place. We support two-thirds of them, 10 out of the 15. As far as I am concerned, that would certainly indicate that, unlike what the government House leader just said, we are neither obstructionist nor are we constantly opposing the government's initiatives. We believe in weighing the pros and cons of each piece of legislation, weighing its merits and then determining our position.

• (1555)

The government gave its verbal commitment to the Bloc Québécois that it would only consider Bill C-48 and Bill C-38 if it got the extension into the summer. It said that if there were other issues, and I was there when we were discussing this, it would consider them on an ad hoc basis, only with agreement.

The government members failed to explain that when the House begins to vote on deferred divisions, for example, subamendments at third reading of Bill C-48 or Bill C-38, there will be times when the House will have nothing to do while it waits for the deferred division to come to a vote. It just cannot sit here idling in neutral. It is not like a government minister's limousine. The House will have to do something during that period of time. If the vote is deferred until the next day, we cannot just recess the House while we are waiting to have the vote.

The government promise to the Bloc Québécois members, to ensure they supported the extension so there could be more debate into July and the government assurance that only Bill C-38 would be discussed, is not entirely accurate.

I would also like to discuss why the government believes that it is so urgent that we get these two bills passed. A number of colleagues rose during questions and comments and asked the hon. government House leader exactly that question. They pointed out that, in the case of Bill C-48, the NDP budget companion bill, it will not come into effect until we know if there is a surplus.

I need to stop right here because one of the things that has frustrated me during my years as a member of Parliament is when

governments start to talk about a surplus. Even the use of the word surplus is a misnomer in my books.

An hon. member: It is overtaxation.

Mr. Jay Hill: Exactly. My colleague from Edmonton says it is overtaxation and she is exactly right.

A fundamental philosophical difference between a Liberal or a New Democratic member and a Conservative is on this very issue because what is a surplus to a Liberal is overtaxation to a Conservative.

Let us look at the very premise of Bill C-48. It is a piece of legislation conceived in the dark of night in a hotel room in Toronto by a unionist, Buzz Hargrove, the leader of the New Democratic Party and the Prime Minister of the country to spend \$4.6 billion.

I happen to have a copy of this piece of legislation that I would like to show Canadians. If they ever wanted to see what \$4.6 billion looks like, there it is. It is two pages. It was conceived in a hurry.

• (1600)

Hon. Karen Redman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I realize that my hon. colleague is in midstream and I hate to interrupt his speech, but I would point out that being a veteran parliamentarian, he would know that it is unacceptable to use props. I would question why he would feel the obligation to use a tactic such as that, which is demeaning of a man who has been in the House for as long as he has. I would just like to point that out to the House.

The Speaker: I appreciate the diligence of the government whip. The thought occurred to me that it might have been in fact a prop, but when then the hon. member identified it as the bill that is currently before the House, I thought that perhaps it was not a prop because it is after all a bill that is under discussion. I think it is probably in order to wave the bill around when one is discussing it.

I realize that the bill is not the subject of the debate, but the motion that we are debating does relate to this bill, among other things. So I suspect it might not quite be a prop. The hon. member knows he will have to hold it respectfully, rather than waving it around and by doing so perhaps turning it from a bill into a prop. Other than that, he is fine.

Mr. Jay Hill: I am disappointed to see the hon. government whip rush into the Chamber and then exit again after she raised this issue.

As some of my colleagues who have been quick to point out, during her bogus point of order, this is indeed a prop in the sense that the government designed this, built it, and wrote it to prop up its government. In that sense, it is a prop. It is an NDP prop. It props up the corrupt government, as thin as it is.

In any event, before I was interrupted, I was about to explain to Canadians, who are watching these debates at home, one of the reasons why we have been so outspoken against Bill C-48. During the debate the Conservative Party of Canada and its members of Parliament carried on for a couple of days until the wee hours, up until midnight in a period of extended hours. If this motion were to pass, the debate would be extended hours again next week until midnight, which is part of the motion.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, and it might surprise you, Mr. Speaker, given the amount of hours that we have debated Bill C-48 at report stage, not all of my colleagues have had an opportunity to speak to the bill yet. I think there are still a few who did not get the opportunity because an interesting development took place last night.

When there was a decision by yourself, Mr. Speaker, to have the emergency debate on the Devils Lake diversion, which will dramatically affect the people of Manitoba, negotiations and discussions took place among the parties and we agreed to have the debate on report stage of Bill C-48 end at a certain time. Once that time was agreed to and was laid before the House in the form of a motion, instantly something happened.

All of a sudden we had Liberal and New Democrat members participating in the debate. Up to that time they had not been, other than the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance. I seem to recall, to his credit, that he stayed here most evenings and participated in questions and comments. However, time after time we expected that members of the coalition of the two governing parties would stand up and participate in the debate, but they did not because they did not want to prolong the debate. However, as soon as there was an agreement to have an end time last night, what happened? All of a sudden they started to participate.

But I digress. The point that I am making is that the reason why Conservative members of Parliament felt so strongly and spoke so passionately about Bill C-48 and will continue to when they get the opportunity at third reading is because of that philosophical difference between Liberals and Conservatives. It is right at the very heart of why many of us, and I would suggest almost all of us here, left occupations that we loved, in which we had for all intents and purposes bright future careers.

We left those occupations and came to this place to represent our constituents. We did so because we believe in the trust between Canadian taxpayers and their government. We believe in that. We believe in a government that takes that trust seriously, not once in a while, but all the time.

●(1605)

That is why we get so upset when we see something like this. I am trying to treat this with great respect, but it is extremely difficult. We get so upset with something like this because of the process by which it came into existence and because of the fact that the government takes for granted that it can spend taxpayers' money any way it wants.

This is a government that is already mired in scandal. This is a government that has been mired in scandal after scandal over the 12 years I have been here. I can give the House examples of those scandals, on which the government has blown billions of dollars.

There is the failed long gun registration scheme it came up with. There was the HRDC scandal, which occurred before probably half of my caucus colleagues even came here, but we remember it.

An hon. member: Shawinigate.

Mr. Jay Hill: Money was blown on Shawinigate. I thank my colleague for the reminder. The past prime minister, Jean Chrétien,

interceded to secure a loan for a golf course and a hotel that he had an interest in.

There was also the spending on Challenger jets. My colleagues are feeding me information here to make sure that I do not forget, because so many scandals have rocked this government over the last 12 years that it is just unbelievable.

And this is the government that has the audacity to come to this place with a bill like this and expect all members of Parliament from all parties to approve it. Bill C-48 was illegitimately conceived. I would suggest that it is the illegitimate child of that union in the Toronto hotel room. The government has brought this bill before the House and expects all parties to fall all over themselves because of all the great and wonderful things it is going to address.

We are not saying that the issue of foreign aid does not need to be addressed. We are not saying that the issue of homelessness does not need to be addressed. We are not saying that there does not need to be greater emphasis on public transit. We have never said those things. Those things have always been part of our agenda, but they should not be dealt with like this.

Canadians understand that. My constituents understand that. This is no way to draft a budget. Canadians put more effort into drafting their household budget on a weekly basis than the government put into drafting this bill.

No one in Canada is fooled when told that this is somehow urgent business, that it needs to be addressed immediately and needs to be passed to the extent that we extend a sitting of Parliament to accomplish it. No one is fooled by that.

People know what Bill C-48 is: desperation in the extreme. This was conceived at a time when the Prime Minister knew that his minority government was in desperate shape and was about to fall if he did not do something. The only thing that kept his government alive in February and March was our party, because, as I said earlier, we assess each piece of government legislation and weigh it on its own merits.

We assessed Bill C-43, the original budget implementation act. We felt that there was enough good in it to support it. We took the unprecedented step, never before done in the 138 year history of Canada, of abstaining on the original budget vote. If we had voted as most opposition parties normally would have, the government would have fallen then. The NDP voted against it. The Bloc Québécois voted against it; to the Bloc's credit, at least it is consistent. The government would have fallen. We would have been in an election in March. We did not do it because we weigh legislation based on its merits and on whether we believe we can improve it.

●(1610)

We believed that the flaws in Bill C-43, such as the CEPA amendments to implement parts of the Kyoto accord, could be taken out. We believed that the bill could be improved and amended, so we waited, on balance, and decided to take an unprecedented step.

Government Orders

At that time, the NDP criticized the Conservatives for this. The leader of the NDP went to the television cameras and dumped all over us and all over the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. He said it was unbelievable that the Conservative Party and its leader would abstain and allow the survival of Parliament.

Let us be clear on that point as well. The Conservatives did not support the budget that night. We did not support a corrupt government that night. We allowed Parliament to survive. We were very clear on that. We allowed Parliament to survive because we believed that this particular piece of legislation, Bill C-43, could be amended and on balance could ultimately be supported. And we ultimately did. We supported it on May 19 and again on June 15.

It strikes me as more than a little odd that the government House leader moments ago said that this legislation, Bill C-48, the NDP budget, is of an urgent nature. Yet Bill C-43 has been passed to the other place. That is the budget, not this. Bill C-43, the original budget implementation act, was supported by the official opposition and the New Democratic Party and went to the other place on June 15. I have been informed that there it sits.

Conservative senators are ready to pass it because it contains things that all of us are under pressure to implement. It does not matter whether we are Conservative members of Parliament or Liberal, NDP or Bloc. We have all heard from our municipalities in our ridings, from our mayors, city councillors, regional district directors, reeves, et cetera. They are all of the opinion that they want Bill C-43, which contains the gas tax transfer of money to the municipalities, passed as quickly as possible into law so that money can start flowing.

An hon. member: And the Atlantic accord.

Mr. Jay Hill: And the Atlantic accord as well. I will get to that in a second. I know the member was worried that I had forgotten about that. I had not.

I want to point out that there are good things in the budget. On balance, that is why, when we assessed it, we supported it. It is important that people in the real world outside of this bubble that sits over Parliament Hill understand this.

Bill C-43 is sitting in the Senate. Why would that be? The government says it is of an urgent nature and is quick to try to condemn the Conservative Party even though, as I have just laid out, it abstained on the original budget vote and has supported it twice since and ensured its quick passage.

In fact, let us talk about the Atlantic accord. The Conservatives wanted to expedite its passage. Time and time again my colleague from Newfoundland raised the issue and pleaded with the government to expedite it, to carve off the Atlantic accord from Bill C-43 and get it through this place.

Mr. Loyola Hearn: As did the Bloc and NDP.

Mr. Jay Hill: As did the other two opposition parties. I should not say that. What I should say is that the one other opposition party and the coalition partner also supported the initiative to try to get that done, but the government refused. It said no, that it was all part of the package.

Time after time we heard in this place that we should pass Bill C-43 and get the budget through, that if we wanted the Atlantic accord we should get the budget through. How many times did we hear that? Now it is sitting in the Senate. It is going to be held for ransom until the government gets Bill C-48 through.

An hon. member: That's what they're doing. Shame.

Mr. Jay Hill: That is what it is about.

• (1615)

The Liberals will hold it up until they pass this bill, which is two pages long and in which they are spending \$4.6 billion. As has been said by my colleagues, let us not make any mistake about it, whether Bill C-48 passes today, tomorrow, next week or next month, it makes no difference.

Let us read from it. We do not have to read much more than the beginning of clause 1, which states, "Subject to subsection (3), the Minister of Finance may...". We can just stop right there. It is "may", not "will". The finance minister "may, in respect of the fiscal year 2005-06, make payments out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund...".

The bill is contingent upon there being what Liberals commonly refer to as a surplus. Even the New Democratic Party members have figured that out. They admit that. It is contingent upon there being a so-called surplus in order to pay for these things.

Hon. Bill Blaikie: So you like that. We did that for you.

Mr. Jay Hill: I do like it. I just do not see the urgency for any of it.

My hon. colleague from the NDP said that he thought I would like that. Of course I like it. Anything that would bring any degree of financial credibility to the government and to its spending habits would be a good thing. I think it is great that the Liberals cannot spend themselves into deficit, although I wonder whether that is exactly the route we are headed for now, despite their pleas to the contrary.

Here we sit today and Bill C-43 sits in the Senate while the government holds us to ransom and tries to blame it on the Conservatives. Conservative senators are ready to expeditiously pass the bill so the money can start flowing to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador for the Atlantic accord and to municipalities all across the country for badly needed improvements to infrastructure, but it just sits there because the government wants to, as I have said, hold us to ransom until it gets this piece of legislation through.

Why it wants to is completely beyond me, when the bill will not come into effect until we know what the financial situation of the country is almost a year from now. The fiscal or financial year end for our country is March 31. Until we get to next April fool's day, we will not know whether there is enough money to spend on these so-called priorities, so what is the urgency?

Government Orders

Why would Bill C-48 be the urgent legislation that the government House leader states it is? Here is what he has said about Motion No. 17. If it fails, if we vote it down, if there are sufficient members of Parliament in the chamber who say it is not urgent enough to extend the sitting into July, with the accompanying costs—and why would it be?—he has actually said that he will go to the Speaker and request that Parliament reconvene after its adjournment. Let us just think about that.

There is a mechanism in our democracy whereby, if it is necessary, a government can recall Parliament in times of great peril when the House is in a recess period. Every Canadian would support this, because we do not have a crystal ball with which to look into the future.

• (1620)

We do not know what would happen if suddenly we were in a situation where some country declared war on us or if there were some horrendous natural disaster, like an earthquake or something, that required the urgent and timely intervention of Parliament. All sorts of crises might occur and they might not be so accommodating as to occur when the House is in session, so, of course, we need to have that mechanism in place. No one disputes that.

However to have a government demonstrate the arrogance that this legislation, along with Bill C-38, the same sex marriage legislation, are of such urgency that it would go to the Speaker and request that he recall Parliament to deal with it, is nothing short of unbelievable. I have never heard of such a thing.

If this unfolds, think about the precedent this sets. I would suggest that there is then no need to even worry about having a calendar whereby members of Parliament of all four parties can try to plan their lives, their commitments to their constituents and the events in their ridings.

As I said at the outset of my remarks, I know there are many members in all four parties who have important events planned in their ridings that allow their constituents personal access to their member of Parliament.

All too often we become so taken up with events in this place that it is all too easy to forget about how important that personal interaction with our constituents is. There are a few people who forget that at their peril and they will be reminded at the time of the next election. All of us have seen that happen.

I cannot and would not want to downplay how important this upcoming recess is for members of Parliament to be able to interact with their constituents.

While I am on the subject of this urgent nature, I just want to briefly refer to Bill C-38, the other piece of legislation that the government says is of such urgency that it has to get it through before we recess for the summer.

One of my colleagues makes a good point. Why did the Liberals not bring it through earlier if they wanted it? Why was it that in the entire month of May, the only day that we had for an opposition supply day was the last day of May. However in order to fulfill the requirement for the supply period, the government was forced to do exactly what I said it would be forced to do when it started down that

road in late April, which was have all of the remaining six opposition supply days in early June. It took up a lot of time in the chamber but the government had to give those days to us finally, otherwise it could not have gotten its supply, which is its funding for the upcoming year. It had to complete that.

Now we are in a situation where the Liberals have determined that these two pieces of legislation are urgent: Bill C-48 and Bill C-38. I have already addressed the so-called budget companion bill, Bill C-48, so I will now turn to Bill C-38.

• (1625)

The reality is that we on this side believe that Canadians have some very deep reservations about enacting into law for the entire country same sex marriage. We believe the majority of Canadians have some very serious reservations about a government that is proceeding down that road. Many of these reservations came out in the debate that took place in the special legislative committee that was struck to deal with the legislation following second reading in the House.

The committee, however, certainly did not do the job that my colleagues, led by the member for Provencher who I know tried to ensure that the committee would travel to give Canadians better access. I spoke earlier about access to members of Parliament. He wanted to ensure that Canadians had access to discuss that face to face with the committee.

The Prime Minister promised at one point that the committee would ensure that Canadians did have that access and yet they did not. For my colleagues, the four Conservative members of Parliament who sat on that special legislative committee, it was a huge fight for them to even get the reduced list of witnesses who would appear. The government just wanted to fast-track Bill C-38 through that process. I say shame because there are some reservations.

However, even in that short period of time, it belatedly became obvious to the government, at the 11th hour, that there were some real legitimate concerns about the protection of religious freedom in this country. Even then, the government missed the deadline for putting forward its amendments at committee. This is how inept the government is; it missed the deadline for putting forward its amendments.

It had to be through negotiations with the Conservative members on that committee that concessions were made. However we have very serious reservations about the strength of those amendments and whether they will really do the job of protecting religious freedom and freedom of religious expression in this country.

We heard again today, in his brief remarks to Motion No. 17, the government House leader reading an editorial from the *Globe and Mail* that said that there had been enough talk about this, that it should just go to a vote and get it over with. In other words, we should just rush it through and never mind that there may be people hauled before courts or tribunals and punished if they question homosexuality. We constantly hear that there is enough protection. We have heard those words before, as have Canadian.

Government Orders

Why is there this urgency? Gays and lesbians are getting married in Canada. What is going to change if Bill C-38 passes through the House? I would seriously doubt it will pass through the Senate before the Senate rises for the summer. What difference does it make to the government whether Bill C-38 sits in this place for the summer or sits in the other place for the summer?

Only one thing comes to mind and it is that Liberal members of Parliament, when they know that the majority of their constituents are opposed to same sex marriage, do not want to hear about it all summer as they are out in their ridings interacting with their constituents. They are hoping that if we can deal with it, pass it and get it shuffled over to the Senate, that somehow that will take it off Canadians' agenda.

• (1630)

It might come off the agenda of the House of Commons but I can say that there is no hope in hell that it will come off the agenda for real Canadians in the real world. However supposedly this is of great urgency.

What is our position? We are not opposed to hearing an hour or two of report stage of Bill C-38. I conveyed that on behalf of my Conservative colleagues over a week ago to the House leader but the government wants the bill completed.

My position and the position of the Conservative Party of Canada was that given the very serious reservations that Canadians have about the protection of religious freedom of expression surrounding the bill, why would we not want to take those amendments, the ones which we and many others believe are too weak, out into the real world and ask Canadians what they think? What would be wrong in doing that for the summer if the bill is still here at report stage?

For those Canadians watching today, report stage is that stage of the legislative process where a bill can be amended. It can be improved and fixed. That was our position and it remains our position.

The majority of us do not believe that the bill is fixable but we do believe that at a minimum it could be improved before we send it on to the other place. We would like to get the opinion of Canadians over the summer as to whether they feel any cold comfort whatsoever with the amendments that have been put forward, both at committee and now put forward for report stage, if indeed those are not ruled out of order the way the vast majority were when it was at the special legislative committee.

The two pieces of legislation that the government says are so urgent that they require either the passage of Motion No. 17 or the extraordinary step that has only ever been taken in times of national emergency of going to the Speaker this weekend and telling him that we must reconvene Parliament next Monday, I would argue that I have just successfully disputed whether there is any urgency whatsoever.

In the lives of real Canadians outside of this place, nothing is going to change whether we pass Bill C-48 or Bill C-38.

An hon. member: Well, pass it if nothing is going to change.

Mr. Jay Hill: One of the Liberals woke up over there and said "Well, pass it if nothing is going to change".

I already explained that we base our opposition or our support—

Mr. Merv Tweed: We will draw you a picture. We will send you a picture.

Mr. Rob Anders: He didn't hear you. Explain it again.

Mr. Jay Hill: I explained that we in the Conservative Party of Canada base our support or our opposition to legislation not on what is most expeditious or is most convenient for us, not because we might want to go home because we miss our families, our communities and our constituents.

We base our opposition or our support to legislation on the merits of that legislation.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Jay Hill: In addition, in anticipation—

Mr. Charlie Penson: And in conclusion.

Mr. Jay Hill: My hon. colleague from Peace River says "And in conclusion".

• (1635)

Members of Parliament from all parties just wait with great anticipation to be given the leader's position on legislation where one can speak for unlimited time. I hate to disappoint my colleague who I respect and a great friend of mine from Peace River, but it is not in conclusion, at least not yet.

In anticipation of this debate today, I did come up with a list of a few reasons. I think the list could be much more extensive and perhaps we can expand upon it as we go along. There are at least a few reasons why the House of Commons should not sit beyond the scheduled adjournment date of tomorrow midnight.

The first reason would be that if it were to sit longer, it would provide more opportunities for the Liberals to cook up more corrupt deals.

Second, we could have more NDP-Liberal coalition out of control spending budget bills. If they came up with one in one night in a Toronto hotel room, imagine if we expand and extend this sitting of the House of Commons for a week or two what they could do. If they had a weekend together, it is completely unimaginable what might happen.

Third, the House might pass the current NDP-Liberal coalition bill, Bill C-48, a bill which represents a ridiculous approach to budget policy, a plan cooked up, as I have said, in a hotel room among Buzz Hargrove, the Leader of the NDP and the Prime Minister and which proposes to spend some \$4.6 billion of taxpayer money in the course of just two pages of legislation.

I will not hold the bill up again. I would not want the government whip to break a leg rushing back into the House to condemn me for using a prop.

Government Orders

Fourth, the House might pass Bill C-38 without properly ensuring that religious freedom is protected. I spoke at some length about that a moment ago.

Fifth, we might have to put up with the Prime Minister being mad as hell about the latest reasons the public should be mad as hell about him.

Sixth, we will have to pay to fly the Prime Minister and his cabinet back and forth in Challenger jets just to vote. Imagine that. If there is ever a reason not to extend the House any longer, that would have to be one, that they will use any excuse to jump in their Challenger jets and fly across the country.

Seventh, every time we vote, there is a potential that the government will try to buy votes, costing us even more money. Do I dare start to expand upon that one point? It was about a quarter of a billion dollars that it cost to secure each of the 19 NDP votes in the House of Commons; \$4.6 billion divided by 19. That is unbelievable.

I always like to stop and ensure that Canadians clearly understand when we talk about billions of dollars. It is so easy as politicians to talk about a billion here, a billion there, \$4.6 billion. A billion dollars is a thousand million dollars. I would dare say that there is a very small percentage of Canadians who would ever even have the net worth of a million dollars, although there are a few.

In any event, I digress once more. I will get back to the subject of buying votes.

● (1640)

When the Liberals were successful in attracting one of my Conservative Party of Canada colleagues to cross the floor to instantly take a cabinet position, I was asked how I would describe that. I said this. We had known for quite some time that the Liberal Party, the Prime Minister in particular, was reaching out to opposition members in anticipation of a confidence vote that his government might lose. He was trying to attract one or more members to cross the floor. I do not think he really cared which one it was. Obviously he was successful in finding the weakest link.

That is what it is with a political party. A political party is bound by a chain of principles, ideas, trust, but it is only as strong, just as a family is, as its weakest link. That is why a lot of my colleagues took that very personally. It is a personal thing when one feels betrayed by a colleague.

At some point we have to address that situation. I have never been able to understand how someone can go to bed as a Conservative and wake up as a Liberal, or any other party affiliation for that matter. It amazes me how that can happen. The reality is it was done strictly to ensure the survival of the government, and it worked.

We will always remember the May 19 vote. A budget vote was held which resulted in a virtual tie in the chamber which was broken by the Speaker. This allowed the government to survive for another day. This happened only because of a deal concocted in a hotel room in the dead of night between the NDP and the Liberals to get 19 votes and a deal offered to a Conservative member to cross the floor to become a cabinet minister. That is the only reason the government survived, and those members know that.

That was not bad enough. To add insult to injury I was asked by the media what I thought of the new cabinet minister being given not only the responsibility for human resources development, but also being given responsibility for democratic renewal. It was so difficult for me to even be civil. It was unbelievable.

That type of action reinforces the cynicism that all of us experience not just as members of Parliament but any politician at any level who is involved in party politics. In most cases municipal politicians could be taken out of that because they run as individuals. Whether it is at the provincial level or the federal level, that type of action reinforces the cynicism which affects all politicians of all political stripes.

Voters do not understand then what they are voting for. There are a few people, and they are precious few, who actually run as independents either at the provincial or federal level of governments in our country and win as independents. We get elected to represent our people in this place for three reasons. One is because of our party affiliation. The second is because of the leader. The third is because of who we are.

● (1645)

Again, those members, regardless of political stripe or what party they run for, become so puffed up with their own sense of self-importance that they start to believe they are elected just because of who they are. I have always challenged those people to run as independents. Then they will know why they got elected.

For the vast majority of us in our system of government, we are elected because we belong to a political party. Our political party has a certain platform on which we run in an election campaign. We have principles, some parties arguably more than others, and we have policies on which we run and people elect us on them.

Why is it that we can think for a moment that if suddenly we become a member of a different political party, that is acceptable to our constituents? I have a great problem with that.

How could the Prime Minister of the country, who has said repeatedly that he wants to address what he has referred to as a democratic deficit, take an individual like that over all his colleagues, his caucus, his members of Parliament, and elevate that person as the Minister responsible for Democratic Renewal when, by her very actions, she has just reinforced the cynicism, the distrust with which all Canadians struggle when asked about politics and politicians? I would argue it hurts the Liberals, the New Democrats and the Bloc. It hurts all of us when that cynicism, that distrust is reinforced.

All of us have spoken many times in this place and elsewhere about the need to address that distrust and to try to restore the link that must exist between members of Parliament and constituents, Canadians out in the real world. One of the reasons I left the farm to get involved in politics was my fundamental belief that taxpayer money should be treated like a sacred trust. That is why I am so vehemently opposed to not only Bill C-48, but the process that was used to bring it about and how it was a slap in the face to everybody, every organization, every corporation and every Canadian who participated in the prebudget consultations.

Government Orders

As many of my colleagues have said much more eloquently than I, if this were so urgent, if this were such a good idea, if all of these things that Bill C-48 is supposedly to address were so urgent, why was it not in the original budget? However, it was not. No one is fooled by the fact that it was not in the original budget because it was not time then to buy votes. It is about power for the sake of power. It is about staying in power when that trust is not deserved.

That is why I believe the New Democratic party and its members made a very bad choice to prop up a corrupt government. In the end, it will come back to haunt them. It is not about taking a principled stand on one piece of legislation, which is how the NDP members are trying to paint this. They say that Bill C-48 is their deal, their budget. They applaud every time we call it the NDP budget. It is not about securing the passage of one piece of legislation, it is about making a commitment to a corrupt government to ensure it stays in power. That is the reality of it.

• (1650)

There were three reasons why I became involved in politics. I have spoken about the first one at some length. It was the financial situation, the fiscal importance of our country. At the time I first became involved in politics I had three young children. My children are now aged 22, 24 and 26. They are young adults who are struggling to pay their bills and make their way in the world. Two of them are trying to pay off student loans while struggling under a horrendous tax burden and soon the third will be. That is what my children are facing and that is what many families are facing.

I got involved because I believed we could do better. I believed that our country could do better. I still believe that. I still believe that Canada can be restored to its rightful place as the best country in the world. That is why I continue to struggle every day in this place and in my riding.

I said there were three reasons that primarily motivated me to get into politics. The second was the need for democratic reform. That is why I took it extremely personally, as did many of my colleagues, when we saw the government succeed in luring one of ours away in order to stay in power, just for the sake of staying in power for another day, a week, a year or however long it is.

I honestly do not know how some of the Liberal members of the caucus could witness that and remain in their caucus. I do not understand that. In the 12 years I have been here I have been fortunate enough to get to know many of them. Although we disagree vehemently and strongly on issues of policy and the positions we take on different issues that come before this place, I have a lot of respect for members from all parties.

I believe very strongly that for the vast majority of members of Parliament, regardless of party affiliation, regardless of whether they believe in separation or that government knows best, regardless of what they believe, the vast majority of Canadians who seek public office do it for the right reasons.

That is why I have a real problem trying to understand those Liberal backbenchers who have struggled and toiled for so many years and who have done a reasonably good job—and I will say reasonably because it depends on the individual—of representing their constituents. I would say that by and large their constituents

must think so because many of them have been re-elected, just as I have. I have a real problem understanding how they could sit there and watch as the Prime Minister, like the prime minister before him, gets members of Parliament from another party to join the Liberal Party and elevates them to the cabinet. The public works minister is a good example.

They sit there and they applaud that effort. How can they not ask themselves why they put in all the years of public service to be overlooked just like that because the Prime Minister suddenly decided he needed one more member in order to survive?

That brings me to the third reason, but before I finish with democratic reform I want to say a couple of things. One point is on the whole issue of free votes. As I said, one of the reasons I was attracted to politics was that I believed members of Parliament all too often did not represent their constituents on important fundamental issues.

• (1655)

We have one of those issues before Parliament now. In fact, it is one of the two bills that the government says it wants to extend the sitting in order to get passed, Bill C-38. It is a fundamental issue that many Canadians feel very strongly about, on both sides, and we recognize that.

I do not understand how a Prime Minister who says he wants to address the democratic deficit will not allow his cabinet members the freedom to represent their constituents on this issue. How can the government say it is going to have a free vote on something like this when it is free only for the backbenchers, not for the cabinet?

We are not talking here about a piece of government legislation such as Bill C-48. Everyone can understand a budget vote, even on such a pathetic budget that is two pages long and spends almost \$5 billion of taxpayers' money. But we can understand why, if a government says it believes in this, it has to have its cabinet support it. We may not agree with that, but at least we can understand it. I think all cabinet ministers would understand that if they want to remain in cabinet they are required to vote for those types of things.

Bill C-38 is a different issue. It is an issue of moral conscience. It is an issue that many of us struggle with. It is an issue on which our party has said we will have a complete free vote for all our members. I am not even concerned about this in that sense, because fundamentally I am a democrat. I believe in democracy. It is why I became involved in politics.

Government Orders

I think there are three in our caucus who are going to vote for Bill C-38, but how my colleagues vote is not even an issue for me. How I vote on something like that is an issue for me. Even as my leader's House leader, I want to have him give me the freedom to represent my constituents or my own moral compass on a bill like that. I do not understand how it can be that the government will not give its cabinet that freedom—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the member. It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, Agriculture; the hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest, Veterans Affairs.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

• (1700)

Mr. Jay Hill: Madam Speaker, I was just getting to the point about free votes and what constitutes a free vote. I really do think it is extremely unfortunate that a Prime Minister who has stated on many occasions that he wants to restore the prominence of the individual members of Parliament lets that stop at the cabinet door.

An hon. member: They could resign.

Mr. Jay Hill: We have an ex-cabinet minister who makes the comment that they could resign. I suppose he would like them to resign so he could get back into cabinet.

In all seriousness—and I am trying to be serious about this issue, believe it or not—I would think that cabinet ministers' constituents would be upset by that. I cannot understand why they would not be upset. First and foremost, cabinet ministers are members of Parliament and are sent here to represent constituents. They are sent here to represent the Canadians in their riding.

It is not for me to judge any individual member's riding, except my own obviously, but if those members are not given the freedom by the Prime Minister to represent their constituents' views on such a fundamental issue, and where they may know in some instances that the vast majority of their constituents are opposed to same sex marriage and yet are bound by cabinet solidarity to vote for this legislation, I cannot imagine that it would not be deeply troubling when they lay their head on the pillow at night.

That was the one of the reasons I wanted to get involved in politics. I wanted to see real democratic renewal and democratic reform. I wanted to see things improved in this chamber, just as the Prime Minister has said that he wants to see things improved, yet examples of that have been scarce. In fact, I have seen quite the opposite.

Certainly I have had a sort of insider's view over the past few months, for the lack of a better term, as has my colleague from Niagara Falls as the whip. He and I have interacted with the whips and the House leaders of the three other parties as we have tried our best to make Parliament work over the last number of months. Evidence is scarce of any desire on the part of the Liberal government to restore a greater degree of democratic freedom to this chamber.

It is quite the opposite. Time after time when the opposition put forward a motion to be debated on a supply day or opposition day, we saw it ignored by this government if it passed. In many cases, these opposition day motions, whether put forward by the New Democratic Party, the Bloc Québécois or the Conservative Party of Canada, got sufficient support to pass, sometimes overwhelmingly, yet the government continues to ignore those motions as if they did not happen.

Yet Canadians are supposed to believe that the Prime Minister is committed to democratic reform, to democratic renewal, to restoring the power of individual members of Parliament. That is what we are expected to believe. Everything that this Prime Minister has done demonstrates the opposite, even to ignoring the throne speech. Let us talk about the throne speech.

• (1705)

I was the whip for the official opposition at the time. I was involved at some level in the discussions and negotiations that took place last October to ensure that the throne speech ended up being acceptable to all four parties. It was a unique situation where that actually happened. The throne speech was amended.

I do not have the amendments in front of me today, but as I recall, there were about five different amendments to the throne speech. One of them was a commitment on the part of the government to place before Parliament a debate and a vote on whether Canada would join our neighbour to the south, the United States of America, in a missile defence shield. Before any decision was taken, we would have a debate and a vote in this House. It was a commitment the government made in the throne speech. It was agreed to.

I was the first member of Parliament to take those few steps to shake the Prime Minister's hand that night, because I felt that we had done something pretty amazing. There had been agreement of all the parties on the throne speech. To use an old adage, everybody put a little bit of water in their wine, and we came up with an amended throne speech that we all felt we could live with.

What happened to that particular commitment? There is a reason the Prime Minister has been dubbed Mr. Dithers. Belatedly he made the decision not to participate. Was there a debate and a vote? No. I was involved in debates the year before but there was no debate. There was no information. My colleague from Ontario who is our national defence critic certainly was looking for additional information about what was expected of us, what was being offered, what we were saying no to. Promises made, promises broken.

The Prime Minister did not follow through on that commitment. We asked him repeatedly in question period and in debate what we were saying no to, what the deal was that his government said no to without having a discussion in this place, the people's house, but we never found out. We still have not found out to this day what it was, whether we should indeed have said no or not. I suspect we would have had a disparity of opinions in the four corners of the House and a good lively debate about it. The Prime Minister says that he is committed to democratic reform. It would have been nice to see him actually follow through on that commitment and have a debate and a vote, but it was not to be.

Government Orders

Then we got into a situation, if we look at the list, where we passed a motion on private land use around the Mirabel airport outside of Montreal. It was a Bloc Québécois motion, if I remember correctly. It passed in this House. What has happened? To my understanding, nothing has happened to put that into practice.

We passed a motion in this House to forgo the requirement for a deposit on the part of the producers to get into the agricultural support program known as CAIS. To my knowledge, there has been nothing, no movement on the part of the government to honour its commitment on that when that motion was passed. It is studying exactly what that means.

We could go down the list. Time and time again in the short life of this Parliament, the Prime Minister, who wants us and Canadians to believe that he is committed to restoring democracy, has flouted democracy. He has thumbed his nose at democracy, whether it is at committee, whether it is in this chamber with opposition motions, or whether it is a commitment to appointments. One of my colleagues just mentioned appointments and brought up the whole issue of the Glen Murray appointment. Another broken promise.

• (1710)

Where is the commitment on the part of the Prime Minister to live up to those commitments? It is not there.

As part of my commitment to democratic renewal and my desire to see democracy restored, one of the things that I have always been extremely outspoken on is another issue that is very near and dear to my heart and indeed many hearts in western Canada in particular. It is the issue of Senate reform.

Madam Speaker, one of my colleagues across the way is wondering when this is going to draw to a close. The reality is, as I said earlier, there is unlimited time to debate this. I think even though we did not believe that it should be necessary, the government and its coalition partners supported extending the hours until midnight. It is only 10 after 5. We have lots of time. I do not know what the rush would be.

It surprises me that my Liberal colleague across the way would be opposed to my going on. It is his government's motion that we are debating, to extend the sitting into July. We are going to be here a long time, I suspect. Everyone is going to get lots of chance to talk before we are done this summer the way it is going.

Hon. Tony Ianno: Say something meaningful.

Mr. Jay Hill: Madam Speaker, the member said to say something meaningful. Obviously democratic reform is not something meaningful to a Liberal. If it were meaningful, the Liberals probably would have done something about it long before now, which brings me to the point that I was about to make. My colleague, I am sure, will be very interested in it.

We have a province in this country that actually accepted the cost and took the time and energy required to elect senators. There is a province in this country that did that. It elected its own senators. It was the great province of Alberta.

What was the reaction from the Prime Minister? The Prime Minister said he was not going to have Senate reform piecemeal.

What does that mean? How is that not a slap in the face to every Albertan who cast a ballot? Even if they did not, every Albertan who contributed tax dollars to ensure that there was an election for their senators in that province has to take that personally. There is no other way to take that. This was from a Prime Minister who said he was going to judge the success of his administration, the success of his government, on how well he addressed western alienation. It is unbelievable.

The Prime Minister is going to judge his government on that basis, but he appoints senators from Alberta over the ones the people of Alberta selected. It is patronage of the worst kind. There is patronage where one can argue about the merits of the individual and whether he or she should or should not have a certain position or job. But the Prime Minister selected people over the heads of those who were democratically selected by the people of the province because the Prime Minister said he would not enact Senate reform piecemeal. There is no justifiable reason that the Prime Minister cannot put in place a system of appointing elected senators.

• (1715)

Hon. Roy Cullen: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but I am wondering what the rules are.

I thought we were debating a motion with respect to extending the sitting hours of the House. I am at a loss to figure out how Senate reform in any way relates to that.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The hon. parliamentary secretary knows this could be a point of debate, but I also want to bring to everyone's attention that we want to keep relevancy in the debate.

Mr. Jay Hill: Madam Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's concern. I appreciate your ruling about relevancy. I would say that I cannot imagine what would be more relevant to a debate about extending the sitting of the House than talking about democracy. How could that not be relevant to extending this sitting? It has to be relevant, I would think. Even a Liberal should be able to make that connection, although maybe not.

We have the situation where the government and the Prime Minister do not want to appoint senators who are democratically selected by the people of Alberta. Yet when we look at history and we look around the world to other countries, senate reform has come about because of, to use the Prime Minister's term, piecemeal progress. The United States is a classic example. In many cases it has not come about because a bunch of people got behind closed doors to come up with a grand plan on how to redraft the country's constitution. That is not how it happens.

It happens because there is support from the people to bring about meaningful change. That is why it happens. That is what Albertans have been trying to do. Albertans have been trying to lead the nation with Senate reform.

Albertans are willing to commit their own dollars to try and bring about meaningful Senate reform, and yet to no avail. I am not an Albertan, although I certainly have a fondness for Alberta. Two of my children have migrated to Calgary, as so many have. I have the opportunity to stop in Calgary and visit with them on occasion, but I am not an Albertan.

Government Orders

The reality is that if the Prime Minister was actually committed to democratic renewal, democratic change, democratic improvement, there is no logical reason, none, except for his wish to do so, to appoint to the Senate, his own people, the people that he chooses, rather than the people that Albertans choose. It puts paid, certainly to Albertans, to all his arguments about wanting to restore and reform democracy in this Parliament and the other place.

There is a third issue that attracted me to politics, other than the need for democratic reform and the nation's finances.

Hon. Tony Ianno: I hope you go into prime time so Canadians can watch what you are saying.

Mr. Jay Hill: I hope so too. I hope that Canadians are watching.

The third reason that attracted me to politics is one that is very near and dear to the hearts of many Canadians. It is the whole issue of justice. It is the issue of the need for reform of the criminal system. I am much more inclined, and I have not changed on this since I got into politics back in the 1980s, to call it a legal system and not a justice system that we have in this country.

I hear this all the time from people in Prince George—Peace River. I know my colleagues hear it from their constituents all the time, that in the eyes of many Canadians there is scarcely little justice left in this system. The reality is that criminals all too often get away with their crimes in this country. They are not punished. That is the reality out there.

• (1720)

I talked about a philosophical fundamental difference between how Conservatives and Liberals view a so-called surplus. What is a surplus to a Liberal is overtaxation to a Conservative. I pointed out some of the fundamental differences of how we look at the need for democratic reform. We believe in an elected Senate and the Liberals clearly do not. I would point to the need for the reform of our justice system and say the fundamental difference is that Conservatives believe that people should be held accountable for their actions. Conservatives believe that people who break the law should be held responsible. That is the reality. That is the difference.

I could go on at great length on the misplaced priorities of the government. It decided to spend upwards of \$2 billion on the failed long gun registry to go after the registration of hunters, target shooters and duck hunters rather than coming down hard on the criminal misuse and abuse of firearms. That is just one example of misplaced priorities.

I could sum up my political career as fighting and struggling against misplaced priorities. That is what fundamentally separates Conservatives from Liberals. These arguments need to take place in the House of Commons where we fundamentally disagree with what the government is doing. Whether it is Bill C-48, the budgetary process, the justice field, or not appointing elected senators, there are fundamental flaws with the priorities of the government. There always have been and there always will be until the Liberal government is replaced with a new Conservative government.

I used the example of the long gun registry. Another example that is of great concern to me personally is the use of conditional sentencing. I was here in 1996, which I do not take any pride in,

when the Liberal government brought in conditional sentencing. I was part of a party then that raised some very deep reservations about how that would be used in the courts across this land.

We were told at the time, by the justice minister of the day and Prime Minister Jean Chrétien, not to worry, that it would not be abused. We were told that it was only there to prevent some youngster who might go astray and put a little graffiti on a wall or be caught shoplifting or something stupid that kids do. All of us recognize that and certainly people who are parents recognize that kids do crazy things sometimes. However, we were told not to worry because that was what conditional sentencing was all about.

We asked, “Why don't you say that in the bill? Why don't you say that crimes of violence will be excluded from having a judge award conditional sentencing?”

What is conditional sentencing? Conditional sentencing is when someone is found guilty. We are not talking about persons who are just presumed guilty or we think they are guilty. These are people who have had their day in court and are found guilty of a crime. Conditional sentencing is when a judge poses certain conditions on individuals instead of sending them to jail or to prison in some cases.

We said that we were very concerned about that legislation because it could be open to abuse where people who are eventually convicted of sexual assault, common assault and even manslaughter would not do time in jail. The government said we were fearmongering and it would never happen. We were told not to worry about it. In the last 12 years in this place, if I had a dollar every time Liberals told me not to worry, I might be a shipping magnate. But we should have worried and we did worry about it, and it all came to pass.

• (1725)

I talked earlier about the need for true democratic reform rather than fueling voter cynicism because voters do not see democracy. We do not want to fuel the cynicism that Canadians have about our justice system either. When they see people not being held accountable for their crimes, when they see people going home with an ankle bracelet or something rather than going to jail, it fuels their cynicism that people can get away with this in Canada. It is not right.

What is another fundamental difference? Another fundamental difference is that we believe in the concept of punishment. People who commit wrong need to be punished to deter them from doing it again. The government does not believe in punishment anymore. The Liberals seem to believe that there are no evil people in the world. There is always an excuse for why people do something. There is always a reason. Maybe they were spanked when they were a child. Maybe they did not get everything they should have had as a child. There is always an excuse. There is always a reason why people do what they do. Yes there is, but they should be held accountable.

We have far too many cases in Canada of recidivism. People who are convicted of criminal acts, sometimes horrendous acts, are confined to prison, get paroled, and sometimes even when they are on day parole, they commit more horrendous acts of violence against innocent Canadians. There are fundamental differences in our approach to the need for criminal justice reform.

Let me speak about relevance. Let us talk for a minute about why we would consider extending this sitting. Why would we as a Parliament consider taking the extraordinary step to extend this sitting of Parliament for another few days, few weeks, whatever?

Mr. Speaker, if I only have one minute, I move:

That Government Motion No. 17 be amended, by replacing all the words after the words "June 23, 2005" with the words " , it shall stand adjourned until September 12, 2005".

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed from June 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-312, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (appointment of returning officers), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): It being 5:30 p.m. the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-312 under private members' business.

Call in the members.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 135*)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Alcock	Allison
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson (Victoria)	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
André	Angus
Asselin	Augustine
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Bélanger	Bell
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bergeron
Bezan	Bigras
Blaikie	Blais
Blondin-Andrew	Boire
Boivin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boulianne	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Breitreuz
Brison	Broadbent
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brunelle
Cardin	Carr
Carrie	Carrier

Carroll	Casey
Casson	Chan
Chong	Christopherson
Clavet	Cleary
Comartin	Comuzzi
Côté	Cotler
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Day	Demers
Deschamps	Desjarlais
Desrochers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gallant	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gouk
Graham	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guarnieri	Guay
Guergis	Guimond
Hanger	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Holland	Ianno
Jaffer	Jean
Johnston	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Khan
Kilgour	Komarnicki
Kotto	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lastewka	Lauzon
Lavallée	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Loubier
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Macklin	Maloney
Marceau	Mark
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McLellan
Ménard (Hochelega)	Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Minna	Mitchell
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Murphy	Myers
Neville	Nicholson
O'Connor	Obhrai
Oda	Owen
Pallister	Paquette
Paradis	Parrish
Patry	Penson
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Poilievre	Poirier-Rivard
Powers	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Saada	Sauvageau

Private Members' Business

Private Members' Business

Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Stoffer
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Trost
Tweed	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Vincent
Volpe	Warawa
Wasylycia-Leis	Watson
White	Wilfert
Williams	Wrzesnewskyj
Yelich	Zed- — 258

NAYS

Members

Beaumier	Bevilacqua
Bonin	Boudria
Brown (Oakville)	Bulte
Cannis	Catterall
Chamberlain	Coderre
DeVillers	Galloway
Harris	Hubbard
Jennings	Karygiannis
Lee	Malhi
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Matthews	McTeague
Pacetti	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Sgro	Steckle
Thibault (West Nova)	Torsney
Ur- — 29	

PAIRED

Members

Duceppe	Scott- — 2
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The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-275, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (failure to stop at scene of accident), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-275 under private members' business.

• (1815)

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

*(Division No. 136)***YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Batters	Bell
Benoit	Bezan
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Carrie	Casey
Casson	Chong
Day	Devolin
Doyle	Duncan
Epp	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Forsyth	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gouk	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis	Hanger
Harris	Harrison
Hearn	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Johnston	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon	Lukiwski
Lunn	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mark	McTeague
Menzies	Merrifield
Miller	Mills
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Pallister	Penson
Poilievre	Prentice
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Scheer
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Skelton	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
Stoffer	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson	Toews
Trost	Tweed
Van Loan	Vellacott
Warawa	Watson
White	Wilfert
Williams	Yelich- — 94

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Anderson (Victoria)	André
Angus	Asselin
Augustine	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Bakopanos	Barnes
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bergeron	Bevilacqua
Bigras	Blaikie
Blais	Blondin-Andrew
Boire	Boivin
Bonin	Bonsant
Boshcoff	Bouchard
Boudria	Boulianne
Bourgeois	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown (Oakville)
Brunelle	Bulte
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carr
Carrier	Carroll
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Christopherson
Clavet	Cleary
Coderre	Comartin

*Private Members' Business***KYOTO PROTOCOL**

The House resumed from June 17 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 162 under private members' business.

● (1825)

[*Translation*]

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

(*Division No. 137*)

YEAS

Members

André	Asselin
Bachand	Bellavance
Bergeron	Bigras
Blais	Boire
Bonsant	Bouchard
Boulianne	Bourgeois
Brunelle	Cardin
Carrier	Clavet
Cleary	Côté
Crête	Demers
Deschamps	Desrochers
Faille	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet	Gauthier
Guimond	Kotto
Laframboise	Lalonde
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lavallée
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Loubier
Marceau	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Paquette
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Roy	Sauvageau
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	St-Hilaire
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Vincent— 52	

NAYS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshcoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Carr
Carrie	Carroll
Casey	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	DeVillers

Comuzzi	Côté
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Demers	Deschamps
Desjarlais	Desrochers
DeVillers	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Drouin	Dryden
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)	Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godbout	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Ianno
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karetak-Lindell
Karygiannis	Khan
Kotto	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lapierre (Outremont)
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)	Lastewka
Lavallée	LeBlanc
Lee	Lemay
Lessard	Lévesque
Longfield	Loubier
MacAulay	Macklin
Malhi	Maloney
Marceau	Marleau
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)	Masse
Matthews	McCallum
McDonough	McGuinty
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLellan	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Minna
Mitchell	Murphy
Myers	Neville
Owen	Pacetti
Paquette	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Picard (Drummond)	Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Plamondon	Poirier-Rivard
Powers	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Saada	Sauvageau
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Siksay	Silva
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Smith (Pontiac)
St-Hilaire	St. Amand
St. Denis	Steckle
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Vincent
Volpe	Wasylycia-Leis
Wrzesnewskyj	Zed— 194

PAIRED

Members

Duceppe Scott— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Private Members' Business

Devolin	Dhalla
Dion	Dosanjh
Doyle	Drouin
Dryden	Duncan
Easter	Efford
Emerson	Epp
Eyking	Finley
Fitzpatrick	Fletcher
Folco	Fontana
Forseth	Frulla
Fry	Gallant
Galloway	Godbout
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gouk
Graham	Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guarnieri	Guergis
Hanger	Harris
Harrison	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Holland	Hubbard
Ianno	Jaffer
Jean	Jennings
Johnston	Julian
Kadis	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Khan	Kilgour
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lapierre (Outremont)	Lastewka
Lauzon	LeBlanc
Lee	Longfield
Lukiwski	Lunn
Lunney	MacAulay
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Macklin	Malhi
Maloney	Mark
Marleau	Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Matthews
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLellan
McTeague	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Mills	Minna
Mitchell	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Murphy
Myers	Neville
Nicholson	O'Connor
Obhrai	Oda
Owen	Pacetti
Pallister	Paradis
Parrish	Patry
Penson	Peterson
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)	Poilievre
Powers	Prentice
Preston	Proulx
Rajotte	Ratansi
Redman	Regan
Reid	Richardson
Ritz	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Russell	Saada
Savage	Savoy
Scarpaleggia	Scheer
Schellenberger	Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Sgro	Siksay
Silva	Simard (Saint Boniface)
Simms	Skelton
Smith (Pontiac)	Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Solberg	Sorenson
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steckle	Stoffer
Stronach	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (West Nova)	Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Tilson	Toews
Tonks	Torsney
Trost	Tweed
Ur	Valeri
Valley	Van Loan
Vellacott	Volpe

Warawa	Wasylycia-Leis
Watson	White
Wilfert	Williams
Wrzesnewskyj	Yelich
Zed- — 237	

PAIRED

Members

Duceppe Scott- — 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

* * *

[English]

HERITAGE LIGHTHOUSE PROTECTION ACT

The House resumed from June 20 consideration of the motion that Bill S-14, an act to protect heritage lighthouses, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill S-14 under private members' business.

● (1840)

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

(Division No. 138)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Adams	Alcock
Allison	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson (Victoria)
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Angus
Augustine	Bagnell
Bains	Bakopanos
Barnes	Batters
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell	Bennett
Benoit	Bevilacqua
Bezan	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Boivin
Bonin	Boshoff
Boudria	Bradshaw
Breitkreuz	Brisson
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bulte	Byrne
Cannis	Carr
Carrie	Carroll
Casey	Casson
Catterall	Chamberlain
Chan	Chong
Christopherson	Coderre
Comartin	Comuzzi
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
Day	Desjarlais
DeVillers	Devolin
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Drouin	Dryden
Duncan	Easter
Efford	Emerson
Epp	Eyking
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Fletcher	Folco
Fontana	Forseth
Frulla	Fry
Gallant	Galloway
Godbout	Godfrey

Private Members' Business

Godin
Goodyear
Graham
Guarnieri
Hanger
Harrison
Hiebert
Holland
Ianno
Jean
Johnston
Kadis
Karetak-Lindell
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Khan
Komarnicki
Lapierre (Outremont)
Lauzon
Lee
Lukiwski
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Macklin
Maloney
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McLellan
Menzies
Miller
Minna
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murphy
Neville
O'Connor
Oda
Pacetti
Paradis
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Poilievre
Prentice
Proulx
Ratansi
Regan
Richardson
Robillard
Rota
Saada
Savoy
Scheer
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Silva
Simms
Smith (Pontiac)
Solberg
St. Amand
Steckle
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Tilson
Tonks
Trost
Ur
Valley
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Wilfert
Wrzesnewskyj
Zed— 233

Goldring
Gouk
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guergis
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Hubbard
Jaffer
Jennings
Julian
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kilgour
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lastewka
LeBlanc
Longfield
Lunn
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Malhi
Mark
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Matthews
McDonough
McGuire
McTeague
Merrifield
Mills
Mitchell

Myers
Nicholson
Obhrai
Owen
Pallister
Parrish
Penson
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Powers
Preston
Rajotte
Redman
Reid
Ritz
Rodriguez
Russell
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger
Siksay
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Skelton
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
St. Denis
Stoffer
Szabo
Temelkovski
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Torsney
Tweed
Valeri
Van Loan
Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis
White
Williams
Yelich

NAYS

Members

André
Bachand
Bergeron

Asselin
Bellavance
Bigras

Blais
Bonsant
Boulianne
Brunelle
Carrier
Cleary
Crête
Deschamps
Faille
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gaudet
Guimond
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lemay
Lévesque
Marceau
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Perron
Plamondon
Roy
Simard (Beauport—Limoulu)
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Vincent— 52

Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Cardin
Clavet
Côté
Demers
Desrochers
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gauthier
Kotto
Lalonde
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Paquette
Picard (Drummond)
Poirier-Rivard
Sauvageau
St-Hilaire

PAIRED

Members

Duceppe

Scott— 2

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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

* * *

SYMBOL FOR THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House resumed from June 21 consideration of the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 228 under private members' business.

(The House divided on the motion:)

*(Division No. 139)***YEAS**

Members

Adams
Anderson (Victoria)
Bagnell
Bakopanos
Beaumier
Bell
Bevilacqua
Blondin-Andrew
Bonin
Bradshaw
Brown (Oakville)
Byrne
Carr
Catterall
Chan
Coderre
Comuzzi
Cullen (Etobicoke North)
D'Amours
DeVillers
Dion
Drouin
Easter
Emerson
Eyking
Fontana
Fry
Godbout

Alcock
Augustine
Bains
Barnes
Bélanger
Bennett
Blaikie
Boivin
Boshcoff
Brisson
Bulte
Cannis
Carroll
Chamberlain
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cuzner
Davies
Dhalla
Dosanjh
Dryden
Efford
Epp
Folco
Frulla
Galloway
Godfrey

S. O. 57

Godin
Guarnieri
Hubbard
Jennings
Karetak-Lindell
Khan
Lapierre (Outremont)
LeBlanc
Longfield
MacAulay
Malhi
Marleau
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Matthews
McDonough
McGuire
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Owen
Paradis
Patry
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham-Kent—Essex)
Proulx
Redman
Reid
Rodriguez
Russell
Savage
Scarpaleggia
Sgro
Simard (Saint Boniface)
Smith (Pontiac)
St. Denis
Stoffer
Szabo
Temelkovski
Tilson
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Wilfert
Zed— 143

Graham
Holland
Ianno
Kadis
Karygiannis
Kilgour
Lastewka
Lee
Lunn
Macklin
Maloney
Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
Masse
McCallum
McGuinty
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
Pacetti
Parrish
Peterson
Phinney
Powers
Ratansi
Regan
Robillard
Rota
Saada
Savoy
Scheer
Silva
Simms
St. Amand
Steckle
Stronach
Telegdi
Thibault (West Nova)
Tonks
Ur
Valley
Wasylcia-Leis
Wrzesneskyj

Johnston
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kotto
Laframboise
Lapierre (Lévis—Bellechasse)
Lavallée
Lessard
Loubier
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mark
Ménard (Hochelaga)
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
Obhrai
Pallister
Penson
Picard (Drummond)
Poilievre
Prentice
Rajotte
Ritz
Sauvageau
Schmidt (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Simard (Beauport—Limoilou)
Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul)
Sorenson
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)
Toews
Tweed
Vellacott
Warawa
White
Yelich— 143

Julian
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lalonde
Lauzon
Lemay
Lévesque
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Marceau
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
Merrifield
Mills
O'Connor
Oda
Paquette
Perron
Plamondon
Poirier-Rivard
Preston
Richardson
Roy
Schellenberger
Siksay
Skelton
Solberg
St-Hilaire
Trost
Van Loan
Vincent
Watson
Williams

NAYS

Members

Abbott
Allison
Anders
André
Asselin
Batters
Benoit
Bezan
Blais
Bonsant
Boulianne
Breitkreuz
Brunelle
Carrie
Casey
Chong
Cleary
Crête
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Demers
Desjarlais
Devolin
Duncan
Finley
Fletcher
Gagnon (Québec)
Gagnon (Jonquière—Alma)
Gaudet
Goldring
Gouk
Guergis
Hanger
Harrison
Hiebert
Jaffer

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)
Angus
Bachand
Bellavance
Bergeron
Bigras
Boire
Bouchard
Bourgeois
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Cardin
Carrier
Casson
Clavet
Côté
Crowder
Day
Deschamps
Desrochers
Doyle
Faille
Fitzpatrick
Forseth
Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain)
Gallant
Gauthier
Goodyear
Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells)
Guimond
Harris
Hearn
Hill
Jean

PAIRED

Members

Duceppe

Scott— 2

● (1850)

And the result of the vote having been announced: (Yeas: 143; Nays: 143)

The Deputy Speaker: The vote being tied, the Speaker has to cast the deciding vote. Following in the tradition of the Speaker's chair, I should maintain the status quo. I will vote against the motion. Accordingly I declare the motion lost.

* * *

● (1855)

EXTENSION OF SITTING PERIOD

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Tony Valeri (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to give notice that with respect to the consideration of Government Business No. 17, at the next sitting I shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that the debate be not further adjourned.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Order, please. I am ready to rule on the request of the hon. member for Lethbridge for an emergency debate. I have considered the matter and have decided not to proceed with the debate this day.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 17 consideration of the motion that C-293, an act to amend the Criminal Code (theft of a motor vehicle), be now read the second time and referred to a committee.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today on Bill C-293, an act to amend the Criminal Code (theft of a motor vehicle).

I would like to begin by responding to some comments made in this House during the first hour of debate on Bill C-293.

I agree with the member for Langley that theft of a motor vehicle is a serious offence. I also agree with the comments by some members about motor vehicles being stolen for a variety of reasons. They can, for instance, be stolen to maintain a drug habit, to facilitate the activities of criminal organizations, or merely for the thrill of it.

If I understand correctly the position of the member who spoke during the first hour of the debate on second reading, one of the reasons given as justification for mandatory minimum sentencing as set out in Bill C-293 is its deterrent value. I am not convinced that the sentencing structure he proposed will achieve that important objective.

If this bill does try to send out a deterrent message about motor vehicle theft, it is a muted message, since it would, if implemented, cut the maximum sentence for motor vehicle theft in half, that is down to five years imprisonment.

Currently, anyone who commits theft of a motor vehicle is liable to 10 years' imprisonment if prosecuted by way of indictment. A maximum 10 year sentence tells offenders that this crime will not be tolerated by society in general or by the criminal justice system in particular.

An important sentencing principle in Canada is the consideration by the courts of any mitigating or aggravating factors during sentencing. For example, when theft of a motor vehicle is accompanied by an act of violence, that act is considered to be an aggravating factor in the determination of the sentence. Similarly, a mitigating factor would be if an offender pleads guilty or has no criminal record. The aim of this compensatory process is to ensure that like criminals receive equivalent sentences for similar crimes.

In other words, the judge has a great deal of discretion in handing down an appropriate sentence that takes into consideration the various directives set out in the Criminal Code provisions on sentencing, especially when it comes to crimes committed for a wide variety of reasons, as is the case with motor vehicle theft in this country.

Private Members' Business

Up to now, I have talked mostly about using criminal law to fight this type of crime.

● (1900)

During the first hour of debate on this issue, my colleague mentioned two other factors contributing to the reduction in thefts of motor vehicles in Canada, namely education and technology.

As regards technology, the current government made significant progress in March 2005, when it amended the regulations on vehicle demobilizers.

The amendment requires that, by September 1, 2007, all new vehicles with a gross weight rating of less than 4,536 kg be equipped with vehicle demobilizers. These systems, which make it difficult to start a motor without the device that deactivates them, will help reduce vehicle theft in Canada.

While no panacea, this new requirement will make it more difficult to steal a car and will no doubt be an effective deterrent in the case of crimes of opportunity or crimes committed by those looking for a thrill.

As regards the need for community and educational programs, recent initiatives enforcing the legislation have met with success. The recent HEAT program in Saskatchewan and the bait car program in British Columbia are examples of innovative methods used by the police to prevent this sort of crime in their community.

In conclusion, while I believe Bill C-293 is based on good intentions, I cannot support it, because it does not take into account the fact that car thefts are committed by all sorts of offenders for various reasons and with varying degrees of violence. In addition, it would essentially halve the current maximum sentence for this type of crime provided in the Criminal Code and would disproportionately increase the maximum mandatory sentence provided when the offence is punishable on summary conviction to two years, which is considerably more than sentences for crimes such as sexual assault.

● (1905)

[*English*]

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to speak to private member's Bill C-293, brought forward by my hon. colleague from Langley. My colleague has brought forward an issue that affects Canadians in every riding in Canada, the issue of auto theft.

The bill is designed to send direction to the courts when dealing with this matter. It is intended to send a message to criminals that the days of stealing cars with little or no consequences are coming to an end. The purpose of the bill is to provide direction to the courts regarding sentencing for the offence of theft of a motor vehicle.

Private Members' Business

Bill C-293 would amend the Criminal Code to provide for minimum sentencing with fines and/or imprisonment for every person who is convicted of theft of a motor vehicle a first, second or subsequent time. The bill would provide for minimum sentencing whether the offence is prosecuted by indictment or punishable on summary conviction.

On first conviction it would be three months incarceration or \$1,000 fine, or both. On second conviction it would be incarceration or \$5,000 fine, or both. All subsequent convictions, should there be any, would be a year in jail or \$10,000, or both.

Each year 160,000 vehicles are stolen in Canada. Over the past decade, vehicle theft rates have doubled in London and Hamilton, tripled in Regina and more than quadrupled in Winnipeg. Canada ranked fifth highest of 17 countries for car theft in the 1999 international crime victimization survey. Canada's vehicle theft rate has been higher than the United States since 1996.

The major motive for theft continues to be joyriding. The remainder is mainly accounted for by organized crime.

While many associate vehicle theft with big cities and bad neighbourhoods, this is not often the case. In fact, the rate of vehicle theft is highest in the western provinces. Luckily, these provinces also have high recovery rates because cars are usually stolen for joyriding and the ones stolen for export markets are harder to accept from non-seaport cities.

Most thefts by organized crime are for vehicles exported overseas or to other provinces. However, many are still chopped for parts as in the past. In fact, a chop shop was discovered about 15 kilometres from our farm this year. I asked a friend on the weekend if his stolen truck was recovered. He said they had found one part, so the whole vehicle must have been chopped. What a waste.

The drastic rise in the cost of auto parts has made this an extremely profitable and lucrative venture for organized crime. Export markets are the reason Halifax, Quebec City, Montreal and large Ontario urban centres suffer from the lowest recovery rate.

Montreal has the largest problem of organized vehicle theft in Canada. Its non-recovery rate is twice that of Halifax, the next city on the list. A staggering 44% of vehicles vanish without a trace.

Last year my husband and I were victims of auto theft. Not only was our family a victim, but more important, so was our business. While my husband worked on the swather, swathing rapeseed, a wanted criminal jumped into our farm half-ton truck on that very same field and headed off down the highway. Luckily I was looking for my husband in the field and noticed our truck speeding down the highway. I managed to call the police.

We were among the fortunate few. We got our vehicle back in one piece, but it was two days later. The RCMP recovered our truck that night on a tip from a suspicious citizen. Unfortunately, this is not the case much of the time because 34% of cars stolen from homes are not recovered. Comparatively, parking lots and streets have much better recovery rates of 15% and 10% respectively. An amazing 41% of cars stolen from car dealerships are never found.

●(1910)

These statistics show that thieves are selective in the cars they take. Even new cars with their new anti-theft systems are not safe. All of this comes at a great cost.

Every day about 440 cars are stolen in Canada. This comes at a staggering cost of \$1 billion per year. This only gets more expensive as cars get more expensive. Our insurance rates skyrocket. Low income families who cannot afford to live downtown find they cannot afford to drive from the suburbs either.

However, it is not the financial cost that concerns me the most. It is the human cost. Those who steal cars are often reckless in their use and even more reckless when fleeing the law.

From 1999 to 2001, just three years, 81 Canadians lost their lives as a result of vehicle theft. Half of them, 54%, were the offenders themselves. The other half were innocent people in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The justice system has failed to keep repeat offenders off the roads, but the Liberal government and its go soft approach to youth crime is also to blame. Young offenders, those aged 12 to 17, account for 42% of all those charged. That is unbelievable. Forty-two per cent of those charged with stealing cars are not even old enough to be licensed.

Although these youths are charged, the consequences under the Liberal youth justice system fails to provide enough of a deterrent. Organized crime knows this. Organized crime, just as it does with young drug runners, targets youth to do its dirty work because there are no consequences. The Liberal government has turned our youth into targets for organized crime as a result, and this is unacceptable.

The costs are not simply criminal records. The real cost is lives. Seventy-one per cent of those killed in stolen vehicles were under the age of 25. While some like to blame high speed police chases, this is not the case. In fact, over half, 54%, of deaths occurred outside of the active police pursuit. Our law enforcement officers are trained professionals and should not be blamed for collisions involving stolen vehicles.

Private Members' Business

As I mentioned earlier this year, our family truck was stolen. We were not alone. Hundreds of small business owners can go out of business with a relatively simple vehicle theft. Many have all their tools and equipment in their vehicles. A stolen vehicle puts them out of business and their families suffer as a result. It can take months to re-accumulate the specialized tools and equipment. Whether it is a plumber, a carpet cleaner, a courier, or a cab driver, all face financial ruin with the theft of their vehicle, their business and their livelihood.

I applaud my colleague from Langley for bringing forward this legislation. By doing so he has taken the first steps to better protect small business owners. More important, he has taken a giant step toward saving the lives of innocent victims, especially our youth and our children.

By supporting the legislation, the House sends a message that there is a serious problem and we want consequences for all those involved in it. I encourage all my hon. colleagues to think of the innocent victims in their ridings and support this legislation.

At this time I want to honour those men and women in our police forces across our country who are in the stolen vehicle units and who work so hard to enforce the laws and to stop people from stealing our vehicles.

• (1915)

Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-293, an act to amend the Criminal Code, theft of a motor vehicle.

I would like to begin by addressing some of the comments made in the first hour of debate on Bill C-293 in the House.

I would agree with the hon. member for Langley that motor vehicle theft is a serious issue. I would also agree with the comments made by some hon. members that cars are stolen for a variety of reasons. As examples, they are stolen to feed drug addiction, to facilitate the activities of criminal organizations or simply as a matter of thrill.

As I understand the position advanced by the hon. member for Langley during the first hour of second reading debate, one of the rationales for mandatory minimum sentences in Bill C-293 is deterrence. I cannot agree that the sentencing structure as he has provided will meet this important objective.

To the extent that the bill attempts to deter vehicle theft, it is sending a mixed message, given the fact that if implemented, Bill C-293 will reduce the maximum punishment available for theft by one-half, down to five years imprisonment.

Currently, a person who steals a motor vehicle is liable to a 10 year jail term when the matter is prosecuted by indictment. A 10 year maximum term sends an important message to offenders that this criminal activity will not be tolerated, not by society and especially not by the Canadian criminal justice system. It makes a long term of imprisonment available to judges imposing sentences when circumstances so require.

It is an important element of sentencing in Canada that a court undertakes an assessment of any mitigating and aggravating factors during the sentencing process. For instance, where motor vehicle theft is accompanied by an incident of violence, this has been found

to be an aggravating factor in sentencing. Alternatively, when an offender pleads guilty or is without a criminal record, these have been found to be mitigating factors. This balancing process aims to ensure that like criminals receive similar sentences for similar crimes.

My point is, this judicial discretion, which is very important, is contributing to the imposition of suitable punishment, one that takes into account various statutory directions set out in the sentencing provisions of the Criminal Code, especially when dealing with a wide range of offenders committing auto theft in the country.

I have focused much of my discussion thus far on the use of criminal law as a means to combatting this form of crime. During the first hour of debate on this matter my colleague highlighted two other factors which would contribute to the reduction of motor vehicle thefts in Canada. These two components include education and engineering.

With regard to engineering, a significant advancement was made by the government in March with the regulatory amendment regarding the vehicle immobilization system. The amendment requires that by September 1, 2007 all new vehicles having a gross vehicle weight rating of less than 4,536 kilograms, except emergency vehicles, must be equipped with an immobilization system. These immobilization systems, which make it difficult for the car engine to be started without the proper disabling device, will be effective in reducing theft in the country.

• (1920)

Although not a panacea, this new requirement for cars in Canada will make it more difficult to commit motor vehicle theft and will certainly prove to be an effective deterrent, especially for those committing auto theft as a crime of opportunity or thrill.

With regard to the need for community programming and education, recent law enforcement initiatives have shown evidence of success. For example, project heat in Saskatchewan and the bait car program in British Columbia are evidence of innovative ways law enforcement are directing efforts at preventing this form of crime in these communities.

In conclusion, although I believe the intentions behind the bill are good, I cannot support Bill C-293 as it fails to take into account that the crime of auto theft is committed by an array of offenders with divergent motivations and associated levels of violence. Further, the bill would essentially cut in half the maximum punishment available for this crime currently under the Criminal Code and it would also disproportionately increase the maximum punishment available under summary conviction to two years, well beyond crimes such as sexual assault.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is an honour to address Bill C-293, an act to amend the Criminal Code, amending sentencing with regard to the theft of an automobile.

I want to thank my hon. colleague from the riding of Langley for his important contribution to Canadian justice in introducing this legislation.

Private Members' Business

Auto theft is a major problem in the lower mainland of British Columbia. The bill is a step in the right direction toward changing that.

I had a look at the statistics for auto theft in my own riding of South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale. In 2004, nearly 200 cars were stolen in White Rock. However that pales in comparison to Surrey. In recent years, Surrey has seen over 7,000 cars stolen a year. The problem in Surrey is so bad the city has even gained the infamous of “auto theft capital of North America”.

I say in recent years because in the last year the RCMP in the lower mainland have launched a somewhat successful project to combat this problem. The RCMP have tasked officers to focus solely on auto theft and have begun using bait cars to capture thieves. Surrey saw car theft drop 23% in the month that the program was introduced, with a 13% drop overall across the greater Vancouver area.

However bait cars, more policing and all the efforts of law enforcement are not going to eliminate most auto theft because even when criminals are convicted, they are back on the streets again quickly. Even auto thieves with long records for repeat offences are routinely given slaps on the wrist.

The situation is not unlike that of marijuana grow houses, also a major problem in Surrey. Despite the best efforts of police to catch and convict growers, they cannot keep up with the problem. Even when convictions are obtained, growers, like car thieves, get light sentences. That is in part because the Criminal Code does not recognize auto theft as anything more than a property crime.

According to Statistics Canada, 171,000 cars were stolen in Canada in 2003. The direct costs to insurers, police and courts of car theft is over \$1 billion a year. There is an added cost to the victims of such thieves, in terms of paying deductibles, lost possessions and loss of mobility.

All Canadians pay for auto theft through the taxes they pay for policing and justice. The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that the component that covers theft of an average annual auto insurance premium is \$48 per car.

Likewise, the cost of grow ops to landlords for damaged rental property and the utilities for stolen electricity is also in the range of hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

However there is a darker side to both crimes, often accompanied by an element of violence and posing a threat to public safety.

As we have learned, grow houses are often protected by armed criminals and the houses themselves are often booby-trapped with explosives or other dangerous deterrents.

Similarly, auto theft could be a dangerous and deadly activity. We need look no further than Maple Ridge, B.C., where in March a gas station attendant was dragged almost eight kilometres to his death under a stolen Chrysler LeBaron.

Based on statistics from previous years, somewhere around 30 people will be killed in an incident involving a stolen car this year. There also seems to be a connection to street racing in some cases of auto theft.

Whether cars are stolen for joy rides, for parts or for the money to buy street racers, the minor consequences auto thieves face if caught are little disincentive to those who would be involved in dangerous street racing. We just had another incident in Victoria yesterday that some eye witnesses believe may have involved street racing. A woman was killed and several other bystanders were injured.

It is also revealing to hear what the police who deal with auto theft believe about the problem. According to a study conducted by the City of Surrey and several interested parties, 100% of police interviewees agree on the following points: auto crime is not strictly a property crime but a crime against persons; auto theft has seriously impacted victims despite insurance coverage; sentences for auto theft are too lenient; auto theft offenders pose a serious risk to police; auto theft criminals carry weapons; and these offenders pose a serious risk to the public.

The courts are simply not taking this crime as seriously as they should when it comes to sentencing and that poses a threat to public safety.

● (1925)

The Surrey mayor stated in the Surrey Now newspaper that:

We're being very aggressive with car thieves who commit frequent thefts and we're working hard with the courts to try and keep these people in jail longer.

We've got to make the courts realize how dangerous some of these people are when they steal cars.

Indeed, there are reasons why auto theft is now so dangerous. Auto theft has become closely linked to the drug trade and organized crime. Many of the car thieves arrested fit a profile of young, single men and male teens often seeking cash to feed a drug habit.

The increasing involvement of teenagers in auto theft is no accident. They know that they can participate in this criminal enterprise with few consequences if they are caught and as juvenile offenders will have no criminal record when they turn 18.

Those paying the cash for the stolen cars are members of organized crime who, incidentally, are also selling the narcotics. It is a huge industry and the profits are phenomenal. Organized crime strips the cars for parts for sale domestically, changes the VIN numbers and sells them interprovincially or exports the cars overseas to jurisdictions where they cannot be traced. Usually it is the more expensive cars and SUVs that are making it overseas; about 40,000 annually by insurance industry estimates. This is a major problem.

According to the latest annual report from the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada it states:

At the Port of Vancouver, sectors of the workforce have been infiltrated by a small number of criminal elements, including some members and associates of the HELLS ANGELS, as well as other independent criminal operators.

A report produced by Statistics Canada on involvement of organized crime in motor vehicle theft states:

Stolen vehicles that are shipped out of Montreal or Toronto may first arrive in the United States and from there travel to Europe, South America or East Africa. Stolen vehicles that are shipped out of the port of Halifax are likely to arrive eventually in Eastern Europe. Stolen vehicles moved through the port of Vancouver often end up in Asia.

For reasons of economics and public safety it is time for Parliament to act on this issue. There are many actions that can be taken and Bill C-293 is a modest, moderate step forward. Bill C-293 would require a minimum sentence upon first conviction of three months incarceration or \$1,000 fine or both. A second conviction would be six months incarceration or \$5,000 fine or both. All subsequent convictions would result in a one year incarceration or \$10,000 fine or both.

There are 29 other offences in the Criminal Code for which there are minimum sentences. This is not a novel idea, nor is it a new idea, but it would be an effective deterrent to those who would steal cars.

The Liberal government disagrees with this approach. When we discussed minimum sentences during the month of March, the justice minister's parliamentary secretary made a number of claims about minimum sentences, some of which were conflicting. His most absurd claim was:

Research into the effectiveness of minimum sentences has shown that these have no dissuasive or educational effect and are no more effective than lighter sentences as far as crime prevention is concerned.

He also said:

—there was no correlation whatsoever between the crime rate and the severity of sentences.

The parliamentary secretary also suggested that the cost to the corrections system may increase with the minimum sentences. He may be correct about that but that is not the entire equation. First, if minimum sentences are enacted and enforced, court and policing costs may drop as repeat offenders find themselves behind bars for extended stays. Also, the cost to drivers, through reduced insurance costs, may be appreciable, because with the car thieves either behind bars or deterred from such a crime there is simply less theft to compensate.

The fact is the government has not taken criminal justice seriously and that is evident to even a significant number of Liberal MPs who are often persuaded to support various private members' bills that stiffen sentences for crime whenever they get the chance in a free vote.

I want to conclude by once again congratulating the member for Langley for introducing this fine piece of legislation. I would like to encourage all Canadians who care about this issue to write or call their member of Parliament and ask them to support Bill C-293.

● (1930)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House and speak once again to the bill. When it was introduced I spoke very much in favour of the bill and I will again. I will reiterate once more my complete support for the bill. I want to give the reasons I feel this is such an important bill. Once again, I congratulate my hon. colleague—

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Order. I regret to inform the member that according to the rules, as he has already spoken on this item, he cannot speak a second time.

Private Members' Business

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Essex.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Madam Speaker, I echo the sentiments of my colleague by saying it is a great pleasure to rise in this place to speak to what I believe is a fine piece of legislation. This bill is long overdue. The bill has been brought forward by the hon. member for Langley who is my seatmate here in the House. In his first year here, he is demonstrating himself to be a fine member of Parliament.

I look at this legislation that he has brought forward which provides for minimum sentences on theft of a motor vehicle. Dealing with criminal justice issues has become a serious passion for the member for Langley. He has worked very diligently on this particular issue and others. The voters back home in his riding of Langley will be very pleased with the work that their member is doing. The new rule changes have allowed him to bring forward his private member's bill in such an early fashion and the chance to have it voted on and moved forward. This is an exciting time for him.

This is a very important piece of legislation. Motor vehicle theft is a very serious issue in Canada. It is a serious issue in my community back home. In the communities of Essex County, particularly the city of Windsor, there is a growing influence of organized crime; vice crime is on the rise.

A number of people, even in my own circle of friends, have had their vehicles stolen. It is a serious cost to them and a serious cost to our fellow Canadians as well. We pay for it through our increased insurance rates. We like to complain a lot about how much we have to pay for car insurance in Ontario. It is not just attributable to poor driving but to the fact that our vehicles are being stolen.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada estimates that auto theft costs Canadians \$1 billion a year. That is a staggering number. We are not talking pocket change here. This is very serious: \$1 billion a year.

Canada's auto theft rate is higher than the rate in the United States. My riding is across the river from Detroit, Michigan. Many of us think that crime is pretty bad over on the United States' side of the border and we pride ourselves that things are a lot quieter and our communities are a lot safer over here. Canada's vehicle theft rate has been higher than the United States' rate since 1996. It is virtually a decade already where we have exceeded the United States in vehicle thefts.

What is particularly serious is the nature of the crime. Vehicles are being stolen, not just as a crime in itself but in order to commit other crimes. It is not just a simple act of theft by somebody on a lark. The statistic I have is that one-quarter of vehicle thefts are linked to organized crime. It is very serious. For our colleagues from Quebec who are tackling organized crime within their own provincial boundaries, this is a serious issue. One-quarter of vehicle thefts are linked to organized crime.

The proceeds from auto theft fund organized crime terrorism. That is where the proceeds are going. Vehicles are stolen to commit other crimes and it is done in an organized fashion. Sometimes the vehicles are exported overseas, or resold in other provinces, or stripped for auto parts. They are very sophisticated operations.

Private Members' Business

The real serious problem is that courts in Canada are not taking this seriously enough. They are not penalizing these criminals in the proper fashion. Why not? The Criminal Code currently rates auto theft simply as a property offence, which fails to grasp the larger issue that these vehicles are being stolen to commit other crimes, that there are strong links to organized crime, to funding terrorism. Those are very serious things.

• (1935)

The courts need clear direction from Parliament regarding the seriousness of this offence. That is why I salute my colleague, the member for Langley, for bringing this bill forward. This is part of our attempt to send a strong signal from Parliament on behalf of society at large, the communities we represent, that they do not tolerate auto theft. They understand the seriousness of it.

We need to express that here within these walls by passing Bill C-293. It is a very important piece of legislation that would provide for minimum mandatory sentences and/or serious fines. It would send a clear message to the auto thieves themselves. It would act as a deterrent. Maybe people who were being corralled into an organized crime ring or drug ring would think twice about it, because they would not just get some sort of house arrest or a little slap on the wrist. There is a very real threat that they would spend some time in a real jail. That may dissuade some of them from getting involved in these kinds of crimes.

Not only would it dissuade potential offenders from offending, but it stands the real promise of dissuading actual offenders, those who have already offended, from reoffending. That is a real concern as well, those who have been involved in organized crime or a drug ring, who have been caught under the old rules. If this law passed, it would change the scenario for them. They would have the potential to do real time. They may think twice now and they might find a way out of it so that they do not reoffend and end up in jail.

The other important thing about this is that it would finally be communicating society's condemnation of auto theft. We have had enough. It is costing us \$1 billion. Insurance rates are soaring. It would send a signal that we have had enough and that we are done with it, that we are going to get serious about this. We are going to ensure that those who steal automobiles for the purposes of committing other crimes are put away. They are going to serve serious time. That is very important.

This is important if we are going to send a serious signal about the larger issue of organized crime. We are not going to tolerate it any more. We are going to fight back. Society wants to fight back. Canadians can do that through their members of Parliament. That is what the member for Langley is doing. That is what I am up here doing on behalf of the citizens and the communities of the riding of Essex and even for our neighbours in the city of Windsor. We know they do not tolerate this anymore. In our community we have seen vice crime on the rise. We have seen a lot of crime that has been going up.

It is very important for us as citizens to express our displeasure. We are done with it. We are just not going to tolerate it anymore. The way we can do that is by passing Bill C-293.

I want to talk about the profile of the typical auto thief. It is not some young kid on a joyride who walks into a neighbourhood, picks a car that is nice and easy to break into, takes it for a little spin and leaves it somewhere else. According to a 2004 auto theft study, the typical auto thief is a 27-year-old male with 10 prior criminal convictions and who is usually addicted to crystal meth or some other illicit substance.

I think I heard one of the hon. members across the way say that the courts have to factor in that the person stealing a car may not have a criminal record and that we have to look out for things like that. Ten prior criminal convictions is the standard profile for an auto thief who is usually a 27-year-old male. This is not just the ordinary kid off the street. We have to send a strong message. It is a very critical issue.

• (1940)

I applaud and salute the member for Langley for bringing this forward. It is about time that we got serious about the issue of minimum sentencing in the country. The other parties may oppose this because they think criminals have a constitutional right to have house arrest instead of being put in a jail. We on this side of the House disagree. We in the Conservative Party of Canada think that it is high time that we start getting serious about minimum sentencing and send a strong signal that we have had enough with auto theft.

I will be proudly voting for Bill C-293 in support of my colleague and in defence of our communities.

• (1945)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I wanted to add my voice to Bill C-293 sponsored by the member for Langley.

This issue of minimum sentencing has come up on a couple of other matters, such as child pornography. There has also been a lot of discussion about the merits of minimum sentencing with regard to grow houses and whether or not they should be applied there.

One of the arguments that has been made contrary to minimum sentencing has to do with whether or not it is a deterrent. I am not so sure that I am interested in whether or not a sentence is a deterrent to somebody else doing it or that same person repeating it. I am more interested in whether or not the public at large feels that the penalty actually is reflective of the seriousness of the crime. That is also important. It is just as important to me as a deterrent.

All Canadians have seen many programming stories about auto theft rings. As the previous speaker said, the typical profile is not the joyride. These are people who are highly likely to be involved in other criminal activity. When we see these problems, we must determine our level of tolerance.

The other argument that I have heard about dealing with matters such as criminal sentencing has to do with the fact that the courts are clogged up and the jails are full. The courts are clogged up because the system or the process has perhaps got out of hand.

Private Members' Business

I can remember observing some cases in court. There was a young man there and his lawyer walked in and said that his client had 27 convictions this year, but 30 the year before. The lawyer appealed to the judge that the number of convictions each year were going down and this was a good thing. His client was getting better.

I thought it was almost laughable. It really was laughable to think that in a court of law one could argue that since the number of convictions were going down, things were improving. When people have this affinity to continue to break the law, there are consequences. The consequences are not just to that individual. The consequences are to the public at large.

Most people who have had a break-in in their home, which is an invasion of their privacy, would say that the impacts of that are enormous. Their personal space is violated, and their security and safety come into question. Those kinds of principles come into account.

We are also talking about a process ostensibly that is not in the federal jurisdiction in terms of the courts dealing with these matters. However, the criminal law, with regard to the sentencing that the provincial courts and the police would have to impose, becomes yet another question. What happens with issues where the police officers are in the situation where they have so much time to spend in court? The courts are not dealing with it quickly and they cannot do their jobs properly, so we are also interfering and taking up the important time of the law enforcement agents.

There will be a lot of debate on this. I am sure that there are many good excuses. I think the fundamental principle that the punishment must be reflective of the seriousness of the crime is right and with minimum sentencing, there has to be some real time. I am not sure there is going to be a deterrent factor. It is something that would have to be studied over some period of time.

I am absolutely sure that the public at large who are aware of the facts of the case in its plainest form would feel that having to serve some time was appropriate given the nature of the crime.

● (1950)

One other argument I have heard was that if a mandatory minimum sentence was set, the sentencing that would always be applied would always refer down to the minimum and would never go to the full extent that was permitted under the law. I am not a lawyer by profession and I cannot say that I am too familiar with the statistics, but that kind of argument is basically an indictment of the integrity and credibility of the judges, and the courts as well.

There has to be a wholesale assessment of what is happening in the courts, both federal and provincial, to find out why it is that the resources seem to be used in a way which ultimately end up with nobody winning.

Convicted people who are involved in a range of criminal activity continue to be problems to society at large. There is no remediation. There is no rehabilitation. How does this happen? I hope Parliament provides a step forward and says that what has been happening so far has not been acceptable. We think that we can and should do better.

We should be able to say clearly that when it comes to matters such as auto theft, or possession of child pornography, which I think

definitely deserves mandatory minimum sentences to reflect the seriousness with which society views that criminal activity, are not acceptable. This includes grow houses as well.

Most members know that the issue of grow houses is quite serious. A very large number of them involve organized crime. Moneys related to the growing of marijuana are not used in the business of selling marijuana, but are used to finance other illegal, more serious criminal activities such as the hard drug business, prostitution, money laundering and all kinds of other things.

Any time a member gets up in this place and says we have to talk yet again about where we are now, where we would like to be, and how we get there, that member will have my full support.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Madam Speaker, I want to give a little history of Bill C-293 and why it is before the House today.

Five years ago I started working on this bill but from a different perspective. I was a city councillor for 14 years and dealt with the problems of auto theft in the community. I was also a loss prevention officer for the insurance corporation of British Columbia. My job was to find out where the crashes and auto crimes were happening, why they were happening, and how to make our communities safer. I found out very quickly, through working with the police and different stakeholders in the community, that the typical auto thief was not somebody joyriding but somebody with a very serious drug problem.

There was a study called "Reality versus perception" done by Simon Fraser University released in February 2004. It was released at an auto crime forum in Surrey, British Columbia. We found out that the typical auto thief was somebody addicted to crystal meth and was stealing the car to commit another crime. A 27 year old male with 10 prior criminal convictions will steal a car again. He is driven by the drugs.

We heard from Superior Court Justice Wally Oppal at the time. He spoke at this auto crime forum and said that the courts had received very clear direction from Parliament that they were not to lock up these high risk offenders. That is the direction that came from the House. The evidence from Superior Court Justice Wally Oppal was that Parliament said not to lock them up as there were no facilities to send these high risk people.

He asked what to do with them as his direction from the House was to release them back onto the street. What we found in the study was that the courts would give probation. People would steal other cars and receive probation for breaching their probation. They were not keeping the peace. Time and time again these high risk offenders stole cars again and got probation for breaching their probation. There was zero consequence.

My consultation over the last five years was to find out from communities, stakeholders and police a way of dealing with this. Do we lock them up and throw away the key? No, that is not the solution. What is an appropriate sentence?

Private Members' Business

One of my colleagues asked earlier, what do we do when offenders do not have criminal records? Do we send them to jail? Bill C-293 would give the courts the discretion of giving a fine or time in jail or both. I see a judge in that case providing a fine and not sending this first time offender on a joyride. There would be a \$1,000 consequence.

I would like to see more than \$1,000 fines, but in consultation it was agreed that a \$1,000 fine would probably be an appropriate sentence. The average cost across Canada to repair a vehicle that has been stolen is \$4,500, so a \$1,000 fine does not even come close to covering that, but it is a minimum. A fair fine would be the cost of fixing the vehicle. This is only a start.

I am asking the House to send this bill to the justice committee where it can be debated. I am open to amendments. I am asking this of the House after five years of consultation. I worked on the immobilizer bill with Transport Canada. Five years ago I sent it to FCM and we now have that part of the protection. We have the engineering, but we need the enforcement part of it.

I ask the House to please send this bill to the justice committee where it can be debated and legislation can be established that will give direction to the courts to provide protection. It is our job as a Parliament to provide security and protection to our citizens. They are not getting it with probation. This bill will provide it and still give the courts discretion for appropriate sentencing.

•(1955)

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): The time provided for debate has expired. Accordingly, the question is on the motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): All those opposed will say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 21, 2005, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, June 22, 2005
Part B

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

[Continuation of proceedings from Part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AN ACT TO AUTHORIZE THE MINISTER OF FINANCE TO MAKE CERTAIN PAYMENTS

Hon. Anne McLellan (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, be read the third time and passed.

• (2000)

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I suppose that at some point we should ask whether we could get this through immediately.

I do not know whether this is the beginning of the end or the end of the beginning. We have been at this bill for quite a while, quite number of months. We have been debating the bill for hours and hours in the chamber. We have been at the bill for hours and hours at committee. The vote the other night was a close vote, but nevertheless I think Parliament spoke. After that vote there appears to be a sense that the bill in fact should pass. I hope hon. members will see it that way at the end of my speech.

The bill proposes a number of social priorities, which I would submit are consistent with the wishes of Canadians. Canada's social foundations are fundamental to who we are as Canadians. We are recognized internationally as a country that gives everyone an opportunity to participate in our society and to succeed in our economy. We pride ourselves on being a country where everyone has an opportunity to succeed.

Indeed, Canada is a prosperous country. Members will know the statistics well because they have heard them repeated many times in the chamber. They have heard about our current fiscal situation, which is possibly the most advantageous of any country in the G-7 and possibly in the OECD as well.

We certainly are in a situation where Canadians can begin to dream their dreams again. The dark nights of deficits, high interest rates and spiralling unemployment were to some measure diminishing the dreams of Canadians. We are now back to a situation where we are in fact the envy of the world.

Bill C-48 proposes to share somewhat more in that prosperity as reflected by this government's support of Canada's social founda-

tions. I am sure that notwithstanding a lot of the rhetoric from the other side of the House there are very few members who actually oppose the four initiatives proposed in the bill itself.

I would like to remind hon. members of just how this government's investments in social programs have contributed to the improved quality of life for all Canadians. Past budgets have in fact established a solid base on which the government continues to move forward with its commitments.

We made major investments where they are needed, health care being number one on the list. Again, I need not remind the House of the historic meeting between the Prime Minister and the premiers in the fall of last year where an additional \$41 billion over the next 10 years was committed to the provinces in order to assist with their health care needs.

Budget 2005 in fact added to that \$41 billion commitment in the amount of \$805 million over five years in direct federal health investments. As we know, not all Canadians are covered by provincial plans. For instance, people in the military and aboriginal people are covered by the federal government in the delivery of health care. This is money that parallels the investments that were committed to by the Prime Minister to the premiers last fall.

The government recognizes that health care is a major priority for Canadians, but there are also other issues that Canadians wish to address and to which they attach utmost importance. May I suggest that at least four of those are in Bill C-48? I would say that this is not an exhaustive list, but this is the list in Bill C-48, which includes the environment, social housing, foreign aid and post-secondary education.

Indeed, as the finance committee travelled, although this year it did not travel as much as it normally does, certainly representations were made from all over the country to the finance committee with respect to a whole variety of initiatives that the government was asked to undertake on behalf of Canadians.

• (2005)

In fact, quite a number of them found their way into budget 2005 in the form of Bill C-43. That in and of itself was not an exhaustive list of initiatives. Certainly representations were made on a whole variety of other initiatives that Canadians wished us to take, but a budget is, by definition, trying to balance the fiscal capacity of the government with the priorities as identified by Canadians.

Government Orders

Bill C-48 extends those priorities. In these four priorities that I have identified, we have in fact tried to reflect some other initiatives that Canadians wish the government to invest in. The bill will commit, in the event of certain contingencies being made, an additional sum of \$4.5 billion, plus another \$100 million for another initiative, for a total of \$4.6 billion in these important priorities that Canadians have identified to us.

Let me speak briefly about these four initiatives. As the House knows, possibly the biggest concern after health care that was identified to us at the committee, and is identified to us by constituents, is the concern about the environment. It is not merely Kyoto related, where we are talking about CO₂ emissions, but it is also about smog, particulates in the air. We have had some days even in this part of the year with situations where people are finding it difficult to breathe.

However, it is not only about air; it is also about the quality of our water and the quality of our environment generally. Bill C-48 goes somewhat toward addressing that issue. Canadians do want to ensure that future Canadians not only have the health care they want but also have a safe and healthy environment.

We have before us today \$900 million for environmental initiatives, the bulk of which will be aimed at public transit in our cities and communities.

I know, Madam Speaker, that both you and I share a constituency in Toronto. It is a great honour to represent people in Toronto and I know that the mayor and the council are extremely interested in seeing the passage of Bill C-48 so that this particular initiative will find its way into the budget of the city of Toronto. You know the subway system and the transit system as well as I do, Madam Speaker, and you know that it is in serious need of additional funds.

This is in fact the government stepping up to the plate and contributing a significant sum of money, not only to the city of Toronto but also to the city of Montreal, the city of Vancouver and a whole variety of large and small communities in between those major cities. This money can be used to encourage public transit systems and therefore reduce traffic congestion.

Madam Speaker, you and I also know about the 401 highway across Toronto, which has become at times nothing more than a glorified parking lot. It seems that rush hour starts at 4:30 in the morning and ends some time around 12:30 at night. Presumably, if these moneys are deployed in a correct fashion, the difficulties with the 401 and other major arteries will in fact be alleviated by virtue of the creation of public transit systems and the increased desirability on the part of Torontonians and others of using the public transit system. I am sure there are other members in the House who could speak to their own congestion problems that occur in their cities.

Part of the funding for the environment is contained also in supporting new low income housing retrofit programs. Hopefully that will benefit low income families. As members have probably observed in their own heating bills, the costs are going through the ceiling, literally and figuratively. I think that this in and of itself may well be a significant saving for low income Canadians.

● (2010)

Speaking of housing, Madam Speaker, you and I share a keen interest in affordable housing. Currently the government spends something in the order of \$1.9 billion on an annual basis toward homelessness and affordable housing. That addresses about 640,000 families who live in existing social family housing units. The bill proposes a further investment of \$1.6 billion in affordable housing construction. That will be a welcome initiative not only our my communities but right across the nation.

It is important to emphasize that this new money is unlike other moneys which have required matching initiatives from either provincial or municipal or private sector partners. In this case there will not be a tie to matching funding from provinces. Some of the money will be redirected to first nation reserves where there is a shortage of social housing. That shortage on some reserves is at a critical stage. We are anticipating some of that money will be redirected to aboriginal housing.

These initiatives reflect well upon the government's \$1.9 billion commitment that already exists. We predict that as this initiative spreads out over the number of years anticipated, it will have a direct impact on quite a number of families.

As we well know, Bill C-48 is not the only thing that the Government of Canada has been doing. In budget 2001 it started the affordable housing initiative with the funding of \$680 million over five years to help increase the supply of affordable rental housing.

People have heard me comment on other occasions that this money plus the fiscal management of the government's finances has contributed directly to an increase in supply of not only rentals but affordable housing that is available for purchase. The interest rates are at virtually an all time low. A lot of people who live in apartments have been renting for years. From time to time they wish to move out—

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Madam Speaker, there does not appear to be quorum.

And the count having been taken:

The Acting Speaker (Hon. Jean Augustine): There is quorum in the House. Resuming debate, the hon. parliamentary secretary.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, I cannot believe that half way through my speech I could lose quorum. That is terrible. It may be that my arguments are so persuasive that members are leaving the chamber and are already prepared to vote in favour of Bill C-48. We seem to have a certain enthusiasm on this side of the House for early passage of Bill C-48.

The \$680 million for increased supply of affordable housing over five years was started in the budget 2001. In the budget 2003 we added a further sum of \$320 million over five years. This is probably the first time in my lifetime where people have been able to anticipate moving out of rental housing and purchasing their own home. That is due to the fact that interest rates are at an historic low. When we have historic low interest rates, we can afford mortgage payments.

Government Orders

A perfectly rational person would say “Do I want to pay x number of dollars toward rent or do I want to pay x number of dollars toward mortgage payments?” They therefore will make the decision to purchase an affordable home and move out. I know in my own riding there is a vacancy rate somewhere in the order of 6% or 7% among low income apartments. That is very unusual. It is more often than not that people, in my riding at least, seek to have housing and the vacancy rates are in the order of 1% or 2%.

Initiatives by the government are twofold. Not only is it to put direct money into affordable housing, but because we are in a situation where interest rates are low and we are paying down debt, the happy consequence for Canadians is they can now afford housing that they previously could not.

As well, in budget 2003, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation housing renovation program had an additional three year, \$128 million program. Again, this is an attempt on the part of the Government of Canada to increase and renovate the supply of housing stock to help low income persons who have serious needs to repair their homes.

The Government of Canada has been quite active in easing the affordability challenges of low income Canadians. We are never going to be there 100%, but we are moving in the right direction. Since we have gone back into this field, since the year 2000, we have put something in the order of \$3 billion into this program. In the anticipation that Bill C-48 passes, we will have a further \$1.6 billion that would be available for this area.

Another area that was mentioned to the committee, and has been mentioned by many Canadians to the government, had to do with post-secondary education. Again, this is a clear priority. Canadians see education as very important for themselves and their children. In that regard, we continue to invest heavily in post-secondary education and training programs.

Bill C-48, proposes initial funding of \$1.5 million in new moneys for post-secondary education. This is an integral part of the initiatives the government has already started. I point out that on the social side of the formerly CHST, the Government of Canada puts in about \$15.5 billion, some of which goes to education.

As members know, the government supports post-secondary education through transfers to the provinces. It also spends \$4.7 billion annually in direct support, in a variety of ways, which include direct financial assistance to students, measures to encourage families to save for post-secondary education and tax breaks that help offset the cost of college and university education.

● (2015)

Budget 2005 committed additional funds to help workers enhance their skills, including \$125 million for workplace skills strategy to help employees keep pace with changing job requirements.

As we all know, at one point we would have a job for life. It is very unusual for people to have a job for life any longer. It is more of a series of jobs and for each one we need training. Bill C-48 promotes that concept and builds on previous initiatives of the government.

The final amount was \$500 million for foreign aid. I know this is near and dear to your own heart, Madam Speaker, having been a minister in that area. We are very much aware of our G-7 responsibilities and Canada is trying to increase its presence globally. This builds on previous increases in foreign aid by providing an additional \$3.4 billion in international assistance over the next five years.

I commend to the members opposite, even those in the Conservative Party, that they support, and I hope they do, affordable housing, post-secondary education, the environment and foreign aid. How they can speak against any of those initiatives remains a mystery to me. I am sure over the course of the evening, we will have this mystery elucidated. I encourage all members to support the bill.

● (2020)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, there is a lot that is a mystery to my friend across the way. One of the great mysteries I would like him to reveal to the House and to people who are watching today is this. If all the things he has talked about are so important, then why did his own finance minister dismiss them as being outrageous ideas when the NDP members were asked him questions about this just days before he agreed to this deal with the leader of the NDP?

If they are high priorities today, why were they not in the original budget back in February? Why was his own minister saying that we could not afford them just days before the government agreed to the deal with the NDP?

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, there is a great deal that is a mystery to the hon. member opposite. I hope in answering the question that in some manner or another I might help him with his limitations.

The initiatives that Bill C-48 represents build upon previous initiatives of the Government of Canada.

As I said during the course of my speech, there are things that we can do in a budget and Bill C-43 represents those things that can be done in a budget. It represents a fiscally sound plan, and I note members opposite initially sat on the first vote. Then on the second vote, after their polls changed, they voted against the budget. After things changed again, they supported the budget, Bill C-43.

It seems somewhat disingenuous on the part of the hon. member opposite who has caused the reconfiguration and created this difficulty for us all.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will ask my question first and then make my comment.

To invest in these areas of social spending, we need a strong fiscal base. Could the member outline the strong, fiscal fundamentals that allow us to make these new investments, with which I am sure all members agree, in areas of education, foreign aid, transit, et cetera, and clean air?

Government Orders

I want to ensure that everyone watching is aware of how these expenditures fit into the plan. When the Prime Minister first became Prime Minister, he gave a lengthy speech that outlined a plan for Canada. In that plan were four elements: the restructuring of the social foundations; improving Canada's place in the world; lifelong learning; and the new deal with cities.

With great integrity, he carried that plan forward into the throne speech. Continuing to keep his promises to Canadians, he carried it forward into budgets. Each time we can add to those priorities, he adds them on. Now, six months later, we are adding more into the budget. These are not just NDP priorities. These always were our priorities. We are just adding the expenditures into the budget.

● (2025)

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, as the member well knows, and certainly the people on this side of the House well know, we cannot do any kind of social investing unless we have our fiscal fundamentals right.

We are in a very advantageous position in this country. Our fiscal fundamentals are right. Bill C-43 represents the eighth balanced budget in a row. It also anticipates that going forward we will have a further five balanced budgets in a row. That, in turn, leads to some very happy results. It leads to some pretty low interest rates and some good inflation bands. We are within a band of one to three and that is acceptable to the minister and to the government.

With low interest, low inflation, balanced budgets and paying down debt, we then can dream a few dreams. Bill C-48 allows us to think in terms of what we would do in the event that we continue to have these surpluses. In the event that we do have these unplanned surpluses, we will invest in these areas.

Bill C-48 is rather interesting legislation in that I do not ever recollect this government, let alone any other government, actually tabling on the floor of a legislature what is called unplanned surplus legislation. This is an interesting way in which to indicate to the people of Canada and to the markets generally this is what we would do with any surplus beyond what we see coming forward.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Madam Speaker, in response to the question from the hon. member for Medicine Hat to the parliamentary secretary, I think there is only one person in this assembly being disingenuous and that is the hon. parliamentary secretary for suggesting that this new NDP-driven budget was something that the Liberals had planned for in any event, because, clearly, it was not. It was an attempt to buy votes from the NDP.

What concerns me more than that is the process in which this budget was developed. Quite frankly, this two page \$4.6 billion budget was developed in a hotel room without the Minister of Finance in attendance. There was the Prime Minister, the leader of the NDP and a union leader but no finance minister.

I can say that Canadians all across Canada have nicknamed the finance minister "Stumpy" because they think his knees were cut out from beneath him by the Prime Minister.

How can the government suggest that this is a responsible budget when in fact the deal was done in a hotel room without the Minister of Finance present, regardless of the fact, as the minister has said before, that the finance minister was on the phone the entire time.

How ridiculous is it to suggest to Canadians that this was a responsible budget when the finance minister, only weeks and days before, was saying "You can't cherry-pick a budget. We can't redo the budget". The Liberals made a new budget without the finance minister of Canada in attendance. They are trying to suggest to Canadians that this is responsible policy and responsible decision making.

How can the parliamentary secretary explain that? It is inexplicable.

Hon. John McKay: Madam Speaker, let me point out that I am about six foot two and so far I am still standing on both hands, as is the finance minister. I do not think he is six foot two but nevertheless he is walking around quite nicely, thanks very much.

The finance minister said that in the event that this unplanned surplus legislation were to go forward, these would be the basic principles on which it would go forward.

First, there would be a significant paydown on debt. In this particular case there is at least \$2 billion each year of the agreement.

Second, we would not go into deficit under any circumstances.

Third, we would continue to balance the budget and move forward on that basis.

In the event that those principles are met, then the finance minister was quite prepared to build upon the initiatives that were in previous budgets.

I put it to the hon. members opposite, which part of these four initiatives is the government not in? Is the government not in foreign aid? Already there. Is the government not in affordable housing? Already there. Is the government not into environmental issues? Already there. Is the government not into post-secondary education? Already there.

Billions and billions of dollars are already being spent. Bill C-48 falls well within the four principles that the finance minister put forward.

● (2030)

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to address Bill C-48.

I want to say at the outset that the Conservative Party of Canada believes that Canada can do so much better than we have done up until now. We are a land that is blessed with tremendous resources. We have access to the richest market in the history of the world and yet our standard of living languishes. Too many people cannot find jobs today or, if they can find a job, they are not the types of jobs that can pay them a wage that allows them to look after their families and ensure that they can send their children off to university. We think we can do a lot better and that is why we are so opposed to Bill C-48.

Government Orders

We think Bill C-48 represents a government that has completely lost its vision, if it ever had any vision. We argue that there is a much better way to proceed, which I will speak to in a few minutes.

I want to say a little about Bill C-48 at the outset. We need to correct the record about some of the things that my hon. friend has said. I think he is completely misleading Canadians about how this came about, about the nature of Bill C-48 and the nature of the spending that is planned in Bill C-48.

I want to remind my friend across the way that when the budget came in back in February there were a number of things in it that our party supported and some things on which we had some concerns but on balance we found it supportable. We did want to change some things and ultimately we got some of those changes.

We received some of the tax relief that we had been seeking but it was very minimal. After we had pushed the government quite hard, Canadians will receive \$16 in personal income tax relief, which, I agree, is not very much. In fact it is a lot less than the millions of dollars that Liberal friends received through the sponsorship scandal in paper bags passed across tables at restaurants and suitcases full of money, but nevertheless we felt that the government was moving a little in our direction.

One of the key elements of Bill C-43, the budget legislation that came down, was a commitment to cut the taxation on large employers. We have been pushing for this for some time because that kind of tax reduction is important to ensuring that the productivity of Canada improves. When productivity improves it means that businesses can hire more workers, they attract more investment, more jobs are created and, as a result of that, more revenue starts coming in to the government. We really pushed that and we were happy to see that the government was doing that, although it was too far down the road.

We have this big productivity challenge in front of us today and the government wants to delay bringing in this tax relief for large employers, even though we face huge challenges today from countries like China, soon India, and basically every other country in the world. We are facing some big challenges but we said that it was okay because at least the government was moving roughly in the right direction.

We had some concerns about some of the environmental provisions of the bill. Part 15 of the bill dealt with regulating large final emitters for companies that emit CO₂. The government wanted to do that through CEPA, the Canadian Environmental Protection Act. We did not like that and just about every party in the House thought that was a bad idea and argued that should not be done. However the good news is that we were able to get some amendments to Bill C-43. We got rid of the CEPA provisions. We were able to make some other changes to greenhouse gas technology funds that made sure it was a little more flexible so that businesses could use it and make it work for them.

We got some changes when it came to transparency on Bill C-43 and ultimately we did support Bill C-43, as the member knows. It is not perfect and it is a long way from perfect. It is not what a Conservative government would do. It is a tepid approach, in our view, but it is a step in the right direction and we did support it.

● (2035)

However, where we thought the government went way off the rails was on Bill C-48. I want to remind the parliamentary secretary that there were NDP members standing in this place until a day or two before the Prime Minister and the leader of the NDP met in a hotel room in Toronto with Buzz Hargrove, the union leader, to cut a deal that was a long way away from this place and from the scrutiny of Canadians. In fact, it was a political deal. It was cut because the government was worried that it would fall with the revelations that were coming out of the Gomery commission, revelations that shook the faith of the country in this government.

Guess what? Despite what the finance minister had been saying in this place about how what the NDP was proposing was outrageous and that "You can't go on stripping away piece by piece by piece of the budget...You can't...begin to cherry pick", two days later his Prime Minister cut a deal with the leader of the NDP to save the hide of the Liberal Party. It was facing these unbelievable charges coming from executives within the Liberal Party talking about millions of dollars being passed to ad executives in suitcases and in paper bags. It was outrageous.

The NDP supported a corrupt government, the most corrupt government in the history of the country, in order to get what it wanted. That is how this all came about, in case people forget. I wanted to set the record straight.

The problems with Bill C-48 go way beyond that. I want to address some of those issues right now.

When the budget came down, the government argued that it needed to have a particular fiscal framework to ensure that we had stability down the road. It wanted to make sure that there was always enough money to ensure that the country did not go into deficit and that there was a minimal amount of money that would go toward debt repayment, which is a good idea. In fact, our party has always supported that, as did the Liberal Party until it struck its deal with the NDP.

In striking that deal, the Liberals took the minimum amount of money that would be used as a buffer to ensure that they did not go into a deficit and if it was not used it would go toward debt repayment. They took it from \$4 billion and now it is down to \$2 billion under Bill C-48. What does that mean? It means that the amount of money that is used to retire debt is less now, meaning that down the road we will pay more in interest. We will not have the same kind of savings that we would have had if we still had that \$4 billion cushion.

Government Orders

I want members in the House to think about what that means. It means that for every \$1 billion that we pay toward the debt, and let us assume the interest rate is at 3%, we would save \$30 million a year in perpetuity from now until forever. If we were to pay down \$2 billion, like the government is now proposing since it struck its deal with the NDP, that would be \$60 million in perpetuity that we could be using to fund things like social programs down the road.

I see my friends in the NDP are very agitated about this but I think I am telling the truth about this. I think they are concerned that I am revealing how damaging their deal is to the social safety net of this country, which they should be concerned about because it is damaging.

My point is that the difference between \$4 billion and \$2 billion means tens of millions of dollars a year cannot now be used to fund social programs down the road, especially when Canadians who are starting to age today, the baby boom generation, hit their retirement years. We expect that when we hit around the year 2030 we will have double the number of seniors than we have today. What will we do then with a much smaller tax base to fund all those seniors? One thing we could do is pay down the debt so that we have more capacity down the road to fund big social programs like health care and seniors pensions.

● (2040)

We are making a grave error. We are making the error of political expediency. The government is selling out the country today to save its own political hide. It is putting the pensions and the health care of seniors at risk down the road. That is what this amounts to and it is reprehensible. That is what the government has done.

There are more problems with Bill C-48. One of the big problems with Bill C-48 can be seen when one picks it up. I do not have a copy of it here, but it is two pages long, a bill that is spending \$4.6 billion. One would expect that when talking about amending a budget to include an expenditure of \$4.6 billion, one would get a document that not only laid out exactly where the spending would occur, but what the objectives are, what the government intends to accomplish, the mechanisms it would use to accomplish the objectives, and the safeguards in place to guarantee that the money would not be misspent. That is what one would expect when talking about an expenditure of this magnitude, but that is not what we got. We got a 400 word bill. It is one of the most pathetic pieces of legislation I have ever seen in my life.

I see my NDP friend over there wagging his finger at me, criticizing me. Well, let me address one of my concerns when it comes to this issue. In this legislation the government is proposing to spend money on post-secondary education, which is laudable. We all want to do that, but we want to do it in a way we can afford so that down the road we can ensure that we can do it for all Canadians, not just in the short term for the political gain of the Liberals and the NDP.

One of the things that my friend from Portage—Lisgar raised was that in 2000 the Auditor General raised concerns about spending on post-secondary education for aboriginals. This was in the year 2000. In the fall of 2004, the Auditor General said that four years earlier her department had raised those concerns and it still had not had a response from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs about

how the money was being spent. Now the government wants to spend \$1.5 billion on post-secondary education, some of which would go to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for post-secondary education for aboriginals. The Auditor General still has not received a response, but those members do not care. They do not care that the Auditor General of Canada has grave concerns about the accountability of this money.

The NDP wants to go ahead and spend that money without having that response from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. The Liberals, of course, do not care. They never have cared about these things. That is why we have problems like the sponsorship scandal. That is why we have problems like the firearms registry.

Frankly, it is why we have problems like one of the worst scandals I think I have ever seen in Indian affairs, which was the whole issue of Davis Inlet. I know that Liberal members and certainly the NDP equate how much one spends with how much one cares. The more money one spends, the bigger one's heart. That is the view of those members. It is not about results for them; it is about how much money they spend. There is no better example that I can provide than how the government handled the problem at Davis Inlet.

I want to remind people in the House and people who are watching this today what occurred. We were all horrified as a country when we saw on television young native children staggering around under the influence of gasoline that they had been sniffing. The prime minister of the day, Jean Chrétien, was horrified. We all were. It was unbelievable that in a country that provides opportunities to so many people, those people at Davis Inlet did not have that opportunity. We saw this absolute social pathology at Davis Inlet, where so many young people basically were throwing away their lives because they were doing this. What was the government's response? The government's response was to throw bags of money at the problem.

● (2045)

Anyone who doubts for a second that is true only has to look at what happened to Davis Inlet after the government intervened. What happened was the government spent \$360 million on Davis Inlet, a community of 900 people, which amounts to \$400,000 a person. The government moved the whole community down the road, and put the people in new housing and provided new facilities for them, water and all the rest of it.

Predictably, all of the problems went with those people, because the government equates how much money it spends with how much it cares. It equates how much money it spends with getting results and the two are not necessarily connected. The Liberals had no plan on how to spend that money to ensure they got results. The result was that those 900 people took all their problems and misery with them 20 miles down the road and they are in the same position today. That is a disgrace.

Government Orders

We will replicate that, I am afraid, with the NDP budget Bill C-48, because the government is moving forward at lightspeed on this with no plan. There is not one detail in the bill as to how the money will be spent. It just says it will go into certain areas. The government did not list the programs. It did not lay out the objectives. We don't know precisely how much the government wants to spend in each particular area. What the Liberals want to do, and the NDP members are prepared to go along with it, is they want to give authority to the governor in council, in other words to give broad authority to cabinet, to decide how the money is spent.

The Conservative Party moved amendments asking that the government provide plans, and I do not understand why it would not agree to it, by December 31 of this year, laying out how the money would be spent. It did not seem to be a very high hurdle to jump over, but the government could not even agree to that. It would not even accept that amendment. I am horrified that the Liberals would not do that when we are talking about such a major expenditure.

I am running out of time and there are a couple of more things I want to say. There is a better approach. The better approach is to figure out what we want to achieve and make sure that we have programs in place that help people realize their dreams. A lot of times it is not the government that does it. A lot of times it is families that do it.

Let us leave that money, where we possibly can, in the pockets of families. Families know better what is right for them and their children than bureaucrats and politicians do. When there is a doubt about what to do with \$4.6 billion that the government has lying around, leave it in the pockets of Canadian taxpayers. They will use it wisely.

My time is running out, so I had better get down to business and move this amendment. I move:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following therefor:

Bill C-48, An Act to authorize the Minister of Finance to make certain payments, be not now read a third time, but be referred back to the Standing Committee on Finance for the purpose of reconsidering all of its clauses with the view to incorporate recommendations regarding tighter controls on discretionary spending.

• (2050)

The Deputy Speaker: The amendment is in order.

Hon. John McKay (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the late great Yogi Berra would say that that speech sounds like déjà vu all over again. I suspect we are going to have a fair bit of déjà vu all over again because there are very few, if any, of the arguments put forward by the hon. member that have not already been heard in this House and outside this House dozens and dozens of times.

He started off by saying that the Conservative Party thinks that it can do better. Unfortunately, he does not seem to acknowledge the fact that the Canadian people do not agree with him. He has given a classic demonstration of why his party has been in opposition for 12 years. It is probably destined to spend at least another 12 years in opposition telling itself that it can do better. Apparently it cannot do better.

I want to make sure that people who might be listening to this debate know that the tax cuts that are proposed in Bill C-43 are being

restored by way of a separate legislative initiative and that initiative has been put on the order paper.

What I do not understand is the hon. member's dodging around corruption. If his argument is that this government is corrupt, then his party for some bizarre reason supported a corrupt government by voting for Bill C-43. I do not see how he can say that his party has done anything other than support a corrupt government, or maybe he does not really believe that this is in fact a corrupt government.

I want to put to the hon. member that in his speech he neglected to mention that this is in fact enabling legislation. Will he acknowledge that the government may spend in these areas in the event that at least \$2 billion in surplus is realized? Will he at least acknowledge that this money is not committed until those contingencies are met?

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, just to assure my friend across the way, I do think the government is corrupt. In fact, I think most Canadians think it is corrupt. In fact, the polling I have seen suggests that people think the Prime Minister is largely responsible for the sponsorship scandal and frankly, I agree.

My friend across the way has asked me to comment on the contingency aspect of the spending. I would be happy to do that.

It is also true that as a member of the finance committee the parliamentary secretary knows there is a very high likelihood that we will be running surpluses next year of a magnitude that will allow the government to meet its commitments to the NDP. This means that this is contingent only on paper. The reality is that this money will be spent. The question is, is this the proper way to spend it?

I want to take a moment to address that. As the parliamentary secretary knows, we went around this country listening to Canadians before the last budget came down. We had a prebudget review so that we could provide the finance minister with guidance on how to spend this money. That was reflected in Bill C-43. What was not reflected was a \$4.6 billion deal cut to save the hide of the Liberal Party which was under fire for the worst corruption in Canadian history, aided and abetted by the NDP. That is so wrong.

• (2055)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is very interesting to hear the member for Medicine Hat talk about corruption, when we know that when in government, his party under Mulroney had the worst record of corruption seen until this day. If he doubts that, he should read *On the Take: Crime, Greed and Corruption in the Mulroney Years* by Stevie Cameron.

The member's presentation was irresponsible. It was irresponsible because of the Conservative record. There were record deficits in the 1980s and 1990s. It was irresponsible because the Conservative Party last year had the most bloated political party platform in Canadian history, with \$86 billion in spending commitments. That was before it threw in the aircraft carriers as a last minute promise. We never even heard how much that would cost.

It was irresponsible because we know that there is a housing crisis and a poverty crisis in this country. We know there are over 1.1 million poor children in this country. Homelessness has tripled in certain regions, including my own. We know there is a crisis in post-secondary education. We know there is a crisis in the environment. Greenhouses gases have increased, not decreased.

Government Orders

Knowing all of these crises, all his party proposed was to shovel more money at the corporate sector. How could that party be more irresponsible?

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to see that my friend is so bitter over there. He should be a little happier about these things.

The NDP has a terrible record in my friend's own province. It took a province that was the fastest growing province in Canada and turned it into a have not province. That is a remarkable achievement under the NDP and I congratulate my friend for continuing to support a party that has so obviously failed.

I think it is a wonderful thing that he has that kind of loyalty, but I also want to point out that not only did that party cause the economy to fail in a way that is without precedent, it was involved in all kinds of scandals like the bingogate scandal. I remember that. I live in the next province over. I remember the fast ferry disaster which ultimately caused that government to fall, and let us not raise the name of Glen Clark. Suffice it to say that the NDP, of any party in this place, has no lessons to give to the Conservative Party about how to run a government.

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why are we sending the bill back to committee? The member knows that we spent lots of time in committee already. We had opportunities to question witnesses. The Conservatives put forward a list of witnesses. They filibustered and were not interested in hearing what the witnesses had to say. We had to bring them back on three or four different occasions.

We then spent over five hours on a three-clause bill and the members again filibustered on items that had nothing to do with the bill. There were amendments that were proposed in committee, again by the Conservatives. I am not going to say they did not make any sense, but they were not even admissible. There was no consideration put forward.

Why all of a sudden is the hon. member going to take the committee any more seriously than he has in the past?

Mr. Monte Solberg: Mr. Speaker, I want to assure my friend who is the chair of the committee that I take his committee very seriously. He does a wonderful job chairing it.

When we brought some of our amendments to the committee, these were substantial amendments. They were amendments to do crazy things like ask the government to explain how the money would be spent. Is that so unreasonable? I think it is appropriate to bring the bill back to committee, so that when we are talking about spending almost \$5 billion, the government might take a few minutes to lay out a few ideas on how it would spend it.

We also tried to amend it and actually had the amendments accepted, although the government turned it down ultimately, along with the NDP. One of the things that we wanted to do was put a condition on the money that went to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. We wanted to insist that, before the government got the money to spend on post-secondary education for aboriginals, the department respond to the year 2000 Auditor General's report that expressed concerns about how money was

being spent on post-secondary education for aboriginals. I think that is pretty responsible.

I want to point out that we had a terrible time getting witnesses before the committee. The chair of the committee will remember that we invited 25 witnesses, 21 of them were from the government. We could not get anyone from the government to appear initially except for the Minister of Finance. None of the ministries that would be affected by the spending, housing, labour, and post-secondary education would appear before the committee, so we had to filibuster until we got a few department officials and ministers to come, but not nearly the number that should have been there to explain the expenditure of \$5 billion. I think it is reasonable to send the bill back to committee and make that happen.

• (2100)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am extremely pleased to take part in this debate on Bill C-48.

As some already know, I am a teacher by profession. I was an economics professor—and will be again once we achieve sovereignty in Quebec—at the Maisonneuve college, where I am still employed. I am sure that Bill C-48 will make for an extremely interesting case study when I go back to teaching at the end of my political career.

Bill C-48 is a unique case politically, economically, and financially speaking and the Bloc Québécois is opposed to it on all those levels.

Politically speaking, look at the situation we were in a few weeks ago when the minority government was looking for support just to survive. Bill C-48 did not come out of the goodness of the Liberals' hearts. They were in political hot water and this is what they came up with to survive politically. Bill C-48 is the product of this government's corruption. Let us not forget that.

Without Bill C-48, this government probably would have fallen and an election would already have been held in which the people of Quebec and Canada could have punished this government.

In case anyone thinks this is not a government on probation, some of whose representatives have been accused of dirty deeds, L. Ian MacDonald, who is not a sovereignist, I am sure we agree, wrote an article in *Policy Options* on the Gomery inquiry. I will read an excerpt. It is a summary of his article that I invite everyone to read:

As explosive as the auditor general's report on the sponsorship scandal was, it did not, and could not, follow those funds, as Sheila Fraser said, "once they left the government." It was left to Justice John Gomery to follow the money, not so much through a bureaucratic maze as down a political trail that led to the advertising agencies in Montreal and back to the Liberal Party of Canada (Quebec). In 128 days of public hearings, Gomery took some 25,000 pages of testimony, some of it stories of cash payments in envelopes right out the movies. Gomery's findings will be out in November and his recommendations in December. Has the cost been worth it? The only benchmark is what we know now that we didn't know before Gomery. The answer is plenty.

Government Orders

It is very clear in what political context Bill C-48 was created. They tried to win an artificial majority in order to continue governing.

Unfortunately, I must say that the NDP, a party that I respect a great deal, has fallen right into the trap. On my way here, I thought about what I had learned in college. The NDP had the wool pulled over its eyes, to use one expression to describe this situation. We have others: it took the bait; it was fooled by smoke and mirrors; in short, it grasped at a shadow and lost the substance.

Politically speaking, I am quite concerned when a party of honesty and integrity, such as the NDP, is taken in by the Liberal Party of Canada, which is a corrupt party. As I mentioned, the Gomery commission and a number of observers seem to support that argument. The truth will come out once Justice Gomery's report has been tabled.

Politically speaking, this is an absolute farce. Nothing in Bill C-48 is truly progressive. Its only purpose is to buy peace for several months so the Liberal Party can continue to govern.

Economically and financially, we have the example of the \$500 million for foreign aid. Obviously, there will always be support for increasing development aid.

• (2105)

So, this allows the Liberal Government of Canada to say that it has invested \$500 million—how extraordinary—but that it will make no commitment whatsoever to 0.7% of GDP for official development assistance.

Again this week, the Minister of International Cooperation said that the government was making a moral commitment to reach this goal, but that there was no timeline, calendar or plan. So, the government is telling us that there is \$500 million in Bill C-48, that this is wonderful, and that this absolves us of any commitment to provide official development assistance.

There is \$1.5 billion for post-secondary education. Obviously, this is an astronomical sum. However, when we do not know how this \$1.5 billion will be spent or what percentage will go to which expenditures, this may be a recipe for disaster.

I myself attended a meeting of the Standing Committee on Finance, two weeks ago Monday. University association representatives came to tell us that a balance is essential. If everything is invested in improving access to a university education, then the universities cannot accept additional students, because they do not have the professors, labs or infrastructure they would need.

Adding this \$1.5 billion may therefore seem to be a good thing, but it is more likely to cause problems than to bring solutions, particularly since there is no government commitment to renewed funding. Teachers will be hired, laboratories opened perhaps, and then everything will have to be closed down again because there is not enough money to fund it all.

I will remind hon. members that there was a strike in Quebec a few years ago, one the Liberal government of Quebec of the day considered illegal. At that time I was secretary general of the Confédération des syndicats nationaux. We were hit with a fine of

several million dollars. Of course, in order to look good and seem progressive, the government said that the money from these fines would be made available to community groups and charitable organizations. The Montreal United Way recommended that these groups turn it down. Why so? Because, when money becomes available for one year, permanent staff is hired, additional services provided, and then the next year there is no more money, staff can no longer be paid nor services delivered, but the demand created is still there.

In Bill C-48, as in the entire approach of the federal government and of the Liberal Party of Canada, there is always that philosophy of creating a need, funding it initially, and then pulling out later, leaving Quebec and the provinces holding the bag.

We have seen this with social housing. There again—I am forced to say this—the \$1.6 billion for social housing is of course welcome, but if the federal Liberal government pulls out the following year, does not maintain its investments, and announces no continued funding for social housing, Quebec will find itself back in exactly the same position as now. I am sure that is the situation in other provinces as well. There is social housing but not the funds to maintain it properly.

So a need is created and then the ball ends up back in the provinces' court—and in Quebec's especially. I must point out that Quebec has kept its commitments as far as social housing is concerned. Moreover, the Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain has said so on numerous occasions. Consequently, the problem is still there. This does, of course, seem to be a most acceptable measure, even praiseworthy in principle, but in reality, it creates problems.

In this regard, we would have thought it more likely the Liberal government would commit to investing 1% of its public spending annually on social housing, as the NDP has asked—I imagine—along with the Bloc. However, this is not the case. The government provides one breath of fresh air, which will then suffocate social housing. It is extremely disturbing.

In terms of the environment, \$900 million is an extraordinary amount, to be sure. It does not prevent the plan announced by the Minister of the Environment in response to the Kyoto protocol from being not only too weak to be carried out but destined for polluters who pay nothing for their pollution.

• (2110)

Accordingly, it guarantees a policy, which is, in our opinion in Bloc Québécois—and that of our critic for this matter—damaging to Quebec. The government is favouring the petroleum industry and once again making the people who have made an effort, especially the manufacturing sector in Quebec, pay for the reduction in greenhouse gases.

Looking at all that, I think it began with the best of intentions. However, the political, economic and financial results are catastrophic and do not resolve the underlying problems. The fiscal imbalance must not be forgotten. And there is nothing in this bill for EI.

Government Orders

It is not the fault of the NDP. I do not want to throw stones at them for that, but it does enable the federal Liberal government to say that it has a very good bill to resolve a stack of social issues, and that employment insurance will be for later. It will not be for later. We know that very well. Since 2000, government members and ministers have promised EI reforms we have yet to see.

I recall clearly—and I repeat this often, because I want everyone to remember—that, in 2000, the member for Bourassa and other Liberal government ministers of the time promised reforms to construction workers in Jonquière or Chicoutimi. Furthermore, during the televised debate in the last election, the Prime Minister himself promised reforms. However, nothing has happened since then.

Some \$46 billion or \$47 billion was diverted. Obviously \$4.5 billion is nothing to sneeze at. However, \$46 billion or \$47 billion has been misappropriated. This gives an idea of the scale involved. We cannot settle for this, especially if we consider ourselves progressive.

So we must continue to put pressure on this minority government. Furthermore, EI should be a priority.

We must not forget the gun registry scandal either. Apparently, \$1.7 billion was spent. Most of us agree with the principle; the gun registry is essential. However, we were told that it would cost \$2 million, not the almost \$2 billion it has cost to date. This is mind-boggling. Obviously some people profited from it. This is another scandal.

This reminds us, obviously, of the sponsorship scandal. I will say no more about it. I think that we have made up our minds about that scandal.

Look at the federal job creation program. The Minister of Foreign Affairs was then the human resources minister. A billion dollars was spent on all sorts of projects. Exactly how that money was used was never really determined.

There is still the fiscal imbalance. We are talking about an amount between \$12 billion and \$14 billion for all provinces. For Quebec alone, the fiscal imbalance represents \$3.5 billion. In that sense, Bill C-48 is like putting a band-aid on a cancer. The cancer should have been treated.

The Conservative Party finance critic mentioned that this bill does not contain any details and that is a shame. As I was saying earlier, in terms of post-secondary education, the choices made in budget allocation will be extremely critical in determining how useful this money is. The same is true for housing. We would have expected a little more. Perhaps they ran out of time.

I imagine the Minister of Finance must be quite shocked to see, after tabling his budget in February, that for partisan reasons his credibility is on the line. Indeed, that is what is at stake.

In February, he told us there was no surplus, but that he had a \$4 billion contingency fund for emergencies and economic prudence. Now the government is making a \$4.5 billion commitment over two years. It is proof—and the Bloc Québécois has denounced this many times—that they deliberately underestimate the surpluses. The finance minister's credibility will be marred for life. He knows

it, too; that much is obvious. When he responds to questions on Bill C-48, he is uncomfortable and he winces. I would rather he gave a precise picture of the public finances and that we had a real debate on how to use the surpluses; not the unexpected surpluses, but the real ones.

Where should this money go? To repay the debt, as they have said for years? I want to reiterate that. That is an extremely serious thing. For years, they led us to think that the unexpected surpluses should go to repay the debt. And yet, we can see it with Bill C-48. If the government expects unexpected surpluses ahead of time, they can be allocated to some particular thing. Tens of billions of dollars are involved here. In fact, some \$60 billion to \$70 billion have been withdrawn from the democratic debate, from the options available to the members here in the House and to the public. It is unacceptable.

With Bill C-48, unfortunately for the Minister of Finance, they made this fact public. In other words, they underestimate the surplus so they can deduct it from the public debt. They also use trusts and foundations for this. In this way, money from the public purse is removed from the control of parliamentarians. This too is a denial of democracy and a democratic deficit, a deficit that the current Prime Minister criticized a few months back. I have to say that the more time passes, the more I realize those words must surely have been intended to convince both the members of the Liberal Party of Canada and the public that renewal was on the way. We are realizing with the Liberals that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

The democratic deficit remains. The proof lies in the number of motions passed in this House without producing any effect on government action. I will give only one example, in which I am personally involved. It is the splitting of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. The Prime Minister decided the day he was sworn in to split this department. Two bills were introduced and defeated. It would seem that that changed absolutely nothing in the government's trajectory. I could mention other motions that also passed in this House, and that came to nought in terms of government action.

So Bill C-48 may be a fine gesture by the NDP, but it is a harmful one from the political point of view, because it attempts to make people forget that at least a portion of one of the parties involved, that is the Liberal Party of Canada, is corrupt. From the economic point of view, this is far from a guarantee of improved services as far as post-secondary education, provision of social housing, or the environment are concerned.

● (2115)

As I have said, as far as international aid is concerned, this will enable the government to wiggle out of its obligation to have a deadline and a very specific plan for achieving the 0.7% of GDP objective by 2015.

Government Orders

So, overall, this is a way to make people forget what is essential: this government has lost its moral credibility; it is a lame duck government, but Bill C-48 has enabled it to enter into an alliance that will keep it going another few months. We in the Bloc Québécois, like all parties in opposition, have a responsibility to keep reminding people of the essential facts, which demonstrate that this government does not deserve the support of the people of Quebec and Canada. It is regrettable that the NDP fell into the trap.

In this connection, it is my hope that within a few days, or a few hours, some people will see the light and common sense will win out. Bill C-48 is a sham, and we cannot vote in favour of a sham. What we want is some real solutions. All parties in opposition must join forces to put pressure on this corrupt government.

• (2120)

Hon. Claude Drouin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Rural Communities), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only sham tonight is listening to the Bloc Québécois, which claims to defend the interests of Quebeckers and repeats that it will vote against Bill C-48. The premier of Quebec, like most of the mayors in Quebec, is asking the Bloc members to support this bill in order to obtain the money the Government of Canada has promised, thanks to an agreement with the NDP, a party that wanted to work in the interest of Quebeckers and Canadians, unlike the Bloc members.

My colleague alluded to a number of points. I want to respond to some of them. He spoke a great deal about sponsorships. I want to ask him what he thinks of what happened in Quebec, particularly with regard to Oxygène 9 and the resignation of Mr. Baril as a minister. A few months later, the Quebec government made him a vice-president of Hydro-Québec in Chile, without investigating or assigning blame, by claiming its innocence.

Here, we created the Gomery commission of inquiry. Four people are currently facing criminal charges, one of whom has already pleaded guilty. We have launched legal proceedings against 20 individuals and businesses for a total of \$44 million. We amended the Election Act's provisions on the funding of political parties. We re-established auditors for each department, to ensure that departmental expenditures comply with Treasury Board guidelines.

Those are the measures we have taken as a responsible government. We have not tried to hide; we have acted. There was a problem: some people took advantage of a flaw in the system. We are aware of the problem and we want to fix it.

It has been suggested that nothing has been done with regard to EI. In fact, an additional \$300 million was announced, but the Bloc does not want to support Bill C-48. However, it has a lot to say about what happened with the gun registry and EI. The \$1 billion he mentioned is really \$80,000. I invite the member for Joliette to table the documents to support his claims. In reality, the inquiry concluded that \$80,000 was missing.

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, my colleague, whom I like very much as a person, has asked a number of questions. I will not unfortunately be able to answer them all.

As far as the sponsorships are concerned, there is no common thread between what went on here in Ottawa with the Liberal Party of Canada, and what went on in Quebec with Oxygène 9 and Mr.

Baril. Immediately he felt there was a hint of conflict of interest, he resigned. Here, the government had to be harassed.

Even back in the 2000 election campaign we were speaking out about some practices by this government. We could not imagine that this scandal had roots so deep.

The Gomery inquiry was struck in response to pressure by the opposition parties and public opinion. This government has never done a thing without being pressured to do so.

It is a totally different situation in Quebec, for both the Parti Québécois and the Quebec Liberal Party. For example, at the first hint of problems with Jean Brault's contributions to the Parti Québécois, a trust fund was created. Here the government had to be harassed for a month, or a month and a half, until it admitted it no longer had any choice. And then it took a while before the money got transferred.

These are not in any way similar situations. Observers were not at all taken in. There was a whole mechanism in place here. I am not saying it was all the Liberal Party of Canada, or all the government, but there was a real system set up to funnel money indirectly to the Liberal Party of Canada. I am not in any way saying that this was the intent of the sponsorship program. Its primary objective, in reality, was to buy the souls of Quebeckers, and opinion polls show that it failed to do that.

As far as Bill C-48 is concerned, Quebec Premier Charest is certainly playing a totally legitimate game in trying to help out his Ottawa brethren, and to sing the praises of the Liberal Party of Canada in a lead-up to the election. Nevertheless, according to the polls, declared votes in their favour are at around 20% or 22%. I do not think that this will be a major advantage for the Liberal Party of Canada in the next election.

There is a lot more I could say, but no more time, so I will take my seat.

• (2125)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a new member of Parliament I have not seen a lot of bills, but this bill is really something else, with words like "may", "up to", "may be", "up to the amount", "shall not exceed" and "shall". There does not appear to be a lot of certainty and accountability in this legislation.

With the Liberal government's history of the gun registry and HRDC boondoggles, the ad scam and such a lack of accountability, does the member see the potential for this to be another scandal or another ad scam? Why does he think the Liberal government likes these bills and programs without accountability?

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. When we read the bill we see that there are a great many "ifs" and "maybes". First, there needs to be a \$2 billion surplus every year. We know there will be one since the Minister of Finance has constantly underestimated the surpluses.

Government Orders

Nonetheless, if the Liberals did not want to give the money because it did not suit them to do so for one reason or another, they could change their mind—we know what they are like. That said, if they just spent money on other programs they could end up with a \$2 billion surplus without having to say a word about keeping their promises.

The Comptroller General was asked whether this bill was binding. The answer was no. It is a line of credit the federal government has opened to spend the maximum in every sector. Take international aid for example. The maximum is \$500 million. There is no guarantee this money will be spent.

I think we should have had—in fact this was suggested in the Standing Committee on Finance—a much more cohesive bill. The haste of drafting Bill C-48 just to form a political alliance is probably what made it so vague. It leaves the Liberal Party of Canada and current government with a lot of elbow room.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I have been absolutely shocked from the start by the unbelievable arguments made this evening by the hon. member for Joliette.

[*English*]

I wish I could do justice in French to a debate with that member on the floor of the House of Commons in his first language. I listened carefully to the arguments. It struck me, with almost every word that was uttered by the member, how much the rationalizations that are being offered are not really up to his usual standard, either of intellectual soundness or his usual political integrity.

I heard arguments about how there was a kind of marriage of convenience between the Liberals and the NDP, which makes it politically suspect and he is going to be talking about that in his courses. However, if there was ever a marriage of self-serving convenience in the history of this Parliament, it has to be the marriage that has been consummated here on the floor of the House of Commons between the Bloquistes and the ultra-cons.

Honestly, I do not believe for one moment that the member can hold his head up when he listens to the incredible arguments, the raving, right wing, reactionary arguments that come from that corner directed at this budget. He has decided to be associated with that.

How can the member honestly stand in his place and say that he feels good about an alliance with a party that disagrees with practically everything in social policy terms that is—

• (2130)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Joliette.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Paquette: Mr. Speaker, we did not join with the Conservatives. We do not in fact support Bill C-48, but that is, in the main, for our own reasons. Presenting things this way is just a rhetorical device. It is as if I said the Liberals and the NDP were identical. Mind you, Trudeau always said that the New Democrats were Liberals in a hurry. I am beginning to believe it now.

That is not the issue. Behind this operation, the NDP, unfortunately, has supported a corrupt party and government. I will say that I am feeling rather uncomfortable for the NDP, which was

party to an operation that prevented the people of Canada and Quebec from punishing this government. There is no alliance with the Conservatives. It is nothing like that.

I think the NDP made a grave mistake by enabling this government to survive for a few months, because it will be just for a few months. They should have gone to the public following the revelations of the Gomery commission. Moreover, no thought was given to the unemployed. There is nothing on employment insurance and nothing on the fiscal imbalance.

As I mentioned at the outset, they traded substance for shadows—certainty for uncertainty. We will have no part of that.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a great pleasure to speak tonight on third reading of Bill C-48, the better balanced budget sponsored by the NDP. I cannot begin to say how much joy we at this end of the House feel for the contribution we have made to this country. I cannot begin to say how fulfilling it is to know that we have been able to play a small part in making this Parliament work.

Before I go any further in expressing my jubilation and excitement about this moment in our history, let me express a frustration that I think all Canadians must be feeling tonight, that is, just when Canadians thought we were this close to accomplishing something great, to finally getting the budget through, to seeing some investments made in critical areas, the Conservatives come along with yet another obstructive tactic. It is not just the occasional obstruction we are seeing from the Conservatives, but aggressive, perpetual, impolite and almost disgusting obstructionist tactics.

Here we are, having gone through all kinds of antics and tactics, patiently waiting while the Conservatives played their games, and tonight at third reading, the final stage of the bill, the Conservatives come along with another delaying tactic, with another motion to send the budget back to committee. That is an absolutely irresponsible action on the part of the Conservative Party.

Let me say, though, that in case those members think those kinds of tactics will get them anywhere, we are determined to stay here as long as it takes. Perhaps the members across the way would like to listen to this, because it is important. We are telling those members that we are prepared to stay for as long as it takes to accomplish something for Canadians, to deliver the budget bill for Canadians.

We know we are going to go through a lot of hardships and heartache by being here. I see that the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam is getting a little agitated already by my comments. I hope he settles down and listens for a few minutes.

Let me say for all of us that staying here longer than normal and staying here for an unspecified amount of time is obviously going to mean some hardship and heartache for people in the House, for members of Parliament, and for those who serve us and their families. Many of us have graduations to attend that are important for our constituents. Some of us have graduations for our children. Some of us will have to forgo a very important opportunity in the interest of putting the public good ahead of our own personal interests.

Government Orders

On that score, I want to pay a special tribute to my son Nick, my special son Nick, who is no doubt watching tonight and who is going to graduate in a couple of days. I want to say that I hope he appreciates what his mom is doing and that he understands the kind of work we are doing in this place.

I want to take a moment to pay tribute to all of those people who have made it possible for us to be here. We so seldom express our thanks to the table officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms, the pages, the security folks, the translators, the interpreters, the *Hansard* staff, and the food services, everyone who makes it possible for us to be here well into the wee hours of the morning each and every night. I think it is important that we acknowledge the hard work and the contribution made by so many who help us here in this place.

I also want to convey my special thanks to those who serve the finance committee. We went through a very difficult process because of the Conservatives' tactics and the games they were playing. I want to pay tribute to the parliamentary staff and the clerk of that committee, Mr. Richard Dupuis, who in fact, as members will know, suffered a great injustice from the Conservatives, who decided a couple of weeks ago to publicly disparage the work of the clerk of this committee.

● (2135)

The member for Medicine Hat was quoted in the *Ottawa Citizen* for suggesting that the clerk was not doing his job and was doing jiggery-pokery. Despite the fact that the committee went over in great detail how exemplary that person did his job and how meticulous he was in ensuring that witnesses were called, the Conservatives, and particularly the member for Medicine Hat, did not have the decency to publicly apologize and that is a shame.

Now I want to talk about this historic moment. This is truly a moment of which we are very proud. It is a time when we have achieved something by co-operating, by making a minority Parliament work. It is something that seems to be anathema to the Conservatives who do not seem to get what it means to work out something when there is the possibility of cooperation. It seems to me they do not have any semblance of an idea of two parties sitting down, finding something in common and working out an arrangement. They seem to think this is nothing but a secret deal that is bad for everybody.

They cannot understand that Canadians want us to co-operate. They want us to work together, they want to make Parliament work and they appreciate what we have been able to do in this Parliament.

This is the first time in the history of the CCF-NDP that we have been able to bring in an NDP budget. It took a great deal of commitment and hard work on the part of the party's leader, the member for Toronto—Danforth. It took a great deal on the part of our House leader, the member for Vancouver East. It took a great deal of commitment and teamwork on the part of everyone in the NDP caucus.

I again hear the member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam suggesting that it is not really such a big deal, it only accounts for 2% of the GDP. Is that not interesting? The Conservatives want it both ways. One minute they say that we have engaged in a wasteful expenditure and that we are bringing this

planet to its end and this country to its knees because of this huge budget bill. Now the member is saying that it is only 2%.

In fact, it is 1.15% of GDP. The member makes our case. We have been responsible in this process. We have brought forward a balanced budget. We have ensured that it will not at any time lead to a deficit. We have ensured that there is a surplus. We have ensured there is \$2 billion for the debt. That is responsible fiscal planning. That is a responsible parliamentary exercise.

We have not heard anything positive from those folks, not a word about what they would have done. They are crying crocodile tears because they did nothing. This budget bill may not be perfect, we may not have covered every area that was in need and we may not have been able to respond to every Canadian's demand, but we did something. That something is better than the nothing the Conservatives brought to the table.

One of the great sins in our society today is the sin of omission. The Conservatives have committed the sin of omission by not acting, by sitting back and acting like back-seat drivers. That is what they are, noisy, back-seat drivers. They are not in the driving seat. They are sitting there yapping because they could not do anything. They would not do anything and did not do anything for Canadians.

Let us not forget what this is all about and what it means. Let us deal with some of the nonsense, myths and silly ideas that the folks over there have been suggesting day in and day out in these debates.

Let us keep in mind, while we are talking about the games that were played, that members of the finance committee heard nothing but obstruction and filibustering by the Conservatives, the same as they are doing in the House. We saw nothing but an attempt by the Conservatives to block genuine witnesses from making their views known to the committee. We sat through hours of embarrassing interventions by the Conservatives who chose to interrupt every witness on a point of order because they did not have the decency or the courtesy to let those witnesses speak

● (2140)

It is about time that those games ended. It is about time that the Conservatives realize they ought to get back to work and start working on behalf of Canadians.

Let us go back to February 23 for a little history on the budget. Let us go back to that moment when the Minister of Finance tabled his budget.

Members will recall that some of us in the House were shocked at some of the additions and omissions in that budget. We were as shocked in the New Democratic Party as the business community was to see that there was another corporate tax reduction. They did not expect it. We certainly did not expect it. We believed the Prime Minister when he said in the election that there would be no new tax cuts until the Liberals had done their responsible restoration of funds for programs that had been cut.

We took a close look at the budget and realized not only was there another \$4.6 billion for corporate tax cuts, but there was nothing in the budget for education, nothing for housing, very little for the environment and public transit and insufficient amounts for international aid.

Government Orders

There were other areas of gaps and needs that we were not able to negotiate. However, we managed to address four important areas for Canadians.

What has been so ironic in this debate or so hard to understand is that the Conservatives will stand in the House and criticize us for doing this. Yet they also stand and say that we did not include agriculture, or we did not include potholes, or we did not include highways or we did not include the military, a whole list of things. They did not have the nerve to suggest one thing themselves. They did not put one idea on the table. They did not try to negotiate anything with the government. Yet they have the nerve and the audacity to criticize us for trying something that is making a difference for Canadians and is appreciated and welcomed by them.

The Conservatives would like us to believe that there is something horrible about taking another corporate tax cut, scrapping it and investing that money in areas that mean a lot to Canadians.

Mr. Jeremy Harrison: It's not your money. It doesn't belong to you.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Is that not interesting? The member from Churchill is suggesting that it is not our money. He is right. It is not our money. We are looking at the fact that this is the money of Canadians. This is money that ought to be invested in projects and programs that help Canadians. It is neither our money nor is it the money of corporations. An expenditure on a tax cut is revenue lost.

Let us understand one thing. This is about choices. Now the Conservatives choose always to give corporate tax cuts, no matter how much corporations today are floating in profits. It is an obsession with them.

We, on this side of the House, believe that this is the time to give Canadians a break. Who has borne the burden of the kind of agenda we have had from the Liberals over the last 10 to 12 years? It has been the average Canadian. It is Canadians who had to bear the brunt of the cutbacks of the Liberals, starting in 1993, when the Liberal government, following on the heels and the patterns of the Mulroney Conservatives, decided to rip the heck out of our social programs. It took \$6.8 billion out of our social programs, out of health and education. It took the biggest cut out of our social programs in the history of our country. Canadians had to tighten their belts. They were told that when good time came they would get their share.

What happened in 1997 when we were out of the darkness, as the Liberals would like to suggest, when we had a balanced budget and we started to see surpluses? Who got the money then? It was corporations. There was \$100 billion in tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy and nothing for ordinary Canadians.

• (2145)

There was no big restoration of programs that were so desperately needed. There was no big break for workers across the country and their families. It was the corporations that reaped the benefits of that kind of growth in our economy. Therefore, Canadians were told again to wait, that they would get their turn once the government got through this and the corporations got their tax cut. Once there was more surplus, they will get their share.

What happened then? We have \$80 billion in surplus dollars over five budgets. Where did it go? It went to the new target of the Liberals, supported by the Conservatives, and that was to ensure that the debt to GDP ratio was down past 25%. Never mind if Canadians have a leaky roof, never mind if their kids are sick and cannot get the help they need, never mind if there is not enough food to go around, never mind if their sons and daughters cannot go to university as long as those corporations get their way yet again.

We have heard nothing but innuendo, false statements and irresponsible actions on the part of the Conservatives day in and day out in this debate. They have not presented Canadians with the facts. They have not emphasized the issues in terms of tax breaks for corporations going up, profits going up and investment going down. They have not said anything about the possibility of creating jobs by investing in areas that both help Canadians, create jobs and grow the economy.

Let us remember that business claims, just like the Conservative claims throughout this whole budget debate, about how this NDP deal will damage business investment and destroy jobs are so overblown that they stretch the limits of credulity.

We have heard from the Conservative friends, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, that says, "My goodness, the sky is falling". We have heard from the C.D. Howe Institute, "My goodness, how irresponsible can they get". We have heard from some of the big banks, "This is terrible". However, they do not want to mention those corporations and businesses that are responsible citizens in our country and that believe very strongly in the need to invest in the economy.

I want to mention a couple of them. I want to mention the statement we received from Husky Injection Molding Systems. The CEO said:

I commend the Prime Minister for continuing to demonstrate fiscal prudence while at the same time embracing sound social policy. The social policy acceleration announced by the Prime Minister and Mr. Layton yesterday should be viewed as an investment in our future, our children's future and the future of our country.

That is just one example. Let me mention another one from the former chief economist of the RBC Dominion Securities and Richardson Greenshields who said:

The Conservatives are in need of an issue. To pull out of the nose dive caused by the [taping] fiasco and the questions around [their leader's] judgment, the Conservatives have decided to set their sights on Bill C-48, the budget deal the NDP leader, [the member for Toronto—Danforth] struck with the Liberal government in April.

He goes on to say:

Competitiveness is driven by many other factors. Better transit leading to fewer smog days; affordable housing for better, safer neighbourhoods; quality, accessible post-secondary education to create a world class workforce; publicly delivered health care which gives Canadian businesses an edge over regional competitors like the United States. These are the key elements of a progressive, 21st century economy.

That is what we aim to do with Bill C-48. We aim to create an economy that includes everyone. We aim to create an economy that is based on the values of human decency and compassion. We aim to strive for the highest ideals which say that there should be no difference between the son of a banker having a better chance going to university than the daughter of a plumber.

Government Orders

We say that every life has value and without those values and going the way that the Conservatives suggest, we end up in nothing more than a ruthless jungle. We are talking about the Conservatives' politics of the jungle. There is no sensitivity to the needs of individuals or recognition of the struggles that families face.

Therefore, we have suggested that there ought to be an investment in education so everyone has a chance to benefit from higher education and training to get those good jobs. We say there should be money in housing so people do not have to worry about whether they have a roof over their head, whether their basement is filled with water or whether there are leaks happening.

• (2150)

People should be able to breathe the air without needing a puffer because of the smog in our cities. There should be some decent public transit in this day and age to help deal with our commitment to Kyoto. Canada, the wealthy nation that it is, has an obligation to the world as well by sharing some of our wealth with those people who earn \$1 or \$2 a year in other parts of the world.

I urge members to stop the games, get on with making Parliament work, and bring home this budget for Canadians.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to set some facts straight. In her speech she suggested that the \$100 billion tax cut was going for corporations, the wealthy, and to no one else. The 2004 plan reduced the income tax of families with children by 27%. Three-quarters of the plan goes to individuals and the greatest proportion of that goes to low and modest income Canadians. With those tax cuts we took a million poor Canadians off the tax roll completely.

Does the hon. member agree with the Bloc Québécois member who said that the NDP was a great party that had fallen by making this budget? My belief is that the NDP stands by the social principles in spending with which our two parties agree.

The Bloc is the saddest story of this whole exercise because Bloc members also believed in those principles, but all of a sudden, for whatever reason, they are speaking against them. They are speaking against the things which Quebecers believe in: urban transit, lowering tuition fees, helping starving children and affordable housing. How could they give up their principles for a few seats and state that the NDP is a great party which has fallen?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, we have engaged in a collaborative approach with the Liberal government around some specific suggestions vis-à-vis the budget. However, there is no commitment, understanding or belief in the Liberal approach generally to public policy in this country today.

We made these suggestions because we found the Liberal approach to budget making to be flawed, weak and inadequate. We did not see the benefits that the member is talking about for ordinary Canadians. On that score, the Conservatives are right, the main budget this year only creates a \$16 a year break for ordinary Canadians. That, of course, is not something we can tolerate.

That is why we suggested another approach. We suggested to take some of the corporate tax breaks and put them in areas that will help ordinary Canadians and help them where it really makes a

difference. We know we cannot simply give someone a tax break knowing that it will create a health care centre, a child care centre or a public education facility. It does not work that way. Those members who think that should study economics 101.

With respect to the Bloc's position, it is absolutely clear that in this budget exercise, we have responded to Canadians. This is not about the NDP. We are responding to the needs of Canadians and of course those who live in the province of Quebec. We have responded to those needs and we have made a difference.

The Bloc has turned its back on average, ordinary working families in Quebec by refusing to support these programs that will create housing, reduce tuition and create support for international programs.

We just have to look at the response since the budget deal was made. The NDP has gained in popularity, respect and credibility here in this province, other parts of Canada and in Quebec. I think the Bloc should be ashamed for supporting the Conservatives.

• (2155)

Mr. Lee Richardson (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a little comic relief is always appreciated in the course of an evening, and what better way than to hear from the NDP, the Rodney Dangerfield of politics. NDP members get no respect over there, but they do provide some good laughs.

I wonder if the hon. member would agree that perhaps the NDP members sold out a little too cheap when they sold their souls and their votes to the Liberals for \$4.6 billion. A week after the NDP members sold out, the government spent another \$22 billion, which is 1% of the budget.

I wonder if the NDP members think that perhaps they sold out a little too cheap, and after listening to the hon. member, I wonder if they really believe they will ever see a cent of what they call the NDP budget.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member asked those questions; however, I regret that he had to do it in such a patronizing manner. I do not think that kind of attitude is called for in this House, but we are getting used to that from Conservatives.

The Conservatives, throughout this debate, have wanted to suggest that there are no details in this bill, that there are no plans. They do not dare mention that Bill C-43, which just passed and which they supported, contains the same kind of language, just like every bill that ever goes through this House. All bills say the government may spend in these areas and that it may do this with the scrutiny and oversight of Parliament. That is how this place works.

Government Orders

I think it is important to respond to this member by telling him that we have done something important for Canadians. He is suggesting that putting money into public transit, affordable housing, clean environmental projects, retrofitting of homes or foreign aid is frivolous. These members here are suggesting that these kinds of projects are frivolous and we should instead be allowing for more corporate profits, even though they are awash in profits today and not putting our money back into our economy.

The question here really is, how can the Conservatives and the Bloc not support something so basic that Canadians so desperately need. It is in the form of help for housing, education and clean air, and support for people around the world, so that we can all live and grow in an atmosphere and a society of decency, where all human beings are able to pursue their dreams and aspirations to their fullest potential.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was carefully reading my notes when I heard my Liberal colleague's question to another colleague. I am rather disappointed by her response. I think too that my colleague should be ashamed of saying that the Bloc Québécois should hide in Quebec because it did not assert itself.

We have to take a look at the budget and what the NDP has let go. They want us to believe that, for several million dollars they will give to municipalities and a few more dollars in connection with Kyoto, the unemployed would all have to be abandoned. The NDP will have to explain to us why it failed to negotiate on behalf of the unemployed. Do they have to be dropped? Could we also agree that the fiscal imbalance is the real issue? I do not know whether they believe that.

I think it is shameful that this government has the support of a political party like the NDP, which is supporting the Liberal Party of Canada, the most corrupt party in the history of Canada.

Today they tried to teach the Bloc Québécois a lesson saying that we should hide in Quebec. We will not. We will say that this budget was not good for Quebec, and we will not be bought for peanuts in order to forget the whole Canadian and Quebec dynamic. There is absolutely nothing for Quebec in this budget. I can tell you the Bloc is very proud to vote against the budget. The hon. member and the NDP should be ashamed for supporting a corrupt party and doing so for peanuts.

● (2200)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I find that question hard to believe. The people of Quebec are the ones who want the benefits of this bill. Quebecers want access to education. Organizations like FRAPRU want access to these funds. Mayors of municipalities want to see this bill passed as soon as possible. Students want to benefit as well. This is incredible.

Everyone wants to reap the benefits of this bill and they want the members here to agree willingly to proceed with this initiative. It may be a baby step but it involves more than mere peanuts. Students know they need money to study. Poor people know that housing programs are very important and necessary.

How, then, can the Bloc and the Conservatives be opposed to these initiatives of such importance to all Canadians?

Mr. Marc Godbout (Ottawa—Orléans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as the member and representative for the riding of Ottawa—Orléans, it is a privilege and an honour for me to address Bill C-48 this evening, on behalf of my fellow citizens.

This bill will allow us to make new investments that will add even more to a budget which, in everyone's opinion, is a strong, balanced and responsible budget. It has been called visionary. Indeed, this is a budget that provides a direction to Canadians for the next 10 years.

A large number of us, and a majority of Canadians, firmly believe in this budget. Given the initiatives included in the original budget to promote, among other things, more affordable child care services, a stronger economy, the protection of our environment, thriving cities and communities, there is no doubt in my mind that this is definitely a budget prepared with the priorities of Canadians in mind.

We are in the process of accomplishing great things which, in turn, will make Canada a stronger nation.

However, no one ever said that this was a perfect budget. Of course, we in this House are always striving for perfection. There is an old saying in French which says that what is good always strives for the better. So, there was room for improvement. I myself was the first one to deplore, here in this House, that the original budget did not give the pressing needs of official language communities and post-secondary education, for example, the attention that these issues deserve.

[*English*]

I was more than pleased when we recently announced a further investment which included \$1.6 billion for affordable housing and \$1.5 billion to enhance access to post-secondary education and support training. As a former assistant deputy minister of education in Ontario, I applaud that investment in knowledge economy.

There is an extra \$900 million for the environment, including assisting public transit and a low income housing energy retrofit program, and \$500 million in foreign aid.

These new measures flow from our throne speech and budget 2005, and as the Minister of Finance previously said, they build on our government's effort to increase federal financial support for the priorities of Canadians in key areas but in a fiscally responsible manner.

Government Orders

The opposition members have been critical of these spending announcements, and especially of our deal with the NDP saying that it is fiscally irresponsible. I do not understand that because the funding for those initiatives stems directly from the budget which the opposition indicated it supported the day it was introduced. These initiatives have been announced because of sound fiscal management of the Liberal government. This is why we are able to invest further dollars in the priorities of Canadians without going into deficit.

The government has never strayed from its stance of fiscal prudence. In fact, new spending in recent announcements totals \$9 billion spread over five years. The fact is that most of the past week's announcements have already been announced or accounted for in budget 2005 and are obviously not new spending. They are also contingent upon maintaining budgetary surpluses over that period.

The Prime Minister has been clear on this. The budget deal with the NDP represents an overall increase in spending of about 1% and it has been explicitly declared that we will not return to a deficit.

• (2205)

[*Translation*]

I want, instead, to come back to the investments set out in Bill C-48: \$1.6 billion for affordable housing. More specifically, this agreement provides \$602 million over the next four years to increase affordable housing units in Ontario alone.

This is clearly a giant step, because it will enable us to provide more affordable housing in communities throughout Ontario. Thousands of people, particularly those with mental health problems, victims of domestic violence and low-income families, will have a real place to call home as a result. It is very hard for me to understand why the opposition would oppose investments for such vulnerable individuals.

In more concrete terms, some 20,000 Ontario households will benefit from this agreement, including 5,000 low-income households that will benefit from subsidized housing.

The Liberal government currently spends approximately \$2 billion per year, through CMHC, to fund 636,000 affordable housing units. By 2006-07, we will have invested an additional \$2 billion to fight homelessness and increase the number of affordable housing units.

And what about the \$1.5 billion to improve access to post-secondary education and training? As I mentioned, as a former educator, I was admittedly delighted to hear this news. As I said earlier, I have been fighting for a long time for this level of government to play a greater role. I have always believed that success starts with learning and innovation. Access to quality education is therefore vital to Canada's future, prosperity, competitiveness and productivity.

[*English*]

Furthermore, I applaud the fact that Bill C-48 will allocate another \$900 million for the environment, including assistance for public transit and a low income housing energy retrofit program, making this budget an even greener budget.

The preservation of our environment is an important issue for all of us. I can say without a doubt that public transportation is an issue that especially concerns the people of Ottawa—Orléans and the National Capital Region. Indeed, we are avidly awaiting the completion of the north-south O-Train transit system corridor, and finally, we hope, the beginning of the next phase that would interest me as the representative for Ottawa—Orléans, the east-west corridor, hopefully in a few years from now, stemming from these investments.

The Government of Canada will provide public transit investment of up to \$800 million over the next two years. These funds are in addition to the \$5 billion over five years in gas tax money announced last February.

As we know, the Liberal government is strongly committed to supporting public transit infrastructure. This investment will thus further help cities and communities to meet the growing demand for better public transit while also enhancing the new deals for the ability of cities and communities to address national environmental objectives.

Indeed, these funds will enable cities and communities to immediately increase their infrastructure and public transit capacities, reduce congestion and limit air pollution and greenhouse gases.

• (2210)

[*Translation*]

In closing, I also want to mention that our government is committed, with Bill C-48, to injecting \$500 million into foreign aid. Of that amount, several million dollars, roughly \$198 million, will be used to fund peace initiatives and international humanitarian relief efforts in the Sudan.

Last week, I had the opportunity to welcome Senator Roméo Dallaire to my riding. He was supporting an initiative by the Jeanne Sauvé school to sponsor a school in the Sudan in order to support that community during this difficult time.

For the people of Ottawa—Orléans, this additional aid to developing countries is certainly a positive measure.

To conclude, I want to reiterate that we have here a very important bill that, in my opinion, has to be passed in its entirety. It would be too bad, if not shameful, to obstruct measures for further completing and improving a budget whose importance and fiscal discipline was something all Canadians could agree on.

The behaviour of the official opposition and, in some ways, of the Bloc, especially in committee, is deplorable. Their tactics and hard line attitude have done nothing to improve the lot of Canadians. It is clear that in their quest for power they are prepared to go as far as putting their own interests before the interests of the people they claim to represent.

Government Orders

Bill C-48 reflects not only the Liberal government's determination to keep its promises and maintain a balanced budget, but also its openness and willingness to adopt new measures that will contribute to the well-being of Canadian and international communities.

[English]

As the member of Parliament for Ottawa—Orléans, I can never say enough about how proud I am and how privileged I feel to represent and serve my constituents. Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, we are more dedicated than ever to the improvement of the well-being of all Canadians. I strongly believe that this bill represents a further step in the right direction. Therefore, it has my full support. I sincerely hope that reason will prevail and that this budget will be unanimously approved by all parties.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked first about being fiscally responsible. He then went on to talk about sound fiscal management. Many of us who have been in the House throughout the years know full well the fiscal management of the HRDC file, of the gun control fiasco and now of the past affordable housing shortcomings, where there is really not a shred of evidence of sound fiscal management at all but rather a preponderance of fiscal mismanagement and corruption.

If the NDP budget housing plan is soundly and fiscally planned, I think the House should really know from the member opposite exactly how many housing units are planned to be created with the \$1.6 billion. How many housing units are being planned for through the sound fiscal planning of the affordable housing add-on in the NDP budget? Could we have an answer to that? Is it 100,000? Is it 10,000? Or do they simply just not know?

• (2215)

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat surprised to hear the hon. member put in doubt our fiscal management. As a matter of fact, just today, in the *Edmonton Journal*, I read an article about that. The headline reads "Canada dazzles G-8 with its economic performance". The article states that among the G-8, which includes the United States, Japan, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Russia:

The federal government regularly boasts at the annual summits that it has done more than any other G-8 government in cleaning up its finances, posting eight consecutive budget surpluses.

But Canada's economic performance also stacks up well, according to the comparative analysis released Tuesday by Statistics Canada.

Canada is a leader among the G-8 members in terms of the pace of economic growth and employment this decade and the educational attainment of its workers, it added.

Just to look at job creation, since January 2003 the Canadian economy has created 500,000 new jobs, almost all of them full time.

I was asked about how much new housing there will be. It is very clear and it has been indicated that we have to sit down with municipalities. I know the official opposition does not agree that we should talk to the municipalities, but we have to sit down with them, assess what their needs are and develop whatever the provinces and the municipalities feel we have to. But that is not the way the opposition wants us to work: directly with municipalities.

[Translation]

Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate this evening has been most

educational. I have been doing so patiently for two hours. I have a number of questions. It has even been said that the Bloc Québécois ought to be ashamed to vote against such a budget. I can tell you that I will do so with pride, and there are two or three reasons for this.

If the government really wanted to give money, we could tell it where to put that money. We have, in fact, already done so. There was reference to the fiscal imbalance, for instance. I can tell you that, as far as seniors, my area of specialization, are concerned, the \$3 billion stolen from them could be given back. I do not see that in this budget.

Then there is a bit over \$1 billion for social housing. I would like the Liberal member who has just spoken to tell me whether he is aware that it is the same with social housing as with everything else; the poor are being made to pay off the government debt.

Canada Mortgage and Housing has a surplus of \$3.7 billion. If social housing is what is wanted, there is no need to add \$1 billion: just spend the money there is, and spend it properly. That is not happening at present, because the surplus is being applied to the government's debt. This is already happening with seniors, those who need social housing, and the unemployed, to the tune of \$45 billion.

So, if we were to vote in favour of a budget, it would be one where the money goes to the people it belongs to, the ones from whom it was taken. It is not just a matter of putting down some figures.

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Speaker, I must say that I agree 100% with the response by my NDP colleague. The Bloc Québécois should be applauding Bill C-48. It should be rejoicing. Their own premier is asking them to support the budget. The Bloc says it represents Quebec but perhaps it should listen to its constituents.

The fiscal imbalance is being discussed to death. A transfer of \$1.3 billion from federal gas taxes was just announced. The Bloc should be applauding this. I do not understand why it is not happy. Does it simply prefer to hear bad news?

We are talking about the fiscal imbalance, but they voted against the Canada Economic Development Agency for the Regions of Quebec. I have trouble understanding their pessimism and negativity. At some point, the Bloc members should start representing the interests of Quebecers as they say they do. Quebec needs to be un-Blocked and, to some extent, given the representation it deserves.

Based on their comments, it is my opinion that they do not knowingly represent the interests of Quebecers and certainly not the interests of Canadians.

• (2220)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Orléans for his support for the NDP budget. I want to continue in the same vein as the questions he was just asked.

Government Orders

We know that some organizations in Quebec fully support the NDP budget, organizations such as FRAPRU, environmental organizations and those working on behalf of the poor or disabled. We know full well that the Charest government has made systematic cuts in every social sector. We, the NDP, on this side of the House, are in fact trying to obtain money for Quebeckers and restore their confidence after all these cuts they have suffered over the years.

Oddly, the Bloc Québécois opposes the NDP budget and wants to replace it with tax cuts for corporations. To me, that makes no sense. I am surprised that the Bloc, although it claims to be a progressive party, refuses to support a progressive budget that is supported by the NDP, a progressive party, the very party that made all this happen.

I have the following question for my colleague. How can the Bloc justify this opposition to the NDP budget?

Mr. Marc Godbout: Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am trying hard to understand. I have done a number of analyses and I do not understand their reluctance to approve this budget. It is beyond the scope of my imagination. As we say in English, it flies in the face of logic.

This NDP budget, Bill C-48, I would say to my eminent NDP colleague is still quite Liberal. All of these priorities had been identified in the throne speech. Canadians had asked us—asked all the parties—to make this government work.

There is no doubt that we listened to what the NDP told us, but we had no objection to investing in the four areas Bill C-48 identified as additional investments. Of these four categories, I give Canadians' priorities special attention.

However, what surprises me—as I told you as well—is that their own premier, Mr. Charest, is asking them to pass the budget. Now I do not understand. I am wracking my brain trying to figure out why they are not celebrating all over Quebec. Well, they are pessimists. Their role is to separate Quebec from Canada. It is not to see the good things Canada does, such as support Quebeckers.

I cannot therefore tell my colleague exactly what is going on in the heads of my Bloc colleagues. First, I am not a Quebecker, then I am certainly not a representative of that political party. They will have to be asked themselves. From what they say, no doubt, they are having a hard time admitting that this Liberal government is addressing the needs of Canadians and Quebeckers.

• (2225)

[*English*]

Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the constituents of Yellowhead with regard to this piece of legislation, if we can call it that. Before we can get into a serious dialogue with regard to this two page \$4.6 billion disaster, we have to understand exactly how we got to the point where late on a June evening we are speaking to a piece of legislation that was brought forward in such an unorthodox way.

I listened intently to my colleagues from the other parties speak to this legislation. I do not for one minute believe the reason we are talking about it today is the \$4.6 billion or all of the noble things the bill is supposed to provide to the Canadian people. This 400 word

document was cooked up in a backroom of some hotel in Toronto by a labour party organization, a desperate Prime Minister and the leader of the NDP. We have to examine what really went on and why it came forward in the first place.

It certainly was not a noble plan that was decided upon because of astute people thinking this was the appropriate thing to do. It was actually a sellout by a desperate Prime Minister who would do almost anything to stay in power because of the scandal his government was caught in. Not only is it the scandal of the decade, but I believe it will go down as the worst thing in Canadian history that we have seen in the House.

It has created a considerable amount of cynicism among the people in my riding and across the country. They see what is going on in this place and ask if that is what federal politics and the federal government have really boiled down to. Has it gotten to the point where it is all about cooking up a backroom deal to try to save one's political hide and stay in power illegitimately?

That is really what this \$4.6 billion is all about. That is what the deal was all about. It was the price the NDP charged the Liberal Party for garnering the NDP's 19 votes to support a corrupt government and allow it to stay in power.

If that were not bad enough, the government over the last decade did the same sort of thing for the province of Quebec. It tried to prop up the Liberal Party of Canada illegitimately through the abomination of the ad scam. The Gomery inquiry has allowed Canadians to examine very clearly and understand in a more fulsome way than ever before just how terrible it was, what went on behind the scenes and the amount of corruption involved. Millions of dollars were being passed around in brown envelopes to try to prop up the Liberal Party. That scandal makes the Watergate scandal in the United States a few decades ago look like child's play. Canadians look at this and become very cynical.

It is amazing when one sees what is actually happening in Quebec. No wonder the Liberal Party has absolutely tanked in the province of Quebec. The writers of soap operas would have to work overtime to keep up with the drama that this place has provided for the people of Quebec as they watch the amount of corruption. Sex, war and violence make for a good soap opera and it seems we have had that here in the last few months. That absolutely has to stop. It is almost at the point where members of Parliament on this side when they go home on weekends have to take multiple showers just to clean the sleaze off from what we see in the House.

I put my name on a ballot to try to garner the support and trust of the people in my constituency of Yellowhead. I took that on as a very important and honoured position. I have come to the House to represent them in way which allows them to hold their heads high.

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• (2230)

I think each member needs to understand that we are here not because of our self-interest but because of the interests of the people we represent. Too many members forget that too quickly after an election. We had an election a year ago. We have seen what it will take for a party to try to stay in power. I find it absolutely amazing when I see that happen.

Let us get on to the actual piece of legislation. Before we get to Bill C-48, we have to talk about its precursor, which is Bill C-43, and understand how it came about.

Bill C-43 is the biggest spending budget we have seen in a decade. An amazing amount of dollars is in Bill C-43. When the budget was first handed down, it went through a process as normal budgets do. There was a lot of consultation, a lot of input. In a minority government it is very important that the government sit down and talk to all parties intently to have their input into the budget. Bill C-43 had a fair amount of that, more than we have seen in other budgets. The House can understand that because it is a minority government and we need to respect that.

When Bill C-43 came forward, although not everything was in the best interests of Canadians, we thought there was certainly enough there that was better than we had seen before. There were some things that needed to be changed in committee. We sat on our hands for the first vote to get the bill into committee so we could address some of the serious problems.

We certainly needed to deal with the CEPA amendments. We certainly needed to deal with making sure that the budget represented the population and that it was in the best interests of all Canadians.

We have to understand what the finance minister said about the budget. He said that we could not run this country by one-offs, that we could not just cherry-pick and apply money illegitimately, without a plan or a purpose and without full consultation. What we saw coming out of this budget was exactly that because the government not only tried to stay in power illegitimately after the NDP budget, which is Bill C-48, but it tried to stay in power through Bill C-43.

An hon. member: They were desperate.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Yes, a very desperate party doing desperate things.

I just want to pick up on the comments made by my colleagues who suggested that the Liberal Party always does what is in the best interests of Canadians, particularly when it comes to health care. It is something I just cannot leave alone because I am very passionate about protecting our health care system. I understand that Canadians are very concerned about it. Many people are dying while they are on wait lists for health services that they cannot get.

A year ago during the election campaign, we laid out our platform before the Canadian people. It is not about the opposition trying to take down a government that is in power. It is about laying an alternative before the people of Canada so they have the opportunity to discern what is in their best interests. We laid out our health care platform during the election campaign. We indicated the number of

dollars that would be needed for health care in the next number of years to sustain it in the short term. Our plan was to make sure that would take place.

The Liberal government did exactly the same thing. The Liberals accused us of having too rich a budget, that we could not afford it, that it was going to break the bank and there was no way in the world that Canada could afford the number of dollars the Conservative Party had suggested. It is interesting. Just think about this. The election was in June and by September we had the 2004 accord. The first ministers sat down with the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister said, "We are going to fix health care for a generation".

There was no possible way that was going to happen, and it certainly did not. Nonetheless the numbers, the dollar figures that came out of that, which we hear the Liberal government bragging about intently, were not the numbers on which the Liberals went to Canadians last June to ask for a mandate to support health care. The dollar numbers that were actually agreed on were in fact almost identical to the numbers in our budget, which were double the amount of dollars for health care.

• (2235)

We understand that health care is a priority. We understand that people are dying on wait lists. What we cannot understand is a government that over the last decade has pulled \$25 billion out of health care.

When the Liberals cooked up a deal with the NDP in order to stay in power, it is interesting that the NDP did not recognize the importance of health care and tried to come up with a way of fixing it, not just for the next decade but for the generation beyond the next 10 years.

The real challenge in health care is not whether it should be a more private or a more public health care. The real challenge is how to sustain it over the next 30 to 40 years as the baby boomer bubble hits our system and, at the same time, understand that when the demand on health care and the amount of money that will have to be put into it will be coming at a time when we will have a diminishing number of taxpayers paying for the service. Therefore we have a significant problem.

We do not have time to play politics with health care any more, as has been happening over the last decade under the Liberal government. It is unbelievable that we see that kind of dishonesty in health care and that kind of dishonesty in budgeting. It is an abomination and it is something that Canadians really have to discern.

I do not think Canadians will be fooled by the government. I do not think they will be fooled by the display of what went on to get Bill C-48 here this evening. They understand that this is a desperate government propped up by a party that has never had an opportunity to do anything and probably never will. The NDP members had an opportunity to stay true to their conscience. They say they are the great defenders of democracy and yet we see what they did. They threw democracy in the air for \$4.6 billion. It is an unbelievable situation.

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Why I have spent most of my time so far talking about Bill C-48 is because Bill C-48 is not the real issue. The real issue is how we could treat democracy in such a pathetic way and cook up a deal in a hotel room by desperate people trying to stay in power. It is not about Canadians and it is not about the \$4.6 billion because after the \$4.6 billion what did we see? We saw \$26 billion being applied to try to buy off the Canadian public prior to what the Liberals thought was going to be an election.

The Liberals tried to buy off Quebec. They bought off the NDP. They tried to buy off the Canadian electorate. If that was not bad enough, they had to try to buy opposition votes because they needed a few more and they were able to do that by offering and giving power. They not only offer dollars but they offer power.

We ask ourselves why Canadians are so cynical about this place and how politics have deteriorated in this country. I say to everyone in the House that we had better soberly understand and think about what we are trying to do here and who we are trying to support. It is not each other nor is it our parties. It is the people of Canada. Too many times the members of the House forget that. We do it in a matter of days around here. It seems to be a very easy thing to fall into that trap. I think we need to understand that.

Let us look at Bill C-48 and discern what Bill C-48 is actually saying. It talks about \$4.6 billion but the dollars are not well planned out and there are no accountability measures. What happens to that money?

The ad scam, one of the reasons that we are here, is a perfect example of what happens. Money was misappropriated and it went to places that it should not have gone to, propping up the Liberal government. We have seen other examples of it with the gun registry. The Liberal government made a promise that Canadians would only pay \$2 million for that registry and it is now closer to \$2 billion. Submarines are another example of the inappropriate use of money. We have seen HRDC and Shawinigan. We could just go on and on.

We could go into each one of those in detail and perhaps we should just to remind the Canadian public how badly the Liberal government treats the Canadian purse when it starts doing these one-offs without any accountability measures. If we want to add some confidence of the Canadian public in this House that has to stop.

• (2240)

This House has a long history of serving the country, which is one of the greatest countries in the world, but it should not be one of the greatest, it should be the greatest. No country in the world has the amount of resources and wealth that Canada has with a population of 32 million. We should be leading the nation in every sector and in every way. We should be an example of how a country should be run. In some ways we do it in spite of the government because we have lots to be proud of, but we could be so much more and so much better. It is a shame that we have to run a government the way we have and the way we are doing it under this piece of legislation.

What we are talking about here is money. Let us look at some of the priorities of the NDP when it was prepared to sell its soul. The number one issue in my riding and from coast to coast is agriculture. I do not know where the NDP votes are really coming from or why it is not thinking of the Canadian people, but the number one issue in

my riding is agriculture. The BSE issue has hit them in a way that has never hit the agriculture industry before.

In my riding it is doubly bad because there were two years of drought and grasshopper problems and on top of that they have now had two years of the BSE crisis. Farmers are in suicidal situations. Many of them are visiting my office and many of them are calling. It is an unbelievable situation in agriculture and the NDP cooks up what it says is a deal of a lifetime and forgets to even think about what is actually happening with the number one issue in the country with regard to a serious crisis situation.

The Liberal government has also failed the agricultural community. In budget after budget we have seen its priorities and the message it is sending to the farmers and producers is that they should get out of agriculture. That has to stop. We do not understand just how serious a situation it is and how important it is to be able to support it.

We all realized that this was a cooked up budget for all the wrong reasons but it was there. What were we going to do about it? When it got into committee we tried to address some of the concerns. We wanted to put some sanity around it. We tried to put a plan in place so that the government would at least be responsible enough, even though it was going to spend the money, to ensure the money would be applied in an appropriate way. That sounded reasonable to me and it makes no sense whatsoever why the Liberals failed to do that.

When it comes to accountability for that money, there needs to be a plan and some accountability measures around it or we will see the same kind of misuse of funds that we have seen in many of these other programs.

The first change we requested was to clause 2 and accountability was in clause 3. In clause 1 we wanted to make sure the government did not forget that it had a \$500 billion debt load. We wanted the government to understand that the debt had to be dealt with or we would be dealing with some serious problems down the road because the economy does not usually go straight up. It usually has some bumps along the way. A good, prudent manager would understand that something like that would happen.

Not only that, a good, prudent manager would have a slush fund, which we have. It is a \$4 billion slush fund. However the NDP deal took half of that away and now the slush fund is only \$2 billion. We are sitting on dangerous ground and we are being asked to come into this House and support it. We are asked to come in here and debate it in the wee hours of the evening and try to come up with a reason why we should support a budget that would do this to the tax purse of the Canadian public. There is no reason that I can think of and it is an absolutely unbelievable thing.

Not only did this cooked up deal take the \$4.6 billion out of it but it also tried to eliminate the tax reductions. We know that if the government can apply \$26 billion to it, it also has extra money.

In closing, I would like to move:

That the motion be amended by adding:

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And the committee report back no later than December 16, 2005.

● (2245)

The Speaker: The debate is on the amendment to the amendment.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me just say that to build oneself up by dragging someone else down is not parliamentary. It is not parliamentary language that the member used and I will not comment further.

He referred several times to propping up a government. We have made it very clear that we are in a minority situation. It is the first time since Joe Clark in 1979. We cannot govern a minority government as if we had a majority. It means collaboration and cooperation among all parties. At least the NDP had the good sense to sit down and talk about responsible changes.

The member talked about how important it was to pay down the debt and yet I cannot think of one member over there who has not spoken at the prior stage, at report stage, and at his stage who has not said that the existence of a surplus means that we are overtaxing and that we have to lower taxes. They cannot have it both ways and be fiscally responsible.

If he feels this strongly, why is it that the Conservative Party voted in favour of the budget implementation bill, Bill C-43, but is now turning around and going to vote against Bill C-48 which represents a 1% increase in annual spending? Why does he want to topple the government and send Parliament into an election. Why is there so much outrage at 1%? It makes no sense. The Conservatives want it both ways but they cannot have it both ways.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to answer that question because I thought I had laid it out fairly clearly that I thought Bill C-48 was an illegitimate cooked up budget that was not about the money but was about trying to support an illegitimate government.

The hon. member wants to know why we supported Bill C-43. We supported it because we were able to make some needed amendments to it in committee. Although Bill C-43 was the biggest spending budget we have seen in a decade, we were not overly concerned with it. With the amendments we said that it was not everything but in a minority we try to move the debate along and try to do what is in the best interests of Canadians and we decided to support it so we could move on.

However Bill C-48 was an illegitimately cooked up, 400 full words, made in a room in Toronto, and the hon. member thinks that is okay and that is the way we should run this country. I find that absolutely amazing. He has been here for a considerable amount of time and he understands how the process works. What would that say if we said that was okay to all those people we consulted on Bill C-43 and who had an opportunity for input, including the NDP, by the way, who said that if it was a priority we should get on with it?

What should we say to those individuals who had input on Bill C-43 when the government completely reverses it and comes up with Bill C-48? Worse than that, it does one offs and adds another \$20-some billion of spending on top of that to try to prepare for an election for the Canadian public. That is what is absolutely pathetic and unbelievable when we look at what has happened here.

● (2250)

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise and ask a question of the member for Yellowhead. I want to go back to his preamble about how we got here.

First, how we got here is that the original budget bill, Bill C-43, was put forth to Parliament. The hon. member's leader, with almost the entirety of his caucus, aside from a few who decided to vote, sat on their hands and expressed no opinion on it. The leader got out of his seat, walked down the aisle, went out the door and said the budget was fine, that it was something he could support.

An hon. member: He loved it.

Mr. Brian Masse: He loved the budget. Then, later on, as things changed, the Conservatives decided to work with the Bloc to try to bring down the government and we as New Democrats were supposed to sit here and do nothing.

Instead, we sought to find out if we could improve Bill C-43 into something that we could support. Instead of waiting for the members of the opposition to decide whether or not to bring the government down, we at least worked to try to find out if we were going to have an improved budget.

It is important to note that the Conservatives started waffling then. Once again they decided that they would support Bill C-43. They did not vote the first time, but they did vote for it just last week, and today we have them voting against Bill C-48.

What they are against is a modest improvement to the budget that at least gives some type of improvement to students. It gives some improvement to our environment, to issues on housing, which we have long sought, and to pension protection for workers, which has been sought by many Canadians.

It is interesting as well to note that when the Conservatives voted for Bill C-43, they voted for the corporate tax cuts. That is the situation they are in. At the end of the day, let us note that the member criticized the farm and health care aspects, but they are left supporting a budget that did nothing for those aspects.

We finally have an improvement to the budget. I would like to ask the hon. member about his reference to the party platform and the election. Should Canada still buy an aircraft carrier or should it invest in health care? What is his position on that?

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of dialogue over there. I can understand that it is a little defensive, because we are hearing from an individual who is prepared to sell his vote and cheapen himself to the point where he would actually sacrifice the democracy of the country in order to put forward a budget in the way Bill C-48 came forward. Actually, I have a difficult time seeing it as a budget. It is illegitimate. I find it absolutely inappropriate.

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We see that kind of desperation from the individuals in the NDP when they ask questions like that. What happened with the vote on Bill C-43, if my hon. colleague is serious about understanding what actually happened there, was that Bill C-43 was not a bill we thought we could accept. We sat down and said we would get it into committee and that when we got it into committee we would ask for amendments. We were able to get the amendments. We were not like the NDP who said they would take all the money and illegitimately spend it.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, I can hardly hear myself. There is just too much noise, but I can understand them being irritated because they have cheapened themselves and it became exposed. I can certainly understand that. Why would they not feel that way? Perhaps they have some answering to do. I believe they will have answering to the Canadian public to do in the next election, as the government will, because I do not believe the Canadian people have been fooled by what has gone on in the last two months. They will discern that. They will understand it full well. They will deal with it. I look forward to that opportunity.

• (2255)

The Speaker: The hon. parliamentary secretary, a very brief question.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate what the previous questioner asked. I want to point out the origins of Bill C-48. We had Bill C-43 before this and the Conservative leader agreed to support it, but he changed his mind. We wonder why he changed his mind.

I will get right to the question. The question is whether or not the member's leader has any credibility. I went to my friends in the Conservative Party and I asked them why he changed his mind and they basically said that they are going to have a big makeover.

My question is, who is going to pay for this makeover? Who is going to do it? Are other members? When I look across the foyer, I note that other members would benefit from a makeover. Are other members going to be eligible to benefit from this makeover? There would be chaos—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Yellowhead, a very brief response.

Mr. Rob Merrifield: Mr. Speaker, we have a Liberal government that is made up. That is the pathetic thing about what has gone on. Our leader has been totally consistent with what went on in Bill C-43. We said it was not good for the country until we got it amended. We could not support it and never did support it until we got the amendments and then we supported it reluctantly. We said that it was still not enough to throw this government out over, let us support it. That was a consistent message right from beginning to end.

I believe that my hon. colleague understands that full well. The Canadian people do as well. The Canadian people will deal with this government because of what it has done to democracy in this country. It has to stop. It has to stop now. The Canadian people will do that.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when we get through all of this, I think there will be some reflection on how this happened. I am not sure that everybody is going to be totally happy.

Bill C-48 is an interesting proxy for a number of things that have occurred here. First of all, let me remind members about the content of Bill C-48 with regard to \$4.5 billion of commitment only, and it is contingent, as the members will all know, that there will be a \$2 billion surplus.

This is not in any way going to jeopardize the country by putting the country back into deficit. I should remind all hon. members that this is going to be the eighth consecutive surplus budget in Canada, getting us on a sound footing. That is why today's *Edmonton Journal* is saying that we are the top of the G-8 in terms of our performance.

The amount is \$4.5 billion. First of all, it is very important to recognize that the government is in a minority scenario. We all remember what happened with Joe Clark in 1979. He simply said to the public, "I'm going to govern as if I had a majority". We know exactly what happened. The government fell and he lost the government.

That is not the way to operate. That was 25 years ago. We have to learn from the lessons of the past. What a minority government does mean, and I think there is probably only one person here who has some experience from back then, is that any day a government could fall. In a minority scenario, a government could fall any day if it does not have a plan which is responsible and has the support of the majority of the House. When it loses that majority of the House, the government falls.

However, no party is going to be responsible by sending Parliament back to the electorate in the short term without having shown some good faith to try to make the minority government work. It means that parties have to talk to each other. It means that there is going to have to be some give and take. It means that sometimes we have to take a little bit less of what we want and understand that others would like to see certain other things.

When it was all said and done, what happened? In order to get support for the budget, to make minority government work, there was a deal made. Is that a shame? A deal was actually made between parties to say, "This would be acceptable if we could get some other items in there". What were the other items?

It seems to me that the first item is \$900 million "for the environment, including for public transit and for an energy-efficient retrofit program for low-income housing".

So far I have not heard one person in the debate we have had on Bill C-48 say that he or she is opposed to these kinds of things such as the improvement of public transit and energy efficient retrofits for low income housing. Not one person has said that.

What was the second item? The second item is in support of "training programs and enhancing access to post-secondary education, to benefit, among others, aboriginal Canadians", in an amount of \$1.5 billion.

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That is a lot of money, there is no question about it, but this certainly has been on the agenda and in past budgets of this government and of this Parliament. Have we done everything that we possibly can for post-secondary education? Certainly not. We can do more. That is acceptable. It is acceptable to do a little bit more.

The third item is “for affordable housing, including housing for aboriginal Canadians, an amount not exceeding \$1.6 billion”. I have spent some time on the health committee, where we looked at aboriginal health issues. I have visited at least four reserves to look at the conditions to try to educate myself about the realities in the aboriginal communities.

• (2300)

There is no question about this. I do not think I have heard anybody in this place say that further investment to improve the quality of life and the health and well-being of aboriginals in Canada was not a good thing. There was no one.

Finally, with respect to foreign aid and the amount not exceeding \$500 million, foreign aid may be a little more problematic for some, yet when we talk about situations such as Darfur, or Africa with the AIDS epidemic, or poverty in Ethiopia, or some of the other areas in the world, let me say that we are a generous and prosperous country. We want to make sure that we do our share in conjunction with our international partners to make sure that people have the dignity of food, clothing and shelter.

This is \$500 million we are talking about. It may not do a lot, but again, I did not hear one speech in this place indicating that an investment of \$500 million in foreign aid in the year 2006-07 was a bad thing. I did not hear members saying they had a problem with it.

If we were to check the record we would see that nobody has talked against these items. What they have talked about is the fact that Bill C-48 exists. In fact, the basic objection of the Conservative Party is to the fact that a minority government is working. It objects to the government working collaboratively with another party which has decided that Canadians do not want an election, that Canadians want us to show them we can make this work. If it does not work, then we can go back to them and they will judge who is responsible. There will be a judgment. That is what Canadians are saying. There will indeed be a judgment.

What did those members do? They said fine, if that was the way we wanted to do it, they would have an alliance too. They do not like two parties over here having an understanding so they will have an understanding as well. What is their understanding? All the Conservatives wanted to do was to throw the government out. The leader of the Conservative Party said he wanted to put us out of our misery as soon as possible.

What kind of attitude is that in terms of the question that Canadians ask, which is whether we have made a legitimate effort to make this minority government work? It was political opportunism at the time. The Conservatives were looking at polls and everything else except governing Canada.

Now we have the unholy alliance over there. We have the right and we have the wrong. The Bloc Québécois members are here to separate Quebec from the rest of Canada and the Conservatives have no problem aligning themselves with that party. Who knows what

secret arrangement or kickback is going to happen if they should happen to defeat the government. How could we ever imagine that?

Some of the dialogue that has gone on has not been with regard to the substance of Bill C-48. Indeed, since the amount of dollars involved in Bill C-48 is 1% of the total budget, it is not the magnitude of the dollars but the principle. The issue really is the fact that there was an opportunity to make government work and those members resent that. That is the bottom line. They do not want minority government to work.

I listened to the speech made by the last member. At least half the speech was filled with things that I would not repeat. It was almost based on the philosophy that the best way to make oneself look good is to tear somebody else down. I would rather speak in favour of something rather than against something. Where is the substance?

Let me turn to some of those specific items with regard to the economics, the finances. It is described here as “do anything to keep control of government”, but on this side of the House we would say it is anything to make sure that we demonstrate to Canadians that we are doing the best we can to make this minority government work. Canadians do not want an election. They want us to make it work. If we do not do our best to make it work, Canadians will judge.

• (2305)

One of the issues that has been discussed often by members is the existence of a surplus. The Conservatives have argued that if there is a surplus, then Canadians must be overtaxed. That is a valid point to make, except for one aspect. A surplus is a matter that exists in one year. If we have a \$2 billion surplus, that is a \$2 billion surplus in that year. In the subsequent year, who knows what it will be?

However, if we say we have a \$2 billion surplus so let us give a tax break for \$2 billion, we might be able to do that and have a balanced budget instead of a \$2 billion surplus in year one. However, what happens in year two if everything else remains constant? All of a sudden there is another \$2 billion tax cut but no surplus to apply it against. That tax cut is each and every year. A surplus is not guaranteed each and every year.

Fiscal responsibility says we just cannot take an annuity and compare it to a lump sum payment. That is not the way finance works.

On top of that the member for Yellowhead has mentioned the government has a \$500 billion national debt. However, when the Liberals took over in 1993, the deficit for the year ended March 31, 1994 was \$43 billion, which came from the Brian Mulroney government. We could not eliminate a \$43 billion in one year. It took until 1997 to finally get the fiscal house in order. It meant some pain. Canadians had to endure some pain. There were cuts in important programs.

I remember the finance minister saying to us that we had to make these cuts to save 80% of what we had. If we had not made them, we would have lost it all. It really took some guts to say that we had to get our fiscal house in order.

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What has happened by making the tough decisions when the government took over? In 1997 we had a balanced budget and a small surplus. We were talking about things like what is the fiscal dividend. A fiscal dividend is not the surplus. The fiscal dividend is how much interest we will save by paying down debt. That is the permanent savings. Since we have balanced the budget, now eight consecutive budgets, about \$65 billion of national debt has been paid down at a savings to Canadians of \$3 billion plus each and every year, which is available to invest in health care and in the other priorities of Canadians. A \$100 billion tax cut plan was fully implemented about two years ago.

It raises a question. I hear members ask about defence and tax cuts. Those are all important priorities. However, I am pretty sure that if we tried to address all the important elements of Canadian society in one budget, whether they be social or otherwise, we would do nothing well. We would never reach a credible threshold where we would actually have a meaningful impact. It means that we have to make some choices.

I always look not at a budget, but at the series of budgets. I look at where we are and if we have responded. If we were to make decisions that we would just do this one thing, we would never be able to catch up. It is about making choices. It is about government. If we make the wrong choices, or imprudent choices or irresponsible choices, there will be an election and the government will be judged. However, the government was re-elected four times because of the fiscal management of the country's finances. That is the issue.

The issue is that Canada is in reasonable shape. We can do better, but we are on the right track. We did not go into a recession when the U.S. went into one. We have not had a recession here since back in the eighties. The economic forecasters would never have thought or bet that Canada would not be in a recession for a dozen years.

• (2310)

People look objectively at the performance of Canada and it is not simply because government is making good choices. It is also because, through the prudence and contingency factors, we have put into place underpinnings so Canada can be resilient to the ebbs and flows of economic realities. It means that when things are bad we can do some things.

That was one of the problems with Brian Mulroney. There were growing deficits in each and every one of the eight years of the Mulroney government. During that period, if I recall correctly, there were some pretty good years.

Hon. John McKay: 1989 was a fantastic year.

Mr. Paul Szabo: 1989 was one of the best years in a very long time.

If we have a \$500 billion debt and exceptional economic performance, why would we not pay down some of the debt when times are good? If we choose not to pay down some of the national debt when times are good, what realistic opportunity do we think there would be to pay down debt when times are not good? It is unbelievable. The debt to GDP ratio was 40% some odd and peaked at 68%. It is now down to 38%.

If we get our fiscal house in order, it means a lot of things can happen. The fiscal dividends, the savings on interest because we have paid down debt, is an important annual annuity which provides the cash flow necessary to fund programs.

Let me recap. We have a budget that was introduced in Bill C-43. It passed in this place with the support of the Conservatives. They had absolutely no objections to any of the four key items. They never spoke once about why we should not agree to those four items or why they were inappropriate. They also never talked about the cost being too much. They knew the incremental cost was just 1% of spending.

What was the real issue? The real issue for the Conservatives was not the content, substance and cost in Bill C-43. They wanted the government to fall. They wanted to force an election. That is the only reason we have been doing this. It could not be any other way. Why would they vote for and pass Bill C-43, the main budget, and defeat a minor item to throw us into an election, which effectively wipes out the main budget anyway? It makes no sense.

In the meantime what happened was the reality of what Canadians wanted from us was becoming clear. It was becoming clear that Canadians wanted us to work hard, to do everything possible to make the minority government work because they did not want an election. That is the difference.

Now there are other situations. There are other dynamics going on, but we have to listen to Canadians. Notwithstanding anything that has gone on so far, we have some important work yet to do, whether it on Bill C-38, the civil marriage act or other bills. We have child pornography legislation coming up.

We have a very important bill coming out of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on whistleblower legislation, Bill C-11, which will offer more tools within the civil service to provide greater accountability and transparency in the way it operates. It is an extremely important bill.

We had the bill in the last Parliament. We finally brought it back and we were given the opportunity to shape it. There is a great deal of work. There must be at least another 20 bills that are in various stages of the legislative process which have important contributions, admittedly, by all members of Parliament. Good work has been done.

To force the government into an election at this time is not only to rebuke Canadians with regard to whether they want an election, but also it says to Parliament that they do not care about all the work that has been in the process. It was done for naught and let us come back some other day.

The Liberal government decided to listen to Canadians, to come up with a responsible budget, to collaborate and co-operate with other parties who were prepared to work together to make the minority Parliament work.

Government Orders

• (2315)

We are continuing on that track. The government will continue to work. Bill C-48 will pass. We will show Canadians that despite the efforts of the Conservative Party this will be one very successful government.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member made some comments regarding this side of the House, the Conservative Party. He was baffled as to why we would not be supporting Bill C-48. The message is, and I thought that he would have heard this loud and clear, Liberals cannot buy a Conservative.

He also asked about the Bloc. That government did try to buy Quebec, but it got caught with the sponsorship scandal. It could not buy Quebec. However, the government was able to buy one party, and that is the unholy alliance about which he talked.

I believe he also said that the House would fail if it did not have a plan that was responsible. He is exactly right, the House will fail if there is a plan that is not responsible. This plan is not responsible.

He has also heard loud and clear that we were not just talking about Bill C-48. We also are talking about Bill C-38.

We have heard loud and clear from the Prime Minister that this is a package plan. He does not want to wait until the fall. He wants a package deal. He wants Bill C-48 and Bill C-38 to pass together. He knows he will be able to get Bill C-38 through. The plan of the Prime Minister is social re-engineering. He wants to destroy traditional marriage. He wants to bring in legalized marijuana. He wants to legalize prostitution. He wants to make Canada the country that is more to the left than any other country in this world. The only way he can do that is with this package deal.

How can the member defend a plan, Bill C-48, that is no plan? He knows there is no plan for the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister on how they are to spend the money. He is going to give the Prime Minister complete discretion to spend the money any way he wants.

We know from experts in criminology and psychology the way to predict behaviour is to look at past behaviour. That is how we know.

An article in today's *Ottawa Citizen* states:

A Liberal-dominated Senate committee says the [Prime Minister's] government has failed to keep its promises to clean up the environment and regulate polluting industries.

The environment is part of Bill C-48.

It goes on to criticize the government "for dragging its feet", and we have heard that before, "on fixing polluted water, air and soil, disappearing species" and it goes on.

Again, we can predict what will happen with the government by its past record, and its past record has been dismal. It has been broken promises.

How in all conscience can he go to his constituents and say that he is propping up and supporting a government riddled with corruption and under investigation? How can he say to them that he knows it will be destroying marriage as they know it but he will support the government?

I would like that member to tell this House and his constituents how in good conscience he can support a government like that.

• (2320)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, I suppose if we have to look at our record, we have to look at it objectively. We have the highest economic and employment growth in the G-8. We have given Canadians a \$100 billion tax cut for Canadians. We have had eight balanced budgets.

I will not take up the matter any further with the member. However, if he would like to meet after the House, I would like to sit down and I would like to go over the record of the Liberal Party. I think he will be impressed.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate, as do my NDP colleagues, the hon. member's support for the NDP's better balanced budget that we are pushing through the House.

He understands fully that the NDP's better balanced budget actually responds to a whole variety of issues that have not been dealt with for years. One of them of course is the housing crisis that we are seeing in the country. There are more and more homeless families in my region, particularly in the lower mainland of British Columbia due to federal Liberal and provincial Liberal cutbacks. We have seen homelessness triple tragically. We have over 1.1 million poor children in the country and this number is growing, again tragically. Therefore, the NDP's better balanced budget addresses that critical area for the first time in quite some time.

There is the post-secondary education crisis as well. We are seeing a crisis in training and a crisis in post-secondary education. I know from my experience in the last election campaign going door to door, and I knocked on over 6,000 doors in my riding of Burnaby—New Westminster, there were young adults who were telling me consistently that they could not afford to go on to post-secondary education because of the lack of funding in that area and high tuition costs.

The environment has seen an increase in greenhouse gas emissions of 20%. We have seen an increase this summer. We are seeing smog alerts across the country. Therefore, the environment must be a priority. The NDP's better balanced budget addresses that.

On the issue of protection for workers in the event of bankruptcy, workers have always been consistently last on the list. We have seen many workers who have invested their life savings in businesses and when that company has gone bankrupt, they have lost everything. There is protection there again that the NDP forced through in its better balanced budget.

International aid is a key area. As we know we are seeing a more unstable world. Many parties, particularly the Conservative Party, believe that by making more guns we will somehow develop more stability in the world. That is not how we do it. We well know that it is by providing water, health care, food and housing for populations around the world. Canada has not been paying its fair share. The NDP's better balanced budget addresses that issue of international stability through the provision of development funds.

Government Orders

These are five key areas where the NDP's better balanced budget addresses key and important issues for Canadians. We are also attacking the issue of public health care in getting waiting lists down and building better jobs. Increasingly jobs in our economy, because of the jobless trade policy that we have seen in the past from the Conservatives and Liberals, are part time or temporary in nature. The average Canadian worker is earning 60¢ an hour less in real terms after the last decade.

I have a question for the hon. member for Mississauga South. Given that he is supporting the NDP's better balanced budget initiative, will he also be supportive of our initiatives to protect public health care and to build better jobs in our economy?

• (2325)

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, absolutely, the number one priority of Canadians is health care. The collaboration with the provinces is extremely important priority as they are our partners in the health care system. That is why the Prime Minister and the first ministers got together and signed the health accord. There have been additional moneys, another \$41 billion over the next 10 years.

However, we need to continue to look at this. Obviously, the latest Supreme Court decision with regard to private insurance for health care raises some challenges to the Canada Health Act. We are going to sustain the Canada Health Act because it is worth saving. I think we are going to show that in key issues such as waiting times, we are on the right track and moving in the right direction, but we need to do more.

The member spoke about homelessness and the problems of poverty. I will give him some figures because I wish it was just as easy as throwing money at the problem. I do not think they are economic problems. I think they are social problems.

The Anne Golden study of the homeless in Toronto, that was funded by the Government of Canada about three or four years ago, found that the homeless could be broken down in the following manner: 35% suffered from mental illness; 27% were youth who were alienated from their families of which 75% had experienced physical or sexual abuse; 18% were aboriginals off reserve; 10% were women who were in transition or abused women; and the other 10% were for a variety of reasons.

When we look at it in that context, there is not enough money because these people who are on the streets of Toronto and all the other major cities across Canada are not there because of lack of money. They are there because no one loves them. That is the issue. If someone loved them, people with mental illness and our youth would not be on the street, and abused women would not be there.

These are very important issues and I do not disagree with the member. I am pleased that we were able to collaborate on this. I hope that as we move forward through the rest of the years of this government, that there will be further collaboration and discussions to make minority government work.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I feel it is my duty to speak to Bill C-48, the NDP budget bill tonight. It is not something that I am happy to do or delighted to be speaking on, but I have an obligation to my constituents and to the country to do that.

Picture this scenario at the no-tell motel in Toronto. In the no-tell motel there is the Prime Minister of Canada, Buzz Hargrove, the big union leader, and the leader of the New Democratic Party together in bed. The Liberal finance minister from Regina was not allowed to be there. The Prime Minister pushed him off into a side suite, and closed the door, like a little boy who is not allowed to see what is going on in the room where the action is. These three individuals decided that they were going to cook up a secret, backroom deal and that is what they did.

Think about these three individuals. What is the Prime Minister's big agenda? The Prime Minister's main agenda is to put in place same sex marriage, legalize prostitution and legalize marijuana. This is the same Prime Minister who believes that government can spend billions of dollars to look after our kids better than we can.

Then there is Buzz Hargrove, the big union leader. We know about him and I will not say anything more about him. Then there is the leader of the New Democratic Party, apparently the new finance minister from what I can tell, who is certainly one of the main authors of Bill C-48. What is his agenda? His agenda is to put in place same sex marriage, legalize prostitution and legalize marijuana. He fully supports spending billions of dollars, so that government can look after our kids better than we can.

Picture the three of them in bed in the no-tell motel cooking up this deal. This is not a sleazy joint. I will give ten to one odds that this hotel room was paid for by the taxpayers. But this deal is not a private business deal. This is a deal that involves \$4.5 billion of taxpayers' money. This is money that belongs to our children, our parents, our grandparents and young people striving to move ahead a little bit. That is \$4.5 billion of hard earned tax money they are playing this game with, whatever the game is, and I do not even want to think about it. It is scary.

They brought this deal back to Ottawa, but not under the normal budget process. We all know that with Bill C-43, the real budget, there was a process. It was not perfect but there was some consultation. There was input from the opposition parties with Bill C-43, which was actually put in place by the former finance minister from Regina. They tabled the budget in the House of Commons and the members are asking how we voted on it.

In fact, we were not satisfied with Bill C-43, but the Conservative Party took a responsible position. We said that we do not like the deal, but we are not willing to bring down the government on the deal. The people elected us as the official opposition in a minority Liberal government and we were going to work together as much as we could. We abstained from voting on Bill C-43 the first time because we did not want to support that budget.

Government Orders

● (2330)

I have been in the House for almost 12 years now and whenever we support any initiative of the government, even if that support is not wholehearted but we think there is more good in there than that which is not good, the Liberals throw it back in our faces. We do not want to support a deal until we think it is something we will not be embarrassed about in the future. That is why we abstained on second reading of Bill C-43.

Then our great finance critic from Medicine Hat, Alberta, worked with his colleagues at committee and brought forward major amendments to Bill C-43, the budget bill. That is the budget bill that was put together by the former finance minister, the member for Wascana. He has been replaced now by the leader of the New Democratic Party, who apparently now is the new finance minister because he was the one who was in bed with the Prime Minister and Buzz Hargrove and cooked up this secret deal involving not their own money but \$4.5 billion of taxpayers' money. That is the way it happened.

Once Bill C-43 had been amended so it was appropriate, what did we do as a responsible political party in a minority government? We supported it. We supported it at third reading and that budget bill has passed. There were things in that bill that we wholeheartedly supported like the Atlantic accord. In fact, that was our initiative from the start, so of course we supported that. It was our deal.

There are other things too. There was some talk of tax cuts, not a great deal, something like \$16 per Canadian taxpayer per year. It was pretty pathetic but at least it was a move in the right direction, unlike the deal in the 2000 budget, the \$100 billion tax reduction. I encourage everyone at home to take their paycheques from 1999 and look at the deductions from payroll, then take their paycheques from 2004 and look at the deductions from payroll.

I encourage all Canadians to tell me what my constituents already have, and that is that there has been no tax reduction. The deductions from their paycheques are at least as big now as they were before the Prime Minister supposedly cut \$100 billion in taxes. Those kinds of tax cuts nobody needs.

On the one hand they may cut, but they take it with the other hand. In fact, through all of this, and the wonderful government that the members from the Liberal Party are talking about which is not a wonderful government but that is what they claim, we find that Canadians are no better off than they were 12 years ago. They are no better off than they were in 1993 when the government took office. The standard of living for Canadians has not improved one bit through all of these economic times.

That leads me to an issue that the Liberals talk about often. They say they are running a surplus. Are they not great? They say they are handling Canadian taxpayers' money wonderfully because they are running surpluses every year. Let us talk about those surpluses. What does that really mean?

It certainly means they are running a balanced budget, so from that point of view it is better than running deficits, but is that really a good thing? Does running surpluses every year mean things are good for Canadians? No, in fact, the standard of living has not increased in 12 years.

It is great for the federal government because it is taking so much in taxes and increasing spending at such a rapid rate that in spite of the increased tax take every year, Canadians are no better off, yet more money is coming from the pockets of Canadians taxpayers and going into the federal government than ever before, by a long shot. That is good for the federal government, and it can say it is running surpluses, but it is bad for taxpayers.

● (2335)

A surplus really is overtaxation. The government increased spending by more than 10% in Bill C-43, a budget bill which we did not happily support but there was enough good in it that we thought we should. That was before the leader of the NDP, along with the Prime Minister and Buzz Hargrove, cooked up this secret deal behind closed doors in a no-tell motel. They added \$4.5 billion to their spending and those are hard-earned tax dollars.

I want to talk about what that really means, but before I do I want to talk about one more thing. The leader of the New Democratic Party and the leader of the Liberals support things like legalizing marijuana and prostitution, and putting in place same sex marriage. They cooked up this deal and I want to talk a bit more about that.

The government has said that it wants to pass two pieces of legislation before the summer break. One is Bill C-48, this NDP budget bill. The other is Bill C-38, the same sex marriage bill.

About 70% of Canadians do not support the same sex marriage bill. There are also many Liberal members who do not support the bill. The member for Mississauga South claims he is going to fight for his constituents and Canadians against same sex marriage. The member for Pickering—Scarborough East claims he is going to fight on behalf of his constituents and Canadians against same sex marriage. The member for Scarborough—Guildwood claims he is going to fight hard for his constituents against Bill C-38. Those members had a real opportunity, maybe two, the second being the vote on Bill C-48, the NDP budget bill. That is definitely a confidence vote.

Those members had two chances to kill Bill C-38. The first was on Bill C-43, the budget bill. Did they take a stand and vote for their constituents against same sex marriage by defeating that bill? No, they did not. Those members should be ashamed of that. They put on a big front. They claimed they were going to fight it on behalf of their constituents.

● (2340)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Mississauga South is rising on a point of order, but before I hear him, there seems to be a tremendous number of conversations going on in the House at a distance. Could I suggest that members who want to talk to one another get closer together so they could talk in a lower voice. The hon. member is pointing down there, but he was yelling at some of the members down there. If he went and sat down there, he could have a quiet conversation and the member for Vegreville—Wainwright could be heard. I would strongly recommend that people get closer together and have their conversations closer together.

Government Orders

The hon. member for Mississauga on a point of order.

Mr. Paul Szabo: Mr. Speaker, the budget implementation bill is important, as is Bill C-48. The member is now talking about Bill C-38. I would suggest that on the basis of relevance he should get back to the Bill C-48.

By the way, I did vote against Bill C-38.

The Speaker: I know the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright is working his way back to Bill C-48, which is the subject of the debate this evening.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, you know they are well tied together.

It is not only the member for Mississauga South who should be ashamed of himself. It is also the member for Huron—Bruce and there are many others over there who claim they want to defeat Bill C-38. There is no free vote on Bill C-38. The cabinet has been ordered to vote in favour of it. Those members know the only way to kill Bill C-38 was to vote against Bill C-43, which was a tied vote. Mr. Speaker, you yourself had to stand to break the tie to pass that bill.

If any one of them had had the strength and the gumption to stand up and really support their constituents against Bill C-38 and to throw away the same sex marriage bill, if any one of them had had the guts to do that, they could have done it. They chose not to. But they have one more chance. When we vote on another confidence bill, Bill C-48, they will have one last chance to kill Bill C-38, the same sex marriage bill. If they do not do it, their constituents will know without a doubt that they are not sincere in any way about standing up for their constituents on Bill C-38, the same sex marriage bill.

I wanted to mention that. It is important that their constituents know that. Those members are not willing to take a stand.

I will get back to Bill C-48.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of applause from across the floor. I understand that. Those members that I have mentioned and others over there, the so-called 30 that are standing up for their constituents on Bill C-38, want me to get off that topic, so I will get back to Bill C-48.

I want to talk about what this \$4.5 billion means particularly to the young people and the older people in our society. They are the people who are hurt the most by high taxes.

The people who are hurt the most by high taxes are the young people who are just starting families. They are paying off their student loans. They have a mortgage. They have a lot of payments. They are trying to buy a car. They are trying to get in a position where they can start a family.

My wife Linda and I have five children in that position right now. I am not saying this just on behalf of my children. It is their friends. It is anyone who has children. It is people who are just starting out and getting to a point where they can start a family.

It used to be that one family member earning wages could probably support the family, and the other could stay at home with the children. Families could afford to do that. Why is it now that two people in the family, both the husband and wife must work to make enough money? The reason is taxes are so out of control in this country. They cannot afford to have one person stay at home because of all the money that is taken off their paycheques.

I think we all agree that a certain amount of money taken in taxation is reasonable. We all agree that we want to support the important social programs across the country.

I would say that many of us here, even on the other side of the House, recognize that we are simply taking too much from people and leaving them with too little to spend on what they want to spend it on. That is why those young families are having such a difficult time buying a house, making their mortgage payments, buying a car, paying off their student loans and trying to get ahead. That is why it is so difficult. More than anything else it is simply because too much money is taken off their paycheques.

I want to talk about the other group, the older folks. These folks often are retired and on a fixed income which usually is not very high. Chances are that a retired person who earns \$15,000 a year pays taxes. The government takes money from an older person's paycheque even if that person only earns \$15,000 a year. There is something very wrong with that picture.

•(2345)

As a result, many old folks come to my office. I do not think any hon. members can say they do not have people who come to their offices to say that they just cannot make ends meet. Their heating and electricity bills have gone up. Their property taxes have gone up a little bit, although nothing compared to the federal tax deduction. The gasoline prices have risen. Many of these people want to remain independent, to be mobile and to be able to drive, but gasoline prices and insurance costs have gone up. All these things have gone up.

I see I only have a minute left. I wanted to say a lot more, but I will save it for the next time I speak to Bill C-48. It has a way to go yet.

Surely the people across the floor care enough about these old retired folks to back off a little bit on taxes. To do that, the Liberals have to stop spending like drunken sailors. There was an increase in spending of more than 10% this year. They have to stop doing that if they are to leave enough money in the hands of young people who are trying to start families and in the pockets of our old folks who are just trying to get by. All they want is to have reasonable retirement years. They cannot do that any more because the government over the last 12 years has increased taxes at such a rate that it is simply out of control.

I implore members opposite to listen, to cut back on spending, to cut back on taxes and to let us spend more of our own money. We will be better off for it.

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Government Orders

The Speaker: Order, please. I have made suggestions that perhaps the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam could sit with the member for Ottawa South and carry on the discussions over there in relative quiet, because we are now on to questions and comments and we have to be able to hear the person who has the floor. It is the hon. member for Charlottetown who has the floor and everyone will want to hear his question, particularly the member for Vegreville—Wainwright.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the Conservative argument that I am hearing tonight is that the allocation of \$4.5 billion over two years is fiscally irresponsible, but when we look at the record of the government, by all external measurements under the international indices, everything seems to be good.

We have had eight consecutive surpluses and low inflation, which in turn have led to low interest rates. We have had a \$100 billion tax reduction. There is strong employment in that 280,000 jobs have been created in the last 14 months. There is a vast growth in GDP. Canada is the only G-7 country to have been in surplus over the last two years. The debt to GDP ratio has decreased from 73% to 31%. All the external indicators are good, despite what we are hearing tonight.

Let us compare that with when the Conservative Party was in power. There was a \$43 billion deficit. Interest rates were at 12%. Unemployment was at 11%. The debt to GDP ratio was 73%. All the external measurements were at the bottom of the heap.

We have to put aside all our partisanship tonight and ask ourselves a couple of questions. My first question for the member is, how did the Conservative Party go so wrong? Second, what collectively can we do as members of Parliament to make sure that the programs, the policies and the thinking of the Conservative Party are never visited on Canadians again?

• (2350)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, the member made an interesting comment before his question. He said that everything seems to be good. He referred to all of these factors that seemed to be good but the fact is that the financial outlook is not nearly that good.

Sadly, Canada has become a non-player in the world. It is not the fault of the Canadian people because they are great people. It is the fault of the Canadian government.

When I attended a meeting of the NATO parliamentarians in February, I went to Paris to a meeting of the OECD, one of the most respected think tanks and research groups in the world. We received an economic forecast from them for the next couple of years. The forecast itself was not that positive. In fact, we have been on a declining schedule for some time when it comes to the economic forecast, but something was even more disturbing than that. In all of the information that was given to the NATO parliamentarians who attended the meeting, the numbers presented were for the G-6, not the G-7 and not the G-8.

The G-7 still includes Canada but we have become such a non-player that all of the numbers were for the G-6 with Canada not included. That is a sad commentary of what the government has done to our country over the past many years. I do not think the members across the floor should be laughing at what they have done

to our country because it is not the people of the country, it is the government that has done that.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I found it difficult to follow the very circular argumentation of the member and his colleague, the member for Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam who said, “Wait, it will make sense eventually”.

Unfortunately, I waited until the end and it never made sense. It never made sense that the hon. member was questioning his colleagues when he said that voting for Bill C-43 was akin to voting for Bill C-38, which means that not only was he condemning Liberal members of the House but he was also condemning his own colleagues who voted for Bill C-43. However I should say that at least that time they voted because in a previous manifestation of the very same bill, with the \$4.6 billion in tax cuts, Conservative members cashed their pay cheques, did not show up for work and did not bother to vote.

Despite all those circular arguments, what I found most surprising about the member's presentation was when he talked about children. We know that 1.1 million children are living in poverty and that housing programs need to address that but he ignores that. It is in Bill C-48 and I hope he will read the bill.

We know there is a crisis in post-secondary education and training. The NDP's better balanced bill deals with that in investing more money in education and lowering tuition fees.

We have invested in the environment. It is our children in communities across the country who will benefit from the additional moneys put into the environment to make a better environment. That is the NDP's better balanced budget bill.

What about the families of workers, let alone children internationally? We know we need to put money into international development to support those children living in poverty around the world.

I guess it is not surprising because when we see the Conservative Party's past, we have seen bloated deficits. Last year it had the most expensive political platform in Canadian history, \$86 billion, and that was even before they included the HMCS Mulrony, the aircraft carrier, for which we were never given a budget estimate.

Given the member's circular arguments, I would like to understand his opinion on his leader's statement this week that it is okay to bribe or to offer bribes but that it is not okay to accept them. How does that member square that circle that it is okay to offer bribes but not okay to accept them?

• (2355)

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's question. I realize I did make a statement during my presentation which was inaccurate. It is very confusing when there are two or three budgets. One kind of forgets which is which.

The member asked how it was that voting for Bill C-43 would be voting for Bill C-38. I meant to say, and it was an error on my part, that voting for Bill C-48, which the Liberal members across the floor did at second reading, is like voting for Bill C-38. That is what I meant to say. It is not that complicated for the member to figure out.

Adjournment Proceedings

If any one of them had voted against Bill C-48 at second reading, Bill C-38 would have been killed. We would have been in an election and we would have a Conservative government, which would mean the end of the same sex marriage bill. That is what I meant to say. If I was not clear on that or if I made an error, I appreciate the opportunity to correct it.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Jean Brault is forced under duress to give donations to the Liberal Party. We call that extortion. A Prime Minister, to consolidate his slipping grip on power, in a backroom is forced to give up a bag of goodies to that other party. What does the hon. member think Canadians should call that?

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Speaker, that is a bit of a difficult question to answer because I cannot say there were any brown envelopes changing hands in the no-tell motel or that there were any suitcases full of money or anything like that. I am not saying that at all.

I suggest that there were shenanigans going on in the no-tell motel that were every bit as serious as those brown envelopes and suitcases full of money. Some \$4.5 billion was being shuffled about among the three people in bed at the no-tell motel. There they were in bed together moving about \$4.5 billion. The Prime Minister, being one of them, agreed to that. Do not forget that the former finance minister, the gentleman from Wascana, was pushed into a side room. He was not allowed to be in the room where all the action was taking place.

I wonder if the NDP member who just asked a question was not there, maybe hiding in a corner watching what was going on.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on this question that was raised a few days ago. I raised the question of the closure of the Nappan Experimental Farm and also the farm at Kentville. Based on documents we received through access to information, even the one at Bouctouche is now a potential victim.

Earlier today I spoke to the former manager of the Nappan Experimental Farm, a really well respected gentleman by the name of Frank Calder. He served there for decades. He was well respected. He ran a great operation. The farm provided services to the agricultural and farming community for years.

I asked him about this whole thing. He is now retired. He said that what the government is doing in moving all this research to universities and laboratories cannot work. This is the manager of the Nappan Experimental Farm talking. He was very clear. He said that we must have the fields and have the cattle in the fields. We must be able to raise them from birth to slaughter. We must be able to judge them and grade them and follow them every single step of the way. We cannot do that in a laboratory.

That is exactly what the Department of Agriculture is proposing to do with the closure of the Nappan Experimental Farm and, speculatively, the closure of Kentville and Bouctouche and so many other experimental farms.

Mr. Calder was very helpful in this debate. I am so lucky to have so much help from people like Mr. Calder. Even his son, Paul Calder, a very well respected RCMP officer now in the town of Amherst, has been very active in this.

Mr. Speaker will remember very clearly that today I tabled a petition of 2,667 names, including those of MLAs from the province of Nova Scotia. Almost 30 MLAs, including Premier John Hamm, signed this petition asking the government to maintain the facility at Nappan. It was signed by many MPs, including the hon. Minister of Human Resources. All the MPs in Nova Scotia signed, the Conservative MPs and the NDP MPs; the Liberals were not able to sign it and I can understand that because it is a government policy to close these farms. In any case, this petition had wide support. Even the warden for Cumberland County, the very distinguished Keith Hunter, signed it.

It has been an incredible effort by the Cumberland County Federation of Agriculture and their president Frank Foster, their secretary Marilyn Carter, and board members like Leon Smith, Carl Woodworth and Kurt Sherman. There has been such an effort to try to stop the government from making this terrible mistake of closing down this farm and losing this tremendous asset forever.

I asked a question about this. Let me quote the minister's answer from *Hansard*. Incredibly, he said:

The minister in this particular case has made a commitment there will be no diminishment of the research capacity in the province.

That turns out to be not quite true, because in seven or eight places in the access to information papers that I have received it is noted that the government is going to move the research out of the province. I will read to members from these documents. Research on 4-H diets and meat quality currently at Nappan could move to Lacombe, Alberta. The government is spending \$7 million there to upgrade it.

At another place in the documents it is stated:

Nappan is one of the four original experimental farms created by legislation in the 1880s. Research here could be shifted to Lacombe, Alberta.

It also states that the beef research from Nappan would move to the University of Guelph at New Liskeard. On and on it goes, talking about how the government is going to shift research out of the province.

It states about Kentville that the research site at Kentville would be phased out and the facility donated. The food quality safety program would be moved to Charlottetown, horticulture would be moved to Quebec and plant breeding would just simply end.

Adjournment Proceedings

This answer the government gave about how there will be no diminishment in scientific research for agriculture is absolutely 100% wrong. It is misleading and it is harmful to the whole agricultural industry when the government gives us this wrong information. This is the information it is using to justify closing Nappan. I would like to know how the government can give us this wrong information and I would like the government to correct it.

● (2400)

Hon. Shawn Murphy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as we said before in the House, there are no plans to close the Atlantic Food and Horticulture Research Centre in Kentville or to move its research activities to Prince Edward Island or to Quebec.

The member opposite has been referring to documents that relate to options, analysis and possible scenarios that were developed to explore possible directions for the department's science activities, but they do not represent final decisions to be made by this department.

The department announced in February, as part of the expenditure review initiative, that it would be closing four research locations: Nappan, Nova Scotia; St. John's, Newfoundland; Kapuskasing, Ontario; and Winnipeg, Manitoba. Review committees were formed in each of these communities to look at possible partnerships with the provinces, the universities and the various stakeholders.

I want to reiterate that the government is committed to ensuring that Canada is a world-class leader in agriculture. To achieve that goal we must be a world leader in science and in innovation. We cannot maintain our current levels of excellence if we are forced to spend research funds in repairing and maintaining aging structures and research facilities.

That is why we are examining other opportunities, including giving our excellent scientists the opportunity to conduct research at more modern facilities, perhaps in partnership with the provinces, universities and private sector. If the wheel has already been invented, we should not be trying to reinvent it again.

By pooling our resources with other research partners, we can produce better results for the same investment by making world-class equipment and world-class scientists available to all partners.

● (2405)

Mr. Bill Casey: Mr. Speaker, I disagree with him wholeheartedly. There is a plan to close these facilities. Now maybe they will not go through with it after we have raised it, but there is a plan.

First, the plan says that in Nova Scotia, "The field site at Nappan would not be needed and would be divested by 2006". That is a plan and it is happening. They have already fired the people so they cannot say it is a figment of someone's imagination. They cannot say it is just a memo. It has happened.

Step two is to close the Kentville facility, but on another page it says, "the Nappan closure would initiate the Department of Agriculture's implementation of the science strategy. Further site closures and staff reductions are planned under the strategy".

I am tired of the Liberals saying that there is no plan to close these plants because there is. The parliamentary secretary has said that they do not want to spend the money on facilities, but yet there is a plan to spend \$232 million on new facilities in places like Ottawa, \$75 million and Saint-Hyacinthe, \$60 million, so—

The Speaker: The time has expired. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

Hon. Shawn Murphy: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite correct. We have identified a plan. Four locations are being phased out, there is no question about that. However, the money must be spent wisely. We cannot continue to spend money, which should be going to science and research, on repairing and maintaining buildings that no longer meet research standards. That is a simple statement.

I want to reiterate that contrary to what the member opposite has said, there are no plans to close the Kentville facility or to move any of its research activities to Quebec or to Prince Edward Island or to anywhere else. The money has to be spent wisely.

The Speaker: The hon. member for New Brunswick Southwest not being present to raise the matter for which adjournment notice has been given, the notice is deemed withdrawn.

[*Translation*]

The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later today at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:08 a.m.)

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