



CANADA

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, May 14, 1998

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 14, 1998

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)

[*Translation*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honor to table, in both official languages, the government's response to a petition.

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FINANCE

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to its order of reference of Wednesday, April 22, 1998, your committee has considered Bill S-3, an act to amend the Pension Benefits Standards Act, 1985 and the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions Act, and has agreed to report it without amendment.

I also have the pleasure to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Finance. Pursuant to its order of reference of Monday, April 27, 1998, your committee has considered Bill S-9, an act respecting depository bills and notes and to amend the Financial Administration Act, and has agreed to report it without amendment.

INDUSTRY

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Industry on the year 2000 computer problem.

I also have the honour to present the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Industry on the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1999.

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honor to present, in both official languages, the third report of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

[*English*]

Pursuant to its order of reference dated Thursday, March 19, 1998, your committee has adopted unanimously with amendment Bill C-29, an act to establish the Canadian parks agency, which your committee wishes to change to parks Canada agency, and to amend other acts as a consequence, and has agreed to report with amendments.

* * *

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Raymond Lavigne (Verdun—Saint-Henri, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-405, an act to amend the Canada Elections Act (ballot papers).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honor to table today, in both official languages, a bill entitled An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

This bill is aimed at amending the provisions of the Canada Elections Act concerning ballot papers.

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

* * *

[*English*]

PETITIONS

PARENTAL RIGHTS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I ask for your patience this morning. I have a large number of petitions to present.

In the first grouping there are 74 pages to this petition with the signatures of 1,819 concerned Canadians from Ontario, Alberta, Manitoba and my home province of Saskatchewan. They are

Routine Proceedings

concerned that by ratifying and implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child that government bureaucrats and the courts will be legally entitled to determine what is in the best interests of the child, not parents.

The petitioners feel parental rights and responsibilities are being undermined by government implementation of this UN convention and they request parliament to address their concerns by adding protection of parental rights and responsibilities to the charter of rights and freedoms.

GUN CONTROL

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in the second group of petitions that I am pleased to present there are 48 pages with 1,134 signatures of citizens from Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and British Columbia calling for the repeal of Bill C-68, the Firearms Act.

These petitioners have asked me to keep a running total of repeal Bill C-68 petitions that I have introduced. This year I have introduced 139 pages with 3,409 signatures.

These Canadians are concerned that the government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars registering more than 18 million legally owned guns while the number of police officers per capita has dropped to its lowest level since 1972.

Therefore these petitioners request parliament to repeal Bill C-68, the Firearms Act, and spend their hard earned tax dollars on more cost effective crime fighting measures such as putting more police on our streets and highways.

ABORTION

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in the next group of petitions there are 24 pages with the signatures of 603 concerned Canadians from Ontario, Nova Scotia, Manitoba and British Columbia. These petitioners believe that many thousands of the more than one hundred thousand abortions a year in Canada are medically unnecessary and actually increase health risks for women undergoing this procedure.

These petitioners request parliament support my motion, M-268, which would require a binding national referendum at the time of the next election to ask voters whether they are in favour of government funding for medically unnecessary abortions.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): I am also pleased, Mr. Speaker, to present four petitions comprised of 30 pages with 710 signatures of concerned Canadians from Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

These Canadians are concerned that there is no provision in the charter of rights and freedoms that prevents government from

taking anything they own without compensation and nothing in the charter which restricts the government in any way from passing laws which prohibit the ownership, use and enjoyment of their private property or reduces the value of their property.

These petitioners request parliament to support private member's Bill C-304 which would strengthen the protection of property rights in federal law.

JUSTICE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to present two petitions with 56 signatures of my constituents of Yorkton, Saskatchewan.

These constituents are concerned that the public is not being protected under the current Young Offenders Act. They are concerned that young offenders who commit crimes such as murder, arson, rape and robbery do not get adequate punishment under the current act.

Therefore these petitioners call on parliament to bring in new and tougher laws for young offenders and also request better enforcement of these laws.

• (1010)

CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present my last petition with 36 signatures of citizens from the province of Saskatchewan.

These petitioners are concerned that the Canadian Wheat Board exercises its monopoly power in a discriminatory manner by forcing only prairie producers to sell their grain to the board.

They call on parliament to either scrap Bill C-4 or support the following amendments. Change the object of the act to maximize financial returns to the producers, remove the inclusion and exclusion clause, allow producers to opt in or out for fixed periods, allow the auditor general to conduct annual audits and allow producers to get information under the Access to Information Act.

NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a very timely petition from residents of this region reminding parliament that over 30,000 nuclear weapons continue to exist on earth and that these weapons pose a threat to the health and survival of human civilization and the global environment.

They call on parliament to support the immediate initiation and conclusion by the year 2000 of an international convention which will set out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

MULTILATERAL AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present three petitions today.

The first is signed by residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas and members of the Richmond riding of the New Democratic Party.

They note the multilateral agreement on investment will disproportionately expand and entrench unprecedented rights to transnational corporations and foreign investors at the expense of the Canadian government's ability to direct investment policy as a tool for the benefit of all Canadians.

They call on parliament to consider the enormous implications to Canada by the signing of the MAI and put it to open debate in the House and place it for national referendum for the people of Canada to decide.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by hundreds of residents of the four western provinces of Canada. It is co-ordinated by the Animal Defence League.

It refers to the very low penalties currently in place for deliberately causing pain and injury to an animal.

It calls on the Government of Canada to impose harsher penalties for serious offences against animals and to establish an education program for judges to help them understand society's abhorrence and condemnation of acts of cruelty to animals.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the final petition refers to the Constitution Act of 1982 and its guarantee of freedom of conscience and religion.

It urges parliament to establish peace tax legislation by passing into law my private member's bill, the conscientious objection act, which recognizes the right of conscientious objectors to not pay for the military and within which the government would declare its commitment to apply that portion of their taxes that was to be used for military purposes toward peaceful purposes such as peace education, war relief and humanitarian and environmental aid and housing.

THE SENATE

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present petitions signed by 151 people from my riding of Red Deer.

These people believe we deserve an accountable Senate and I fully and strongly endorse—

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member has been here a long time and he knows he is not supposed to do that.

Routine Proceedings

I know he likes presenting petitions and the House likes to hear him present petitions, but I know he would want to do it within the rules.

Mr. Bob Mills: Mr. Speaker, I got a little carried away.

The petitioners call on parliament to request that the Prime Minister accept the results of the Senate election in Alberta and any other province that might so choose to elect a senator.

JUSTICE

Mr. Jim Gouk (West Kootenay—Okanagan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an additional 14 pages to the many already presented on this subject.

The petitioners, residents of West Kootenay—Okanagan, draw to the attention of parliament that violent crimes committed by youth are of great concern to Canadians, that the incidence of violent crimes by youth would decrease if the Young Offenders Act were amended to hold young persons fully accountable, and increase periods of incarceration to deter young people from committing criminal acts; therefore your petitioners call upon parliament to significantly amend the Young Offenders Act to include—

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but I can tell from the words he is using that he is reading the petition, which I know he knows is wrong.

If he would like to give the House a brief summary of the petition we will hear that.

Mr. Jim Gouk: Mr. Speaker, in brief, the petitioners would like to have the age limit lowered, have longer periods of incarceration for individuals who commit violent crimes, to hold them more accountable and also to hold the parents more accountable when they contribute to the crime by not giving proper attention to their children.

• (1015)

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today. The first has to do with the subject matter of misuse of alcohol.

The petitioners are from a number of parts of Canada including from my riding of Mississauga South. They would like to draw to the attention of the House that the Food and Drugs Act is designed to protect Canadians from the harmful effects related to food and drug consumption and that the consumption of alcoholic beverages may cause health problems.

Specifically they point out that fetal alcohol syndrome and alcohol related birth defects are 100% preventable by avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy and generally, that consumption of alcohol impairs a person's ability to operate machinery or an automobile.

Supply

The petitioners therefore call upon parliament to mandate the labelling of alcoholic beverages to caution expectant mothers and others of the risks of alcohol consumption.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with the family.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society.

The petitioners also concur with the recommendations of the National Forum on Health which cites that the Income Tax Act discriminates against families who choose to provide direct parental care to children in the home.

The petitioners therefore call upon parliament to pursue initiatives to eliminate that tax discrimination against families who choose to provide direct parental care to preschool children in the family home.

* * *

[Translation]

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed?

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

Question No. 21 has been absolutely languishing now for eight months. In the name of patience it would be nice to know from the government if it intends to answer this question, let alone when. I have raised this countless times. I would like to know when we might expect to get an answer to this very straightforward question.

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. He has repeatedly sought an answer to this question. I can assure him that it will be answered.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, some of these questions require an inquiry to one department of the federal government. Question No. 21 which we are working on involves inquiries to every department of the federal government. We are working our way through them.

The Deputy Speaker: I can only remind the House that patience is a virtue.

Shall the questions stand?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC) moved:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to put forward the following motion that be it resolved:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to put forward the motion, but it gives me no pleasure that this government has created a situation where a motion such as this one needs to be put forward. It gives me no pleasure. It gives the Tory party no pleasure. It gives Canadians no pleasure that this government has failed to provide strong political leadership to the Canadian forces.

The truth can no longer be hidden. Everybody in this country knows that the Prime Minister abuses the forces. Nobody knows it more than the men and women who serve Canada in Canadian forces uniforms.

Today's debate will show how this government's failure has resulted in the terrible living conditions for members of the Canadian forces. We will demonstrate how this government's failure has resulted in inadequate health care for members of Canada's forces. Today's debate will show how this government has failed to provide proper equipment.

• (1020)

All these things have resulted in deplorable morale in the Canadian forces. That is not leadership. For these reasons this House must condemn the government for failing to provide strong leadership.

When I have completed my opening remarks members from the government and maybe even the minister himself will give a list of great achievements by the government. They will tell this House that they have bought new search and rescue helicopters and new submarines for the navy. They will announce how they are in the process of overhauling the military justice system with Bill C-25 which at this very moment is in committee. They will talk and talk but that is what this government is very good at, talking.

[Translation]

However, I want to draw the attention of all members of this House to what the government is not saying. This government must recognize these shortcomings. It must recognize problems

such as poor living conditions, inadequate health care and low morale, and it must take action.

In its 1994 defence white paper, the government wrote: "Defence policy must respond not only to an uncertain and unstable world abroad, but also to challenging circumstances at home".

My party strongly believes that we must recognize the efforts made by our forces in times of peace, and particularly in times of war, to defend Canada, its honour, its interests and its way of life. We must recognize that contribution by leading the Canadian forces into the 21st century, because they are the ones who are carrying the torch.

Our forces have been criticized a lot over the last few years. While the Prime Minister, referring to the Somalia inquiry, said that everybody can make a mistake, he did not address the problem.

[English]

Instead the Prime Minister has looked for quick and easy solutions to the problems that need real attention. He disbanded the airborne regiment and the problems grew. He disbanded the Somalia inquiry before it had a chance to finish its job. That is not leadership. The problems continue to grow.

The 1994 defence white paper committed to combat capable forces. The government made that decision to have combat capable forces. However to make those forces effective and truly combat capable, the Prime Minister is ignoring the problems the Canadian forces are facing.

I want to share with the House my experiences and the experiences of the members of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs as we travelled across this country from base to base. We covered a lot of bases.

I first want to talk about equipping our forces. I am sure my colleagues in the House have read recent reports on how our soldiers are trying to do their jobs when they do not have the most basic equipment. Recently there was a cover story in *Macleans*' magazine with the headline "Fighting Mad". I am talking about uniforms and boots.

When the committee visited the base at Petawawa the commander of the Royal Canadian Dragoons was wearing a one-piece jumpsuit instead of his regular kit. He said it was because he could see right through his regular uniform and did not see a new uniform coming. When we talk about equipment we have to consider major purchases as well.

This Prime Minister spent \$500 million to cancel a helicopter contract in 1993. One year later the 1994 defence white paper stated that the forces desperately need that helicopter. What I am

Supply

speaking about right now is the replacement for the 30-year old Sea King helicopter which flies off the back of our brand new frigates. That was in 1994 and now it is 1998. This government spent \$500 million cancelling a contract and there are still no helicopters.

No one should think that the government paid only \$500 million. This government is still paying and paying dearly.

• (1025)

I visited Shearwater last week and was amazed to see the Sea King helicopters on the maintenance floor completely torn apart. I wondered what had happened that the helicopter needed such extensive repairs. I was told that the helicopter needed 70 hours of maintenance work for every one hour in the air. That does not sound very efficient to me. The helicopter through its regular life was supposed to have eleven and a half hours of maintenance for every one hour. Even that would seem high.

Not only that, the pilots are afraid to fly them. They are not coming out in public and saying this, but when one talks to them. And their hair is turning white. If one motor fails, it is a chance whether or not they get back. Why are new helicopters not being ordered? Our guys are doing a super job keeping these things in the air but the Prime Minister is not giving them any help. He does not give them any leadership.

That is not all I want to talk about this morning. I feel it is my responsibility to tell the House about the inadequate health care the government provides to men and women in the Canadian forces.

It is my understanding that doctors on military bases can treat soldiers but cannot treat soldiers' families. This creates problems that are simply not necessary. In fact the base doctors I have spoken to who are trained as family doctors want to practise family medicine. Instead, because they are not allowed to treat the families of soldiers, they end up dealing only with the soldiers themselves and their particular medical and psychological problems. If the House needs further evidence, I will read from the testimony of a Canadian forces member who came before the committee in Halifax:

My name is Michael Robert Innes. I was released from the military on a 3A medical category on December 23, 1997 stating that I was unfit for military service or any environment.

I have a decision from the Charlottetown medical review board that my illness is attributable to my service in a special duty area in Croatia, the former Yugoslavia. Subsection 21.1 of the pension act provides entitlement for a disability that is attributed to, was incurred during or aggravated by your military service. I receive 25% of this decision currently.

The quality of my life has been affected to the point where I cannot work, ride a bike, play hockey, go camping, swimming, rough house with my kids, household chores. God bless washing dishes. These are things I used to take for granted. Showering, getting dressed is difficult for me. The physical activity is painful, debilitating and affects every area of my life. I limit my activities and try not to let the illness regress to

Supply

the point of being bedridden because it happens very easily and it is harder to come back each time.

My family as well as myself had to make adjustments in our lifestyles dealing with limitations of this illness.

Michael Innes cannot get his full benefits because although he was released from the military because of his disability, he has been denied his claim because he does not meet the definition of disabled. This makes very little sense. The government closes its eyes. It provides no leadership.

In fact as the committee travelled from base to base I learned that soldiers suspect that when the government no longer wants them, after 20 years normally, it just lets them go. It usually finds a medical excuse to use to get rid of them. It gets rid of these soldiers because they are past their prime. Soldiers who expected to learn a trade in the military find that their skills are not recognized outside and life only becomes more difficult.

One Canadian forces mechanic I met explained that he works on heavy trucks that are all well over 20 years old. When he leaves the service he told me he will not be able to get a job as a mechanic because he does not have a clue how the newer vehicles are built today with modern components. He has no idea how they operate, so he is out.

The Prime Minister should be considering a program to better educate our soldiers and perhaps provide them with an option of civilian course work under a program that both the soldier and the government would pay into. Has the government proposed anything like that? No. Why not? Because it never shows any leadership.

• (1030)

I want to talk about living conditions on bases across Canada. In fact it is probably best again if I read from the testimony of a witness who came before the committee. They speak far more eloquently on how the government failed than I ever could. At Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, Angela Hulbert explained how she lived on the base with her corporal husband in their PMQs, private married quarters. She said:

Gale force winds blow through our window frames in the wintertime. We have to chip the ice off the inside of all our windows. Our furnaces run steady just to keep the house liveable. Actually, it is not liveable.

My kitchen cupboards are on the outside wall. I can actually freeze things in them, so we do not need a beer fridge because we have a beer cupboard.

We have such bad mould and mildew on our window sills, the water runs off it constantly and makes big patches of paint and gyprock come off the walls.

If we decorate the place ourselves just to make it liveable, we have to put it all back the way it was when we leave. I do not consider dirt-white liveable. We like to decorate a little bit and then we have to change it all back to dirt-white.

We have a river that runs through our basement every spring. They tell us that we do not pay for our basements, so it does not matter what condition they are in. We do not have a storage closet, so we have to use the basement.

When we showed up in Halifax, the whole thing had changed a bit. Then they were receiving letters saying that the Canadian Forces Housing Association is now charging \$30 to \$40 because now they consider that the basements are usable. Maybe they consider they have indoor swimming pools. She also said:

Our washers and driers are down there. I do not think it is good for my appliances when they are sitting in at least six inches of water for part of the day or two days.

We ask for something to be done and of course they are either coming or they say they will call us in a few days. We don't hear from them and they figure we'll just forget it, I guess. They never show up. They never call back. If you call them back, they just say they are coming. A couple of years go by and they are still coming. I do not think any other landlord would get away with this.

Is this acceptable to the House? Is this the way the men and women who protect Canada deserve to live? Is this right? I do not think so.

I could say more about the horrid living conditions but I hope the House gets the idea. Our soldiers and their families are living in terrible conditions.

Until now these have been secrets the Prime Minister has refused to share with the public. Canadians have to know and they are starting to know that men and women who serve in Canada are not properly respected and do not have the proper political leadership.

The government has cut the defence budget by 30% in the last five years. That is taking its toll. It is taking its toll on equipment. It is taking its toll on training. As the defence committee travelled from base to base this spring, we found it is taking its toll on the simple quality of life that my party believes soldiers all through our forces should enjoy.

Things have become so desperate, something called the Canadian forces personal support agency has been set up within the Department of National Defence, mandated to provide for the morale and welfare of the men and women of the Canadian forces.

How will they achieve this? They will sell space, just like a hockey rink. The Department of National Defence will sell space for corporate logos. We will be the only NATO country that instead of our flag painted on our trucks and helicopters—we do not have them yet—we will see a big logo that says “Drink Coca-Cola”.

An hon. member: What about McDonald's?

Mr. David Price: Everybody will have a chance. If that is the best leadership that the Prime Minister can provide, the House must condemn the government for its failure.

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While the government expects Canada's forces to jump when the Prime Minister gives the word and while the dedicated people who make up the Canadian forces will always respond when the government calls, the government abuses the dedication of the forces to the country.

I cannot think of a more disgusting waste of talented and dedicated men and women than to abuse their dedication by not providing them with equipment, training and resources they need to do their job.

Because the government continues this trend of abusing the Canadian military there will come a time when the Prime Minister says "Okay, boys, it is time to go", and the response will be "I am sorry, sir, we cannot do the job".

• (1035)

The answer will come not because they will not want to perform that particular mission, not because they do not want to come to the aid of Canada, but because their government has let them down and they no longer have the resources to do the job.

That day will come sooner than we think because the government refuses to show the smallest ounce of leadership and do its fundamental job to protect Canadians. For that the government must be condemned.

Maybe it is best to close with the words of Marguerita Bargiel who came before the committee at CFB Petawawa. Her husband has been in the Canadian forces for over 20 years and she was a military brat before too. She is somebody with a long experience. She said:

This stinks. Let me tell you, I'm not too impressed with the whole system. I'm fed up. I guess I'm not the only one. You do your best and you get screwed. That's the way it is these days in the Canadian forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my hon. colleague, whom I had the pleasure of working with on the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, which he referred to.

I noticed pretty much the same things he did. I think the main concern right now in the Canadian forces is pay. Our military feel they are underpaid, and I agree. In addition, for non-commissioned officers and enlisted men, opportunities for advancement are practically nil. The organization is top heavy, which is unusual nowadays. That is another problem.

With respect to equipment, I agree with him that we need state of the art equipment meeting current military requirements. I think that, for the next little while at least, governments will have to

balance spending between human resources, military equipment and military training. These three budgetary items must, unfortunately, be kept under tight control at this time.

I would like to hear what personal thoughts the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead has on this issue of financial resources apportioning for the purchase and use of equipment, for human resources, military pay, severance pay and so on, and finally for training military personnel, exercises conducted on land, on sea and in the air. Does he have any idea how these funds should be apportioned?

Mr. David Price: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I did not talk about salaries, which is also another problem. It was one of the main issues raised during our tour across the country. I am convinced that we will hear more about it.

As I did briefly, the hon. member also raised the issues of training and of how personnel are treated. I briefly mentioned that the problem has to do with the possibility of getting an education. People join the army and most of them stay for 20 years. Then they leave without a profession to fall back on.

Let me give you a specific example. Let us assume that a person is a licensed electrician in the armed forces. When that person leaves the forces and tries to find a job anywhere in the country, his licence from the military is not worth anything. That person has to start from scratch again and serve an apprenticeship of at least four years to become an electrician, when he is already one.

I could also talk about mechanics, whose situation is exactly the same.

• (1040)

I am confident that soldiers would be prepared to pay their share, as is the case in the United States. What they do down there is a good example, because they have a fund to which soldiers contribute so that, at the end of their stint, they can attend university or an apprentice school. They have that opportunity.

The member talked about maintaining a balance between equipment and personnel, and I definitely agree with him that our soldiers are getting the short end of the stick. General Baril said there would be no trade-off. I do not know how he is going to do it, but he will definitely need more money. It is not possible to achieve both, but we have no choice. There is clearly a shortage of personnel.

Our military personnel need proper equipment and clothing to do their job properly. A significant amount was budgeted for clothing, but the clothes have yet to arrive.

Supply

I hope this answers the hon. member's question.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, having attended one of the SCONDVA meetings and having heard from numerous veterans and members of the present military, morale seems to be a big issue.

These fine men and women go away and serve our country. They are separated from their families for a very long time. They are faced with keeping a family together yet they have to do it from thousands of miles away. These families incur huge phone bills just to be able to be in touch with their families.

We heard from one lady who spoke about the fact that when they started speaking by phone the phone bill was hundreds of dollars. Instead of having quality family time they were fighting about the high cost of the phone bill and what it would do to their very limited budget.

What does my hon. colleague see as a solution? What about possibly looking at some kind of toll free line that military people could use when they are on extended tours of duty?

Mr. David Price: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question. Unfortunately at this point I have to get ahead of the minister. A lot of that problem has been solved. There have been some good moves made toward that. General Baril has opened a line in Bosnia where people can call back every day if they wish. I see the minister smiling; he is happy.

That is only one point. Look at all the points we could have gained. There are still some problems to be looked. We had some problems with the ships in Halifax but they are working on addressing them right now. A lot of work is being done with Internet so they can work with e-mail. The problem we did hear about it is that in many cases these people do not have the funds to purchase a computer and therefore cannot get e-mail. The family resources centre has purchased some computers and they actually have a 24 hour service set up.

That problem is being addressed, but it has taken a long time to get to that point when the technology has been there for quite a while.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, during the last election, our party proposed a special intervention unit, a special division of 14,000 troops that would form an elite corps to head our interventions here and abroad.

I would ask my hon. colleague if he thinks this idea could readily be implemented.

• (1045)

Mr. David Price: Mr. Speaker, the underlying problem here is the lack of money. A lot of time is invested in training people to go to Bosnia, for example, where one group is going in June. They get training and then they come back here afterwards.

There is not enough time between deployments. They do not have enough time to be properly trained and to set up a proper team. But the major problem in all of this is always money. They do not have enough equipment either. This sort of project requires the latest highly specialized equipment.

It is too bad, because we are always working with big forces, like those of the Americans and the English, who are well equipped. We do a very good job with what we have, but we cannot keep doing it. Things keep deteriorating.

[*English*]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is an old saying that when you point a finger at somebody there are three of them pointing back at you. I think that is particularly appropriate for the Conservative Party today because there are three fingers pointing back at them.

Many of the conditions they have talked about today are ones that were in place when they held the reign of power in this country. When Brian Mulroney and his Conservative government were in power we had problems with all of the areas they are talking about. And that is exactly what they are doing. Talk, talk, talk. Yadda, yadda, yadda.

It is this government that in fact is taking action to rectify these problems. We are providing the leadership that is necessary to prepare our Canadian forces for the new millennium, to comply with the requirements of the defence white paper, to provide the kind of support for our forces personnel and their families and to help provide for a quality of life for them that they rightly deserve.

The Conservative defence critic said there had been a 30% reduction over the last four years. That is quite true. Our defence department has been cut 30% in its purchasing power and 23% in actual dollars. It has gone from just over \$12 billion down to \$9.4 billion. Yes, the defence department and the Canadian forces, together with every other department and every other program of the federal government, has had to contribute to deficit reduction. Why? Because of the big deficit we inherited from Brian Mulroney and the Conservative government.

They virtually put the economy and the fiscal condition of this country into ruin. The first priority of this government was to put the country on a proper fiscal course to be able to provide the kinds of jobs that our economy is now providing. We have lower interest rates. Inflation is under control. We have a balanced budget. Because of what we inherited from that government we had to absorb a lot of cuts in defence as well as in other areas.

Supply

The hon. member talked about helicopters. They botched that arrangement as well. They were going out, when the country had a \$42 billion deficit, and buying expensive developmental helicopters with all the bells and whistles, things that were relevant to the cold war period which they did not seem to recognize as being over. They were spending a lot of money for equipment; money that we did not have at that time because of the deficit situation they put us into.

We have bought search and rescue helicopters. We will replace the Sea King with a new maritime helicopter. We will do it at a cheaper price with off the shelf equipment which is more appropriate for our needs and cheaper than what they were going to provide.

• (1050)

When it comes to dealing with the issues that face our forces personnel and their families, the pay, the living conditions, the housing conditions and all of the other things, there is nobody who is more committed than I am in seeing that these problems are dealt with.

On behalf of this government, because that is what this government wants to do, I went to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. At the very first meeting I told them "This government wants to deal with these issues".

I had visited a number of different bases during the summer, within two or three months of being appointed Minister of National Defence, and I heard a number of stories. I told the committee, made up of members of all parties, to go to the different bases and communities and listen to what our forces personnel and their families have to say about the challenges they meet. How are they coping? Are they having difficulties in terms of pay levels or housing? What about the postings which result in them frequently being moved from one part of the country to another? Families face difficulties when they are at home and forces personnel are overseas, sometimes in some rather dangerous conditions. All of these things are important to this government. It is important that we address them.

At the very first meeting of the committee I asked members to address those matters. I said at the time that I needed to have a stronger understanding on the part of all members of parliament, on the part of the government and the Canadian public as to the challenges our forces personnel and their families are facing.

What we heard from the member this morning is of course what I heard previously and what others are now hearing in the standing committee. The reason those hearings are being held is because of the leadership of this government and the desire to get to the bottom of these issues and the desire to take corrective action to make sure that our forces personnel have a quality of life, a standard of living, that is befitting of the great service they provide to this country.

All that we hear today is a regurgitation of what we have heard from the public. What suggestions do those members have? They do not have any suggestions at all. They ridicule every other idea. They even criticized the idea of trying to get sponsorship for various non-public activities, non-core activities of the military. They got it all wrong in the course of doing it. We are not about to put "Drink Coke" on our tanks or on our armoured personnel carriers, or submarine sandwiches on our submarines. They know that is the case.

They know that what we are talking about are things like tattoos or the Snow Birds performances, all of which are not part of the core activities, but are areas where we do require some sponsorship, tastefully done I might add. It will not be done with the kind of advertising logos they are talking about.

This has been going on for several years. There is nothing new about this. It is an appropriate way of getting sponsorship for the things that are not part of the core activities of the Canadian military. Those things that are core, which require public funding, will continue to be handled out of public funds in the traditional way.

He got that all wrong. The other thing he was wrong about was our allies. They all do it. When the United States sends entertainers abroad they get sponsorship. They are all doing the same kind of thing, but it is those additional things that also help, whether it is the Snow Birds or a tattoo, to give the public a better understanding and appreciation of the skills and the talents that our forces personnel have.

As tragic as the events of the Saguenay, the Red River and the ice storm have been, they have also given the Canadian public a better understanding and appreciation of what our forces personnel are all about and the kind of professionalism they bring. In concert with that professionalism, this government is providing leadership to make sure those forces are ready for the next century.

We are bringing about institutional changes. We have agreed with more than 80% of the Somalia commission report. We appointed a new chief of defence staff and overhauled many of the senior positions within the Canadian defence upper echelons.

• (1055)

We have brought into the House the most extensive amendments to the defence act since its creation 50 years ago. They did not bring any amendments to the defence act. We are overhauling the military justice system to make sure we have an appropriate system for the new millennium. We have had reports on our reserves and we are implementing those reports.

In many cases we are not even waiting for the reports. We are taking action now. The 9% increase in pay is an example of something we are doing now. The retirement allowance for the reserve forces is also something we are doing now.

Supply

Institutional changes and reforms are being carried out and monitored by a former Speaker of the House, the hon. John Fraser.

The purchase of the helicopters, the submarines and the armoured personnel carriers are all decisions that came out of the white paper. The things they did not do and did not do properly we are carrying out.

We have also improved communications, as I think even the hon. member has admitted, both between the forces and the public and within the forces.

This is just a quick thumbnail sketch of a lot of things that other speakers I hope will get a chance to talk about further, but it clearly shows that when they point their finger there are three pointing back at them for their inadequacies during the time they were in government. This government is showing solid leadership.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, every chance he gets, our colleague, the Minister of National Defence, says the Conservative Party, always the Conservative Party, is the one responsible for everything that is wrong.

There are some things that need to be remembered, if one wants to be objective. For instance, the matter of the debt, which will take but a few seconds. Let us talk about the period from 1970 to 1984. In 1970, the debt stood at some \$15 to \$18 billion. The Liberals multiplied it tenfold. By the time we took office in 1984, the debt had reached \$200 billion. Instead of multiplying it by 11, we doubled it. That is a considerable slowdown.

At the time, however, we knew the deficit had to be controlled, so we adopted tax reform measures. Moreover, free trade, against which you voted, has freed up considerably more money to reduce the deficit.

I would like to ask the minister, since his choices are supposedly always the wisest possible, how it happens that, having suspended the helicopter purchase contract, negotiated at the time for \$33 million, he is now bragging about the same purchase, but at \$40 million plus, without considering that there was absolutely nothing set aside for R&D, and nothing for maintenance.

How can they pay 20% to 25% more for helicopters and try to convince us that the wait was worthwhile, after spending \$600 million? How can he claim that it was worth the wait, and then try to boast to us about the purchase?

[*English*]

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton: Mr. Speaker, I know the Conservatives are not very good at figures, given the way they ran up the deficit, and they seem to have a hard time recognizing that.

They equally have a very difficult time coming to grips with the helicopter purchase. They fail to understand that they were

proposing helicopters at a time when we could not afford them. They were military development helicopters which meant that a lot more money was going to go into the development stage before they would fly.

We are buying off the shelf helicopters that are already commercially certified in search and rescue which do not have all of the costs associated with them which their proposal had. We have ended up buying helicopters, and subsequently the maritime helicopters, at 30% less than what they would have paid. That was a shame. The taxpayers could not afford that.

I am very pleased about the search and rescue helicopters that we are buying. Yes, they are a cousin of the helicopter that was in its developmental stage, but getting it off the shelf and commercially certified is a lot cheaper. This helicopter will meet our requirements, which was the most important aspect of this purchase. It went through a very rigorous test and an extensive examination to ensure that it was the helicopter to best meet our operational needs and to do it at a price that was affordable to the Canadian public.

• (1100)

Even more important is to note that buying it now as we have, we bought it at a time that we could afford it. We got rid of that big deficit which we inherited from the Conservative government.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, to address the comments of the minister about debt, and also the Conservative Party, I do not think either one of those parties can claim to be on the high ground in that area. After all there is a \$600 billion debt. The Conservatives added \$250 billion. The Liberals trashed the taxpayer by adding another \$100 billion since they have come into office. Nobody can claim the high ground.

In speaking about the military, I just came out of committee on Bill C-25. It became evident on how undemocratic our process really is. This bill is coming from the top down. I ask the minister, in producing a bill and pushing it down to committee, why does he not give the committee more power to adjust, make amendments and do what is right for the military through that process?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton: Mr. Speaker, maybe if the member goes back to the committee instead of sitting in here he might be able to get some amendments put on the table. We are certainly happy to see him discuss the matter at committee.

In terms of the National Defence Act amendments, as I indicated these are very extensive amendments. They have come through as a result of two things. A lot of the recommendations in there should not be new to the hon. member. A lot of them came out of the Somalia commission report. All of them virtually mirror the report from former Chief Justice Dickson and his committee on the military justice system. They are well thought out by people, including a former chief justice of Canada, as to the kind of updating that is required in the military justice system to ensure that it has within it Canadian values and justice principles that are

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also acknowledged in the civilian area as being those that are required.

We are updating and streamlining the operations. If the hon. member has some amendments, or his party has some amendments, there has been every opportunity to be heard at the committee. I look forward to the committee reporting back to this House.

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There seems to be a lot of interest, and we are very attentive in the minister's answers to our questions. I would seek unanimous consent to prolong the questions and comments so that we can hear the hon. minister's reply.

The Deputy Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to extend the questions and comments time on the minister's speech?

An hon. member: No.

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid that there is not unanimous consent.

The time for questions and comments has now expired.

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand here today, although I have to say I am somewhat surprised that this motion came forth from the fifth party, the Conservative Party, from parts of the maritimes and from parts of Quebec.

An hon. member: Parts of Alberta.

Mr. Art Hanger: There are no Conservatives in Alberta. I obviously appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue.

To say the least, I cannot begin to stress how disappointed I have been with the treatment of our Canadian forces and how this government has impacted on their well-being and their effectiveness.

Again my surprise is that the motion comes from one of the two parties that really contributed to the problems we see in our military today. It was the Tories who continued to gut the forces during their disastrous tenure in government. I do not think they have a whole lot to offer in this debate apart from the fact of making it a debate. I certainly agree with them on that issue.

• (1105)

Our military exists fundamentally to protect the freedoms of our country. It is a proud institution which has distinguished itself in

two world wars, the Korean war, the gulf war and a myriad of other international conflicts. Our peacekeepers have set the international standard for competence, professionalism and humanitarianism.

Unfortunately the past 30 or so years have seen an increasing tendency by the federal government to neglect its responsibilities to the Canadian forces. Decreased funding, increased bureaucratization, failing equipment and a decreasing standard of living have taken an enormous toll on the morale of the forces. I am going to throw in one other item because I believe that military justice is a key aspect to morale.

If we see a two tier system as is present with only some tinkering done with Bill C-25 which the government is introducing we are not going to see morale improve a whole lot. I find that rather unsettling. The government has had years to make corrections to the military justice system and to the defence act and has failed to do so until now. And when it does so, it is superficial to say the least.

When I talk about decreased funding, increased bureaucratization, failing equipment and a decreased standard of living having taken its toll on morale there is no question that these evils are also cutting into the forces' operational capabilities. Members of the forces are now in the uncomfortable and often unrealistic position of being asked to perform duties with outdated equipment and with insufficient financial support for themselves and for their families.

The auditor general's report released about two or three weeks ago clearly puts the military at a disadvantage when it comes to their equipment and the way they are being administered.

Touching briefly on those points, first is decreased funding. For too many years successive governments, and the very government which ran up higher and higher deficits, cut mercilessly into the heart of DND, into the military. It seemed that DND served as the sacrificial lamb whenever governments wanted to take an overt demonstration of cutbacks. It is easy to whack somebody who cannot defend themselves.

The inefficiencies of the operation continued behind the scenes. When it came to showing the public how the government was balancing the budget, it was balanced on the backs of those who cannot defend themselves. There are no advocates for the military on that side of the House. None. When the government wanted to make this demonstration these cutbacks were always deemed as belt tightening. Unfortunately at some point belt tightening became limb amputation.

During the 1993 election, Reform proposed that the military's budget should be preserved at approximately \$11 billion. We argued that this was already too low for the military to function effectively but we felt that \$11 billion was a realistic figure which could be justified when compared to other government obligations. We argued that a strong military is an essential resource and

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therefore should be protected along with other government necessities. In other words cuts should come from somewhere else.

Since 1993 the DND budget has been cut to just over \$9 billion. Now even the auditor general is warning that equipment is getting dangerously outdated.

Let us talk about bureaucracy. Bureaucracy is a term that the Liberal side of the House understands to perfection. Perhaps the greatest mistake the Canadian government ever made with respect to the forces was folding it into the government bureaucracy and treating it as though it were just another government department. This had a number of disastrous effects.

• (1110)

First of all it fostered a sense of careerism which had not previously existed. Many military leaders that have the military and the country at heart have made it very clear to this government that this was going to happen. It refused to listen. Suddenly, advancement in bureaucracy replaced advancement in the military chain of command. Kowtowing to bean counting bureaucrats became essential for career development.

The military is not and should never be just another government department. The very nature of the military requires that it exist outside the bureaucracy but is still accountable to parliament, words that are going to be difficult to swallow on that side of the House which really does not appreciate many democratic principles.

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Why don't you talk about what the men and women say?

Mr. Art Hanger: This of course is unsettling to bureaucrats and to politicians who want to retain control over all aspects of the government. It is control that this government really would like to maintain.

Mr. Charlie Penson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to listen to the debate that is happening here today. My colleague from Calgary Northeast is making some excellent points but it is very difficult to hear because of the heckling from the other side. It seems to me that the member should reserve those comments for debate or questions rather than the strong heckling.

The Deputy Speaker: The debate is certainly lively and has been for a good part of the morning. If the hon. member cannot hear, then he has a valid point. I know it is important that all members be able to hear the debate. The hon. member for Calgary Northeast has the floor. I think hon. members might show the proper deference to the hon. member while he speaks.

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. That would help a lot.

What is essential however if the military is to thrive is to keep the bureaucrats and the politicians out of the administration of the military. What do they really know? But unfortunately we are looking at a government today that is somewhat dictatorial in its viewpoints and likes that control. I have to say that the Liberals have only contributed to the problem.

I would like to talk a little bit about the Somalia inquiry. It was in many significant ways an extremely important process. It brought to light the need for several positive changes to the Canadian Armed Forces.

The recognition of the need for military justice reform and increased accountability throughout the ranks are positive results of the inquiry. Without the Somalia inquiry, the top brass in national defence would never have been exposed to the glaring light of public accountability. Although restricted again by this government not wanting to expose everything, it was exposed as to their accountability and they were found wanting.

Of course the Somalia inquiry also exposed the Liberal government's gross arrogance. In shutting down the inquiry prematurely, the Liberals took abuse of power to dangerous new heights. It was the first time an inquiry was ever shut down. Never before had a government shut down a public inquiry simply because it was embarrassing the very government that commissioned the study.

Unfortunately the whole Somalia affair also did massive damage to the otherwise stellar reputation of the forces. Just when the inquiry was starting to get to the root of the defence department's internal problems, the government ended the process.

I certainly commend the member of the Conservative Party for bringing forth this motion. The debate is worthy and necessary. It has to reach heights beyond what it has right now to really provide a greater input of information to the public. I commend the member on the motion he has presented to the House.

Mr. Paul Bonwick (Simcoe—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I find it somewhat ironic to hear the member bringing forward the word dictatorial. Just yesterday in this House I heard the Reform member speaking about how lovely democracy is on such a controversial debate and how it is working so well in this House and the very next day he is saying that there is no democracy and that in fact it is dictatorial. Maybe they should get their stories straight.

• (1115)

I have a question for the hon. member. I would certainly like to take this opportunity to make a comment to the minister and to offer my sincere appreciation on behalf of the men and women in Canadian Forces Base Borden for the excellent job he has done in representing their needs, in meeting with them and in trying to find proactive ways of handling military issues coming into the next millennium.

Supply

As I look across the floor I see a wolf in sheep's clothing. Members opposite are riding on the backs of men and women in the military. They sat here in the last parliament and constantly tore the military apart over the Somalia inquiry, offering no positive words of encouragement whatsoever. Yet today they stand here and run off at the mouth about issues that they know very little about.

With regard to money, I have a question for the hon. member. In 1995 the Reform proposed budget suggested slashing \$1 billion from the armed forces or the defence budget. I am just wondering how the hon. member feels he could better serve the military by slashing \$1 billion from the men and women in our military.

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, the member likes to talk about verbal diarrhoea but there is only diarrhoea coming from one side of the House. Referring to democratic procedures, they are sadly amiss over on that side.

The prime example of this very undemocratic process is to watch the hepatitis C vote. How many members had to kowtow to that front line and their leader?

Mr. Paul Bonwick: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. To suggest that somebody in the House has diarrhoea is absolutely outlandish. Why can the hon. member not stick to the issues and answer the questions? Enough of the rhetoric—

The Deputy Speaker: We have a lively debate going on but I do not believe the hon. member for Simcoe—Grey has a point of order.

I know that the hon. member for Calgary Northeast will be judicious in his choice of words.

Mr. Art Hanger: Mr. Speaker, that was a very appropriate ruling. I know members on the other side are very delicate, very sensitive, when it comes to the process of democracy and the hep C vote was one example.

I just came out of the defence committee too and it is the same process. It is a top down process. Here we had a bill trying to correct the justice system within the military and it was all dictated up here and down at the committee. They sat there like a bunch of trained seals, clapping when they were asked to clap, jumping when they were asked to jump. That is the committee and that is the committee process that has to change.

To answer the member's question, he says Reform wants to cut \$1 billion out of the defence budget. How little he knows about Reform policy. How little he understands even his own party's policy when it comes to the military.

The Liberal government wants to chop \$2 billion from this budget, down from \$9.2 billion. The Reform, recognizing that there

is a strong need to support our men and women in the Canadian military, wants to increase this budget to \$11 billion. That will take care of the procurement problems and the rusting out equipment. That will take care of some of the social problems and complaints.

The government has had five years to correct the problems. For five years it let the military suffer. For five years it allowed housing away below substandard to exist in which to put military families, five years and there was no consideration of the social needs of military families. That is where the fault lies and there is the answer to the member's question.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for questions and comments has now expired. I know hon. members are disappointed.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre de Savoye (Portneuf, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the speeches for some time now and I must say that, when I was teaching at a college in Quebec, if a student of mine had behaved like one of the hon. members just behaved in this debate, I would have gladly thrown him out of the classroom.

This type of situation explains why Canadians judge us so poorly. But I would like the public to know that most members behave rationally in this House.

I am pleased today to speak briefly on the motion put forward by the Progressive Conservative Party. The motion reads as follows:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

First of all, I would like to point out to my Conservative colleagues that the members of the Canadian forces are paid by the Canadian taxpayers and not by Her Majesty, for whom I have the greatest respect. I think we could simply call them the "Canadian forces".

Having said that, let us get to the matter at hand. Providing political leadership probably starts with managing Canadian tax dollars effectively. Now, in his latest report and previous comments, the auditor general, as you know, repeatedly indicated several flaws in terms of military spending.

Recently, he stated that two thirds of the \$3.3 billion defence budget, that is \$2.2 billion—so it is \$2.2 billion out of \$3.3 billion—were spent on goods and equipment that did not really meet the needs of our troops. Now, \$2.2 billion is a lot of money. It is an incredible amount of money. In fact, it would eliminate the deficit in the province of Quebec.

That money was spent of military goods that did not meet our needs. Let me give you some examples.

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The Griffon utility tactical transport helicopters: a study done in August 1992, after the department had decided on the Griffon, showed that its load capacity was less than that required to transport a gun or engineer equipment. The long and short of it is that this is a helicopter that is not capable of lifting what is put into it, what it has to carry. Its load capacity for evacuating wounded and for logistical support was also lower than required. The government bought a helicopter that was quite simply not up to the job.

Another example is the Leopard thermal weapon sight. The results of tactical analyses on how to modernize the Leopard do not justify the decision to improve only the night vision system. If the government had been willing to spend the money, what the army needed was for the entire vehicle to be modernized, including the gun and the armour. According to the study, that was the minimum that would have been acceptable. More money badly spent.

Then there was the Lynx replacement project, project Coyote. The tactical concept used for the Coyote armoured reconnaissance vehicle was based on a number of studies, including a simulation study used for the Leopard. This study showed that, without powerful backup, armoured vehicles similar to the Coyote cannot withstand the enemy fire they would have to face in mid-intensity conflict.

What does this mean. It means that the government is buying armoured vehicles that are not up to the conditions in which they may find themselves. More money badly spent.

Need I point out that still more money has been thrown away on second-hand British submarines? I predict that, a year from now, the auditor general will come back to this topic and it will not be to congratulate the federal government but to tell it that, once again, it has wasted taxpayers' money.

But enough about money. Money is important, but it is not everything. Now we are going to talk about integrity, and about the Létourneau commission and what went on in Somalia.

• (1125)

The government showed poor political leadership in categorically refusing to shed light on the events that took place in Somalia. Justice Létourneau had a mandate. To properly complete his job, he would have needed a little more time. We are not dealing with any old thing here, but issues that are important for maintaining democracy.

Justice Létourneau requested that his mandate be extended to December 30, 1997, or a six-month extension. That is all he needed, but the Liberal government simply denied this extension.

This caused a scandal, of course. I must admit that it is not clear whether this is only a Liberal scandal or also a Conservative scandal, as this whole thing started under Prime Minister Campbell, who ran in the 1993 campaign.

At any rate, the current Liberal government swept this issue under the carpet by not extending Justice Létourneau's mandate. Let us face it, for all intents and purposes, the unilateral decision made by the minister represents nothing less than direct political interference in a judicial process, which is contrary to every democratic principle, including the separation of powers between the judicial and legislative branches.

The list goes on. Fortunately, we have a committee, the defence committee, that is currently touring military bases. I would like to briefly comment this tour, first because it is an important tour and second because I had the pleasure of sitting on this committee when hearings were held at Canadian Forces Base Valcartier in February.

As I recall, many senior officers testified at these hearings, as did many soldiers and members of their families. I can remember part of what was said. First of all, the lower ranks are underpaid. They cannot provide their families with a decent living on their pay. This is not inconsequential.

There are regions in Canada where the cost of living is so high—take Vancouver for instance—that we have seen Canadian forces members based in Vancouver go on welfare because they could not make ends meet with their pay. Is that political leadership? Let us be serious. The government goofed a long time ago. It is wasting our money on equipment that does not work, and it underpays the most important resource in our armed forces, namely our troops.

We now come to moves. Military personnel gets transferred from one base to another. When they move, they must sell their house if they have one and, more importantly, their spouse must quit his or her job and try to find another one. It is not easy for an English speaking spouse to find work near the Valcartier base because, as you know, things are done in French in Quebec. But the reverse is also true. It is not easy for a French speaking spouse to find work in an English province. All this causes serious disruption to family life.

But there is worse. Take the case of a young francophone whose parents are transferred to a base with an English environment. What school is that young francophone going to attend? How is he or she going to get an education in French? Some situations are truly deplorable.

I want to move on to the protection afforded to our military, in the case of an occupational injury. If the injury occurs in a theatre of operations, they are entitled to generous compensation, based on the nature of the injury suffered. However, if the occupational

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injury occurs here, during training in Canada, our military do not get any compensation. Worse still, they are released, because they are no longer able to fulfil their duties.

No injured worker in Quebec would received such shameful treatment, as Major General Forand pointed out during the hearings. Something must be done about this.

There is also the issue of building maintenance. Military buildings are deteriorating because there is no money to maintain them. We will lose a fortune because we cannot afford to do inexpensive repairs that would keep these buildings in good shape.

• (1130)

In conclusion, the federal government is mismanaging our money and the Canadian Armed Forces. I can guarantee you that things would be different in a sovereign Quebec.

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Portneuf for summing up what he saw during a tour of our military bases. I was also on that tour.

Earlier, the minister of defence blamed the Tories for leaving our armed forces in a really poor state. You know, it is always easy to blame others. One is never to blame, it is always the other guy's fault.

There was no deficit in Canada before 1973. The first one to open the door to a deficit was the current Prime Minister of Canada, who bragged about being the first finance minister from Quebec to become prime minister. I do not think it does us great credit.

Anyway, it is easy to always blame others. I have noticed several things. Let us use the example of our armed forces. In Trenton and in Petawawa, some members of our Canadian Forces told us that they had been waiting eight months for a pair of boots. Our soldiers in Bosnia buy kevlar equipment from the U.S. military, because we are unable to provide them with what they need.

Two years ago, the Auditor General of Canada told us in his report that the RCMP had 4,000 hats in storage in Ottawa. Some people have too many hats, others have to do without boots. There is currently a lack of warm equipment for those who are posted to Alert. What is the problem? It may lie with our suppliers who are probably not getting as much as they think they deserve, because they are not providing us with anything. Have we come to the point where our soldiers will have to provide their own rifles and their own bullets to join the army? We are almost there. Eight months for a pair of boots, does that make any sense?

Let us move on to housing. Our colleague said he was concerned about the welfare and health of the members of our armed forces and their families. The committee visited military housing. I do not know whether he would want to let anything live there. There was

two feet of water in the basement and military personnel were told to keep quiet, they were not renting the basement.

They get a \$100 increase and end up with \$46 after taxes. The cost of food is raised from \$200 to \$425 a month and housing costs are raised by \$125 or \$150 a month, and military personnel are told they should be content with that.

Morale has bottomed out. The military are exhausted. The armed forces are demoralized. Meanwhile, the minister is spouting fine rhetoric, saying he did this or that well. The armed forces, however, are a disaster. Something has to be done to raise their self-esteem.

Corporal Paquette in Trenton, a francophone, with a quadriplegic child whose only hope is to one day learn to speak, cannot obtain the services of a remedial teacher in French to teach his child to speak. After 17 years of service he is told "If you are unhappy, why don't you go home to Quebec and leave the forces?" This is the way our soldiers are being treated.

I see the member for Mégantic—Compton—Stanstead nodding, because it is true. He was there and heard the testimony with me. When will all this come to a stop?

Millions of dollars have been wasted. I remember the cancellation of the privatization of Pearson airport. Doug Young, the minister at the time, said it would cost us a maximum of \$25 million. Last time I looked, the government was being sued for some \$500 million because of this purely political decision.

I agree that the purchase of helicopters was not the greatest decision by the party previously in government, but its cancellation cost us an arm and a leg. At some point, there is a need for consistency, for logic.

I would ask my hon. colleague, who does an admirable job in all areas, but especially in this one, to tell us what he thinks of the well-being and the morale of the military. Perhaps he would give us some details.

• (1135)

Mr. Pierre de Savoye: Mr. Speaker, my colleague for Chambly is too kind, but he is right about the Canadian military being highly skilled and the Quebec soldiers having great courage. The problem is not the military or the military hierarchy, but the political decisions that are made against the best interests of the general population and the armed forces.

Some soldiers have shown me drinking water that was so dirty I would not have bathed in it. I would not even have given a dog a bath in that water. It was unbelievable. That is what was coming through the water supply system.

I can only hope that this debate will help the government realize the importance of making decisions that will give our military the means to do their job, so that we have soldiers who are proud of what they do, who are well paid and well thought of, who have

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decent housing and who are properly dressed and well equipped, and so on.

[English]

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to the motion by the member for Compton—Stanstead:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian forces.

I regret to say that I have to agree with the conclusion reached by this member that the government has indeed failed to provide strong political leadership to Canadians who are within the military and also working for the Canadian forces.

In the last 11 months that I have had the privilege of representing the people in Dartmouth, I have been quite frankly astounded by the deep malaise I have seen in every sector of the community involved with the military.

That sector is substantial. In Dartmouth and Halifax there are 10,000 military personnel and over 2,000 civilian personnel working for the military.

Our citizens have been central to the war effort in both the first and second world wars. Thousands of sailors and merchant marines have sailed out of our harbour and thousands have never returned. Thousands of civilian workers stayed at home during the wars and fuelled the war effort.

My communities, probably more than any in this country, have really felt the effects of war. Everyone has a grandmother or an aunt who can remember the exact place where they were during the Halifax explosion. That explosion killed thousands of people in our community, an east coast community right here, during the war.

I remember something that happened to me when I first arrived in that community. I went to a church that has now become my church. I was there on Remembrance Day with my children and a couple of people in the choir came down from the choir.

They took off their robes and started singing "The Band Played Waltzing Matilda" which is a very poignant song about a young Australian soldier going to Gallipoli, fighting in that war and then returning with his legs blown off. It is an anti-war song.

I looked around me and there was not a dry eye in sight. There were many military families in that church that day. I thought these were people who have a whole different view of fighting for a country and investing a great deal in it from what I ever had. I think I really changed my mind that day. I began to understand some new things about what commitment meant.

I am now the MP there. A great percentage of the people who come through my door or call our office are from the military or civilian workers.

They are asking for assistance intervention with DND, with DVA. They need ministerial inquiries into pension issues, unfair dismissals from the Department of National Defence and simply the draconian methods of downsizing that have been going on under the process of alternative service delivery.

In trying to fight for some of these citizens, I have run up against bureaucracies and a leadership that will not take responsibility, is not responsible or responsive to the concerns of these people.

• (1140)

On May 8 and 9, I sat in on the parliamentary committee which is crisscrossing the country to hear quality of life concerns within the military. I listened to dozens of soldiers and sailors, some of them fathers, and their wives speak out about the situations facing them. I heard from a peacekeeper who had been sandbagging PCBs in Sarajevo for seven months. He had been exposed to incredible environmental poisons so that now his health is completely gone. He was pleading before the committee for a decent pension level so he could look after his family.

A father named Al Lannon spoke for his son Glen Lannon, a young man from Truro who was injured during a military exercise at Camp Shilo. He was trying to receive some sort of pension that would allow him to take care of his family. A woman named Susan Rierdon spoke on behalf of her husband Terry Rierdon who returned gravely ill from his deployment in the gulf in 1990. They are still fighting for recognition of his illness. They are still waiting for the government to take some responsibility for the wounded soldiers and their families.

Mrs. Rierdon had a question for the committee:

Why is it that our country will not stand up with us in our hour of need? Veterans affairs is a minefield, and as I speak, Terry's pension is under complete and total review. The outcome will not be known for one or two months due to misplaced paperwork. Medical documentation that was misplaced at veterans affairs.

It's not new to me. Misplaced files, unreturned calls, constant delays are standard. I am the sole paper fighter for the military and veterans affairs. As an ex-military wife, I am ashamed, not only of the way our family has been treated by this country's agencies, but the treatment of all our ill and forgotten lost soldiers. I appeal to each one of you to restore dignity to those brave men and women, they all served us with no questions asked.

A sailor who now has AIDS and hep C from tainted blood transfusions done in a military hospital said:

I am in a battle for my life and to make matters even worse I must now fight a major bureaucratic battle with national defence and veterans affairs to ensure that when I no longer breathe that my wife and children will not starve, will not lose the family home.

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All these submissions paint a picture of an oppressive, vindictive leadership, a bungling, secretive bureaucracy. All expressed fears of reprisal for coming forward and all are waiting for such things as pensions. They are in line-ups for operations. They are waiting for diagnoses from military doctors whom they have lost faith in.

The civilian military workers await the next round of cuts which will see their jobs diminish. Jobs that used to bring \$12.50 an hour, family supporting jobs, are now privatized and restored at \$7.50 an hour. I do not blame them for their feelings of anger and betrayal. Their years of service have been met by the prevailing government attitude of privatizing everything that moves, of shifting responsibility to the private sector so it does not show up on the government books, so the Minister of Finance can gloat and bray about his surplus, while communities such as mine become weaker and more anxious by the day about their futures.

These people did not become part of the military effort to fight for those values. They did not fight for the values that now pervade the leadership of the military and the government. They committed their lives because they had an ideal of a country and a community they wanted to live in and were willing to fight for. That ideal involved the concepts of justice, fairness, equality and protection of the weak.

We now have parliamentary committee crisscrossing the country to hear quality of life issues from military personnel and their families. Each night we see on the news the horror stories of the families that have no money and are going to food banks. We hear the horror stories I have just put forward.

I am glad to hear that the country is waking up, that our own citizens are waking up and changing some of the stereotypes and mythologies they carry about the military.

• (1145)

This has to go further than that. In the fall there will be probably a very large report released by the committee. There will be lots of trees cut down in the interests of this weighty document. However the document will mean absolutely nothing unless there are ears to hear and unless there is a strong political leadership within the government to back up the recommendations of the report.

That leadership must herald the return to the values for which these young men and women have fought and put down their lives: justice, co-operation, care for the wounded, the vulnerable and the ill. If it does not happen we will in the not too distant future have no one left willing to stand up to fight for a way of life: democracy, fair play and justice. All we will have is generals who will be by themselves rattling their sabres. We will have our ministers flaunting their reports. However the battle for the way of life we believe is valuable will be lost.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, so much for the 1994 defence white paper that the minister of defence claims the government is still committed to.

The white paper has been turned into a word of fiction. The government has ignored the white paper, its own defence policy. We saw a news release that was sent out today by the minister of defence saying that he welcomes the auditor general's report.

The auditor general's report also condemns the Department of National Defence and what it has been doing. I wonder if he will look at the recommendations in the auditor general's report and really implement them. He certainly has not implemented the white paper.

The government has ignored the white paper, its defence policy, and failed to implement many of its very necessary recommendations. These recommendations include replacements for the Sea King, new multi-role support vessels for the navy, 3,000 extra soldiers, new armoured personnel carriers for the Canadian army and upgraded weapons.

I refer to chapter 7 of the national defence white paper for those on the other side who may want to read up on their government's official policy. The unofficial policy and the one most often put into practice has been neglected. How can we in Canada in good conscience continue with alliances such as NATO and the UN when we do not give our armed forces the resources to meet our obligations?

In fact we have been embarrassed. All Canadians are embarrassed now as are the members of our armed forces. We cannot continue to expect the respect that has been shown in the past for the many Canadians who have given their lives in conflicts all over the globe when we do not give our armed forces the ability to do the job we are asking them to do.

I cannot believe that we are saying to Subway that it can put an ad on our submarines. That is what we are to do. We will serve Subways to the men who serve on the submarines. I cannot believe that we are to put Rocket 88s on our rockets. I cannot believe that we are to sell ads to raise money and to put those ads on our vehicles and on all of our equipment. That is the way we are to raise money. I have never seen this done in Canada. It is an embarrassment around the world.

The government has cut the defence budget by 30% in the last five years. That has affected equipment and training. Recent news reports have highlighted the effect it has had on the quality of life of the soldiers. It is a disgrace.

As most of us in the House are aware, a second lieutenant at CFB Moose Jaw told the defence committee how he moonlights as a

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security guard for \$5.75 an hour so that he can feed his family. A sailor aboard the HMCS *Calgary* canvasses for the United Way. There is a gentleman in Moncton, New Brunswick, Mr. Soueracher, who when he was in the armed forces had a blood transfusion. He now has AIDS and he contracted hepatitis C. Our people will not even look at the man because they kept absolutely no record of the blood transfusion. His wife was there during that operation. There is still on the bottom of his foot a spot where they put the transfusion, but they will not give him his medical records. He offered to fly here and talk with the Minister of Veterans Affairs or with his staff, and no one will meet with him. I cannot believe this is happening.

• (1150)

The auditor general noted last month that defence spending often does not match the goals and the policies of the department. He pointed out that while Canadian soldiers were expected to fight alongside the best and against the best there was not sufficient capital to equip and modernize our forces. The auditor general also noted that despite a commitment to ensure that the experiences of the 1970s were not repeated when equipment was rusting out rapidly, the long term capital plans and the defence services program currently forecast a decline in equipment spending over the next five to fifteen years.

Can we imagine? We will have decline for the next 15 years. We just will not have a Department of National Defence.

Our minister of defence is saying that he will listen to the auditor general. He never listened to the white paper and he did not adopt it, and he will not listen to the auditor general either.

What about our veterans that made great sacrifices to uphold our values in international law and security? What do they get in return? The government has made deep cuts to veterans programs. It has slashed veterans affairs operating budget over a three year period by \$182 million.

I have wives of veterans coming to me. They cannot afford to bury their husbands. The merchant navy will be here on the Hill, on the steps of the Parliament Buildings, to protest. One merchant navy veteran said to me "I would rather sit there because they would have to bury me in the end. They will not give my wife enough to bury me so I will sit there on a hunger strike. When we die on the steps of the Parliament Buildings they will have to do something with our bodies".

I cannot believe it. We should reinstate the means test back to \$24,000 for the last post fund. It should be a priority. It was reduced in 1996 to \$12,000 and very few veterans now qualify for burial benefits. That is \$12,000 between husband and wife, not just for the veteran. Various legion branches have passed resolutions calling for reinstatement of the last post fund to \$24,000.

By the end of World War II the Canadian merchant marines grew to 180 ships and 12,000 mariners. Sixty-seven ships were lost with

11,046 mariners killed and 198 taken prisoner. Despite being referred to as the fourth arm of the fighting services during the war, merchant navy veterans were denied veteran status and many of the benefits offered to veterans. In particular, they were offered very limited career training opportunities.

We as a country have recognized the injustices against our merchant navy seamen and women. Why have we not compensated them adequately? Some of the measures the merchant navy is seeking include a payment of a tax free \$20,000 to each merchant navy war veteran or surviving spouse as compensation for their exclusion from many of the benefits offered to military veterans after the war and for the job and career opportunities merchant seamen were denied.

There should be an extension of the same benefits available to allied military veterans to veterans of allied merchant navies, provided the latter meet standards applicable to military veterans. We need to look after our veterans.

I am splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Quebec. I want to close by saying that we need to look after our veterans. Not only do we need to look after our veterans. We need to look after our military right now. We need to look after the man from Moncton and all those others who have not been treated in a manner in which they deserve. We will continue to fight for each and every one of them until this is corrected.

• (1155)

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. leader of the Progressive Conservative Party this morning in connection with the motion before us.

I cannot help but think that the hon. member is painting an extraordinarily bleak picture of the Canadian Armed Forces at this point in time. None of us on this side of the House would suggest for a moment that there are not some problems within the military, but the picture painted by the hon. member goes a little too far with respect to reflecting the reality of the situation.

I have two questions for the hon. member. One of them relates to the whole issue of the white paper. As a member of the national defence committee I just returned from the committee hearings in Halifax and the maritimes. We talked to quite a number of people. I had the opportunity to speak to Rear Admiral Dusty Miller who is in charge of the maritime Atlantic command. I asked him about the whole equipment issue, whether or not we could do the job that has been mandated to us in the white paper and in connection with the Department of National Defence mission statement.

Rear Admiral Miller was very clear in terms of his comments. He said that when Canada gets the Upholder submarines we will have one of the most modern navies in the world, some of the best equipment available in the world and some of the most highly trained people in the world.

If we look at the reality of the situation, I think it is reflected in the commitment the government has made to the navy over the last number of years: 12 brand new frigates in the Canadian navy, absolute state of the art in terms of weapons systems, radar, communications systems and computer systems. It is the very best technology we could possibly offer our men and women in uniform on those frigates.

The maritime coastal defence vessels is another example: 12 brand new maritime coastal defence vessels, and we have the Upholder submarines as well.

I ask the hon. member to respond to that aspect of the equipment and whether or not she is prepared to admit that perhaps she painted a little too bleak a picture.

The other issue she raised was on the personnel support programs. We are seeing commanders in the case of the maritime Atlantic command who are taking the initiative. I spoke to one service person who showed me a card produced by maritime—

Mr. Jean Dubé: Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We are on questions and comments. The hon. member has been giving a speech. I believe there are other members who would like to ask questions. We only have a certain amount of time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): This period is called question and comments so a member is quite free to comment rather than to ask a question.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, all I want is enough time for me to reply to his question. It does not leave a lot of time for me.

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Speaker, I did not hear the last comment by the hon. member for Saint John.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: I have the answer if I have the time to answer.

Mr. David Pratt: Madam Speaker, the other question I have is in connection with personnel support programs. It relates to some innovative thinking that is occurring within the Canadian forces right now.

What is wrong with companies providing support to members of the Canadian forces. What is wrong with that? What difficulty does the hon. member have with that? It shows some real leadership and innovation.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne: Madam Speaker, when it comes to the submarines, they have bought used submarines from Britain and unlike nuclear subs they cannot stay submerged indefinitely and therefore do not allow for Arctic patrolling.

The auditor general takes note of a very limited capability to assert national will in the very demanding environment of Canada's Arctic. He has stated this is not good. Furthermore, when it comes to the Sea Kings he did not mention that because some of our

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people lost their lives. In our area they lost their lives and their parents are writing to us and the Sea Kings are still there. Every one that goes up in the air has to have 70 hours of maintenance afterwards. It is an absolute disgrace. Why do I not want McDonald's and Subway and everybody on the side of our vehicles for national defence? Ask around the world. It is embarrassing when we reach rock bottom like that. For our defence people that is embarrassing.

● (1200)

So I say to him work to put back the respect that should be there. Some of our people now in the forces there are going to food banks. He wants me to be proud of that. No, I will fight tooth and nail to give them their respect.

[Translation]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Madam Speaker, I want to thank my leader for sharing her time with me. She is totally committed to defending the interests of both our veterans and all active members of our armed forces who are experiencing very serious problems at the moment.

We have put forward this motion because we are aware that the present government has brought our armed forces back to the sixties and seventies. They are close to not being operational. This is strange because we expect a lot from our soldiers and their families. It seems to me that it is the duty of the House of Commons to care about what is going on within our armed forces.

Everybody is pretty much aware of this reality that is devastating our armed forces. It does not affect 10,000 or 50,000 people, but hundreds of thousands of Canadians. Our soldiers are directly affected by this devastating reality. Are their immediate families and their extended families. Practically all Canadians are affected by what is going on right now, by what we have been learning about life within the armed forces.

As the member of the Progressive Conservative Party for Chicoutimi, Quebec, I must say that there are soldiers in that region who worked extremely hard during the national disasters that hit our country in recent months and recent years. Members of our armed forces have been and continue to be our national heroes. However, this fact must be recognized in a tangible way; the government must act responsibly.

As this issue affects hundreds of thousands of people, indeed all Canadians, we think the time has come for a ministerial statement, either by the Minister of National Defence or the Prime Minister, to show all Canadians that we are committed to modernizing our Canadian forces and making them effective again.

We expect a lot from these people and I am positive they do not feel their services are considered essential. They are called upon for every activity, for every national disaster we go through. They are also called upon to travel to other countries, to give up being

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with their families for months at a time, with absolutely no recognition.

The government in power is waiting on the recommendations in committee reports. It does not need to wait; at the very least, it could start by immediately improving its management of equipment replacement. It costs about \$1.5 billion a year just to replace and modernize our equipment.

There has been talk about many purchases that have been made without regard for the priorities that any soldier would be able to set. The supply department itself is extremely inadequate. These are things that could be done very quickly. Normally, recommendations in the auditor general's report can be acted on within the year. But instead the government is waiting on the standing committee's report.

• (1205)

Before the committee's final report is in, there are extremely progressive measures I think the defence minister and the government could take.

Canadian soldiers have been serving abroad for four years now, as well as at home. And who is Canadian soldiers' worst enemy? It is the budget slashing Liberal government.

Everyone agrees that there has to be rationalization, but the government has gone into the banking business. It has set aside \$20 billion in a special fund at a time when our soldiers are underpaid and lack modern equipment. They are the laughing-stock of other countries. With completely obsolete equipment, they are the best soldiers in the world. That is what the government should do something about and pronto.

It all began with a purely political move, the cancellation of the helicopter contract, which had been carefully worked out. This contract cost hundreds of millions of dollars in delay, compensation and the whole business of renegotiating a new contract that is costing several millions more than the 1992-93 deal.

In addition, there are serious shortcomings with respect to activities such as training, that have not been taken into account. Also not taken into account were the cost of replacement parts and maintenance, as well as the \$960 million because of postponing replacement of the old and now unreliable Labradors and Sea Kings.

And it goes on. I prefer not to speak about R&D. The contract was scrapped, a term the government understands. It promised us it was going to scrap free trade, even though it has been responsible for raising our export figures from \$90 billion to \$215 billion. It also promised to scrap the GST, another thing it has not done.

What it did scrap, however, was the helicopter contract. Renegotiating a poorly negotiated contract cost hundreds of millions of dollars.

The former national defence chief of staff has admitted that the Canadian army was ill equipped to fight a true armed conflict. Really now. According to the *Globe and Mail*, in 1996, the chief of defence staff said that the Canadian army is not equipped to wage a serious war, and the rank and file are justifiably dubious about the competency of the high command. We are not talking about 1939, before the second world war, but about 1996.

In the 1996 auditor general's report, it was pointed out that certain well-known deficiencies in their tanks made it impossible to keep the risk of missions on which the armed forces were sent to an acceptable minimum. This means that the Canadian generals—and this merits careful reading because there is a considerable responsibility here—sent thousands of soldiers to combat zones in Bosnia and Somalia, knowing that their safety was compromised because of serious deficiencies in their armoured vehicles. The auditor general said that even machine-gun bullets could go through them. And our military personnel were riding in these, an instance of unacceptable irresponsibility.

This is why our party has decided to make this an official motion today in the House of Commons, in order to try to bring about some rapid improvement if possible and, of course, to also continue to work, as our colleague is, within the standing committee in order to have an official report ready very soon.

As for troop morale, one need only look at the reports from the standing committee currently travelling across the country to see how devastating this situation is to our armed forces.

• (1210)

A senior officer based, not in Washington, at the Pentagon or in Silicon Valley, but in Bagotville, in my riding—no one will challenge me on reporting what was said there, I am sure—told me that the situation was “just this side of a crisis”. This means that the government should not wait for the standing committee's official report. There are plenty of reports available. There are reports by the auditor general, who recommended that our military be better equipped both in terms of personnel and of operational equipment. That much the government can do, and it should do it quickly.

Members of the armed forces sometimes come across instances of shameless squandering on purchases of various equipment, on which they do not dare blow the whistle for fear of what would happen to them if they were found out. This is not Russia, or the former Soviet Union. This is not right. I hope the government will

take into account the recommendations made by both the auditor—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member's time has unfortunately expired.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Chicoutimi. The government complained today that we show only the bad side and do not make any practical suggestions.

I thought I had made one this morning, and I would like to hear the hon. member for Chicoutimi on this. The problem is that proper training is not provided. Individuals who leave the armed forces after a 20 year military career have no training. There should be an education system. Perhaps we could share the costs: we take a little off their pay and the government could chip in. This way the costs would be shared.

When their service engagement is over, they could go back to university, college or training school. I know this is an area my colleague knows well. Perhaps he could comment on this.

Mr. André Harvey: Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comment.

Indeed, after my defeat in 1993, I had the opportunity to work with base authorities in certain areas of training. It was one of the positive sides of my defeat, since it allowed me to get closer to businesses and to work somewhat like in the private sector.

Another proposed measure is the creation of a well trained rapid reaction corps. I want to go back to this. It is also recommended that an ombudsman be put in place, because our military are afraid to speak up. We need an ombudsman in the Canadian Armed Forces. It would allow us to improve military operations on a day to day basis.

An hon. member: It is necessary.

Mr. André Harvey: Based on all that information, we think the government has no choice. It must make a statement on the state of our armed forces and their ability to fulfil their mandate.

This is precisely what the auditor general asked of this government. Over the last five years, in addition to scrapping the helicopter deal, the government has been scrapping the whole of the Canadian Armed Forces, both in terms of their equipment and in terms of the pride that our military used to have. These people feel that the authorities, and particularly the government, never listen to them.

This is why we must set up a rapid reaction corps and have an ombudsman who will listen to our military on a daily basis because, as I said, they are afraid to speak freely. They were very pleased to appear before the committee, but afterwards the issue will be completely forgotten.

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We must have effective means of protecting the lives of our military, and this affects not just tens of thousands of citizens, but hundreds of thousands of them. I am convinced that we could then implement all the recommendations made by the standing committee on national defence.

I agree that the work being done by the committee members from all the political parties is positive and effective. But the government must act immediately, because our military are leaving the forces. This is unprecedented. They are leaving. It is unbelievable. I see it in my region, on the base in Bagotville. Our best specialists, our best pilots and our best technicians are leaving the military, because they do not feel that they are considered as valuable individuals in Canada.

This is why we want to take action. Today is Armed Forces Day in Canada, and it is an opportunity to show greater respect for our military.

• (1215)

[*English*]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Madam Speaker, my hon. friend from Chicoutimi spoke very eloquently. He mentioned the helicopters. We heard from the minister of defence this morning. He talked about how this was actually a good deal for Canadians. Somehow he expects Canadians to accept that receiving half the helicopters at a loss of over half a billion dollars, a helicopter that has only half the capacity of the one we would have purchased under the previous government, is a good deal.

I wonder if my friend might respond to that.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): The hon. member for Chicoutimi has 15 seconds to answer the question.

Mr. André Harvey: Madam Speaker, I will use my 15 seconds to thank our colleague, who is on the standing committee, for the very positive work the committee has done for all of Canada.

The matter of the helicopters is another scandal of the present government. They wanted to win. They won by promising Canadians that they would scrap the matter, knowing full well that financially and technically the matter—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I apologize to the hon. member, but his time is up.

[*English*]

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Waterloo—Wellington.

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It is a pleasure to speak to this motion because the examples of leadership this government has shown with respect to the Canadian forces are demonstrated day in and day out by the very pride we have for the dedication, the skill and the professionalism of Canada's soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen.

Pride in the Canadian military has very deep roots and today's Canadian forces draw inspiration from the courage, commitment and accomplishments of the hundreds of thousands of their countrymen and women who served before them for this country in war and in peace.

This government has proudly demonstrated the great honour of being the custodian of the distinguished military heritage we have. I believe the need to maintain Canadians' pride in their military tradition is a responsibility which we must and do take very seriously.

I know that the men and women of the forces also take that tradition very seriously. They are currently experiencing a period of intense operational activity and they continue to perform every mission with great skill and courage.

The mission of the Canadian forces is to defend Canada and Canadian interests and values while contributing to international peace and security.

As we all know, the world is in the midst of incredibly dramatic changes. One example is that NATO will expand to include former members of the Warsaw Pact. We are full, active partners in collective security organizations like NATO and NORAD because Canadians believe their security is indivisible from that of our allies, old and new. We continue to contribute to UN peacekeeping missions and other multilateral operations because Canadians believe they have a duty to promote stability and alleviate the suffering which is often caused by armed conflict.

Canada has participated in virtually every peacekeeping mission ever organized, with more than 100,000 women and men posted all over the world during the last half century.

Peacekeeping also requires patience and discipline, as well as innovation and courage. We have made some mistakes on our peacekeeping missions, and some serious ones, but we have also achieved some remarkable successes and, on balance, we have as a nation done a great job.

The Canadian forces in the former Yugoslavia helped to prevent fighting from spreading to other parts of the region. They saved countless lives by assisting in the delivery of humanitarian supplies and preventing more massive assaults on civilian populations.

Peacekeeping and peacemaking are proud and dangerous undertakings to which the army, navy and air force all contribute.

The responsibilities of the Canadian forces also include the surveillance and control of Canadian territory, air space and maritime areas of jurisdiction. They include the securing of borders against illegal activities, fisheries and environmental protection, the protection of Canadians from all manner of disaster and, when required, aid of the civil power.

• (1220)

There is no way of knowing what the 21st century holds for Canada, nor what the challenges and tasks will be for the Canadian forces. The totally unforeseen changes that have occurred on the international stage in the past 10 years are a guarantee of that.

The question is: How will the Canadian forces prepare for the challenges of the 21st century?

In the government's view the choice is clear. We must retain multipurpose, combat-capable forces to carry out the essential mission of defending Canada and contributing to international peace and security.

If the Canadian forces are to meet the challenges of the 21st century and carry out the roles provided by the government, roles which Canadians support, they must be flexible, well equipped, thoroughly trained and able to fight if necessary.

Throughout the 20th century our allies have depended on Canada as a reliable contributing partner to the preservation of international peace and security. The courage and the commitment of the men and women, along with our equipment, our training and our skills, have enabled Canada to participate with the most modern and professional armed forces in the world.

We have made a choice to maintain Canada's historic role and stature as a nation in NORAD and NATO. To do this we must continue to provide the Canadian forces with the tools to do the job.

The government has announced over \$1 billion in equipment purchases. We have an obligation to spend the taxpayers' money wisely. That is why, wherever possible, we are choosing to buy off the shelf commercial technology to upgrade the equipment now in our inventory, or in some cases to consider purchasing used equipment.

The government is also restructuring the forces, downsizing headquarters, reducing infrastructure and improving management practices to enhance operational efficiency and to provide Canadians the best value for their defence dollars.

Numerous initiatives are under way and we are seeing excellent progress. In 1994 we had 52 bases and stations, far too many for the size of today's military. Today the number has been reduced by more than half to 24.

In my childhood I lived in PMQs in Zweibrücken, Germany; Centralia, Ontario; Bagotville, Quebec; and Trenton, Ontario. My father was a proud member of the RCAF and I am very proud of him and others who serve.

The Canadian forces need our support and they need our understanding. They must be given missions that are clear, realistic and achievable. They deserve our respect and our gratitude. No matter what challenges we face, no matter what choices we make, we must ensure that we do what is best for our men and women of the Canadian forces and for Canada. That is why the government has embarked on an examination of quality of life issues which face our military personnel and their families.

We have asked the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs to undertake an extensive comprehensive examination of the people issues so important to a modern military. This committee has been travelling across Canada and has visited our troops serving abroad. They are hearing firsthand what we need to hear, the very concerns of the Canadian people serving us.

The committee is planning to present the report in the fall and the government will at that time again demonstrate the leadership necessary by taking concrete action as required and I am confident it will do so.

Our vision of the future is that of a revitalized Canadian military made up of multipurpose, combat-capable troops, both regular and reserve, ready and able to carry out any of the operations entrusted to them.

In my city of London, Ontario we are extremely proud of the 1st Hussars, a most decorated reserve unit with a sterling and long history. In the last month I had the very real honour of being able to inspect the quarter guard. That was a very proud and memorable moment.

Also within the last month I was pleased to address the men and women graduates of our Canadian military colleges who reside in southwestern Ontario. I know that these leaders are willing to accept their mantle of leadership. They understand that service is before self.

The Canadian forces of tomorrow will continue to be a streamlined command and control structure that will be capable of producing the best possible combat forces in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible. We will be proud of them.

● (1225)

Our defence policy is founded upon our hopes for and understanding of a changing world and the values Canadians wish to protect, promote and perpetuate. At its heart is the example set by these thousands of men and women who for over 130 years have provided loyal and courageous service to Canada and the world.

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It is very important to thank them as we stand in this Chamber today and on those occasions when we deliver ourselves in service to our country. I would like to thank them on the basis of my knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the commitments of the men and women who serve in our Canadian Armed Forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, BQ): Madam Speaker, I was very interested to hear the remarks of the hon. member opposite. Unfortunately, I have not reviewed the guard of honor. I guess he was accompanying the Prime Minister or some minister. I was more involved with the lower ranks, with enlisted personnel, with the people we never see but who live in a submarine in a room the size of a toilet. I listened to these people. I certainly did not inspect the boots of the military standing at attention on Parliament Hill or anywhere else.

But I can tell you that I saw the terrible things that partisan politics, no doubt—it cannot be from anything else—prevents the hon. member from criticizing, like the member for Nepean—Carleton, who sits on the same committee as I do.

Earlier, I mentioned a francophone in Trenton who has a young quadriplegic child. The child is three and a half years old and does not speak yet. The name of the person is Denis Paquette. He is at the Trenton base. All he wants is a transfer back to Quebec so his child may be taught to speak. This is all the child will be able to do.

I contacted Corporal Paquette in Trenton, as the hon. member was starting her speech. He said he is getting nothing but reprisals for complaining to the committee when it visited Trenton and is being told that he might be encouraged to leave. He has been told that, if he is transferred to Quebec City, it will be for compassionate reasons, but they will not pay to move him or his family. That is the member's wonderful Canadian armed forces.

It is time a look was taken at the army's human resources. I could almost believe that the soldier who wrote *Une armée en déroute* was right. Our soldiers are poorly paid and poorly outfitted. They travel in style, on lovely big vessels, leaving the Sea Kings aside, but they do have new equipment. Everything has been spent on equipment and very little on human resources and soldiers' well-being.

I do not think that the member would agree to live in the so-called PMQs, the houses soldiers are provided with that are not fit for a modern family, where the stoves do not even have hoods to vent cooking odours. Is this what the member thinks makes our army so wonderful right now and contributes to the well-being of soldiers? I think not.

I call on members to have a bit of compassion and to listen to soldiers' complaints, such as that of Denis Paquette, about the insurmountable human problems they are up against. And to think that the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party has just been

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told that the army is wonderful, that there are no problems and that she is making it out to be worse than it really is.

We spent three weeks on the ground. Some of the committee sessions lasted from 1.00 or 1.30 p.m. until midnight. Like the member for Pontiac—Gatineau—Labelle, we heard soldiers tell us that they were not even allowed to see their own medical file. The excuse given was national security. This is wonderful?

It is time that members examined their conscience, that for once they set aside partisan politics, that they set the record straight and admitted that our soldiers are badly paid and badly outfitted. A soldier came to tell us that he had been waiting six months for boots and nobody believed him until his colonel came to tell us it was true. He had no boots. For six months, the man had been wearing the boots of another soldier who had retired last year. What does she have to say to the soldiers in Bosnia who buy kevlar suits from the Americans? How are we going to send them over? Wearing loincloths, like the Indian tribes of old?

• (1230)

[*English*]

Mrs. Sue Barnes: Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to stand here and correct the hon. member. I did not travel with any minister. I was not with the Prime Minister. I was doing the work as an everyday member of parliament in my riding. Whenever I had the opportunity over the last five years I talked to the men and women who serve with the reserve units.

In my unit I have talked to people who have served in Somalia. I have talked to people who have served in Bosnia. In my city we are going to send people in the 1st Hussars to Bosnia again this June.

When this speaker makes derogatory comments not founded in fact, I must correct him because it is far from the truth. It is the men and women. Maybe this—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Thibeault): I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but her time has expired.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to address this motion on the government's leadership with respect to the Canadian forces. I believe the government has shown tremendous leadership in this area. I am pleased to report that the residents of my riding of Waterloo—Wellington also believe the government has shown outstanding leadership in this area.

The examples of leadership this government has shown with respect to the Canadian forces are demonstrated day in and day out by the very pride we all have in this House, and all Canadians, for the dedication, skill and professionalism of Canada's soldiers,

sailors, airmen and airwomen. That pride is demonstrated by people in my riding and all Canadians support our military.

Pride in the Canadian military has very deep roots. Today's Canadian forces draw inspiration from the courage, commitment and accomplishments of the hundreds of thousands of their countrymen who served before them in both war and peace. This government has proudly demonstrated the great honour of being the custodian of a distinguished military heritage, something we as Canadians can be proud of. The need to maintain Canada's pride therefore in military tradition is a responsibility we as government take very seriously, and rightfully so.

Canada has participated in virtually every peacekeeping mission every organized. That is a great feat and certainly reflects well on this country, with more than 100,000 men and women posted all over the world during the last half century.

If the Canadian forces are to meet the challenges of the 21st century and carry out the roles both in peace and in war provided by the government, roles that Canadians support, they must be flexible, well equipped and thoroughly trained and be able to fight if and when necessary. I reiterate the government's record in preparing the Canadian forces for the 21st century speaks for itself. The government has taken action. This is what leadership is all about.

I will highlight some of the actions the government has taken in this very important area. Immediately following coming into office, the government fulfilled its commitment to cancel the EH-101 helicopters ordered by the Conservative government. They were simply too expensive for what was needed. Also the government made a commitment to significantly enhance the role of parliament in stimulating informed public debate on defence issues. The parliamentary committees reviewing Canada's defence and foreign policies conducted extensive and unprecedented numbers of public consultations in 1994. The government has also held a number of parliamentary debates on major foreign policy and defence issues, including Canada's role in multilateral peace operations in Haiti and most recently in the Arabian gulf and the Balkans.

Canada's defence policy as introduced by this government charts a new course for the Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces. Priorities were set out and some tough decisions have been and will continue to be made in this regard. The Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces have fundamentally changed the way they do business. A program of extensive institutional renewal was introduced and is currently being implemented across the entire defence organization. That is important to note.

• (1235)

The process of reform is ongoing. In March 1997 the report of the Minister of National Defence to the Prime Minister on the

leadership and management of Canadian forces and the progress outlined in the commitment to change document released last October demonstrates that much has already been achieved in terms of improving training, education, morale and leadership.

The Minister of National Defence has established a monitoring committee on change to monitor change initiatives and their effectiveness. An independent ombudsman to enhance fairness within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces is in the process of being established.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces are committed to gender integration and the Canadian forces are world leaders in terms of the proportion of women in the military in the number of areas in which they can serve. That too is a source of pride for residents in my riding and across Canada.

The government remains committed to maintaining multipurpose combat capable forces to carry out a range operations both at home and abroad in the fulfilment of its commitment to multinational institutions such as the UN and NATO. Resources are focused on maintaining the core capabilities of the Canadian forces.

The government is also committed to ensuring that the Canadian forces have the tools they need to do their job. This is a priority, and rightfully so. Over the last year there has been significant progress on important capital acquisitions, including the purchase of 15 new search and rescue helicopters, four Upholder class diesel-electric submarines, armoured personnel carriers, maritime coastal defence vessels and the tactical command control and communications system. All these are important acquisitions that we need to have in place for the Canadian forces.

The government has introduced amendments to the National Defence Act to modernize and strengthen the military justice system and to more closely align it with Canadian values and legal standards. This is an important move and one that underscores the commitment of the government in terms of this important period.

The government is also committed to improving the quality of life of the members of the Canadian forces and their families.

The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs is currently examining the social and economic needs of Canadian forces personnel. The government looks forward to its report and recommendations. We will certainly await that report and the importance it will carry.

The government is committed to informing Canadians about the good news in the Canadian forces. Steps have been taken to improve communications both within the department and with the Canadian public. It seems we should always say thanks for the tremendous work the Canadian forces do on our behalf. It is

Supply

important that we do so in order to show them our ongoing gratitude for the tremendous work they do on our behalf.

The Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces have accomplished much over the last number of years. The government has provided the necessary leadership. It has made the right decisions and followed through on its commitments.

Through the government's leadership, the Canadian forces are prepared for today's challenges and especially for those of tomorrow. It is important to underscore and ensure that all Canadians understand we are preparing for the 21st century.

The government has shown outstanding leadership and commitment when it comes to the Canadian armed forces. It has demonstrated the leadership required and the ongoing commitment necessary to ensure the Canadian Armed Forces are considered to be one of the best in the world.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague from the Conservative Party for putting forth this motion. It is very deserving at this time. The House would do well to listen to what the opposition has to say concerning our military.

The major problem in this decade, particularly since 1993, has been that this government has chosen to run the military like it runs one of its departments. It has chosen to run the military with the same secrecy. If it wanted to look at one of Canada's success stories, it is when the military looked after itself and the politicians stayed out of it. But the government has not done that.

● (1240)

As a case in point recently, within the least year, the military had a conference in Winnipeg. The theme of the conference was efficiency and accountability. Now the auditors are being asked to look into this \$2 million conference which lasted only four days. It was attended by Canada's top military officers and their guests. If that does not sound like a department of this government, nothing does. That is exactly what it is.

According to military documents obtained by my colleague, the hon. member for Lakeland, food and alcoholic drinks for the conference cost \$74,000. It sounds like a department to me. Furthermore, this conference included \$8,000 in tips to the staff. It sounds like a department to me. The defence minister has now confirmed that the auditors are going to examine this four day conference.

The success of any country's military and particularly that of Canada and the glorious past to which the government has been referring took place when the military ran the military. If we tried to run the RCMP like this government is trying to run the military we would have no national police force.

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The Liberals since coming to office in 1993 have done nothing but tear the guts out of the military. While they talk about all the purchases, they have chopped the military budget by \$3 billion.

I have talked to some of these people in the military. I congratulate my colleague from the Conservative Party who said do we ever need an ombudsman. In the military today as with this government there are a minister, deputy ministers, political hacks and all the rest of it and then at the bottom we have the real troops. That is what has been wrong with our military. The soldiers, the people in the front corps, are telling this government on every trip they make that is the problem with the military.

I do not know whether these people have read the auditor general's report, but he says the military is rusted out. It is like VIA Rail, it cannot replenish its stock. Only recently have the Liberals moved to do something about that.

I hope the committee travelling across Canada right now looking at the quality of life in the military stopped at the base in Moose Jaw. I hope the members of the committee talked to some of the people I talked to. I hope they were as shocked about the conditions in which the military families were living as I was. I hope they saw the squalor of some of the houses. I guess as long as we are going to have a department with a military being run as a political organization, that is exactly what we can expect to achieve.

On the search and rescue helicopters it took four years to end up with the same EH-101 Cormorant that the Liberals had scrapped in 1993 at a big price. It took four years for the Liberals to sign a deal with the British to buy four used submarines. It sounds like a department to me. It does not sound like the military.

We still do not have the maritime ship borne helicopters. We are told we are going to buy them. I would like to say this as a positive note and offer a suggestion to this House. Everything I have said has been positive but it will be received by members opposite as being negative. That is the problem. I just spoke the truth. I realize members opposite do not like that.

• (1245)

The opinion in this country of Canada's military is not negative. It is the government's handling of the military that is looked on negatively. We could do a poll on the Somalia inquiry should no one believe me. That would tell us what is thought of politics and government.

Right now we could do a lot to improve the image of the military. In the area where I live it is impossible for young people to become part of the militia because they are not encouraged and they would have too far to travel as there is no military establishment nearby. Many of the young people whose grandfathers served

in the famous South Saskatchewan Regiment have to drive all the way to Regina to become part of the military.

I would encourage the Minister of National Defence to go out and sell a program with the cadets of the three branches. I truly believe that if we could sell the cadet program in our schools and in organizations within our communities, not only would that help children with a number of problems and give them something to do but it would also be a real source of recruitment into the military when the time is right. If someone enters and stays in the cadet program until they have completed high school, it may well be that they will want a career in the military. This is a program we should give serious attention to.

I hope this country is never again disgraced with the government's closing down of the Somalia inquiry. When this inquiry was going on and then was cut off it reminded me of a cat making a deposit on the pavement and trying to cover it up. You just cannot cover it up. You cannot cover up the Somalia inquiry.

The government should take some real steps, and I hope it will during this tour, to bring Canadians' image of our military up to where it once was. Our military image has really gone down. It has really fallen in the last 10 to 12 years. That is what my hon. colleague's motion is all about and that is what every member of this House and myself want to see.

My parting words are to get the military out of the politicians' back pockets and let it run as a true military force.

Mr. Lynn Myers (Waterloo—Wellington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member opposite and his reference to the secrecy in terms of what the government and the military are doing. I could not believe I was actually hearing what he was saying. It is incredible to think he would make that kind of statement.

Surely my hon. colleague should know, and in fact I hope he does, that the defence committee has been listening very carefully to what the military has to say. In fact the committee has taken soundings in terms of what is being said at various places across Canada. Might I remind the hon. member that the committee has done so in Yellowknife, Vancouver, Comox, Edmonton, Cold Lake, Esquimalt, Valcartier, Bagotville, Kingston, Petawawa, North Bay, Trenton, Gagetown, Goose Bay and Halifax. In fact I do not think he realized that hearings were held in Moose Jaw as well.

I would remind the member that this is a government intent on listening very carefully and very closely to what the armed forces personnel and people in this area have to say. I think it is very important that we go on record to note that is in fact the case.

My question is really simple. Why would the hon. member downplay the tremendous hearings that are being held across Canada in order to get the kind of feedback, in order to open up the

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process that we need and think is appropriate? Why would he downplay that? I think that is really appalling.

• (1250)

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the hon. member was not listening. I was not condemning the present fact finding tour.

The hon. member knows very well that I talked about the secrecy shrouded around the Somalia inquiry and the shredding of documents, that is what Canadians thought of the military. I am not condemning talking to people, listening to the rank and file and not just the officers and the politicians. You got it wrong. I did not say that and you know I did not say it.

The Deputy Speaker: I know the hon. member means to address the Chair.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, first of all allowed me to thank my colleague from the Reform Party, who supported this morning my motion to create in the armed forces a position similar to that of the auditor general and commonly called ombudsman.

I think that this would indeed provide an answer to all the serious problems our military personnel and their families are confronted to.

I wonder if our colleague could share with us two or three of the most pressing recommendations this government and its defence minister should implement immediately instead of waiting for the report on which the standing committee on defence is working on, to at least show all our troops that we listened to what the auditor general has been saying for the past two, three or four years. I would like to hear my colleague on this.

[*English*]

Mr. Roy Bailey: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question.

Absolutely, there should be the same procedure in place within the military which I know exists within the RCMP and police forces. Even the lowest recruit has a right to issue a complaint. In doing so they know full well that the complaint will reach its proper source and they will not be penalized for putting their reasoning forward. We found out in the Somalia inquiry that when they got to the touchy political part that is when the problem started.

The member is right and it is a good question. We should get the politics out of this and let the military run it and reach solutions without the politicians getting into it.

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Tories for their motion today.

It is entirely right to condemn the government for what it is not doing with the military. It is condemned for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian forces. Political leadership. Nobody is asking the government to provide leadership in the field. We expect from this House that it will provide strong leadership to the military, to the forces in total.

What do the military do for us and what have they been doing in the past? They fought alongside the armed forces of a lot of other countries in many wars over the years.

In World War I they fought in the trenches. They fought heroically. They fought with self sacrifice. They were completely selfless. Some of the worst things that could happen to a soldier happened to soldiers in World War I. They did everything that could be done to help win that war. They fought in trenches. They had a fledgling air force. They fought at Vimy Ridge. They fought at Maple Copse, the Battle of the Somme. Those are the words that define the heroic history of Canada in World War I.

In World War II there was Dieppe, the Normandy landings on D-Day. I am proud that my wife's father was at Normandy on D-Day. My mother-in-law, a war bride, did everything she could to help in the defence of Britain during the war that encompassed that land.

• (1255)

There were the London air raids, the battle of Britain and the battle of the Atlantic. That was only the European theatre. Our people fought everywhere on this globe in the second world war. There is probably not a member in this House whose family was not affected by the wars.

We had the Korean war. I have known and employed veterans of the Korean war. They suffered. They suffered not without meaning. They suffered because they believed in what Canada stands for, democracy.

These people should be looked after in the way we would expect someone who has sacrificed for us would be looked after. They should not be left lying on the sidelines somewhere. We have picked them up off the battlefields but have we looked after them once they have returned home? They have trouble getting pensions and any number of things.

It is not only in declared wars that our people have fought. They have been there for peacekeeping missions around the world. They work in disaster relief in Canada, just recently during the Winnipeg flood and the Quebec ice storm. Our soldiers were there as volunteers, not because somebody picked them up. They went of their own accord.

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In the past our military have been shot at, gassed, bombed, shelled, sunk in ships and crashed in planes. They have been made prisoners of war, taken hostage and more. They have served in temperature extremes. They have practised in the Arctic and have served in the deserts. One would think with all of that it would be enough suffering. Is it? Not according to the Liberal majority government.

The pay is ridiculously low for what I just listed as the things they do. We have seen on television and committee members have heard the military give testimony on the dismal housing conditions. And the equipment. I know a man in the navy who served on a wooden ship. It is almost the year 2000. What kind of things are we handing these guys to defend our country?

These people are responsible for our national defence. They help out in times of national disaster. They keep peace around the world. We would think that they would be accountable to parliament and the Minister of National Defence. But we also think that the Minister of National Defence, this parliament and this country is responsible for their well-being. The way they have been treated is unacceptable.

In reading "Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair" we find that with respect to peacekeeping they have been at it for 40 years. In 1992 what did they find? There was no comprehensive training policy based on changing requirements. There was an absence of doctrines, standards and performance evaluation mechanisms. That does not speak to a government that is responsible for looking after the military.

The Department of National Defence military activities are ineffective in respect of parliamentary oversight. I am just reading a little bit again from "Dishonoured Legacy: The Lessons of the Somalia Affair". A 1994 examination by a joint committee of the Senate and the House of Commons was unanimously in support of the view that there is a need to strengthen the role of parliament in defence matters. That would increase the morale of our people. They obviously do not envision parliament having a day to day role in things but they say it needs to be effective in promoting accountability when it receives, examines and publicizes reports. That is when parliament is most effective.

Leadership in matters of accountability and an accountability ethic have been found seriously wanting in three areas, the upper military, bureaucratic, and what we are discussing today, political echelons.

There was material tabled by the Minister of National Defence in 1997 which has only been some meagre talk about changes on accountability and the desirability of it.

In 1994 the Liberals had a white paper calling for a combat capable defence force, multipurpose. What do we have? We have

had years to get helicopters which were cancelled as a political ploy. What have we got now? The same helicopters.

• (1300)

Does that make sense? It does not make sense to me, not to Canadians, not to other members of the House. What are they spending nowadays? It is \$9 billion. What was it in 1993 when the Liberals took over? It was \$12 billion. Let us not discount the effect of inflation on those types of things.

Our military has not been looked after. We have used submarines, but it only took forever to get them. West Edmonton Mall had more submarines than the Canadian navy for goodness' sake and probably better ones than the navy has had up to date. It just is not right.

We do not think that is what the government should be about. It needs to have a purpose. We need to decide what it is to do. We expect the armed forces to support our political, economic and environmental sovereignty. We think that should be happening over Canada's territory.

We want to continue to participate in NATO, NORAD and any other defence organization that may be developed in the future. It is still an issue as recent events show worldwide that things can quickly fall apart which we thought were together.

We need fast response. We do not need to send our people overseas and expect them to wait around in the mid-Atlantic while we decide whether or not they are suitably outfitted to go into a war theatre or a peacekeeping operation. That is outrageous. We need to provide these things now. We definitely need to have our military prepared for any event. We need them to be prepared on a variety of facets.

I am in complete agreement with the motion to condemn the government for the way it treats our military personnel. I trust that as a result of the motion before the House it will review what it is doing and will make the decision to do the right thing.

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this weekend I had a marvellous opportunity in my riding. We had inspection of our cadet corps of young people. It was lovely to watch. I was at an air cadet inspection on Friday and an army cadet inspection on Saturday. I watched the pride. I watched the skills. I watched the talent that was brought forth in these young people in my community. I found it pretty amazing.

The reserves are working with these young people and providing a fabulous opportunity in each of our communities for them to participate and to see firsthand the value that military training can bring to them.

I found it remarkable to see young people who when they became involved were not nearly as focused as they might have

been otherwise. They developed pride, skills, excellence and moved forward. This is something our military people are supplying in every community across the country. Our military people are there when they are asked to be.

It does not matter if we are talking about the flood in Manitoba and the tremendous work the military did there. We can talk about the ice storm in eastern Canada, Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, and the service it provided and the praise people gave. We can talk about the recent fire in Alberta. Our military went there.

We have a very proud, a very strong, a very viable military that is doing a job of which we all have to be very proud. We need to thank the military for everything it is offering our communities.

Quite frankly I find that year after year the condemnation of the military and its plans and movements is wrong. It does not take very long to think who was in power from 1984 to 1988 and on to 1993. It seems to me it was a Tory government.

• (1305)

I do not remember the Tories bringing forward the issues they are bringing forward today. I do not remember them dealing with the problems in the military. I remember them as a very different group: see no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil. Three blind mice could probably have given a better scenario of what was happening than the people who sat there and did nothing to enhance our military bases during the nine years they ran government not very many years ago.

In 1997 we commemorated the 80th anniversary of the Canadian victory at Vimy Ridge, one of the greatest allied victories of World War I. Superb leadership, meticulous planning, and the courage, determination and spirit of the Canadian soldier won the day. The qualities that led to a stunning victory at Vimy Ridge have characterized the efforts of Canadians in uniform for more than 100 years. The Canadian military ethos is the heart of a proud traditional service and the heart of great sacrifice. Through two world wars, Korea and 50 years of peacekeeping it is what we define as excellence in the Canadian forces. That distinguishes our forces as a great institution.

This military ethos is based on strong, principled and effective leadership. Leadership is a good word to define the action taken by the government with respect to the Canadian forces.

One example of leadership is the government's proposed amendments to the National Defence Act, Bill C-25. Discipline is the lifeblood of any military organization. Whether in peace or war it spells the difference between military success and failure. It promotes effective and efficient qualities. Its foundations are respected for leadership, appropriate training and a military justice system where equity and fairness are unquestionably clear at all times.

Supply

However, in recent years the capacity of the military justice system to promote discipline, efficiency, high morale and justice has been called into question by a number of incidents. The government looked closely at these events and acted decisively. The government has taken leadership. It responded to the report of the Somalia commission of inquiry very aptly titled "A Commitment to Change". We are implementing about 83% of the recommendations in the commission's report.

In December 1996 the government commissioned a special advisory group under the Right Hon. Brian Dickson, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, to assess the military justice system and military police investigative services. It reported on time and under budget. The minister of the day supported its recommendations in his report of March 25, 1997 on the leadership and management of the Canadian forces. The Prime Minister endorsed early action on recommendations and work began immediately to pursue the implementation.

The special advisory group on military justice and military police investigative services was also asked to examine the quasi-judicial role of the minister of the military justice system. Chief Justice Dickson's recommendations are now being implemented.

When the government saw that the military justice system was one of the key areas in which change was needed, it took action and demonstrated leadership. The government sought advice within the military and from the public at large, from distinguished Canadians who specialized in the knowledge of the military.

• (1310)

The amendments contained in Bill C-25 are a product of that process. The amendments proposed in Bill C-25 are the most comprehensive in the history of the act. Bill C-25 addresses a broad range of provisions in the National Defence Act. It will modernize the provisions with respect to the board of inquiry. It will clarify the legislative authority for the performance of public service duties by Canadian forces members such as the actions during the ice storm of which I spoke earlier.

However Bill C-25 is primarily about the modernization of the military justice system and has four principal thrusts.

First, it will establish in the National Defence Act for the first time the roles and responsibilities of key figures in the military justice system and will set clear standards of institutional separation for investigation, prosecution, defence and judicial functions.

Second, it will enhance transparency and provide greater structure to the exercise of individual discretion, investigation and charging processes.

Supply

Third, it will modernize the powers and procedures of service tribunals including eliminating the death penalty under military law.

Fourth, it will strengthen oversight and review of the administration of military justice.

These changes are made because it is absolutely essential for a military justice system to be rigorous, transparent and fair. The system of military justice is designed to meet operational requirements particular to the armed forces. It is intended to promote discipline, efficiency, high morale and justice in the armed forces.

On two occasions the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed the need for a parallel and distinctive system of courts to meet the special requirements of military discipline. Indeed our armed forces must have portable courts which, by using procedures that are both speedy and fair, are capable of operating in conflict or in peace.

To better understand the special needs of the Canadian forces in respect of justice and discipline, one need only consider a variety of tasks they perform in such a professional manner. From the Golan Heights to Bosnia, from the floods in the Saguenay and in Manitoba to the recent catastrophic ice storm that occurred in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, to the actions that I mentioned in Alberta they perform very direct services to all people throughout the world as well as to Canadians.

There is no question that they perform very specific functions and need to have opportunity to carry out those functions, but the justice system must be in place to help as well.

Bill C-25 will make it possible to modernize the code of service discipline so that it will meet the particular needs of the armed forces while reflecting the values and expectations of Canadians. It will make the system of military justice, to the extent that military requirements permit, more in keeping with legal standards that currently exist in Canada.

These measures will greatly enhance accountability and transparency, increase confidence in the military justice system and certainly give everyone a better understanding of our system. They will provide a more modern, effective statutory framework for operations of the department and the forces. They will enhance transparency and accountability. They will increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the Canadian forces and enable men and women of the forces to do so much to make the country a better place.

These changes to the National Defence Act demonstrate strong political leadership on the part of the Canadian government. The Canadian forces will benefit from the movements with which we are going forward.

• (1315)

I mentioned when I first started where my colleagues in the Progressive Conservative Party had been. They were here some eight or nine years in order to bring forward plans and changes in the military. It seems to me that during the election campaign the Tories admitted that the strength of the military was critical to our sovereignty. Yet the heart of their election plan was to weaken Canada by slashing an additional \$2.6 billion from the national defence budget over four years. This government's restructuring and downsizing of DND has already produced a leaner military. Do they actually expect us to believe that they can find \$650 million in savings by privatizing private property management and food services? Some of the suggestions they made are very questionable and certainly not well studied.

At the same time I have heard some different viewpoints from the Reform Party. From what I have seen from the Reform Party over the last few years I have some questions. The Reform Party claims to strongly support a well equipped Canadian force. Its fresh start election platform made no mention of any plans to improve national defence or international security. The only time the words "national defence" were ever mentioned in its election platform was in the list of government areas that would be targeted for cuts and spending reductions. That is what I heard from the Reform Party during the election. That is what I have heard from the leader of the Reform Party. That is what most Canadians have heard from the Reform Party day after day.

The Reform Party has consistently called for major cuts in defence spending. In 1993 its zero in three plan would have cut \$1.8 billion from the defence department's budget. In 1994 it wanted an additional \$1 billion cut from national defence on top of a 15% cut across the board that it was planning for all departments.

During the Somalia affair the Reform Party stood and criticized day after day the fact that the military was not performing the Reform Party goals and objectives. Yet today it comes in here and suggests that it is supportive of military actions.

All Canadians remember the stinging attacks, the budget cuts, the crunches that it was suggesting. Now it has changed its mind on most of the policy that I see coming forward. I ask members of this House how many times they have heard the Reform Party talk about cuts. It is always more money here, more money there. It has totally turned its whole position around. To me it is very ludicrous.

I do not think that we should be playing politics as much as we do with these issues. It is clear that we need to be decisive. We need to put in place decisive measures. We need to move the agenda forward. We certainly need to show the respect that the Canadian military has and should have. We need to make certain that this process is in place so that we will have a service that defends this country not only at home but abroad. We have to make sure that we

Supply

can move in a direction that is consistent with our allies. We have to move in a direction with the pride which these forces show.

It is clear, in my opinion, and I believe in the opinion of most Canadians that our military is a very proud institution, one that has served this country extremely well and one that continues to serve this country well. We have to look at the experts and suggestions that are coming forward. To stand and condemn day after day is a pretty bad role that our opposition has taken toward military, toward government and toward what is going on in this country.

• (1320)

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will touch on one point that the hon. member mentioned. He started off by speaking about cadets. I will speak about air cadets in my riding.

I was a member of the air cadets several years back. In the last two years they have had to close down. Granted, the cadet system is a non-profit organization, but it does work usually under reservists who help out.

That brings up the other point of what has happened to the reserve over the last four years. They have cut the hours out of the reserve. They only have 32 days a year to train.

This government talks about making the reservists a good, solid force, yet it is cutting the feet out from under them. It is taking equipment away from them. It is cutting their hours.

How can they possibly work with 32 days a year? Besides that, now they say no more summer exercises. They are all being cut out. This is where we get our young people involved. They get out in the summertime, get jobs with the reserves and get to do summer exercises. Maybe the member could comment on that.

Mr. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the air cadets, on Friday night I saw the most exquisite drill team that I have seen in years. As a matter of fact, they were among the leading drill teams across Ontario.

There is no question that the reserves are working in my area. They are doing the job with young people that really needs to be done.

There is no question that these young folks are looking forward to all kinds of other opportunities as they go from the base level of training up through the air cadet level to experimental flying preparation and that type of thing. The army cadets are in a very well structured program.

I believe it could well be that in the hon. member's area that may not be happening. However, it is not the same scenario across

Canada. In my area there is a well functioning group that is carrying on these activities with young people.

Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take hon. members back to about 1955 or 1960 to see the wonderful armed forces we had at that time.

I have sat here today and listened to these comments about being the great supporters of the armed forces, about being the ones taking care of armed forces personnel around the world and in Canada. What have I heard? It is the Reform Party that does not have all the big plans that should be written down.

I say to this House that this Liberal government is responsible for low morale, underpaid personnel and more generals and servicemen than our allies.

Reform at least has a chance in the future to write a page of history that will make the armed forces much better. What we see from the Conservatives and the Liberals in this House is a history of destruction of our armed forces, particularly with respect to unification, underfunding and the low morale that we see today.

What does the member have to say about that Liberal record which is really disgusting?

Mr. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that very clearly, week after week after week during the last election, I heard nothing but cut, cut, cut.

When we came to this House the Somalia affair was going on. I heard nothing from the members opposite outside of how bad a job the Canadian military was doing.

I talked to a lot of people in the military and they felt demoralized. They felt that the actions of the opposition were tearing down the institution in this country. Without question it is not just the financial aspects, it is also the attitudes which strip any group of pride and greatness.

• (1325)

Quite frankly, I believe this Liberal government is moving that issue forward. It is making certain that we restore pride in the military. It is making certain we have good directions. Without question I believe that we have taken actions in order to move that agenda in a very positive way.

I would be very frightened if it were the Reform Party which took the reins of the military some four years ago. Would we have been able to react in Alberta to the fires that started last week? Would we have been able to react to the ice storm? To me the Reform Party has very little to give positive direction. It has been totally critical all the way. That is unfortunate. I do not hear positives, I hear criticisms. That is not good.

Supply

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Dubé (Madawaska—Restigouche, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Armed Forces may well be demoralized after comments such as I have heard coming from the government representative this morning.

The hon. member refers to pride, talent and excellence. At least I believe that is what the hon. member said.

[*English*]

He spoke about the flood in Manitoba and he spoke about the ice storm. I was there. During the ice storm I saw the military. I saw what they did. Believe me, I thank them. What the hon. member is doing is certainly not thanking them. He is embarrassing them.

The member keeps saying “The Tories were there before”. This is playing politics with the issue. The problems are here today. The government must demonstrate leadership and it is not doing that. What is it going to do for the problems that the military is facing today?

We could say that Trudeau was there before us. But what is that going to do to rectify the problems of today?

I ask the member if he thinks the military is living below Canadian standards. I heard this morning for the first time that injured soldiers are not getting proper care. We also see that the military is living below Canadian standards. Or are there Canadian standards? We see that members of the Canadian military are getting out of the forces and do not have the proper education to find a post-military job.

Does the member think there should be standards in place for military personnel so that when they leave the military they will be able to get a permanent job? We should have an education system in place to protect these people. I would like the hon. member to comment on that.

Mr. Jerry Pickard: Mr. Speaker, I think there is a short memory here. If my memory serves me correctly, \$6 billion was the position of the hon. member’s party on the Cadillac, submarine-fighting helicopters. The military had requested at that time to buy helmets and flak jackets, but they were turned down. They were turned down on helmets and flak jackets at the same time as that party was asking for \$6 billion for submarine-fighting helicopters.

The heart of its election campaign was a \$2.6 billion cut in national defence.

Now the hon. member is telling me that we should be spending more money, but his party’s campaign rhetoric was that it wanted these huge cuts. I cannot equate the two. I do not believe Canadians can look at that and say they are consistent.

Now that they are in opposition and looking at the positive directions in which we are trying to move, they do not see it the same way as they did during the election campaign. They do not see it the same way as they did during their nine years in government. They seem to be missing the point. Everything does not happen overnight. We have to move the agenda forward, but their whole rhetoric was wrong.

• (1330)

Their whole rhetoric, in very many respects, was demoralizing to the whole military process: tear down, cut dollars, do something different. I question how they can come back today and give that same type of sermon. They missed the boat when they were there and they are still missing the boat today.

Mr. Jack Ramsay (Crowfoot, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to my hon. colleague across the way, it seems that he spent most of his time simply criticizing a party that has never held power in this House. It never had the power to do one thing either good or bad as far as the military is concerned and yet he spent all his time criticizing that party.

We should be looking ahead as to what we could be doing, which is what I think this debate is for. The hon. member from the Liberal side had the opportunity to place before the House and the people of Canada their vision and their goal for the role our military should be playing but we did not hear anything from that member. Why?

We can only assume it is because they have no vision, certainly not a vision they want to share with the House or with the Canadian people. We saw what happened. We saw their actions. We can judge what their vision is, as secretive as it might be, and their goal for the military.

We saw what happened in the Somalia inquiry when something very bad occurred that reached into the upper echelons of our military command. After less than two years they shut it down. We will never know the full truth. We can only speculate at the truth. Justice was never done.

I spend much of my time thinking about and working in justice. In order for justice to occur we must have the truth. Upon truth is built justice and from a sense of justice that we have in the minds and hearts of all of us there is a peace of mind that flows. From that peace flows the prosperity that we all seek in our lives and in our nation.

When we deny the truth, turn it aside, hide it or shut down inquiries set up to find and reveal the truth so that justice can be done, so that a sense of justice prevails across our land in the minds and hearts of our people, what is left? Is it justice based on half truths or no truths? What did they do in the Somalia inquiry to our country and to the morale of those members who worked so diligently during the ice storm and the Manitoba flood and who

stand ready today to respond to any emergency that they will be called on? They see that justice has not been done because the truth has been withheld.

We heard from the government side that this had gone on long enough and enough money was spent. Yet we have had inquiries that have lasted four and five years. We spent as high as \$50 million on some inquiries.

The Liberal Party now has the opportunity because it has the power to express and put into action its vision for the military. What do we see is happening? We see the hon. member stand there minute after minute and not reveal his vision for the future and not tell the men and women in the military what is in store for them. He attacks a party that has never held the reins of power but does have a vision for the military, a vision for the unity of this country and a vision for the people of our land.

• (1335)

That hon. member spent almost 90% of his time simply attacking the Reform Party of Canada that has that vision. So what do we say about the military? What is our vision for the military?

The role of our military should be clearly defined. What should the role of the military be? We are saying that parliament should define that and then equip it to perform those duties thus defined. If it is peacekeeping or peacemaking or simply the defence of the sovereign nature of our country, if it is simply to fulfil those roles, let us decide as a nation and equip our military to do that job.

That is just the beginning of the vision we hold for the military based on the truth, based on fact, based on consultation with not only the military commanders but their grassroots as well as the Canadian public. That is our vision.

Our vision for this place is to allow our elected representatives to be a conduit for the thoughts and feelings and concerns of the people we are supposed to be representing and not have a form of government that will squash the rights of individual backbenchers to stand up and represent the people of their constituencies, whether it has to do with the hepatitis C issue or the military or what other issue placed before the elected representatives of the people who are supposed to have a vision of this country for all of us.

That is the vision of the Reform Party and that is what is being attacked here today. Why? They do not have anything they wish to share with the Canadian people, with the members of the House of Commons or with the members of the military. They do not have anything to share. I listened intently, waiting for that vision to be revealed and it is not forthcoming.

Why is it not forthcoming? They have no vision and they stumble from pillar to post, from one emergency to another.

Supply

When war raised its ugly head again with the Middle East situation and we had to send our people, as our duty and responsibility, into that potential conflict, what did we hear? We heard that the military had to go around scraping up equipment, clothing, helmets to send our people into a potential conflict. That is the vision, or lack of it, the Liberal Party legacy has left the military, this House and the people of Canada.

It is amazing to me that government members do not grasp this opportunity put forward by our Tory colleagues to tell the people of Canada what vision they have and what they see in the future for the military. What is it? Why would they not take that opportunity? It is there for us all to express what we believe should be done.

We have not heard that but we certainly have heard an awful lot of abuse and criticism of a different vision put forward in this country for the past 10 years at least in terms of the steps that should be taken to put our military on a proper footing.

If we are going to have a military we should know what we want it to do. Does that not make common sense? Once we decide what we want our military to do, let us equip it to do the job. It is that simple.

• (1340)

We did not hear any expression at all of consulting with people, the military or members of parliament as to really what the role of the military ought to be and then equipping our people to get on with the job. We have had the debacle of ordering helicopters and then cancelling helicopters, ordering submarines, cancelling submarines and then ordering submarines again.

The people of Canada would like to know if we are going to equip our people what do we want them to do? Should that not flow from determining what we want to do with the helicopters and the submarines and what we want to do by reducing the strength of our military? What is the purpose of that? Or if we want to increase it, why? What is the role we want our military to play? Depending on every action that the government takes that touches on our military we have not heard a thing.

The hon. member who just spoke left me with feelings of shame because we honour and respect one another in the House, particularly their thoughts and ideas. We may oppose them but all we heard was a response to a very important subject attacking a party that puts forward a vision and plans. They criticize and attempt to lay blame for what has happened to our military on a party that has never had the levers of power. One day I promise we will have the power because there is no vision on that side. There is a vision on this side, certainly within this caucus.

I commend the Tories for this supply day motion because it is an important subject and it is time for an accounting. It is time to say to the government what do you have in mind, why did you do this, what are you planning to do to correct it, what do you have in mind

Supply

for our young men and women in the military living below the poverty line, how can you justify this.

We are asking for an explanation and all we get is the kind of rhetoric we heard. It fills time and space on the agenda but it certainly does not answer any question for any Canadian tuning in to this debate. It certainly does not inform them.

To be informed about what is in store for our military you cannot go to the opposition. You have to go to the government. Why the member was attempting to focus the responsibility on the Reform Party and put the blame for all the things that have gone wrong is beyond me and I think beyond the common sense of anyone watching the debate.

We need a military. The military should be trained. It should have the best possible leadership we have, those who have volunteered to serve in this manner. It should be properly equipped and above all it should know exactly what its duty is.

I would like to hear that from my hon. colleagues in the Liberal Party who have formed the government for this term and who have the sole power, control and responsibility to do those things. Let us hear something constructive from the government side rather than the belly aching we have heard and the blame laying that has occurred particularly against the party that has never hurt the military, never had the opportunity to help, never had the opportunity to place in position our vision of what our military ought to be doing.

• (1345)

Mrs. Sue Barnes (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Revenue, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, after having listened to my hon. colleague from the Reform Party, I think it would be appropriate at this time to put some Reform facts about military vision on the record.

The Reform Party has consistently called for major cuts to defence spending. In 1993 its zero in three plan would have cut \$1.8 billion from the defence department's budget. In 1994 Reform wanted an additional \$1 billion cut from national defence on top of the 15% across the board cuts it was demanding from all departments. The Reform Party's taxpayer budget released in 1995 also called for \$1 billion to be slashed from the national defence budget.

I know the vision Reform espoused called for "professional, well equipped and sufficiently strong armed forces". The Reform Party claims that it wants this.

In last year's election platform, I looked for what the Reform Party's plans were to improve for instance national defence or international security. In its fresh start election platform campaign the only time that the term national defence was mentioned was

when it was listed as one of the areas of government that the Reform Party would target with cuts and spending reductions.

Reform cannot have it both ways. It talks only cuts and it does not talk about what it would do. It is a good thing for the defence department in this country that the hon. member is not in government and the responsible side of this House knows how to make cuts but also manage a progression into the future. This government does take care of international security and does move forward to listen to our armed forces and work toward a path that will help them do their jobs professionally as well as help their families.

I ask the member where was his vision? Where was his party's vision? Where was his leader's vision on defence?

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member had an opportunity again to present her vision and the government's vision for the future of the military. What did she do with that opportunity? She attacked the bits and pieces of the overall plan the Reform Party has put forward.

It is clear the member is not concerned about the fact that many armed forces personnel have to use food banks in order to survive, that the lowest income of the military is at or below the poverty line in this country, as well as the fact that they are not properly equipped. As I referred to earlier, members of our military had to scramble to gather up clothing and helmets used or unused from hither and yon from other parts of the military at a time when we were sending them into a possible conflict area.

Let us hear what the government has in store for the military instead of trying to defend it simply by attacking and using only bits and pieces of the plans of our party or any other party. Let us hear what her plans are. She has not told us what her plans are. Why can we not hear what her plans are?

The people of Canada and members of this House are looking squarely at the vision of the Liberal Party of Canada, the party in power. This is the member's opportunity during this supply day motion to indicate how her party is going to equip our military and how they are going to give our military people a decent standard of living. How is she going to do it?

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate my colleague from the Reform Party for his speech, which has shown us how widespread the problem related to the armed forces is.

In fact, what he is calling for is what all Canadians are waiting for. I believe no one in Canada would fault the government for making an official announcement, by either the Prime Minister or the Minister of National Defence, on measures that can be taken immediately to improve the situation of all our military personnel,

as well as measures for the medium term. This could, obviously, mean they would end up with a budget spread out over at least five years, for better equipment management

• (1350)

I ask my colleague whether what he is referring to is what the auditor general found, the total absence of a strategic plan for the Canadian Armed Forces, a plan which would enable it to define priorities for the short, medium and long terms for the navy, army and air force, through measures that could be implemented immediately, tomorrow morning, in fact.

The parliamentary secretary has referred to rationalization. Everyone agrees with this, but there are some measures in place at the present time that need to be corrected. I would like to know whether this is what my hon. colleague was referring to.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question because he puts his finger right on the whole issue. The auditor general is saying the government has no vision for the future, there is no plan, there is no strategy.

The first thing we should do is decide what role we want the military to play. How do we decide that? Let us ask the people of this country. Should we be peacekeepers or peacemakers? There is an enormous difference. Let us ask our people whether we want to send our military into conflict areas, not to maintain peace but in an attempt to establish peace through armed conflict. Is that what we want?

We should know what the people of Canada want us to do. Let us consult with our military advisers. Let us consult with members of parliament. Above all, let us consult with the people of Canada whose sons and daughters we are going to send to face these crises, whether it is in this country through a natural crisis or through armed conflict in another country. Let us decide. Let us not have another report from the auditor general that says there is no plan, there is no strategy and there is no vision.

That is what this government so far has been offering. Again the Tory party today has offered the Government of Canada an opportunity to place its vision for the future of the military before the people of this House, the elected representatives of the people of Canada, as well as the people themselves. Where is the vision? Where is the strategy? Where is the plan that the auditor general called for? Where is it?

This is the opportunity now for perhaps the minister or someone else who knows to stand and express that vision. Where is it? Are we going to go to another auditor general's report and have him report the same thing, that there is no strategy, no plan and no vision?

Supply

The government has an opportunity. I am asking members, rather than just attack the opposition parties, please let us hear the plan, let us hear the strategy. The auditor general is crying out for it. Of course the opposition members are calling out for it and the people of Canada are calling out for it. But above all, the people in the military are calling out for some kind of leadership from this government.

[Translation]

Mr. René Laurin (Joliette, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to my hon. colleague from the Reform Party. Among the problems affecting our armed forces, I wonder if he does not see anything wrong with our military personnel.

According to the statistics to be found in part III of the latest estimates, in the volume about National Defence, the three branches of the armed forces, Air, Land and Sea, include 81,000 individuals, 20,000 civilians and 61,000 military personnel. Of these 61,000 military personnel, only 6,500 are privates. All the others are officers of the air, land or sea forces. For instance, there are 28,000 corporals for 6,000 privates. There are 6,000 sergeants. Higher up, above warrant officers and chief warrant officers, there are 1,487 lieutenants. There are 6,333 captains to supervise these 1,487 lieutenants. There are 2,938 majors and 66 generals.

This morning, the Minister of National Defence stated that morale was low in the armed forces. This may be one of the reasons. I can understand that the 6,500 privates must have no hope of a promotion because, out of 61,000 members, there are 55,000 people above them.

• (1355)

We have highly competent officers who have 6,500 privates working for them. Does that make sense? I would like to find out what my Reform colleague thinks of this whole situation.

[English]

Mr. Jack Ramsay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. He certainly came to this debate well informed with statistics. They say that if you are well prepared, you shall not fear. If that is how we can view our military, as well prepared and well armed, then Canada need not fear.

To address the crux of my hon. colleague's question, our military is overweight at the top end. There are a lot of unaccountable people shuffling papers, playing golf, looking at one another and wondering what the poor people are doing. We should closely look at our military to determine whether or not there is a proper balance in terms of funding and leadership.

Leadership is so important at the grassroots level. It determines the morale of the members, the direction we will take and the execution of plans. It is very important. There is no question that there are more generals in the army today than we had during the second world war in the Canadian military. Is that needed? Is that

S. O. 31

wise? How did it get there and why? The big question is, is that what we want? Is that the role we want? Or do we want the kind of military that is top heavy with leaders, certainly generals?

We have to look at those questions. This is a good opportunity for my hon. colleague and the rest of us in the House to debate this issue and ask the government, which is in control and has the power to do these things, whether or not it has any answers to these questions. Now is the time. Today is the day these questions can be answered by the government.

The Speaker: As the time has expired, we will take up the debate after. We will now go to Statements by Members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

NAVIGATING A NATION

Mr. Carmen Provenzano (Sault Ste. Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Sault Ste. Marie canal is being honoured in "Navigating a Nation", a set of 10 stamps that pay tribute to Canada's inland waterways. The Sault canal is the final link in an all-Canadian water route that extends from the Atlantic Ocean to the head of Lake Superior. It was the first inland waterway in the world to have an electrically powered lock.

Saultites recognize the importance of the canal to their city and to Great Lakes shipping. It is certainly welcome news in my riding that Canada Post has chosen to immortalize this world famous waterway in a beautifully designed stamp. The issue of these stamps could not come at a better time. The Sault canal lock which has been closed since 1987 is expected to reopen to recreational boat traffic early this summer.

Hats off to Canada Post for acknowledging the importance of our inland waterways and to Parks Canada for making possible the reopening of the Sault canal lock.

* * *

ABORTION

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it has been 29 years since abortion was legalized in this country. In those days abortion was used only where a mother's life or health was endangered. But today I think it has gone too far, especially when we see taxpayer funded abortions on demand, increased diagnoses of post-abortion trauma, indication of medical linkages to breast cancer, minors given abortion without parental consent and approximately \$50 million spent annually on abortion.

Not everybody in the Reform caucus or across the country agrees with me. That is why the Reform Party's responsible position is to identify abortion as an issue of personal conscience and supports informed debate and giving people a voice through a national referendum. Canadians should be allowed to examine the facts on all sides of the issue.

In my opinion, women have a right to know about the risks of abortion and taxpayers should know the cost. For me, if it is about choice, let us give women better choices.

* * *

• (1400)

THE PAROLYN FAMILY

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Cindy Parolyn and her children Melissa and David.

In the autumn of 1996, Cindy and three of her children began a horseback camping vacation in B.C. Shortly after their trip began a cougar attacked Cindy's six year old son Steven. Without regard for her personal welfare, Cindy left the safety of her horse and rushed to Steven's defence. Despite the poor odds Cindy saved her son by diverting the cat's attention to herself. During the scramble Cindy instructed her other children to carry Steven over two kilometres to the closest source of help.

Despite the dozens of stitches that he required Steven survived. However Cindy was not so lucky. Only hours after the ordeal began Cindy succumbed to the wounds that she sustained during the assault.

Cindy's life and death were dedicated to helping others. Last year the Cindy Parolyn safe homes program opened in Princeton, B.C., and was dedicated in her name. Tomorrow Cindy will be posthumously awarded with the Star of Courage by the governor general. I ask my colleagues to join with me today in recognizing their gallant deeds.

* * *

THEATRE ONTARIO FESTIVAL

Mr. Ovid L. Jackson (Bruce—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week the Owen Sound Little Theatre is hosting the Theatre Ontario Festival where excellent community theatre groups will perform plays acclaimed throughout Ontario.

Community theatre is an important part of Canadian culture. Plays relate stories about Canadian life, represent our values and entertain us. While professional plays can provide culture as well, community based theatre is often accessible where professional troupes never go.

In the past few years the creation and performance of Canadian plays have been revived by community theatre. Our amateur

theatre groups need new plays and local talent, as well as the support of those who appreciate a story brought to life on stage.

I congratulate the Owen Sound Little Theatre and all groups attending the festival this week. I applaud them.

* * *

[Translation]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP is celebrating its 125th anniversary.

[English]

In the beginning the RCMP served Canada and its people by establishing order in the frontier regions of the country. As the nation grew in population and diversity and its communities became established, the mounted police adapted ensuring the peace and security of citizens across our land.

The RCMP also shares its expertise abroad by participating in United Nations missions. The purpose of these missions, such as the one that will be leaving for Bosnia next week, is to transform local police forces from instruments of potential intimidation into guarantors of public security and to ensure civil rights in those countries.

The 125 years of achievement by the RCMP are our proud heritage.

[Translation]

Congratulations to the men and women who continue to make us very proud.

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MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Nick Discepola (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, we are disappointed with the Quebec government's decision to end discussions on the millennium scholarships between its representatives and those of the federal government, discussions that had been initiated in a climate of cooperation.

The Quebec government should be proud to participate in a wonderful initiative that will mark Canada's entry into the new millennium.

The Canadian government's objective remains the same. For a period of 10 years, the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation will give exceptional support to the provinces so that all young Canadians can have better access to teaching and training institutions throughout the country.

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The Quebec government should rethink its strategy in the interest of all young Quebecers who want to pursue their education. After all, it is their future that is at stake.

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[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Reed Elley (Nanaimo—Cowichan, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, one wage earner families in the country have looked for a long time for a tax break from government. The recent budget of the government gave no indication of any help.

In fact by offering more relief only to those families that avail themselves of day care, the finance minister has once again discriminated against stay at home moms and dads. In so doing he perpetuates an economic system with high taxes and high unemployment that forces many Canadian parents to both go to work.

The result is that during the formative years of children's lives they spend most of their time with people who are not their parents. This is at a time when research continues to prove the critical importance of the parent-child bond in long term social development. Many of these children grow up with role models who do not reflect their parents' values and beliefs.

Reformers and Canadian everywhere call for the finance minister and the government to look at Reform's family friendly tax proposals that would serve to keep families together instead of tearing them apart.

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● (1405)

NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

Ms. Elinor Caplan (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, May 11 to 17 is National Nursing Week. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Canada's nurses.

This year's theme "Nursing is the Key" could not be more appropriate. We need nurses and nursing. Nurses are key cost effective providers of health care. Almost everywhere health services are received nurses are there. In hospitals, doctors' offices, seniors' residences and private homes, a nurse is always found providing high quality care.

I congratulate nurses and nursing for their forward thinking. Nurses are helping on the frontline, finding solutions to some of the complex problems in health care today. If an hon. member knows a nurse or receives services from a nurse, take a moment and thank them.

I have often said that a hospital without nurses would just be a hotel. We need our nurses. We must respect and honour their noble profession, not only this week but every day of every week of every year.

*S. O. 31***GUN CONTROL**

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada, not content with having drafted domestic firearms policies based on prejudice, disinformation and hysteria, has decided to cast a wider net and has agreed to have gun control on the agenda of the G-8 summit meeting.

Will the representatives of the world's richest societies be able to disarm the downtrodden, the marginalized and the dispossessed of the earth by issuing a sugar-coated communique? Somehow I doubt it. What they will probably do is create another excuse to further harass and constrain their own citizens by blaming each other for providing the stimulus.

The strategy is as transparent and as old as politics itself: "When a huge minority of your citizens is angry, direct their rage outside of your own borders and take some of the pressure off".

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Murray Calder (Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear that both the official opposition and the fourth party have a limited understanding of international trade.

The Leader of the Opposition says that he cannot think of a single example when the Prime Minister's foreign travel has produced results for Canadians. The leader of the fourth party said that the Prime Minister should stay in Canada. Both leaders fail to comprehend the importance of building critical international relationships for Canadian business.

Team Canada missions led by the Prime Minister have created valuable trade relations with many countries, leading to \$24 billion in economic benefits for all sectors of Canadian business.

It is a fact that international trade leads to economic growth, jobs and prosperity in Canada.

* * *

HEPATITIS C

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are waiting and hoping today for the federal, provincial and territorial health ministers to do the right thing, to decide today to compensate all victims of hepatitis C. It has been a long, hard struggle for the victims of this failure of the blood system.

We must do everything in our power to ensure that such a tragedy does not recur by implementing the recommendations of the Krever report. The report cited a lack of resources at the health protection branch, a lack of clear authority and delays in responding to potential problems.

Justice Krever talked about the need for Canadian self-sufficiency for blood, the need to retain control of our own standards and decision making in the course of harmonization with other countries, and to retain strong federal regulatory authority. These lessons can be applied to many areas in the whole health protection area.

As we wait to hear the outcome of the federal-provincial ministers' meeting, let us recommit ourselves to co-operative federalism. Let us show solidarity for the victims of the tainted blood tragedy. Let us learn those lessons in order to prevent future tragedy.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is for the benefit of the member for Calgary East. I rise today to reflect on the Leader of the Opposition's comments concerning the Prime Minister's team Canada missions.

The trip to Latin America included representatives from more than 180 Canadian companies, 80% of them small and medium size businesses generating more than 300 deals worth \$1.7 billion. That is some photo op.

The Summit of the Americas marked the launch of negotiations for a free trade area involving 34 countries, a market of 800 million people and about \$10 trillion. That is some photo op.

● (1410)

Many members of the opposition could be called frequent flyers. However their travel ends in no op as in no opportunity for Canadians.

Team Canada missions led by the Prime Minister have secured deals worth close to \$24 billion. That is the photo op as in opportunities for Canadians and Canadian business—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Quebec.

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[Translation]

LES VIOLONS DU ROY

Mrs. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Les Violons du Roy, the chamber orchestra, is continuing its incredible rise to success both at the national and international levels.

The orchestra was founded in my riding of Quebec in 1984 and includes about fifteen highly talented musicians.

Their recent appearance in Los Angeles got rave reviews. The *Los Angeles Times* talked about a gripping and flawless performance.

Congratulations to the Violons du Roy and their artistic director, Bernard Labadie. You are true ambassadors of our city. We are proud of your success and greatly appreciate your talent.

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[English]

JUSTICE

Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester, PC): Mr. Speaker, seven years ago James Mills was murdered while in Renous prison in New Brunswick. Yesterday in question period I asked the solicitor general if he would press charges in this case and he quite correctly answered he could not. I understand that.

I hope the solicitor general understands the frustration of the Mills family and myself. It has been seven years since this murder took place and nothing has ever happened.

We have used the House in question period. We have met with Corrections Canada. We have met with the RCMP. We have met with the minister. We have used access to information.

I was even working on this when I was a member of parliament in 1992. I was defeated. I am back now. I am working on it again. I am still frustrated.

I say to the solicitor general that seven years is too long for the Mills family to wait. The government owes the Mills family an explanation. It owes them justice or at least an apology.

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[Translation]

VARENNES TOKAMAK PROJECT

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it was my intent this week to rise in this House to congratulate the Tokamak project, in Varennes, for receiving the 1998 Award for Excellence from the Canadian Nuclear Association for its exceptional contribution to the development of fusion science and technology.

Unfortunately, the Tokamak project, in Varennes, came to an abrupt end, last Tuesday, because of the total lack of vision and foresight of the Liberal government. Its penny pinching, by completely cutting its modest \$7.2 million annual contribution, led to the Tokamak project being shut down.

But it is much more than \$7.2 million in annual investment from the federal government that the province of Quebec will lose. It will lose the fruit of 20 years of labour, tens of millions of dollars in investments, first class research infrastructures, significant technological benefits, a promising renewable energy project, world

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renowned and experienced researchers and an enviable international reputation in the area of nuclear fusion.

Quebec comes off the loser, how else would one put it?

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wanuskewin.

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[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Wanuskewin, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of loving reasonable Canadian parents spank their children on occasion. The minister of heritage wants them thrown in prison, and that will happen when section 43 of the Criminal Code is removed.

The minister of heritage has signed an agreement that renews funding for the federal court challenges program which hands \$3 million to her Liberal friends so that they can engage in social engineering through the courts. She has no right to grant some citizen groups easy access to the courts while shutting out others who represent the values of the majority of Canadians.

What gives the minister of heritage the right to create this uneven playing field, removing justice from the justice system? Why is the government using public money to support a systematic program of legal warfare against its very own citizens, in this case reasonable and responsible parents?

* * *

NATIONAL MINING WEEK

Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada is recognized as a global leader in the sustainable production of minerals and metals. It ranks among the world's top five producers for some 16 major mineral commodities.

[Translation]

This world class industry has led to a rise in the demand for workers and highly skilled professionals and created growth in the mining-related manufacturing sector, including the environmental technology and services area.

[English]

Mining related jobs are an important source of high paying employment for many rural and remote communities across Canada.

National Mining Week celebrates the great contribution mining makes to our country. It takes place from May 11 to May 17. The theme of the 1998 National Mining Week is "Mining makes it happen".

I call on all members of the House to join with me in saluting the men and women who have helped to make the Canadian mining industry a world leader.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

• (1415)

[English]

HEPATITIS C

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, today at the hepatitis C conference the victims blew the lid off the health minister's excuses.

The head of the Canadian Hemophilia Society told the conference that the number of victims infected before 1986 who are sick enough to need compensation is probably only 5,000 to 8,000. That is a far cry from the 60,000 people the health minister's propaganda suggests.

Is the government prepared to pay all those victims who are sick enough to help, yes or no?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it would appear the organizations of victims had a very useful dialogue with the provincial health ministers and the federal health minister. Now the ministers are carrying on a discussion and we are very anxious to see what consensus will emerge on the part of the provincial ministers so that we can take appropriate action.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it seems that in these discussions the federal health minister has sat in stony silence. Nobody knows what the federal government's position is.

The highest responsibility lies with the federal government because it is the regulator of the blood system. This government is trying to blame the provinces and say it is their fault.

Will this government accept its responsibility and compensate all these victims, yes or no?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has always acted responsibly. I remind the member that when Justice Krever published his first interim report the Government of Canada acted immediately on all recommendations that had relevance under federal authority.

Under that same federal authority, the federal minister brought his colleagues together and together they fashioned out packages that served the short term, medium term and long term interests of both hepatitis C victims and those who need a health care system that addresses need when it occurs.

Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, the provinces were the ones that called for this get together. It certainly was not the federal health minister who called for it.

David Page of the Canadian Hemophilia Society said this today when he came out of the meeting: "Three provinces, Ontario, Quebec and B.C., are willing to move forward. What is missing is federal money here. With federal money we think the rest of the provinces would be on side".

Again, will the government commit to leading the way in giving compensation to all victims who need government help, yes or no?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada has always and continues to believe in addressing the needs of Canadians as they occur. It also believes in working together with all the deliverers of the health care system and they are the provincial and territorial authorities.

What we have done and continue to do is address the interests of all Canadians in a collaborative effort in order to be efficient and effective.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, listen to the government's excuses for not compensating these victims. First off, its numbers. It said 60,000 to 80,000 victims. The victims say it is 23,000. It then goes on to the issue of fault. The victims say they will sign no fault. It then said the whole thing would break the system. These are all excuses.

Why is the government continuing to try to get this conference to fail?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member himself in the House said that compensation should be based on fault. Now he has changed his position from what he originally said. So much for his credibility.

We do not want this conference to fail. We want it to succeed in the interests of victims. We are actively taking part in the conference and trying to treat the matter very seriously.

Mr. Grant Hill (MacLeod, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, let me make my position clear again: compensation for every victim. This is quite different from the Deputy Prime Minister.

This is the headline the health minister hopes to take out of this meeting: "Oh, we couldn't reach a consensus. The provinces are at fault".

If this federal government had taken a powerful position into these meetings, if it had gone in there as leaders, we would have a solution to this.

Why has this federal government been followers instead of leaders?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not imagine the member opposite has ever thought that his theatrics might be clouding his judgment.

Oral Questions

The fact that we have a conference attended by ministers at all three levels sitting together trying to fashion out a package that will address all the needs of all the victims and all sufferers is an indication of leadership. If he objects to leadership that involves the federal authority bringing together partners at the provincial and territorial level, he has a different—

• (1420)

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois.

* * *

[Translation]

DAVID LEVINE

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the hiring of David Levine as director of the hospital centre in Ottawa has caused a real uproar in the region.

In this respect, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs stated “I hope that Canada will be more unified than ever and that full use will be made of available talents”.

Does the minister realize that in making this statement he is clearly saying that, as far as he is concerned, it is perfectly all right not to make full use of talents available across Canada if these are sovereignist talents as long as the national issue has not been resolved?

The Speaker: The way the question was put, it seems to me this is something that might be better dealt with outside this House.

I will allow the question since reference was made to a statement supposedly made by the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs.

So, the hon. Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has the floor if he wishes to respond.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in this highly decentralized federation of ours, a minister of the federal crown does not have the power to decide who should be hired by a hospital.

This does not mean we cannot deplore the fact that this federation, this country of ours, is not unified enough for such a problem not to arise.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I cannot see how this would be a problem in Quebec. However, I can see how it is a problem elsewhere, and particularly in the national capital.

Let me quote the minister again. He said “As long as there is a threat of separation, this kind of problem is to be expected”.

Does the minister recognize that, by the irresponsible remarks he made and keeps making, he is condoning and justifying the unacceptable behaviour of those who wish to take this position away from Mr. Levine simply because he once ran in an election under the sovereignist banner?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we ought to be pleased to see the leader of the Bloc suggest that the federal government interfere in an area wholly under provincial jurisdiction.

What position will the Bloc take next in this House in support of the federal position? Are they turning totally against Quebec separating from the rest of Canada?

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister is missing the point.

We are not asking the federal government to interfere. We are simply asking the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, who made some unfortunate statements, to give us an explanation.

Will the minister not admit that his ministerial responsibility is not to add fuel to the fire on an issue such as this one, but rather to strongly condemn those who want to prevent someone from getting a job because of his political beliefs?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have nothing to add to what I said. The unity problem in Canada creates this kind of difficulty.

It is fortunate this is happening in Canada, because in all the other democracies I know, this kind of difficulty would be even more acute with the threat of separation.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, does the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs realize what he just said?

Does he not understand that he just sent the message to all sovereignists in Quebec that the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, which prohibits discrimination based on political beliefs, does not apply to them? That is what he just said.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing in which I strongly believe, it is freedom of conscience. I strongly believe that politics should have no influence whatsoever on the public service. I would never ask anybody to take an oath of allegiance.

But in light of the threat of separation, we are lucky that this kind of problem is not as severe in Canada as it would be in other democracies.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

[English]

NUCLEAR TESTING

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, India's recent nuclear testing could trigger a serious arms race in south Asia. Pakistan is now threatening to test its own nuclear devices in response to India and the situation demands urgent action.

Will the Canadian government instruct the foreign affairs minister to leave the G-8 and go directly to Islamabad to dissuade Pakistan from further escalating regional tension by testing its own nuclear devices?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our high commissioner in Islamabad has already told the Pakistani government that Canada is asking it not to take any provocative stance and not to carry out any nuclear tests. We have also called in the Pakistani high commissioner to Canada and given him the same message.

Our message is very clear. If there are tests by Pakistan, the measures already taken against India and those we are contemplating taking further against India will be applied to Pakistan.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, people want to see the foreign minister take a message directly there.

Canada's hands are not clean in this fiasco. Canada has sold nuclear materials and technology to nations that refuse to sign the non-proliferation treaty. Canada is hiding under the nuclear umbrella of the U.S. and NATO. Canada has failed to aggressively push for the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Canada must end its own ambiguity and complicity.

When will Canada show real leadership in the fight to eliminate nuclear weapons?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been showing leadership. We will continue to do so with respect to Pakistan. We cancelled our nuclear program with that country at the same time we cancelled our program with India almost 25 years ago.

As I have said, we have already sent a firm message to Pakistan that it should not take a provocative stance, that it should not carry out tests. Certainly it is a signal that the action we have taken against India we are ready to take against Pakistan. We hope it will not be necessary. With respect to the measures we are already looking at taking against India, we are considering applying, if necessary, the same further steps against Pakistan. That is firm action and I think it speaks for itself.

HEALTH

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of National Defence inform this House what steps he has taken to redress the case of Rudy Saueracker of Moncton, New Brunswick, a corporal who contracted hepatitis and HIV from a tainted blood transfusion in a military hospital?

The Speaker: As a general rule, those are very specific cases and I do not know that we can always expect the government to respond to them. However, if the hon. minister would like to address himself to that question, I will give him the floor.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can only say that we are concerned about the health and welfare of all our Canadian forces personnel. I do not know of the specific case the hon. member mentions but I would be happy to look into it.

Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very glad the minister is going to look into it because it has been several years since that this man has been working with the government to try to get his compensation.

Representatives of hepatitis C victims said today that the number of victims infected between 1986 and 1990 is much lower than estimated in the Krever report. The health minister has argued that treating all hepatitis C victims equally would bankrupt the health care system.

How can the minister make such a claim and continue to refuse compensation when he has not put in place a mechanism to identify the total number of people infected?

Mr. Joseph Volpe (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one of the functions of today's meeting is essentially to hear the submissions like the one the member is addressing right now. It would be instructive as well to keep in mind that the numbers Krever accepted were those that had come after exhaustive investigation on his part.

Judge Krever accepted the numbers provided to him by Health Canada and other institutions. After analysing and evaluating each one, he came up with the numbers he gave in his final report.

This House through members on both sides has been asking that his report—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Red Deer.

* * *

NUCLEAR TESTING

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister shrugged off Canada's nuclear sales to India. He

Oral Questions

simply said it broke its word. That might be business as usual in Liberal circles but Canadians find that irresponsible.

• (1430)

Canada's unique heavy water technology is still at the heart of India's nuclear arsenal. Is the government not just hiding the fact that it was Paul Martin Sr. who was involved in the deal in the first place?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it really is remarkable the depths to which the opposition will stoop to try to score what appears in their eyes to be a point.

When Canada discovered in 1974 that India had made a nuclear test, we immediately suspended all our nuclear activity with them. We toughened and strengthened the safeguards. We invited India to sign the new safeguards. India declined and we terminated all our nuclear activity with them more than 20 years ago.

Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, that answer, I am sure, really makes Canadians feel reassured. A real leader would bring China, Pakistan and India together in forging a new Asian security agreement. A real leader would take action to stop a new arms race and a new cold war. Canadians wonder why does the Prime Minister not act like a real leader?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to encourage dialogue among the Asian countries in question to reach a security agreement. We have been encouraging that.

We have been showing leadership in our contacts with Asian countries. We are showing leadership in taking firm action with respect to the unacceptable Indian nuclear tests. We are showing leadership. Beyond that all we have from the Reform Party is talk, not leadership, in contrast to the words, action and future action of our Prime Minister.

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[Translation]

YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, contrary to the intimations of the Minister of Justice, who is planning to amend the Young Offenders Act, there has been no increase in violent crime in Canada in the past 20 years. In addition, Quebec, where the act is intelligently applied, has the lowest recidivism rate in Canada.

Why did the Minister of Justice base her proposed reform on demagoguery as the editorial page of *La Presse* pointed out this morning, rather than on facts and statistics, which speak for themselves.

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me comment upon the hon. member's use of statistics.

The level of youth crime in this country has remained relatively stable but for unfortunately one category which is violent crime. We have seen a slight increase in the commission of violent crimes by young offenders.

Let me say that I believe the government response to the standing committee report deals with that and other issues. Our response is an integrated strategy that speaks to prevention, meaningful consequences and rehabilitation. I believe that represents fundamental core values that are shared by all Canadians.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Bellehumeur (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ): Mr. Speaker, yesterday on the *Téléjournal*, her parliamentary secretary acknowledged that the statistics I have just mentioned were correct, but she said that the minister nevertheless wanted to legislate solely to calm public opinion and to look good.

Will the minister acknowledge that, as criminologist Jean Trépanier has pointed out, drafting legislation on prejudice rather than fact is neither acceptable nor responsible?

[English]

Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say again that I believe our government response to the renewal of the youth justice system speaks to fundamental Canadian values.

Canadians whether they live in Quebec, Alberta or British Columbia want us to prevent youth crime before it happens. They want us to have meaningful consequences when it happens. They want us to rehabilitate those who have committed an offence against society. Nothing more than this response represents core Canadian values.

* * *

• (1435)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, picture this: \$75,000 spent on a fly-past; \$67,000 on the use of a flight simulator; \$75,000 on food and drink charged to the Crowne Plaza Hotel; a total of over \$2 million spent on a conference-retirement party for General DeQuetteville. All this when privates and corporals are looking for decent clothing and respectable housing and are having to go to a food bank to feed their families.

Who is the genius who approved this spending? Was it the minister? He got an invite.

Oral Questions

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the hon. member and his party have got things all wrong.

First it was not a retirement party for General DeQuetteville. There were people of all ranks there to discuss and learn about the future of the air force, particularly after 20 years of air force reduction. It did not cost \$2 million. The incremental cost was \$330,000. It was for a valid conference. The internal auditor will soon be reporting on the matter.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, in 1993 Mohamad Sharif Karimzada, a junior level Afghan diplomat, was granted refugee status in Canada. He has since been ordered deported.

High ranking UN officials and U.S. officials have spoken on his behalf. Even former president Jimmy Carter has talked to the minister about this case. The minister has signed a waiver in her possession saying she can speak freely about this case.

Why is the minister willing to send Mr. Karimzada back to a certain death in Afghanistan?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the final decision in this case has not been taken yet. I do not have the intention to discuss this case publicly.

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[Translation]

MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIPS

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, while the government is doggedly ramming through its bill on millennium scholarships, negotiations between Quebec City and Ottawa to find common ground on the issue have just broken off.

Will the Acting Prime Minister admit that neither the Minister of Human Resources Development nor his negotiators were mandated to amend the bill in order to accommodate Quebec's concerns and that, as a result, federal negotiators were just going through the motions in order to stall for time?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the provincial education minister, Mrs. Marois, said "I asked Mr. Pettigrew if he was prepared to implement the proposal made by the Liberal opposition in Quebec City".

I wish to give the House two pieces of good news: the first is that, after examining the proposal made by the official opposition in the National Assembly, the Government of Canada concluded that it was interesting, very interesting; the second is that it will not be necessary to amend the bill in order to give effect to the proposal.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition itself, in its proposal, called for the bill to be amended.

What else can we call federal intransigence on this issue but flagrant bad faith?

Hon. Stéphane Dion (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education should be urged to return to the table with the Minister of Human Resources Development, since we have just said that the proposal by the official opposition in the National Assembly was very interesting, very promising.

What is most important, after all, is that governments think about helping students.

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[English]

MILLENNIUM BUG

Mr. Werner Schmidt (Kelowna, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Financial Institutions.

The year 2000 millennium bug is a potential time bomb for the Canadian economy. The chief economist for Deutsche Morgan Grenfell has indicated that a global recession is likely to result from the millennium bug to about a 60% probability.

I do not believe that either the Secretary of State for Financial Institutions or the Minister of Finance has a plan to protect the Canadian economy. If he does, will the Secretary of State for Financial Institutions or the Minister of Finance—

• (1440)

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

Hon. David M. Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry has been somewhat preoccupied with this issue. A report that deals with the issue has come from the standing committee.

All government departments are working on their own plans. The plan I am responsible for at the Department of Transport is well under way. I can assure Canadians we will have very safe skies in the year 2000. The hon. member should realize that the government has the matter well in hand.

Mr. Eric Lowther (Calgary Centre, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, a lot of world leaders are preoccupied but they have a plan for this

situation. The Toronto Stock Exchange is requiring that businesses be year 2000 compatible in order to be listed. World leaders know this is a serious problem. Experts are saying that without work on this issue the Asian financial sector may collapse.

Canadians are wondering why the finance minister is hiding from this issue, why his head is in the sand. Why is he leaving Canadians vulnerable? Where is the Canadian plan?

Hon. David M. Collette (Minister of Transport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think I answered the question in the first reply. The government has been seized with this issue for the past couple of years. Interdepartmental committees have been working on it, as have committees with the private sector and various industries. We have been looking at this. We consider it to be a priority of this government to work with all sectors of the Canadian economy to make sure there is no disruption in any industry when the year 2000 turns.

* * *

[Translation]

MULTIMEDIA PRODUCTS

Mrs. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

On May 7, the minister announced the creation of an Internet site that is merely a collection of existing programs, plus three round tables, as part of the 1998 Multimedia and Info-highway International Market, which is currently under way in Montreal.

When will the government finally follow up on the report tabled by the Information Highway Advisory Council and set up a \$50 million fund for the production, distribution and marketing of Quebec and Canadian multimedia products?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first I want to thank the hon. member for her question. We really care about the multimedia issue because it is really important for us, in Canada, to have good content in both official languages. This is why we will proceed very soon with other initiatives.

Second, it would be nice for those who are asking for French language content that Quebec start by authorizing Télévision française de l'Ontario to broadcast in Quebec, since it provides a French language multimedia content across Canada.

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[English]

ALBERTA FOREST FIRES

Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, forest fires are raging in Alberta, forcing people to flee their homes and businesses. We know how valuable the Canadian Armed Forces were to the flood victims in the Red River and the Saguenay,

Oral Questions

and to those in eastern Canada affected by the recent ice storm. Can the minister of defence tell this House how the armed forces are helping the people of Alberta?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, once again the Canadian Armed Forces are coming to the aid of fellow Canadians. Some 56 troops including 17 reservists are now taking trucks into the forest fire area to transport firefighters. There are some 600 firefighters and some 24 forest fires in that area of Alberta. They are helping in that effort. They will continue to help in that effort as long as those fires are burning. We want to help fellow Canadians and the people of Alberta.

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IMMIGRATION

Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

On Tuesday in answer to my question concerning a Vancouver immigration consultant who faces 18 criminal charges, the minister said that she had mechanisms in the Immigration Act to deal with this individual. Will the minister immediately seek an injunction to stop this evil man from the further counselling of unsuspecting would be immigrants via the Internet? Will the minister immediately bring in legislation to license all immigration consultants?

[Translation]

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are two completely different issues here. First, there is the case of the individual involved. As you know, I never publicly discuss the details of an individual's case.

The second issue concerns immigration consultants. As you know, this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction. However, we are working with the provinces to try to find a solution.

• (1445)

We are also looking at the recommendation made in an independent report to find a solution to the issue of regulating immigration consultants.

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[English]

MULTICULTURALISM

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, recently the Secretary of State for Multiculturalism jettied 20 British Columbians off to China at a cost of \$300,000. Why? So they could learn Mandarin Chinese. This is yet another example of wasteful spending.

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Does the secretary of state not feel that one can learn this language by taking a course in Vancouver which, after all, is home to over 250,000 people of Chinese heritage?

Hon. Hedy Fry (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism)(Status of Women), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it always amazes me that these questions have such little depth and breadth of the understanding of the issues.

First and foremost, these are students who are going to work in the tourism industry. The values of understanding a proper tourism industry are not just linguistic. There is a need to understand the culture of the places from which the people come and the needs of the people who travel. The only way they can learn that is to go to work in the hotels in those countries so they can understand how to best supply what is needed for a proper tourism industry.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

The minister last April signed an MOU with the Government of B.C. promising full consultation on the B.C. salmon fishery. Today a group of B.C. fishers stripped and performed the full Mifflin, accusing the minister of stripping the shirts off their backs.

Why is this minister showing contempt for the Government of B.C. and B.C. fishers by failing to consult with them as he promised to do in the MOU on the proposed salmon licence buy-back?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the demonstration in front of my office was certainly more revealing than many.

I point out to the hon. member from the NDP that we do have an MOU with the province of British Columbia. It is working well. All information that should be exchanged is being exchanged, at least from the federal government to the provincial government.

Mr. Svend J. Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the B.C. government has said that it is not getting anything on the buy-back.

British Columbians learned from a leaked federal document this week that Liberal negotiators are prepared to surrender to the U.S. and sell out Canadian interests at the Portland salmon treaty talks.

If we are to avoid desperate fishers once again blocking ships this year, will the minister finally show some guts, denounce this document and stand for B.C. before we see a repeat of the desperate situation on the east coast cod fishery?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is clearly unaware that we have a Canadian delegation which includes people from the Canadian government, the British Columbia government, industry, aboriginal fishers and other sports and recreation people.

The document in question has not been seen by me or my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is an internal assessment of American attitudes within the delegation. It is as much a document of the province of British Columbia as it is a document of the federal government. In fact, it is neither. It is an internal delegation of a Canadian team Canada approach.

The suggestion that somehow or other it is part of some federal change of position is totally false and untrue.

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THE YEAR 2000

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, many experts consider Canada to be a leader in the year 2000 problem from a global perspective. This problem is immediate, urgent, underestimated and spread worldwide. Currently every company and government is going at it on their own.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. At the upcoming G-8 meetings will the Canadian government propose to take the lead and set up a global Y2K battle plan?

Hon. Marcel Massé (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for Infrastructure, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague mentions, this is a problem that is worldwide. It is a problem that the Canadian government has been looking at carefully.

We have a program for the various institutions that depend on the Canadian government. Internationally we have been discussing this at the G-8. An international group will be put together to look at the various questions coming from the Y2K problem. We are presently working with international organizations, such as the World Bank, to deal with the problem.

• (1450)

Mr. Jim Jones (Markham, PC): Mr. Speaker, today's Y2K report states that Canada's major trading partners, specifically the Asian market, are falling far behind in the year 2000 implementation. The Prime Minister should also be aware that in the last two days the Canadian dollar dropped by more than half a cent largely due to the problems in Asian markets.

Will this government push in the G-8 meetings that all countries, regardless of economic or commercial interest, focus on making the Asian market aware of and comply with this immediate deadline?

Oral Questions

Hon. Ronald J. Duhamel (Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development)(Western Economic Diversification), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the industry committee's report today and thank all members for having brought forward this unanimous report.

[*Translation*]

It is much appreciated by all.

[*English*]

I want everyone to know that the government has indeed shown leadership. The Prime Minister has alerted all of his ministers, the private sector and his colleagues internationally. We are working together.

It is very important that we recognize that this is simply not a Government of Canada challenge. It is a challenge for all levels of government, the private sector and, indeed, all of us. We have a common objective with a common goal and we must work together to achieve it.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan—King—Aurora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week's massive mudslides devastated the region of Sarno, Italy. As a result, 143 are dead, 136 are missing and 1,500 people are homeless.

My question is to the minister of defence. What is this government going to do to help those individuals and those communities who are trying to keep their lives together?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have received a request from the Italian government to provide earth-moving and excavating equipment, specifically 10 Bobcats. In fact, we are going to send these over to Italy together with Canadian forces personnel to operate them. They will be arriving with three Hercules aircraft, taking both the people and the Bobcats, plus a backhoe and four CF personnel to operate it.

We will be arriving in Italy this Sunday.

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FISHERIES

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanic—Gulf Islands, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, it is fine for the minister to stand up and make jokes about what is revealing. He just told the member for Burnaby—Douglas that he is unaware of documents that department officials are talking about with respect to the treaty with the U.S.

This minister is unaware of the extinction of our fish stocks in Atlantic Canada. He is unaware of what is going on in B.C. with our fish stocks out there that are facing extinction.

Is the minister going to stand and fight for B.C. or is he going to watch our fishermen and fish stocks out there become extinct as well?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the one thing that the hon. member is clearly unaware of is my reply to the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

What I indicated to him was that the document referred to is not a Canadian government document. It is not a document of the Government of British Columbia. It is not a document of the various other participants on the Canadian team in the negotiations with the Americans. It is an internal document of the delegation analysing the strategy and opinions of the American position.

Therefore it should not be described this way by either the Reform Party or the NDP because to do so damages the Canadian position in these—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

* * *

[*Translation*]

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Daniel Turp (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

While American Secretary of State Madeleine Albright is trying her level best to save the Middle East peace process, by receiving the Israeli Prime Minister at the last minute, a demonstration to commemorate the Nakba deteriorated into a confrontation between the Palestinians and the Israeli army.

Given the real difficulties in ensuring that the Oslo agreements are complied with, what steps does the Government of Canada intend to take to ensure that Israel meets its obligations under the Oslo agreements?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted McWhinney (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are aware that the process of negotiation is delicate, that it is ongoing and at this stage we best proceed by quiet diplomacy. We do wish to ensure that all members of the United Nations respect and obey security council resolutions.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister of agriculture will know that there is a very dry spring under way on the western prairies that is beginning to look increasingly like a drought. The timing could not be worse with an already sharp drop in farm income forecast and the sharp cuts in the department of agriculture.

Oral Questions

• (1455)

Would the minister of agriculture please inform the House what contingency plans will be available in the event that this dry spring turns into a full-fledged drought?

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are aware that they could certainly use more rain in much of western Canada, as they could in other areas in Canada, and we hope that comes in the very near future.

We do have a very complete safety net system in place, crop insurance as well as NISA, the net income stabilization program for Canadian farmers. They will have the opportunity to draw upon the programs provided by the government and the ones they fund themselves, along with the provincial government and the federal government, if the need arises.

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[Translation]

CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP

Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, PC): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand we have the Minister of Immigration telling us that birth in Canada does not necessarily make a child a Canadian citizen, and on the other we have the Minister of Canadian Heritage telling us Canadian citizenship must be awarded to any person who is born in Canada.

May we know the real policy of this government with respect to immigration, regardless of the confusion that reigns within cabinet?

Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, this is not a matter of immigration but of citizenship. That is a totally different act and one that has not been re-assessed or reviewed by this Parliament in the past 20 years.

Some time ago, we received a report from a parliamentary committee of this House which made some proposals. We also have an independent report from three consultants with some suggestions. Based on these, analyses will be carried out within the department, and within months we shall be seeing a bill tabled in this Parliament.

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CHIAPAS

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Secretary of State for Latin America and Africa.

Will the Government of Canada be imposing economic sanctions in response to the work of the parliamentary delegation returning from Chiapas?

Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Latin America and Africa), Lib.): Señor presidente, I thank the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park for her question.

I very much doubt that the government will have to impose economic sanctions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our colleagues who took part in this very important mission. I wonder why the official opposition did not participate.

An hon. member: A good question.

Hon. David Kilgour: The Minister of Foreign Affairs wishes to meet with these people as quickly as possible and I believe that the chair of our Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade also wishes to meet with those who took part in this mission.

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[English]

NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE

Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister for International Trade what the government is going to do about the unfair hockey subsidies of the United States.

Is this government going to request a chapter 20 dispute panel under the NAFTA or is it going to force struggling Canadian teams like the Senators and the Oilers to fight these unfair subsidies on their own?

Mr. Julian Reed (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister for International Trade, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of answering that question yesterday and I will repeat the answer today. I extend congratulations to the Reform Party for finally waking up and realizing that hockey is important to Canadians.

I would also point out to my hon. friend that a committee is holding hearings at the present time. We expect its report in the fall and we will look at absolutely every submission with due diligence.

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[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Indian Affairs.

As part of its new aboriginal affairs policy, the Government of Quebec will be setting up a five-year economic development fund. Quebec will put in \$125 million and hopes that the federal government will match this amount.

Given that this development fund, which has been received positively by aboriginal groups, emphasizes aboriginal entrepre-

neurship, and is consistent with federal policy in this area, will the minister undertake to put in the \$125 million requested by Quebec?

Mr. Bernard Patry (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Saint-Jean for his question.

I would simply like to say that the amount to be invested by the province of Quebec with respect to the First Nations falls exactly in line with the strategy put forward following the response to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People: let us share and work together.

• (1500)

The Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development will definitely be working with the province of Quebec to promote the First Nations economy.

* * *

[English]

CRTC

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Baton Broadcasting announced 334 layoffs across the country yesterday. Forty-one of those jobs were lost in the maritimes.

Baton bought CTV and made a commitment to the CRTC to serve the needs of local communities. It seems its promise was not worth the licence it was written on.

It is the CRTC's job to enforce regulations to ensure companies like Baton live up to their commitments. If the CRTC will not do it, it should be scrapped.

Will the minister of heritage tell us what she will do to make the CRTC protect local news and programming across the country?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House will join with me in sending certainly our sympathies to those families whose jobs have been lost as a result of this decision by a private broadcaster.

If the member has reason to believe that the licensing requirements are not being met, I suggest she forward that information to me. I will immediately ask the CRTC to review the licensing procedures that have flown from its original licence.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, according to my legislative calendar we have about 20 days left for business in the House.

I would like to ask the government House leader if he could confirm that we have 20 days left to work in the House before the

Supply

summer recess, and the nature of the business of the House for the remainder of this week and for the next sitting week.

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this question is almost as good as last week's question.

Tomorrow will be the day for consideration of third reading of Bill C-19, the labour code amendments, pursuant to a previous order of the House.

Next week is a constituency office week. When the House returns, it will be for the final sprint to the summer adjournment. The government's intention is to work very hard. We will continue to be concerned with a number of report stages and third readings.

During the week of May 25 we shall consider Bill C-36, the budget bill, at both report stage and third reading, and Bill C-29, the parks agency bill.

Tuesday, May 26 shall be an allotted day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—CANADIAN FORCES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

• (1505)

Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Oak Ridges, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take part in this debate. I noticed that the motion deals with the failure of this government to provide political leadership. I am very surprised to see that given the track record of this government. Clearly their definition of political leadership and ours is different.

I am going to be splitting my time with the member for Nepean—Carleton.

I want to highlight a couple of issues and specifically talk about the reserves. Since this government took office in 1994 it has restored public confidence and pride in the Canadian military. We have given the forces a clear mandate to change the way we do business and get a bigger bang for the buck.

In 1994 we produced the defence white paper. We cut the bureaucracy and reduced the number of top military brass. There was procurement reform and 3,000 more soldiers were added to the army. We increased the number of reservists to 30,000. We have re-equipped the forces. This is clearly leadership, not failure.

I am surprised that the hon. member across the way would put such a motion forth. I am not going to dwell on the record of the

Supply

Conservative Party or the comments we heard during the election from the Reform Party. I want to talk about positive things.

We hear a lot of negatives in the House so I want to talk about the positive things this government has been doing, in particular the leadership we have shown with regard to the armed forces and in dealing with the issue of the reserves and the total force concept outlined in the 1994 white paper on defence.

Beginning with the first principle, reserves are value added because they are so deeply embedded in Canadian society and our Canadian traditions. The militia idea goes back to the earliest days of New France. Citizen soldiers fought off attacks on their country in the 1770s and again in the War of 1812. They were the backbone of national defence after the establishment of the modern Canadian state in 1867. They kept their skills alive at a time when Canadians wanted to think about anything but war.

We have a proud military tradition in this country. One just has to look back to the first world war, Vimy Ridge; the second world war, D-Day and the battle of the Atlantic; recently the Persian gulf. Canada has participated in over 40 peacekeeping operations. This is a record we can be proud of as Canadians.

Canadians fought and died in Korea between 1950 and 1953. They have shown bravery. They were the shock troops of Europe in the first and second world wars.

The reserves in particular are a bridge between the regular forces and the Canadian public. They are made up of the Canadian public all across this country. Most important of all, the reserves are a vital and relevant defence resource implicit in the message of the total force. The reserves are not a frill or some out moded luxury. They are a necessity, an integral part of the Canadian forces. They are able and expected to augment and sustain regular units or, in some cases, execute specific tasks not generally carried out by the regular forces.

The militia has since the 19th century provided individuals and entire units for the whole range of army imperatives. Naval reservists have major responsibility for coastal and harbour defence and naval control of shipping. The air reserve is creating a national pool of trained personnel to supply air force deployments at home and away.

The communication reserve has been a leader in the implementation of the total force. The Canadian Rangers provide a military profile in our vast north and other isolated areas of this country.

During operation recuperation when we met the storm of the century with the largest peacetime deployment of the Canadian forces in our history, the reserves were there. The reserves supplied fully one-quarter of the more than 16,000 military complement which carried out essential tasks in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. The availability of these reservists demonstrates the value added effect of this service because we could not afford an

additional 4,000 regulars to be available on such short notice for such emergencies. I know my hon. friend across the way would agree with that.

• (1510)

I am proud of what the reservists did during the ice storm of 1998 and what they did during the floods in Manitoba and in the Saguenay. I know hon. members feel the same delight as I feel that our men and women are cheered on the streets across this country for what they did.

As the chief of defence staff likes to remind us, the ice storm highlighted one of the Canadian forces' most essential roles, protecting the lives and possessions of Canadians in times of crisis.

I would be less than frank if I did not think and say that these recent operations in Canada have helped with restoring the contract of trust between Canadians and the forces. Reservists are every bit as important a part of this process as our regular forces.

When the government took office it very quickly made it a high priority to reform, modernize and upgrade the reserves as part of the program to improve the overall capacity and operational effectiveness of the entire force.

We need well trained and well equipped reservists, organized and cohesive and logical military structures which use resources more effectively than in the past.

I know it is easier to criticize than it is to provide solutions. The government has been providing solutions since 1994 on this issue. But again we will hear all the negatives. We will not hear the positives because of course that is not the job or the role of the opposition.

We have put a great deal of study into the restructuring of the reserves, including the convening of a special commission. The most complicated aspect of a restructuring program concerns the militia. We have decided to reorder the geographically based districts into brigade groups, organized along functional lines, again showing leadership.

The government is engaged in an evaluation program based on carefully thought out criteria and extensive consultation with the reserve constituency, notably honorary colonels of the reserve 2000 committee. The final decision will not be easy but I know that every effort will be made to make it fair and to make it equitable.

While the complex labour goes on the government has not stood still on other fronts. We have improved equipment available to reservists. The soldier project, Griffon helicopters for the 400 squadron at Borden and the 438 squadron at Saint-Hubert, and the delivery of maritime coastal defence vessels are some examples.

Over the past year we have introduced an improved pay and benefit package for reservists which, combined with the reserve

force retirement gratuity, demonstrates the commitment to recognize and to compensate our citizen soldiers for their sacrifices.

With the assistance of the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs we are also examining in a comprehensive way the needs of people in the military. We must ensure we provide an appropriate level of support to the men and women of the forces and their families and that includes reservists. I know my friends and colleagues on the other side would agree with that.

The Canadian forces liaison council is making great strides in protecting civilian jobs and benefits of reservists. There are over 4,500 employees in the databank. Over 3,000 of them have stated their support of the reserves, while 1,800 have agreed to grant military leave to reserve employees.

Clearly we can be very proud of the work our reservists do. Concerning underrating and underutilizing reserves in the past, we are taking care of that. We find them indispensable and they have shown their commitment to their country.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Oak Ridges for his comments. I am always quite interested in the reserves, being a reserve member for six years many years back.

I find the member's comments, where he is talking about what we have done for the reserves, going in the wrong direction. Yes, we have added numbers to the reserves but we have cut down their hours. We have cut them to less than half and also we have cut out all the exercises they do. So what we are doing is cutting out their training. We are not giving them a chance to train properly. So instead of getting higher quality reserves, we are lowering the quality of our reserves and they do not deserve that, particularly since we are using reserves an awful lot these days overseas. It is important that they get good basic training at the reserve level so they can continue on at the regular level.

• (1515)

He was also talking about preparation and equipment and I thought I would mention at this point our submarines. He mentioned the 1994 white paper. The white paper was quite clear that we needed those submarines and it was a good deal. That was four years ago. We finally ordered the submarines, but it will take a couple of years for them to get here.

In the meantime this month we have another submarine that is being decommissioned and another one will be in September. That will leave us with one submarine. That is our total fleet. We will go for a couple of years with one submarine. It is not very logical. That submarine will not be out too much.

Maybe the member would care to comment on that.

Supply

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. friend for his comments. As far as the reserves are concerned we are going through a process. We have made improvements, as I said earlier in the House, whether it be in terms of pay and benefits or whether it be in terms of equipment.

Clearly the process is not finished. We obviously want to have the best equipped, the best trained reserves and armed forces generally. Rome was not built in a day and clearly we are improving. As far as submarines are concerned, we did not buy the nuclear submarines to which the previous government had committed itself, but we have an agreement now in terms of the four new submarines from England. It is excellent value for the Canadian taxpayer.

Obviously we do not want to be in a position as we were in preparing for the first and the second world wars when we did not have the necessary equipment. We want to make sure that if we are to send our forces overseas on peacekeeping missions or involve them in activities in this country we have the right personnel with the right equipment.

We even heard in the House today that the Government of Italy requested that Canada provide assistance. Again we have personnel who are recognized for their professionalism around the world.

Mr. Mark Muike (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House are trying today to bring forth the concerns and the situation in the military.

I keep listening to the other side of the House which is pointing the finger at past governments. I do not know how far back they will go to past governments. I am expecting that soon they will be talking of Sir John A. Macdonald and blaming him for some of these problems.

Some of the concerns my colleagues and I have been addressing today are related to dollars. Others are related to how people are treated. Those are concerns that I believe most of my colleagues on both sides and I have. That is what we want to debate today. We are discussing these issues so people, parliamentarians and Canadians know there are concerns out there.

Mr. Bryon Wilfert: Mr. Speaker, I never mentioned past governments other than my comment on nuclear submarines. I am quite frankly not interested in what the previous government did because I am interested in what we are doing.

The member asked about whether we had failed in political leadership. I demonstrated at the very beginning all the things the government has done. The gentlemen over there should listen up. If they ask questions they had better be prepared to listen to the answers. Otherwise they should not ask questions.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to be participating in the debate today on the

Supply

opposition day motion. Just to get the motion on the record, it states:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian forces.

It is sponsored by the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead. I have had the pleasure of working with the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead over the last number of months. The two of us are on the national defence and veterans affairs committee. I must say that he is a very diligent worker and that he brings a lot to the table in terms of discussion. He has done a good job that way. The hon. member would probably agree as well that in framing the motion as he did he very much overstated the case with respect to the current situation in the armed forces.

● (1520)

Let me take the opportunity to put this matter into some perspective. Certainly the world has changed greatly over the 1990s. The challenges we have faced in the 1990s and the rapidity of change we have experienced as a society and indeed right across the globe have been tremendous. Governments have tried to respond to that as best they could, and our government is no different.

When we faced the prospect of forming a government in 1993 clearly we were concerned about security issues. All Canadians are concerned about security issues. One of the foremost security issues we had to face in 1993 was our financial security. As a result some decisions had to be made. When we had a \$42 billion deficit to deal with, some decisions had to be taken with respect to restoring financial security to Canadians.

As a result cutbacks had to be made in government. It was not just the Department of National Defence that experienced those cutbacks. There were many other departments. It is safe to say, and most members would agree, that there has been a significant cutback in government activity.

At the same time, in the post-deficit situation we face right now there is a realization and a recognition that some of the departments of government used to perform a lot more activities than they do now. There has to be some action taken to address the problems that have occurred in those departments, and the Department of National Defence is certainly one of them.

Its budget has been reduced, as has already been mentioned, from \$12 billion in 1993-94 to its current situation of \$9.38 billion in 1998-99. This process has not been easy. I have to salute the Minister of National Defence for his actions since he took the post. He has done what no other minister of national defence was prepared to do, which was to have the national defence committee go across the country to talk with individual soldiers, sailors, airmen and women to find out what concerned them, what was on their mind, what were the issues they had to deal with on a day to day basis.

That took a lot of political courage. When we start a process like that one we really have no idea where the whole process will end up. From that standpoint the minister is to be congratulated. Having had the opportunity to discuss this issue with the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead, he would generally agree with the observation that it took some political courage to do what the Minister of National Defence has done.

As I mentioned earlier, we have had the opportunity to go to many bases. Just to give an example, the committee touched down and held hearings in Yellowknife, Esquimalt, Comox, Edmonton, Cold Lake, Moose Jaw, Val Cartier, Bagotville, Kingston, Petawawa, North Bay, Trenton, Gagetown, Goose Bay and Halifax. For anyone who was counting that was 15 different locations to date. I have had the pleasure of speaking to Canadian forces members in all but two of those locations.

We have heard a great deal from members of the Canadian forces. We have heard about the issue of salary. There is no doubt that the issue of salary is one that is very important to members of the Canadian forces, especially younger members of the forces that occupy the junior ranks, the privates and corporals of the Canadian forces.

I frankly do not know how some of them are able to do it on the salary they are making right now. Their starting salary is \$17,000 and \$18,000. The salary rises as the spend more time and are eligible for pay increments, but members of the national defence committee would agree that base salary has to rise.

● (1525)

The government has already taken steps to improve the salaries of members of the Canadian forces. I hope that in the not too distant future we will be able to see further improvements in that way.

The issue of housing has been mentioned. That is certainly one of the more important issues for members of the forces who have families and are living in the PMQs. We have seen some very poor accommodation for members of the forces in many locations across the country.

It is very old stock and it needs to be replaced. How we do that in today's financial environment will take a lot of innovation and creativity on behalf of employees of the Department of National Defence in the Canadian forces housing agency who are charged with that responsibility. I hope they are up to the task because our soldiers, sailors and airmen and women certainly deserve better than what they have right now.

We have heard about other issues including the care of the wounded and the injured. There should be better ways of dealing with the problem of unemployed spouses on Canadian bases. It continues to be a problem.

Many families take two incomes for granted, but that is not often the case at a Canadian forces base. A spouse has difficulty getting employment with private businesses outside the base. Many employers refuse to hire them when they know they will be posted somewhere else in a few years. They are not prepared to make investments in terms of training and skills. We have also heard about the problem of post traumatic stress syndrome.

Those are just a few of the problems we have heard about in the course of our hearings across the country. The hon. member for Compton—Stanstead would agree that at the same time there is a tremendous esprit de corps in the forces. Some people say that the overall morale in the Canadian forces could probably be improved quite significantly but that the unit morale is very strong. There is a strong esprit de corps or a strong connection between people working in a platoon, a company or as part of a ship's crew or air crew. They feel proud to wear Canada's uniform. They feel proud of the record of our Canadian forces men and women abroad.

The issue of equipment is important. The forces are in the process of enhancing or improving the equipment available to them. As I mentioned in earlier comments today, our navy is among the most modern in the world in terms of the technology it has available. The same can be said of our air forces with the CF-18s and their precision guided weapons which are among the most modern in the world. The army definitely needs more equipment. The government is in the process of equipping it with new armoured personnel carriers and other equipment it needs in terms of clothe the soldier program and others.

Rather than condemning the government, the opposition should be congratulating it for having the political courage to go out there to speak to the men and women of the Canadian forces to learn what is on their minds. I congratulate the Minister of National Defence and the government for their courage in that regard.

Ultimately the matter rests with the government. As far as the men and women of the Canadian forces are concerned I am confident the government will do the right thing.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member who has just spoken. This has been perhaps the most open and honest approach we have heard from that side all day. I commend him for that. At least he alluded to the problems we face. I assure him that this side of the House and the committee to which he referred will be looking forward to his report.

I have read in newspapers and magazines about the problem of the Department of National Defence in relation to NCOs and commissioned officers.

• (1530)

I come from a part of Canada which has the RCMP as the provincial police force. I have been in the same area for a long time. The highest ranking officer that has ever been in our

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detachment, albeit this is the RCMP, is a corporal. Imagine having three sergeants and one constable.

If I heard correctly today, and this is part of the problem that the government should be addressing, we have something like 65 generals in the Canadian army.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I will have to interrupt the hon. member, because we have another question to go. The hon. member for Nepean—Carleton can form a response to that question.

Mr. David Pratt: I would be happy to, Mr. Speaker. Were there too many generals at one time in the Canadian forces? I think the answer is yes. The number has been brought down from approximately 130 to about 70.

Mr. Roy Bailey: Sixty-five.

Mr. David Pratt: There you go. Are there too many? We are working toward 60,000 regular members at this point in the Canadian forces. Are 60 some generals too many? I am not sure it is.

There is one comment that I did receive which I think the hon. member would be interested in. I was speaking to a non-commissioned officer in Halifax. He mentioned to me something which I thought was very interesting which was that only nine members of the Canadian forces earn over \$100,000 per year. That is for an organization that, as I mentioned earlier, takes from the federal budget \$9.3 billion and has a complement of 60,000.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite mentioned that there was good esprit de corps in the armed services. I would like to quote from an April edition of *Maclean's* magazine:

"To make any unit run, you have to have esprit de corps," said Warrant Officer George Parrott of Edmonton, who served in Croatia, Bosnia, Germany and Quebec during January's ice storm. "When I joined in '83 they made you feel good about working as hard as you possibly could to achieve the highest level you could. Right now, there is not that feeling of being proud of who you are and what you represent".

This is by a member of the armed services speaking about the assault on morale. How does the member reconcile his remarks with these comments from an enlisted person?

Mr. David Pratt: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I have had the opportunity to visit about 13 of the 15 bases where the committee has held hearings. I can say this quite honestly. I have talked to hundreds of members of the Canadian forces. I am giving my general observations. Certainly there are going to be people in

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an organization as large as the Canadian Armed Forces who are going to have different views on that.

The general observation I have had from people is that within their own unit when they are tasked to go to Bosnia, or participate with the army, or if they are on board one of our frigates, whether it is the HMCS *Toronto*, the *Vancouver* or the *Ville de Québec*, the ship's crew, the companies, the battalions, are very proud of what they do. They are very concerned about some issues obviously in terms of pay and benefits and those sorts of things. In terms of discharging their work, they are very professional. They are very proud people and very happy to wear the uniform of the Canadian forces.

[Translation]

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honored to speak to this motion, which reads:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

[English]

In speaking on this motion, it is very important to note the words "provide strong political leadership". Note that the motion does not simply say provide leadership, but political leadership. This puts the emphasis on the elected representatives which is where I believe it firmly belongs.

• (1535)

Also, when we speak of the Canadian forces we are speaking about the civilian and the military components, a fact which often escapes the public. Sometimes when the public think about the Canadian forces, they think solely about those men and women in uniform. We must remember that there is also an important contingent of men and women working side by side those men and women in uniform. They are the civilian workers who team up to provide Canada with an excellent, proud and professional service.

Also when we think about the Canadian forces, we have to remember that the people working for the Canadian forces sometimes find themselves in a category of occupation which is often overlooked by the public except in times of emergencies, such as policemen, firefighters and emergency workers. These are people with jobs we would not normally want to do ourselves but we are certainly happy to have them there when the occasion and the need arises. Perhaps politicians fall in that category as well.

I am talking about the category of workers who sometimes find themselves in a thankless job. People are their friends as long as they are doing exactly what they want them to do but the minute that is not the case they seem to forget about them. We have to remember that sometimes the public do not give as much recognition and as much honour as they should to the people in our

Canadian forces. Because of the nature of this occupation it is very important that we have good leadership, not only leadership within the services, but also good political leadership.

The other thing the public sometimes fail to remember is that a job in the military today, even though we talk about peacekeeping, is still very dangerous. It is not a job to be taken lightly. In an article in *Maclean's* magazine Sergeant Dale Lyne in speaking about his work in Bosnia talked about the fact that his engineer regiment dodged booby traps to defuse land mines. They survived having guns held to their heads by the local combatants. They retrieved body parts of soldiers blown up by mines. This is certainly not a job a lot of us would aspire to. Because of the nature of this job, we feel it is important that there be adequate political leadership.

What makes us feel that today there is not that quality of leadership? Already the member opposite has mentioned many of the problems that would support the fact that there is need for good strong political leadership.

We have heard about low morale because of frozen pay levels and lack of promotions. There are a lot of problems around family life and inadequate housing. Many spouses find themselves unable to meet their daily expenses and struggle while their spouses are away. We hear stories about soldiers having to buy their own boots to serve in Bosnia. There are many instances which we read about or hear about which lead us to feel that there is just cause for the low morale which exists within the military.

I think of military members who have families. We are told that the long absences can be devastating for those who are left behind. I read in a magazine article about Andrea Grant who has two children and is married to a leading seaman at CFB Halifax. She lives in a cramped apartment in the city's north end. She said that she sometimes cries herself to sleep when her husband is at sea. Not too many of us can relate to the feeling of having to cry oneself to sleep because their loved one is away.

I personally can empathize to a certain point with the aspect of someone being away that you care about. My father worked on the railway. He was away from home at least three or four days each week. As a young boy growing up I can well remember how much we missed his presence in the home and how happy we were when we would hear the doorbell ring when he returned home from his trip on the train. He had a special ring on the doorbell and we automatically knew it was him. Even the family dog recognized that ring of the doorbell and would jump up and run to the door before any of us.

• (1540)

My father was not in any danger when he was away. He was working on the train and unless there was a train accident he was

quite safe. But our armed services personnel are quite often away in a foreign land in a different culture. They are faced with unknown things that may occur, for example land mines. We can therefore understand why someone like Andrea would cry herself to sleep while her loved one was away. These are some of the things which our armed services personnel are faced with.

Then we read stories, one as recently as in today's paper, reportedly, and I say reportedly because all the facts are not in yet, but reportedly about a \$2 million party for the top brass in the military. When we look at this kind of expense, whether it be \$2 million or \$300,000 as the minister said today in question period, it is still a fairly major expense for a celebration when people are faced with an inadequate amount of money perhaps to buy medicine for their children.

There is another story along those lines. Quoting from a magazine, we are told the story of Kathy Couture who had never broken the law in her life until one night in October 1996. She walked into a pharmacy in Victoria, slipped a bottle of children's Tylenol into her pocket and walked back out. She said "I was terrified. I shook for hours when I got home". Couture's six year old daughter Natasha had a raging fever. It was five days until her husband, sailor Mario Couture, would be paid and the family did not have the \$5 to pay for the medicine. They had moved to Victoria from Halifax only weeks before and they knew no one they could ask for the money. "My husband was shocked. I was shocked", said Couture. "I still cannot believe I did that. But I had to".

The conclusion of this story talks about the parliamentary committee that travelled to Victoria in January. Her husband chose not to speak. He was afraid he might be too honest and would offend some people, but Kathy did speak out. She did speak out because she had hurt so much. She said it is her friends and neighbours in the military subdivision that kept her going while Mario was at sea. "It is very hard on your self-esteem. I think to myself I am worth more than this". Kathy can only hope the politicians hear her testimony and agree.

I would say today it is important that we as politicians hear these stories, understand and show some empathy. When we are making decisions concerning our armed forces we should not look at the bottom line as being the dollar but rather look with a compassionate heart to see what we can do to help our military.

The Minister of National Defence said today in question period when he was talking about the forest fires in Alberta that once again the armed forces were coming to the aid of fellow Canadians. I would ask today, who is coming to the aid of our Canadian forces?

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member if he feels that the initiative that was

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undertaken by the minister was a worthwhile one, in terms of having the national defence committee go from base to base asking members of the forces about the problems regarding salary, living conditions and working conditions.

Would the hon. member not concede in his franker moments that was an act of political leadership relating to the forces, it was something that was absolutely necessary? It is a difficult process and one that certainly has not been easy for the government in terms of hearing the various stories that have come up. It is a difficult process and one which was absolutely necessary under the circumstances.

• (1545)

The second question I would ask concerns the Canadian public as a whole. The hon. member may or may not be aware that I have a motion on the order paper to declare June 15 as Canadian forces day and to celebrate the achievements of the Canadian forces.

Is that something the member and his party could support?

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate those two very interesting questions. Certainly it is very important for the standing committee to hear stories directly from members of the Canadian forces about what they are experiencing. Even more important than hearing them would be for the government to show strong political leadership to follow up on the concerns in a meaningful way to address the issues.

With respect to declaring a given day as Canadian armed forces day, we always have to be careful that when we declare any given day as a special day we do not lose sight of the fact that every day of our lives should be special for those issues. We cannot weaken our obligation in that way by just having a special day where we highlight certain things. It is important to concentrate each day of our lives upon the concerns of our Canadian forces.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I find it rather interesting that the NDP member is talking from the heart about this issue. As we travelled to different bases I was very disappointed to see that members of the NDP were not that involved. They did not show up at a lot of the places except if it happened to be in one of their ridings.

They are self-professed as being very strong in the ASD file. We really did not hear a lot from them. Maybe the member could answer as to why they did not show up at those meetings.

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, rather than answering why we did or why we did not I would like to emphasize some of the things we in fact did.

One of our members travelled to Goose Bay, Labrador, to see firsthand the situation involving the downsizing of services there. Many members of our party have been involved directly with

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military personnel and with civilian personnel and hearing their concerns firsthand.

We may not have been in the same places as the hon. member but we have been there. We have always been there and we will continue to be there.

Mr. Mark Muise (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 1993 the NDP had chosen to help the military by voting against the purchase of EH-101 helicopters.

I am wondering why today we hear complaints from members of the NDP who say that the government should be supporting things of this nature.

Mr. Gordon Earle: Mr. Speaker, I always find questions a bit amusing when people point to something in the past and try to justify exactly what is happening today. The hon. member can look to his own party. He can look to positions that were taken at one point in time and then subsequently changed for whatever reason.

We are concerned about the present situation with respect to our Canadian forces. We are supportive of the concerns they brought forward. We want to work in the best interest of resolving those issues. I do not want to dwell upon past history which has no meaning to what we are concerned about today.

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in the debate this afternoon.

As someone who served for a brief period on the defence committee and to elaborate on the last question asked about why we were not more visible at those public hearings, I remember that the first swing the committee took was in late January. Our caucus had a meeting and a subsequent meeting the following weekend so I was only able to get to one of them.

I must respond to the question of the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton regarding whether it demonstrates great political leadership and wisdom to convene the committee to hear frankly from military men and women about pay and rations.

● (1550)

Calling a committee meeting probably demonstrates the absence of political leadership. The easiest thing anybody can do is to have a committee to discuss an issue. As I said in committee, and I feel very comfortable standing in my place and saying it here today, a lot of this was about busy work. It was to keep the defence committee travelling around. It was also demeaning to hear people admit that they used food banks.

In the meeting I attended in Moose Jaw in late January, Mr. Cory Robinson, a second lieutenant at CFB Moose Jaw, indicated he had to go to the local town and country mall to moonlight there for \$5.75 an hour to properly feed, house and clothe his family. It must

have been extremely difficult for Cory Robinson and hundreds of other people who attended those meetings. They all came out because they are concerned but I am sure it was not easy for them.

I remember saying at a committee meeting last fall that I did not run for parliament to determine what was an appropriate pay and ration for men and women who serve in the military forces. I am aware that there are professional people who do this on a permanent basis.

There are standards. There are groups that are at the lower end of the pay scale and others at the upper end that are doing relatively the same kind of work such as police officers and firefighters. If we look to the United States, the United Kingdom or other appropriate countries we can find their levels of pay and benefits for military men and women.

I do not accept that it is showing great political leadership to have directed the defence and veterans affairs committee to travel around the country to meet with people to discuss this issue.

It was probably a way of keeping the defence committee from looking at other things that would be more relevant. Obviously we do need an effective well paid military, but if we wanted to look at the helicopter issue or submarine issue in a more in depth basis we could not do it because we were travelling to look at pay and benefits. I do not accept at all the premise I have heard earlier this afternoon.

My colleague from Halifax West also talked about alternate service delivery. That has been a major concern in the Palliser riding which has 15 Wing Moose Jaw. I will read into the record a recent letter from Mervin Ernest who said:

My co-workers and myself have been in limbo awaiting decisions on contract finalization and most of all, job offers from—Bombardier—. This whole privatization process has dragged on far too long. This has been an extremely stressful time for all the employees and their families. I have seen many manifestations in my co-workers including stress illnesses and all the personal problems it can cause.

It's very clear that with everyday that passes, current Departure Incentives, Alteration and Relocation options that have been available to us will very soon cease to exist—.

As an employee of DND, I have only two burning questions. Do we have a job or not and if not, will there be financial assistance (Early Departure Incentive—) for those being terminated?

In bold face he wrote:

Please, we just want to get on with our lives!

That is the kind of lack of esprit de corps that the committee has seen and heard about over recent months at both the military and the non-military levels.

● (1555)

At this point in time the Canadian government has not decided what it is that the department of defence could and should be. It is trying to be all things to all people. It has not decided whether its

primary role is to be a peacekeeping role or whether it is to be a full military role.

Because it has been unable to decide that, it is stretched very thin. Its equipment, as we all know, is relatively seriously outdated. It is stretching badly the pay, rations and benefits of the men and women who serve in the armed forces or the civilians working in the armed forces.

Until the government demonstrates the leadership to determine what in effect it will be when it grows up, these problems will continue to be there with the poor quality of housing and the lack of other amenities which come with that territory.

I have not seen any lack of leadership. I would agree wholeheartedly with the recommendation before us:

That the House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian forces.

I hope we put an end to this charade of travelling around and forcing people to demean themselves by telling their personal stories, of their trips to the food bank and their moonlighting jobs at a minimum wage, and get on with the job of paying our Canadian men and women who work in the armed services a decent and fair salary.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, since my name was mentioned by the last member I feel compelled to stand once again. You are damned if you do and damned if you don't as far as the NDP is concerned.

If the minister had said they were to talk to a few generals to straighten out the problem with morale, quality of life and living conditions in the forces, the NDP would have been the first party to say that was another top down solution and that the government was ignoring the rank and file. However, when the minister takes the initiative to have the defence committee go out to various bases in a true bottom-up solution, to solicit the views and concerns of members of the forces, the NDP goes on the attack once again.

It is unfortunate because it is a very historic effort on the part of the defence committee. It has never happened before in Canadian history. It has never gone to members of the Canadian forces, who are trained in terms of their discipline not to speak up, not to be political, to receive their comments. The minister is to be congratulated.

I have another comment to make before I sit down. The NDP does not seem to understand either the white paper and what the white paper is all about. The white paper provides for a multipurpose combat ready force serving Canada. That is exactly what we have. There is no confusion there. If the member read the white

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paper I am sure he would appreciate the details of what are the responsibilities of the Canadian forces.

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, again I simply do not agree that there was any leadership demonstrated in this whole area.

If they did not want professionals to look at the situation and resolve it, why would they not simply let the Canadian military have the right to join a union as some other countries do and negotiate pay and rations with the government? Why not sit down and do it that way?

Mr. David Pratt: They do not want to do it.

Mr. Dick Proctor: How is that known? Has there been a vote?

Mr. David Pratt: I have been to 13 bases and the consensus is absolutely no way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Please do not leave the Chair and the rest of members out of this debate.

• (1600)

Mr. Dick Proctor: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton says that he has asked people. There are votes, there are secret votes, there are hand ballots, there is hand raising and the whole thing. If the government was serious about this it would consider this option.

Mr. George Proud (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Peterborough.

I am very pleased this afternoon to address this motion on the government's leadership with respect to the Canadian forces. I believe that the government has indeed shown tremendous leadership.

Last year the then Minister of National Defence published his report to the Prime Minister. That report, along with Chief Justice Dickson's report on military justice, contained 100 recommendations on how the Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces should move forward to change, to improve and to restore the pride and sense of purpose of the forces.

These reports recommended that action be taken in areas such as military discipline, value and ethics, leadership, the command and rank structure, operational missions, terms and conditions of service, the national headquarters and relations with the Canadian public.

The very comprehensive nature of these changes reflects the extent of the challenges we were facing. At that time the Department of National Defence and the forces were emerging from turbulent years. There were challenges to respond to successive budget cuts, personnel reductions and a very active slate of operations both at home and abroad.

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Intense public scrutiny was taking its toll and resulted in the leadership, discipline, command and management, and even the honour of the Canadian forces being called into question. But since that time the Department of National Defence and the Canadian forces have been very busy implementing these recommendations and putting in place many other initiatives.

Before I describe those initiatives I would like to briefly mention some of the many initiatives the government took during its first mandate.

In 1994 the government established the special joint committee on Canada's defence policy of which I was a member. In response to that valuable report the government wrote the 1994 white paper on Canada's defence policy.

In 1995 it was this government that established the commission on restructuring the reserves. I am proud to say that I was chairman of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs when we reviewed that commission's report. Since then the government has made numerous achievements in implementing necessary changes.

Closer to home, I wish to commend the minister for his commitment to Prince Edward Islanders when he announced the construction of a new naval reserve base in my riding of Hillsborough. This new base is now up and running and is recognition of the islanders' unwavering support for the Canadian forces.

I might just say that in 1939, the day war was declared, every one of the members of the HMCS *Queen Charlotte* volunteered for active duty.

Before I get carried away with the countless past initiatives, I should revert to the most recent examples of how the government has shown excellent leadership. To begin with, there is almost entirely a new leadership team. Solid leadership is essential to implementing reforms, and every one of these leaders has expressed their commitment to moving the agenda forward.

Another example of these changes is the NATO flying training in Canada program. Under this initiative, which was announced last November, industry partners will carry out most of the functions that are now handled by the defence organization. This project will significantly reduce the cost of training military pilots. It will also mean almost \$1 billion in direct industrial benefits for this country.

These are just two types of changes, but there are other major areas of reform that show leadership. For example, the Minister of National Defence responded last October to the report of the Somalia commission of inquiry in a report very aptly entitled "A Commitment to Change". This report addressed each of the commission's recommendations and indicated agreement with some 83% of them. Of the 28 recommendations that were not

accepted, most of the underlying concerns have been or will be addressed in a different way than the commission members specified. But they will be addressed.

In many cases the commission's recommendations were already implemented and others have specific target dates for implementation.

● (1605)

The commission of inquiry requested that the minister report to parliament on the department's implementation of the commission's recommendations. In addition to this report, the minister has asked prominent Canadians to participate in the minister's monitoring committee on change, which will report semi-annually to him on the department's progress.

Another important initiative is amending the National Defence Act to allow for comprehensive change to the military justice system. These amendments, which were referred to the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, will help to renew the Canadian forces by enhancing the transparency, fairness and effectiveness of the military justice system.

In fact, following this morning's very productive meeting, I expect a favourable report to the House to be forthcoming.

These amendments, the most comprehensive ever since the enactment of the NDA in 1950, clarify the roles and responsibilities of key figures in the military justice system and establish a clear separation between investigative, prosecutorial, defence and judicial functions. The amendments improve accountability and transparency by creating two oversight bodies, namely, the Military Police Complaints Commission and the Canadian Forces Grievance Board, both of whose reports will be tabled in parliament by the minister.

Implementing these reforms is all about being able to maintain multipurpose, combat-capable forces that are able to defend Canadian interests and contribute to international peace and security. Moreover, these reforms are also about ensuring the trust, respect and confidence of Canadians as the forces carry out these tasks.

Because the government believes this policy stands firm, it has also taken steps in the past year on certain white paper issues, such as equipping the forces. For example, among the various capital investments made under our leadership, the government is acquiring four Upholder class, diesel-electric submarines from the United Kingdom.

The government has also decided to purchase 15 search and rescue helicopters for the Canadian forces. The Cormorants have the power, speed and endurance to cope with the extreme weather conditions and vast distances that characterize Canada's unique and challenging search and rescue environment.

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Of course, since last year there has been a very busy slate of operations, both at home and abroad.

I do not need to remind members about the natural disasters Canadians faced over the last year and that the Canadian forces took part in all of them. We have recently sent 50 Canadian forces personnel, including 16 reservists and some equipment, to help fight the terrible forest fires in Alberta.

At the same time as undertaking these domestic operations there have also been changes in the forces' international activities.

For example, just yesterday the minister announced that we are sending 20 to 30 personnel and 10 specialized front-end loaders to Italy to assist in the clean-up of the devastating mudslides in the area of Sarno, Italy.

Last December members of the forces returned from serving with the United Nations mission in Haiti, where they assisted in sustaining a secure and stable environment.

Recently Canada agreed to participate in two new missions. In February the government announced that Canada would send the patrol frigate HMCS *Toronto* and two KC-130 Hercules tactical air-to-air refuelling planes to the gulf as Canada's contribution to possible military action against Iraq. The government has also approved Canadian participation in a new three-month United Nations peace support mission in Central Africa.

From what I have described so far we can see that a great deal of work has been done over the last year. Changes are being made on every front. I believe these changes have demanded strong and effective leadership from the government.

These are changes that will improve transparency and accountability, changes that will improve the quality of life for members of the forces, changes that will ensure the forces can continue to do the job that the government has assigned to them.

I believe that the government has indeed shown and will continue to show leadership with respect to the Canadian forces and it should be commended for that.

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to another ministerial speech from the parliamentary secretary. I would like to bring up this point with him.

He mentioned the natural disasters that have occurred in the last several years across our country, in the Saguenay, in the Red River and the ice storm, and I fully support the military's role, their great efforts and their great work to help the people affected by those disasters.

However, if such a disaster were to occur in British Columbia, what would the government's response be?

This government closed CFB Chilliwack in the Fraser Valley. That base would have provided support to the greater Vancouver

region if there were a natural disaster. There are over two million people in that area. The closest base has now been moved to a Liberal riding in Edmonton. What a big surprise. I cannot believe it. If there were a natural disaster in that region of the country the forces would have to go through the Rockies for 12 hours with heavy equipment to get there. If there were a natural disaster, I rather doubt that route could be taken by the forces.

• (1610)

The parliamentary secretary mentioned that there is a new naval base in his own riding. Surprise, surprise. I am questioning whether the government is basing these decisions on sound policy, on directions for the country, or is it more political patronage in the establishment of these facilities?

I want to hear about CFB Chilliwack and why this government chose to close that facility.

Mr. George Proud: Mr. Speaker, numerous bases have been closed over the last number of years, Chilliwack among them. A lot of bases were closed, but the really big hits took place on the east coast of Canada. The air base in my own province of Prince Edward Island was closed in 1989. These things have been going on since the end of the second world war. Many of these bases were out of date and no longer needed.

As far as the Canadian forces' being able to get to British Columbia, there will be no problem with that. As I said in my speech, we have already sent troops to Italy. I am sure if we can send them to Italy we can certainly send them to British Columbia a lot faster.

As far as the naval base in Prince Edward Island is concerned, it has been ongoing for a number of years. It was through this government that we finally got the money to complete it. This was promised long and ever ago. It is now in place on the east coast. It is a very good naval base. I believe that Prince Edward Island and all other provinces deserve to have a military presence.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs. I hoped he would talk a little about the problems between veterans affairs and the Canadian forces. In our travels through the different bases we heard quite a bit from people who suffered injuries while in the forces. When they leave the forces and go to veterans affairs there seems to be a block in the interchange between the two. Information is not getting across.

There is a problem with different doctors. The Canadian forces have one doctor and when they go to veterans affairs they see another doctor. There seems to be a blockage. Every time somebody applies to veterans affairs they do not seem to get the two tied together. Medical documents seem to disappear. They melt going from one to the other.

Supply

Could the parliamentary secretary tell us whether the information handed down to the committee will go immediately to veterans affairs to be handled, or will we have to wait for it to go through report stage?

Mr. George Proud: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his questions. There is no doubt, and I have heard it many times in my office as I know he has heard it in his, that people have experienced this breakdown in communications and, for want of a better word, this turf protection between the two departments.

I listened to members from veterans affairs the day before yesterday as they appeared before our committee along with a liaison officer from the Department of National Defence. There are still problems with people who are injured in the forces who then leave the forces and come under the Department of Veterans Affairs. However, I am confident this is being overcome. It is not 100% yet. There is no doubt there is a long road to go.

The member talked about different doctors, one from national defence and another from veterans affairs, examining the same person. These things must be overcome and they are being overcome as we go down this road. As this communication continues, as a result of a number of investigations by the committee, by the McLellan report and others, I believe it will be much easier for people leaving the forces to get veterans affairs benefits than it has been in the past. That is not to say it is right and all fixed by any stretch of the imagination.

However, I am confident from what I have heard in the last week that the changes being made are real and that people are very serious about making this transition as seamless as possible.

• (1615)

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to join this debate on the motion concerning the armed forces of Canada.

As my colleague has just indicated, the record of this government in meeting the defence challenges and defence needs of this country is outstanding. Our defence policy is responding to the characteristics of the post-cold war environment. Our Canadian forces have shown themselves to be fully capable of executing this policy. This is a clear reflection of the strong political leadership which the government has provided to our forces.

The Canadian forces are designed to do many things. They protect Canada's sovereignty, secure our global interests and co-operate with friends and allies in maintaining a stable, peaceful international system.

Since the collapse of the Berlin wall, the Canadian forces have played an increasingly important role in promoting international

peace and security around the world. They have participated in an unprecedented number of peace support operations during this time.

Over the past few years our Canadian forces have been subject to intense public scrutiny and indeed criticism. Yet at the same time they have continued to carry out their assigned tasks both at home and abroad with professionalism and courage. These fine men and women have been put to the test time and time again and they have accomplished great things.

Our military is recognized around the world for its expertise and experience.

The people of our Canadian forces performed admirably during the gulf war. They made a meaningful contribution to that campaign. Since then they have participated in several deployments to the Arabian gulf area to assist in the maintenance of the embargo against Iraq. They have reached out to help and have spared no effort in responding to the humanitarian crisis in Rwanda. While they could not stop the bloodshed, General Dallaire's tiny force was able to save thousands of lives.

They continue to assist in the international community in dealing with the tragic conflict in the Balkans. Their military contributions include land, sea and air capabilities as well as a wide range of humanitarian activities. They helped stabilize the volatile situation in Haiti and initiated a wide range of humanitarian projects throughout that country.

They led a multinational response to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance in central Africa thereby serving as a catalyst to help break the impasse that had kept refugees in camps for two years. Recently the Canadian forces have deployed troops in the Central African Republic to assist in the maintenance of peace and security there.

As my colleague mentioned this afternoon, our Canadian forces have been asked to assist with the tragic mud slides in Italy.

We also have responsibilities very close to home. Last January the Canadian forces mounted an operation which attracted Canadians' favourable attention and I am sure warmed their hearts. Operation recuperation was the largest peacetime deployment of the Canadian forces in their history. Just as the storm in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick showed Canadians at their very best, banding together in times of trouble to assist their friends and neighbours, it also highlighted one of the Canadian forces' most essential roles: protecting the lives and property of Canadians in times of crisis.

Operation recuperation at its height saw more than 16,000 men and women of our Canadian forces deployed from bases across Canada into storm ravaged areas where they assisted civilian authorities in responding to one of the greatest natural catastrophes in Canadian history. Masses of uniformed men and women are a

sight seldom seen in Canada's urban areas but there they were during the terrible ice storm.

Newfoundlanders, British Columbians, Quebecois, New Brunswickers, indeed military personnel from every part of the country assisted with hydro repairs, distributed camp cots, air mattresses and sleeping bags, set up and distributed generators, assisted in clean-up operations, acted as police and advisers and supplied water and hot meals. I spent three days in the ice storm area and I saw this myself. It was remarkable to see armed forces with full equipment functioning in our own country in that way.

• (1620)

Never was it clearer that the Canadian Armed Forces are a deeply rooted national institution representative of all Canadians and available to all Canadians. They provide a source of comfort, security and pride drawing us closer together.

Like the assistance provided during the Red River flood in Manitoba last year, or in the Saguenay and previous natural disasters, or at the present time in Alberta fighting the forest fires, these were proud moments for our Canadian forces. They were fulfilling one of the crucial functions of any national military organization: reacting, and quickly, to the unexpected at the direction of the government.

Operation recuperation was a chance to render aid where and when it was most needed, to help the taxpayers and citizens of Canada. It was an opportunity to reinforce public faith in our Canadian forces, in their professionalism, in their commitment to service and in the value of maintaining a substantial viable military organization even in times of peace.

Yet with more than 16,000 unarmed Canadian service personnel rebuilding hydro wires and helping people in need move to heated homes and emergency shelters, we must not forget that this mission, critically important though it was, was only one of many that we were asking our men and women in uniform to perform at that time.

At the same time that thousands of our personnel were deploying into eastern Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, hundreds more were completing a much longer journey to meet Canada's United Nations obligations in the former Yugoslavia as part of the international community's ongoing commitment to peace and stability in that part of the world. They were replacing other Canadians who had been there busy performing the same function.

Both missions were right and just. Both were rewarding and potentially dangerous. Both demanded of our citizens in uniform the utmost in training, preparation, will-power and skill.

These missions and others like them are not easy. The professionalism of Canadian forces personnel in deploying so many

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people and so much equipment so quickly to trouble spots does not come without a tradition of expertise and many years of training and experience. Such operations demand organizational skills, physical toughness, mental agility and the art of leadership. Sheer flexibility too.

Think of where the army, the air force and the navy have been and what they have done in just the last two years. Saguenay, Haiti, the skies over Bosnia-Herzegovina, Manitoba, Zaire, the Arabian Sea, ex-Yugoslavia, the Central African Republic, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, New Brunswick, Italy. These are in addition to all our more longstanding, ongoing obligations.

The fact that the Canadian forces have accomplished so much during the past few years is proof positive that this government has provided and continues to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian forces.

[*Translation*]

Mr. René Canuel (Matapédia—Matane, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member who said his government has provided leadership for some time. It may be true in a sense, but there have been some scandals. Some military personnel gave a wake-up call to the government by doing unacceptable things.

Of course, I also want to pay tribute to the Canadian and Quebec members of our armed forces. A number of my former students are serving in the forces and they honour us through their tremendous work. However, when we say that a government must take its responsibilities, we mean a lot more than that. What do we do with an army? Do we want a peacekeeping force or combat troops?

• (1625)

I think Canada should opt for a peacekeeping force and that decision should be made collectively. The government should assume its responsibilities, because what will the role of an army be in five or ten years, if not to maintain peace, or to provide services to the community, as was done in the Lac-Saint-Jean region, in the areas hit by the ice storm, and in Manitoba? I salute our military for their role in these instances.

It is essential to define the role of our forces. But how are we going to equip them? With submarines? Through contracts that were signed, that the government does not want to fulfil, or that it countersigns? We lost an incredible amount of money with the helicopters. Is this taking one's responsibilities? I do not think so. Is this providing leadership? I do not think so.

I also want to talk about another point, women in the forces. How many women said they were almost persecuted? How many women generals are there in the Canadian forces? Women do not

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have the importance they deserve, and I wonder what the hon. member has to say about this.

[English]

Mr. Peter Adams: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for a number of interesting points.

There is one thing I would like to say first though. I think for a variety of reasons our armed forces have come through a period of time when they have been subject to enormous public scrutiny and criticism. Although wherever there is fault there should be public scrutiny and criticism, I would like to think we have come through that stage now and we are at the time when we can support our armed forces and we can compliment them for the things that they have done and for the things that they do.

That is what I was trying to do in my speech. It was not to ignore some of the problems but the time I hope is now past to emphasize the problems.

With regard to the other parts of my colleague's questions, first in defining the role, as I tried to point out, we ask a great deal of our armed forces. We ask them to be available for disasters here and abroad. We ask them to be in relatively peaceful peacekeeping situations and very dangerous peacekeeping situations and so on.

I do not see how in the modern world we can design an armed forces except one that is very flexible and capable of performing all sorts of tasks, while at the same time being combat capable. It is important. The Canadian forces are a military unit. They have to be combat capable, but also in the new world they have to be able to adapt to a great variety of situations. I do not think it is easy to define a single role or even one or two roles.

The hon. member mentioned the matter of equipment. It is very important, as has been stressed today, that we now move steadily, after some of the problems that we have had, and properly equip our armed forces.

I mention the submarines. I myself, as you know, Mr. Speaker, have done a great deal of work on sea ice. I have studied sea ice in various parts of the north. I greatly regret the fact that we have not had the capability, except by air, of getting people and troops, if that is the right thing, into some of the remote parts of Canada which are covered by ice.

The submarines, I hope adapted for under ice work, will be a useful addition to one of the many capacities that our armed forces need, which is to deal with the huge northern territory, land and sea, that we have in those parts.

With respect to women, I make the point again, in my view great progress has been made with the role of women in all parts of our armed forces. I agree with my colleague and I hope that progress continues.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): 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 Acadie—Bathurst, Employment insurance.

• (1630)

[English]

Mr. Mark Muisse (West Nova, PC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Richmond—Arthabaska.

Canada has a very rich and proud military history. Since Confederation our young men and women have responded to this country's call to arms by risking their lives in defence of our country.

The exploits of our Canadian military personnel are legendary throughout the world. History will always remember the determination of our heroic young Canadians at Vimy Ridge during the first world war. Their heroism helped turn the tides of battle in favour of leading to the eventual allied victory. Vimy helped define us as a nation.

The second world war saw our young Canadian soldiers involved in some of the most important battles of the war. The ill-fated landing on the beaches of Normandy, our victorious return to Dieppe and our successful victory during the battle of the Atlantic are all part of Canada's proud military history.

Often lost to Canadians is the vital role our military has played and continues to play in helping maintain a peaceful existence throughout the world. Our Canadian peacekeepers are among the most respected throughout the world. The demand for Canadian peacekeepers continues to exceed our capabilities.

Records of Canadian peacekeeping operations can be found in troubled countries throughout the world including Bosnia, Turkey, Somalia and Haiti, just to name a few.

Most recently our military has received great praise for its efforts at home. I would like to extend our appreciation and congratulations on recent citations of excellence for the work performed during this winter's ice storm, as well as last year's Winnipeg floods. At present some of our forces are involved in fighting forest fires in Alberta. These acts of compassion within our own boundaries have helped rekindle the once proud image of our military.

I mention the military's proud image in the past tense because since the government took power it has done everything in its means to reduce this proud organization from a first rate fighting force into nothing less than a support operation for our NATO allies.

It pains me deeply to have to say this about our military. However, consistent government cuts in military spending and a lack of leadership from the top are responsible for seriously reducing our military's capability resulting in serious morale problems. It does not take long to come up with reasons there is such a serious morale problem in the military.

The Liberal government has done more in recent years to destroy our Canadian military than the German army did during both world wars. It closed many of our military bases across the country including CFB Cornwallis in my riding. In most instances these bases had a long and proud history of service to the Canadian people. The government has even refused to allow stained glass windows that were removed from Cornwallis base to be returned as part of the new military museum. These windows were donated to the base by those who trained there to commemorate all those who participated in the battle of the Atlantic.

This part of our military heritage has been tucked away where only a select few will have an opportunity to enjoy them. The wishes of our military personnel are once again being ignored.

Our brave young helicopter pilots continue to risk their lives each day flying dangerous, antiquated Sea King helicopters. These helicopters have long since worn out their usefulness and should be replaced. For each hour flown it takes almost 24 hours of maintenance, and I believe I am conservative in that comment. An hon. colleague says 70 hours of maintenance. It is not a good ratio.

For what can only be described as crass politics at its worst, the Liberal government chose to gamble with the lives of our brave pilots by cancelling the former government's EH-101 helicopter deal. Not only did it stick Canadian taxpayers with a \$500 million cancellation penalty, but it also delayed delivery of much needed helicopters putting our pilots at risk of death or serious injury.

The government will say it has purchased new search and rescue helicopters at a much cheaper price. These new helicopters resemble the cancelled EH-101, but taking into account some of the needed modifications to these new helicopters the final tally will be very close to the original EH-101 deal therefore offering Canadians no savings at all.

● (1635)

Our military personnel who served in the gulf war deserve our utmost appreciation for a job well done. They distinguished themselves with honour. How does the government choose to recognize these brave men and women who once again answered the country's call in a time of crisis? I am not sure it recognizes the valiant efforts of these soldiers.

Supply

The government still refuses to recognize this conflict as the gulf war, instead choosing to call it special duty area Persian Gulf. I believe we are the only country involved in that war which does not acknowledge it as such. By not recognizing it as a war the government can defend its decision not to award the veterans the same disability benefits as they would war veterans.

During the recent SCONDVA hearings in Halifax we heard from a number of military personnel and their spouses. Among those presenting was a wonderful human being from my constituency by the name of Sue Riordon whose husband has been left totally disabled from the effects of gulf war syndrome. The military has a gulf war clinic, yet the government does not recognize the gulf war. Military doctors question the existence of this syndrome. Surely they cannot deny the debilitating effect this disease is having on thousands of Canadian and U.S. veterans alike.

People such as Sue Riordon, Louise Richards, Rudy Saueracker and Michael Innes, to name just a few, have had to battle the Department of National Defence every step of the way to try to obtain benefits they and others affected by gulf war syndrome are legally entitled to receive. Many former veterans have refused to pursue their rights for fear of reprisal through possible reduction of their existing pensions.

There is reason for fear as Sue discovered. Having raised very pertinent questions about gulf war veterans benefits she quickly found herself and her husband being chosen for audit with the results continually pending.

Our military needs the government to show some leadership. The stories about military personnel moonlighting because they cannot make ends meet, our veterans having to fight tooth and nail with national defence to secure an adequate pension, living arrangements on bases that are far less than normal standard, torn uniforms, outdated equipment, and a serious lack of direction for our military personnel are all about problems that must be immediately addressed by the Liberal government if we are ever to restore pride and dignity to our military.

As parliamentarians we have a duty to Canadians including our Canadian forces. If we do not speak up for them who will? If we continue to treat them with disrespect how will others treat them? If the government fails to provide leadership to our forces how can we expect our forces to show leadership whether it is in Canada or abroad?

These are but a few of the illustrations of the government's continuing campaign not to provide for the military. The government sends speaking notes on Remembrance Day in November and then forgets about its veterans until next year. I believe we should remember and honour our veterans each and every day. The

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government has forgotten our veterans. The government wants to forget the men and women who serve in our forces today.

I am humbled to stand in the House today to speak on behalf of all the men and women who fought and continue to serve so valiantly on foreign soil in the quest for peace and freedom. Let us not forget.

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for West Nova especially the genesis of his talk. He seemed to be using all the correct terminology when speaking about our military being honourable, dedicated, devoted and hard working. Then he reached a certain point in his discourse where he went downhill faster than an Ottawa valley otter could slide into the local creek, on his belly I might add.

The hon. member raised the case of the helicopters and was rather creative in his methodology. I had a math teacher in high school who certainly would disagree. In the first instance he was talking about \$5 billion with the Conservative government, and then the Liberal government did the right thing and put the helicopter bidding process out for public bid. It received the best bid that it possibly could get, although personally I was a little disappointed that Boeing, which is in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, was not the successful bidder. We saved literally hundreds of millions of dollars in the awarding of that contract.

• (1640)

The member said there were certain reprisals for people who appeared before the defence committee which has been travelling throughout the country. Many people do not realize that committee members from all political parties have been doing an absolutely outstanding job.

I might say to the member for West Nova that even a member from his particular party has not been real conservative in his thinking when it comes to looking after the spouses and members of the military. He should inquire from his colleague in his own caucus. All people who appeared before the committee have been told very explicitly that there will be no reprisals whatsoever.

An hon. member: Is this a speech or a question?

Mr. Hec Clouthier: I am getting to the question. I just had to set the record straight. I will rush to the conclusion.

With regard to the veterans he would be interested to know that the veterans in Canada have without a doubt the best compensation of any veterans in the entire world. I would ask him, if he would care to do so, to respond to my question.

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in answering the hon. member's question.

The hon. member states that he was very happy to hear my comments, but I think he became disturbed when I went further and spoke the truth about the situation that our forces are faced with. I think it hurts him. My mother used to tell me an old saying that the truth hurts. The truth is hurting and we are hearing it today.

Let me just quote a couple of facts about the cost of killing the deal for the EH-101 back in 1993. They do not take into account that the deal the Conservatives entered into in 1993 was for 15 search and rescue helicopters and 35 shipborne helicopters. We are getting 15 helicopters similar to the EH-101s for a similar cost or less money but by the time they are reconfigured to function the way they are supposed to there will be very little saving.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Mark Muise: The hon. member just goes on and on shooting rhetoric across the floor so I will sit down.

Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the morale. I would like to ask him the following question.

With approximately 60,000 troops in the Canadian forces and 60 generals we have more commissioned officers per soldier and per military personnel than any country in the world. No wonder the NCOs are in the mood they are in. Would the member not agree with that?

Mr. Mark Muise: Mr. Speaker, the morale question in the military is not necessarily one that has to do with dollars, cents and equipment. It is how people are treated. It is how military men and women who are still serving see their counterparts that have left the military being treated by the institution they so proudly serve. When these types of things happen we cannot expect anything but for morale to drop.

The staffing situation is also another issue but I see that I do not have time to continue.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, essentially today's debate has touched on a number of details and information, but primarily the problem is this government's lack of respect for the men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces. I think that is the way it can be summed up lack of respect.

• (1645)

Our military personnel go everywhere in the world. People react favourably when they see "Canada". They are drawn to the men and women who represent us in peacekeeping missions. They are glad to see our soldiers in Bosnia and elsewhere.

When there is flooding or some other problem in some part of the country, our armed forces personnel go out into the part of the country affected, to our counties, to our rural areas, and Canadians and Quebeckers are glad to see the men and women of the

Canadian forces out lending a hand. They are glad to see them there, glad to know they are not ignoring those with problems, glad they will lend a hand.

The men and women of the armed forces are respected by people everywhere except by the government, or more precisely by cabinet.

I am prepared to say that, when it comes to looking at the problems of the armed forces, my colleague for Compton—Stansstead is far more aware of the details than I, but one might say that the general in charge of the armed forces is a man respectful of his men and women, and respected by all, a man who is doing a good job. What is it that is not working properly?

We turn to the minister. I would not want to make any excuses for the minister, but I do believe that in some cases he wants to ensure that the men and women of our armed forces receive the equipment, the training and the money they need to do a good job. The problem again lies within cabinet. We do not know how, but funding is being cut by 30%.

With the helicopters we have today—because the government decided to buy some—every hour of flying time requires 70 hours of maintenance. Essentially, our helicopters are birdhouses with rotors on top. That is what they are like now. They put the lives of our pilots and their passengers at risk.

Today we would have the latest model helicopter had the Liberals, for strictly political reasons, not spent over \$500 million to cancel a contract on an election promise. This shows a lack of respect for Canadian forces.

It also shows a lack of respect for Canadians for having wasted \$500 million. The Minister of National Defence also displayed a lack of respect for parliamentarians in preparing to announce the purchase of helicopters by trying, for purely political and partisan reasons, to find a way to hide the fact that the helicopters were the same as those the Conservatives wanted to buy, in consultation of course with the Canadian Armed Forces.

They looked for a little hint, a little sales pitch to say that the helicopters were not the same. They came up with a name: Cadillac, Chevrolet. That was the best they could do. In the meantime, months went by and no helicopters.

The issue was totally partisan. How can the men and women in the forces feel good about themselves and young people be interested in signing up if the purchase of the helicopters was delayed over the need to come up with a name like Cadillac or Chevrolet? They waffled about for six months. This is a flagrant lack of respect.

The armed forces are being realigned, but there are limits. There is still a problem. Our soldiers have no boots. The uniforms are pitiful. The men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces have no boots. There are no boots.

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I was a mayor for some ten years, and we supplied work boots to our employees. That was customary. We had them. If a pair of boots were worn out, we replaced them. They are having a hard time getting boots for the Canadian Armed Forces. There are limits. Is there no respect? How do we expect to get people to join the armed forces when we cannot even equip them properly?

Incidentally, I have in my riding one of the businesses that manufacture boots for the armed forces. I am sure that it is ready and able to carry out a contract to supply the men and women of the armed forces with boots.

Another example of lack of respect, which my colleague touched on, concerns those who saw battle and supported allied forces in the gulf war.

• (1650)

They will not admit that the gulf war was a war. Why? Because, once again, they do not want to recognize gulf war veterans. They are showing a lack of respect for the men and women who fought and provided support services in Iraq.

It is the same thing with helicopters. Instead of describing them as Cadillacs, they describe them as Chevys. Instead of talking about the gulf war, they talk about the Persian adventure or whatever. There is a big problem somewhere. I hope the minister is not the problem. I do know, however, that the problem is within cabinet.

A clear message ought to be sent to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces to let them know that the days of savage and disrespectful cuts are over. First we cut their funding, then we ask them to give us a hand. Enough is enough. It is time to send them a very clear message.

Helicopters were finally purchased, but at an absolutely incredible price. Let us not forget that, until the old contraptions were replaced with brand new helicopters, for each hour of flight, the military had to spend ten hours on maintenance. It all adds up. Now, we can say goodbye to our old contraptions and fly decent aircraft. Eventually, we will also get decent submarines.

Could we not send other messages as well, because our Canadian Armed Forces members are human beings. There are human problems on the bases. There have been a number of suggestions, in several documents, that an independent ombudsman be established to whom the men and women in the forces could turn to obtain information and report difficulties. Why not?

This would be one of the best messages we could send the men and women in the Canadian forces, and it would not cost a fortune. We are not talking about helicopters, boots, submarines or canons. We are talking about the human element in the armed forces. The human issue must be resolved by humans.

Supply

In closing, we hope that there will be humans, men and women, on the government side, who will finally understand what the men and women in the forces are really going through and agree to provide solutions.

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nippissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has a problem with the way he sees money.

My apologies. I speak French like an Ottawa valley logger. My French is not as clear as that spoken in Paris.

The hon. member has a big problem with money. Permit me to point out that, before the last election, the Progressive Conservative Party was talking about cutting \$800 million from the defence budget. The member said the Liberal Party showed no respect in its handling of the helicopter and submarine acquisitions, but it is the Conservatives who decided to cut some \$800 million.

I might ask my colleague to comment on that.

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I understood perfectly. The member's French is truly excellent.

I would, however, tell my hon. colleague not to think too much because, if he does, he will come up with the right answers and probably cross the floor to join us. I therefore ask him to be patient.

On the issue of money, and I made this very clear, there is of course an economic context. What is clear, however, is that the armed forces have always been one area where it was easy to make unwarranted cuts. It is peacetime, the government says, and proceeds to cut, cut, cut.

If the hon. member wishes to pursue the matter, however, he could perhaps read the document and the appendices. What my colleague, the member for Compton—Stanstead, regularly proposes in committee is that there should be a guideline and some common respect for the men and women of the Canadian armed forces. I think that is important.

In conclusion, I remind the member that we have nothing to learn from him about finances, because, with an election in the offing, the government party, with a single stroke of the pen, signed a lovely cheque for \$500 million and up to cancel a helicopter contract for strictly partisan reasons, thus endangering the lives of the men and women who fly these bird houses.

• (1655)

[*English*]

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in this debate. I think the role of the Canadian government, at least these past few years, in supporting the defence forces has been not brilliant but very good at the very least.

I would like to direct my remarks primarily toward the reserves because I am very interested in the whole issue of the reserves. My riding is Wentworth—Burlington, but close to my riding in Hamilton there are two major reserve battalions of great historic fame, the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry and the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders.

Just two weeks ago the member for Burlington and I went on a training exercise with the Argyles at Meaford, the militia support training centre opened in 1995 near the little town of Meaford in the Bruce Peninsula. Note the date, 1995. This is obviously an initiative of this government, not the previous government.

This militia training support base is a part of a series that is to be opened across the country. There is already one that has been opened at Valcartier in Quebec. There is another one to be opened in the west at Wainwright and there are two to be opened at Galetown and Aldershot in the maritimes.

The theme of these proving grounds is to give Canada's reserve forces an opportunity to train in near combat circumstances. Meaford is a section of ground that was set aside during the second world war for the training of our troops for overseas. It went more or less into mothballs for many years. It was opened 1995 primarily for the use of the militia but also permanent force people train there as well.

It was very interesting. The member for Burlington and I arrived about noon and we were taken on to the proving grounds. There are some very excellent and modern support buildings, barracks for permanent forces primarily but also for militia forces. The area is very large, comprising of a lake, a section of the Niagara escarpment, a lot of brush and mixed countryside. In one section of the proving grounds there is an artillery range.

While we were there we saw artillery being fired. They use live rounds because they want to test the quality of the ammunition.

More important, we went down to where the Argyles were dug in. There were dug in to some terrain facing the mock enemy. The mock enemy were not all that mock. They were U.S. marines from Buffalo who were testing out the Meaford proving grounds. They were the supposed enemy approaching the Canadian militia across about two kilometres of open ground.

It was very interesting. The youngsters who were in the foxholes dug on the side of the hill were men and women who had been recruited from primarily the city of Hamilton and the surrounding area. There they were in foxholes with their primary support weapon, the C6, and a machine gun derived from that in their positions. They were staring across the countryside at the opposing forces that were supposed to be coming.

It was very interesting for me. I have done some research in the past on the military. One of the great dangers of peacetime military is that it might get engaged in buying toys or buying hardware that has political value but little real value in the event of combat.

• (1700)

As a military historian, I was most interested to see that these young militia members in their foxholes were armed with something called a C6, an automatic fire weapon that fires bullets of about .25 in calibre. It is actually measured in millimetres but I can never get the metric straight. It is half the weight of the bullet that would be carried in a normal AK47 or M30 or whatever it is the Americans use.

This weapon was totally without class. In other words, I cannot imagine gun dealers across the world wanting to acquire this weapon. It is manufactured in Canada. We started manufacturing it in Canada for Canadian forces only four or five years ago.

It is a superlative firearm. The average soldier can carry twice the amount of ammunition as an opposing soldier carrying one of the more traditional firearms that we would expect in Russian made weapons and certainly NATO made weapons.

We can see that someone in Canadian forces hierarchy is thinking very carefully and is considering the fact that when there are Canadian forces in the field, they want to minimize the weight and maximize the amount of munitions they actually carry.

This was a superb gun as well in the sense that the militia members demonstrated to me and explained that it was a gun that fires dirty. In other words there is not a lot of maintenance. It is extremely reliable.

I thought to myself that there is a lot of intelligence going on somewhere in the Canadian forces brass, in its hierarchy, to come up with a specific firearm for use by the Canadian forces and which is unique to the Canadian forces.

Provided that we do not have a repeat of the catastrophe that occurred in the first world war with the Ross rifle. I do not know whether many people around here remember Canada's first foray into producing its own—

An hon. member: George Proud.

Mr. John Bryden: George would know. I do not know that many people in this Chamber would go back to the first world war. Certain members might, perhaps.

Nevertheless, this is a superb weapon, and I am very, very impressed. I was given the opportunity to fire the machine gun. It was quite amusing. It was more amusing to see the member for Burlington lying on the ground firing this machine gun because as you know, Mr. Speaker, the member for Burlington is noted for her charm and forthrightness. It was quite amusing to see her down in the trenches firing this machine gun. Fortunately, it had blanks in it and I felt quite safe as a result.

Supply

The important point about this is that this machine gun was highly portable and the amount of kickback was very minimal. We are looking at weapons that have been designed for the modern battlefield.

Coming back to my militia, it was very interesting because there they were, all dug in. Their weapons were in place. Later we moved down the road to look at the opposing forces. Along the road came the U.S. Marines and I have never seen anything like it. It was really amusing because these enormous young men with big shoulders were marching along. I could not help but laugh because in comparison to these youngsters serving the Canadian militia up on the hill awaiting the enemy, they were huge strapping professional soldiers.

I have to say that this C6 .25 calibre high power weapon is a great leveller. The reason they can use the lighter weight bullet is that it has the same ultimate impact of bullets twice as strong.

Maybe I am just showing my Canadian nationalism but in the end I would put more trust and more confidence in those youngsters from Hamilton who were manning those trenches. Provided that the Canadian government always remembers to equip its forces properly, we cannot go wrong in the kind of policy that we have toward our militia.

Turning to that, I will point out that in 1994 the defence committee came out with a white paper that suggested cutting back on the reserves.

It is very important to listen to what standing committees produce and what the MPs in this Chamber produce in recommendations to the government.

• (1705)

We can say with some satisfaction that the defence minister overrode some of those recommendations and had another report done. Rather than cut the reserve forces back to a total of 24,000, he in fact reinstated a basic level of 30,000 for the primary reserve. In this year's estimates almost \$1 billion is going into the support of Canada's reserve forces.

I should switch for a moment. I have another story with respect to our reserves.

Not very long ago, I think it was last year, the HMCS *Shawinigan* came into Hamilton harbour on a demonstration cruise. The then defence minister was there to tour the ship and I happened to be able to come along. Local dignitaries on the afterdeck were enjoying an occasional glass of wine and quite nice sandwiches. I had the opportunity to go along with the first officer and tour the *Shawinigan* from stem to stern.

It is like the C6 gun I was talking about. The *Shawinigan* is a superb little vessel. This is tomorrow's ship. Technically it is a minesweeper. It goes along on the ocean and it is supposed to spot mines, but in fact it maps the ocean floor. It has multiple defence capabilities. There is a container in the back of the vessel. At that

Supply

time the container contained extra barracks. The *Shawinigan* is designed just like a container vessel. Any container containing any kind of weapon system on the *Shawinigan* can be transposed and it can be turned literally overnight into any kind of a support vessel.

The other thing that impressed me about the *Shawinigan* is that it is designed to be extremely mobile. The design of the ship's bow thrusters, which are not installed and I hope the defence minister will install them shortly, combined with the type of propulsion it has, the *Shawinigan* can actually turn on a dime. It can turn on its length. It should be able to turn on its length.

In today's world we have the problem of homing torpedoes. These are torpedoes which can be left on the sea floor and as soon as a vessel passes nearby, they can pursue the vessel and sink it. The *Shawinigan* has the capability of avoiding contact by one of those undersea missiles on very short notice. This is one of the reasons it is such an excellent support vessel, an excellent mine-sweeper.

I do not like to say this, with all due respect to the Minister of National Defence, but I actually like the forethought that has gone in to the Canadian built *Shawinigan* more than the forethought that is going in to the submarines that we are buying from Britain. I do want to say that I support the minister's decision to buy the submarines, but Canadian built is better. These vessels, like the *Shawinigan*, and there are four of them, are better than anything in any known navy.

What does that have to do with the reserves? The entire crew of the *Shawinigan* except for the chief officer are reservists. The reserves also have a naval reserve based in Quebec, for those who are interested in the regions of the country and how they play into our Canadian forces. We have about 5,000 reservists and they take their training and do their duty on these vessels.

It was most interesting to go around with the first officer. I am really sorry I do not remember where in the country he came from. He was most informative in showing me the various systems in place on the *Shawinigan*.

● (1710)

In terms of Canadian defence policy, preparing for the next millennium and preserving our nation, we have to stay ahead of the worldwide threat that will constantly develop against Canada. I am not talking about peacekeeping. I am talking about actual threats.

The difficulty is that Canada is one of the richest nations in the world. I am sorry to say that we have to protect that status and our sovereignty. We will always be the subject of a certain amount of hostility from other nations, not necessarily third world nations nor former iron curtain nations. There are other countries which

sometimes have designs on Canada. That should make us want to preserve a very active and capable military response.

That is why the reserves are so important rather than a professional army which takes a long time to change. With great respect for our own professional army, professional armies are like military bureaucracies. When you join as a private or as a young officer and you stay in for 20 or 30 years, you are very much influenced by your first experiences. Your vision tends to be rooted very much in the past. An army with at least half of its response force made up of reserves has an advantage. It provides the opportunity to work with young people to create a modern army that is loyal to its new weaponry.

Meaford was an interesting experience. There was a change from armoured personnel carriers and tanks. The Persian gulf war showed us that this type of hardware is enormously vulnerable and is no longer an effective answer in a land war. We have actually turned back to the citizen soldier. This is another reason I like reservists. We are creating a Canadian forces based on the classic concept of the citizen army. It is just like republican Rome. When the state gets into trouble it has a cadre of relatively well trained personnel to call upon to answer the emergency.

While I do not pretend to be an expert on all the things the government has done in terms of national defence, I believe the minister is very much on track with his changes to the reserve forces. This is where we should make the investment. In tomorrow's wars, whether it is peacekeeping, whether it is local wars, or whether it is a national emergency, we need intelligent citizen soldiers who understand modern weaponry and modern tactics.

I would put my faith any day in those young militia members I saw at Meaford or on the *Shawinigan* rather than in the professional soldiers I saw from the United States or any other country either in NATO or out.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his very interesting speech. I quite enjoyed it. There is only one thing that bothers me a bit. It is probably the same situation as the situation I expressed to the member for Oak Ridges.

It is this thing of the militia. The member said that the government has made steps by increasing the numbers of militia. The member talked about Meaford and other training centres across the country and about improving training. At the same time the bean counter somewhere along the line has said it is fine that the numbers have been increased but now the expenses have to be cut down. So they have dropped the training to 32 days a year which is not enough time to give somebody good training and to get them used to it. The member has seen how the militia works. A normal training year used to be in the 60 day range. Now we are talking half of that time. By expanding the numbers but cutting the hours we are dropping behind.

Supply

• (1715)

I would like to see both the hours increased and our soldiers well trained, particularly our militia. Part of the problem is that we seem to be comfortable with the fire power they have. Unfortunately they are lacking a lot of other things.

The militia has access to clothing, but they do not seem to have access to other things such as equipment. Our soldiers find themselves in the opposite situation. They do not seem to have access to clothing. Something seems to be missing.

Perhaps the member would care to comment on that.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, one of the advantages of a debate like this is that we can raise genuine issues that we are concerned about.

When I was at Meaford I was impressed by the basic weaponry they were supplied with. They had excellent weaponry. But I did notice that the tents, for example, in the communications area, although well organized with maps and so on, had holes in them. My thought was that if it rained they would get pretty wet. There was no doubt about it.

I would also like to say that while I applaud the fact that the primary reserve level has been brought up to 30,000, I would actually like to see it increased even more. I would like to see the reserve increased by another 10,000.

What I failed to mention in my speech is that the reserves have an enormous role to play in our society in giving young people an opportunity to serve in an environment in which they put selfish motives aside and look at larger issues such as serving their country and being part of an effort that is not celebrating just the individual, but working together as a group.

Do not mistake my remarks that I am only here to praise the government. I believe there are things the government can do. I agree with the member on the equipment problem. I believe from what I have heard the defence minister say, especially during question period, that there is a move afoot to re-equip the Canadian forces. If we are going to send these kids out to fight it is very important that they have the best weapons.

I believe that someone at the head of the defence establishment, and I would like to think it is the minister but I suspect there is some brass involved as well, is thinking ahead and will supply the Canadian forces with the appropriate weaponry first. Next must come good equipment and, I agree, more hours if possible.

Mr. Peter Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's remarks, but I would like again to pick up the question of the reserve.

I agree with my colleague. He gave the example of citizen soldiers in our cities, but it seems to me that many of the

peacekeeping operations that we have around the world are best served by a judicious mix of regular soldiers and citizen soldiers. Very often the troops are dealing with civilians and it is good to have combat-ready troops, but it is also good to have troops who may be combat-ready but who live in normal communities.

The other aspect of that, of course, is that the reserve provides a presence for our armed forces in all the communities across the country and it ties in with the cadets. I heard the member's remark about the increase. I had heard that we were perhaps the only one of the G-7 nations with fewer reserve troops than regular troops. I wonder if my colleague knows if that is true and I wonder if he would comment further on how we might develop a larger, more diverse, effective reserve force.

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, the short answer to the member's question is, we need to make more of a financial investment.

• (1720)

We already have the infrastructure because the armouries are there, but if we invest in another 10,000 reservists and the equipment they require we will more than recoup that investment in the savings we make on intercity problems. It is not that we are taking off the street kids who would otherwise be involved in crime. It is not that at all. When we take young people into the Canadian forces in a reserve capacity what happens is that they go back into their communities with their uniforms and they become a part of the community. It is like the Boy Scouts. They return to their communities and they have a tremendous role to play.

We saw the value of the reserves, of the citizen soldiery, in the ice storm incident and in the problem we had with the floods out west.

It is a worthy investment. Let us agree on all sides of the House that we can conclude this debate by saying there is consensus on all sides of the House to invest more in the reserves and to do more for the young people of Canada. It will promote the nation, it will promote the flag and it will make Canadians that much more proud of themselves.

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker made some comments with respect to the submarines about which I was very intrigued. He did not seem to be all that enthused with the decision to go with the Upholder submarines.

The defence committee recently had the opportunity to tour the HMCS *Okanagan*, one of the current submarines in our fleet. Commander Dermot Mulholland was delighted about the fact that they are very cheap. He said it was like a dream buy for the Canadian forces. They are extremely quiet and they are faster than the current submarines, the Oberon class submarines. They will also give us an opportunity to train well with the Americans.

Supply

What problem does he see with the Upholders? Many people think it is a great deal?

Mr. John Bryden: Mr. Speaker, the problem with the Upholder is the *Shawinigan*. Vessels like the *Shawinigan* are more than a match for vessels like the Upholder, and the *Shawinigan* costs a lot less.

The reason the Upholder is a good investment, and I support the government on this, is that we need to have modern submarines in order to play games with the Americans. Basically that is what it amounts to. In order to stay abreast of any submarine warfare we have to have the latest in technology and the Oberon class of submarines is the latest in technology.

I also note that the purchase of the British submarines is basically an exchange deal for time on Canadian ranges for British troops. It is not so much a dollar investment as it is a military exchange with the United Kingdom.

In the end, in tomorrow's world, smaller is better, although I do support, in principle at least, the purchase of the four British submarines.

Mr. Leon E. Benoit (Lakeland, Ref.): Mr. Speaker, I want to start by saying that I appreciate the efforts of the Conservative Party for presenting this motion today. The motion reads:

That this House condemn the government for its failure to provide strong political leadership to Her Majesty's Canadian Forces.

I expected that we would have heard from speakers from all parties in the House today that in fact that leadership is missing. We have indeed heard as we travelled with the defence committee, of which I am a member and of which many of the members who have spoken are members, that there is a lack of leadership on the part of the government when it comes to the Canadian forces.

I will talk about this leadership from a couple of points of view. First, I will give a clear demonstration of the lack of political leadership by making two key points and then I will demonstrate the lack of commitment by talking about one particular case involving the military's most important assets, people.

• (1725)

First, the lack of political leadership can be clearly demonstrated in several ways. Let us start with funding. Money is not everything. Putting more money into the military is not going to solve many of the problems that we have in the Canadian military today. However, funding has dropped below a critical level which does not and will not allow, even with proper management, Canada to sustain the kind of military force that it needs to provide the basic security that Canadians expect for our country. Funding has dropped from

\$12.5 billion in 1992, just before this government took office, to \$9.3 billion this year.

Clearly this government, as it has over the past many years, as all governments have over the past 30 to 35 years, found the military to be an easy target. Because of the lack of commitment shown to the military by the top leadership in this country the general public does not get too excited when the military is cut. That situation is changing due to the involvement of the men and women in our forces in some of the key natural disasters that have taken place. But funding has been cut from \$12.5 billion to \$9.3 billion.

Other than funding, a complete lack of support on the part of our Prime Minister and this government has been shown in several ways. For example, when was the last time we heard the Prime Minister say that we need a strong military to provide basic security for this country? I challenge anybody to remember that. I certainly cannot and I doubt that anybody in this House can. It has not happened. The Prime Minister is not committed to having a strong military. When was the last time we heard the Prime Minister say that the men and women of the forces are doing a great job? We saw a little bit of that when the men and women of the forces were involved in the ice storm, in the floods and in peacekeeping.

The Prime Minister seems to completely miss the point that the primary role of our forces is to provide security for Canada as a sovereign nation. The lack of belief on the part of governments over the last 30 years that we need a strong military force to provide that basic security has led to the situation we see today.

That contrasts dramatically with what we see in the United States. I point to our neighbour to the south. There are a lot of things they do not do right, in my judgement, but one thing the president certainly does is acknowledge the need for a strong military to protect that country. Occasion after occasion he points to the men and women who have served so well. We could point to the men and women in the Canadian forces in the same way because they have served well.

I want to talk about the lack of commitment by bringing the attention of this House to a specific case which was dealt with in committee about three weeks ago. I will quote the chief of defence staff who was at the committee meeting in a minute. However, first, I want to set this up.

A woman by the name of Mrs. Dolhan phoned me. I talked to her for some time. This is an extremely serious situation which I believed would be dealt with. It involves Master Corporal Dolhan who is a member of our forces. He was parachuting under very unsafe conditions. He was one of eight out of eleven in that particular jump who fell into trees. He was injured. There was a bungled rescue attempt to get him out of the tree. He ended up in the hospital. The comments made by him and his wife were that they have had absolutely no support from the military. That is sad.

I brought this case to the attention of the chief of defence staff in committee about three weeks ago. The chief of defence staff, General Baril, said this:

This is one of the examples that we are taking, that when an accident happens we've got to cover all angles. We have only one chance of maintaining and furthering the confidence of the men and women who are serving and if we miss it, we miss it for a long, long time and we hear stories that Col. McLellan has heard. We will never be able to repair the damage that was done, but on that case I think that I can assure you that we got the bull by the horn on this one.

He was referring to this case of Master Corporal Dolhan. Even after bringing it to the attention of the chief of defence staff and after the chief of defence staff saying he was going to take care of it, I get this call from Mrs. Dolhan last night saying that nothing has been done.

• (1730)

She is not an unreasonable person. All she is asking for are some very minor expenses to be covered, expenses that are not minor for her. These are expenses to cover the mileage when she takes her husband to the hospital which she has to do at least twice a week, coverage for some child—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It being 5.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from April 1, consideration of the motion that Bill C-247, an act to amend the Criminal Code (genetic manipulation), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mrs. Madeleine Dalphond-Guiral (Laval Centre, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I had no hesitation whatsoever in agreeing to second Bill C-247, introduced by my colleague for Drummond and entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code.

I am therefore pleased to rise today during this last hour of debate on this bill. We are debating the necessity of clearly banning the cloning of human beings.

The rapid progress made in recent years in new reproductive technologies raises crucial questions on medical ethics.

Less than year ago, Dolly the sheep was in the headlines all over the world. Scientists in Scotland translated science fiction into reality by creating a lamb from a cell taken from an adult female

sheep. She subsequently gave birth to a seemingly perfectly healthy lamb. The clone, a carbon copy of the original, caused a commotion throughout the world, and reopened the entire debate on regulating the new reproductive techniques.

If applied to human beings, this technique raises important ethical questions. Scientists say that cloning does not require very sophisticated technology and could unquestionably interest some scientists or provide an opportunity for rich eccentrics to realize dreams as dangerous as they are appealing.

In this respect, I draw your attention to the work of a Chicago scientist, Dr. Richard Seed, who wants to open a human cloning clinic to produce children for sterile couples, a new kind of fertility clinic. This announcement, reported by the press earlier in the year, makes us realize the extent of the problem.

This scientist applauds the absence of legislation in the United States; there is nothing preventing him from going ahead with his project. Should his country ever pass legislation prohibiting cloning, he would do his experimenting in Mexico. This is the context in which Bill C-247 takes its full significance. The only way to counter such behaviour is to prohibit the use of this technique altogether.

Because it involves the future of mankind, who we are as human beings, our origin and the whole way we relate to each other, to allow human cloning, appealing as it may sound, is to destroy the uniqueness of each individual.

Given the speed at which new reproductive technologies were developing, in 1989, the federal government established a royal commission of inquiry—better known as the Baird commission—on the subject.

• (1735)

Four years, and \$28 million, later the commission handed in its report: 1,275 pages and 293 recommendations, including one to ban human cloning, and I quote "We have judged that certain activities conflict so sharply with the values espoused by Canadians and by this commission, and are so potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and of society, that they must be prohibited by the federal government under threat of criminal sanction. These actions include human zygote/-embryo research related to ectogenesis, cloning—". This is from page 1022 of the Baird commission's report.

Despite the urgency and importance of the problem related to ectogenesis, it was not until 1997 that the government decided to take action and introduced Bill C-47. But came the election and the bill died on the order paper.

Since the beginning of the 36th Parliament, the government has done nothing about this issue, although the situation is evolving

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rapidly and more than ever demands new legislative measures with respect to new reproductive technologies.

Canada is now one of the only major western countries that has had neither the courage nor the will to pass legislation with respect to these technologies.

Following the announcement by Dr. Seed, which I mentioned earlier, some 20 European nations approved a text prohibiting human cloning and introducing sanctions. This text completes the European convention on biomedicine signed by 22 member countries of the Council of Europe.

This measure will extend to all European countries that sign the protocol and will entail serious sanctions for infractions, in particular the loss of the right to practice for offending researchers. This measure will also apply to European citizens and European corporations operating outside Europe. These concrete measures should be echoed in North America. Bill C-247 is a step in that direction.

It was no accident that the Scottish lamb was given the name Dolly. No civilized society will ever have the right to give life to infinitely reproducible dolls. Our most precious asset is our identity, our right to freedom and life in every sense of the term.

I am confident that this bill will receive the unanimous approval of the House.

[English]

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on Bill C-247, an act to amend the Criminal Code as it relates to genetic manipulation. I congratulate the member for Drummond for her efforts in sponsoring this bill.

Bill C-247 would amend the Criminal Code by adding after section 286 a prohibition for genetic manipulation that could lead to human cloning. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has hit the nineties and it is a scary thought that science has advanced at such a rate that this has become a reality, that in a science lab a person might have the ability to create human life.

I think once again we find ourselves in the position in government and in parliament to try to keep up to the quickly advancing rate of science. As technology continues to advance we too must advance and turn our minds to this situation.

This bill is very timely in light of the recent technological advancements and developments that have resulted in, among other innovations, the successful cloning of a sheep. As we have seen, what once was thought to be completely impossible becomes reality. We as law makers must be prepared in advance of other new reproductive and genetic technologies.

• (1740)

Unfortunately the government in this instance has been slow and I want to remark on the steps it has taken. The Progressive Conservative Party did have the foresight to lay the groundwork for developing policy options with respect to this matter.

In 1989 the Progressive Conservative Party of the day had established a royal commission on new reproductive technologies and that commission's mandate was to examine the social, medical, legal, ethical and economic considerations and implications for new reproductive and genetic technologies. In particular, it was to examine the area and implication of women's reproductive health and well-being.

Following extensive consultations with Canadians the commission reported its findings to the new Liberal government in November 1993, more than four years ago. The commission stressed at that time the need for the federal government to adopt a comprehensive public policy on new reproductive and genetic technologies.

In response to that commission the Liberal government announced a voluntary moratorium on the nine NRGs in 1995, which continues to stand to this day.

In 1996 the Liberals tabled Bill C-47, the human reproductive and genetic technologies act, which prohibited 13 practices including cloning, transfer of embryos between humans and other species and surrogacy arrangements. Unfortunately the Liberals did not consider the legislation to be a priority and it died on the order paper with the calling of the election last summer.

As with so many other pieces of legislation that died on previous order papers, the Liberals have yet to reintroduce Bill C-47. Again, hats off and praise to the member for Drummond. Through her private member's bill she has attempted to fill a void that was left by the government's inaction in this area.

On behalf of the Conservative Party I am pleased to say that we support Bill C-247, the legislation that would draw a clear line in the Criminal Code and set parameters in the area of human cloning. Moreover, since the government has already recognized that there was a need for some form of regulatory regime for reproductive and genetic technologies, I hope government members will join with those in the House in opposition who are in support of this bill. They have taken what I would describe as baby steps in this direction in the past in response to the report I spoke of earlier and were moving in that direction. This in essence provides a vehicle to do that.

It is important to note, however, that although Bill C-247 is an important step to fill the vacuum there are still plenty of legislative measures that need to be put in place and addressed by this government.

Out of the 13 specific procedures that would have been prohibited by the government's legislation had that bill passed in the last parliament, only 2 are addressed and proposed in this private member's bill. Furthermore, Bill C-247 does include a national regulatory regime with a mandate to enforce controls on improper genetic testing.

The Liberal government has a responsibility to introduce comprehensive legislation similar to and based in principle on that initial report, similar in content to what was before the House in the last parliament.

Along with complementing the work of the member for Drummond, any legislation the government introduces should also reflect an emerging consensus for the need for a national regulatory regime to manage the field of reproductive and genetic technologies. This regime should also be allowed to be managed in a way that would protect health and safety for all those affected.

Canada is very much in need of guidelines in this area. Next month will mark the second anniversary of the government's tabling of the human reproductive and genetic technologies act and I encourage the government to stop any delay in bringing this important issue back before the House and follow the example set by the member for Drummond and introduce legislation to control new reproductive and genetic technologies.

Most important, avoid any abuse or forays into this area without some guidelines and parameters that would be firmly established by legislation.

• (1745)

Mr. John Bryden (Wentworth—Burlington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this issue because I believe it is a classic example of the value of Private Members' Business.

I congratulate the member for Drummond for bringing the bill forward. It addresses one portion of an issue that was covered in Bill C-47, the bill that died on the order paper as a result of the last election which purported to make all kinds of fixes to issues of human reproductive technology.

One of the problems with our present system of government sponsored legislation is that the government tries to get, and rightly so, as much bang for its buck as it can. It prepares omnibus bills that address entire issues.

For instance, Bill C-20 is a very elaborate bill that is looking at amendments to the Competition Act. There is a group of bills that look at whole issues that are debated in very grand style. Sometimes they occasionally come to grief because they try to fix so many areas that many flaws are discovered and the bills fail. Bill C-47 on human reproductive technology is a case in point.

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What killed it for me was that it wanted to stop genetic research which would have in effect led researchers along avenues that would have corrected genetically inheritable diseases like muscular dystrophy. We had this incredible situation where a law was coming down the pike that would have stopped cloning of human beings, which we all agree is frightening and something we should at least have a very long moratorium on. By the same token it would have attempted to kill research in areas very much in the public interest that hopefully would alleviate human suffering.

The problem is that the government—and I do not mean it as a criticism of the government—traditionally in the parliamentary system has always come down with big bills.

Where I think Private Members' Business has a tremendous role is doing exactly what the member for Drummond is doing with her bill which looks at one urgent issue. That urgent issue is that at least Canadian society and at least this MP, if I may so, are not prepared to have research go forward which could possibly lead tomorrow to the cloning of human beings. That is a frightening concept.

Not that we can make jest of it, but there are certain members of the opposition I would only want one copy of. If we had multiple copies of them I think we would all be very worried. That aside, the reality is that we are not yet sufficiently sophisticated as human beings to play God. I do not think we can afford to go back into the science fiction books and actually produce multiple copies of the same human beings. Quite apart from religious ramifications it would raise huge ethical dilemmas.

I cannot even begin to imagine the ethical problems that would confront society in the process of choosing who would be copied. Who would it be? Would it be some top politician? Would it be some artist? Who would be the first to be cloned? Then how would we prevent people being copied illicitly who might be carrying genes or characteristics that are reprehensible yet have the money to copy themselves? It is an absolutely unacceptable concept.

• (1750)

The difficulty is we know now that it is possible, or if not possible it is immediately on the horizon. The member for Drummond recognizes this. Discarding all the controversial aspects of Bill C-47, she focused on the one thing that I think most Canadians would absolutely agree with, that we must at least have a moratorium now on the cloning of human beings.

The government's objection, as I understand it, is that the bill would put the restriction and the penalty in the Criminal Code. This is not an appropriate place for this type of penalty. We can give the government the benefit of the doubt on that. The government has to be very concerned about tradition, the appropriateness of legislation and its effect.

Private Members' Business

I must say I tend to support the member for Drummond on this issue. We must remember that if it goes into the Criminal Code it will only be a temporary measure until we can come back to the issue. Maybe it will take us a year. Maybe it will take us two years. Maybe it will take us ten years, but we can come back to the issue with a more comprehensive bill on reproductive technology.

Quite frankly I do not think we will have an easy ride with any new omnibus legislation on the subject. We need the bill to make very clear that the country does not tolerate and will not tolerate attempts to clone human beings. We can be open to other forms of genetic research because we have to, because it is in the interests of humanity to encourage our scientists to continue with genetic research, but we should draw a line in the sand.

The bill does it. It puts it in the Criminal Code but probably only temporarily and later we can move it to a more appropriate place.

This is a classic example of Private Members' Business which raises an important issue, offers Canadian society and the government a way of putting on the back burner a very difficult and emotional issue and sets it aside for now until society knows better how to address it.

I have to say the member for Drummond has done us a service by bringing the issue before the House and I thank her for it.

Mr. Rey D. Pagtakhan (Parliamentary Secretary to Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the constituents of Winnipeg North—St. Paul in debating Bill C-247, an act to amend the Criminal Code on the subject of genetic manipulation. Of course the subject matter has a profound impact on our human race, on our very humanity.

The essence of our being was shaken when a little more than a half a century ago, in 1944 to be exact, research scientists in the United States observed for the first time a human egg being fertilized in a glass dish outside the womb of a mother. Thirty-four years following that scientific milestone the first live birth of a child, having its beginnings outside the human body, occurred in England.

It was international news at the time, but at once it raised many fundamental societal questions. I therefore understand that today we are debating 20 years later this issue in the Chamber in the bill before us.

I congratulate the member for Drummond on her initiative. I concur in principle with the thrust of the bill, its prohibitions on the cloning of the human embryo and of genetic manipulation that could allow the transmission of an altered genetic structure to a subsequent generation.

My intervention is in the nature of a friendly submission. I have a reservation. How will the single focus, enshrining in the Criminal Code one point of the very broad and complex reproductive technology issue, be seen?

In preparing for this debate I revisited the two volume report produced by the royal commission on new technologies that I may have the guidance of its work and its wisdom. The royal commission on new reproductive technology chaired by Patricia Baird issued its final report entitled "Proceed with care" on November 15, 1993. It contained 293 recommendations.

• (1755)

Before I proceed further allow me for greater clarity to define certain terms in the language of human biologists. First I go to the fertilized egg before implantation as it develops during the first 14 days. An embryo refers to a developing human organism after implantation in the uterus until about eight weeks after fertilization and a fetus refers to the human organism at the beginning of the ninth week after fertilization until the time of birth.

Why did I define these terms? The terms embryo donation, embryo transfer and embryo research are inaccurate since they all occur with zygotes and not with embryos in the language of human biologists. However the terms continue to be commonly used and we understand them in this context.

Embryo research since the milestones in 1944 and 1978 has raised questions about the ethical and legal status of the embryo and about how society's respect for human life should apply to the situation. Concerns have been expressed about the potential impact of embryo research on women and on society.

The royal commission was given the mandate to examine how new reproductive technologies should be handled in our country. Some 40,000 people were involved in the work on the report "Proceed with Care" from which I quote:

Commissioners have set out a blueprint for how Canada, with its unique institutions and social make-up, can deal with new reproductive technologies, regulate their use, and ensure that future developments or use are in the public interest.

It continues:

At the same time, it will ensure that only ethical and accountable use of technology is made, and demonstrate that Canadians have wisdom, humanity, and compassion in the way they choose to use technology.

The 293 recommendations were categorized into three general categories: first, recommendations regarding the need for criminal legislation to set boundaries around the use of new reproductive technologies in Canada; second, recommendations regarding the establishment and operation of a national reproductive technologies commission to manage new reproductive technologies within these boundaries; and, third, other recommendations addressed to existing federal departments and agencies.

With respect to criminal legislation and relevant to the bill before us, certain activities according to the commission “conflict so sharply with the values espoused by Canadians and by this commission, and are potentially harmful to the interests of individuals and of society, that they must be prohibited by the federal government under threat of criminal sanction”.

My problem with the bill in terms of a submission is that the actions defined by the commission include human zygote-embryo research related to ectogenesis; cloning; animal-human hybrids; transfer of zygotes to another species; maturation and fertilization of eggs from human fetuses; sale of human eggs, sperm, zygotes, fetuses and fetal tissues; and advertising for or acting as an intermediary to bring about a preconception arrangement.

What then will be the implication if out of this two volume report we pick one or two items and say we will criminally prohibit it at this point? Might it be implied wrongly that the others are sanctioned? I am worried about that. I submit that we ought to use an approach that is integrated and comprehensive.

The issue raised by the bill before us is of profound importance to all Canadians. How we deal with it, as suggested by all the speakers, is a reflection of our credo and faith as Canadians.

It is in this spirit that I say again I concur with the principle of the bill. It is also in this spirit that I offer my reservation and why I would prefer that the bill before us not proceed at this time but be taken into account as we await the government’s more comprehensive response and integrated response to this very delicate human issue that transcends political partisanship and challenges us to a more thorough, careful but urgent look as we prepare our parliamentary response.

In conclusion, this response may not be limited only to criminal legislation but should encompass the totality of the recommendations contained in the two volumes of “Proceed with Care”, the full report of the royal commission.

• (1800)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak and I thank my colleagues for their indulgence. I have to say I will be speaking against the bill and I encourage my colleagues to give serious thought to my arguments.

I am not opposed to the idea of prohibiting cloning. I think everyone agrees on this point, and that is not where the problem lies with the bill introduced by the member for Drummond.

Private Members’ Business

I would draw your attention to the second part of page two. I will quote from it, if I may, and then list my reasons for opposing it. The second part would necessarily prohibit the following, that is:

—alter the genetic structure of an ovum, human sperm, zygote or embryo, if the altered structure is capable of transmission to a subsequent generation.

[*English*]

I would like to take a step back and perhaps put into perspective why I think we should not approve such a measure.

In 1990 the international community launched what is called the human genome project, an exercise of some 52 countries over 15 years that had as an objective to map out the human genome, our entire chromosomes, the entire sequencing, the 100,000 or so genes that are contained in human chromosomes.

Canada participated in that effort up until last year to the tune of \$21 million over five years, \$1 million from the National Research Council, \$1 million from the Medical Research Council, and the balance from Industry Canada. That has now lapsed and Canada is no longer at that table. I think we should be back at that table and I encourage the government to consider that.

The project is going so well that it is quite possible that by the year 2002 the entire human genome will have been mapped out. Why is that significant to this? There are about 4,000 genetic diseases known. It is quite probable that we, the human species, will have the ability to isolate the genes that cause these 4,000 genetic diseases and cure them. There are two ways of doing that. One is the somatic approach which means that we can cure the individual and it does not get transmitted into the next generation, which is fine but then we would have to do it for every person who is born with that genetic disease.

There are possibilities that we could cure some of these diseases for good. To put this into the Criminal Code now would prohibit Canadians benefiting from such advances when they come.

My colleague from Hamilton—Wentworth was saying this could be in 10 years. The odds are very good that some of these diseases will be curable long before 10 years from now. I would hesitate to put in the Criminal Code something which would prevent us from curing genetic diseases and transmitting that cure from generation to generation.

I am not against the intent of prohibiting human cloning but I certainly would not want us as parliamentarians to prohibit the curing of diseases permanently. That is what we strive for.

I caution my colleagues in support of this bill.

Adjournment Debate

[Translation]

We are entering a new era, that of genetics. We have had a number of eras, but, in three or four years, we will have the capacity to understand our genes. Naturally, there are benefits associated with this, as there are also monstrous disadvantages we cannot yet imagine.

We need not necessarily preclude the possibility of passing on a genetic correction from one generation to another. I think I also agree with the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. What has to be done, and what the government must do, and the responsibility is its, is to draft framework legislation for the whole issue of genetics.

We must be able to set controls on this enhanced knowledge and to reap its benefits. Naturally, we must ban anything that can be very harmful. I think everyone can agree on that. Instead of passing a bill like this one, I call upon the government to act and to strike a parliamentary committee if necessary.

Yet we must admit, dear colleagues, that we are on the verge of an absolutely amazing era. As parliamentarians and as legislators of this country, we must take the bull by the horns and create a legislative framework that will indeed ban such things as the cloning of human beings, without banning the possibility of correcting genetic diseases or curing them definitively. We must not make that error.

• (1805)

I apologize for getting a bit more carried away than usual, but these are things I believe in. Well intentioned as the bill may be, I believe it is a mistake to put such limitations in the Criminal Code at this point in time.

I trust that serious thought will be given to this, and that instead of making this mistake, we will collectively do what must be done, which is to make a pre-emptive strike and to create a framework which will enable us to benefit from this new knowledge and to eliminate the possibility of the human race doing itself harm.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those in favour will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the recorded division on the proposed motion stands deferred until Monday, May 25, 1998, after Government Orders.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a matter I have raised in the past about employment insurance eligibility.

Employment insurance is in a crisis. At the moment, fewer than 40% of unemployed Canadians are receiving benefits and yet the surplus in the employment insurance fund is over \$15 million.

On March 10, I asked the Minister of Human Resources Development when the situation would be critical enough to cause him to act. When the percentage of those eligible for EI benefits is down to 25% or 15%? What would it take to get this government to revise its eligibility criteria for employment insurance?

The minister said he was concerned about the situation but did not understand why the proportion of unemployed people who qualified for benefits was so low. Is the government blind or simply stupid? It changes the EI eligibility criteria to make it harder to get benefits and then wonders why people do not qualify. After a year the government is wondering why people do not qualify.

I would like to repeat the minister's response. He said this:

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst would do well to start learning about his own region. The employment insurance participation rate in the Atlantic region is 75%. The participation rate in the province of New Brunswick is over 80%.

• (1810)

I can guarantee you that I am familiar with my region. My hon. colleague across the floor, the Minister of Human Resources Development, is not.

That is why I invited the Minister of Human Resources Development to come to Acadia. The local newspapers back home sup-

Adjournment Debate

ported this, and even ran political cartoons showing the Minister of Human Resources hitchhiking his way to Acadia.

If he did get down to our area and saw the poverty in which people are living, he would not be long in noticing that his 80% figure does not exist. Absolutely not. What is more, the New Brunswick minister of human resources development, a Liberal, has called the employment insurance changes terrible, and has said that fewer people would be eligible for EI, so more would end up on welfare.

Those are the words of a Liberal, the New Brunswick minister of human resources development, and a Liberal like those members on the other side.

Last week, moreover, another Liberal, minister of intergovernmental and aboriginal affairs and acting minister of education, Bernard Thériault, said that the crisis in Acadia was the fault of the employment insurance changes. How can the minister and the government not have any social conscience toward the people of Canada?

Ours is not the only area affected. Look at Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, the Gaspé, and parts of northern Ontario. Or northern Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan. I am just back from B.C., and they had the same problem there too.

I am calling upon the government, once and for all, to examine its conscience and do the right thing for Canadians, do what Canadians want to see done. That \$15 billion in the bank should go back to the people it belongs to, in other words back into the pockets of the workers.

[*English*]

Mr. Jerry Pickard (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this government is very concerned about unemployed workers and we continue to develop policies to improve their prospects.

However, we realize the problem is more complex than the hon. member is suggesting. For example, labour market changes such as increases in long term unemployment between 1990 and 1994

played a significant role in the decline in the proportion of unemployed who receive benefits.

Simply providing passive income support through regular EI benefits could never be a sufficient response to the problem we are going through. We understand Canadians would not be satisfied with a step backward to an obsolete system. Instead, the federal government is working with the provinces to provide real solutions for unemployed Canadians. We will create more jobs by using a three year, \$300 million transitional job fund. That is now in place using general revenues to serve high unemployed areas.

To date the fund has already created 30,355 jobs throughout Canada, 8,067 in Atlantic Canada alone. We will also spend an additional \$800 million per year on active employment benefits under EI, bringing federal funding to more than \$2.7 billion annually by the year 2001.

We are co-operating with provincial and territorial governments to deliver these benefits in the best possible way. Labour market development agreements are now in place or are under discussion in all provinces and territories. Decisions on the best way to help the unemployed get back to work must benefit from the knowledge and insights of those who most closely are in touch with local markets.

• (1815)

We have confidence that these measures will be successful in helping the unemployed return to productive employment. As employment growth continues and the number of unemployed falls, the ratio of beneficiaries to unemployed should rise again. Nevertheless we are carefully monitoring the recent declines in this ratio. The department is conducting an analysis of the situation and the results will be released in a paper in 1998. We will use that to make decisions for Canadians in the future.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.)

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