



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, January 31, 2001**

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, January 31, 2001

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Atikokan and the hon. member for Mississauga West.

[*Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### MEMBER FOR PERTH—MIDDLESEX

**Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise in the House today to thank the people of Perth—Middlesex for re-electing me for the third straight time.

I am proudly grateful to all my constituents for giving me the chance to serve them once again. I will do everything I can to be worthy of their trust.

The action plan in the Speech from the Throne will create opportunity and ensure that all of our citizens are full participants in our economy and our society. It will help get children off to a good start, it will help strengthen our communities and it will strengthen our country. This is what the Liberal Party is all about.

I wish to reiterate my thanks to the people of Perth—Middlesex. With their support, I will continue to be a strong voice for them.

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### CHINESE NEW YEAR

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this week marks the first week of the new year of the

Chinese zodiac. The Chinese mystics reveal that the coming year, the Year of the Snake, holds many wonders in store for all of us.

This is the year to toot your own horn. By bringing attention to your talents, you can win advancement and honour that will not only benefit you but all those you love.

Each new year Canadians of Chinese descent are thankful to be Canadians. They are thankful for the opportunity to be a part of this great country. Despite living through tough times in this country's history, they have survived to become successful in every facet of Canadian society.

In the Year of the Snake, mankind can expect greater international and domestic co-operation among governments. On a personal level, a deepening spirituality will touch us all, making any efforts to strengthen ties to church and nature greatly rewarding.

Mr. Speaker, to you and all members of this House, Happy Chinese New Year.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Mr. Eugène Bellemare (Carleton—Gloucester, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been two earthquakes recently, first one in El Salvador and then another in India. Canada was one of the first countries to react and to free up funds to organize emergency support. The Canadian International Development Agency was on the spot and did an amazing job.

I would like to draw particular attention to the key role played by the minister, who was in El Salvador and lived through the earthquake there. Happening to be in Latin America on a mission, the minister did not hesitate to roll up her sleeves and get directly involved on site.

\* \* \*

### CHARLOTTE BOISJOLI

**Ms. Diane St-Jacques (Shefford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the performer, teacher, director and novelist Charlotte Boisjoli died in Notre-Dame Hospital at the age of 77.

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Born in Quebec City in June 1923, Charlotte Boisjoli began her stage career with the Montreal theatre company Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent.

Later on, she and her husband, Fernand Doré, founded the Compagnie du Masque, which was extremely active a half-century ago.

She will be remembered for her involvement in numerous stage productions, as well as a variety of radio and television roles.

Charlotte Boisjoli was a woman who loved to get her teeth into a good script. Hers was a rare intensity in everything she undertook, whether in a role or in life and its battles.

May I extend my most sincere condolences to the family and friends of Madame Boisjoli.

All Quebec salutes this great artist and we can only hope that her great love of the theatre will live on in those who choose to follow her career.

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#### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on November 27, 2000, the Liberal Party of Canada won an important victory.

Canada's Prime Minister, the leader of our political party, managed the impressive feat of getting his government elected for its third consecutive term of office.

The Liberal Party of Canada improved its results in terms of votes cast, and obtained more votes in Quebec than the Bloc Québécois, which lost six members.

We owe this victory to Quebecers, of course, but also to our Prime Minister, who has been able to rely on the unwavering support of his wife through these many years of political life.

In yesterday's throne speech, the Prime Minister urged us to build the Canada of tomorrow on a strong foundation. He also urged us to build a world-leading Canadian economy.

The Prime Minister has the full support of the Liberal team when he calls on the people of Canada to share their prosperity, to fight against exclusion and to help children get the right start in life.

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[*English*]

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Carleton, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to draw attention to the role that our government can play in helping to end one of the greatest human rights tragedies of our new century. I speak of the Chinese

government's brutal repression of freedom of conscience in general and of Falun Gong in particular.

The Prime Minister will shortly be departing for China on a team Canada mission. Team Canada missions are about trade, and I am sure that every member of the House will agree that free trade and free enterprise promote human rights. Team Canada missions are also about aid, and aid to a tyrannical government can be interpreted by that government as an endorsement of and a subsidy for its repressive actions.

Canadian aid, and that includes any subsidized or preferential trade, must be linked to human rights. If the persecution continues there can be no room for Canada to give aid to China. This is the message that team Canada must take to China.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### POPULATION OF MADAWASKA—RESTIGOUCHE

**Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the new member for Madawaska—Restigouche, it is with great pleasure that I thank my constituents for their trust. I pledge to do my best to represent them well at all times.

[*English*]

I stand here today to thank my constituents of Madawaska—Restigouche who have given me the mandate to represent them in parliament. It is an honour to serve my constituents and the country and it is a duty I take seriously.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### CHARLOTTE BOISJOLI AND PIERRE ROCHE

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois must sadly today signal the loss of two of Quebec's great artists: Charlotte Boisjoli and Pierre Roche.

A total artist, socially committed, but first and foremost an actress, Ms. Boisjoli was a prime mover in Quebec theatre.

● (1405)

Hers was the voice of Pépinot, to the great delight of children. She also lent her talents to staging both in theatre and opera.

Pierre Roche was one of Quebec's most prolific writer-composer-performers. His work and its performance will be immortal and become one of the jewels of Quebec's rich cultural heritage.

We thank Ms. Boisjoli and Mr. Roche for giving us moments of great emotional beauty.

[English]

### INTERNATIONAL AID

**Mr. Gurbax Malhi (Bramalea—Gore—Malton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday a massive earthquake on the scale of 7.5 ripped through the Indian state of Gujarat, leaving tens of thousands homeless and killing others. The toll is 13,000 and rising. Thousands of children and families are in need of emergency aid as they are without food, water, shelter and medical supplies. The federal government has acted quickly by providing \$3 million in aid.

I encourage the federal government to further its aid for the devastated region and to help foster international co-operation in order to establish preventive measures so such natural disasters would not be as tragic in the future.

I ask my colleagues to join me in encouraging and thanking Canadians for giving donations to humanitarian organizations to assist the victims of this terrible tragedy.

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### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's throne speech Canadian farmers were hoping to hear a federal vision for agriculture. Instead they were told to move beyond crisis management and find better uses for their land. They were hoping to hear a commitment to support farm families and to vigorously fight the foreign subsidies that have suppressed grain prices and oppressed the family farm.

Are farmers surprised to have been ignored by the government yet again? No, they expected it.

Nick Parsons, from Farmington, B.C. in my riding, has once again brought his combine, Prairie Belle, to Parliament Hill seeking fairness for Canadian farm families. Last year in a private meeting, the Prime Minister assured Nick that the government was doing all it could for western farmers. Yet when the government had the chance to offer some hope to farm families in the throne speech, it was not a priority.

The Liberals' agricultural legacy of inaction and indifference is a disgrace. Yesterday's throne speech provided the latest evidence of why farmers are now on the endangered species list.

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### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the P.E.I. potato industry is being devastated by unfair United States trade action. The single biggest threat to our most important industry is not the potato wart, which was discovered in October and quickly

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and appropriately dealt with using sound science, but the threat of United States protectionism.

As a result of being wrongly banned from the United States market and having taken action to protect the rest of Canada's potato industry, P.E.I. producers have suffered extreme losses.

I call upon the federal government to take strong action. Potatoes originating in states with a record of potato related diseases should be subjected to the most rigorous scrutiny at the border. Soil testing requirements similar to those required for us should be instituted for states. Finally, the federal government must come forward with an assistance program to deal with the financial hurt.

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### THE ECONOMY

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's throne speech we heard about the so-called Liberal vision of a prosperous nation ready to embrace globalization, but who really gets to be included in the new high tech Canada of the future? It is not the 200,000 homeless people sleeping on the streets tonight, not the 14% of Canadian families who continue to live in poverty, not the students facing crushing debt loads and not the thousands of aboriginal peoples dealing with the hardships of life in our urban cores.

If the throne speech signals the return to Liberal roots of social justice, then a heck of a lot of people got left behind.

Social justice is not about vague promises or hollow platitudes. It is not about the Liberal tradition of announcing the same old patchwork programs over and over. Social justice is about real inclusion. It is about a national housing strategy, universal day care, a national grants program and acknowledging the responsibility to off reserve aboriginal peoples. That is what the throne speech should have been about.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

[Translation]

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's speech from the throne, the federal government carried on its traditions. It continues to accumulate surpluses on the backs of the disadvantaged and to invade the areas of health care, education, labour and early childhood over which Quebec has jurisdiction.

Tradition and continuity describe the attitude of this government. In other words, it is an authoritarian and centralizing administration in its treatment of Quebec, among others.

*S. O. 31*

Furthermore, there is no provision for follow-up of the demands of the world march of women, despite the motion in support passed by this House on October 17.

Had the government really wanted to be innovative, it could have helped the disadvantaged. The Bloc Québécois will continue to fight vigorously against the arrogance of the Liberal government.

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[English]

**GENIE AWARDS**

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, January 29, the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television announced the winners of the 21st Genie Awards, which honour the finest in Canadian cinema. I congratulate the award nominees and recipients for this year.

I especially congratulate my constituent Keith Ross Leckie for being honoured with five nominations at this year's awards. Keith has written scripts for more than a dozen hit movies including: *The David Milgaard Story*, *The Arrow*, *Children of My Heart*, and most recently, the feature film *To Walk with Lions*.

These achievements, both creative and industrial, are a reflection of the success our cinematic community is achieving both at home and on the international stage. The new feature film fund and the movies that come from that fund will ensure that the men and women who work in this highly competitive industry will be able to find worldwide success while remaining in Canada, bringing glory, honour and great entertainment to our wonderful country.

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**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the House knows well of the heroic courage our Merchant Navy veterans showed 60 years ago when called to the seas in time of war. The House knows well of the selfless risks taken by our Merchant Navy veterans when they cast themselves into harm's way for king and country.

Yet for reasons that escape all of us here in this Chamber, we continue to dishonour them. Why has the government not paid out the full 100%, not a mere 60%, of the compensation money to all eligible veterans? Why will it not pay? Many veterans have not even received 60% yet.

Why does the Minister of Veterans Affairs insist on trying to justify this disgraceful action of the government, forcing national heroes to fight for every single dollar owed to them? Instead, why

will the minister not rise here today and make a pledge to these brave men that their money will be in their hands by the end of February?

\* \* \*

**AL WAXMAN**

**Mr. Tony Ianno (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise with sadness to recognize the passing of Mr. Al Waxman, a great Canadian, husband, father, friend and actor.

Mr. Waxman contributed significantly to the Canadian arts scene. He starred in over a thousand TV, radio, theatre and film performances. Although his career took him abroad, he always came home to Canada, particularly to Toronto. He never forgot where he came from.

Mr. Waxman was celebrated for his artistry as both an actor and a director in the theatre, especially in Stratford, for the many plays that he directed and participated in. Mr. Waxman played many roles on TV but he will be best remembered by millions of Canadians for his role as Larry King in the popular CBC TV series *King of Kensington*, which was filmed in the Kensington Market, the heart of Trinity—Spadina.

His true spirit of supporting his community was reflected throughout his life. He was very active in many charities. He represented the Canadian way through his theme of giving back.

I thank his wife Sara Waxman, daughter Tobaron and son Adam for sharing his great personality and talents with us. He will be missed and his huge personality will be well remembered.

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**GENIE AWARDS**

**Ms. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to salute the men and women who are Canada's film industry.

Of those films and individuals who made it into the winner's circle at the 21st annual Genie Awards, I pay particular tribute to Martin Cummins, son of our parliamentary colleague, the member for Delta—South Richmond.

Martin won best supporting actor for his own role in the film *Love Come Down*, a love story about the acting debut of singer Deborah Cox.

● (1415)

Martin was also honoured when Helen Shaver won best supporting actress for the film he wrote and directed, *We All Fall Down*, which is about life on Vancouver's inner city streets.

As a former British Columbia fisherman, the member for Delta—South Richmond can be proud of his son Martin and his catch of the day at the Genie Awards.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin the first question period, and I know members opposite on the government side are just itching to join with me, by congratulating the Prime Minister on his successful re-election.

The economy continues to show signs of change. There is no question that we are headed into turbulent times. We think we will be able to sail through the choppy waters, but not without a budget in place that clearly shows the change in the reaction to the revenue assumptions, the change in the exchange rates, interest rates and revenue flows.

In light of these changes and in light of the fact that it is unprecedented that a government would start a session without a budget, will the Prime Minister reconsider and present a budget this February?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his congratulations on the election. I want to offer my congratulations to him and to every member for winning their seats.

On the question from the Leader of the Opposition about a budget, the government was very wise to have a mini budget in October because the reality is that the tax cuts that the Americans are dreaming about at this moment were implemented in Canada as of January 1, 2001.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that teeny tax reduction by the Liberals in no way compares to what is happening in the United States and that is a cause for concern.

[Translation]

Although we have every reason to be optimistic, it would be logical and prudent for the government's forecasts to reflect the new economic realities.

[English]

If the Prime Minister has no idea of the implications of the tax reductions and no idea of the assumptions can he at least give us the total cost of the promises in the Speech from the Throne delivered yesterday? What is the total?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, everything that was written in our program was costed before.

### Oral Questions

Contrary to the opposition party, which cannot add its figures very well, we know everything that was in the plans that we submitted to the Canadian public. As we said in the Speech from the Throne, we know exactly what the cost will be, which is what we told Canadians during the last campaign.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the answer, for those who need a deciphering of that response, was that the Prime Minister does not know the cost of what was put into the Speech from the Throne. A few moments ago it was announced that the U.S. rate was lowered.

Can the Prime Minister indicate to us if there is anybody on that side who knows the cost of those promises? The Prime Minister does not. Is there anyone on his team who does?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that it is more than \$800,000.

• (1420)

In fact, over the years the opposition has complained and has always blamed our Minister of Finance for being too prudent in his forecasting. It was good that he developed a habit of being prudent because it now gives us a lot of comfort. If adjustments are needed we will of course make them.

\* \* \*

### IMMIGRATION

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the country has just received word that government offices both in Ottawa and Toronto have been evacuated. The immigration building here in Ottawa is, and I quote, "closed until further notice". Will the immigration minister stand and confirm today that it is because of a suspected biological threat?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to let people know exactly what happened. An envelope was received in my office. It was opened. There was a substance inside. The substance was tested. As soon as it was determined it contained bacteria, it was immediately sent to a lab for testing. Because of our concern for the employees who work for us the building was closed.

**Miss Deborah Grey (Edmonton North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that there should be some mechanism in place before people open general mail. There are reports that this could potentially be anthrax. That moves it into a completely—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Edmonton North has the floor.

*Oral Questions*

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Mr. Speaker, it is hard to believe there is so much noise on the floor of the House of Commons when lives are potentially in danger.

The report has come out that the substance may possibly be anthrax. What is the immigration minister able to do and what will she do to make sure that she is in control of her department and in control of this crisis that is ongoing now?

**Hon. Elinor Caplan (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the first thing I will do is tell the member opposite that it is irresponsible to speculate on what the substance might be. The scientists are making that decision.

The second thing I will tell her is that the employees who came into contact with the substance were immediately examined by physicians and given, as a precaution, antibiotics to ensure that their health and safety was our number one priority.

I support the decision of the senior management of my department to close the building until we have the answers to all the questions. I also want her to know that the issues have been referred to the appropriate authorities, the RCMP and the scientists, and everything that should be done is being done.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech made repeated references to what the Prime Minister calls "the Canadian way", which is just an excuse for increased interference in the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

In fact, the main innovation in the throne speech was to ignore federal jurisdiction or introduce a series of initiatives that ride roughshod over the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces.

I therefore ask the Prime Minister if he can explain to us why the only area in which he really shows any imagination is that of interfering in jurisdictions that do not concern him.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech, we alluded more than once to the fact that we had agreements with the provinces in all these areas.

We have signed a number of agreements, regarding children in particular. We have been working together with the provinces for several years now and we are continuing to do so because we believe that, if Canada is to be successful, all levels of government must be involved in any programs introduced.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of agreements, there was one on health last

September. Let us remember that it came about after the federal government cut off health funding. The provinces were left holding the bag because they had to provide the services. This has been a great hardship to the provinces.

• (1425)

Would it not be more correct to say that the real innovation in the throne speech was to give back to Quebec and the provinces money that was rightly theirs for health services, at the 1994 funding levels?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the country was bankrupt because of the bad administration prior to the arrival of the Liberal government, all governments, including the federal government, had to reduce expenditures.

Now that we have balanced the budget, interest rates are much lower and the unemployment rate has dropped considerably. As a matter of fact, on September 11, Mr. Bouchard congratulated me on my patience and objectivity.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, for years, the provinces, and Quebec in particular, have had problems with health service funding. The reason for this is simple: the needs are in Quebec, while the money is in Ottawa. Instead of dealing with this problem in the throne speech, the Prime Minister has again trotted out his obsession with the "citizens' council".

Aware as he is that the present level of federal funding of health systems has dropped from 20% to 14%, can the Prime Minister not, instead of hanging on to this pointless concept, assume his responsibilities and raise the transfer payments to their 1994 level, as all provincial premiers are demanding?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has said, several months ago Quebec signed an agreement, along with all the other provinces, concerning not just health care funding but health care system reform.

We have considerably increased transfer payments to the provinces for health and we have reached an agreement on the priorities for reform and improvements to our health care system.

We are therefore working together, the federal government, Quebec and all the other provinces, on this public priority.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the time this agreement with the premiers was reached, his idea of the "citizens' council" was rejected.

Can the Prime Minister explain to us why he insists on imposing this fancy of his, which will in no way improve health care and

services, whereas considerable progress would be made if he were to increase transfer payments?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised to work toward setting up such a council in order to get Canadians more directly involved in the process of health care reform. It is clear, however, that we are going to proceed by consulting our provincial partners, and I intend to raise this matter with my counterparts at the appropriate time.

\* \* \*

[English]

### TRADE

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Five hundred of the world's corporate representatives have security clearance and access to the free trade area of the Americas' negotiating documents, yet what is in those documents is not being shared with Canadians.

With so much at stake and with so many legitimate concerns about inadequate protection for agriculture, for the environment, for health and education and for Canadian culture, why is the government supporting such a closed process?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will take note of the hon. member's question because no one has informed me that there is any problem in the development of this conference.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government's throne speech yesterday was loaded with being more open with Canadians but anyone who is not a government insider or one of the members of the corporate elite is completely shut out of the FTAA process.

The throne speech completely failed to acknowledge let alone address legitimate concerns being raised about the government's approach to globalization. Why are Canadians with legitimate concerns about this latest free trade deal being forced to the barricades?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am so very proud that Canada was the first country of the 34 to put its position on the Internet. We cannot be more transparent than that. The Canadian position is right there on the Internet.

● (1430)

As for the negotiating documents, obviously there are 34 parties to it. It is not up to Canada to share it if other countries do not want to share it. Canada would support sharing it at this stage. However our partners do not wish that. We will respect them. The Canadian position is right there on the Net, and we are the first country to do it.

### Oral Questions

#### ETHICS COUNSELLOR

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question to the Prime Minister is simple and it allows a yes or no answer. Will the Prime Minister fulfil his 1993 red book promise?

The Ethics Counsellor will be appointed after consultation with the leaders of all parties in the House of Commons and will report directly to parliament.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I named this person I consulted the leader of the Reform and the leader of the Bloc at that time. They both agreed that Mr. Wilson was the person with the qualities to do that job.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a promise broken.

I have another question for the Prime Minister. In his various conversations with the president of the Business Development Bank was there any reference, direct or indirect, to the Grand-Mère Golf Club located next to the Auberge Grand-Mère, a golf club in which the Prime Minister had held shares?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. It gives me an opportunity to point out that this matter has been looked at by the ethics counsellor several times. Clear answers have been given with respect to the notion of any conflict of interest.

As recently as today, the ethics counsellor, in a letter addressed to the Leader of the Opposition, reiterated his position at least three or four times in the text of another letter. Let me read the last sentence of the letter:

Therefore it has been my position that the Prime Minister had no financial links with either the golf course or the Auberge.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CANADIAN ECONOMY

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, clearly an economic storm is heading toward Canada, but the government is not moving.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. Will he be presenting a budget before April 1 this year?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the slowdown in the American economy has implications for Canada's economy.

Most economists in Canada and elsewhere outside the country believe that October's economic statement was the right tonic for the Canadian economy and is working.

*Oral Questions*

That said, we are continuing to follow the situation and, if we must take other measures, we will.

**Mr. Joe Peschisolido (Richmond, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this government is ignoring what is happening in the States. The Canadian economy is becoming more or less competitive compared with the States.

I would like to know whether the Minister of Finance will really cut taxes in order to address this new economic reality? This is no longer October 2000.

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member is mistaken.

As the result of the economic statement, taxes on corporations in Canada, on capital gains and on options will be lower than in the United States. It is obvious we have taken the necessary steps. If other steps are required, we will certainly consider them.

\* \* \*

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, during the last election campaign, the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and organizer for the Liberal Party made the following pledge to the citizens of the Montréal region, on Montreal's south shore:

Our commitment is a firm one. We want to build both bridges and 14 kilometres of highway.

Only yesterday, the member for Beauharnois said:

We pledged to invest \$357 million.

Last week, the Minister of Transport wrote to his Quebec counterpart that the Liberal promise was no longer valid.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Could he tell us whether or not his government will invest the \$357 million that was promised?

• (1435)

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me first congratulate the hon. member on his appointment as transport critic for the Bloc Québécois.

Unfortunately, the hon. member is making a big mistake. In my letter to Mr. Chevrette, I wrote that the federal government would be reviewing the issue of highway 30 on a priority basis.

That is the position of the Canadian government. We are in favour of extending highway 30 to reduce traffic congestion in the Montreal area.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the residents of the Montréal region want a clear answer.

In the mailer from the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, the Prime Minister said that the options offered would be crystal clear.

We want a clear answer. Will the Liberal government make good on its promise, or will it break it as it did with the GST?

**Hon. David Collenette (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian government's position is clear: we support extending highway 30.

We are prepared to work with our friends from the Quebec government to reduce traffic congestion on the island of Montreal.

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[English]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians will be very surprised to learn all of a sudden that we have lower taxes than the United States. Our taxes federally are at least a third higher than in the United States. That was one heck of a nose stretcher.

The finance minister says that everything is fine and that we can be happy. The chairman of the U.S. federal reserve says that there is zero growth in our largest trading partner. Many major economists say the U.S. is headed into a recession or is in a recession.

It has cut an unprecedented one full point off interest rates in the last month, including today. The markets are not reacting. This could pose a crisis for the economy. What does the finance minister intend to do about it?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I neglected to congratulate the member for Richmond on posing his first question in the House, and I would like to congratulate him. I wish I could congratulate the financial critic who was in New York with me at the time we had discussions with representatives of the American business community.

They seemed to understand that Canadian corporate taxes will be lower than those of the United States. They understood that our capital gains taxes are now lower than those of the United States. They also understood that our treatment of stock options is more generous than in the United States. If they understand it in the States, why does the critic for the Alliance not understand it?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, if they understand it, why are Canadian business people, investors and young people leaving the country every day to pursue economic opportunities in the United States? They understand that there are greater economic opportunities where taxes are lower.

*Oral Questions*

The finance minister is avoiding a very serious issue. We export more manufactured goods to the United States than we consume domestically. Consumer demand in the United States is going through the floor. The stock markets, as we speak, are actually reacting negatively to a 50 basis point cut in the fed rate.

What does the finance minister propose to do? Will he just ignore the growing storm clouds on the horizon, or will he bring in a budget that cuts taxes and does so quickly?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the implications of the slowing U.S. economy will have their effect in Canada. We will monitor the situation very closely and if it is necessary to take action we will take it.

I think I should be able to simply cite one economic forecaster among the many in the country to tell members exactly what the government has done. Let me simply do so.

The Conference Board of Canada indicates that recent changes in taxation, combined with the spillover from the 2000 budget, have created cuts in personal income tax, boosting household spending power in Canada. It goes on to say that at a time when the U.S. economy is slowing and exporters are hurting, the federal government in Canada appears to be riding to the rescue.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on pages 18 and 19 of the throne speech, it says, and I quote: "Government reaffirms its commitment to support sustainable official language minority communities".

Can the Prime Minister give us a clear definition of what a sustainable minority community is?

• (1440)

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and also congratulate him on his return to the House.

As he has already spent some time here, he is very much aware of our desire strengthen our commitment, not only to the viability of the francophone communities across Canada but also to their full development, wherever they are in this fine country of ours.

**Mr. Benoît Sauvageau (Repentigny, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are not the only ones concerned. The Commissioner of Official Languages has some concerns about this new concept or definition as well.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage or the Prime Minister give us a clear definition of what a sustainable minority community is?

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the hon. member wants to make use of quotes, I too would like to use one, this one from the FCFAC stating that "It is encouraging to see the federal government speaking up to reaffirm its commitment to the principle of linguistic duality".

I would also like to emphasize that, as the hon. member over there and his cousins in Quebec are well aware, one has to be very careful in one's choice of words.

\* \* \*

[English]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my question is with respect to the drunk driving tragedy this past weekend involving a Russian diplomat. This is at least the third drunk driving offence in recent times involving this diplomat.

We have also received reports that the diplomat, Mr. Knyazev, had a letter from the Department of Foreign Affairs apologizing to him for his treatment at the hands of the Ottawa police the last time he was arrested for drunk driving.

Will the minister confirm the existence of this letter and ensure that the nature and contents of that letter are revealed to the House?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure that all hon. members of the House would join me in expressing the profound sadness and concern that we feel both for the family of Catherine MacLean as well as for Catherine Doré, who has suffered serious injuries as a result of this incident, and her family. It is a tragedy and it is a great loss of a wonderful person.

We have made our views very clearly known to the Russian government. We asked it to waive diplomatic immunity in this case. Our concern is that the individual involved in the accident be required to face justice. We expect that to happen at the hands of Russian authorities.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would really like a response to the question I just raised. I also point out that this is at least the third time Knyazev was stopped by police for drunk driving. Each time the Department of Foreign Affairs was informed.

Why was this diplomat not expelled long ago when it became clear that each time he went out on the road he was endangering Canadian lives?

**Hon. John Manley (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of the letter to which the hon. member refers.

Generally speaking, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not informed of incidents unless a charge has been laid. On investigat-

*Oral Questions*

ing the information that we had with respect to police investigations in the community, we did not have information that any other charges had been considered or laid against the individual. We had only been asked for a photograph of the individual involved, which was provided to the relevant authorities.

\* \* \*

**INTERNATIONAL AID**

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of International Co-Operation.

The massive earthquake that rocked the Indian subcontinent last week has affected millions of people. Let us join with those constituents in Brampton Centre who are among the many Canadian relatives of the victims as we mourn the deaths and pray for strength for those facing devastation and misery.

Could the minister tell the House what efforts have been made by the Canadian government to provide assistance to the victims of this devastating earthquake in India?

**Hon. Maria Minna (Minister for International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I extend my deepest sympathies to the families of the people of India and to the communities in Canada with families there. Having been involved in an earthquake myself very recently, I know the devastation that it can create.

As soon as the Indian earthquake took place, I immediately announced \$1 million in assistance to deal with the information I had at hand.

• (1445)

I tripled that to \$3 million in health assistance for some 100,000 people, shelter for about 20,000, clean water for about 25,000 people, and clothing for about 50,000. I will be announcing further assistance in the near future.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, farmers are again demonstrating on Parliament Hill because they are being forced into bankruptcy. New parliament, same problem.

According to figures released yesterday by the government, the average return last year for a Saskatchewan agricultural producer was \$14 a day. There is no support for farmers, which would be entirely legal under the WTO, but billions in highly questionable loan guarantees are instantly available to Bombardier.

Spring seeding is just months away. When can Canadian farmers expect to hear of some meaningful assistance for them from the government?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since June 1997 the government has increased support to the safety nets for Canadian farmers by 85%. Last year we put in place a program, for example, of interest free money available to individual producers. That will be available for producers again this year.

We are continuing to look at a number of ways in which we can add further support to combat the stress we know is there, particularly in the grains and oilseeds sectors of Canadian agriculture.

\* \* \*

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech was little more than a rehash of tired Liberal platitudes, offering little for Canadians to cheer about. While the government is busy patting itself on the back and telling us all is well, thousands of workers in the city of Windsor and in communities like it are facing layoffs and plant closings.

Will the finance minister today commit to introducing a budget with concrete measures to address the impending economic downturn and crisis in our auto industry?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in the House, obviously we are concerned by the implications of the slowdown in the United States. The fact is that the very large fiscal stimulus of tax cuts and spending on things like health care is exactly the tonic required.

I must say that the \$17 billion tax cut for this year alone only went into effect less than a month ago. That being said, we will continue to monitor the situation in the United States and will take whatever action is required as circumstances warrant.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT**

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister explain to this House the link between the suspicious circumstances surrounding the loan to Auberge Grand-Mère, an issue with which he is very familiar, and the fact that the Federal Business Development Bank has had three different chairmen over an 18 month period, which is also something the Prime Minister is well aware of?

*[English]*

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier today, the ethics counsellor wrote to the Leader of the Opposition in response to his letter.

*Oral Questions*

It does not matter how much the leader of the Conservative Party wishes it were otherwise, the fact of the matter is that the Prime Minister, a 38 year veteran of the House, is a man of integrity. His reputation has been completely upheld by the ethics counsellor.

If the member opposite were a gentleman he would accept that and stop this character assassination.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the questionable contention of the Prime Minister and the minister that the ethics counsellor has cleared the Prime Minister of any wrongdoing, a commissioner, I note, who reports only to the Prime Minister, will he now admit that there was a connection between the decision of the Business Development Bank to call the \$600,000 loan to the Prime Minister's friend Yvon Duhaime and the dismissal of the Business Development Bank president François Beaudoin?

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no, I would make no such admission because that is an absolutely false and misleading statement.

I would ask the member to contemplate the nature of the kinds of comments that are now being made. The question of the dismissal of the former executive is a matter now before the courts. The member as a lawyer knows it ought not to be commented upon in the House or outside the House.

\* \* \*

• (1450)

**PORNOGRAPHY**

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, in its decision on child pornography last week, the Supreme Court of Canada legalized some child pornography, stating that harm to children would be minimal.

Does the Minister of Justice agree with the court that the risk to our children created by the court is acceptable?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, let me welcome my colleague, the member of parliament for Provencher. The member and I have a history together. He is the former—

**Hon. Ronald Duhamel:** Poor you.

**Miss Deborah Grey:** Should I give him my red jacket?

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure the House will want to hear the history.

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Let me clarify that the history to which I am referring is the fact the hon. member is the former attorney general of the province of Manitoba. I look forward to working with him in the months and years ahead.

The hon. member raises an important question. Since the Supreme Court of Canada ruling in *R v Sharpe*, I made it plain that I would consult with provincial and territorial colleagues, the police and the prosecutors. In fact, if further clarification is required in relation to the two exemptions or exceptions set out by the supreme court, we in the House will undertake those clarifications.

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for her answer. Considering my wife is in the audience in the House, I appreciate the clarification.

Contrary to the minister's position that the harm to Canada's children appears to be acceptable, the attorney general of Ontario has expressed concern that the decision of the court may create serious difficulties for law enforcement and our children. What concrete steps will the minister take to protect our children?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member knows I did not suggest in my response to his first question that the harm was acceptable.

As I said, I had the opportunity to speak with the attorney general of Ontario. I understand that the attorney general will be writing to me about some of the questions he has around the possible clarification of the two exceptions identified by the supreme court.

I appreciate receiving those concerns. I told the attorney general of Ontario that I would work with him, with other provincial and territorial colleagues, with the police and with the prosecutors, and if clarification is required to protect our children—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Longueuil.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS COUNSELLOR**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, this government is still the object of numerous criminal investigations.

A major problem is the fact that the ethics counsellor is at the mercy of the Prime Minister's will and is not even accountable to the House of Commons.

How can the Prime Minister explain that the throne speech is totally silent on this issue, when we all know that it made headlines everywhere during the election campaign?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows full well, and in fact we answered the question earlier, that the ethics

*Oral Questions*

counsellor is truly a person of integrity and that he has done an excellent job. His appointment received the support of the member's party and of the Canadian Alliance or Reform Party, because I am not sure what they call themselves now.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the issue is not who the government House leader consulted in 1993 or whenever.

We simply want to know why the Prime Minister stubbornly insists on maintaining full control over the ethics counsellor. Is it because it suits his purposes?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member got the answer to her question. Needless to say that, while she may try hard, she must know that these allegations are unfounded and also unfair to the Prime Minister, the ethics counsellor and everyone else. The hon. member knows full well that these accusations are completely incorrect.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

[*English*]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Edmonton Southeast has said that western Canadians are being treated unfairly by his own government. He said "We are being shut out of the national government. We need substantial change, not cosmetics, optics or gimmicks". Yet the throne speech contains nothing of substance to address this important issue.

Given that the problems are so obvious to members of his own caucus and cabinet, how does the Prime Minister propose to solve these important issues by ignoring them?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has managed to get 17 members elected west of Ontario three times in a row. We would like to have many more, but I guess we have a few more members than the Alliance has in Quebec or in Ontario.

We will continue working hard to convince them that we are providing them with a good government. Despite the fact that they have only 17 members, they have 9 members in cabinet and that is pretty good representation.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that tepid response, recent unfortunate comments by the intergovernmental affairs minister and disparaging remarks by the Prime Minister himself directed exclusively and solely at western Canadians require an apology.

The Prime Minister has spent more time in the air flying to Florida for golf trips than he has spent on the ground in western Canada. How does the Prime Minister expect to find solutions to important western Canadian problems when the closest he gets is 35,000 feet?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no prime minister has ever travelled as much as I have in western Canada. I have been going there for many years. There has not been a year when I have not been in every province. I have travelled in the territories all my life. Half of my family is from Alberta. I know the west and I do my best. I am very proud that we have achieved something that has not been done before. I will keep working. We are persistent.

The member had to change parties, so others will probably decide to change parties to be on the good side with us.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ORGANIZED CRIME**

**Mr. Jean-Guy Carignan (Québec East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the solicitor general.

For a number of months now, organized crime has been becoming an increasing presence in our communities. People in my riding, as in the rest of Canada, need to know what the federal government will be doing in the face of this threat.

Could the solicitor general tell this House whether the government has a plan of action and, if so, what steps does he plan to take in the coming months?

[*English*]

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for Québec East on his first question.

I am sure he is aware, as is everybody in the House, that we live in one of the safest countries in the world. The government is committed to making sure it stays that way.

My hon. colleagues are well aware that in the Speech from the Throne aggressive steps were taken to intensify the fight against organized crime, such as stronger anti-gang laws and the protection in the justice system of members against intimidation.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the agriculture minister likes to selectively quote statistics to mask what is really happening now on Canadian farms with regard to the financial crisis. I have two statistics for him.

First, for the year 2000 in Saskatchewan the total net income will only be 35% of the five year average which is already a disaster.

*Points of Order*

Second, only half of the money that the minister promised over two years ago has been delivered. Farmers are on the brink of bankruptcy and are demanding emergency cash injections.

Why will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food not commit to an emergency cash injection right now before it is springtime?

• (1500)

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the role of supporting agriculture across the country is twofold, with both the federal government and the provincial governments giving support.

The government of Saskatchewan has put some support there, but nowhere near the level of support that some other provinces have given to individual farmers.

The commitment of the government, in conjunction with the provinces, that would put out \$1.6 billion in aid and support to farmers will be fulfilled. I can guarantee that.

As I said before, the interest free money available for spring seeding will be there again this spring. We are looking at other support for farmers as we go into the spring seeding time.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I never saw the Liberal government asking the provinces for permission to give Bombardier money.

Farmers across the country have come to Parliament Hill this week to tell the minister that agriculture programs have failed. The Speech from the Throne mentioned getting beyond crisis management in agriculture but ignored the disaster created by the government's mismanagement. Farm families need help today, not months or years from now.

Why will the minister not commit to an emergency cash injection before spring seeding?

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I point out to the hon. member that the province of Quebec contributed to the support for Bombardier. It is a 100% repayable loan.

The hon. member made comments about the throne speech. I am very concerned that he does not want to see the government do all it possibly can to help the industry move beyond crisis management. That is the challenge we have and that is the opportunity we will fulfil.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## GOVERNOR GENERAL'S SPECIAL WARRANT

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I notice in *The Canada Gazette* that an amount of \$1.768

billion has been approved by Governor General's special warrant providing for expenditures from January 13, 2001 to February 11, 2001.

I refer to private member's Bill C-270, assented to on February 19, 1997, with which I think the Speaker is quite familiar. If I may quote the bill, it says "Subject to subsection (1.1) where payment is urgently required for the public good" and "there is no other appropriation pursuant to which the payment may be made", the Governor General may authorize the payment.

When I look at the details of this special warrant, I see that they are all basically for operating expenditures. The House approved operating expenditures for all the departments mentioned when we approved the main estimates last June.

Therefore in my opinion this is not eligible to be approved by way of special warrant because there was already an appropriation made by the House last June to cover the operating expenditures for the departments listed in this special warrant.

Therefore I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board why this \$1.768 billion of taxpayer money is being expended without reference to the House and when this will be rectified. Perhaps she could clarify whether or not this is actually legal, because in my opinion it is in contravention of the law as it currently stands.

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** The Chair has grave reservations as to whether this is in fact a point of order or a matter of argument on the application of the law.

Perhaps the government House leader, in a brief reply, could clarify the situation for the hon. member for St. Albert in a way that would let the matter rest for the time being at least. I know there will be other opportunities to investigate these special warrants.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief. Standing Order 81 explains for the hon. member and for anyone else how the convention of supply works. It should be obvious to anyone that the House could not grant supply before parliament had been reconvened. The House was of course called back to elect our Speaker on Monday and received its Speech from the Throne yesterday. The hon. member knows that even before estimates could be approved by the House we would need at least seven opposition days in order to do that.

The hon. member is questioning whether these expenditures are necessary because they are for operations. Need I remind him that if there is no money for operations and the government ceases to function at the same time as he and his colleagues are demanding further expenditures, there would be at least something wrong. It is not only the privilege but the duty of the government to ensure that the government functions until parliament can properly grant supply.

*Routine Proceedings*

**The Speaker:** We will treat the matter as closed for the time being. I am going from memory at this point, but my recollection is that these special warrants are referred to the standing committee on something or other, and I think it is the public accounts committee.

I know the hon. member for St. Albert was a member if not the chair of that committee in the last parliament. Who knows what will happen when the striking committee reports, but I am sure that if he is the chair he will be able to take up that matter in the committee with vigour and enthusiasm and find out all the details about whether there was anything amiss in the special warrant to which he refers.

I believe the Chair has notice of a point of order from the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, allow me to congratulate you on your rocket-like ascent to position of Speaker.

I rise on two points of order. My first point of order concerns a letter that was referred to in an answer in question period. I would ask that the Minister of Industry table the letter so that it forms a part of the record of the 37th parliament. I acknowledge that he has provided us with a copy.

My second point of order concerns a response to a question I posed to the Prime Minister. The Minister of Industry characterized my question as a false and misleading statement. Mr. Speaker, I would refer you to Beauchesne's sixth edition, a publication that I know you are very attached to. At page 151, citation 494, it states:

It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

It may be that the Minister of Industry is feeling a bit testy because his old riding of Straits—White Bay North has just gone Tory for the first time since Confederation. Trevor Taylor was elected there.

I would ask in all honesty that the new member would now withdraw that characterization as false and misleading in this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** I will deal with the first issue concerning the tabling of a letter. If the Minister of Industry did read from a letter, I would be glad to hear from him on that point.

**Hon. Brian Tobin (Bonavista—Trinity—Conception, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would be very happy to table the letter in question but pursuant to standing orders I will have to await the appropriate-

ly translated version of the letter in order to lay it on the table of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I await your direction on this, but with respect to the second matter I would be happy to respond now if the Speaker so desires.

• (1510)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough has raised an interesting point. Perhaps if instead of reading Beauchesne's he had read Marleau and Montpetit, he would have come up with a slightly different bent on his argument.

As he knows, Beauchesne's is an older book now and Marleau and Montpetit is just the latest and greatest on procedural matters, of course. I know the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough reads that book extensively. However the difficulty is that the words the Minister of Industry used did not include the words deliberately misleading. My recollection, without having gone through Marleau and Montpetit extensively on this occasion, is that the words must be that the statement was deliberately misleading the House. He did not say that.

Accordingly, while I heard him say it and the thought passed through my mind, as I know it did through that of the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough and sent him running for Beauchesne's, I do not feel that he has transgressed the rules today on this point. Accordingly I have nothing further to say. I do not think the point of order is well taken.

**Hon. Brian Tobin:** Mr. Speaker, I was well aware that the word deliberately in fact would have put me in a position where I would have transgressed the rules of the House.

However, I want to say that I have been in a far gentler House for the last five years, a gentle place full of gentlemen and gentlewomen, and I realize today that I have returned somewhat to old form. Even though I have not violated the rules of the House, because it is my first day back and I want a good start, if I in any way, shape or form have offended the sensibilities of the member opposite, I want him to know that I hope he sleeps well tonight.

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**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**WAYS AND MEANS**

## NOTICE OF MOTION

**Hon. Jim Peterson (Secretary of State (International Financial Institutions), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I wish to table a notice of ways and means motion relating to

the assessment of expenses regarding a financial consumer agency, and I ask that an order of the day be designated for consideration thereof.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to inform the House that the following member has been appointed a member of the Board of Internal Economy for the purposes and by virtue of the provisions of the Act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, chapter 32 of the Statutes of Canada, 1997: the hon. member for Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh.

[English]

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to seek the consent of the House, following consultation on all sides, to present without debate the following motion. It is a motion that I believe is supported by members of all parties represented in the House and is seconded by my colleague, the member for Vancouver East.

I move that this House condemn the cruel punishment of 100 lashes administered on the 22nd of January last to Bariya Magazu, a Nigerian child in Zamfara state, as an act of torture and a breach of Nigeria's commitments under the UN convention against torture, the UN convention on the rights of the child and the international covenant on civil and political rights, and call on the Canadian government to work with the Nigerian federal government and all relevant authorities in an effort to ensure that this cruel and unusual punishment is not repeated.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1515)

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to seek guidance of the Chair. There have been consultations on all sides of the House and an agreement from members representing all parties. With great respect, I wonder if the Speaker might seek consent of the House once again. I think he might find that it is forthcoming.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Perhaps there were consultations with all House leaders. However, when members produce a long motion like the member just gave looking for unanimous consent, I think some of us would prefer a bit of notice so we could consider it in detail.

**The Speaker:** I think it is apparent there is not consent. Clearly the hon. member could put his motion on the notice paper and then seek consent once it has been on the notice paper for a period of time. Perhaps that is the way to deal with it.

S. O. 52

[Translation]

#### PETITIONS

##### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am today tabling in the House three petitions concerning employment insurance by constituents of the riding of Charlevoix.

Since the Minister of Human Resources Development is simply putting off the problem of seasonal workers by gradually changing the limits of employment insurance regions over the next three years, the people of Charlevoix will continue to pressure the government.

They ask the government to make acceptable changes as quickly as possible so seasonal workers are not penalized.

[English]

##### KIDNEY RESEARCH

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition signed by several hundred people from Peterborough and elsewhere. The petitioners point out that kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada, and that real progress is being made in various ways of presenting and coping with kidney disease.

They call upon parliament to encourage the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to explicitly recognize kidney research as one of the institutes in its system. The institute would be named the institute of kidney and urinary tract diseases.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

##### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, welcome back to the chair. I have had a lot of good opportunities when you have been in the chair to ask permission for an emergency debate.

Under Standing Order 52, I ask that the House, through your auspices in the chair, allow an emergency debate with respect to the crisis in agriculture today. As seen in the House today, all parties, including the government, agree that there is a general

*The Address*

crisis in agriculture. We should have the opportunity in the House to discuss openly what is happening right now in my community and other communities across the country.

Since 1999 we have lost 22,000 farmers. The year 2000 was the worst. The year 2001 and beyond will be worse yet. We have to talk about short term requirements and long term support programs, and we have to talk about them now. I ask the Speaker to allow us an emergency debate on agriculture.

**The Speaker:** The Chair has carefully considered the point raised by the hon. member for Brandon—Souris. While the Chair was tempted to grant the emergency debate, I point out to the House that we are debating today, tomorrow, and I believe Friday, the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. That allows debate on any topic.

Since any topic may be raised, including the very important topic mentioned by the hon. member for Brandon—Souris, during the next few days at random, the Chair feels that it would be inappropriate at this time to grant an emergency debate on the subject raised. Of course the hon. member is free to bring the matter before the House on another occasion.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from January 30 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to resume debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

First, I wish to thank Her Excellency the Governor General for the class that she displayed in delivering the Speech from the Throne and for the passion with which she fulfils her duties as the representative of Her Majesty the Queen in Canada.

We were all very touched by her recent visit to the Innu children of Sheshatsiu. Her Excellency travelled there on behalf of all Canadians to show our compassion toward the children of this community in crisis.

I also want to congratulate the leaders of all the other parties for the way they campaigned. I know that harsh words were sometimes spoken and that Canadians expressed their frustration at the tone used during that period, but I also know that party leaders are dedicated and determined people and that they firmly believe in what they do.

Finally, I wish to congratulate the Prime Minister on getting a new mandate from Canadians.

The official opposition has a duty to ensure that the government fulfils the responsibilities it has been given by Canadians. While we sometimes disagree with the policies or administrative measures of this government, our task is made easier in knowing that the Prime Minister cares about serving the public and loves our country.

[*English*]

I am sure everybody in the House would agree, regardless of party, that when I say our greatest desire is to help the people of the country achieve their greatest potential that should be our goal. We want our constituents and all Canadians to be able to meet their daily needs, to reach their personal goals and to fulfil their dreams.

We hear a lot of talk about the difference among regions in the country and the difference of goals and the difference of values. I believe there is much more that joins us than divides us.

All Canadians have hope and aspirations for their future. I think we would all agree that all Canadians want good jobs that allow them to live in comfort. They want an excellent education for their children. They want health care to be available when they need it. They want a clean environment. They want safe communities and strong families. They want freedom in the pursuit of their dreams.

These are the hopes and dreams all Canadians share regardless of regions in the country. Our task in the House is to make sure that people have the freedom and the ability to achieve those hopes and dreams.

There are two basic philosophies or approaches toward government in terms of seeing a people attain their hopes and dreams.

On one side there is a strong interventionist approach that holds that the machinery of government should be intervening significantly throughout economic and social life. In helping citizens to reap the harvest of their dreams, the government chooses the field, prepares the land, selects the seed, plants the crop, drives the plough, harvests the crop and markets the produce. The people do what the state tells them and then they receive what the state gives them and are expected to be happy with the results. This is sometimes called an entitlement approach because people receive what the government tells them they are entitled to have.

The other approach says that people themselves should plant and harvest their own field of dreams. It is individual citizens who should choose their field, sow the seeds of their own hopes and harvest the yield of their own crop of dreams. The government's role is to ensure that all are treated fairly under laws of equality and that all have an equal opportunity to work toward the dreams and

*The Address*

receive the rewards of their own efforts. This is sometimes called an empowerment approach because people are given the tools and resources they need to pursue their goals, their hopes and their dreams.

These two approaches are not totally incompatible. All democratic societies have a blend of intervention and also freedom, entitlement and empowerment. There are genuine entitlements; the right to support seniors in the form of pensions and the right to health care for all, which we all accept. Advocates of both models believe society must show care and compassion, especially for those who cannot care for themselves.

● (1525)

One of the lessons of the last century is that the philosophy of a limited form of government and intervention, one which encourages empowerment rather than one which intervenes all the time in terms of entitlement, is the one that yields the broadest possibility of people attaining their hopes and dreams.

That is the vision of the Canadian Alliance. It is a vision of empowering Canadians. Empowering Canadians means that rather than relying on politicians and bureaucrats to shape our collective future, we must instead see that people are equipped with the tools they need to build their own futures.

In reply to the Speech from the Throne I will propose those things that we believe will explain why the positive vision of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, can be used in the attainment of these goals.

We can empower the Canadian economy by giving individuals, entrepreneurs and business more freedom, allowing them to keep more of their hard earned money and to fulfil their own potential. We can empower Canadian community and civil society so that Canadians working together, especially at the local level, can be assured of excellent health care, a clean environment and safe streets and communities. We can accomplish those things.

We can empower Canadian democracy, providing a renewed sense of citizenship and participation in the decisions of government, starting with reforms that are necessary right here in the House. This is the people's Chamber and we believe that a more democratic Canada will be a stronger and more united Canada.

Democratic empowerment, community empowerment and economic empowerment is our vision for a stronger, better and a more united Canada. We hope we can persuade the government that the philosophy of empowerment would result in a better country than would the fading philosophy of entitlement and massive intervention.

The Speech from the Throne shows a government that has dozens and dozens of program ideas, vague promises and trial balloons. These are all well focus tested no doubt, but lacking in overall depth and understanding of the very nature of the people we serve.

It was interesting in the Senate chamber yesterday as I watched the effect of promise after promise on one of the very few young people who had been invited by the federal Liberals. I say

young people in deference to my wife who is here and also to others.

This has absolutely no reflection on Her Excellency who delivered a marvellous speech, but as the speech progressed and as promise after promise was made and laid upon the shoulders of Canadians with the ensuing cost, the face of the young person who works in the Senate became more and more pale and beads of sweat began to appear on his forehead.

This is just my assumption as to why he was suffering. He looked like a strong young man and well intended but eventually he went down on one knee under the weight I presume of what he was hearing. I had to encourage him, as did others. I said not to worry, that we could address the situation. He was helped to his feet and taken from the room somewhat refreshed.

What we want to do is take these old, tired ideas that the federal government brings to this Chamber and refresh them with the policies of empowerment that will especially see our young people stand strong and encouraged for the future which faces them.

That is the reason we are making these proposals today, and we will continue to do so. The government still believes in its heart that the answer to every problem is more and bigger government, more intervention and more dominance. The government believes that it knows best and that the people of Canada cannot be relied upon to make decisions for themselves.

We believe in the people of this country. That is the big difference between us and the government. We believe they know what is best for them. We believe the role of government is to assist people, not to control them.

It was in the period of state expansion in the sixties and seventies that the philosophical ideas of the Liberal Government of Canada were formed. The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister were a part of that era of dramatic government expansion and intervention. The Minister of Finance, who was not there during those times, absorbed the whole process by osmosis.

The experience of the eighties and nineties showed even the Liberals that the tax, borrow and spend policies of the sixties and seventies would eventually take us to the brink of economic disaster. For those interested in that, the truths of classical economics were rediscovered. In plain terms, these are the same truths that most households are aware of from their own budgets. What they do not have they cannot spend. Even liberals and socialists, as we look historically around the world, have been forced to rediscover the virtues of balanced budgets and, more recently, tax reductions.

● (1530)

Furthermore, politically the federal government has been forced to retreat from the position of intervention and entitlement, especially in the social field, through the use of its spending power. It had to change course, not only because the federal intrusions were exacerbating federal-provincial tensions and fanning the flames of

*The Address*

separatism in Quebec, but also because it could no longer afford that scale of intervention in the lives of its citizens.

Economic and political reality have now forced the Liberals to retreat from the kind of massive deficit spending that they indulged in during the 1970s and 1980s. What I am concerned about is that their heart has never been in it. Their heart has never been there. As we see the possibility of surpluses, I am very concerned about a return to those old ways because that is where their hearts are, massive intervention into these types of programs.

Fundamentally, Liberals believe that there is no problem so tough, no challenge so difficult and no chasm so deep that it cannot be solved with another government program. They have never understood that a less dominant state can lead to a stronger, healthier economy and a flourishing civil society.

The Liberals have never understood that a less invasive state can be accompanied by the empowerment of individual families, citizens, community groups, businesses and local governments so that they themselves can find answers together to the challenges they face.

This government asks Canadians for blind trust while showing a lack of trust in those Canadians. The government believes in itself but we believe in the wisdom, hard work and ability of the Canadian people.

I will present the vision of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, and those proven policy positions which will enhance the quality of life for all Canadians. First we have to look at empowering the Canadian economy. The first step toward doing that is to make sure people are equipped with the tools they need to compete in the global economy of the future and that they are provided with the incentives that reward those efforts.

The throne speech attempted to paint a rosy picture of the Canadian economy. We heard again today that the picture may not be all that rosy. There are cracks beneath the facade of economic prosperity. We think that these cracks can be managed if the right policies are in place, but it appears as though those policies will not be in place.

The United States economy, which has been the economic engine of growth substantially for Canada and other economies for the last several years, is now reporting a possibility of zero growth.

Alan Greenspan and the U.S. federal reserve have taken sharp rate cuts, again today, to stave off the economic slowdown. Mr. Greenspan recently announced U.S. growth was near zero. Canada is bound to feel the effects of this, especially in sectors where we

rely on the United States, such as the automobile industry, the high tech industry and others where we are seeing an increased number of layoffs being reported. With the threat of a slowdown, the Canadian people need a plan that will empower them and the economy to see them through these choppy seas that lay ahead.

What are the Liberals doing to empower Canadians and equipping them to face the uncertain economic times that we are now entering? They have announced some teeny tax cuts in their teeny budget but these are grudging, half hearted, half step measures. Their hearts are not in it. It is not enough in the short term to address the current economic uncertainty. It is not enough to ensure that the Canadian economy will start to catch up to the United States or keep us from falling further behind. We have already paid the price for that in a declining standard of living relative to other countries. Our standard of living, as measured by real disposable income per capita, has actually declined from 70% of the U.S. average in 1990 to just over 63% in the year 2000.

The then Royal Bank's chief economist, now the member for Markham, commenting on the Canadian performance in the 1990s, used the Latin words *decennium horribilis*, roughly translated as being lousy Liberal politics.

In a survey of the 25 wealthiest OECD countries, Canada's growth and standard of living ranked a terrible 24th over the decade from 1988 to 1998. Do we still enjoy good living in Canada? Of course we do, but in which direction is it headed? We must be consumed with that question.

• (1535 )

Ireland was actually number one and has moved from having only half of Canada's per capita income to almost the same level in a mere 10 years. Think about that. Ireland has doubled its standard of living in a decade while Canada has been standing still.

The Canadian economy is growing slightly now but it is falling behind many of our trading partners. These realities must be recognized.

I have hope and optimism that these trends can be corrected but not on the plans and proposals offered to us by the government. If Canada does not catch up and overtake the productivity growth in the other countries, it will find itself continuing to fall behind.

What is worse is that the gap between the United States and Canada will grow and not shrink over the next few years. With the Bush administration in the United States it is very clear that it is going to aggressively pursue tax reductions and debt reductions.

*The Address*

Alan Greenspan has also given the nod of approval and stated that is a prudent way to go. The gap will only increase in terms of competition and in terms of potential reward for people deciding where they are to put their investment dollars and where they should be working themselves.

The proposals, which now seem on their way to implementation in the United States, echo the proposals of the official opposition. As a matter of fact the official opposition proposals were in place even before those of the Bush administration. It must have been reading our manual somewhere along the way.

The Canadian Alliance calls for significant tax cuts and tax and debt reductions. We want to empower Canadians by leaving them not just more of their hard earned money but with the hope for investment and opportunity in the future.

The plan, if it is fully implemented, would save Canadians \$130 billion dollars over the next five years. It would reduce income tax rates to 17% for 97% of all Canadians within the first four years, and 100% of all Canadians, in a second mandate, would be enjoying a single rate of 17% on our approach.

Large personal exemptions of \$10,000 per person and \$3,000 per child would also help Canadians. We are asking that those be implemented as well. Let the Liberals take the credit and let the families benefit, especially lower income Canadians and families.

Our burden of income taxes as a percentage of GDP would drop from over 14%. That is the highest rate in the G-7 countries, which is not something to be proud of.

The Liberals complained that our program was too large and too radical but then they turned around and implemented their own pale copy of our program.

An interesting comment that someone passed on to me comes from the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer. He once said that all truth passes through three stages: first, it is ridiculed; second, it is opposed; and, third, it is accepted as being self-evident.

That has been the Liberals' approach to the Canadian Alliance call for tax cuts and other proposals. First they say it is crazy, then they say it is dangerous and finally they do it themselves. However, while the Liberals stole some of our program, we begged them to steal more of it for the good of all Canadians.

We need these bold tax cuts to keep Canada competitive, not half measures. Not only are the government's tax cuts half measures, its plan is only half baked. Its implementation is too slow, in fact only half fast.

The Liberal mini cuts will still leave Canada with the highest income tax to GDP ratio in the G-7, even while the U.S. is dramatically lowering its tax burden. We need to give hard working Canadians, businesses and entrepreneurs the same kinds of incentives and rewards that they could be achieving elsewhere or they will be lured to those other places.

We believe that if Canadian businesses and workers are allowed to harness their own dreams and visions, the country will benefit as a whole. The most important vision for the country is that of the Canadian people themselves and not the tax and spend fantasies of the Liberal government.

That is why the official opposition believes that the Minister of Finance should table a new budget in the spring, rather than wait a full year after the election. We are disappointed that the Speech from the Throne did not commit the government to an earlier budget. It must bring one down.

Canadians must be updated on the cost of the government's election promises. Today when I asked what those costs were, there was no response. The government does not even know and yet economic times are changing.

The government must reassure markets in this time of economic uncertainty and it must take measures to help Canada be competitive with our trading partners.

• (1540)

The Canadian Alliance urges the Minister of Finance to table an early budget to continue the necessary work of tax reduction, debt reduction, and seeing revenues come in to support our social programs. The key changes are lowering the marginal rates, expanding exemptions for individuals and families, reducing corporate income tax and reducing capital gains tax. These will enhance Canada's competitive position.

Increased productivity will lead to increased revenues, and this is an area where the Liberals cannot connect the dots, so that the federal government can continue to provide the quality of health care and social services that the people of Canada rely on.

[*Translation*]

Such changes—reducing the maximum marginal rate, providing exemptions to all taxpayers, reducing corporate tax rates and taxes on capital gains and improving Canada's competitiveness—will ensure that we do not suffer from the more aggressive economic measures taken in the United States. Increased productivity will result in greater revenues, which will allow the federal government to continue to offer the health care and social services that Canadians need.

*The Address**[English]*

If these steps are not taken, the Canadian dollar will continue to go down and Canadian businesses which are attractive because of the hard work of Canadians will increasingly be purchased by Americans. That will then cause a rise in the concern from the Liberals to bring in foreign investment restrictions. All of these things will lead to a wrong conclusion.

We have seen today, announced only a couple of hours ago, the purchase of a dearly beloved team, Les Canadiens. The Montreal Canadiens have been purchased by an American business. The key reasons the Americans were able to purchase the team were indicated: high taxes which inhibited Canadians from buying it, a low Canadian dollar and the U.S. salaries. That is an indicator of what is happening. The Liberals continue to allow Canadian business to be underpriced and purchased by American business.

Tax cuts and debt reduction are a crucial first step to empowering the Canadian economy and perhaps the most single important contributor to our competitive position, but they are not the only answer. A strong system of education and training, good industrial and transportation infrastructure, and support for research and development are essential components for future economic growth. The Canadian Alliance recognizes that. The government, however, claims it cannot lower taxes too much because it needs the increased revenues to allow for government investments in the economy.

The government still does not get it. It does not understand that reducing taxes and debt and investing in needed economic and social infrastructure are complementary goals. By reducing taxes, reducing the debt, invigorating the economy and increasing revenues, it is with an invigorated type of fiscal position that we can support the social programs Canadians want. That is the approach that must be taken.

Too often when the government makes public investments, the investments take the form of creating new entitlement programs, such as subsidies which dispense grants and loans to favoured industries from favoured regions of the country or programs which maximize the visibility of the federal government and its bronze plaques without maximizing economic efficiency.

We welcome the throne speech commitment to double R and D and to strengthen universities and government labs, but the emphasis here should be investment in basic scientific research through such programs as Canada's research granting councils and the National Research Council rather than the government trying to second guess industry about which applied technologies or new products to pursue through industrial subsidies. That is not the most effective way of approaching it.

Investing in basic R and D and science is not a frill. It is essential and we recognize that. It is essential for building a better economy

and a better society. As a matter of fact, to put it in terms that the government may understand, it is reported that when the great British Prime Minister Sir William Gladstone met Michael Faraday, the inventor of the electric dynamo, he asked him whether electricity would ever be of any use, to which Faraday replied "Yes, sir. One day you will be able to tax it".

We are trying to help the government connect the dots on economic growth. We will call on the government to increase its investment in infrastructure, in particular the rebuilding of the crumbling highway system.

• (1545)

Technological infrastructure is necessary. The national fibre optic backbone network needs to be looked at. Canadians from coast to coast are also demanding a serious upgrade of the Trans-Canada Highway. The Liberals have promised that. Where are the specifics on that?

We will call on the government to increase its contribution to post-secondary education through the CHST and by encouraging greater information sharing and co-operation among colleges, universities and provinces, not by coming up with new programs that duplicate what is happening in the provinces and waste dollars that could and should be going to students.

Industrial subsidies through Technology Partnerships Canada or the Export Development Corporation must be phased out and eliminated. As John Roth of Nortel has said, Canadian business must learn to stand on its own two feet. We can help it do that with proper tax policies.

The energy and creativity of Canadian business should not be diverted into the game of seeking subsidies and grants from government. It should be assisted through low taxes, a skilled workforce, an excellent public infrastructure, and people who are empowered and equipped to take on the world. That is the path to sustainable economic growth.

We also need to look at empowering our communities and building a stronger society. Economic growth, jobs and wealth are not the only things that point to health in a society. There are many measures of social progress that cannot be built into the GDP. As well as a strong economy we must ensure a strong society.

Empowering Canadians means empowering Canadian communities and civil society. We must ensure we have quality health care that is second to none. We must ensure that our children are nurtured in strong families and educated in excellent schools. We must ensure that our seniors have dignity in their retirement years. We must ensure that our streets and communities are safe.

*The Address*

The Liberals too often see the balance between a strong economy and a strong society as a trade-off. The two are complementary. They believe that more government taxation and regulation of the economy are necessary to provide the types of programs that lead to strong communities, but we believe a free and prosperous economy goes hand in hand with a stronger society and stronger communities.

Invasive, dominating, centralized government programs do not create a strong society. However, government can empower and equip citizens, families, charities, community groups and others at the local level who are themselves the foundation of a strong and flourishing civil society.

Let us apply the philosophy of empowerment to our communities and to programs like the national health care system. There is a lot of ongoing debate today about Canada's public medical system after years of cutbacks and neglect from the federal Liberals.

As Dr. Peter Barrett of the Canadian Medical Association stated, the serious problems facing medicare today can be labelled a health care crisis. For patients awaiting health services it is a personal crisis. He goes on to say that doctors and nurses on the frontline know it is a crisis.

The waiting lists continue and have increased dramatically under this government. Average wait times between seeing a general practitioner and receiving treatment have increased from 9.3 weeks in 1993 to 14 weeks in 1999. This has severe consequences.

Canada continues to lose doctors and nurses to the United States. Eighteen doctors leave permanently for the United States for every one doctor who comes north.

Canada rates 23 out of 29 in the OECD when it comes to doctors per capita. That is not acceptable. We are far behind many OECD countries in terms of providing access to medical technologies. Yet with all of these difficulties, the Liberal government refuses to consider genuine reforms to our system of health care.

The Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, is firmly and fully committed to a publicly insured health care system that respects the five principles of the Canada Health Act. Let us be very clear on that.

Let us also be clear that the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition, is committed to preserving, maintaining and strengthening the Canadian health care system within the letter and spirit of the Canada Health Act. Indeed we believe there should be a sixth principle added to the Canada Health Act: the principle of stable funding.

The federal government should increase funding to the provinces for this fiscal year to bring the 2001 federal contribution to

medicare through the CHST back to the level of 1995, before it ripped it away from the provinces. We also need to guarantee that level of funding for the next five years. However money is not the only answer. There must be true reform to the system.

• (1550)

Over the next few months we will be consulting with doctors, nurses, patients, practitioners and citizens to find new approaches to health care. We need to encourage creativity and innovation. We need to listen to what is happening and bring forward the types of reforms that will truly strengthen our system.

As we do this, we need to respect the positions that are being articulated and not mischaracterize the positions of others. We will debate them fairly and show why they are faulty. We cannot have a clear and open discussion on this issue when people resort to the type of name that knock people off the desire to have a debate.

We want to see the health care system improved and maintained under the five principles of the health care act. We believe our approach would allow Canada to develop the best system in the world. That is not the case now. It can be with the proposals that we look forward to.

The same philosophy of empowerment should be applied to other areas of the Canadian social union. Empowering Canadians means empowering our aboriginal communities.

In its throne speech the government devoted much attention, and rightly so, to the problems faced by aboriginal Canadians. With a growing younger population but continuing chronic poverty, the situation of Canada's aboriginal communities must be addressed.

I am willing to admit that the government has proposed a few positive initiatives. The promise to introduce more democratic accountability to band governments is a crucial step and one that we have been advocating for years. We will of course support that.

We will examine carefully the legislation that the government brings forward. We will consult with aboriginal Canadians and offer positive suggestions on how to ensure accountability.

Many of the government's proposals will only deepen its culture of invasiveness and shackle aboriginal Canadians to the cycle of dependency that has led to many of the problems they are dealing with. Most aboriginals see the Indian Act as archaic and destructive, yet the government continues to cling to it. Why?

Canada's aboriginal communities need to be empowered to solve their own problems and drive economic growth in their own communities while knowing that existing treaty rights will be respected. That is a key point that we must say over and over again.

It is crucial that both local bands and status Indians be able to choose to participate in the free market economy on an equal

*The Address*

footing with other Canadians. Bands should be able to buy and sell property. Individual aboriginal families should be able to enjoy the dignity of home ownership, if that is their wish, the same as other Canadians.

The government can certainly play a role in helping aboriginal economic development get started, but programs need to be designed with autonomy and self-sustainability as the goal.

That is the approach that will work, not the one of massive intervention and invasiveness that the Liberals have pursued for too many years, even while the present Prime Minister was the minister of that particular department. We need to be doing this.

The throne speech also discussed the government's ongoing children's agenda. Nothing could be more important than our children and their healthy development.

Again we have to question whether the federal government is the best placed institution to judge children's needs or whether the answer lies in empowering and equipping Canadian families to make their own choices in their children's best interests.

That is why we favour a universal per child tax credit so families can make their own choices, rather than an interventionist, one size fits all child care program.

That is why we favour equalizing the personal and spousal exemptions to end discrimination between one income and two income families. It is time we began treating all family decisions respectfully and equally.

We support the existing child tax credit to help lower income families with children. Indeed, it is a far better approach to getting children out of poverty than the subsidized approach of one size fits all that the Liberal government continues to invade us with.

We must also pay attention to the root causes of child poverty. We salute the throne speech's acknowledgement of both this and the effort and support that need to go to single parents who are raising children, many times in difficult circumstances.

We must acknowledge that a significant factor in predicting child poverty is the issue of fatherlessness. We must not be afraid to discuss that. We need to look at this and other family issues with compassion, not finger pointing, and look to enhancing the factors which truly strengthen family bonds.

• (1555)

We also need to look carefully at our tax laws, divorce laws and social programs, which may have contributed perhaps inadvertently to weakening family bonds, and at what factors strengthen those bonds.

We applaud the commitment in the throne speech to modernize child support, custody and access laws. We hope the government will be guided by the parliamentary joint committee report on child custody and access, which had many useful recommendations including how to keep both parents involved in the welfare of their children even after a marriage or a relationship has broken down.

Government must help strengthen the position of families through increased parental choice in child care, strengthening the position of families in our tax code, and recognizing the value of families in law. These are positions of the Canadian Alliance, the official opposition.

Empowering Canadians also means empowering groups of citizens through voluntary and charitable organizations at the local level to meet their social needs. Charities, whether they are faith based groups such as Catholic Social Services or community based groups, need more financial support from the federal government but not federal invasiveness.

We need to examine new legislation to support charities to replace the arcane common law rules that govern them, which have led to perverse results in many instances, such as community music groups being denied charitable status while terrorist fronts receive it. We need to take a common sense look at these.

Charitable groups of all types have done much to educate children, care for the sick, feed and clothe the poor. The contributions of all such groups should be recognized and encouraged.

Although faith based institutions make up nearly half of all registered societies in Canada, they had virtually no input into the Prime Minister's task force on the voluntary sector. That was an oversight.

We have seen the federal government, in an interesting situation, name churches as co-defendants in lawsuits against the federal government for its treatment of native children under its care. The government must look at these lawsuits which threaten the survival of entire denominations that have done and continue to do much to meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of Canadians.

We must acknowledge wrongdoings that have happened. We are absolutely committed to that. We must ensure that justice is done in relation to those wrongdoings. Surely that can be done without eliminating entire organizations which have had a long history of helping and strengthening our communities.

Empowering Canadians, individuals and groups is what we need to be doing. That will ensure communities are safe from the threat of crime and violence.

Over the past seven years the government has adopted the rhetoric of getting tough on crime and on the causes of crime.

*The Address*

However, too often the government has put the rights of accused criminals above the rights of victims and has ignored police and local communities. Canadians are saying it is time to change that focus.

For seven years we looked forward expectantly and heard promises to reform the Young Offenders Act. Let us get to work on this. Let us acknowledge that citizens need protection from serious repeat offenders and that we need to apply preventive and caring approaches to young people who are at risk of becoming serious offenders.

Even in the past week the Supreme Court of Canada, while upholding the essence of Canada's law against the possession of child pornography, has read in certain exceptions to the law that three of the justices fear may cause harm to children and hamper the prosecution of these cases.

The government acted too slowly in the Sharpe matter, the B.C. decision. It failed in its responsibility to maintain the law while the case worked its way through the courts and caused many prosecutions to be abandoned.

It is now the government's responsibility, and ours with it, to ensure that these supposedly minor exceptions do not provide loopholes for those who would exploit our children and steal their innocence.

Empowering Canadians means preserving the natural environment, the environment that we depend on for our resources, our economy and the health of our communities.

We encourage responsible measures to protect the environment and work co-operatively with the provincial and municipal agencies and governments that are closest to the challenges.

• (1600)

We understand that the government intends to bring forward a new endangered species bill in this session. There have been hints that the legislation may be improved to address the valid concerns of rural Canadians regarding fair compensation. The Minister of the Environment claims to have learned from the abysmal implementation of Bill C-68 how crucial and how important it is to work with rural Canadians and not try to criminalize their traditional ways of life.

We will examine the new bill with interest. We will consult with Canadians. We want to preserve the diversity of Canada's natural species and balance that with the needs of local communities in the areas most affected.

We must also empower Canadian farmers and rural Canadians in resource dependent communities. The federal government has not only ignored the voice of rural Canadians when it comes to

firearms control and balancing the preservation of natural species, but it has also ignored the entire area of agriculture and natural resource management. After seven years the government has failed to help struggling farm families during the ongoing farm crisis. We meet those families every day.

AIDA help was supposed to be delivered two years ago but only 50% of that money has been distributed. Fifty per cent of claims from 1999 remains unprocessed while family farms move into bankruptcy. Farmers need immediate assistance. This promised money must go to farmers before the next spring seeding. They need the help now.

We will continue to work with farmers and the agricultural community to aggressively push the government to move toward ensuring that farmers get the help they need and that farm families are not driven from their lands.

The root causes of the farm income crisis must also be addressed. Foreign subsidies must be aggressively negotiated downward. Where is the federal government on this particular process? Red tape and bureaucracy must be cut and federal assistance programs must be redesigned so that they meet the needs of the farmers rather than support bureaucracy.

Governments need to look at farmers' input costs. They are burdened with fees and high taxes on everything they buy and with skyrocketing fuel costs. Why does the federal government refuse to lower some of its own fees and charges to the agricultural community? This must be done.

We have seen in the recent unjustified blockade of Prince Edward Island potatoes how the government has failed farmers and has failed to maintain good relationships with our largest trading partner, the United States. Not only did the government fail to negotiate a timely solution to the P.E.I. dispute, the minister of agriculture was absent at critical times during the negotiations. Even though Canadian officials demonstrated that there was no scientific merit to any blockade of those P.E.I. potatoes, the government has been unable to negotiate a solution.

Time and again the government has failed to get results in reducing international subsidies, which are now choking our farmers. Results can be obtained but we need to be tough and we need to use the leverage available to us in the negotiating process. In fact our farmers are being forced to compete against foreign subsidies that have actually risen in the last few years. Where is the federal government in terms of protecting our farmers?

The government must be more aggressive in pursuing these subsidies. For example, the collective buying power of free trading nations should and could be used to push the protectionist countries back to the bargaining table. Where is the government in terms of

*The Address*

trying to organize that? As I visit farmers from coast to coast, too many have told me that they do not know if they can survive the winter.

Let us have no more Liberal excuses. It is time for action: reduce costs, reduce foreign subsidies and set Canadian farmers free to feed the world as we know they can do. That is what empowering Canadian agriculture means for Canadian farmers.

A similar problem confronts us in a resource based industry crucial to the livelihood of rural Canadians with the ongoing softwood lumber dispute with the United States. The government knows that on March 31 the existing softwood lumber agreement with the United States will expire. We are hearing reports that the government is not on this issue and that it is not moving rapidly to make sure our concerns are on the table.

People paid more for homes, furniture and other goods because of this flawed agreement, but provincial governments and industries still have not seen a clear strategy from the federal government on this. Where is the government?

These ongoing disputes over agriculture and lumber show how important Canada's relations really are with our strongest ally and our largest trading partner, the United States. We need to have good relations. We need to be strong negotiators but we need to have positive relations.

• (1605)

The government over the past seven years seems to have taken more pleasure in tweaking the nose of our trading partner, whether by appearing to favour the Castro regime in Cuba or simplistically opposing the American position on various international treaties or most recently avoiding the discussion of a proposed continental anti-ballistic missile defence shield.

Incredibly, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, at his recent meeting with the U.S. secretary of state, said Canada would approve of this defence system if it could convince the Russians and Chinese to agree first.

The House of Commons needs to be empowered in a non-partisan way to discuss foreign policy with all facts available and with input from our constituents duly on the table. Issues such as the terrorist threat from rogue nations are too important to be decided on the political whims of the Prime Minister's office. These are important issues for Canadians. They must be discussed here in the Chamber.

There is no mention in the throne speech of the need to increase support for our armed forces nor to modernize their equipment. We are losing our influence in NATO and other international organizations because we have reduced our support for our armed forces. They are not properly equipped when we send them to foreign fields and sometimes we cannot effectively bring them home from those fields. That has to change.

How seriously do we think American trade negotiators will be told to take Canadian concerns if they know that Canada is not pulling its weight in our collective defence and may be out to embarrass the United States diplomatically at the next international meeting? These issues are tied together.

We need to take a tough position with the United States but one that signals that we recognize it is actually an ally. We must work together, be tough for Canadian interests but recognize the greater diplomatic realities. Canada needs to develop a mature relationship with the United States based on trust and mutual understanding.

I hope that the partisan position of the government toward the new administration has not handicapped this relationship and therefore diminished our chances of success as we negotiate everything from farm subsidies to softwood lumber to environmental accords.

Yes, it was good to see in the Speech from the Throne an acknowledgement of freer trade with the Americas. We will support that. However, after the photo ops are over Canada must aggressively pursue getting a trade deal that meets the interests of Canadian workers, farmers, businesses and consumers.

We need to look at the possibilities of trade expansion, including the United Kingdom and our possible linkages with NAFTA. Empowering Canadians means taking a responsible approach on the world stage that puts a clear priority on the security and interests of Canadians.

Empowering Canadians above all else means empowering Canadian citizens to play a more active role in governing their country. Perhaps the area where the government has most failed to empower Canadians is in failing to empower its elected representatives, whether they are MPs elected federally who are routinely ignored by an all powerful executive branch run out of the Prime Minister's office or at other levels of government whose constitutional authority is routinely usurped by the federal government.

Respecting, not rejecting, the elected members of parliament sent to Ottawa by Canadians, and respecting the jurisdiction of provincial governments that have democratic mandates no less legitimate than those of the House, is in fact respecting and empowering Canadian people.

We know that many of the members in the last House, even on the government side, felt frustrated. They told us these things. They were unable to properly represent their constituents as legislators. Liberal MPs have regularly been forced to vote against their will and the will of their constituents on issues ranging from gun control to hepatitis C compensation to high taxes on gasoline.

In the last election it was fascinating to go into those MPs constituencies and hear them scrambling to speak on behalf of their

constituents instead of the Prime Minister's Office. When members of parliament are not treated with respect then the Canadian people who sent them there are not being treated with respect. Citizens feel that disrespect and that contributes to a sense of alienation.

The government mentioned parliamentary reform in the throne speech. My heart skipped a beat and hope increased when I heard about voting procedures and increased reform in the House of Commons. It said it would accomplish that by increasing resources to the parliamentary library.

● (1610)

I love taking guests to the library. It is a fabulous resource and the people who work there are to be acknowledged. However, that is going to do nothing to increase the free voting that can happen in this particular assembly.

We intend to make these issues central in this session and democratic reform will be one of the central issues in this parliament.

You understand, Mr. Speaker, the importance of this and the tradition of the Chamber. All members have a responsibility to foster and pursue that ideal. We in the official opposition pledge ourselves to the task.

I would say to the Prime Minister that I believe he has the right to look for a legacy. I believe that in all sincerity. I believe one day that there will be a legacy of a building that will crumble, a highway that will become potholed or a mountain top that may blow its stack.

The Prime Minister has served with distinction and he deserves a more fitting legacy. What greater legacy to leave for this century than an opening of parliamentary freedom, the freedom of his own MPs to vote. What a legacy for him to leave. Unless he changes, history will record that parliament was used to rubber stamp plans drawn up in the back rooms of his office rather than the plans that came from the living rooms of the Canadian people.

The Canadian Alliance has proposed constructive alternatives to make the House work better. We have grouped them in a package that we call "Building Trust". We have made 12 concrete suggestions, 12 simple steps that would free members of parliament to represent their constituents. It is a 12 step program for those who are addicted to power. It will require politicians to put their trust in the hands of a power higher than themselves and that power is the Canadian people.

We will be advancing those causes. We will also be advancing the cause and joining with the Liberals in their promise of 1993 that the office of the ethics counsellor be transformed into a truly independent ethics commissioner's office, reporting directly to parliament. We are going to support them on that. We know there is going to be great movement there.

### *The Address*

These measures and others contained in our proposals called "Building Trust" will go a long way to reducing the alienation that Canadians feel.

Alienation is not just a regional phenomenon. The deepest alienation of all is between government and a disaffected Canadian people. Voter turnout in the last federal election fell to an all time low, near 61%. Almost two in every five eligible Canadian voters said "none of the above". This is not something any of us can be proud of. It is something that all parties should work to address. We can do this by empowering members of parliament to truly represent their constituents. That would allow Canadians to feel empowered.

I was born in Ontario and raised in Montreal. I lived and worked in the maritimes, British Columbia, Alberta and the Arctic. I love Canada. I see, I understand and I know that the yearning in the hearts of Canadians in these areas is similar from coast to coast. These are elements of Canadian unity.

Some people in Quebec and a few other regions say that Canada does not work and that we should give up on the federal approach. I will never give up on this country. If Canada is not working as well as it should, then it is our job to make it work, to put aside the partisan differences, to give up those corridors of power and allow Canadian citizens to be empowered to make this country everything it can be.

The Prime Minister was challenged again today on the fact that he spends more time in the United States than he does in western Canada. I am willing to take him at his word when he says he wants to see relations improve with western Canada.

There have been recent proposals in western Canada from a group of prominent citizens who have acknowledged that improvements can be made in the standard of life for Canadians. We are not talking about massive devolution of power. This is how the Prime Minister tries to avoid a discussion on balancing constitutional provisions between the provinces and the federal government.

● (1615)

I hesitate to do this because I really do not want his popularity to go up, but I am willing to suggest that the Prime Minister reach out to western Canada. The next time there is an opportunity for a Senate appointment, he should appoint a senator from the province of Alberta. It has already elected its senators in waiting. If he does that, he could once again dare to venture into places like Calgary, Edmonton, Cochrane and Fort McMurray and he would be received happily there.

It is time we turned the page on the entitlement approach to government programs and the desire of the government to leave greater and greater levels of spending as its only legacy. It is time we turned the page. It is time to empower Canadians socially to be

*The Address*

able to handle their local challenges. It is time to empower Canadians democratically. It is time to empower us economically.

We can do these things. Hope runs eternal. I have hope and a sense of optimism that we do not have to wait until the next election. We have already talked to some MPs from across the floor who have said they are interested in empowering Canadians. I am sure they will agree that the motions we are bringing forward will empower all Canadians. I have great optimism that can happen.

In the meantime, although the government has identified some positive initiatives that we can support, it has failed to provide us with an empowering vision for Canadians in its Speech from the Throne.

Therefore, reluctantly I move that the motion be amended by adding:

And this House regrets to inform Your Excellency that although there are a few initiatives in the Speech from the Throne worthy of support, your advisors have not provided the leadership Canadians deserve from a new government by their failure to commit to real tax relief, fair criminal justice reform, stabilizing social programs, empowering Members of Parliament to vote freely on behalf of their constituents, fighting for the family farm and failing to embark on a new era of respect and co-operation with the provinces.

We look forward to seeing Canada truly empowered and Canadians becoming everything they can be within their field of dreams.

• (1620)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my first words in the debate are to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the House of Commons. I also congratulate the others who have been appointed to help you in your job.

I congratulate the mover and the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne. The members for Northumberland and Laval East are new to the House. Judging from their speeches yesterday, both clearly have bright futures ahead of them.

I congratulate the Leader of the Opposition on his speech. I was very impressed with how many times he approved the spending of the government. He was happy with every program that we were planning: infrastructure, research and development and the children's agenda. I would like to thank him. He has become a spender. It will be noted by the Canadian people.

Indeed, as one who has been in the House for some years now, I welcome and congratulate all the new members, whatever their party affiliation.

It is an honour and a great privilege to serve in the House of Commons. Whether one is elected for the first time or the 12th time, or in the case of the Deputy Prime Minister, the 13th time, one has to know it is a humbling experience to be chosen by your fellow citizens to represent them in the Parliament of Canada. Only

Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the member next to me managed to be elected 13 times to the House.

• (1625)

No one comes here for the money. No one comes here for the hours of work. All of us, regardless of party, come here for the same reason: to serve our constituents as best we can and to contribute, to the best of our abilities, to making our country a better place. Regardless of party, we all have the obligation, by our words and our deeds, to dedicate ourselves to building trust in our institutions and our democracy.

We should remember what Churchill said about democracy. He said it is "The worst system of government in the world. . . except for all the rest". He was right. Of course improvements can always be made, but there should be no doubt that Canada's parliament serves our country very well.

Like any human institution, the House of Commons is not perfect. It can be strengthened. Over the years many changes have been made to improve parliament and more will be made to bring parliament into the 21st century.

The House leader is working with his colleagues from all parties on reforms that will make the House work even better for the benefit of all Canadians, for example, electronic voting, more research support for committees and more bills referred to committee at first reading.

I was happy to hear the Leader of the Opposition speak about reforms a few minutes ago but he should not try to teach us too much. He was the house leader in the Alberta legislature for many years and was in some very nice situations. For example, when he was Alberta's house leader, he questioned the need for the legislature to have a fall sitting. He said that the longer the legislature sat, the greater the temptation was "to come up with new laws and regulations". He also said "Albertans would rather see us shout at each other on our own time". I could go on. At one time the legislature sat for 36 days until he finally said that was enough and that it had to adjourn.

We have no great lessons to learn. We will be listening but we will certainly not do what he was doing in Alberta.

Last November 27, the people of Canada gave the government a new mandate. I am particularly proud that we Liberals have members on this side and in the corner on the other side. They have the best spot because they can see more than the ones behind us and are in a better position to tell me when they do not agree with me. What is very important is that we have members from every province and every territory, which proves that we are truly a national government.

*The Address*

Of course I recognize, as is always the case in a democracy, that many Canadians voted for the other parties. In some provinces we do not have as many members as we would like. We will be working very hard as a government to ensure that many more Liberal members from western Canada will be here after the next election. My pledge is that the government will listen to all Canadians, wherever they live in Canada, and will govern in the interests of all Canadians, regardless of who they voted for.

We have been given a mandate by the people of Canada to move beyond old disputes, old fights, old problems and old solutions; a mandate to set ambitious goals and objectives for a strong, united Canada for the years to come; a mandate to build on the solid foundations that have been put in place since we assumed office; a mandate to prepare the country for the fast paced change the new economy demands; and to bring the best of Canada into the 21st century by building an innovative economy, by ensuring social inclusion and by strengthening our collective voice in the world.

• (1630)

These are the themes I will focus on today. My ministers will address in more detail other elements of the government's agenda during the course of this debate.

No country can look forward to the new century with more confidence than Canada. We will make this first decade of the 21st century an exceptional decade for Canadians, a decade marked by the pursuit of excellence and the sharing of opportunity.

When we formed the government more than seven years ago, we came here with a vision of the country we wanted to build and of the values and principles that will guide our actions, a distinct Canadian way, a distinct Canadian model.

Our vision and our purpose have not changed: a society of excellence with the commitment to success, where prosperity is not limited to the few but is shared and created by the many; where every child gets the right start in life; where young people have a chance to grow and be the best at whatever they choose to do; where citizens have access to the skills and knowledge they need to excel; where citizens, regardless of income, receive quality health services; where families enjoy strong, safe communities and a clean, healthy environment; and where Canadians work together with other countries to promote peace, cultural diversity, human purpose and the benefits of the new global economy.

We understand that it is not possible to do everything at once, that the secret to success in governing is to make progress pragmatically in a step by step manner and with boldness where necessary, to set broad goals and objectives, to make choices based on the values that have made Canada strong, and to bring about

major change in a manner that is sustainable and affordable. That is exactly what we have done over the last seven years. That is the approach to governing that has been endorsed and endorsed again by the people of Canada in three successive elections. That is the approach we will continue to take.

We set out to restore fiscal sovereignty to regain the capacity to make choices for the future. We have succeeded beyond anyone's wildest expectations. We remain firmly committed, as we go forward, to balanced budgets, debt reduction, and a competitive tax environment for investment and entrepreneurship.

There is obviously uncertainty today about the short term prospects for the United States economy. The government will closely monitor developments in the United States and in the global economy and their possible impact on Canada. That being said, the success of our economic policies has put us in a better position than ever to manage in the case of a temporary slowdown in the United States economy. We have every reason to believe that our economy will outperform our major competitors and trading partners this year.

• (1635)

A healthy fiscal climate is not an end in itself. It is the essential prerequisite for all social and economic investments that government must make, in collaboration with its partners, to build a prosperous country where opportunity can be shared by all.

We on this side of the House believe that an activist government can be a force for good in society. An activist government requires a first class public service. I am proud of our public service. The government will take all necessary steps to ensure that we continue to have the talent necessary for a public service that is committed to excellence, and we will make the necessary reforms to modernize the public service for the requirements of the 21st century.

[*Translation*]

We set out more than seven years ago to do our part as a government to build a more innovative economy: the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Networks of Centres of Excellence, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the 2000 Canada research chairs, the increases in support to the granting councils, the changes in our corporate tax rates and our capital gains tax rates, and making Canada one of the most connected countries in the world.

We have built a strong foundation, but we cannot rest on our achievements, otherwise the world will pass us by. In the 21st century our economic and social goals must be pursued hand in hand. Let the world see in Canada a society marked by innovation and inclusion, by excellence and justice.

*The Address*

To achieve this we have a plan which combines innovation, skills and learning, and a commitment to ensure all of our children are given the chance to realize their potential.

Let me start with innovation. In the new economy, the race goes to the quick. This is true of high technology, but applies as well to virtually all sectors from resource extraction to farming to merchandising.

Canada must have one of the most innovative economies in the world. A key element in getting there is to ensure that our research and development effort per capita is among the top five countries in the world. To achieve this objective, the government has a five part plan.

First, it will at least double the current federal investment in research and development by the year 2010. The government over the course of its mandate will increase its investment in the granting councils. It will do more for Genome Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and for research within government. This will make Canada the place to be for world class researchers. It will strengthen our economy and our society.

Second, it will build on what we have already done to make Canadian universities the place to be for research excellence, and a place where the best and the brightest want to come. The government will work with the university community to assist our universities so that they have the resources necessary to fully benefit from federally sponsored research activities.

Third, it will accelerate Canada's ability to commercialize research discoveries and to turn them into new products and services.

• (1640)

Fourth, it will pursue a global strategy for Canadian science and technology. Canada must be at the forefront of collaborative international research which expands the frontiers of knowledge.

Fifth, it will work with the private sector to determine the best ways to make broad band Internet access available to all communities in Canada by the year 2004.

However, our research commitment as a country must not be that of the federal government alone. It must be a national endeavour. Today I challenge the private sector and the provinces to devote more of their resources in the years ahead to making Canada one of the leaders in the world in research and development.

The transition to the new economy is not about any one sector of the economy alone. Economic success across all sectors of the economy depends more than ever on human enterprise, ingenuity and creativity. It depends fundamentally on our human talent. In this context, our most important investments are the investments we make in people.

I want Canada to be seen throughout the world as having the most skilled and the most talented labour market force anywhere. That has to be a national goal, and a national effort.

Learning does not take place in school alone. From early childhood development programming to the public school system to post-secondary institutions and to on the job training, Canada has all the elements of an evolving national infrastructure for lifelong learning. All governments, the private sector and educational institutions must work together to enhance this national infrastructure for the benefit of Canadians.

For its part, the Government of Canada has invested significantly over the course of our first two mandates to help to make Canada the most talented and skilled place in the world. From Canada education savings grants to help parents save for their children's education, to increases in the education tax credit, to the Canada millennium scholarships for today's students, to new rules for RRSPs to help Canadians finance retraining and skills upgrading and to new Canada study grants for students with dependants and other similar programs.

However, there is still much to do and this government is prepared to play its full part in this national effort.

[English]

We want at least one million additional Canadian adults of working age to be able to improve their skills. Therefore, we will create registered individual learning accounts to make it easier for Canadians to plan for and finance their learning needs.

We will ensure that our youth employment programs reach out to youth at risk to help those who have the most difficulty in making the transition from school to work.

We will do our part to ensure that those who most need training are eligible for training funds. A national effort to have the most talented and skilled labour force requires the support and collaboration of the provinces and of the private and voluntary sectors. We will be inviting them to jointly launch with us a national literacy initiative. We must raise the level of literacy in Canada because too many Canadians lack the literacy levels necessary for the new economy.

• (1645)

Canada needs more skilled workers. We must do better as a country to attract highly skilled immigrants. As a federal government, we will take the necessary steps to make sure that unnecessary barriers are not placed in their way. In a global economy, Canada must do better to recognize quality credentials earned abroad.

I urge provincial governments to revise their policies with respect to the recognition of foreign credentials of new Canadians. In Europe, doctors can move from one country to another but in

*The Address*

Canada many professions cannot do that. It is protectionism within each province. It is detrimental to all Canadians because some professions are not open even for Canadians to move let alone people with great competence who come to Canada, where a professional body refuses to recognize them. I invite the provinces to help us in this field.

I urge provinces to give life to the social union framework and move quickly to ensure the full mobility of Canadian students and other Canadians with Canadian credentials across the country.

Elementary and high school education in Canada falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces. I know that each provincial government takes its obligation very seriously. Each province works very hard to provide high quality public education. However, we all know that in the knowledge economy those who drop out of school are also dropping out of opportunity. The school dropout rate remains too high in Canada. We cannot afford the social and economic costs when young people become discouraged and drop out.

I want to challenge provincial governments to redouble their efforts to ensure that those who are in school finish school and that those who have dropped out come back.

We need literate, skilled, educated and healthy people to be a world leading economy, but this in turn requires a truly inclusive society. We cannot separate social and economic priorities. Just as a strong economy allows us to pursue our social values, an inclusive society is a prerequisite to a very strong economy.

Through our progressive tax system, active measures and our social safety net, Canada has avoided the worst social and economic costs of exclusion. While incomes are now rising for most families, there are still too many single parent families, visible minorities, recent immigrants and aboriginal Canadians living in poverty.

Canadians with disabilities still face too many barriers to participation. We are determined to help families break out of the poverty trap, to reverse the cycle of dependency and to help parents realize their hopes and the dreams of their children. We cannot afford the moral, human and economic costs of child poverty.

• (1650)

Economic growth and job creation are the most effective ways to reduce poverty. There is no doubt about that. Tax cuts put more money in the hands of families but they do not solve all our social problems. Governments have an important role to play.

We need a balanced approach. We must find new and better ways to promote opportunity and to ensure that the basic needs of all are met. Nowhere is the need more important than for our children and nowhere can we have a greater impact for building a strong and

inclusive Canada. It is not something the federal government can do alone. It is something all of us have to work on together.

We have made considerable progress over the last seven years and we have done so in co-operation and collaboration with the provinces. The national child benefit is the most important new social program since medicare.

The early childhood development agreement of September 11 is a further important step in the right direction. We must and we will do more. Our goal must be that no child be excluded from opportunity because of the debilitating effects of poverty and that every child be given the right start in life.

The most urgent place to start is with aboriginal children. Quite frankly, I am concerned that in the case of aboriginal peoples we may be spending too much time, energy and money on the past and not nearly enough on what is necessary to ensure a bright future for the children of today and the children of tomorrow.

Too often our spending does not reach those in the greatest need. That must change. We must turn the page. From now on we have to focus and target our investments on where we can achieve the greatest good.

There are never enough resources to do everything. Our approach will be to focus on the future and, most important, on the needs of children. As a start we will significantly increase resources dedicated to aboriginal head start, a program our government started, a program that is working exceptionally well.

We must significantly reduce the incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome in our aboriginal communities. We pledge to be part of a national effort to achieve this goal. I will tell the House of Commons that there is a member of parliament, the member for Mississauga South, who has written books about the issue. He has spoken about the issue in caucus and in the House for years. He is a backbencher who had an idea that he felt strongly about. He talked about it for years and now it has become one of the priorities of the government.

We would be putting our heads in the sand if we did not recognize as a society that there are too many young aboriginals in the criminal justice system. We have to take the steps required in our social and economic policies to reduce that number. Our goal must be to reduce the number of aboriginal people incarcerated or in conflict with the law. Within a generation there should be no disparity in the incarceration rates between aboriginals and the rest of Canadian society.

• (1655)

These are ambitious objectives that will not be met easily. Mistakes will be made along the way. All will not be achieved in one mandate but we all have to be part of this national effort. Its success or failure will say much about the type of country we are.

*The Address**[Translation]*

Last September 11, we had a very successful first ministers meeting here in Ottawa on health and on early childhood development. Subsequently, we agreed with all the provinces on a federal-provincial-municipal infrastructure program.

We have demonstrated time and again since we took office that when we focus on the needs of the future, we can all work together and that our federal system works well.

Canadians see beyond the borders of their province or region. They are part of a larger community and they want their governments to work co-operatively to reflect our common values and give meaning to the Canadian experience. We can and must do this in a manner that respects one another's responsibilities as well as one another.

Our spirit of co-operation and collaboration tells me that we can set very ambitious goals that we can achieve these goals together, and that a national effort can succeed in giving every child a good start in life and real access to the opportunities of Canadian society. We are prepared to do our part and I extend my hand to my provincial colleagues to join in this great national effort.

It took a generation working together to reduce the incidence of poverty among seniors. It happened step by step, but we took a lot of steps together. We cannot be complacent, but we have come a long way.

We can and must make similar progress for children. We will not do it overnight. There will be bumps along the way. It is my view and that of my party that we must ensure that our children are a national priority. We must make this great national objective a major focus of what are always limited resources.

During the course of this mandate in the budgets that we bring down we will establish an investment timetable that will allow us to make real progress in ensuring opportunity for all Canadian children.

Essential to opportunity and the well-being of Canadians young and old is, of course, a modern health system and quality health care. I referred a few minutes ago to the agreement of September 11 on health. We agreed on new investments, substantial investments, but we also agreed on a plan. In the years ahead, we will keep working together to support that plan.

Through collaboration, we will achieve our goal of timely access to high quality health care available to all Canadians, regardless of income or place of residence and we will report to Canadians on our performance and our progress.

Today I reaffirm our commitment to work together with the provinces and Canadians to bring medicare into the 21st century to ensure its relevance to the needs of Canadians.

● (1700)

We will work with and support provinces to make our health system more integrated, more effective, more responsive and more transparent.

We will do more on aboriginal health, on new technologies and other strategies to assist people with disabilities.

On promoting healthy living, on strengthening health research and on ensuring that we do everything necessary to provide a modern system of medicare for the years ahead.

A safe, healthy environment is essential to the health of Canadians and to the future of our children. We will accelerate our efforts at home and internationally to foster a clean environment. We will focus on air and water quality and on the preservation of our natural heritage.

All of us have vivid memories of the last election campaign. partisan rallies and visits to homes and factories throughout Canada, there were but for me one event stands out above all the others. It was a visit on a beautiful Saturday morning to the Conservatory of Music in Victoria to listen to performances by extraordinarily talented young Canadian musicians and to reflect on the importance of the arts and culture as central to the fabric of any society and to the Canadian fabric in particular.

In a globalized society, in a universe of hundreds of channels, in the age of the Internet, it is more important than ever to support Canadian culture.

In this mandate, the government will provide new support to ensure that our cultural institutions, our performers and our artists can play to the full the critical role of helping us know ourselves and, as ambassadors to the world, share the best of Canada.

We have developed over more than a century a distinctive Canadian way. We have pursued a flexible approach that recognizes the importance of individual and collective action and responsibility. We have learned the value of working together in common purpose in a federal system that permits diversity and experimentation. We have recognized the advantage of our linguistic duality and multicultural society. We have developed a deep commitment to democracy and human rights. We have become a model for the world.

During the course of this parliament, we will be playing an active role in the international community. Whether through the chairmanship of the G-20 by the Minister of Finance, hosting the G-8 in 2002, or the very important meeting of the summit of the Americas in Quebec City in April of this year, we will be working to strengthen multilateral institutions for dialogue and co-operation.

• (1705)

We will increase our international development assistance to expand opportunities for more countries to participate in the benefits of globalization while promoting peace and human security in the world.

[*English*]

We will be working very closely with the new administrations of President Bush and President Fox. The United States is our most important trading partner, our closest ally. I will be travelling to Washington next week to meet with President Bush to reaffirm the importance of our relationship.

I thank him because he was very gracious in calling Canada first after he became president and because his secretary of state received our Minister of Foreign Affairs first. Next Monday I will be the first leader to meet with the new president. We will discuss the importance of safe and efficient access to each other's markets. We will be talking about accelerating the joint work that has already begun to modernize our shared border to facilitate trade and investment while ensuring security for both countries.

I will also express the strong position of the Canadian government and, I am sure, of the House of Commons of Canada that our farmers should be able to compete on a level playing field and that subsidy wars are in the interest of no one. It is a very important item and one of the first I will discuss with him, because I suspect it is the wish of members of all parties.

We have a great story to tell Americans and overseas investors about the success of the Canadian economy, about Canada as a place to invest, about Canada as a place of action and excitement. We will be devoting much effort, with the help and co-operation of the private sector and the provinces, to promoting Canada as a highly innovative, skilled economy that attracts and keeps talent.

The government agenda for this parliament is a positive one. It is moderate and forward looking. It is balanced but it is also ambitious. It builds on what has made Canada the country it is today.

Last fall, after the death of Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Canadians were moved to reflect on and discuss not only the Trudeau legacy but the meaning of Canada and our attachment to it.

His vision was of a mature, confident Canada shaping its own destiny, tied together by a common citizenship based on shared rights and mutual responsibility; a bilingual Canada in which citizens could enjoy and benefit from our rich French and English heritage; a country respectful of the special place of aboriginal people; a multicultural Canada open to the world and fully aware of

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its global responsibilities; a just Canada in which opportunity is truly equal.

We will take steps to commemorate his legacy in a way which both reflects and furthers these values.

• (1710)

This vision has shaped how the world sees Canada. It has helped to define the Canadian model. Increasingly the world is seeing a new Canada as well, a Canada built on this rich foundation but also a Canada of exciting opportunity, advanced science, leadership in new technologies and excellence in education, with a skilled and innovative labour force, a Canada that is a place to invest in and do business in. That is the Canada we must also build in the weeks, months and years ahead: a Canada with a dynamic new economy and strong, healthy communities, a Canada of innovation and inclusion.

We are more than citizens of a single province or a single region. We are more than just taxpayers. We are citizens of a great country. We have responsibilities to each other. We need a national government working in partnership with all Canadians to assure our strong voice in the world, to assure a strong economy, and to protect and strengthen the social fabric of our society and the unity of our country. We on this side of the House will provide that government.

As for me, I have been fighting for Canada all my life and, believe it or not, I am just getting warmed up.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who were elected this past November 27 and to extend a particular welcome to my new colleagues.

We know that all hon. members want the House to be a true forum for debate. All of us represent the population of Canada and we, along with others of course, represent the population of Quebec. All of us have the required legitimacy to express a variety of opinions that characterize our distinctive societies.

There is one thing that strikes me in the Speech from the Throne, one statement that I must make. Canada is constructing itself in its own way, according to its own values, its way of doing things, its objectives. That is legitimate; we acknowledge that. Quebec does not, however, fit into this Canadian construct and it too must construct itself within a world that is evolving and changing at a dizzying pace.

There are two concrete examples of this. I am thinking of the Young Offenders Act. The government tells us of the flexibility within this legislation. I would remind my listeners that Quebec possesses, without a doubt, the most efficient system for rehabili-

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tating young offenders. That is universally acknowledged. There is a totally different vision across Canada, one that is more punitive than rehabilitative. We do not want to impose our system on others, nor do we want a system that is not ours imposed upon us.

• (1715)

The government speaks of flexibility. Yet as far as justice is concerned, the weight of precedent, the weight of jurisprudence on which our justice system is built, at least as far as criminal law is concerned, knows no boundaries and will not stop at the Quebec border. In other words, decisions taken elsewhere, within a different mentality, might be used in a case in Quebec and lead to a result that is totally different from the objective pursued until now by the system in place within Quebec.

Why not remove Quebec from the application of this law, especially since this does not involve the criminal code? We are not talking about one criminal code for all of the country and a different one for Quebec, although there are proposals in this regard from the native peoples. In the case of young offenders who do not come under the criminal code, we want a different approach.

Why not apply the motion on the distinct society that this government boasts of passing? This represents an opportunity for the government to prove to us that the motion has some meaning, that it recognizes Quebec's distinct nature, in the case, for example, of the Young Offenders Act. There is a very broad consensus in Quebec among all the political parties, among all the stakeholders, from the police to social workers, yet the federal government says "No. Things will be done only one way, Ottawa's".

The second example is that of parental leave. All the political parties in Quebec, the Liberals, the ADQ and the PQ, and women's groups, employers and unions all recognize and prefer by far the plan proposed by the government of Quebec because it is much better suited to modern realities. The Prime Minister talks of modernism, of the rate of change in the world, of our need to innovate and adapt to new realities. This is an opportunity to prove it.

Why is the federal government opposed to the plan Quebec is proposing? I had better not try to tell us that one complements the other. A thorough examination reveals obstacles to fully carrying out a plan that meets the needs of young people.

Why not take the time to negotiate? There is another year before Quebec implements its program. There is still time to sit down and look at the mechanisms that we could set up to ensure that there is only one plan and that young couples can fully benefit from it.

These are two consensuses that are dismissed out of hand by the federal government, but that same government is about to get its

heavy hand in provincial jurisdictions. In fact, the Prime Minister was even clearer in his speech when he said that the federal government would get involved in education, yet education is clearly a provincial jurisdiction. I also just mentioned early childhood.

As for manpower, we thought the issue had been settled. An agreement was reached in 1997, but the federal government is back with a vengeance in that area.

Rarely have we seen a throne speech that touches on so many areas that do not come under federal jurisdiction while saying so little about issues that are under federal jurisdiction. This is somewhat disturbing.

Is there anything positive in this speech? I recognize that there are two good intentions that seem to be a step in the right direction. First, the government seems to want to address the causes of the problems experienced by aboriginal communities, by the first nations.

This effort, or at least willingness, is laudable and we support it. However, we want to see what it means in concrete terms. Will the government follow the Erasmus-Dussault report, which was accepted by the first nations and which we supported as soon as it was released? Nothing has happened since that report was made public. We will see, based on the quality of the proposed legislation, whether these good intentions translate into good legislative measures.

The second interesting point in the throne speech is that the government finally recognized the need for anti-gang legislation, true anti-gang legislation. While the government denied that such a need existed, we spent months asking questions to that effect in this House.

• (1720)

We pointed out, and rightly so, that if there are limits to the freedom of speech—as shown recently by the ruling in a child pornography case which at did not, however, raise the whole issue of freedom of speech in Canada—then there must also be limits to the freedom of association.

The government does acknowledge that stronger action is needed. We will have to wait and see if it comes up with concrete measures or only brings back something similar to what it put forward in 1997. I have told the government that time is of the essence. While we wait around, these groups are moving ahead. The government is duty bound to solve this problem before June and refer the issue to the supreme court.

There are some gaping holes, but mostly smaller holes, in this speech, first about how the surplus will be used. The election was

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supposed to be on the surplus. That is what the Prime Minister told us when he called the election, but now we have three options before us and we still do not know what the Liberals' position is.

The Prime Minister said that 50% of the surplus will go to debt and tax reduction and 50% to social programs. In his mini budget, the finance minister said that 80% of the surplus over a period of five years and not for the coming year will go to deficit and debt reduction and 20% to social programs. The star economist and new member for Markham, who used to work, I believe, for the Royal Bank, predicted a \$2 billion deficit.

It would have been interesting to know from the Speech from the Throne which takes precedence: the predictions of the hon. member for Markham, the Prime Minister's speech or the Minister of Finance's figures. The answer to this is still forthcoming. It seems to me that it was the least that could have been expected.

Another significant omission is the whole matter of a shipbuilding policy. We had asked for Canada to have a shipbuilding policy. The Liberals voted in favour of a bill introduced by my colleague, the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

The Minister of Industry is in the process of touring Canada and people are telling him that the Bloc Québécois bill ought to have been passed. There is not a single word in the throne speech on this issue and I find that disconcerting given the intolerable situation that prevails at the present time in British Columbia and in Ontario, but particularly in the Atlantic provinces and Quebec. There is nothing about this in the throne speech. This is rather disconcerting.

Another promise, the one concerning the highway system, should have been in the speech, but was also absent. My former colleague, Mr. Daniel Turp, was greatly interested in this issue. The member who replaced Mr. Turp in representing Beauharnois—Salaberry, the public works minister and the President of Treasury Board have all made a promise. They have said "It's official; there will be \$357 million for the construction of two bridges".

However, the letter from the Minister of Transport contradicts this statement. His answers to our questions today also contradict it. Have we come back to the old policy of promising to build bridges over the course of three or four elections? This seems to be the case with the Liberal attitude. Have we returned to the climate of 1993 when the Prime Minister wanted to eliminate the GST. That was not the way it was put, but let us say he wanted to eliminate the GST. We saw what happened: he reneged on his promise. The problem is the same with the promise with respect to the highway system.

There was nothing on the need for ethics in government. Over twenty investigations are underway into the administration of this government. Charges have been laid in some cases, including in the

Prime Minister's riding. This is a serious matter. We raised these issues. Initially they denied the existence of such things. We simply asked that an ethics counsellor or adviser be appointed by the House and be made accountable to it. What is so dangerous about someone having the autonomy necessary to reach the most objective decision possible, certainly, and with the ability to speak freely?

• (1725)

What we have is a situation in which the Prime Minister chooses the counsellor, who is accountable to him even when he is investigating him. This is unacceptable. Naturally, they were saying today that the leaders of the opposition of the day supported the appointment.

I would point out two things. First, supporting an appointment is not enough. In practice we have seen where that has led. The counsellor must be accountable to the House.

Second, in the recent appointments—I am thinking in particular of the privacy commissioner—the opposition parties were asked for their views. Our party did not approve of the appointment of Mr. Radwanski, but he was appointed all the same. That is why the House must go ahead, not the Prime Minister himself.

Members can imagine the situation if the person being investigated could select the police officers and the judge and if the latter were to hand down a verdict before considering the facts. This would be ridiculous and would diminish the quality of public life here and throughout Canada.

Another area not addressed was employment insurance. Even though the government admitted its error during the election campaign, there was nothing in the throne speech. We are told that a bill will be introduced Monday; that is all very fine and well. Apparently it will be the same as the one which was initially tabled but which never reached second reading in the last parliament. Despite the assertions of certain Liberals during the election campaign, this bill was never voted on.

That having been said, the bill is not good enough. We do, however, support a good number of its proposals, all the more so as they were ones we made for months on end to the government, which rejected them.

There is only one clause in this bill that we cannot live with and that is the one making it legal for the government to continue to divert funds rightfully belonging to the unemployed, to entrepreneurs and to employees. That is unacceptable.

Does the government really want to have more democratic, substantial debates here? Would it agree to split this bill so as to not uselessly trap opposition parties and to allow us to vote on what directly affects the services provided to recipients, those who really do need them? This would be a lot quicker.

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True debate is necessary to discuss the final use made of such funds while people are being taxed for dubious reasons, since this money is being collected for all sorts of unrelated purposes. This is immoral.

Another source of concern in the throne speech is the government's intention to change financial institutions. I think this specifically refers to banks. We have some problems with that, particularly in regard to the National Bank, by far the largest bank in Quebec, which could be owned by a single person. This is disturbing. We expressed our concern about this some months ago.

Then there are the services provided to citizens by banking institutions. There has been a deterioration of services, and some people cannot have access to these services. I am now announcing that we will be proposing significant changes in that regard.

Another area of concern is that of sustainable official language minority communities. This is a new concept or designation. Is the government telling us that some communities are sustainable while others are not? We asked the question today, but did not get an answer, yet goodness knows plenty of time is taken in drafting a throne speech to choose the proper terms. Do not let them try to get us to buy the idea that this was a poor translation—that would be a rather serious mistake—because the word sustainable is no better. Does this mean that some communities are sustainable while others are not? That does not hold up. Some explanations are in order.

As for the health field, reference is made to the September meeting. The Minister of Industry was the premier of Newfoundland at the time, and all provinces were unanimous in calling for a return to the 1994 funding level. They were unanimous, yet this was refused.

Another thing the provinces refused was the creation of a citizen's council answerable to Ottawa, which would determine how health care needs to be delivered, whereas there is virtually no expertise on the other side of this House in this area, except where aboriginal people are concerned. There are huge problems with poor service delivery, and where the Canadian armed forces are concerned, it is a disaster.

● (1730)

They know nothing about this and yet they want to set standards instead of putting the funding back at its source so that the provinces may be really in a position to provide the required services.

There are also concerns about social housing. The terminology has been changed once again. Now it is called affordable rental housing. In other words, builders are to be given the money instead of those in need, which is saying that the market will naturally succeed in responding to the needs of these people. We can see what is happening in California at the present time with electricity. I do not believe that the housing market funding can be handed

over blindly without consideration to social housing needs at a time when there is a huge crisis in the major centres of Quebec and of Canada.

There is another concern relating to culture. Reference is made to Canadian culture. There is no recognition of the existence of the Quebec culture nor the aboriginal cultures. Only the Canadian culture is referred to.

The existence of national cultures is denied, including that of Quebec, and the existence of the Quebec nation is denied. Yet there is such a thing as the Quebec culture, and this is obvious to anyone spending a little time in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. One culture is not superior to the other, but there are different cultures. It would be best if they looked after Canadian culture and left us to deal with the culture of Quebec.

When I see that the "My name is Joe; I am Canadian" superhero has emigrated to the United States, I think there is cause for concern.

What I see in this speech is the extension of the social union, of the Canadian nation building concept. The only solution for us is to reach a new agreement, to create a new equal partnership between Quebec and Canada. Equal partnership means that both would have equal status. It means that Quebec must be a sovereign nation under a modern definition of sovereignty, different from what it was 40, 30 or even 10 years ago. Countries are different today, and it is this new world that we want to be part of.

This is particularly important to us with the creation of a free trade zone covering the three Americas, a concept we have always supported whereas the Liberals were against it a few years ago. We want to draw on models that exist in Europe, models with a common currency, something the Liberals refuse to discuss.

I am not saying that the option I am advocating reflects the majority opinion in Quebec. I am saying that the kind of federalism that we see developing in Canada does not reflect the majority opinion in Quebec either. I am saying that unfortunately Quebec is divided, that the Quebec issue remains on the table and that other people in Canada are increasingly perplexed about Ottawa's role.

We have a duty to think about that rather than to try to crush the aspirations of a people.

In closing, I would like to move the following amendment to the amendment:

That the amendment be amended by adding, after the word "provinces", the following:

"and, consequently, Canadian federalism offers Quebec no option for redefining the partnership between Quebec and Canada except to become a sovereign country."

● (1735)

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before I put a question to my leader, I would like to thank the constituents of Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour.

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cour for re-electing me for a fifth term with a 57% majority. I want them to know that, during this fifth term, I will continue to serve them as diligently as before and that my work in the House of Commons will be as effective as ever.

In fact, my party's whip has congratulated me for the wonderful work I have done here, in committees and in the House, but as my leader has said, our ridings should not be neglected, so I will also be very active at the riding level as I have always been.

I have a question for my leader. He mentioned all the provincial areas of jurisdiction the government is about to infringe upon, based on what was said in the throne speech. Should the House not reflect on this issue since all of the provinces want more taxation powers in the future and less power for the federal government?

Is it not time to address this issue so that all the provinces have the opportunity to prevent the federal government from interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction thanks to tax revenues it is collecting? If, however, taxes were levied only by the provinces, then the provincial governments would have the power to negotiate acceptance of some of the so-called national policies.

I want to ask the hon. member if the time has not come to have a very serious debate on who should be taxing the residents of the provinces.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, that is a debate that has been going on for more than a few decades. In my view, it is one which is necessary and which must take place in a different context, one that will have to evolve over the years to come.

However, I believe that there should be fundamental respect for the jurisdictions for which money is being collected through taxes.

When, in the case of employment insurance, I see that to date some \$38 billion has been collected while only some 43% of unemployed workers receive benefits, I can say that the money is being used for something else. The Minister of Finance would be the first to agree: this money is being used for purposes other than those for which it was collected.

That is what is unacceptable and what makes Canadian federalism dysfunctional. It is dysfunctional because the money is in Ottawa, but the provinces, which have the needs, must supply the services. Ottawa takes in much more money when the economy is strong. It provides services and increases its involvement, but it pulls out when it can no longer afford to foot the bill and the provinces are stuck with the existing services. That is what led to this basic dysfunction in the Canadian federation.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions to ask of the leader of the Bloc.

One has to do with the funding of health care. He indicated that the federal government should fund health care and allow the provinces to implement the health care system in their provinces as they so choose. In his amendment he has proposed that Quebec should become independent of Canada, which means that the federal funding would then obviously cease. Does the member see a contradiction in that statement?

The other question concerns culture. I acknowledge very freely that some 25% of Canadians speak French and are of French origin, while 75% are not. Many other cultures in Canada are represented. I happen to be one of those who is neither English nor French. I think that I have the right to practise my culture with my family and my relatives, as do all of the Ukrainians in my riding. That is by far the most populous group.

• (1740)

Should the federal government be involved in supporting the culture only of the French language in Quebec and in the rest of the country, or should it get out of that and allow Quebec to promote its own culture, or should we fund all different cultural groups equally?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, there is no contradiction between asking that the money collected from taxpayers for health care be given to the provinces, since they are the ones responsible for delivering these services, and saying that Quebec wants to become a sovereign country.

We would no longer receive money from the federal government, but we would no longer be sending Ottawa any money either.

One thing is sure, and you will have the opportunity to realize it in the years to come, money does not grow on trees on Parliament Hill. It comes from taxpayers' pockets. We send in money that comes back to us. If we stop receiving money, we will stop sending in money, which seems very logical to me.

Second, on the issue of culture, this is something that exists in every country. I am thinking of Ukraine, which became a country after many years of struggle. The culture in Ukraine is that of the Ukrainian people, which is perfectly normal. Unless I am mistaken, I do not think there is a multiculturalism policy in Ukraine that

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would give funding for Russian theatre, for example. If anybody knows of the existence of such a policy, they should tell me, but I would be surprised.

It is normal for each country to have its own culture, for Italian to be spoken in Italy and for the development of the Italian culture to be a priority in that country, without intolerance toward other cultures being generated. What I see is the Quebec of tomorrow.

When I look at what is going on in the province of Quebec, I realize that the only true bilingual city in Canada is Montreal.

**An hon. member:** Moncton.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** No, I am sorry, it is not Moncton. Legally maybe, but not in real life.

Unfortunately, despite the heroic efforts of the francophone and Acadian communities outside Quebec, their assimilation rates are alarming and very worrisome. In fact, their assimilation rates are unacceptable.

I think we should condemn the situation and ensure that things improve. We see the complete opposite in Quebec. For instance, we have three English universities: McGill, Concordia and Bishop's. They are doing very well, and it is a plus for our province. There is nothing like it in the rest of Canada.

We have to be clear on this issue. I see Quebec as an open, non-racist, non-sexist, non-violent nation, welcoming everyone with open arms.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. leader of the Bloc Québécois for mentioning shipbuilding in his policy.

Could he quickly elaborate as to the blatant arrogance by the industry minister who before the election made promises and indications to the people in the industry that he would do everything he could and then, after the Bombardier deal, turned around and said nobody in the shipbuilding industry would even get this consideration?

Could he elaborate a bit more on the arrogance of the industry minister in his views toward shipbuilding?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, that may be how one moves up the ladder in Ottawa.

The same thing happened with the health issue, where the former premier of Newfoundland took a stand contrary to the Liberal principles he adhered to later on.

The same with shipbuilding. I am sad to say that the Liberals often talk like New Democrats during an election campaign, but they do not act like New Democrats once they are in office.

We should think about that.

• (1745)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very glad to take part in this debate and to represent the New Democratic Party and particularly the constituents of Halifax.

[*English*]

I want to add my congratulations to all members who were elected to serve in the 37th parliament. In addition, I extend an appreciation, and I do so on behalf of all Canadians, to all candidates who offered to represent people in their communities. That appreciation needs to extend not only to the candidates who offered to represent the five parties now in parliament, but also to the smaller parties, such as the Green Party, the Canada Action Party and others. We cannot have too much democracy in a democratic society, and I think we should thank them all.

I also want to congratulate the Speaker for the high honour bestowed upon him by his peers earlier in the week in being selected to preside over the Chamber. It is a demanding task to interpret the rules fairly, to ensure that all members are heard and to maintain order in a Chamber where there is such a vast range of views, beliefs and political philosophies.

Mr. Speaker, you will enjoy the support and co-operation of myself and my colleagues in the NDP caucus as long as you continue with your already demonstrated practice of firmness, fairness and allowing us all to have a bit of fun while we get on with getting the job done.

I want to state the obvious. Parliament is the forum through which our citizens speak. The Parliament of Canada must represent the people of Canada in all their diversity. As we debate the throne speech and as we vote on whether parliament has confidence in the government, it seems to me that we must consider an even more profound and disturbing question: Do Canadian citizens have confidence in parliament to get the job done?

In the recent federal election it was alarming to recognize that a mere 58% of Canadians actually bothered to vote. I think those terrible results of very low voter turnout indicate how many people really have lost faith in parliament. It indicates how many people see some of the archaic practices in parliament and excessive partisanship as not being able to address their concerns and as being remote from their everyday lives and somewhat irrelevant to their concerns.

We have to seize the challenge that this presents. Far too often, amid the pomp and splendour of parliament, there is a tendency to

ignore the dangerous and growing gap between those who govern and those who are governed. If we ignore the problem then we place our precious democratic system in peril.

From their parliamentary perches, too many government members are asking themselves what could possibly be wrong with an electoral system that elected a Liberal majority government. Let me say that narrow partisanship will not heal democracy. It is not leadership. As parliamentarians we know that it is essential to represent citizens in every community in every corner of Canada.

As members of parliament we have different political philosophies, but together, at the end of the day, we share the responsibility to help restore the faith that Canadians have in the democratic process and in parliament's ability to get on with addressing their concerns.

• (1750)

It seems to me the project deserves more than the vague reference it received in yesterday's throne speech, a bare mention, conjuring up the image that parliamentary reform is to consist of not much more than a little technological tinkering on the corners of our desks when it comes to voting. Radical parliamentary and electoral reform are imperative if we are to revitalize democracy within these walls and throughout our nation.

We share as well an obligation to ensure that Canadian democracy is not threatened by external factors. Canadians are justly proud of our reputation as responsible, compassionate members of the world community. The 21st century provides an unprecedented opportunity for us to work in partnership with other progressive forces to promote peace, human rights, social justice and genuine economic progress around the world.

It is therefore disappointing in the extreme that the throne speech failed to reject unequivocally the national missile defence system, the madness that threatens to reignite the nuclear arms race and to introduce dangerous instability into today's world.

The throne speech regrettably was also silent on other important international issues. In trade agreements the government has uncritically embraced the corporate model of globalization. In the throne speech and in the Prime Minister's response to my questions earlier today, it remains true that the government ignores the legitimate concern of Canadians that trade deals protect core labour standards, basic human rights and our cultural diversity; protect our social programs, particularly the universality of our health care system; protect our natural resources and our primary producers; and protect our environment, including the most life sustaining provisions of all, clean air and safe water.

With the government these critical concerns are casually dismissed as impediments to the corporate goal of unfettered trade.

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The government is virtually bargaining away our ability to choose and chart our own future as a sovereign nation. It threatens the very democracy that is so prized by Canadians.

In opposition the Liberals recognized, or at least they professed to recognize, that unless the flaws in the free trade deal were fixed the trade agreement remained unacceptable to Canadians and therefore should not be ratified. However, once in government, the Liberals reneged on their promise not to ratify the flawed free trade agreement. In fact, they compounded the problem by entrenching those same flaws in the broader NAFTA.

Thanks to NAFTA, we have not only moved away from the polluter pay principle in protecting our environment, our most precious resource, but we are actually facing the indignity of having to pay the polluters. Thanks to NAFTA, Canada is forced to permit the use of MMT, a dangerous neurotoxin banned in many other countries. To add insult to injury, for having dared to protest, Canada is now required to hand over \$20 million to Ethyl Corporation, the American company which supplies that neurotoxin.

Sadly, last week at Davos, Switzerland, Canada's industry minister killed the last hope that the federal government would wake up to the growing concerns held by Canadians about the Liberal-Tory globalization model. I have to say that the new industry minister's fawning over the Mulroney free trade deal rivals the *Irish Eyes Are Smiling* embarrassment in the Ronald Reagan era.

• (1755)

Thanks to NAFTA, Canadians are struggling to heat their homes this winter because a U.S. energy crisis will not allow us to sell our fuel to one another at reasonable prices.

Farmers and farm families cannot get the support they need to survive in times of crisis, while U.S. and European agricultural competitors are massively subsidized by their national treasuries.

What critical analysis of and what solutions to these problems does the government offer in the throne speech? Absolutely none. Nothing. Not one word. Not even an acknowledgement that these problems exist.

I would like to believe that the throne speech of platitudes and warm fuzzies that we heard yesterday will translate into genuine progress and concrete solutions for our citizens: for our aboriginal peoples, too long shut out; for persons with disabilities, too long ignored; for visible minorities, too often sidelined; for women who still suffer discrimination in many ugly forms; and for those trapped in poverty and those living without adequate shelter or, worse still, living on the streets.

Unfortunately yesterday's throne speech was devoid of solid initiatives, like a national housing strategy to help the quarter of a

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million Canadians who are living in substandard housing or who have no roof over their heads.

Where was the concrete action to introduce the promised legislation to ban bulk water exports? Where was the action to protect our endangered species or to meet our climate change commitments? Where were the national pharmacare and home care programs, which are needed to modernize Canada's health care system and help people deal with the rising costs of medical care? Where was the commitment to a national child care program, promised in 1993 and still not delivered?

Perhaps most important, where was the promise to introduce a budget that would set out clearly and concretely what social, environmental and infrastructure investments the government is actually prepared to make in the years ahead and throughout its mandate?

What choices will the government make, especially with the economic storm clouds gathering on the horizon? Will it be the corporations or the citizens of Canada whose interests will guide public policy choices through the third mandate of the government? Will it be the elimination of the surtax on incomes over \$100,000 or the commitment to eliminate child poverty? Will the government delay in another tax break on capital gains targeted to those in the \$250,000 plus bracket or in another barrier to post-secondary education and more student debt?

There are many more questions that my colleagues and I will have in the days ahead. From the point of view of my constituents in Halifax and those in the Atlantic region, I have many other questions that go completely ignored in the throne speech.

My colleague from Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore has mentioned one of them. Where is the commitment to the national shipbuilding strategy? After eight years of denying that there was a need for any strategy, we finally had some acknowledgement on the eve of this election that it was past time for the Liberal government to introduce such a strategy. Then we saw the industry minister backpedalling completely from it. It seems to me he has some questions to answer about whether in fact the real impediment is not the free trade deal that he is now praising from the heights of Switzerland.

Where is any recognition of and any commitment from the government to deal with the problem posed by an unfair equalization formula, one that makes it impossible for governments in have not provinces to actually make progress because of the excessive clawback of any resources from, for example, the offshore development that now may give an opportunity to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland?

• (1800)

Democracy in Canada is at a crossroads. The choices made by the government and what we achieve in this parliamentary session will determine where we go from here. It is significant that as we

launch this 37th parliament we have an opportunity to rethink the very nature of our country's democracy, which is in peril because of the government's approach to free trade.

With the free trade of the Americas summit happening in Quebec in April, there is a perfect opportunity for Canada to see the fact of this happening here in our midst as an occasion for Canadians to begin to be heard on the fundamental concerns about the threat to democracy because of this uncritical embracing of a corporate model for globalization.

If we want to restore the faith of Canadians in our public institutions, we must reform those institutions. Most important, we must deal concretely and sincerely with the everyday concerns, the bread and butter issues that plague our citizens, together with the myriad of issues this 37th parliament must tackle. If we can restore Canadians' belief in capability and resolve of their public institutions to get the job done, I believe it would be possible to declare the 37th parliament a success.

**Mr. John Herron (Fundy—Royal, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to make some comments about some points that I would like to help the hon. member with and on which I disagree with her position.

We all know that the member for Halifax is a very learned and solid contributor to the House of Commons, but with respect to the free trade initiative we have to reflect on the overall impact it has had on Canada. Our trade with the Americans was around \$90 billion in 1998. Now our trade with them is over \$320 billion each and every year. That is the single largest instrument of the growth we have had in our economy. To some, globalization is a problem, but we know Canada can win on a trade based regime. We can compete with the world and actually grow our economy.

With respect to the MMT issue, the member is absolutely right. There was enough scientific capacity to say that MMT could have a negative effect on human health. All the Government of Canada had to do was to ban that substance as a toxin under schedule 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, a very pioneering act brought forward by guess who? The Progressive Conservative Party. Had the government banned it as a schedule 1 toxin as opposed to making it a trade issue, it would not have been challenged under NAFTA. To hold NAFTA responsible for the Liberals' mismanagement of MMT as an environmental cause is wrong. Clearly under NAFTA and under FTA Canadians have the right to set our own labour, cultural and environmental standards.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure we will have many occasions to debate these issues over the next while.

In general it is not the view of the New Democratic Party, nor did I express it today, that globalization per se is a problem. The

problem is the approach to globalization and specifically the nature of the trade agreement into which the government has entered and into which it now seems absolutely intent to propel us yet again with the free trade area of the Americas agreement.

• (1805)

The problem is that the government has lost sight, as the Mulroney government did, of the fact that trade ought to be the servant of the people, just as the economy ought to be the servant of the people, not the master. Trade is not the end goal. Trade is a means, and a very important means, to develop our economy and to potentially improve life for Canadians. However, when we see a kind of uncritical embracing of the corporate model, we literally see an erosion of the right of citizens to have a say in the future of their country.

It is important that we debate these things. That is why it is so astounding that in the throne speech, instead of acknowledging that there is a growing crescendo of concern among citizens, not just in Canada but in many parts of the world, about the flawed and failed corporatist model, we get nothing but a once over glossy reference to the wonders of free trade that the government has brought to Canadians.

Let us be a little more critical and a little more discerning. Let us be a little more willing to look at what flaws have now proven to be a problem and let us correct them before we barge ahead at the upcoming summit in Quebec, which will lock us and other vulnerable citizens in other parts of the world even further into trade deals that are bad for citizens and designed mainly to address the needs and greed of corporate entities.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Halifax for her very thoughtful comments in response to the throne speech. She covered the whole gamut of what was lacking in the throne speech and what, from the perspective of New Democrats, we need to be putting forward.

I agree with the hon. member when she says that what this parliament and the Government of Canada need to do is address the bread and butter issues facing Canadians. She laid that out very well.

I would like the hon. member to comment on one aspect of the throne speech, which is that we somehow will have a new national project to address child poverty. Could the hon. member comment on this based on the performance we have seen from the government over the last three and a half years? I am sure she remembers the time 11 years ago when the Hon. Ed Broadbent put forward a resolution in the House of Commons to eliminate child poverty. What happened to that national project? Why is the Liberal government only talking about it today as though somehow this

### *The Address*

will be addressed? The record on this issue is important. I would like the hon. member to give us her thoughts on the matter.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to the question of what happened to the commitment to eliminate child poverty in this country, a commitment made by all parliamentarians in this Chamber 12 years ago, is exactly what we fear will happen to the “commitment” to eliminate child poverty, which is yet again in the throne speech. It is so totally lacking in any kind of comprehensive strategy precisely because it is a statement of intentions without any facts or figures. There are no hard dollars and no specific programs.

The first event the New Democratic Party launched in the last election campaign was an event to address the issue of child poverty. Ever since then I have worn on my lapel a pin given to me by the anti-poverty workers, specifically workers in the field of child care and child development. It is a pin that reads “Children First”.

If the government really meant what is stated in the throne speech and what is stated by the Prime Minister this afternoon when he talks about the head start program, we would not be pretending that this is something new that has been discovered. With all due respect to the member for Don Valley West, I applaud the fact that he has spoken to the importance of the head start and early childhood development programs, but I had the sense that the Prime Minister was Rip Van Winkle waking up from a long sleep this afternoon when he talked about the head start program being something new. I was working in the head start movement in 1964.

• (1810)

For 40 years it has been proven that if one is serious about giving children the best possible start in life then one has to eliminate the poverty that exists in families and in communities.

Giving children a head start is not just a slogan. If we are serious about eliminating poverty then we must make sure that they have adequate nutrition. That means decent incomes. We must make sure they have decent housing so that when they go to school they can actually learn instead of suffer from the fact that they have not been able to sleep because they are too cold or they are living in crowded conditions or, worse still, on the street.

The short answer is that this slogan has still not been translated into the kinds of concrete initiatives needed to get the job of eliminating poverty done. That is why we call for a budget. That is why we call for the allocation of dollars, so that this slogan can be translated into something real in terms of giving kids the best possible start in life.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. By unanimous consent we are seeking that the hours of debate be

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extended to encapsulate the spirit of the agreement by the House leaders that all leaders speak on this day in the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

I have consulted with the other House leaders and I believe you would find unanimous consent to extend the hours for that purpose only.

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Mr. Speaker, does this mean that it will be extended only to the extent of giving him the allotted time of 20 minutes?

**The Deputy Speaker:** My understanding is that there would be 20 minutes for the speech and 10 minutes for questions and comments. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much not only for the opportunity to speak but for the agreement to extend the hours if by chance I should be on my feet longer than 20 minutes.

I begin by congratulating the Speaker and the candidates for speakership. Indeed I congratulate all members who were elected and, as the leader of the New Democratic Party just did, all who had the courage to stand for office in the election of November 27, 2000. I also extend my congratulations to the mover and the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech From the Throne.

You will understand, Mr. Speaker, if I extend a particular thanks to the voters of the constituency of Calgary Centre. It is a diverse, dynamic and positive community. It is a community that is committed to the country and is able to play a leading role in shaping the future of Canada. I look forward to working with the constituents of Calgary Centre to ensure that the voice of western Canada is heard in very positive and constructive ways on the floor of the House in shaping national decisions.

The throne speech offers no vision for the future of the country. That is not surprising because through the election campaign the Liberals offered no vision of the future of the country. They drifted through the campaign as they have drifted through the last seven years. They were elected by default.

I say to my colleagues on this side of the House that was as much our fault as it was theirs, but it is important to underline that the government has no positive mandate from the people of Canada. It was elected by accident, elected by default. We on this side of the House will ensure that we hold it to account on the actions that it undertakes.

[*Translation*]

I believe the greatest danger is that the throne speech is utterly silent on the economic challenges facing the working people of

Canada. As industries lay off employees across our country and other nations change their policies to fight an economic slowdown, the government's only initiative is to delay until the fall a budget that should have been brought down in February.

The major initiatives in the throne speech on children and aboriginals are an indication of the guilt this government feels for ignoring these issues for seven years.

• (1815)

[*English*]

There are several issues that need to be addressed in the House. I want to break with tradition in the throne speech debate and focus my remarks exclusively on how we can reform the House of Commons and restore accountability to democracy in Canada.

I believe there is a general willingness in the House, in all five parties, to break a tradition that gives governments too much power and the elected representatives of the people far too little power. The leader of the New Democratic Party has just spoken of that.

Recently the Liberal members for St. Paul's and Winnipeg South wrote an article on this issue. They underlined some of the alarming developments in our country, one being the low voter turnout, which dropped more than 5% in the November 27 election.

The article focused on parliamentary reform, such as broadening the role of individual members, whether by more free votes, more resources to the parliamentary library or more influence on committees. That is an important issue on which I believe a lot of progress can be made if we work together in the Chamber.

The House leader of the Canadian Alliance has put forward some very interesting proposals in that vein. My party and I could support many of those proposals. Indeed, many of them we put forward ourselves in one way or another.

Speaking entirely on a personal basis, I would like to look at changes that give private members from all parties an initiating role in drafting public legislation. I support this and will work actively with my colleagues to achieve more power for individual members of parliament. I call that reform by empowerment. However, the change that would be even more important would be reform by accountability.

[*Translation*]

I have had the privilege of serving in eight parliaments, in government and in opposition. When it comes to parliamentary reform, I believe there is an even more important and urgent goal. That goal is to restore to the House of Commons the means to effectively control the spending authority of the government, through unrestricted examination and control of estimates.

*The Address*

That is a power the House of Commons used to have and gave away, for reasons that no doubt seemed compelling at the time.

That control of the estimates cannot be brought back in the forms that worked in the past, but the principle can, and should, be restored. The power to deny the government the authority to spend is the best means to hold that government accountable to parliament.

[*English*]

I will come back to some specific proposals that would have that effect, but I want to discuss briefly another way to hold the government accountable; that is, to ensure that the watchdogs established to monitor government behaviour report directly to parliament, not to the cabinet.

The place to start is with the 1993 Liberal Party red book promise to have the ethics counsellor report directly to the House of Commons. That promise should be kept. It should be retroactive to 1993 so that we can examine decisions taken since that time. The terms of reference should be expanded to include representations to crown corporations and other activities where suspicious contacts may occur.

We need to consider what other instruments are required to ensure that government is as transparent as possible, because a conditioned precedent to holding a government to account is to know what it is doing. That means there must be more respect for the work, the reports and the mandate of the privacy commissioner and the information commissioner.

We should also look at innovations in other jurisdictions. Thanks in part to the new member for Vancouver Quadra, British Columbia has a very interesting procedure that we should look at.

• (1820)

It is a procedure that establishes a special prosecutor for cases specifically involving the investigation and prosecution of crimes involving persons of particular influence, including cabinet ministers, senior public officials and police officers or persons in close relationship to them.

There would be other examples in other jurisdictions. We need instruments to hold any government, whatever its partisan stripe, to account. We need to look at ways in which that could be done.

I will come back to accountability. The real dilemma in societies that are both modern and democratic is to combine efficiency in government with real accountability. In the past 30 years most societies have made a choice. We have chosen efficiency over accountability.

We did that in Canada in the 1960s and the 1970s. We changed that for what seemed at the time to be very good reasons. The old system of committee of the whole House and supply made it difficult for governments to plan. It made it difficult for govern-

ments to respond to urgent questions. There is no doubt that it was inefficient. We made a change in the name of efficiency.

No one in the House would question that we need governments that are both willing and able to act. That requirement is more dominant now than ever before in the complex and fast changing world of today.

This is a time when the unthinkable happens regularly. Human life can now be cloned. Terrorists with package bombs are mobile and lethal. Traditional farm or industrial emissions can aggregate to poison water, air or streams. Governments have to be able to act.

In a democracy, if democracy means anything at all, governments must also be held to account. We have lost the capacity to hold governments to account in the House of Commons. We are letting the country down. We have an obligation in this House to make changes in the next few years to restore that power to parliament.

Traditionally, the primary role of the House of Commons has been the granting or withholding of supply to the government of the day.

It is more than 30 years now since the House of Commons, in an attempt to improve consideration of supply, changed the rules and began to send the annual spending estimates of government not to a committee of the whole where parliament and the world could see, but to committee with time limits. That experiment has been a complete failure on every count. Year after year effective parliamentary authority over government spending has been allowed to lapse.

I took a look at some of the larger departmental estimates that were considered in committee last year. The Standing Committee on Defence and Veterans Affairs spent a grand total of one hour and 30 minutes on the estimates of the Department of National Defence and one hour and 35 minutes, a little bit longer, on the estimates of veterans affairs. The total time on the estimates of the Department of Finance last year was one hour and 20 minutes. The total time on the Department of Health was less than 90 minutes.

That is a system that does not work. In a parliament that is founded on the idea that we control the government, that is an indication of abject and complete failure. We have an obligation to try to make that change.

Why has the system failed? It has failed because in that old system, when we met in committee of the whole here on the floor of this House—and the Prime Minister and some of the rest of us are old enough to remember that—there was a tension and there was a profile to the examination and the analysis of government estimates.

In committees now there is no profile and no tension, and so there is no attention to holding a government to account. The time

*The Address*

limits that exist now and the cycle of questions make it virtually impossible for any member of parliament, in government or in opposition, to sustain questioning over a period of time.

Under the old system, a member of parliament could literally continue asking questions as long as he or she stood on his or her feet in the House of Commons. Indeed, if someone happened to be speaking at the time the House adjourned, he or she would continue speaking in the morning.

• (1825)

Was that subject to abuse? Of course it was. However, it also ensured that the government was held to account. It ensured there was no way simply by resorting to a schedule that a government could get away from that kind of scrutiny.

What happened then? Ministers paid attention to the House of Commons. They also paid attention to their own departments. Ministers now are sort of chairmen of the board of their department. They do not get involved with the difficult details of running a government.

The Minister of Human Resources last year got into terrible difficulty because she did not know her department. Had she been forced to come to committee of the whole and defend the estimates, as ministers before her have been forced to do, she would have known and we would have known. There would have been an opportunity for us to avoid some of the problems and some of the terrible waste that occurred because our system has gone wrong.

Not only would that be good for accountability, it would be good in terms of fiscal responsibility. It would save money. It would mean there would be much less waste. It would also change the relationship between elected members and public servants whom the Prime Minister positively and correctly applauded and encouraged today.

Public servants in that old system knew they had to be ready for tough scrutiny. They had no option but to respect a parliament that could hold up virtually forever their spending plans. That has now gone in this committee system. Nobody takes seriously the fundamental responsibility of the House of Commons to control the spending of the government of the day. That is something we simply have to change.

What do we do about it? One option I believe would be to restore a committee of the whole House for the consideration of a limited number of departments, but for an unlimited period of time. It could take two departments each year and give it to the official opposition decide which two. We could establish a rule that the choice would not be made until the day before the debate began so everybody would have to prepare for coming into the place and asking questions without any kind of fetter. That is one way in which we could restore the capacity of the House of Commons to control the government.

Another option is to take estimates away from the standing committee and put them into a new kind of chamber, a debating chamber, a committee of the whole House acting as a committee of supply that could meet simultaneously with the House as a whole. It would meet in parallel with the House. It should be televised so the questions which are asked and answers that are given are seen by the public at large.

Ministers would answer to the committee in a freewheeling process of question and answer without the artificial time restraints that are now in place. Ministers would have to know about their departments because they would not be able to have officials answer for them.

Those are some options. There may well be others in the imagination of the House and by examples that are available to us in other jurisdictions.

We all recognize that the system as it exists now does not work. We have just come back. We can spend our time trying to breathe life into a system that does not work. We can pretend it is parliamentary reform if we have the opportunity to move more motions or take a more independent role. This is not about the independence or the participation of individual members, important as that is. This is about making any government accountable to parliament. That is why parliament was established. We have let that power be lost and we must regain it.

I consider that issue important enough that instead of dealing with other issues, which I will pursue and my colleagues will pursue in the days to come, I want to focus attention now on our most fundamental responsibility, which is to make this institution viable by changing it. We must ensure that we restore and respect the fundamental purpose for which we were all elected, which was not only to represent our constituents but to ensure that the people of this democracy of Canada would have some means on a day to day, year to year basis to control the government that affects so much of their lives.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the right. hon. leader of the Conservative Party if he remembers a few things that occurred some years ago when the Conservatives were in power. He is referring to accountability to this parliament.

• (1830)

In 1988, Mr. Speaker, the year I believe when you were first elected to the House of Commons, parliament was recalled, sat, never tabled estimates, never was granted supply, adjourned, prorogued the session and then called for a Governor General's warrant without having asked this parliament for a cent.

*The Address*

That can hardly be reconciled with reforming parliament. That is something that was so retrograde that it went against every democratic principle. It was illegal a hundred years ago in the United Kingdom. That was done by former Prime Minister Mulroney at the time, and the right hon. member across was a member of his cabinet. They presumably approved the use of a Governor General's warrant when parliament had previously sat. That is what he and the right hon. member across did with his cabinet colleagues in 1988.

He may wish us to forget that but some of us have long memories. Does he recall I asked Dr. Harvie Andre, who was House leader at the time, a question about the estimates? The estimates had been tabled and not one minister appeared before a parliamentary committee to defend them. That was the Conservative Party of which he was a member. Why does the right hon. member fail to remember all of these things? Why does he pretend all of a sudden to be an advocate for parliamentary reform and accountability for this great institution? I could go on about several more like that.

The few examples of parliamentary reform that we have were co-authored by the hon. Jim McGrath. The right hon. member said parliament was not working at all. What would Jim McGrath think of a speech like that? We made some of those reforms. It was a Conservative who chaired the committee to have these done.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** You repealed the McGrath report.

**Hon. Don Boudria:** The hon. member from the back row just alleged that we repealed some of the McGrath committee report. As far as I know the only reform that was repealed was the one to make committees larger than seven members. We did it because there was a five party condition in the House. Had we not done that the Conservative Party would not have had a seat on any committee.

I know something about it because in 1997 I authored that initiative to give his party representation on committees. If the right hon. member does not believe it perhaps he could talk to his House leader who knows a lot about that issue. However, I do not know what kind of terms they are on.

Today we could shrink the size of that committee back to what Mr. McGrath said. Who would stop us from doing that? What party would be against doing that if we proposed it right now? I will let members guess what party would lose out on that point.

I listened attentively to the right hon. member's speech. I had high respect for him when he was minister of foreign affairs. He did great things for the country and I acknowledge that. I listened to many of his speeches. I recognize what he did as a minister of national unity some years ago. I will agree that he did a good job

then too. However, today he stood and recited some of these platitudes. The first thing I would do is fire the speech writer.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to respond in kind but I would imagine that I remember more of what the hon. member said in opposition than he does. If we want to get into that kind of exchange, we can do that.

If I may say so, his response indicates exactly what is wrong with the House. If there is a question about which we should not be partisan, it is the question of how we make the House work more effectively.

Was I responsible for actions which did not advance accountability in the House? Yes, I was. Did the House of Commons deliberately decide that we would move away from the committee of the whole consideration of estimates? Yes, we did.

• (1835)

Were we right? No, we were not. We were wrong. We should recognize that we collectively were wrong. Members of several parties took that decision because we recognized that the old rules were not allowing us to adjust to a new reality.

I am asking the House to recognize now that the new rules we put in place also do not work. I can dig up as much information about the past as anyone in the House. I have a longer memory. I have the capacity to make the point in both languages. That is not the purpose of the House of Commons.

In fact, the reason we are in such low repute is that the people of the country look at parliament and they see us casting arrows at one another, putting partisan interest ahead of national interest. That is not what we are here to do.

We are here to make parliament work. We are here to make democracy work. If we are honest at all with one another, we know that it is not working as well as it should. Perhaps the proposals I have put forward today are not adequate. If they are not adequate, let us bring forth better proposals. Let us not lose the chance to change parliament, to hold the government more accountable, and to give more power to individual members of parliament.

I hope that this was a temporary lapse, that the highly responsible minister, the leader of the government in the House, thought he was a rat packer again. He got caught in a time warp and slipped back to his old behaviour. I would like to believe that there is a real commitment to reform among the members of the Liberal Party. I know that there is a commitment among many of their backbenchers. I hope it is reflected in the government benches too.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I only have one question. While I was listening to the member's

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speech I was thinking that what drove me out of his party and into the then Reform Party, now the Canadian Alliance, was the lack of accountability by parliament for the finances of the country.

There is no doubt about the fact that if the government that we have now, and the government of which the member was a member previous to that for nine years, would have exercised restraint, we would not have even today a gross debt of over \$600 billion. He has put his finger on it. It took him some 10 years longer to find out than those of us who are in this section of the opposition.

I honour and respect now what he has just said. What I would like to know is how do we know for sure that on his road to Damascus his conversion is real.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I will not speak about the consistency between what people say on the way to an election and what they do when they get to the House. There has been recent evidence very close to the member for Elk Island about how quickly positions can change. I do not want to get into that. I will not argue who was where first. The important thing he said is that he agrees with my analysis as to what is wrong here.

Judging from the reforms proposed by his House leader, his party believes that there are changes that have to be made. So do we. Certainly, if I may speak on this occasion for her, so do members of the New Democratic Party.

[*Translation*]

I think we could include the members of the Bloc Quebecois. Everyone agrees, and some members of the governing party would also like to see major changes to the standing orders of the House. We would like to see parliament's ability to control the government restored. That is the challenge we face.

On this we agree. On other topics, we do not. That is the nature of parliament and democracy, but if we wish to protect and enhance democracy in Canada and the reputation of parliament, we must consider changes to the standing orders of the House.

[*English*]

I welcome the support of the hon. member on this issue. I know it is only on this issue.

I believe we have work to do here. I hope that in the session that begins this week we will accept that responsibility and change this institution to restore and serve democracy.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In closing, let me thank all members of the House for their collaboration on this being a leaders' day. I might add that it is great to be back in the Chair.

It being 6.40 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.40 p.m.)

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