



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Monday, May 6, 2002**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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## HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, May 6, 2002

The House met at 11 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1100)

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**The Speaker:** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 81(14), to inform the House that the motion to be considered tomorrow during consideration of the business of supply is as follows:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should set up an assistance program for the softwood lumber industry and its workers, to support them in the face in the unjust decision by the American government to impose a 27.2% tariff on Canadian softwood lumber exports to the United States, the program to continue in effect until such time as this conflict has been resolved.

This motion, standing in the name of the hon. member for Joliette, is not votable. Copies of the motion are available at the Table.

• (1105)

[*English*]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in my weekly business statement last Thursday I indicated that Thursday of this week, May 9, would be an allotted day. In reviewing the progress of legislation over the past weekend I concluded that the flow of business would be better served if that day were spent on legislation. Therefore I want to inform the House that May 9 will not be an allotted day.

I also wish to inform the House that since the topic of debate today encompasses much of what had been on the minds of House leaders in terms of a possible take note debate on Wednesday evening, I will not now be proposing such a debate for Wednesday evening of this week.

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### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

#### BRIEFINGS OR NEGOTIATIONS

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should never exclude elected provincial government officials from any briefings or negotiations with provincial civil servants concerning legislation, regulations, treaties or agreements of any kind.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion. The motion arises as a result of my personal experience as a provincial justice minister dealing with negotiations with the federal government on the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

While I was a provincial minister I was told by my staff that I could not attend negotiations or discussions with federal officials, nor could I be briefed by my own staff with respect to these meetings with federal officials despite the very real financial, political and administrative interests the provincial government had in administering not only the Young Offenders Act but the new act that has been put in its place.

I initiated the motion after the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights barred the appearances of provincial attorneys general during hearings on the Youth Criminal Justice Act, Bill C-7. The newer members of the committee, such as myself, were told that it was a rule or a convention of the committee to not hear from elected provincial officials. The government members voted down a motion supported by all four opposition parties to waive this rule. As a result, the committee was only able to hear from non-elected provincial officials.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act, which replaces the Young Offenders Act, is enforced on a day to day basis by provincial officials and authorities. While the justice committee regularly hears testimony from the federal attorney general, unbelievably we were prevented from hearing from the officials who are actually responsible for implementing the legislation, paying for it and for making it work: the provincial attorneys general.

Despite the numerous concerns expressed about the lack of consultation with provincial authorities in the ongoing debate over this bill, astonishingly the government members on the justice committee said that they did not believe it was appropriate to invite elected representatives from provincial governments to make representations here in Ottawa. While they discussed matters with staff, they would not hear from the elected representatives who are politically accountable to the people of the various provinces.

Given that the provinces are often shouldered with the burden of the costs in implementing new laws, it is a tremendously important issue for provincial attorneys general or any other provincial minister administering a federal law who have to justify to the taxpayers the moneys they will have to spend. As elected officials responsible for the expenditure of funds and working in partnership with the federal government, there can be no relevant objection to them explaining their views and concerns to parliament.

*Private Members' Business*

On the issue of funding, I recognize that the federal government has indicated that it is willing to spend more money to implement the Youth Criminal Justice Act but we know that it will never reach a 50:50 partnership as the act had originally intended. Essentially the provinces will continue to bear about 75% of the cost of this act, and possibly even more in the years to come.

The provincial attorneys general and the taxpayers they represent who are shouldering the bulk of the financial burden of this act could simply say that they will not enforce this legislation or any other legislation the federal government imposes on them in the future. This was done with Bill C-68 where provincial attorneys general said that they would not co-operate in that federal act because it did not meet the needs of the people of their provinces.

The attorneys general of Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba are not required to enforce the new youth justice legislation. They could simply say "Forget it. Let the federal government do it". They could refuse to accept the delegation to prosecute under that act or to indeed spend any moneys under that act.

Even if that might be an unlikely possibility, and even though in Bill C-68, for example, they did refuse that delegation, common sense, good government and co-operative federalism demand that the provincial attorneys general be allowed to come to Ottawa to explain the difficulties they may foresee in making the legislation work.

• (1110)

It is critical that the federal government continues to work co-operatively and in good faith with the political figures who are responsible to the taxpayers of their respective provinces.

The motion also indirectly addresses the fundamental concerns of parliamentarians who often see committee work as ineffective or irrelevant. During the justice committee hearing in which we discussed whether or not to hear the elected provincial officials, the parliamentary secretary to the minister of justice at the time, the hon. member for Erie—Lincoln, said:

With respect to the ministers, they have more than ample opportunity to speak to the Minister of Justice at various federal-provincial-territorial meetings that go on frequently, and went on with this specific legislation. They've had more than ample opportunity to present their views to the minister.

Even if that is in fact correct, which it is not, having had that experience as a provincial justice minister where we were not consulted nor did we have an opportunity to discuss the act with the federal minister, as the member for Winnipeg—Transcona so aptly pointed out at the committee, it appeared that it did not even occur to the parliamentary secretary that perhaps the justice committee might form a different opinion or might even be a different entity in some respects from the federal justice minister.

The parliamentary secretary sat in his chair and said that ministers of justice in the provinces can talk to the federal minister of justice and that was good enough. This lack of democratic consultation is exactly what many Canadians, including parliamentarians, find so disconcerting about the entire legislative process.

There are only two significant ways for individual members to contribute to the political process under the process that we presently have today in parliament. One is through the introduction of private

members' bills and the other is through parliamentary committees. However it is now apparent that even these avenues are being shut off. This was demonstrated recently when the Prime Minister rejected the extensive work of a committee reviewing the contentious species at risk legislation, Bill C-5. All Liberal members in the House were instructed to vote against the committee amendments, including amendments that would have guaranteed compensation to landowners for land expropriated under the legislation.

Similarly, last week the new Minister of Justice rejected the recommendations of the parliamentary committee that proposed important changes to protect the interests of children caught up in bitter custody battles after divorce.

Those are but a couple of examples of why so many Canadians, including parliamentarians themselves, have become disillusioned with our political system. What is the point of an all party justice committee when the Liberal majority on the committee is simply an appendage of the justice minister?

Although the motion will not necessarily address issues of democratic reform in parliament, it would go far to remedy one particular consequence of the dysfunctional nature of parliamentary committees. The motion as worded would give parliamentarians the opportunity to confer on a number of fronts with both elected and non-elected provincial officials regarding any matter crossing areas of provincial and federal jurisdiction.

By working more positively and proactively with the elected political figures who are responsible and accountable to the people of their respective provinces, the House could demonstrate an unprecedented measure of good faith that would go a long way to improving co-operative federalism in the country.

Although the motion is not votable, I would hope that it would be a starting point for future discussions on this matter.

I have the minutes from the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights as of April 4, 2001. I want to read a few of the comments that were made by members in voting down hearing from provincial officials. When I stated:

I understand there is a standing rule that prohibits elected officials from coming here, and I think that's unfortunate.

The member for Winnipeg—Transcona then expressed his concern and the chair indicated the following:

The rule, the tradition, the convention predates the chair's being a member of the committee, but my understanding is that there are technical aspects of this the provinces would have to be responsible for administering, and we wanted to bring in the technical people who would be doing that. Therefore, what we wanted to do was bring in deputy attorneys general and representatives of the government, rather than elected officials. That was what I understood.

• (1115)

The member for Winnipeg—Transcona then raises other points, saying that on this kind of bill there are political matters in the very best sense and there are federal-provincial issues with respect to the allocation of resources.

The parliamentary secretary then said the following, and it was astounding. He said:

*Private Members' Business*

Mr. Chair, I stand to be corrected, but the suggestion that we have not heard from the provinces before this committee would be inaccurate. We have heard from officials. To my recollection, certainly in the case of the Province of Manitoba, the Province of British Columbia, the Province of Ontario I believe...invitations were extended to the provinces as well. We're certainly very happy to hear from the individuals who work with this legislation day to day.

With respect to the ministers, they have more than ample opportunity to speak to the Minister of Justice at various...meetings...They've had more than ample opportunity to present their views to the minister.

The point is however that they were not allowed to present their views to committee.

Perhaps the height of Liberal majority arrogance on the justice committee was seen when one Liberal member stated the following with respect to the motion in favour of having elected representatives there. He said:

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to say that I would not be supporting the motion on the basis that I've spent two years as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, and I can see that changing our convention would be simply opening it up to a series of fed-bashers. They would come here, the way they do, with the media in tow, and get into that. That's why I think the rule or the convention makes sense, to have officials who aren't going to be here to play the political game. As much as we are discussing political issues, I don't want to be captive to a round of fed-bashing, which I think this would inevitably lead to.

We are talking about the elected representatives of the people of the various provinces. They are responsible for administering and enforcing the legislation. The point of view of the parliamentary secretary is that this is simply fed-bashing. That is the problem with this government. Liberal members think that unless they can absolutely control any discussions to arrive at a predetermined result, it is simply fed-bashing.

This is a federal system. The federal attorney general has the right to speak to the provincial attorneys general. However we, as justice committee members or any other committee members, should be entitled to hear from these elected officials. They are responsible for the payment of this in large part. They are responsible for prosecution. They are responsible for administration. This is a shameful example of how the government refuses to co-operate with the provinces.

The provincial attorneys general could simply say that they will no longer prosecute under the criminal code and that they will leave it to the federal attorney general. They can say they will no longer prosecute under the youth justice legislation. However they are attempting to work co-operatively with the federal government, but unfortunately the Liberal majority on that committee refuses to hear from those who have significant input on this matter.

• (1120)

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada and Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel it is important for several reasons to participate in this debate on Motion No. 360 this morning, which was tabled in the House by the hon. member for Provencher. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should never exclude elected provincial government officials from any briefings or negotiations with provincial civil servants concerning legislation, regulations, treaties or agreements of any kind.

First, I am taking part in this debate because it gives me an opportunity to highlight the fundamental role of intergovernmental

relations as a key element in the functioning of the Canadian federation.

Second, I want to use this occasion to illustrate the co-operative mechanisms now in place between the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Third, the motion as tabled ought not to be interpreted as meaning that the Government of Canada has either the capacity or the desire to circumscribe its provincial partners in any way as to the selection of members for their own delegations to discussions or negotiations between representatives of the two main orders of government in Canada.

I do not intend to use the short time available to me in giving a detailed depiction of intergovernmental relations in Canada but rather simply to highlight their importance and their place in the lives of Canadians.

Intergovernmental affairs is obviously not alone in maintaining co-operative relations with the provincial and territorial governments, but this motion is of particular concern for us because this organization is at the centre of the efforts for co-operation and co-ordination to advance the progress of our Canadian federation.

In our country each order of government is sovereign within its own legislative sphere, but there are nevertheless types of responsibilities between orders of government where the roles of each need to be better defined. Moreover, the increased role of governments in the lives of citizens over the past century has consequently expanded their areas of activity. These areas of jurisdiction have become increasingly interlinked, leading governments to work together more closely and to identify co-operation mechanisms to manage these interactions.

No one can dispute that federal-provincial meetings have a key place in the political life of Canada. To cite but one example, in 2000-01 the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat, the agency that provides administrative services for the planning and conduct of senior level intergovernmental meetings in Canada, served 99 conferences. Six of those were at the first minister level. Most of the others were among federal, provincial and territorial ministers, as a matter of fact 29 in total. Of those meetings and conferences, 31 were at the deputy minister level.

The purpose of each of these meetings is to make the functioning of the federation more harmonious, to reduce frictions between the federal and provincial-territorial governments, to forge consensus on important issues of common interest and to clarify issues relating to national unity.

Whether it be first ministers meetings, intergovernmental ministerial meetings or regional conferences, it is important to understand that every such meeting necessitates from the outset a large number of informal contacts and exchanges among officials and that these efforts are productive.

*Private Members' Business*

National agreements have been concluded, for example, on the national child benefit. Negotiations between the federal and provincial governments have led to bilateral agreements on the transfer of active employment measures. Regional agreements have been concluded on procurement policy between Quebec and New Brunswick and interprovincial trade among the Atlantic provinces. These are just a few of many examples.

There are few areas where the federal government could afford to act alone without requiring the co-operation of the provinces. Intergovernmental co-operation mechanisms respond to this inevitable need to adapt to an ever changing world. The system works and Canadians are the first to benefit.

At the beginning of my speech I stressed the autonomy enjoyed by each order of government in its own sphere of activity. Our government believes that one of the key factors to the success of our federation is respect for the jurisdictions of the federal and provincial governments.

If there is an area where this logic ought to apply first and foremost, it is in the selection of a provincial delegation to a meeting with federal representatives.

• (1125)

I want to emphasize that this government has never had a policy of excluding a member of a provincial delegation from a federal-provincial meeting whether the delegate is elected or not. In reading the motion, I admit that I found it difficult to imagine what could have motivated it and I wondered if the hon. member had a specific case in mind when he brought forward his notice of motion.

On our side, no such example has been brought to our attention and we therefore find the motion tabled by the opposition member extremely puzzling. Having said that, I must be honest. After hearing the member present his case in debate, I now more fully understand his point of contention.

The motion insinuates that the provincial and territorial governments are not free to designate their own representatives, elected or not, to discussions with the federal government. This proposal is patently absurd. The motion gives nothing more to the provinces and territories which already have full latitude in choosing their representatives.

We do not support the motion because the House does not need to formalize something that can be addressed informally. Whenever provincial ministers feel that they do not have access to the information they need from the federal government, their ministers need only contact their federal counterparts and for the most part these things can be worked out. I am sure the hon. member knows this as a former provincial minister.

This is the nature of intergovernmental affairs in our federation.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today and speak to Motion No. 360 introduced by the member for Provencher. I intend to keep my comments short.

Let me first remind the House of what one of the greatest statesman of the 20th century, British Prime Minister Winston

Churchill, once said: "Democracy is the worst system ever invented except for all the rest". My speech will be based on that statement and divided into four parts.

First, in a democracy such as the one we live in, legitimacy rests with elected officials. These elected representatives of the people have the legitimate power to make decisions.

Second, it is up to the elected officials, who have the support of their constituents, to make decisions.

Third, to be able to make the right decisions, elected officials have to be as well informed as possible. That is totally understandable. To make the best decision possible, we need to be informed.

Fourth, the best information is first-hand information. In federal-provincial negotiations, first-hand information is what we get during briefings and negotiations. It is only appropriate that elected provincial representatives attend briefings or negotiations between federal and provincial public servants.

This is why we agree with the non-votable motion brought forward by the member for Provencher.

• (1130)

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Québécois colleague has indeed been very brief. He has summarized a thought many of us share, in some very fine phrases couched in impeccable French, and I must congratulate him.

I will soon have sat in this House for five years, but I have still learned something from Motion M-360. The hon. member for Provencher, the mover of the motion, has said that in the debate in the justice committee on Bill C-7, the committee chair indicated that a rule or convention excluded elected representatives of the provinces and territories. Not being an expert like you, Mr. Speaker, on rules, procedures, conventions and traditions, I have learned something new.

I am going to ask our parliamentary leader and our rules and procedures adviser to explain to me in greater detail what this is all about. They refused to allow the provincial ministers of justice, the attorneys general, to speak, based on rules and conventions, claiming that committees cannot accept them as witnesses, if I have understood the hon. member for Provencher correctly.

This led me to wonder. I thought the committee was sovereign. I know that royal commissions hear provincial and territorial elected officials and wondered why the same did not hold true for committees. I wondered if there were any examples. There have been a number of examples where provincial and territorial elected representatives have appeared before a committee examining a bill.

Since there is not much time left, I am going to speak about the famous Bill C-20—now a law—I might even call it the infamous bill on referendum clarity. If I remember correctly, Joseph Facal, Quebec's Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, came before the committee, as did Benoît Pelletier, the Liberal MNA for Châteauguay, not far from here.

*Private Members' Business*

If, for a bill such as Bill C-20, there was acceptance of provincial ministers and elected representatives, and this issue did not come up, I do not understand why a committee would decide to exclude them because of rules of procedure.

I need more clarification. If it was because of rules, conventions or traditions, the government, which refused to hear from the people of Quebec, among others, during consideration of Bill C-7, citing parliamentary procedure, ignored that procedure during consideration of Bill C-20; this is a double standard. If rules need to be changed, it should change them, but I do not think that that is the case. We have a number of examples of elected provincial government officials appearing before the committee.

I am not sure what the specific purpose of the motion is but, if I understand correctly, the idea is to not exclude elected officials from the provinces and territories when bills which have an impact on the provinces are being considered. We would not disagree. I am learning things. We need some answers.

I listened to my former colleague who crossed the floor, the turncoat who is now the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport. He explained how federal-provincial relations are supposed to work. This government is in no position to tell us how to operate. I think that the previous government had much more credibility when it came to respect for the provinces. The short-lived government that the leader of my party had the opportunity to lead could point to examples of real co-operation.

Members will recall that when the right hon. leader of the Progressive Conservative Party was about to make appointments, he telephoned the then Premier of Quebec, Mr. Lévesque, and told him, "I have some names, but I would like your opinion".

• (1135)

My leader reminded me that Mr. Lévesque was quite surprised that the Prime Minister had called to consult him about appointments.

This is a fine example of the skilful handling of relations. However, our friends on the other side are arrogant, because they base their decisions on certain rules in order to exclude some people and go their own way, do as they please.

I find it unfortunate that, for Bill C-7, they refused to meet with elected provincial representatives on the basis of some criteria and regulations, some tradition and conventions, whereas, in the case of Bill C-20, which divided the country much more than it united it, the presence of ministers and members of legislatures was accepted.

They resort to double standards whenever it suits them. This is another case of bad handling of relations here in the House by this government. It is another example of this government using the rules for the benefit of its own leader and excluding the provincial elected representatives, who are our partners only when this government finds it convenient.

Finally, we must be careful. We must not forget that there are two distinct philosophies about the vision for our country. On the one hand, some say that Canada is Ottawa. It is a central government, which in its great generosity grants some powers and responsibilities to what we call provinces. This is Canada according to some people.

Perhaps it would help to look back further in history. Canada is made up of regions and provinces which decided to act together and to give shared services to Ottawa. It was a bottom up approach, not a top down one. A country such as Canada cannot remain united if decisions are always made at the top. Decisions that shape this country must be made in the regions and in the provinces.

This is why we hope for a fairly quick change of government in order to change the way things are done and if possible, an even quicker change in Prime Ministers and Ministers of Intergovernmental Affairs. This could not come soon enough. In any case, squabbling has already started within the ranks of the Liberal Party.

Having said that, these are two different visions of the country, two different approaches. I hope that the vision of the country that recognizes that it was the regions and the provinces that created this country and that decided to come together for all kinds of reasons, more or less good, will gain more widespread acceptance.

I also sincerely hope that there will be a level playing field when it comes to the witnesses that will be called to appear before committees. We need to acknowledge that on numerous occasions, when it suits the government, provincial and territorial members and ministers have appeared before committees. I hope that decisions will not be made based on rules once, only to flout them the rest of the time.

[English]

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Motion No. 360. I agree with the member who brought it forward that it is a growing concern given the obvious jurisdictional problems between federal, provincial and even local governments.

We are seeing time and again how the actions of one impact on the other. It is becoming obvious even from the discussions in the newspapers that all Canadians realize there is only one taxpayer. We are living under one set of laws in a sense and Canadians are asking their elected officials to do their best to pull together to give us the best country possible run in the most efficient way possible in a way that is co-operative to get the job done with the best interests of Canadians in mind.

I would go further than the member's motion and the way he has it worded which is proper and right. The examples he uses are good ones but I would suggest an agenda be published when ministers meet at the federal and provincial level so all Canadians know what is being discussed. Too often what happens is we read about a meeting that took place and except for a few people at the bureaucratic top of the pyramid we do not even know what the meeting was about. An announcement is made that something was negotiated behind closed doors. The House does not know what it is about. Sometimes the provincial minister, as has already been said, has been excluded from the discussions. Something is done at a bureaucratic level and people wake up to find an announcement or agreement on the front page that has been signed or is close to being signed that may affect all of our lives.

### Supply

It is only proper that an agenda be published that allows people to know what is coming up. All of us would say that it is a good job for ministers to negotiate. We do not have anything against them talking about technicalities, regulations or getting fussy about fine points. However, there are other times, and I think of the current negotiations that are taking place surrounding the Kyoto agreement, when they enact or enforce international agreements on everything from the environment to women's issues to international courts that affect more than one jurisdiction.

Although our jurisdictions are well defined constitutionally, too often we find the federal government intruding into another jurisdiction with its spending power. By doing that it involves provincial governments in a way that affects them substantially either on the funding side or committing them to a course of action that they have little control over.

I emphasize my support for the member's motion. He is on the right track. The more communication we can get between the levels of government Canadians can experience better government overall. They expect us to find ways to co-operate on those issues that are inter-jurisdictional. When there are no elections they want us to get together and to do it right on behalf of all Canadians. The best way to always do that is to have it front and centre with all jurisdictions involved.

• (1140)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Chair will recognize the hon. member for Provencher under right of reply. We will have five minutes to close this debate.

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments that have been made here today in respect of the motion. Again I want to reiterate that the federal government should not be barring provincial ministers from negotiations as it has done in the past on matters that affect them. It seems odd to me that the government would invite provincial officials but specifically bar provincial ministers.

While I understand that ministers may not want to attend certain types of meetings because they are working meetings, the federal government has gone beyond simply barring the attendance of the minister. The staff that was sent from Manitoba to attend the meetings on the Young Offenders Act was permitted to attend only on the condition that it not disclose to the minister what the nature of the discussions was. In an effort to continue with co-operative federalism, I said that I was very interested in making sure that we had input into it and I did not want to bar them because of this ludicrous condition. Therefore, members of the staff of the provincial attorney general and justice minister went there and came back but could not disclose what was discussed at these meetings. It was simply astounding given the financial interest, the administrative interest and the prosecutorial interest of the minister in that matter.

How could I, as a minister, go back to cabinet and say that I have just sent my staff to negotiate an agreement but I cannot tell cabinet what they negotiated because I do not know? How could I say that the reason I do not know is that the federal government is saying that my own staff cannot tell me? What we see is this kind of control of the process in order to achieve a desired result: the minister can then say that there were negotiations with staff. He can say that the minister had the opportunity to pick up the phone and call him. That

is easier said than done in this great and wonderful democracy. As great as it is, it is not that easily done.

Those are my comments. I urge members to consider the motion very carefully.

• (1145)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. As the motion has not been designated as a votable item, the order is dropped from the order paper.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I think that if you seek it you would find consent to begin our supply day motion and debate at this time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville have the consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—RURAL CANADIANS

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should cease and desist its sustained legislative and political attacks on the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians and the communities where they live.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Medicine Hat.

The topic for today's official opposition motion does not come from us as MPs but from Canadians. We are a vast country and the vast majority of the people who live beyond the glare of the big city lights are fed up. They feel neglected by the Liberal government and they are telling us so. I imagine that Liberal backbench MPs have been told the same thing by their constituents for the last eight years, but sadly these common sense appeals from rural voters have fallen on the deaf ears of the Liberals.

As evidence of this I will cite that over the last couple of weeks a fear of being dethroned during the next election has been spreading among the Liberal backbenchers. Some of them have even been brave enough to speak up against the Prime Minister's dictatorial ways. These Liberal MPs will again accept minor word changes by the government and consider that a victory. The Liberal elite laughs at how easily duped they are: A few grants and handouts later, they are back barking like trained seals.



*Supply*

If the constituents in those Liberal ridings want to see real change, they should elect Canadian Alliance MPs. We have been in the lead in championing these issues important to ordinary Canadians for the last eight years. The government implements our policies, but much too slowly to make the dramatic changes that are needed to turn our economic engines into economic dynamos. The Liberals would rather use taxes and red tape until the industries are hurting so bad that they need to subsidize them.

Only when the Liberals are subsidizing things do they consider their programs and policies a success. Slush funds and political patronage they understand; economic development they do not. Slush funds, by the way, are used mainly to buy votes. If the government had implemented Reform Party agricultural policies in 1994, many thousands of farmers would not be facing the crisis they are today. Unfortunately in eight years the Liberals have learned nothing. In fact they have become more arrogant, anti-democratic and corrupt. They look for new ideas among the bureaucrats and Liberal backroomers when the best ideas are right in front of their noses. All they have do is listen to the people who are on the long-suffering end of their failed policies and programs.

The Liberals are experts at pitting one group of Canadians against the other and nowhere is this more evident than in the way they have pitted urban voters against rural voters, the very essence of what we are bringing forward today. The Liberals play up to animal rights groups at the expense of farmers, hunters and fishermen. They try to ram animal cruelty legislation through parliament and make farmers out to be the bad guys when the opposite is true. No one cares more about animals than farmers do. The Liberals play up to the environmental lobby groups by trying to ram endangered species legislation through the House, but they are dishonest with both environmentalists and farmers because the laws they wish to enact will not protect endangered species and will force farmers to abandon their land without being paid fair market value for their land.

The Liberals play up to urban voters by telling them they are doing something to fight violent crime in the city by forcing millions of law-abiding citizens to register their guns, this despite data from Statistics Canada and insurance company actuaries that prove that responsible gun owners are no threat to themselves, their families, neighbours or communities. Anyone listening today must be starting to see a trend developing here. Last week the backbencher from Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey acknowledged this serious problem in a letter to his caucus colleagues. He stated:

I believe that unless [the bill] is amended, there will be a perception in rural Canada that once again a law tailored to urban interests is being thrust upon the rural community. Those of us representing rural ridings know all too well the divisiveness and distrust that remains from our government's passage of C-68, the gun registration law.

That strikes to the very heart of what we are talking about today.

• (1150)

Our speakers will outline failure after failure of Liberal policies and programs. Today we will describe Liberal legislation and programs that have failed rural Canadians: legislation like Bill C-5, Bill C-15B, Bill C-68 and Bill C-4 from 1998, which perpetuated the fiftieth year of the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board. We will describe programs like useless regional economic development

funds and corporate handouts that are really slimy Liberal slush funds buying votes instead of creating real development opportunities.

We will describe today how rural Canadians have been ignored and neglected by the Liberal ruling elite while the Liberal backbenchers sit on their duffs in the House, scared they will lose their perks and access to their slush funds if they start to really represent the true needs and wishes of their constituents. We will describe Liberal neglect and mismanagement of trade issues to the detriment of the softwood lumber producers and the communities where they live and work, and Liberal neglect and mismanagement of the foreign trade and subsidy issues to the detriment of Canadian farmers and their communities.

Not only will the House hear a dry, statistical and economic argument today, it will hear about real people in real communities who are hurting because of Liberal laws and Liberal neglect.

My own province of Saskatchewan lost 15,000 jobs in the last year alone. *Report Newsmagazine* recently reported that the population of Saskatchewan has dropped by 26% in the last three decades. Saskatchewan should not be a have not province. Liberal policies and programs perpetuate Saskatchewan's have not status and it has to stop now. The Liberal failure to allow Canadian wheat producers to sell their wheat directly to value added processing like pasta plants is just one glaring example of Liberal neglect and stupidity.

The one area of economic opportunity in Saskatchewan is guiding and outfitting, but what do the Liberals do? They force every American hunter to pay a tax of \$50 to come into Canada. Many of them stayed home last year, and it will get worse. Who are the Liberals hurting with this new tax? They are hurting farmers who are forced into getting into outfitting to help finance the losses they were suffering on the farm. Again they are at the receiving end of failed Liberal policies and programs. The Liberals are hurting aboriginal guiding and outfitting companies, one of the few economic opportunities for aboriginals living on remote reserves. Liberals would rather pay welfare than get out of the way and let aboriginal entrepreneurs prove that they can pull themselves up by their own bootstraps.

What if a farmer needs to go out and buy a new rifle to shoot the coyotes that are attacking his cattle? The Department of Justice documents put the regulatory cost of buying a rifle at \$279. That is before even buying the rifle and bullets. That is absolutely ridiculous and the government has the nerve to say it is not doing anything to negatively impact on law-abiding citizens who use firearms for their own livelihood.

### *Supply*

Before my time is up I want to leave everyone with one last message for our friends in urban Canada. The Canadian Alliance is not playing the Liberal game of pitting one group of Canadians against another. We believe that sound rural and resource development policies create jobs, opportunities and wealth in urban centres. It is no secret that all the mines are in the north but most of the money from those mines flows through Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal to benefit all of the citizens of these cities.

When farmers succeed, the Canadian economy grows and jobs are created in urban centres. Development of Canada is a team effort. Unfortunately, for the last eight years the Liberals have been neglecting half of the team.

I predict that in the next election campaign the Liberals will again try to use labels to smear their opponents rather than discuss the issues important to Canadians. Today's motion is a key part of the debate that needs to take place.

Today the Canadian Alliance is saying to rural and northern Canadians "We know you are fed up and we are not going to let the Liberals get away with it any more. Like a friend of mine once said "To light a fire you start at the bottom, and it will spread upwards". If we want the economy to start burning we need to get out of the way of our basic resource sectors; we need to stop pouring cold water all over them and instead get them back on track, be it the fisheries on our east and west coasts, the farms all across Canada, the forestry sector, the mining, oil and gas sector, or the tourism industry for hunting and shooting sports. All these rural based industries are being held back by destructive Liberal policies or neglect.

The message I have for our city cousins is this: "Please help us, for it is the economic health of urban Canada and your own jobs that are affected too".

• (1155)

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today and debate an issue that is so important to great swaths of the country. The government's lack of judgment and lack of attention with respect to rural issues has put many rural industries in serious trouble.

I appreciate the work of my hon. friend who spoke. He has done much with respect to firearms legislation, animal cruelty and so many other issues. It is critical that we discuss these issues in this place today.

Although we will be talking about all kinds of numbers and statistics this is a debate about people, the people responsible for opening Canada up and making it a great country. To be fair, over the years much of the population of rural Canada has shifted into urban Canada. However the people of rural Canada still play a vital role in the economy of the country.

There are so many subjects we could talk about. We could talk about the endangered species legislation, the animal cruelty bill or the firearms registry, all of which have deep flaws. Unfortunately the government has not listened to the good judgment of so many people from rural areas who have offered ideas about how these pieces of legislation could be improved. We will offer some of those suggestions today.

I will talk specifically about Canada's economic situation and how it impacts rural Canada. Today Canada has a debt of \$547 billion, a staggering amount of money. It is about \$35 billion higher than when the government came to power. We spend about \$40 billion every year on interest payments. Of every tax dollar sent to Ottawa 25¢ goes to pay interest on the debt. As a result of such high debt and interest rates we have taxes that are much higher than they should be. They are about 40% higher than in the United States. We have the highest personal income taxes in the entire G-7 on a per capita basis.

This is important not only because of the direct tax implications for all Canadians including those in rural Canada. It is important for a number of reasons. At this time of year when people are filling out their income taxes they see the impact of it. Because we have high personal income taxes, high corporate taxes and high taxes on fuel, taxes become embedded in the price of everything we buy. If we need to buy fertilizer we find high taxes embedded in the price. As a result we not only see input costs continue to rise for people on farms. Prices keep rising for people anywhere in rural Canada who must buy the things they need. This makes it more difficult to compete and stay in business.

We see this reflected in the dollar. The Canadian dollar today is near an all time low although it has rebounded slightly. There was a time when the Prime Minister argued the low dollar was good for exports. Not long ago he realized the folly of this and started to argue it was perhaps not such a good thing. He finally got it right. Although a low dollar initially looks good for exports we must still use it to purchase things like farm equipment that come from outside the country. As a result, at some point we end up paying more for imports than we could ever benefit from by exporting things. However this has started to change. The government has started to recognize this and has quit talking down the dollar, at least for the time being.

The government has done a poor job of spending the tax dollars that come from rural Canada. It gets a big chunk of fuel tax every year that the Canadian Automobile Association and many people believe should be put back into roads. The government could help people in rural Canada by putting back into roads some of the \$170 billion it brings in every year from taxes, especially the fuel tax.

*Supply*

• (1200)

We all know the story of how we lost the Crow rate in Canada. We know the impact this had in terms of the abandonment of rail lines. The loss of the Crow rate ultimately means we must truck more of our grain to get it to market, but its impact on roads in rural Canada has been huge. The government brings in billions of dollar every year from the excise tax on fuel. However nothing comes back to allow us to fix up the vital infrastructure that is so important to rural Canadians. The federal government is putting no money into fixing up highways to account for what has happened as a result of the loss of the Crow rate.

Over the last number of years we have seen dramatic increases in spending by the government. Does it go to things that are vital to people in rural Canada? I hardly think so. We have seen all kinds of spending on grants and subsidies. We have seen the expansion of regional development programs which on the face of it are supposed to help people in rural Canada but which are full of patronage and pork barreling. We have seen burgeoning scandals like the potential problems at Canada Communications Group and the public works department under the previous minister Alfonso Gagliano. I expect we will hear more about that this week as the auditor general releases her report. The point is that when money goes into regional development agencies it is unaccountable and does not have the impact it should.

What should happen to regional development money? Obviously it should go into things like infrastructure that have an impact. I spoke a moment ago about roads. In Atlantic Canada there is a huge argument to be made for putting infrastructure money into ports, airports and border crossings to allow Atlantic Canada to prosper and benefit from all the advantages it has as a region. Regions like Atlantic Canada should be able to benefit from all the things it produces. However if it cannot export them because it does not have the proper infrastructure it is all for nought. This is a good example of how the government could change its spending habits. It could take the money it spends on programs of dubious value and put it into things that would have an impact.

In my riding a lot of cattle liners come through from Saskatchewan and northern Alberta to bring cattle to the big feedlots around Picture Butte, Alberta. They come trundling through my riding down Highway 36 and tear up the highway. However the money that should come from fuel taxes does not. As a result the province has to scramble to find ways to maintain the roads.

The government could help with infrastructure by dealing with the water shortage in my riding. We have a real shortage of water. We are trying to build a pipeline from the Milk River Ridge Reservoir to take water to the driest corner of the province in the southeast part of my riding. However we have run into problems with the federal government. It funded a bit of the project but we have run into environmental problems. The federal government is not being as cooperative as it could be. If it helped us build off-stream storage we could have more water for irrigation over the course of the summer. That is where the money should be going.

The government needs to completely refocus what it is doing. It needs to lower taxes, pay down the debt and get rid of pork barreling and patronage. It needs to take money away from programs of

dubious value and put it into infrastructure. This would have a positive impact on the people of rural Canada. The government should put money into roads, better and more efficient border crossings, and port facilities in Atlantic Canada. Doing so would allow these areas to benefit from their natural advantages. It would allow rural Canada and other regions that have not benefited for a long time to stand on their feet and do what they do best: produce tremendous prosperity for the people of Canada.

• (1205)

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to go on record to make sure the people of Canada have heard the attack made by the Canadian Alliance on our regional development agencies. Alliance members have made the attack before but now they have made it official. I want to make sure the people of Canada heard the speech of my hon. colleague about the assistance that goes to rural Canadians in Atlantic Canada, western Canada and all parts of rural Canada through programs like ACOA and Western Economic Diversification.

I find interesting and incongruous, if not humourous, the number of times Alliance members have talked about lower taxes and lower debt. It is something I am sure we would all like. However they then go on with a huge list of spending priorities, two of which were mentioned by the first two Alliance speakers. The first member talked more about spending on agriculture. The second, who just spoke, talked about more spending on roads. They have asked for up to \$30 billion in extra spending, as was mentioned earlier in the House. The Alliance constantly asks for less debt, less taxes and more spending. It does not add up.

The Alliance's ideas include the PFRA and compensation for people affected by the endangered species act. They include more money for border security, sniffer dogs, detoxification, defence and health care. My question to Alliance members is this.

**Mr. Myron Thompson:** How much has the gun registry cost us?

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** I obviously have them quite riled up. That is good. They are thinking about it. Maybe they could go over the list again. I am not suggesting they review tiny projects of a few hundred thousand dollars. They should review the things that would add up to the \$30 billion extra they want to spend, plus the money they want the government to cut to replace these things.

*Supply*

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend did not tell us where he got the \$30 billion figure. He invented it out of thin air. Even the hon. member for Winnipeg South, his own colleague, has called for an end to Western Economic Diversification. Unlike the hon. member for Yukon, the hon. member for Winnipeg South understands that the program has not worked. For example, \$35 million went as a loan guarantee to a farm machinery manufacturer in Manitoba. The manufacturer ended up moving to the United States and away from Western Economic Diversification. Would my hon. friend argue that was a good use of taxpayers' money? I do not think so.

My hon. friend has asked me where cuts could come from within the fat of the government to fund important projects like infrastructure. I will run through them. Regional development programs as they are structured today are ineffective. I will be clear about that: They do not work. They are full of problems. The auditor general points to this all the time.

Let us look at Canadian Heritage which spends billions of dollars on subsidies to all kinds of people who do not need them. Why do Canadians, some of whom make \$10,000 a year, pay taxes to see their money go to artists and writers whose books and materials the public will not buy? Why should people at the lowest end of the income scale have to pay taxes for that? It is unbelievable.

Why should we pour money like water into the department of Indian affairs when the auditor general says it is full of problems? We do not have a problem with properly funding natives who need help. However to send money to the band level only to see it evaporate is unbelievable. I cannot believe my hon. friend would sit idly by and allow it to happen without speaking up about it.

There are many examples. I could go on and on. I could talk about CIDA and the hundreds of millions of dollars the auditor general has pointed to as being unaccounted for. I could talk about the \$15 billion a year the budget has put aside for grants and contributions. Do we ever see a proper accounting? Does the government stand and say the money needs to be better spent for the benefit of all Canadians? No, it does not. Instead we get pale defences like the one my hon. friend has offered.

• (1210)

**Hon. Andy Mitchell (Secretary of State (Rural Development) (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in debate today. This is an important subject matter and I am pleased that the Alliance has turned its attention to having a broad based debate about the issues of rural Canada.

I have listened carefully to both hon. members of the opposition who have spoken, the member for Yorkton—Melville and the member for Medicine Hat. I profoundly disagree with the substance of the motion and with the comments they have made to support the motion. I do so because the Alliance motion demonstrates two important problems, first, a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of the issues that face rural Canada and second, a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of our federation.

There is no attack on the lives of rural Canadians and on the communities of rural Canada. I can tell hon. members what we have seen in the House. We have seen the government proposing through

HRDC to help build community capacity building and watched the Alliance oppose it. We have seen the government propose a strategic infrastructure program of \$2 billion. The hon. member for Medicine Hat talked about the need for infrastructure. What did the Alliance do? It voted against it.

We have seen the need for access to capital by small businesses that operate in rural Canada. We have such a program called community futures and it provides loans to small businesses at commercial rates in rural areas. What happened? The Alliance campaigned against that particular program. It is right in its platform that Alliance members do not want to see it.

We believe that rural Canadians have a right and should be able to access health care, post-secondary education and life long learning and have a competitive business environment. All these things can be obtained by going forward in the implementation of broadband Internet technology. What do we see? We see the Alliance totally opposed to that type of initiative.

I will spend a moment not talking about those particular issues, but talking about some of the fundamental differences that exist between this side of the House and that side of the House.

The opposition suggests, particularly in talking about legislation, that it is an either/or type of scenario. We are either with rural Canadians or we are with urban Canadians, that there is no connect between the two. Legislation must be either one way or the other way. That is a fundamental misunderstanding because what opposition members do not understand is that Canada is more than the sum of its parts. It is more than a collection of regions. Canada is a nation with national values, goals and objectives. The legislation that we bring forward in the House needs to speak to those national values, goals and objectives.

We also need to understand that a successful Canada is one that is made up of strong component parts, both urban and rural. It is not a case of one or the other. To be successful we must have both strong urban and rural communities and strong urban and rural components. We cannot have a successful rural Canada if we do not have a strong urban Canada, if we do not have those markets or if we do not have the support of those urban communities. Nor can we have a successful urban Canada if we do not have the wealth that is generated from rural Canada and we do not have the communities that sustain rural Canada. The two component parts are absolutely essential. There is a fundamental misunderstanding of that in the opposition.

The two members who have already spoken have spent time telling us what is wrong with rural Canada and the government's approach. That is fair enough. It is part of what the Alliance members are there to do. It is their job to be critical of the government, to say what it is that they do not think is right.

*Supply*

•(1215)

However, it is only part of their job. Criticism is part of it, but it is only part. What Alliance members have not done this morning and have not done in the eight years that I have watched the debate in respect of rural Canada is to point toward an alternative vision. There is an obligation to Canadians. I say to Alliance members that it is not simply good enough to criticize. The opposition should criticize but it should also put forward an alternative vision for rural Canada. In fact, it has not done that.

The issue of rural Canada and rural sustainability is far too important to be a partisan political exercise. It requires members of parliament, members of the other place, and members from all parties to come together to ensure we have a sustainable rural Canada and to ensure we can in fact protect the needs and the interests of rural Canadians.

I want to talk a little bit about a vision for rural Canada because we have not seen a great deal of it from the other side. To me we need to pursue a three part approach to ensure the sustainability of rural Canada.

I believe our approach must be a bottom up and not a top down approach. The solutions for rural Canada do not simply lie here in Ottawa. They do not lie in the provincial capitals. The solutions to rural issues lie in rural communities themselves. We need to reflect and it is important to reflect that the needs, challenges and priorities of a rural community on the prairies are not the same as those in northern Ontario, Atlantic Canada or the interior of British Columbia. They are all as valid and important, but to ensure that public policy works well we need to take the approach that individual communities must be empowered to pursue their sustainability in a way that makes sense to the challenges that they meet in their particular communities.

It must go beyond that. It is not good enough to say that we take a bottom up approach. It is critical that we ensure that communities have the capacity to move forward on their particular approach, that they have the capacity to retain, attract and train human resources, that they have the capacity to understand what their assets are so that they can build upon them. Rural communities must have the ability to build a community consensus on the direction that they want to take and that they have the ability to develop a community plan that they can move forward on.

But again, it is more than just bottom up and more than being able to build community capacity. Senior levels of government do have an obligation to provide tools to those communities to use in a way that makes sense for them, for example, community capacity building that is provided by regional agencies. The hon. member for Medicine Hat denigrated regional agencies. They play an important role in ensuring rural communities have the capacity to move forward with economic development.

Access to capital is a key tool that we need to provide to small businesses that are in our rural communities. Our community futures program does that well. It works well with our communities.

The member for Medicine Hat talked about infrastructure. It is an important tool that is provided by both the federal and the provincial governments. We have provided a federal-provincial program of

infrastructure over the last couple of years of \$2 billion. We have talked about a new strategic infrastructure program of another \$2 billion. It is somewhat disconcerting to see each time that we move forward with an infrastructure program that members of the Alliance vote against it. They are voting against their constituents.

We talk about broadband access and the access it will give to Canadians. I asked a question in the House some three months ago. An hon. Alliance member stood up and said the secretary of state was absolutely nuts. He said nobody in rural Canada cared about having broadband Internet access. He turned to a couple of his colleagues who were sitting behind him and asked if they had ever heard of anybody in rural communities asking for that? They dutifully answered that, no, they had not. Rural Canadians need access to that technology, not for the technology itself but for what it can provide to them in terms of access to health care and education in a competitive business environment.

•(1220)

Today's debate is important. As important as it is to listen to what each and every parliamentarian has to say because there is value to be added to this debate by all parliamentarians, and as important as it is to take into consideration the views of our provincial colleagues and the various provincial legislatures, it is not enough. It is not the primary thing we need to do. The primary thing is to listen to the voices of rural citizens themselves. It is from them that solutions will come and it is their needs and concerns that parliamentarians need to understand.

Believing and knowing that, starting in 1998 the government engaged in what was the government's largest citizen engagement process, a rural dialogue to listen to the needs and concerns of rural Canadians. To date over 10,000 rural Canadians have participated in that process. There have been hundreds of local sessions, dozens of area sessions and many regional sessions. There have been two national rural conferences which brought together over 1,000 rural citizens from all parts of the country.

In those two conferences we saw representation from almost all political parties represented in the House, except one. The Alliance did not seem to feel there was a need to come and listen to the views of rural Canadians. The other opposition parties thought there was a need and a value, but I guess the Alliance did not.

I want to say something because I can hear the criticism already turning in the minds of Alliance members. These rural dialogues were not just about talk. They were not about having a meeting, talking about where we might go and letting it fall off the table. In each of these rural conferences we came forward with a specific action plan on specific things that we needed to do as a government to fulfill the needs and desires, and to work on the issues brought forward by rural Canadians.

I tabled the action plan from the 2000 conference. It had 54 items in it. We worked on those items; we did not let them drop. When we had the conference in 2002 we came back and put them in front of the delegates, the rural citizens, and let them judge for themselves the type of progress and accomplishments we were able to make. Yes, we did well on some, and we need to continue to do more work on others. We are now putting in place another action plan based on the results of the 2002 conference.

### Supply

That is why I approached all parties in the House over the last couple of weeks and said to them that we have heard what rural Canadians had to say to us at the Charlottetown conference. They have many issues and concerns. I suggested to all the parties that we have a take note debate. It was scheduled to happen on Wednesday. All parties would have an opportunity to talk, and not just about partisan politics. The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake said to me, with some validity and justification, that his party did not want to do something if it was just an opportunity to praise the government.

We wanted an opportunity to talk about and listen specifically to what rural Canadians said, and the types of responses we need to take as a government. Those are the kinds of things we need to do. As parliamentarians we need to listen to what rural Canadians have told us. We need to work on the priorities that they establish far more so than the priorities that we ourselves may be establishing here.

• (1225)

I profoundly disagree with what the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville has put forward in the motion. However I do respect him because I believe that in his heart, as in the heart of all members in the House, is the genuine desire to help rural Canadians, rural communities and the people who are dependent on rural Canada.

Yes, partisan debate is part of what we do here, but we need to reach beyond reach beyond just simply saying what does not work and start talking about what does work. Canadians want to see that. Viewers watching this debate throughout the day expect the opposition members to lob the government and for the government to lob opposition members right back. If that is the nature of this debate today, it will be a disappointment, not just for Canadians watching but a disappointment for me as well. I want to see us talk about solutions and the things we ought to do make things better in rural Canada. Those members can criticize the government because that is part of their role, but let us talk about things that will work.

The issue of rural development is too important to simply be a partisan exercise in the House. All of us who live in rural Canada, who have brought up our families there and who represent constituents of rural communities, know how special a place that is. It is important in our hearts. It is a place with unique values and special traditions. Rural Canada is an important part of this country. The wealth that is rural Canada is absolutely essential, not just for the success of rural Canadians but for the success of all Canadians and for the success of this nation. That is what rural Canada is all about.

I am determined to work to ensure that rural Canada thrives as we move into the future. I am determined to work toward ensuring that we build a rural Canada, not using the tools of the 19th or 20 century but using the tools of the 21st century that will build a rural Canada that embraces the world, not a rural Canada that hides from it. I am committed to those things as are all members on this side of the House. I challenge members on the other side to commit with us to building a better rural Canada, and in so doing, building a better and a stronger Canada as a whole.

• (1230)

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, as we see the number of failing small towns across Canada from the east coast to the west coast and the problems

up in Nunavut, there obviously are not too many solutions coming from the government. I did not hear too many today.

The minister wants us to give some positive solutions. We could deal with the big tuberculosis issue with the elk in Riding Mountain National Park. If we fixed that problem, it would save a Canadian industry worth billions of dollars.

People working in rural Manitoba for \$15,000 or \$20,000 pay as much as \$1,200 to \$2,000 worth of taxes every year. Why are they being taxed? We could help them.

The Canadian Wheat Board is forcing farmers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta into a monopoly and giving them no opportunity to sell outside of that monopoly which would increase their incomes.

The northwest terminal feedlot project is not going ahead because of the government. American feeder cattle would have been allowed to come into Canada thus creating jobs and economic opportunity. That is something the Canadian Alliance would put forward.

We would fix the PMRA so Canada would have pesticides that are safer and better for the environment instead of the old ones we presently use.

The Canadian Alliance would take the \$700 million that has gone into gun control and use it to build infrastructures that would create the climate whereby rural Canadians would be able to start businesses knowing they could actually move products off to market.

The Canadian Alliance put forward a motion in the House of Commons for \$400 million to be put into farm programs. The member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington and the member for Dufferin—Peel—Wellington—Grey voted against it. They voted against that kind of positive initiative put forward by the Canadian Alliance.

Could the member tell us why there is still insufficient funding for 4-H of Canada? Why did the first grant on rural development go to his own riding and what was that for?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell:** Madam Speaker, I certainly do not remember the first grant for rural development going to my riding. What the hon. member may be referring to is the CARCI program which is a \$9.3 million national program. It assists groups and organizations in rural parts of the country in a number of endeavours, particularly those communities that are having challenges in the agricultural industry, and gives them an opportunity to reach out.

The member talked about some of the ways of reaching out to try to diversify their economies, to build beyond just the producing side and to get into the value added side. I know from seeing the approvals that there have been dozens of them in ridings of Alliance members as well as in other ridings. That is not the issue. We do not dole it out according to who happens to hold the riding. We dole out according to the need that may be in a particular riding.

*Supply*

The hon. member talked about business start-ups. I wonder if the hon. member is aware that 60% of new small business start-ups occur in rural areas. There is a misconception that rural Canadians are not entrepreneurial in their approach. The exact opposite is true and the figures show very clearly that is the case.

I know the hon. member is committed to the needs of his riding and committed to the agricultural industry in the country, as are the members on this side of the House. Unless I am mistaken, today there is a federal-provincial meeting among all 10 provinces and the federal minister. They will be working on the issue of agriculture. They signed an agreement almost a year ago in Whitehorse, Yukon.

They are working toward restructuring the way we do agricultural business in the country and that is what we need to do. We need to not simply say that what has happened in the past is good enough and that it is simply working the way that we want it to. We need to bring together the provinces and producers and that is what we are doing.

There is a very extensive consultation process taking place right now bringing producers from across the country together to talk about finding the ways to move forward in the 21st century when it comes to agriculture. Those are the kinds of things we are doing as a government. Quite frankly, from my perspective, there are things that I do not think we should do just simply as a government. There are things that we ought to do as parliamentarians.

Many members who sit on the opposition benches come from the western Canada and they have a valuable contribution to make. They have a valuable perspective to put forward. When it comes to rural development and sustainability, we need to work collectively as parliamentarians to ensure the well-being of rural Canada and rural Canadians is foremost in our minds and foremost in the actions that we suggest and undertake.

• (1235)

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, the secretary of state suggests that we should not be partisan in these issues dealing with rural items. I found it interesting that he had a project in my riding in the last couple of months. I am sure it was by mistake but the local MP certainly was not invited to that event. The only way I found out about it was because I subscribe to my weekly newspapers. As I looked through the list of participants, I noticed a couple of the only identifiable Liberals left in our provinces were major presenters.

I also found afterward, and again I had to go to the newspapers to see what had happened, as I read the information about the conference that a lot of the solutions very much involved more government in the lives of people instead of less. I am surprised that the government does not go to committee leaders within the constituency and find the successful businessmen. The secretary of state said that 60% of new businesses start up in the rural areas and I have several of them in my riding. They were not the conference or invited to make presentations.

Does the secretary of state not have the resources to find those people? Is he not familiar with them or has he a set agenda that only includes people who come with the solutions that he wants to hear, which usually involve more government and very rarely private initiative?

**Hon. Andy Mitchell:** Madam Speaker, if the hon. member had come to the national rural conference, he would have seen that not everybody was there to compliment either me or the government. There was criticism of the government. That is part of the process of bringing people together. It is part of what we need to do and engender.

I should mention that I asked the advice of my colleagues in the House about who should come to Charlottetown. I did not simply do that in isolation.

On the program the hon. member was talking about, I normally send letters to hon. members letting them know that there has been an approval in their ridings. If that did not go to him, I apologize for that. I will look into it and will try to endeavour to ensure that it does not happen in the future. If the member checks with some of his colleagues who have been involved, they have received letters. However we will ensure that it is done in the member's case.

As the secretary of state, I do expect there to be partisan issues revolving around rural Canada. That is why we are here. We have different perspectives and we debate them. Beyond that and beyond the partisan politics, we have to do more than just say that this is not good or that is not good. We have to turn our conversation around to what will work, what do we need to change and what types of new ideas and approaches do we need to take. We need to go beyond simply the partisan political side of things.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Madam Speaker, in answer to the secretary of state's rhetorical question, what has to change obviously is the Government of Canada. When he speaks about partisanship, we have not seen a more partisan, poisoned, duplicitous government in the last century. This member should know that.

He talks about rural Canada in his condescending way and how somehow his government is speaking to rural issues. He heads up this committee and good for him. It is about time after a decade that the government turned its mind to Atlantic Canada, to other parts of the west, to Quebec and to the provinces that are really struggling because of his government's policies.

He wants solutions and wants to talk about what he could do. He could do away with some of the clawback provisions that are hurting provinces like Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador as they try to develop their offshore oil and gas. He could do a great deal to put money back into infrastructure such as roads and bridges. He could take initiatives aimed specifically at helping students in rural Canada so they can stay and work and live in their communities.

The member talks about his government somehow being a protector of Atlantic Canada or rural Canada with policies like gun registry that suck \$700 million out of the pockets of people, specifically impacting on rural Canada. What specifically has the government done for rural Canada except another study? What a waste of time.

*Supply*

•(1240)

**Hon. Andy Mitchell:** It is hardly studies, Madam Speaker. There has been \$2 billion for strategic infrastructure; \$2 billion in terms of provincial-federal infrastructure programs; \$90 million for the community futures program; and several hundreds of millions of dollars into Service Canada. Also money has been put into connecting and giving public Internet access to all of Canada.

These are tangible real things that are to the benefit of rural Canadians. They work for rural Canadians. I know the hon. member is a passionate advocate of both Atlantic Canada and rural Canada. I look forward to working with him and not simply on committees and studies.

The government, unlike the previous Tory government, has appointed a particular individual in the ministry responsible for rural Canada. That is important. We have had some real programs that have been put forward and I enunciated them. I look forward to working with the hon. member to move the agenda of rural Canada forward into the future.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to address today's motion presented by the Canadian Alliance.

This motion reads:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should cease and desist its sustained legislative and political attacks on the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians and the communities where they live.

Instead of using the term “attacks”, I would rather talk about a “lack of policies” on the part of the Canadian government. My definition of rural areas is much different from the one being discussed today. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will have to make up his mind and decide how to manage the agricultural sector and how to harmonize rural areas with the decisions that will be made regarding agriculture.

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is slow to release Canada's broad policy thrusts in the context of globalization. Meanwhile, the Americans are drafting their U.S. farm bill.

We also do not know what will be the place of the rural world, which is confronted daily with massive industrialization in the agricultural sector. This government likes to consult. I have been a member of parliament for almost five years now and whenever I hear the Liberal government, it talks about consulting. I just took part in one of these consultations across Canada regarding the mood of farmers. I can say that few people are pleased with the Canadian agricultural policy.

I also took part in two conferences on rural development. At the first conference, we talked about the importance for people to have access to the Internet. We talked about the Internet at a time when, in my riding and in several other ones in Canada, it is still possible to see five customers sharing the same telephone line. Just imagine: they wanted to hook them up to the Internet.

At the second conference, they talked about networking. They said “We have to talk to each other, we have to communicate”. From

what I can see on the other side, they have a great deal of difficulty communicating between departments.

The federal government's famous tour, three years ago, resulted in the income support program. They used a very positive expression, namely the “Disaster Program”. This is the positive work done by the government when farmers are confronted with economic problems.

The Canadian government asked the standing committee to do another cross-Canada tour. By far the majority of agricultural stakeholders came to tell us that Canadian agriculture was in an impasse, if not a total crisis. Generations of them had devoted their lives to building a rural environment that was a pleasant place to live. Now, with agriculture becoming increasingly industrialized, the efforts they have expended are disappearing.

Everywhere in Canada, we heard one stakeholder after another speak of their concerns. This past weekend, the president of the UPA, Laurent Pellerin, used some clear language in *La Terre de chez nous* “Either we move ahead or we repeat history”. I will use an even more Quebecois expression, not advancing, not repeating ourselves, but “stuck like a broken record”. That means nothing is being done.

I share the concerns of the Quebec agricultural sector when the federal government, in yet another strategy document, does not directly address questions of supply and demand and collective marketing. The first step is to really determine what this government's orientation is as far as agriculture is concerned. Then we can start negotiations, so that we can find out how to manage our rural areas.

This government is trying to draft Canada-wide national standards in order to bind the entire agricultural sector with some great principles which will not meet provincial and regional aspirations. The agricultural sector throughout Canada is demanding more flexibility than that, in Quebec in particular.

•(1245)

There have been four rounds of consultations and two conferences on the rural problem, and there is still no sign of an agricultural policy. *The Hill Times* recently reported the minister of agriculture as saying that he was still prepared to consider other studies before releasing his policy.

What is the minister waiting for? While the government is consulting right and left, the Americans have almost finished drafting a national agricultural policy which will further add to market distortions. Once again, the Americans are getting ready to inject several billions of dollars in subsidies.

Again last week, members of the standing committee on agriculture put this question to four of the minister of agriculture's top officials, who are supposedly experts on strategy. They said they knew nothing about this upcoming American legislation, which will have a negative impact on all aspects of the agricultural market.

While we are getting nowhere, the Americans are drafting their next piece of legislation, the famous farm bill, which will increase financial assistance to farmers by close to \$5 billion annually over six years.



Many countries are outraged at this increase, which is inconsistent with the U.S. support for the principle of reducing subsidies expressed at the last meeting of the World Trade Organization in November.

Nor does this bill have unanimous approval within the United States. Americans producing items which are not massively subsidized and those calling for a more equitable share of government support feel that this legislation is a disgraceful waste, which may well further depopulate American farm land. People are critical of the bill because they say it will make the rich richer, cause prices to drop, and eliminate even more small farmers. This looks a lot like what the Canadian government has been doing in recent years.

In Canada, the proposed U.S. legislation has caused a number of people to sit up and take note, including Saskatchewan's minister of agriculture who was critical of the farm bill for the negative impact it may have on Canadian farming. Provincial ministers are opposed to the bill. *La Terre de chez nous* still has much to say about it, as do the main farming associations, but the minister keeps saying that he knows nothing.

Yet this bill runs counter to the WTO rules on subsidies. It will mean that our farmers will no longer be able to compete on the market. The Americans have still not even complied with the GATT agreements, and now they are compounding this by announcing major subsidies for the near future. They are going to continue to target Quebec's agricultural policy.

Let us talk about this government's consultations. There is a more partisan group, the Liberal Party task force, set up by the Prime Minister to find out what was really happening in the world of agriculture. There are processes, parliamentary committees, and every one of us in our ridings is listening to farmers, and the Prime Minister created another committee to find out farmer's real needs. What a revelation.

This group recommended that the government invest more in agriculture to counteract the negative impact of inclement weather, the markets and income fluctuations. This sounds a lot like all of the demands that I have heard.

Again, we absolutely must settle Canada's agricultural policy first, before trying to deal with rural development, because whatever the government decides, in terms of types of agriculture it will support, will determine the future, or lack thereof, of rural areas.

• (1250)

I would like to broach another subject that was raised during the cross-country tour, that is labelling of GMOs. This worries people in rural areas. In the past, people pinned their hopes on organic farming. They made a great effort to get accredited. When another farmer uses genetically modified seeds or other genetically modified products, they can end up watching their crops being destroyed.

During this trip, I met an organic seed producer who told me that because of the carelessness of another farmer who had used genetically modified seeds, he lost \$37,000. He lost it because there was no legislation for obligatory labelling of GMOs, whether it be seeds or products for consumption. But consumers should have a right to know what they are eating.

### *Supply*

This, despite the fact that there have been two attempts in the House to solve this problem. The last time was in October 2001, when Bill C-287 was voted down. Yet it was a bill that was sponsored by a Liberal member. Fifteen Liberals from Quebec voted against this legislation, yet all of the consumers associations and rural populations were calling for it.

The true debate on the future of the rural sector ought to address protection of water and the environment, the emergence of agrotourism, and seeking to strike a balance among the various agricultural concerns. We know that, with the protection of farm activities and the advent of the right of production, agriculture is assuming a vital role in our rural areas. The countryside must not become exclusive to agriculture. It must also protect our irreplaceable collective heritage such as our lakes and woods. The debate that should take place on rural development must also address this aspect.

I would like to come back to the tour in order to show how I was approached about our the future of our rural areas. A number of groups and organizations came to express their grave concerns on the growth of agribusiness and all its potential consequences for the environment. Our rural areas have been totally ruined by the burgeoning giant pig operations in all provinces, Quebec in particular. Land prices, on which there is heavy speculation by those involved in vertical integration, have increased so much that in the very near future it will become more and more difficult for dairy and beef farmers to buy any land at a reasonable price, if they want to expand. Not only that, but young farmers wanting to start up an operation will face major obstacles in the increased land and production costs.

The rural communities understand all of this. In fact, in the past 10 to 15 years, agriculture has taken a turn toward agribusiness. The various levels of government have focused their assistance on that sector, abandoning the small farm operations. The famous U.S. bill is being criticized. If it gets enacted, there will no longer be any room for small operations, in Quebec or in Ontario. I have heard the positions of the associations on this. I asked them directly, "If the various levels of government continue to favour agribusiness almost exclusively, what do you see happening to our rural areas in the future?"

Their unanimous opinion is, "Our countryside as we know it will disappear. There will be nothing but giant farm operations managed by big agribusinesses, often even U.S. ones, which will replace us and do things their way".

• (1255)

What many generations in Quebec, Ontario and the other provinces have built up will be lost. And this is where the focus needs to be when it comes to rural development.

The secretary of state is trying hard. He has even met with many well-intentioned stakeholders, especially in Charlottetown. However, his government is not giving him enough money to show the leadership needed to save rural areas.

### *Supply*

Rural areas are also affected by all the efforts which have been made to implement farm tourism. Those who use our charming bike trails will quickly abandon them if they come up against the increasing affront to the nose from industrial farming operations.

A recent ad campaign by Quebec's federation of hog producers used the line "Spring is in the air". When I was young, the air smelled good when you stepped outside. Now, if you put your nose out the door and the hog megaproducers have spread the liquid manure, the slogan "Spring is in the air" takes on quite a different meaning from the delightful one that would have occurred to me in the spring way back when.

The time has come to stop imitating the United States. I have spoken at length about the woes of the rural world. However, I have seen what is happening elsewhere. It is important for members of the House to get out and see what is being done elsewhere. It is as though we are obsessed with solely looking at what is happening in the United States.

Let me give the example of a country called Switzerland, where small producers practice farming to supply food, of course, but while protecting the environment at the same time. The environment must play a central role in the debate over rural development.

Nearly 80% of all Swiss farmers have switched to green practices, which were promoted in the early 1990s. In a referendum held in June 1996, 77% of the Swiss population supported a concept of agriculture that incorporated multiple functions to promote sustainable development. Canada is a long way from this reality.

In addition to the obligation to feed the population—close to two thirds of the food consumed in Switzerland is produced in the country—the agricultural sector has become a partner in implementing a sustainable development policy. Consequently, it works to ensure the protection of biological diversity by providing the necessary land for animal and vegetable species. This is a far cry from what we see in documentary footage on the treatment of animals here in our craze for mass production. Animals virtually never go outside, yet the land belongs to them.

There is also a connection between farming and tourism. Farms must be laid out in a decentralized manner, and must not spoil the landscape.

In closing, the Government of Canada must announce its policy direction regarding the agricultural model that it wants to pursue. More importantly, it must reflect on rural development as a whole and try to rationalize the industrial model with the family model and try to come up with policies that will meet the needs of our communities.

• (1300)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, as we know, the U.S. farm bill will be passed in the next few weeks. Interestingly enough, the Americans will be throwing another \$73 billion into their farm subsidization programs with about \$45 billion of that going directly to producers. They have also brought in other onerous provisions which we object to, in particular country of origin labelling on such products as beef.

I live just across the border from Montana. I have found it interesting, as I have watched over the last 10 or 15 years, to see that the massive amounts of money Montana spends on its farm programs does not seem to be restoring its rural areas. Many of the small towns in Montana are in far worse shape than the towns in western Canada. The city of Havre, which is the main trading area south of us, a city of between 10,000 and 15,000 people, has a very difficult time even keeping a mall open.

It is obvious that money is not the only answer to the problems facing rural areas. Does the member have any ideas about how we should go about passing the rural lifestyle, the agricultural land and the farms on to our children in order to preserve our rural lifestyle given that throwing more money at it does not seem to be the total answer?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Madam Speaker, I share the concerns of the hon. member from Saskatchewan. When it comes to markets, the U.S. government should begin by respecting the agreements it has signed, such as the recent GATT agreements. A reply has not even been provided yet to the negotiated demand.

The Americans often tell us that Canada is a privileged partner. I would like to know their definition of the term partner. We are concerned about everything along our border with the United States.

The Canadian government will have to react quickly. We know how the Americans operate. When they table their bill, it will be too late. Why are they slow in releasing it? It is because they are also preparing all the regulations that will go with it. We Canadians and Quebecers will have to try to find a way around all these regulations.

The situation of our agricultural sector and rural areas will continue to deteriorate if this government does not make the necessary efforts to assume true leadership to save our agriculture, which is currently in a state of crisis.

[*English*]

**Mr. David Anderson:** Madam Speaker, I would like to respond to the comments made by the member.

We see little or no response from the government on these trade issues, things like country of origin labelling and the introduction of pulses into the farm bill which were not there before.

I would like the member's opinion on whether we should be pursuing the issue directly at the NAFTA and WTO or, as the government has done with so many other issues, should we just wait until we have a major confrontation before we choose to do anything about the issue.

*Supply*

•(1305)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Madam Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food will have to send a message to the Minister for International Trade and indicate to him that agriculture is a priority. The government will have to show that agriculture is important to this country.

In April 1998, I attended a Cairns Group meeting. Guess who New Zealand's Minister for International Trade was? It was its Minister of Agriculture. This means that New Zealand realizes the importance of providing leadership for the agricultural sector.

Here, while the Minister for International Trade is trying to achieve certain consensus with the Americans, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food keeps consulting again and again. The time for consultation is over. It is now time to act and to draft a policy that will reassure our farmers.

[*English*]

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I want to say a few words on this very important debate before the House today about the vision we have for rural Canada and the lack thereof by the federal government.

I have been around the House for a while and have seen various government policies over the years and there has been a real lack of national vision regarding rural Canada and what will happen to the rural part of our country.

It is getting worse all the time. Recent evidence of that is the American farm bill which is in its last week of winding its way through the American government process and will give a subsidy of \$171 billion to American farmers. That will be absolutely devastating to the farmers of this country. That is \$171 billion over 10 years. They have already had a massive subsidy. The Canadian farmer now gets about 9¢ on the dollar from the federal government, while the American farmer has been receiving about 35¢ on the dollar from Washington. Of course when it gets to Europe it gets even worse. The European farmer receives about 55¢ on the dollar from Brussels.

On top of those things, we get the American farm bill, which is another \$171 billion. I do not know what the calculation of that will be but it will certainly be very devastating to the farmers of our country. It is a national farm bill. It applies to British Columbia right through to Newfoundland. Pulse crops will be included for the first time now.

I was on a plane on Friday with a Saskatchewan farmer who said that the American subsidy now for a bushel of peas was about \$5.95. It is just absolutely incredible in terms of having any of our producers even survive this kind of devastation that is hitting our country. Therefore I consider this a very important debate here in the House today.

When I look at the prairies and at my own province of Saskatchewan I worry about another problem, the problem of drought. The year 2001 was Saskatchewan's driest year in recorded history. It was dryer than the 1930s. I think the driest years in the 1930s were 1936, 1937 and maybe 1938. The devastation to rural

Saskatchewan, the rural prairies and rural Canada has been incredible. We had very little snow during the winter and very little rain this spring. When I fly over the prairies it is brown. A disaster is coming down the chute and obviously the minister across the way is aware of it.

We have drought and we have low international prices caused by massive subsidies in Europe and in the United States compounded now by the ever increasing subsidies by the Americans under the American farm bill. Those are recipes for an absolute disaster.

This is a human tragedy. One just has to look at the census results across the rural prairies. Even in the province of Alberta, which has tremendous revenues because of oil, gas and bigger cities like Edmonton and Calgary, many of the smaller towns and villages in the rural areas are disappearing. Since 1995 almost every single riding in Saskatchewan has suffered a population loss and that is before the American farm bill has even been passed.

It is a strange situation when we hear George W. Bush and the Americans talk about the importance of free trade and how they are champions of free trade and yet we have greater protectionism by the government of the United States than we have seen since the 1930s with the American farm bill, softwood lumber in British Columbia in particular and the subsidies now in the American steel industry. It goes on and on.

It is a very important economic issue for Canada that our federal government take a very strong stand with the Americans. This is not just an economic issue for the prairie farmers or the rural people in the small towns and villages, it is a national economic issue of great importance to our country. We must stand up and fight as hard as we can to make sure we protect the farmers of Canada.

•(1310)

The second thing that is very important is that farmers need help. The federal-provincial agriculture ministers from across Canada are meeting today and tomorrow at the Marriott Hotel in Ottawa. I am sure the federal minister will hear from all the provincial ministers about the need for help particularly on the prairies. The federal government has reduced price support programs since 1993. It has cut back on price support programs in accordance with the WTO.

**An hon. member:** The deputy premier is over there, so do not worry.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom:** Of course our deputy premier is over there right now.

The government has cut back on farm support programs since 1993. It has done that to a much greater degree than it had to.

Once again there is a huge surplus in the federal treasury. The finance minister tabled a budget a couple of months ago and talked about a surplus of \$1.5 billion. Now we hear from the Department of Finance that there is likely to be a surplus of between \$7 billion and \$10 billion. The money is there for a couple of billion dollars for an emergency farm program to help the farmers.

### *Supply*

I would like to see the Liberal members across the way get up on their feet and join the debate in a call for an emergency farm bill to help keep some of our farmers on the land. The Liberal Party has a rural task force which has been around the country. The agriculture committee has been around the country. They have been to Saskatchewan and right across Canada. I am sure they have seen firsthand the problems the farmers are having.

If farmers continue to go bankrupt it will hurt the country very badly. It is a very big economic issue. It is extremely important that the House unite and make this one of its priorities. There is nothing more important than the economic well-being of the country in terms of having a society that is happy and healthy. Now we see more and more people in the rural areas suffering from all kinds of problems. We see an increase in suicides. We see an increase in frustration. There is an increase in family violence, bankruptcies and the dislocation of family life in small towns and villages. Driving through the countryside, people can see the towns that were once thriving are thriving no more.

Where is the vision? We in this country have a surplus of \$7 billion to \$10 billion in fiscal 2001 and fiscal 2002 with a projection of a bigger surplus next year. Let us channel some of that surplus back to the farmers.

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** We just gave \$1 billion to Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom:** That is a wonderful idea across the way. I hope the member from rural Ontario gets up and makes that public in the House of Commons, that Saskatchewan needs \$1 billion.

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** That is what it got last year.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom:** What the federal government has taken out of Saskatchewan since 1993 is absolutely incredible.

There has been the abolition of the Crow rate and all the money has gone out of the province of Saskatchewan. The highways are being destroyed. The farmers are not moving their grain by rail. All across the prairies there are thin membrane paved highways. When big trucks are put on those thin membrane highways the highways are destroyed. Those highways have been destroyed by the big trucks as farmers truck grain into the towns instead of by rail. Now hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent to build thick membrane highways that can carry the big trucks.

That is what has happened in the 1990s. There has been a lack of vision by the government across the way. That is why there are very few rural members from western Canada sitting on the government side of the House. There are very few because of the total negligence by the government to rural Canadians that live in the western part of our country.

I am asking members today to vote with us. I am asking the Liberal members across the way to stand with us in asking for some real money for a real vision. Where is the vision the country is supposed to have, a national vision of building a stronger country and a stronger foundation?

If the farmers are better off, then we all will be better off. If the farmer spends the money, it will stimulate the economy in the towns

and the cities and there will be a job for every Canadian right across the country.

That is one of the problems in rural Canada. When we lose our rural infrastructure, we lose our rural hospitals and the rural health clinics. The post offices are pulling out. The small towns are losing their stores and shops. The whole thing is falling by the wayside because of the lack of leadership and the lack of vision.

I also turn to rural Canada when I think of softwood lumber. I think of many parts of my province.

● (1315)

People think of Saskatchewan as a flat prairie province but over half of its land area is full of trees. Softwood lumber is a very important industry to our province and to British Columbia, yet the American government has put a duty of some 27% on softwood lumber. It is the same American government that expects us to co-operate fully in the war on terrorism, to co-operate fully in Afghanistan and to support it all the way in the so-called northern command and to have a joint customs union. However the Liberals across the way are not even talking about a common currency because they do not want to upset Uncle Sam.

Why are we being boy scouts in these dealings with the Americans? The Americans would not be doing this to themselves, yet the Liberal government across the way seems to be afraid of its own shadow when it comes to speaking up about what is good for Canadians and Canada.

We need a farm support program. It is very ironic that today the Alliance Party is talking about additional aid for farmers. It is the same party that spoke against government support for farmers and farm support programs years ago. There are many quotes in the House where the Alliance opposed farm support programs. There are many cases in the House of Commons where the Alliance Party has talked about government being too big, having too many programs, too many grants, too many subsidies and too much money going out, and the Alliance has wanted to cut back on spending and on programs. We already have the smallest government spending in terms of GDP since 1949. That is what the Alliance Party is doing but it should go exactly the opposite way of what the Alliance is doing.

The Alliance once again today is calling for the weakening of the Canadian Wheat Board. We do not need a weaker Canadian Wheat Board. We need a strong Canadian Wheat Board, a single purchasing agent on behalf of all Canadians.

It is very strange. The Alliance Party talked about grassroots democracy, referenda and plebiscites. Every time there is a referendum or a plebiscite on supporting the Canadian Wheat Board, the farmers of our country and my province overwhelmingly want a Canadian Wheat Board that is strong and which is there on behalf of all farmers of the country. Every survey seen among the farmers of my province show that people want a very strong Canadian Wheat Board.

The Alliance Party wants to throw it open to the so-called open market, to the Cargills of the world and to the big multinational grain companies that are based in the United States. The Alliance pretends it is speaking up for the ordinary farmer of Saskatchewan. That is total rubbish. It is exactly the opposite direction to where we have to go.

It is about time we had a rural vision, a vision that would put money into the rural infrastructure, into the hands of the Canadian farmers, a vision that would have strong marketing boards for our products and a strong Canadian Wheat Board that would fight on behalf of the Canadian farmer. We need a Canadian government that will fight against the Americans' new national farm bill. We need a Canadian government that will take a strong stand in support of our softwood lumber producers.

A lot of things need to be done for rural Canada. I was in Newfoundland just a few days ago. There is a byelection going on in Gander. My friend from Pictou was in Newfoundland the day after I was there. We can see the rural devastation when it comes to the outports and small communities of Newfoundland. They have been devastated by a lack of vision by federal governments over the years. The fishery has been gutted, again because of a lack of vision and a lack of planning by governments over the years. It goes back well before 1993.

Year after year we in the House of Commons are ignoring the important issues that face rural Canada. I also think of the unemployed. In Canada there is a tendency to have more unemployed in rural areas than in the larger cities. I think of places like Bathurst and the Acadian peninsula in New Brunswick. There is a large number of unemployed people in that part of the world. Yet the government across the way is cutting back on employment insurance benefits and making it more difficult for legitimately unemployed people to qualify for benefits.

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** You are a few years behind on that one.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom:** No wonder the Liberal from rural Ontario is hanging his head in shame. The federal government has an accumulated surplus of some \$43 billion in the EI fund, yet the majority of people do not even qualify for employment insurance. That is the Liberal vision. No wonder people are becoming alienated with the political process.

**Ms. Libby Davies:** It is a nightmare, not a vision.

**Mr. Lorne Nystrom:** As my friend from Vancouver East has said, it is a nightmare that ordinary people are facing.

• (1320)

Let us get our priorities straight. The country needs a vision by a strong federal government, a national vision that includes all Canadians, including rural Canadians. We need a strong federal government that will take on the Americans in terms of their trade policy. We need a strong national government with a national farm support program to make sure that farmers get back their costs of production as a minimum plus a decent income on which to live. That is the kind of vision we need.

We need a federal government that is committed to use some of the national surplus to help the farmers and rural people. Yet the

### *Supply*

federal government was so spooked before the last election campaign by the Alliance and by the brand new leader of the Alliance Party that it made a commitment to the biggest tax cut in the history of our country, some \$100 billion over five years, at the cost of cutbacks to the farmers, at the cost of cutbacks to our national health care system, and at the cost of cutbacks to transfers to the provinces for public education.

Where is the Liberal Party of old? Where is the Liberal Party of Lester Pearson and Pierre Trudeau? Where has that party gone? Sitting across the way is the most conservative government in the last 40 years.

As I said before, program spending now by the government is the lowest it has been since 1949, when comparing program spending to the GDP. That is not the Liberal Party of old which would pick up ideas from the CCF and the NDP, such as national medicare, social programs, a mixed economy, the CBC, the Canadian Wheat Board. Where is that old Liberal Party? The old Liberal Party is gone.

Hopefully some Liberals will get up in the House of Commons today and give us a national vision of where we should be going. If we do not do that we will lose rural Canada and the farmers.

I see another friend of mine across the way from New Brunswick. I hope he also gets up in the House. He represents a rural riding and talks about the devastation of the economy in rural New Brunswick and what has happened there since the Liberal Party has come to power.

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, my friend from Regina—Qu'Appelle talked about vision. Perhaps it is because he is getting a little older but his vision seems to be going.

We can talk a little about our party. He knows better than to insult us because he knows full well that we have very strong support in western Canada and for good reason. When we talk about rural Saskatchewan dying, one of the main reasons there are problems in rural Saskatchewan has been his government and the philosophy of the NDP in Saskatchewan.

In the 1930s Saskatchewan was the third most populous province in Canada. Unfortunately that population has been stable for almost seven decades, coinciding with the NDP being fairly strong in our province. We have seen great prosperity across the border. Many of us have had to watch that with dismay. Hopefully we can change that over the next few years. Alberta and Saskatchewan have had similar resources. At one time we had similar populations but we have not been able to experience that same prosperity.

My friend mentioned the Canadian Wheat Board. I was amazed that he would insist we stick with the same antiquated system we have had for decades now. We need prosperity in rural areas. Perhaps one of the reasons he said what he said is that he has a mainly urban riding and does not understand what is going on in rural Saskatchewan.

### *Supply*

Within our smaller communities we need value added. We need processing. One of the ways we can do that is to take the product we grow the most and do the best job at it, which is to take wheat and begin to process it. Interestingly enough the pulse industry has grown exponentially in our province partially because it has not had government interference in its development. It has grown 3,000% in the last 10 years.

We need the same thing in our wheat industry. Unfortunately because of the restrictions on western Canadian farmers, we have watched the wheat acreage actually go down in western Canada. Not only is the wheat board a hindrance to farmers but it is actually working against itself by keeping these restrictions on people.

I assume the member supports the provincial NDPs in Saskatchewan. Could he tell us a little about what they have done to counter the aggressive federal Liberal government that has worked to destroy so much of our rural culture in the last 10 years?

● (1325)

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Madam Speaker, the NDP in Saskatchewan has done an awful lot. Otherwise it would not get re-elected. I am sure the member across the way will respect the wisdom of the voters of Saskatchewan. The NDP has been in government there for most of the time since 1944 and we have had to fight this very far right wing tendency in our province over the years. We have usually been victorious in fighting that tendency.

Here again we have a far right wing party that wants to cut back on all kinds of government support. It is against any kind of subsidy or support coming from the federal government. It is against the Canadian Wheat Board, or at least the member across the way made it very clear that he wants to get rid of the Canadian Wheat Board. He wants the wheat board off the backs of Saskatchewan farmers. I can tell him that about 80% or 90% of Saskatchewan farmers would disagree very strongly with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands. The Canadian Wheat Board is an institution that has been supported very strongly by Saskatchewan farmers over the years. The member knows that. His party is supposed to be a democratic party, a party based on the grassroots and input from ordinary citizens, yet it does not listen to the ordinary people.

The farmers want the wheat board. The farmers have supported the wheat board. My riding, which is half rural, is extremely supportive of the Canadian Wheat Board, supportive by adding more crops under the Canadian Wheat Board. That is the position of most of the producers in the province of Saskatchewan.

It is parties like his that say there should be smaller government, fewer government programs, fewer government supports and fewer government subsidies. Now of course this is happening in terms of the federal government. That party is getting its wish because part of its agenda is being implemented and it is devastating rural Saskatchewan and devastating rural Canada.

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle for his very powerful comments about what really is a sense of betrayal on the part of people who live in rural Canada about what has happened in terms of the demise of federal programs. The irony is that it is not as though the government has somehow shifted all of its supports and

resources into urban Canada, because the same picture emerges there.

I also was glad that the member referred to the situation with EI because I know that in small rural communities people are particularly hard hit by changes to EI. One of the most shocking revelations in research done by the Canadian Labour Congress is that two-thirds of the EI surplus, the \$40 billion the member spoke about, actually came from people who made less than \$20,000 a year. We are talking about part time workers.

In reference to the softwood lumber fiasco and how that will hit rural communities, I would ask the hon. member if he could comment further on what we need to do to provide support and assistance to the workers and those small rural communities that are hit, for sure in British Columbia where I am from, but also across the country.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Madam Speaker, softwood lumber is a very important issue for the whole country and particularly for rural Canada. There are all kinds of small communities being hit very hard with layoffs in the softwood lumber industry. Again the government has not been very aggressive with the United States in terms of fighting the duties that the Americans are imposing. We should look at a national government program to help the workers who are laid off and to help some of the small companies that are laying off people.

There should be changes to the unemployment insurance plan whereby more people would be eligible to qualify for EI benefits. We should make sure that the qualification period is easier to obtain, that there is a longer qualification period. There was a time when a majority of workers qualified for EI. Now a lot of them do not. These are the changes that have to be made. The EI fund now has a surplus of approximately \$43 billion. The member for Vancouver East has pointed out that a lot of the money going into EI comes from low income people. These are the very same people who do not qualify for unemployment insurance assistance.

What we need is a program to protect the workers, to make sure that if they cannot keep their jobs in the softwood lumber industry they get the training and skills needed to find employment elsewhere. There is a whole package in terms of education and training that we need to be pursuing in this country.

● (1330)

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I have two short questions.

First, do the member and his party oppose the current Bill C-15B before the House, the cruelty to animals legislation amendments to the criminal code? They are negative not only toward farmers but toward rural Canada. This is a big issue in rural Canada. It would also hurt Canadians in small towns and cities, because if that bill is passed we will end up with fewer jobs as the livestock industry deteriorates.

Second, in regard to the PMRA, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the member's health critic would like to have virtually every pesticide removed from the shelves and from Canadian farmers. Does he support that?

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Madam Speaker, the member is talking about the cruelty to animals act, Bill C-15B. We have said that there should be adequate compensation for any farmer who will be disadvantaged economically in terms of implementation of the bill. I think there is a fair consensus in the House of Commons that there should be some amendments to that effect.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, in reply to my colleague from Cypress—Grasslands the hon. member made a statement earlier in regard to the percentage of farmers who want the freedom to market on their own the products that they work so hard to grow, exclusive of the dictatorial powers that the Canadian Wheat Board has placed on our farmers. The member from Saskatchewan said he did not know what survey my colleague from Cypress—Grasslands was looking at but that 90% of the farmers want to continue to embrace the wheat board. In fact, a recent survey by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business disputes that number and shows that there is a full 80% of farmers who want a voluntary way to market their products, either by themselves or through some sort of wheat board. Also what is interesting is that an internal survey done by the Canadian Wheat Board itself clearly showed that 66% to 70% of the farmers want the freedom to market the products themselves, exclusive of the wheat board.

That flies in the face of that 90% “rally round and hug the wheat board” number that the member from Saskatchewan just put forward in the House. It is wrong.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Madam Speaker, what I said was that 80% or 90% of the farmers in Saskatchewan support the wheat board. That is an historical fact. Every time we have had a vote there has been overwhelming support for the Canadian Wheat Board. If the hon. member wants to come out to my riding and knock on the doors of farmers he will find that 80% or 90% of the farmers support the Canadian Wheat Board, a strong single desk marketing system, which will stay if we listen to the farmers of the country.

I know Alliance members do not believe in that. They want great big companies that take over everything. They want to sell out our country and they do not want any farm support programs, but that is not the vision that Canadian people are buying. That is why their party is going down in poll after poll.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Madam Speaker, I am very pleased and honoured to have an opportunity to speak to this supply day motion, this debate that has been brought forward by the Alliance. I think it is very timely. Coming from the rural riding of Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, I am very pleased to say that I empathize greatly with the sense of frustration that many people are feeling in the rural parts of Canada.

I come from a riding where a great number of people still make their living in the fishery and they still make their living by getting up early every day and going to work in fields and in forests. These very same people in the riding I represent and in ridings across the country are feeling a sense of abandonment, in many cases a sense of

### *Supply*

hopelessness in pursuing their way of life in rural Canada, because of policies that the government has introduced and pursued.

The motion itself speaks of calling on the government to “cease and desist its sustained...political attacks on the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians”. I would disagree with the motion only insofar as I do not think that this attack is intentional. I think it is a byproduct of rural Canada being ignored. I do not think it registers on the political radar screen of the government, for simple, terrible political reasons.

The concentration of the population of the country is increasingly being found in the urban centres. The last demographic surveys from Statistics Canada indicated that Canadians are headed in droves to big cities: Toronto, Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver. That is fine. That is the freedom of mobility. Yet they are being forced to do so because of lack of employment, lack of opportunities and lack of attention from the federal government.

The Liberals have been in office for almost 10 years. They have been in power for almost a decade to the detriment of rural Canada. I want to acknowledge that the parliamentary secretary comes from an rural area himself and has very clearly demonstrated a concern about this issue. I commend him for that. I commend him for taking the issue and trying to bring it forward, yet I cannot help but be disappointed with some of the political rhetoric that already we have heard in this debate. We will hear more of it. We will hear it from all sides. It will not help to address the fundamental problems and the challenges that rural Canadians are continually faced with.

The Progressive Conservative Party has consistently spoken out for rural Canada in this parliament and in previous parliaments. We have brought in policies that were aimed at infrastructure and aimed at helping rural Canadians. The Confederation Bridge to Prince Edward Island is a perfect example. It was aimed at helping transport goods to market. We helped bring in policies and took initiatives to get shipbuilding projects, like the frigates in Saint John. We helped bring in policies that allowed parts of rural Canada to access undersea resources the same way that underground resources are accessed in the west.

The hon. members opposite do not like to acknowledge that. They do not let truth get in the way when we are talking about issues such as this, but the record is there. It speaks for itself.

I want to take some time to talk about some of the specific issues that are challenging young people, people from families that have lived in rural Canada for generations. In the three counties I represent, Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough, there are severe problems facing industries like the fisheries: Little Dover, Ecum Secum, River John and Merigomish, places where for centuries people have lived and worked and existed by virtue of relying on natural resources. It is not just fisheries. Clearly forestry and farming complete that three pronged pillar that has kept the country growing.

### *Supply*

Let us not forget that the country was built out of rural Canada. The origins of the country completely sprung up from rural Canada and the hard work, sweat and strain of people, our ancestors, who recognized that they had to be productive, they had to be innovative and they had to work hard to build the country. They are still there. The ancestors of those original settlers are still very much engaged in that exercise. It is that passion, that difference in culture, I would suggest, that is sometimes what is challenging for the government. It has lost touch with that pioneering, frontiering attitude that exists in the rural parts of Canada.

● (1335)

We have to ask ourselves some basic questions when examining the government's performance. The questions are simple: Is our health care system getting better? Do we feel we are making more money now and keeping more of it? Do we feel the country is being more productive?

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** More people are working.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** The hon. member says that more people are working. Yes, more people are working because of free trade, a policy which the Liberals adamantly campaigned against. Members may remember the duplicitous flip-flop of the Prime Minister. He was going to rip it up along with the GST, another monumental olympian backflip done by the Prime Minister.

That is why Canadians feel that the government itself is corrupt and that it is deceiving people. Canadians are completely disgusted with the performance of the government and the Prime Minister. I would say that the percentage of Canadians who feel that way is even higher in rural Canada. If we were to look at the numbers representing how people in rural Canada view the government and its level of corruption, those numbers would be up at 80% to 90%. Canadians, rural and urban, are doing well in spite of the government, not because of it.

I will now turn my attention to an issue that has plagued a region within Nova Scotia for some time and that region is the town of Canso in Guysborough county. What is taking place in that historic little town is indicative of what has gone on, particularly in provinces like Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island to some extent. The scenario playing out there is simply tragic. It is a perfect example of what happens when a government bails out and completely backs away from its responsibility to help people living in rural regions of Canada. It is happening in Burgeo, in Trepassey and in all kinds of communities.

The same argument could be made for what has happened to farmers and what is currently playing out in British Columbia with respect to the forestry issue. The government is simply walking away. It is simply saying that it is not its problem. It has failed in terms of its negotiations with the Americans on the softwood lumber deal in the same way that talks broke down with respect to the potato import issue in Prince Edward Island.

There was a time when the Prime Minister of Canada may have taken a personal initiative by calling the president of the United States to deal with an issue in an upfront, straightforward way. This Prime Minister used to berate the previous Conservative government by saying it was going fishing but now golf is the flavour of the day.

We know how much President Clinton and the Prime Minister used to hit the links. We know the Prime Minister himself used to own a golf course so he has a specific interest in that area of real estate.

What is more important is that we address these particular challenges. We can go into a number of areas and a myriad of solutions could be found but it must happen soon, particularly in places where the infrastructure is struggling and crumbling. I am speaking of roads in rural parts of the country, the very lifeline that allows farmers, fishermen and forestry workers to get their products to market. How on earth can a farmer get his beef to a market if the roads do not allow passage? How can we get an oil and gas industry going on the east coast if it involves taking heavy equipment over bridges that do not have the capacity to hold that equipment?

We know the government abandoned the ports and the ports police. It pulled out all the supports for the upkeep, maintenance and safety of ports. That has been completely eviscerated by the government through the policies it has put in place.

I want to turn back to the town of Canso for a moment. A plant in Canso, which is currently closed, employed over half of the entire population of the village. People are now looking to the government, not only for access to resources but for assistance to ensure they will be able to live and prosper in what was once a very prosperous village.

The government can talk about these issues. It can talk about travelling, about hearing from people and about displaying all sorts of compassion but it needs to display some initiative. It needs to show that it is prepared to do something, not just come up with another study that quotes statistics on how bad it really is.

● (1340)

We need initiatives that will allow people to keep more of their money. We need initiatives that will allow students to handle their debt. We need the government to take some initiative and cancel programs that are not working, one being the gun registry which is a huge waste of money.

Time and again we hear the talk, the rhetoric and the political promises and yet the true record will show that those promises have been broken time and again, and all Canadians see it.

● (1345)

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough is being far too generous to the government. He mentioned earlier that he thought the problems arising in rural Canada were because the government ignored rural Canada, not that it was an intentional thing it was doing.

I want to run through a list of the problems we have in rural Canada. He talked a little about fisheries policies and how destructive they had been in his part of the country. We now have softwood lumber problems at the other end of the country in rural areas.



*Supply*

After all this time we still do not have a cost on Kyoto. This morning we heard that it would be somewhere between \$5 billion to \$12 billion a year. The government cannot decide which study or which number it should use as it tries to convince Canadians that Kyoto is a good idea.

We are all familiar with the gun law, Bill C-68, which was aimed directly at rural Canadians and drew a target on their backs.

We had a lot of hubbub last week over Bill C-5, the species at risk bill, and the fact that it contains no provisions for compensation. We just have another tired commitment that regulations may be made at some point. It has been very frustrating to hear some of the Liberal rural members try to take credit for making changes in the bill and then to hear them later laughing about the stunt they pulled on the farmers and on the media. That is really reprehensible.

We also have other things. Bill C-15B, the animal cruelty legislation, is also geared toward rural Canadians. Bill C-53, the pest control act, also deals with rural issues. Maybe we could use the pest control act to get rid of the DFO people who have invaded the prairies. These people have come in and said that they will not allow municipalities to put in new culverts unless they get permits from DFO.

Could it be that the government is so incompetent that it is actually doing these things to rural Canada by accident?

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Madam Speaker, my colleague's question as to whether this is a deliberate policy direction that the government has taken or whether this is sheerly by neglect is one that bears examining. I would argue that in many cases it comes down to a political direction that the government has taken, although it may be a combination of both.

The government has targeted putting in infrastructure, putting in the effort and putting in the political goodwill that it feels it has to invest in order to get re-elected.

The Liberal government reminds me a little bit of Elizabethans and sex. It claims to loathe it and protest against it but it secretly lusts for it and cannot live without it. The Liberals have made this a political issue. Instead of targeting rural Canada and saying that they need to put in the time, effort, money and infrastructure and come up with long term plans to help Canadians live and exist in communities like the hon. members and my own, they have targeted cities. They have targeted building up the areas of the country where they already hold the political power and the political base.

The Liberal vision that the hon. parliamentary secretary spoke about was the Liberal vision not the Canadian vision. Canadians are not looking to this government for inspiration or direction.

Another issue, which has not been touched on yet, is rural health care. Rural health care is a huge problem for Canadians. It impacts in a very direct and real way on the ability of Canadians to access quality health care. Do members know that 99.8% of Canada's 10 million square kilometres are rural by area and yet 31.4% of the population or roughly 9 million people live in predominantly rural areas? Towns under 10,000 account for 22% of the population and yet they are only served by 10% of the physicians. Canada's larger rural and regional centres of 10,000 to 100,000 constitute 15.9% of the population and have only 11% of the physicians.

Recruitment, retention of physicians, the ability for people living in rural Canada to access the most rudimentary medical services is waning and is in real jeopardy. In places like Canso and Guysborough they do not have the ability to get proper medical care. If it is more complicated, such as needing surgery or X-rays, they are forced to travel extensive distances. Thank goodness for the able paramedics who act as stopgaps for the fact that we are seeing many services in terms of medical procedures being done only in the urban centres. That is a huge problem for rural Canada.

I touched on the firearms registry and my colleague from Yorkton—Melville spoke at length about this issue. We talk about the priority of Canadians, particularly around policing in rural Canada, which is another big challenge because of the size of regions they have to patrol and the ability to get around to all the corners of large rural areas. Let us consider the billions of dollars being wasted by the government, with the firearms registry perhaps being the most prime example. Others that come quickly to mind were the cancellation of contracts such as Pearson and helicopters where there was no return. It was money burned. It was like driving down the Trans-Canada Highway, rolling down the window and throwing hundreds of millions of dollars out the window. That is what happened, only in that instance rural Canadians may have been able to pick it up on the side of the road. In this case it was thrown into a furnace.

We saw what happened during the HRDC scandal and the way in which that money was being funnelled into the hands of good supportive Liberals. We see it in Prince Edward Island today where the president of the Liberal Party for the island is getting hundreds of contracts and millions of dollars because of his loyalty.

● (1350)

That type of patronage is absolutely offensive to many Canadians. That leads to the cynicism and apathy that we are seeing in politics. Canadians are staying away in droves, which is of great benefit to the party in power because the lower the voter turnout, the lower the numbers that come out. It is the loyal Liberals who come out and vote. They win ridings with 38%. The hon. member opposite knows. He is good at it. He spreads the money around in his riding.

Rural Canada is not a priority for the government. It has not been and will not be until the voice is heard, until there is a feeling that there will be a political cost for ignoring this part of the country, for ignoring regions such as the west and the farmers with severe problems either due to drought or flooding. Members will recall the Prime Minister's visit out west in 1997. He went there and threw a couple of sandbags around. Then he headed back to Ottawa, pulled the plug and called the election. That was opportunism.

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Politically motivated, corrupt and patronage is what Canadians are saying. The Prime Minister likes to brag because he has never had ministers resign. That is because he shuffles them off months later into obscurity or sends them off to a diplomatic post. Talk about corrupt. There was a good likelihood that there was going to be an RCMP investigation into the matter involving Alfonso Gagliano and all of a sudden he is representing Canada abroad in Denmark. What did the Danes do to deserve that?

That is the type of image Canadians are getting now of the government. That is the type of lasting impression and the legacy that the Prime Minister may be searching for so desperately as he reaches the end of his tenure and as the dogs around him start to close in. That is the image that Canada will have of the Prime Minister, particularly in rural parts of the country where people are suffering immensely, where students are burdened with a debt the size of a mortgage by the time they finish university or leave school to pursue a career. These are Canadians who are looking at the country and the government with a very jaded eye.

When we have these types of debates and talk about the challenges we must talk about how to be more productive. We must talk about sharing the wealth. We talk about getting money back into the hands of Canadians through incentives. We talk about getting companies to locate in rural parts of the country instead of always funneling them into the golden triangle here in Ontario. That is fine if we want to be a completely split rural-urban country.

It is ironic that we have two competing task forces, a rural task force and an urban task force. The parliamentary secretary talks about his vision for Canada and yet it has been divided up. The government has given the task forces little projects to go off and work on at separate times instead of having a national strategy or coming forward with real ideas that will allow Canadians to go back to work and be productive, to keep some of their hard earned money, to face the challenges in health care and education and to look at ways in which we can grow industries in rural Canada because the geographic challenges that used to exist are no longer there.

Technology allows Canadians to access health care via the Internet in certain instances. It allows them to participate from a rural location in the high tech industry. It allows rural Canada to benefit from greater use of natural resources like natural gas off the coast of Nova Scotia. It allows farmers to use greater technology in the implementation of their activities and access to markets. The government is an abysmal failure in terms of its response to the needs of rural Canada. It can talk all it likes and bring forward some miniscule examples but its record over time is the true test.

When Canadians ask themselves the basic, fundamental questions of whether their quality of life has improved, whether they see the Liberal government being responsible for helping them get ahead, for making sure their children have a brighter future and can live and grow, and continue to keep family and rural traditions in the country alive, do they look to the government with any sense of hope or optimism? Sadly not.

When the rhetorical question is asked from the opposite side: how will this change? There is only one way it will change and that is when the government is defeated and there is a government that is

sensitive, open to ideas and prepared to act on behalf of rural Canada.

• (1355)

**Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, listening to my friend from Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough talk about the corruption that is present within the Liberal government is no surprise to us because we have been talking about that for some time now. Finally the media is starting to see it and write about it.

This talk of corruption should be no stranger to the Conservative member because when his party was in power there was example after example of corruption within the Progressive Conservative Party. I do not know who is teaching who to be more corrupt, the Liberals or the Tories, but neither has an exclusive right to practise open corruption within the politics of our country.

It is fun to talk about corruption with the government. When the former Liberal minister, Alfonso Gagliano, was quickly shuffled off to a diplomatic post in Denmark, I wondered whether there was more than one reason. Can the member tell me whether a Canadian diplomat who has diplomatic immunity in the country that he or she is serving have diplomatic immunity of some sort in Canada? Is that why our Prime Minister shuffled Mr. Gagliano off to a diplomatic post, so that he could avoid an RCMP probe or maybe charges being brought forward in this country? Can the member enlighten me on that and perhaps the House as well?

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, the Quebec forestry company Tembec of Abitibi-Témiscamingue has initiated proceedings to recover \$200 million in damages from the U.S. government for the duties that have been imposed on Canadian softwood lumber by President George W. Bush.

Frank Dottori, CEO of Tembec, has stated that this measure “is tantamount no more and no less to expropriation of our market, in violation of the Free Trade Agreement, and we are therefore demanding compensation”. He went on to say, “We entered into a free trade agreement and we expect the United States to respect their international and national commitments. This they have not done”.

• (1400)  
[English]

### G-8 SUMMIT

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, last week the Alberta legislature leaked a memo regarding the G-8 summit in Kananaskis. The memo described that negotiations have deteriorated to the point where the Alberta government has threatened to ban federal officials from the summit. The problem of course is money and who will pay the bills.

The government assures Albertans again and again in the House and in the media that it will pick up the tab. The problem is that the costs associated with the summit go well beyond security and logistics. For example, the cost of prosecuting Jaggi Singh should not go to the province.

In addition, small business owners stand to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. In the case of Canadian Mountain Holidays in Banff, this heli-hiking company has had to turn away 176 customers and stands to lose about \$270,000 due to a four day no-fly zone. These small business owners are demanding that they be compensated sooner than later.

It is time for the government to be straightforward and honest for a change. These business owners, local residents and Albertans cannot afford to take the government to court for their compensation.

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### ELIZABETH FRY WEEK

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise in recognition of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies as it celebrates National Elizabeth Fry Week.

Elizabeth Fry societies work to enhance public awareness and education around the circumstances of women involved in the criminal justice system. They seek to challenge and break down the negative stereotypes that exist about women who are victimized and criminalized.

National Elizabeth Fry Week ends on Mother's Day each year in order to draw attention to the fact that the majority of women who come into conflict are mothers, most of them the sole supporters of their families at the time of incarceration. When mothers are sentenced to prison, they and their children are also sentenced to separation. Many women find this the most severe punishment.

Elizabeth Fry societies across the country have organized public events in their communities. I wish to commend them for their most important work toward the development of, and support for, community based alternatives for women rather than costly incarceration.

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### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I rise to salute the Canadian Adaptation and Rural Development showcase, a celebration of agricultural innovation and opportunity.

The CARD fund, created in 1995, is an initiative of the government to foster long term growth, employment and competi-

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tiveness in Canada's agricultural and agrifood industry. CARD supports farmers by providing measures that assist a sector in adapting to change and market opportunities. Creating partnerships among industry groups and between industry and government is a key feature of many CARD programs.

This evening in Ottawa visitors to the CARD showcase will meet program recipients from across the country and view 44 CARD exhibits under CARD's six priorities: rural development; marketing; innovation; food safety and quality; environmental sustainability; and human resources capacity.

All Canadians who care about safe and healthy food and who want a strong Canadian agriculture and agrifood sector will take pride in the—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

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### BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, when Winston Churchill uttered the words "Give us the tools and we will finish the job" Canada responded in a way that was described later by the British as remarkable, astonishing and magnificent.

The Battle of the Atlantic began September 3, 1939 when the German submarine U-30 torpedoed the passenger liner *SS Athenia* bound for Montreal with more than 1,400 passengers and crew, killing 118 people. The Battle of the Atlantic became the longest running conflict of the second world war, lasting 2,075 days.

Canada's navy began the war with a mere 13 vessels. When the war ended it was the third largest navy on the allied side. The Battle of the Atlantic did not just involve the brave men of our navy, but it also included the merchant marines who suffered the highest percentage of casualties.

More than 2,000 members of the Royal Canadian Navy were killed in all theatres, but most in the Battle of the Atlantic. Additionally, the Book of Remembrance of the merchant navy lists by name—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford.

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### WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

**Ms. Aileen Carroll (Barrie—Simcoe—Bradford, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, May 5 I attended the 100th anniversary of the Thornton Branch of the Women's Institute. The first branch of the Women's Institute was founded by Adelaide Hoodless in southern Ontario in 1897.

The Women's Institute is now an international organization. Its motto "For Home and Country" provides an educational forum for women, with an emphasis on civics. The Thornton Women's Institute has six women who have been members for over 50 years.

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This is a time when governments and organizations throughout North America are searching for ways to get people together, to discuss means of enhancing the quality of life in their communities, to increase opportunities to bring people together for companionship and support, and to further social cohesion. This is one of the primary ways to prevent isolation and fragmentation which too often results in social breakdown.

I wish to congratulate the Thornton Women's Institute for 100 years of strength and leadership.

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● (1405)

[*Translation*]

### SPORTS

**Mr. Robert Lancôt (Châteauguay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, from May 1 to May 31, large numbers of Quebec students will be taking part in the various activities available during Quebec's physical education and student sport month.

This event is organized by the Quebec Student Sport Federation, with a view to raising awareness of the value of physical activity and sports, and the pleasure we can get from them.

This eighth edition, the theme of which is, "Healthy living is fun", will focus on sports ethics, diet, an anti-smoking, anti-doping campaign. The spokesperson will be short track speed skater, and Salt Lake City Winter Olympics bronze medallist, Marie-Ève Drolet.

The Minister responsible for Youth, Tourism, Recreation and Sport will reach this year's target group via his department's Kin-Québec program.

The Bloc Québécois salutes this initiative to link fun and health.

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### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY WEEK

**Mr. Gérard Binet (Frontenac—Mégantic, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from May 3 to May 12, 2002, we will pay tribute to those who have played a role in making information technology more accessible, visible and interesting.

Information Technology Week is jointly promoted by Industry Canada and the Information Technology Association of Canada.

For these ten days, communities, businesses, employees, teachers and students are encouraged to work together to find innovative ways to highlight and showcase achievements in information technology. In a knowledge-based society, people are the greatest resource.

Canada's Information Technology Week complements the "Connecting Canadians" initiative to make Canada the most connected country in the world.

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[*English*]

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, can members imagine government

policy designed to actually bring people together, help them understand contributions that are made by both the urban and the rural economies? The Liberal government has created a divide between our rural and urban areas.

How could it ever come to such a state? I will tell members how. It is the arrogance of the Liberal regime that allows it to feel that it is okay to neglect our rural residents. They are smaller in number which means fewer votes. It means the Liberal machine can be maintained without the rural vote. This negative attitude has to stop. This is unacceptable if we are to stabilize rural Canada and adopt policies that will foster growth in both rural and urban Canada.

Can we imagine a Canada with no farmers, no small towns, and no villages? Can we imagine a Canada with no backbone, no one to care for the land, no one to supply the food this nation consumes, and no one to supply its commodities? Can we imagine forgetting rural Canada?

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### HEALTH AND SAFETY WEEK

**Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from May 5 to 11 we will be celebrating North American Occupational Health and Safety Week. This year's theme, Prevention is the Solution, focuses on taking preventive measures to create safer work environments.

On average in Canada three workers are killed every working day. Unfortunately, young people are the most likely to be killed or injured on the job. We have to keep on working together to protect our young workers.

Canada's labour program is proud of its close collaboration with the Canadian Centre for Occupational Safety and Health and the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering to provide healthier and safer workplaces for today's workers.

I hope members will join me in wishing all participants a very safe and successful week.

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### AFRICA

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is arrogant and out of touch. The Prime Minister's latest attempt to restore Canada's tarnished image abroad suffers from the boorishness that Canadians know all too well.

I am referring to the Prime Minister's African development agenda. We now hear from development leaders that this African development plan was put together largely without input from those on the ground and closest to the people.

Most frightening of all, the Prime Minister's plan for Africa fails to come to grips with the single most devastating pandemic facing that continent. HIV and AIDS receive a single mention in a 67 page document that promotes trade and governance. The statistics are appalling, with 14 million African AIDS orphans, and in Mozambique alone, 17% of the country's teachers will succumb to this disease within the decade.

We fully support increasing economic development aid to Africa but the government must understand that a healthy economy can only be built by a healthy population.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

#### YMCA FELLOWSHIP HONOUR

**Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to rise in the House today to recognize a Burlington resident, a noble Canadian and a fabulous volunteer, Dr. Mahmoud Ali.

Dr. Ali has been a community leader for many years. His commitment and service have earned him the YMCA's highest distinction, the YMCA Fellowship Honour. In addition to chairing the board of directors of the YMCA of Hamilton—Burlington, Dr. Ali was instrumental in opening a downtown YMCA to family membership in 1988 and presided over the international development and health sciences advisory committees. He had hands-on involvement in the establishment of the YMCA's first international partnership with Costa Rica. Most recently, Dr. Ali collaborated with Hamilton Health Sciences to incorporate hospital services within a new YMCA facility.

Since 1978, 75 exemplary YMCA leaders have received the Fellowship Honour under the sponsorship of the Governor General of Canada.

I wish to extend congratulations to the YMCA and say “way to go” to Dr. Ali.

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[Translation]

#### GALA DES MERCURIADES

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 23, the Quebec Chamber of Commerce will host the 22nd gala du concours Les Mercuriades. I am happy to say that three Drummondville businesses have been chosen as finalists in four categories.

Armotech Inc. has garnered two nominations, one in the category for contributing to regional economic development and the other in the foreign markets category.

Fempro Inc. is nominated in the new investment project category.

And ALPHA insurance company is a finalist in the customer service category.

These companies, and all those they are competing against, do work that deserves being recognized. Being nominated for this gala is in and of itself a remarkable accomplishment.

I wish them good luck at the gala, which will take place in Montreal's Palais des Congrès.

S. O. 31

[English]

#### WOMEN'S RUGBY

**Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Nepean—Carleton is the home of the Twin Elms Rugby Club and the people of Nepean—Carleton are big rugby fans, so it is my pleasure to rise today to wish success to the members of our Canadian women's rugby team competing at the 2002 Women's Rugby World Cup to be held in Barcelona, Spain from May 13 to 15.

Our team is comprised of 26 players selected from across the country and five coaching staff. Quebec's Josée Lacasse and Gillian Florence will be attending their third world cup, while for most of the other players this will be their first world cup experience. Our team is confident it can improve on its fourth place finish at the 1998 world cup considering their international experience and their recent performance against the United States women's rugby team. Canada defeated the second ranked U.S. team in Ottawa on July 7, 2001, by a score of 23 to 3.

The members of the women's rugby team continue to be great ambassadors, both for their sport and for Canada.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### NATIONAL NURSING WEEK

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this week is National Nursing Week. Nurses have a long tradition of caring for families, as well as the knowledge and skill to make a difference to family health. The theme of this year's National Nursing Week is “Nurses Always There For You: Caring for Families”.

Economic constraints, the aging of the population, the increase in chronic health problems, and technological advances in the treatment of diseases have added to the burden borne by families. With the federal government evaluating the future of our health care system, it is more important than ever to acknowledge this burden and to draw attention to the role which nursing staff can play in taking some of the load off families in difficult times.

On behalf of its members, the Canadian Nurses Association has long advocated a collaborative approach to medical care which recognizes the respective expertise of nurses and of families.

I encourage all members to underscore the wonderful work being done by nursing staff throughout Quebec and Canada by taking an active part in National Nursing Week.

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[English]

#### MICHENER AWARD

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I ask the House to join me today in extending congratulations to Kitchener's daily newspaper, the *Record*, which has recently been presented with the 2001 Michener Award recognizing meritorious public service journalism.

### Oral Questions

The Michener Award is Canada's most prestigious journalism prize. Kitchener's hometown newspaper has captured the coveted prize a remarkable four times since inception of the prize in 1970 by the then governor general, Roland Michener. The *Record* has consistently demonstrated a reputation for persistence and a commitment to solid journalism. Certainly the newspaper keeps our feet to the fire on all topics of public interest.

The Michener award was presented in acknowledgement of the newspaper's efforts to uncover a complicated leasing deal between the city of Waterloo and MFP Financial Services. The *Record's* coverage provided a compelling read for our community. Special mention goes to *Record* journalist Kevin Crowley, who led the eight month effort and who was recently named Journalist of the Year at the Western Ontario newspaper awards.

I congratulate the *Record* for its ongoing commitment to in-depth journalism.

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

• (1415)

[English]

### GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES

**Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, like so many Canadians we are wondering why the government and the Prime Minister have the wrong priorities.

With the mess that the government has created for hardworking Canadian families in softwood and agriculture, along with its ongoing problems with corruption, taxpayers are wondering why the Prime Minister is preparing to jet off to sunny Spain.

Could the Prime Minister explain to Canadian families what he is going to do to clean up the mess he has made in softwood, in agriculture and in his corruption riddled government?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I object to the last term used because it is completely untrue. Nothing has been proven. They are only trying to throw mud.

The EU-Canada meeting is held every year. The Prime Minister of Canada, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the minister of trade, meet with their counterparts in the European Community and the leader of the European Community.

The meeting is in Spain this year. I will use the beginning of next week when parliament is not in session to meet with the president of France and the prime ministers of Great Britain and Italy to discuss Kananaskis and a program to help the poorest in the world.

**Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister bristles at the suggestion that his government is corrupt. I would quote the Oxford dictionary, which states "corruption: moral deterioration...widespread".

Today there are reports that the auditor general has advised the government to call in the RCMP to investigate the government's decision to pay Groupaction three times for a nothing report.

Will the Prime Minister tell Canadians that he will recall Alfonso Gagliano from Denmark so that he can assist the RCMP in clearing up this troubling mess?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was the minister himself who asked the auditor general to look into that. The auditor general will report this week.

Of course we have always done that. We look at all the problems of the administration, and if somebody has done something wrong that is criminal, of course the RCMP is involved, but I will say at this moment that it is the minister himself who referred that problem to the auditor general and we will see what the auditor general has to report before coming to any conclusion.

**Mr. John Reynolds (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister asked the auditor general after a slight nudge from the House for a couple of days, and he already has the report so the Prime Minister knows what is in it.

Let me give the Prime Minister some examples of poor management, wrong priorities and, yes, possibly corruption. Let us put aside the bungling on softwood and agriculture. The finance minister has refused to clear up the question of whether his bagman was selling tax policy. His industry minister will not even tell us what one of his high flying staffers does for taxpayers. The RCMP has to clean up smelly deals in public works.

Will the Prime Minister just stay home and get people back working in the industry again and solve these smelly problems in his government?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, he cannot throw mud all the time.

They make accusations based on nothing all the time. We could talk about the opposition, all the flip-flops on Stornoway, for example. They all said to their electors that they would never accept a pension from the government. After the third election, they all flip-flopped to get the cash. They offered a \$50,000 payment to have a seat for one of the leaders who had no seat. After that there was \$800,000 paid by the taxpayers of Alberta because the then leader of the opposition made a terrible error while he was minister of—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Battlefords—Lloydminster.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I guess I would throw it back to the Prime Minister. If he wants to make those kinds of accusations, he can make them outside the House and then we will have some real fun with him.

Consistent poor management and political interference from the front bench of the Liberals have caused millions of tax dollars to be wasted, and it is all self-serving government grandstanding that is paid for. It seems that Groupaction is only the tip of the iceberg. Public works says it has solved the problem, but thanks to its track record nobody believes that line.

*Oral Questions*

Will the Prime Minister listen to the advice of his own auditor general and call in the RCMP to clear up the mess?

•(1420)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. colleague will want to speak to his House leader and possibly his leader.

This is not the government's auditor general. This is an officer of parliament who was asked by the minister of public works, myself, to do an audit of the situation and I was discussing with his own leader only 15 minutes ago the process by which it will be made public on Wednesday.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, if the auditor general is really and truly an officer of parliament, why did the briefing this morning only include cabinet ministers from that side? How were we left out if she answers directly to parliament?

One of the especially odorous examples of the political manipulating under the sponsorship scheme involved the Deputy Prime Minister. He forced public works to spend another \$150,000 to advertise how great the government is in Ottawa.

Considering the federal government is the biggest employer, the biggest purchaser, the biggest landlord and the all around biggest presence in the city, I wonder how the government can account for this decision other than to say it is political pork-barrelling.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have received representations, and I do almost every day in the House after question period, from members of parliament of all sides of the House asking for sponsorships in their own ridings, including the Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the New Democrats.

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[Translation]

**MUNICIPALITIES**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's task force on urban issues is recommending that the Canadian government develop a strategy to participate actively and directly in municipal development. The Minister of Transport was quick to endorse this report and said that it would be used as a guide by the government.

Does the Prime Minister realize that municipal issues clearly come under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and that, consequently, any direct involvement by Ottawa would be federal meddling in a provincial jurisdiction?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, many federal programs have been applied to municipalities, for a long time now. The infrastructure programs, for which municipalities are praising us, come to mind. Our problem is that provincial governments, but not municipal governments, are dragging their feet.

It is the same thing with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, which for generations has helped cities and the poor by providing affordable housing. It is since the provinces have been

more involved than they were in the past that things have not been going so well in the housing sector.

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, if the federal government is trying to interfere at the municipal level, it is because it has money coming out of its ears, it is because there is truly a fiscal imbalance and Ottawa is using it to push Quebec aside.

If the government really wants to show leadership, as claimed by the Minister of Transport, it should give the money to Quebec and the provinces, it should give the means to those who already have the expertise, whether it is in the housing, transportation or municipal infrastructure sector.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are being criticized for having properly managed the affairs of this country over the past three years. During that period, we also succeeded in reducing taxes. We are doing very well because the economy is doing well.

As recently as Friday, major U.S. institutions said that Canada's situation could not be better. They have increased our credit rating. One of the major reasons for this is that they see the Bloc Québécois and the threat of separation going down.

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in its unhealthy desire for visibility, the government is ignoring a fundamental document, one called the Constitution of Canada. If it took the trouble to read its own constitution, it would see in section 92(8) in black and white that municipal affairs are a provincial jurisdiction.

So why is the government doggedly insisting on getting into things that do not concern it? Why is it that it is constantly seeking confrontation? Why is it always trying to stir up trouble?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the municipalities are the ones asking us to work with them. We have federal jurisdictions that clearly apply anyway; we have responsibilities which clearly apply to those who live in cities.

And since 80% of the population are city-dwellers, we are merely fulfilling our responsibilities.

•(1425)

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, following that same reasoning, 100% of children attend school, so the federal government should deal with education as well. Really now, that argument does not hold water.

Every time the federal government invades an area of provincial jurisdiction, this provokes a confrontation, delays getting the money to where it needs to go, and decreases efficiency.

So, instead of trying to go over the heads of the provinces and of Quebec, why not pay out the money to them via existing channels? That would be so simple.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the folks over there kept telling us for months, years even, that if we transferred manpower to the provincial governments, that would be just wonderful all round.

*Oral Questions*

Now, if one were to go ask the people in the regions whether they were pleased that the federal government has withdrawn in favour of the provincial government, most would say they feel that this transfer was a disaster for recipients of services.

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[English]

**CHILD POVERTY**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this government's arrogance is disgusting and so are its priorities. Here we have a \$40 million a year Liberal propaganda program riddled with political interference and double billing and the auditor general calling for a criminal investigation into government marketing contracts. While the Liberals heap cash on their cronies, poverty among Canadian children increases by 40%. Some Liberal legacy.

Will the Prime Minister put an end to the pork-barrelling and redirect the funds to end the national disgrace of child poverty?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I see the member of parliament getting up today and asking us not to do that, yet she wrote letters to the minister recommending sponsorship in her home town. She should make up her mind about it.

The reality is this program of sponsorship has been extremely good for Canada. In 1995 Canada was drifting. We went to Quebec and told Quebecers all about Canada. Look at the result today. Even the big agencies have said that the government has acted properly and now the danger of separation is much less than it was in 1995.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what a record of which to be proud. No wonder June Callwood, the highly respected journalist, said today on behalf of Campaign 2000 that the federal Liberal government was either comatose or it was morally bankrupt when it came to child poverty.

What a record: an increase in child poverty of 39%; 1.3 million children in this country living in poverty; 45% of children under the age of six living in poverty today, many of them going to bed hungry.

Is the Prime Minister happy with that Liberal legacy? If not, what will he do about it?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government has taken very concrete action to help Canadian children and families, including our national children's agenda, \$2.2 billion, and the national child benefit program. We have lengthened the parental benefits under the employment insurance program to 12 months and increased the limit on child care expenses.

In Budget 2001 we added \$185 million for programs targeted at aboriginal children. We have cut taxes aimed at low and middle income Canadians. I could go on and on to prove that we have done a lot for children. However we still have a lot to do because we will never be satisfied.

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**GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES**

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is paying its friends in Groupaction a million dollars for

photocopying. These actions cry out for an RCMP investigation, but they are only one example of a growing pattern of patronage and abuse by the government: the untendered subcontracts to Lafleur Communication; the untendered Challengers; the payments to leadership supporters and the speech writers who do not write speeches; the continuing conflicts of interests; and the Gaglianos shipped out of the country.

Will these be subject to RCMP investigation too?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I expect to report the findings of the auditor general on the Groupaction, which I myself referred to the auditor general, as early as Wednesday of this week.

**Right Hon. Joe Clark (Calgary Centre, PC):** Mr. Speaker, that is the Gagliano response. Any police inquiry would be limited to the notorious abuses that have already been identified.

There is a deeper problem here, a persistent pattern of breaking the rules and rewarding political friends. No one knows how far that pattern reaches and Canadians need to know. The only way is with an independent public inquiry with a full mandate to investigate all practices that may feed or that may hide unethical behaviour or abuse.

Will the Prime Minister name such an independent public inquiry?

● (1430)

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have replied to all the questions in the House of Commons that have been asked of us, whenever there have been questions. After that people appeal to the ministers and they appear in front of committees where questions are asked by members on both sides of the House of Commons.

We have always given a reply to the Canadian people. They have been satisfied enough to ensure that this government is still in power and that the Tories are in the corner for a long time.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, on Friday the minister of agriculture stated that he might consider WTO and NAFTA challenges against a crippling U.S. farm bill. That is a big maybe. The Liberal delays on the softwood lumber have cost tens of thousands of jobs in Canada already. Now we are seeing the same delay on agriculture.



*Oral Questions*

Did the minister of agriculture tell the U.S. secretary of agriculture that Canada will initiate WTO and NAFTA challenges the same day that the U.S. farm bill was signed into law?

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food met with Secretary Veneman in Ottawa on Saturday. He certainly told her and the United States, in no uncertain terms, how upset we were about this.

If we can find any way in which we can take this to the WTO now, we will. However certainly they have upset us and at the next talks at the WTO we will lead the way and build support around the world against the United States agricultural subsidies.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the question was will they initiate a trade challenge or not? I do not remember what the answer was but it sure was not about that.

We have to keep pushing on our trade negotiations as the secretary said, but we will not convince the U.S. to drop its subsidies anytime soon. Our farmers need to have some protection in the meantime from those high subsidy levels that cause overproduction.

Perhaps I should ask the Prime Minister this question. Will he immediately use his government treasury to put forward a trade injury compensation program to stop the hurt that is caused by these rising U.S. subsidies?

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we certainly realize that subsidies do not work. The Americans are saying that their farm bill is about trade liberalization but they are wrong. It is about protectionism. In fact this bill was driven by a market that was driven by farmers going to the mailbox. It does not encourage people to be entrepreneurs, which our Canadian farmers are.

We will go to the WTO if we have any proof at all that they have gone past what they can legally do.

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[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the auditor general is about to ask the RCMP to investigate the dealings of Groupaction. Indeed, the *Globe and Mail* has revealed that the mismanagement is much more widespread than originally believed.

Given the ever more frequent blunders with Public Works and Government Services Canada's sponsorship program, does the government plan on launching an independent public inquiry to get to the bottom of the problems throughout this department, as the Bloc Québécois has been calling for since March?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member need not shout. I can hear, he is not that far away.

I would like to draw to his attention the fact that the auditor general's report, as I have already mentioned to another hon.

member, will be tabled as early as Wednesday of this week, or in 48 hours and 25 minutes.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about \$1.6 million in the case of Groupaction alone, when the total program budget is in the neighbourhood of \$40 million annually.

Given the amount of money involved and the serious questions raised about the quality of management at public works, does the government not think that a public inquiry is warranted, and urgently?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the conclusions will now be available in 48 hours and 24 minutes, one minute sooner than when he asked his last question.

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[English]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the trade minister's stupid remark that no workers had lost their jobs—

• (1435)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am sure the hon. member will want to rephrase his question and avoid the use of that word which I think is offensive.

**Mr. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, the trade minister's uneducated remark that no workers have lost their jobs because of the softwood lumber dispute has not helped Canadian legal challenges under NAFTA.

In a positive move, three large Canadian lumber producers have now announced NAFTA legal challenges for damages from U.S. softwood lumber trade actions. These challenges now total over \$500 million.

Will the minister instruct his department to assist smaller companies to co-ordinate their efforts so they can pursue and seek—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Industry.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no one in this country has worked harder in the interests of the softwood lumber industry and its workers than the Minister for International Trade. He has led the efforts on behalf of a united industry with all the provincial and territorial governments to protect and defend the Canadian position.

We bear very much at heart the interests of workers, families and communities affected. We are looking at a wide range of options by which we can show that we will stand by Canada's softwood lumber industry.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I was at the premiers conference. I heard how many people were unemployed and how many would be unemployed. The government is ignoring the plight of unemployed forestry workers. The minister is in Spain. In one day \$100 million was spent for the Prime Minister's luxury jets, and \$260 for unemployed forestry workers. That is an insult.

The minister has known for months this problem was coming. Is it any wonder the government has failed to announce a comprehensive plan for unemployed forestry workers?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of ways in which we are assisting workers, communities and the industry. The benefits to those who may be unemployed are only part of that. There are a number of programs being used. If the needs are greater, we have an open mind with respect to other options.

This government will be there to stand behind and stand with the industry, whether it is helping it diversify markets around the world or broaden its research and development into new products. We will be there to stand with the industry against these unfair American trade practices.

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[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government silenced a public servant by telling her to mind her own business when she questioned the relevancy of spending \$3 million to fund agricultural fairs and hunting and fishing shows all over Quebec. This example shows the mismanagement and political interference that afflict the sponsorship program.

What is the Minister of Public Works and Government Services waiting for to order an independent inquiry on all the activities of his department, not just on Groupaction, but on his whole department?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will patiently wait until Wednesday, when the auditor general will table her report. Most of the other members of parliament will wait patiently. I am convinced that the hon. member opposite will show the same patience and come to the same conclusion. All appropriate measures will be taken and this government will display its usual transparency.

**Mr. Pierre Brien (Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the problems are much broader than what is covered by the ongoing investigation. This situation reminds us of the scandal at the Department of Human Resources Development, which the government tried to downplay in the same way.

The documents mentioned this morning in the media refer to problems of mismanagement, administrative flaws, political interference, double billing, overbilling, inadequate follow up and monitoring, and bad practices.

What more does the government need to order a public inquiry?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the report has yet to be tabled. We wonder why one of the few Bloc Québécois members who did

not send a letter supporting sponsorship initiatives is suddenly asked to put this question.

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[English]

**GUN REGISTRY**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, despite all the evidence to the contrary from his own department, the Minister of Justice keeps bragging about how wonderful the gun registry is working and how it is keeping firearms out of the hands of people who should not have them.

Will the minister please explain how Hells Angels leader Maurice "Mom" Boucher managed to get a firearms licence? This licence authorized him to buy a 9mm handgun and three pump action shotguns.

● (1440)

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have said many times in the House that when the government decided to proceed with the gun registration system we wanted to put in place the philosophy that would ensure that we would keep building a safer community. The gun registration system has been working very well on the licensing side and on the registration side.

If members look at the declaration that has been made by the new leader of the Canadian Alliance, they will see that party's caucus is deeply divided on the question.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the minister that Mr. Boucher was a biker gang leader proudly complying with the firearms registry. His criminal record includes convictions of theft, sexual assault with a weapon, possession of a prohibited weapon, carrying a firearm and counselling violence. That is whom the minister gave a licence to. Yesterday Mr. Boucher was convicted of two counts of first degree murder and one count of attempted murder.

The minister's so-called culture of safety is failing Canadians and failing them badly. When will he ask the auditor general to determine—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Justice.

**Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know why the hon. member keeps attacking the gun registry system. It is a very good system that this government has put in place.

Let me quote what the leader of the Canadian Alliance once said "It is an issue that is dividing caucus. I support the concept of gun control and I will be putting out my own survey to find out how my constituents feel".

He supports it. We support it in order to ensure that we keep building a safe society.

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. John Maloney (Eric—Lincoln, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Burma's military regime announced that Nobel laureate and National League for Democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi will be released from house arrest. Will the Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific share with the House Canada's reaction to this news and inform us how it will affect our relationship with Burma?

**Hon. David Kilgour (Secretary of State (Asia-Pacific), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as one of the world's most courageous and admired political leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi embodies the determination and enormous promise that Canadians have long known exist in the people of Burma.

We certainly welcome the long overdue news that she has been released after 20 months in prison. We hope she will be able to participate meaningfully in a political process. We also hope that the remaining 1,400 to 1,500 political prisoners will be released very soon.

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### AGRICULTURE

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Americans have just added another \$73.5 billion to their farm bill which now totals \$180 billion in subsidies over 10 years. This is devastating for the farmers of Canada and harmful to the national economy.

Today the provincial agriculture ministers are in Ottawa. They are asking the federal government for \$1.3 billion in support.

Will the Minister of Finance stop hiding behind the WTO and provide that support for Canadian farmers now? They need that support and need it desperately.

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as my colleague knows, at this moment the federal minister of agriculture and all the provincial ministers are meeting across the street. About 100 of the largest farm organizations are here in the city today to meet together as we look at the agriculture policy framework for the future of the country.

We will do things in a positive way for our farmers. We made a commitment in the budget that we will have money there for the future. We will be there for our farmers.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a finance question for the Minister of Finance.

The American farm bill will devastate western Canadian farmers and farmers right across the country and will hurt our economy. I want to know from the Minister of Finance whether or not he expects some compensation for the Canadian farmers who are being hurt by the bill. There is now a surplus in the federal treasury. Will some of that money be spent for Canadian farmers, yes or no? Can we expect that?

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me the same opportunity we had a couple of hours ago in the House to point out that the government invested \$1.1 billion in

### Oral Questions

Saskatchewan last year. Last week we invested \$2 million in this country for the drought. We do have money there. In fact we will have great financing there. The government rural caucus, the Prime Minister's task force, the Senate have all been there. We have been listening to producers. We will be there. Last year we invested \$3.7 billion in agriculture.

\* \* \*

• (1445)

[Translation]

### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, since speaking to the auditor general, the public works minister has behaved like Pontius Pilate in connection with the crisis over the sponsorship and visibility program: he is washing his hands of it and telling people to wait, that everything is under control.

But several names keep coming up: Groupaction Communications, of course, Lafleur Communications, Groupe Polygone, Columbia Communications and, who knows, perhaps Everest Communications in the not-too-distant future.

Is it not time that the minister launched a full public inquiry into his department's visibility and sponsorships program?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not washing my hands of it. Since being appointed minister, I was the one who asked the auditor general to look into this, largely at the request of hon. members of this House.

The report will be released as early as Wednesday of this week. If members wish to ask questions then, I will answer them and take the necessary corrective action.

That is how I have operated thus far and that is what I will do in the future.

**Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I still say that he is behaving like Pontius Pilate; he is waiting for the resurrection, someone to come to the rescue in connection with the allegations of patronage in his department.

As the minister is well aware, there have been other allegations. We know that Mr. Gagliano has taken off. Now, it is his responsibility.

After calling the auditor general, has the minister himself investigated other companies in connection with other allegations in his own department?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is the same question worded a bit differently, and the answer is the same.

The auditor general will reply on Wednesday. Any corrective action will be taken at that time. I will announce the results. The member will perhaps reply on behalf of his party; I do not know. The necessary corrective action will be taken and we will, of course, follow up on these recommendations.

*Oral Questions**[English]***HEALTH**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that the fix was in when the CIHR announced guidelines allowing experiments on human embryos. The health committee recommended that research only be permitted as a last resort, but the minister has her ear closer to the scientists and it looks like they are going to get their way. Why is she ignoring her colleagues on the health committee?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Standing Committee on Health for the very fine work it did. We will certainly take into account the work of that committee as the government develops its legislative and policy responses to a very difficult area around assisted human reproduction.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at what the government is doing in this area.

Genome Canada is funding a major study on the ethical, legal and social concerns raised by stem cell research. That sounds like a great idea, does it not?

Why is the government pressing ahead with experimenting using human embryos before its own study has even been reported?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Minister of Health, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has identified an area which I know many members on all sides of the House are very interested in and concerned with. It is a very difficult and complex issue. None of us should treat it as a simple issue.

I am very mindful of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Health. As I have said, the government will take those into account when we propose legislation to the House in the coming days.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, lumber producers will have between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion in additional expenditures because of the duties imposed by the Americans. The industry has so little support from the federal government that a number of companies have decided on their own to sue the U.S. government, as Tembec has done.

Instead of denying reality, would the federal government not be wiser to immediately put a support plan in place, as the workers, their unions and the industry are demanding, until such time as the recourse before the WTO and under NAFTA is completed?

• (1450)

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are very much aware of the requirements of the softwood lumber industry, the individuals and the communities affected by the unfair charges levied by the Americans.

We have not rejected any of the options. We intend to examine them all and to act in the best interests of the communities and the industry.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister for International Trade himself admits there is a problem, since he has made a statement on TQS that he was prepared to inject additional funding into the various programs if that became necessary. It is not only necessary but urgent.

Does the government understand this, or do we have to wait until there are more plant closings and more layoffs?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are already various programs available. We intend to pursue them. We have a totally open mind to other options. As I have said, and stressed, we have not rejected any option whatsoever.

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*[English]***TECHNOLOGY PARTNERSHIPS CANADA**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, according to the annual report of technology partnerships Canada, corporations that have received grants under TPC have only paid back 1.3% of the money owed. When the finance minister announced the program in 1996, he said that TPC would be able to fund itself and would pose no more risk to taxpayers than it would to the private sector. Clearly he was wrong.

My question is for the Minister of Finance. How much will it cost the taxpayers to shoulder the burden of all of these bad investments by absorbing the losses of TPC?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for every dollar invested under technology partnerships Canada in Canadian enterprises, the private sector has contributed \$4 in the same investment. Accordingly, it is the same risk as that undertaken by the private sector.

As for TPC itself, my hon. friend likes to call it welfare. It is anything but. It is an investment by Canadians into the future of their economy. Every advanced industrial economy in the world does it. We do it in the public interest.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is an insult to taxpayers. The government has handed out \$1.6 billion since 1996. It has received \$20.1 million back. That is a 1.3% return. Technology partnerships Canada is a corporate welfare program and the minister should admit it.

The finance minister stated in the 1995 budget:

Across government, we are taking major action in this budget to substantially reduce subsidies to business. These subsidies do not create long-lasting jobs. Nobody has made that case more strongly than business itself.

What happened to the minister's own words? What is he doing to ensure that the government gets money back from these corporations?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that those investments have created over 35,000 jobs so far in this country. The fact is those investments are the future of our economy. Like every other country in the world, we are investing in R and D possibilities.

*Oral Questions*

The real question is whether the member and the opposition would have Canada out of the game of international competition for economic advancement. Would the Alliance Party have Canada disqualify itself in the contest for economic prosperity? That is what the member suggests.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ECONOMY**

**Mrs. Sue Barnes (London West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

[English]

On Friday, Moody's raised Canada's domestic and foreign currency debt rating. Will the minister explain the consequences of this new triple A credit rating for all of us?

**Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it will certainly lower borrowing costs in Canada. It will certainly encourage investment.

What is every bit as important is that when Canada was downgraded in 1995, this was deemed confirmation of the difficulties we faced. This upgrade to the highest credit rating is confirmation of the remarkable fiscal turnaround engineered by Canadians. This is not arid numbers on a balance sheet. This is a great Canadian victory.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear.

**The Speaker:** Order. I know that we have a popular minister and a popular member of the opposition rising but we do have to hear the question now.

The hon. member for Langley—Abbotsford has a question.

\* \* \*

●(1455)

**GRANTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS**

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, boy are they happy over there now.

This is not just about Wednesday's report of the Groupaction deal which just happened to donate \$70,000 to the Liberal Party. We warned the government time and time again that its arrogance would overshadow its fiscal responsibility.

Now that the auditor general will indicate there should be an RCMP probe, I wonder, does the government understand it has a problem with corruption, with mismanagement and in fact with integrity itself?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is giving summary justice. The report has not yet been tabled. The report will be tabled and will be answered appropriately, and the necessary actions will be taken. Making these gratuitous kinds of insinuations I do not believe helps.

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it must be a mistake that it only gave \$70,000 to the Liberal Party. That is just a coincidence I guess.

Public works has been a feast of failure in the country for years. The deputy minister shovels pork into his hometown so he gives a profile to Ottawa or perhaps himself. The RCMP probes into Groupaction for something that should have never occurred in the first place. Alfonso Gagliano gets the pork posting of his life ahead of a probe. I wonder if the Prime Minister understands the words corruption, integrity—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that very much, which is why in the nine years that we have formed the government not one person, not one member of parliament and not one minister has been accused of corruption in front of any court.

They keep using that word. They know that it is part of the criminal code. It was never used because we have offered a very good government. The answer that the Minister of Finance gave a minute ago proves that the international community has a lot of confidence in the administration of this government.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**AIRLINE INDUSTRY**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the board of directors of the Aéroports de Montréal is about to announce the transfer of passenger flights from Mirabel to Dorval as early as April 2003.

This flies in the face of common sense and violates the lease, which clearly stipulates that the lessee must use the premises for the purposes of a major international airport.

Given that the board of directors is making a complete mess of this and is not respecting the lease it signed, what is the Minister of Transport waiting for to ask for their resignations?

**Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as usual, the Bloc Québécois has not stopped to listen first. The two airports are run by a non-profit organization. No public report has yet been tabled. There has been no business plan. There is nothing to go on, and already they are accusing the board of incompetence. This is standard practice with the Bloc Québécois.

\* \* \*

[English]

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, rural Canada is the foundation upon which Canada was built. Furthermore, aside from being home to thousands, rural Canada supports the agriculture sector which is the second largest industry in the nation. With this in mind, could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House what the government is doing to help rural Canada seize the opportunities that are desperately needed to keep this essential part of our economy alive?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada supports the agriculture and agrifood industry in rural communities in many ways.

One clear example of this support is the Canadian adaptation and rural development fund, also known as the CARD fund. Since it was created in 1995, CARD has provided more than \$450 million in funding to thousands of projects nationally and regionally, and CARD has become a catalyst for turning dreams of creativity and innovation into reality in rural Canada.

This evening I invite all members of the House to the Chateau Laurier so they can see the CARD showcase and see how their funds are invested. Also, they will have an opportunity to meet many of the great agricultural leaders in this country.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the government says that it is consulting on aboriginal governance so let us see how it is doing in Manitoba.

In Manitoba we have 103,000 aboriginal people. How many participate in the consultation process? Fifty-three participate, and the numbers are lower in many other areas of the country.

The Liberals' guide for managers on aboriginal issues says, of proper consultation, "If an interested party is overlooked, the entire exercise could be frustrated."

How can the Prime Minister claim that these consultations are any more legitimate than his 1969 ideas when he is violating his own government's guidelines on consultation?

● (1500)

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has taken part in extensive consultations across the country touching more than 10,000 members of first nations communities. We held 450 events in more than 200 first nations communities to get adequate consultation on this issue.

In addition, we are bringing forth legislation on governance and first nations institutions in the near future, and that will provide further opportunity for consultation through the House, through committee and across the country.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL SESSION ON CHILDREN**

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister of Canada has decided not to take part in the United Nations' special session on children.

Is this not a perfect illustration of the embarrassment the Prime Minister feels, considering the dismal national figures since he took office, particularly the increase of almost 362,000 in the numbers of children living in poverty?

**Right Hon. Jean Chrétien (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I had agreed to attend this UN session last fall. Unfortunately, because of the events of September 11, the session was cancelled and rescheduled. Since the meeting between Canada and the European Economic Community is taking place during the same week, Canada will be represented by the Deputy Prime Minister.

I regret not being able to attend, but we have been among the most active participants in the preparation of this session. I am taking this opportunity to thank the members of parliament, ministers and senators who took a special interest in this session. Many of them will be in New York City, on Thursday, to attend this event.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1505)

[English]

**PETITIONS****FISHERIES**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the pleasure to present a petition from the people of Canso and surrounding areas. The petitioners call on the government to take action, specifically the minister of fisheries whose denial of quota to the town of Canso has resulted in the closure of its plant.

The people of Canso are left without a livelihood. They are looking for a way to once again be contributors to their local economy and the national economy. They are calling on parliament and the minister to reconsider his decision or at the very least to come and meet with the people of Canso to discuss ways in which they can restore economic vigour.

Instead of focusing on patronage and rewarding friends the petitioners would like the government to revisit the resource centre economy in which they have been participants for almost 400 years. They call on the government to do something.

On behalf of the people of Canso and surrounding areas I am pleased to table this petition in their name. I hope the minister of fisheries will take it seriously as do the people of Canso, the mayor, the trawlermen's association, the people affected by schools and hospitals at risk of closing, and others in the town who are struggling.

On a day in which the subject matter of debate in parliament is centering on rural Canada it is time for the government to act with respect to the problems of people trying to make a living and earn respect in places like Canso, Nova Scotia in Guysborough County.

**CHILD ABUSE**

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have petitions from all four western provinces. The petitioners are calling on the government to ensure the protection of our children from all sexual abusers.

They are asking that parliament pass legislation that would incarcerate indefinitely those offenders designated dangerous sexual child offenders and child rapists who have committed more than one offence against a child.

I am pleased to present this petition at this time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

#### SUPPLY

##### ALLOTTED DAY—RURAL CANADIANS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, before the question period recess into rhetoric and retreat there was a question from the hon. member for Prince George—Buckley Valley. He asked if I could enlighten him. That is probably more than anyone in the House could do, myself included.

He wanted to know why the government would choose to send corrupt and disgraced cabinet ministers abroad. He made reference to the fact that the Prime Minister likes to boast about never having had a cabinet minister resign while in office and never having had to fire one. It is quite simply because he has lowered the bar so much one could not limbo under it.

The Prime Minister has completely done away with the principle of parliamentary responsibility, the Westminster principle that cabinet ministers take responsibility for their actions and actions that occur within their departments. That is why cabinet ministers do not resign. That is why they get dispatched to places like Denmark as a big reward in the midst of turmoil, allegations and possible RCMP investigations.

The hon. member made another reference. He talked about corruption in previous governments. I would remind him he need only look in the mirror when talking about monumental reversals of position. I remind him in particular of some of the positions his party took with respect to Stornoway, pensions, political perks and doing things differently. His party made a spectacle of bringing to parliament a new way of doing things. Its members danced outside the Senate with Mexican hats on, waved Canadian flags around and had wetsuit press conferences.

The Liberals love it when the hon. member resorts to the tactic of throwing mud at a government of 10 years ago. It plays right into their hands. However there are no lessons to be learned from the

#### Supply

Progressive Conservative Party on reversing oneself. Thank goodness the hon. member and his party will never get into power. If they reverse themselves on these positions while in opposition let us think what they would do if they ever got a sniff of power.

• (1510)

**Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough did not answer the question regarding Alfonso Gagliano and whether he is allowed to be prosecuted, probed or charged under diplomatic immunity. The hon. member from Nova Scotia chose instead to personally attack me and my integrity.

He wonders why I have no time for the remnants of the Tory Party in terms of getting together in some sort of Alliance. It is because of insults and personal attacks like this which go on all the time, particularly from the more mouthy members like the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

If I heard what I think I heard it would be highly unparliamentary. We all say things in the House we should not. In the heat of the moment we allow ourselves to get carried away. However a certain degree of decorum is expected, and I would expect the last of those remarks was unparliamentary or out of order.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps the hon. member could specify which words he feels were out of order. The Chair recognizes that the debate is perhaps a little less than totally friendly at the moment, but we will hear from the hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough very briefly in response to the comment and then we will move on. Perhaps he will be able to change the tone in his response.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question. Yes, an individual abroad accused of doing something criminal in Canada could be prosecuted whether or not he or she was a diplomat in a foreign country. The problem would arise if a diplomat in a country like Denmark were accused of a crime there and chose to claim diplomatic immunity and come back to Canada. One cannot claim diplomatic immunity when out of the country serving as an ambassador.

As to who began down this road, I think the hon. member is suffering from some degree of memory loss. He should recall that it was an unprovoked question from himself that caused me to respond in kind.

Once again, only the Liberal Party benefits when we engage in this type of banter. I take no umbrage at all at the hon. member's comments. The member has no lessons to give this party or this member about what public statements were made and what complete turnarounds, somersaults and olympic backflips were done a short time later when Alliance members reversed themselves on all kinds of positions. The public record is clear on that.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley.

### *Supply*

The government is failing agriculture and rural Canada. We are debating rural issues including agriculture. Being the chief agriculture critic for the Canadian Alliance, I have a lot to say about the agriculture aspect of rural Canada.

The policies are being lived by people in my own riding. Albert Strick, a farmer in my area, has done a lot to develop the community in our area. He sees clearly that a lot of the policies are not in the best interest of farmers. I appreciate constituents like him who try to move the debate along and accomplish something that the government has not.

The government does not seem to understand the importance of agriculture. The direct result of this misunderstanding is indifference and insufficient support for farmers who are fighting against foreign subsidies that are of course beyond their control.

The U.S. farm bill is dumping \$180 billion into the U.S. subsidy program. U.S. politicians are using their subsidies to close the gap with Europeans. The real effect will be to push Canadian farm income even down further. What does our agriculture minister have to say about the issue of subsidies? He has said that the government cannot match it, that it has to do is find ways to mitigate it and that it will be seeking ways to do that.

I have outlined, and my party has outlined in report after report some of which were tabled in the House, many ways to help farmers without the direct subsidy route if that is what he feels he needs to be done. All he needs to do is read up on those. I will even send him another letter to ensure that he fully understands what those are. We will mention many of those in our speeches today.

The minister's department has identified a 25% decline in prices due to these foreign subsidies. That is why I have repeatedly asked questions of the minister and the parliamentary secretary in the House about the trade injury compensation program. All the farm associations like Keystone Agriculture Producers, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers in Alberta and the grain companies like Agricore United, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Canadian Federation of Agriculture know that we need to have a trade injury compensation program but the government refuses to deliver it.

Individual farmers are taking the bull by the horns. I will mention two individuals in Manitoba who are doing just that on an individual farmer basis, over and above the farm organizations, because the minister does not seem to listen to farm organizations like he should.

Mr. Murray Downing of Reston, Manitoba and Joe Dusik of Oakbluff sent a letter to the right hon. Prime Minister, the Ministers of Finance and Agriculture and Agri-Food and to the leader of the official opposition. They said:

I am a Canadian Grains and Oilseed producer and/or a concerned citizen of Canada.

According to information from the department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, foreign subsidies are removing \$1.3 Billion each year from the income of the grains and oilseed sector in Canada.

Our industry cannot fight against foreign treasuries alone. I am joining with all agriculture groups across Canada in requesting that you immediately implement a \$1.3 Billion trade Injury Compensation Program in the form of an immediate cash payment to be directed at grains and oilseed farmers.

This payment would generate a \$9 billion spin-off to the Canadian economy. This is not an expense but an investment in your future.

These two gentlemen and their families are farmers who are living the life of desperation in a lot of ways because the agricultural policies of the government and its lack of support make them very uncompetitive with our U.S. neighbours just across the border a few miles south.

The minister has to answer these questions. Yes or no. Does he support our farmers? Is he going to put this trade injury compensation program in place or not?

The other ministers who have a big impact on agriculture should not escape unscathed from the debate today.

• (1515)

The current Minister of Health for instance has had a record of being anti-farmer. She was formerly the justice minister who brought in the cruelty to animals legislation, Bill C-15B. In that bill the minister and the government have refused to provide the protection for farmers that is necessary for their livestock production. The protection is needed to prevent harassment type prosecution by animal rights groups. The present minister could fix that right now by adding in the legal protection that we had in the criminal code before this time.

In addition the Pest Management Regulatory Agency is virtually non-functioning at this time and I do not think that the new amendments under the pest products control act will do anything to alleviate the problem with getting full use of newer and safer pesticides inside Canada.

This can only be corrected by the minister taking responsibility and a leadership role in telling the bureaucrats that they will make the agency work and that they will serve the client, the farmer and the pest products people who produce the pesticides needed for agriculture.

There is another major issue which could be effective in helping rural Canada. The thrust of my speech is on all these minister who could do something for rural Canada but will not.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is going to Manitoba, the prairies and across the country enforcing subsection 35(1) of the Fisheries Act. That act is designed to protect the habitat of fish in our streams and lakes. Nobody is against that. However the department is using this subsection of the Fisheries Act to obstruct the reclamation and the improvement of agricultural land. It is saying that until a study is done on a particular drainage project, drainage cannot be done and existing drains cannot be used or cleaned. From the time drains were built by the municipality, minnows have got into them and as a result, fisheries and oceans has stopped the drainage improvements which directly impacts on farmers in a negative way.

The province of Manitoba believes that the cost of drainage projects has increased by 25% to 30% to comply with the new fisheries enforcement act.



In my riding of Selkirk—Interlake where Mr. Strick lives, about 10,000 acres in the RM of Armstrong, along with Coldwell, Woodlands and St. Laurent are currently being flooded because we cannot get the drainage put in. Part of that is fisheries and oceans but also part of it is the lack of infrastructure spending by the government in rural Canada, which is the topic of the debate today.

If that money were forthcoming to Selkirk—Interlake to be used on North Shoal Lake, where I ranch, we would have a much larger agriculture sector there. We would have more production, creating more jobs for more Canadians. The commodities that we produce are exportable and as a result we would bring in a lot of foreign currency.

Mr. Strick is a councillor from our local community of Armstrong who has done a lot of hard work to try to mitigate these circumstances that have been so negatively impacting on agriculture in my riding.

We can talk about other ministers. The revenue minister could quite easily today get rid of the 4¢ federal excise tax on diesel fuel and gasoline.

Farmers could come under the wheat board voluntarily. I do not understand why the government and the minister want to give Ontario, Quebec and the provinces outside of Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan a big marketing advantage and the option to decide what is best for their farmers but yet our prairie farmers come under the thumb of the board. Farmers have been told that the only way they can market some wheat or barley is by delivering it strictly to the wheat board. However Ontario and Quebec get whatever they want. They can market whatever they want but not prairie farmers.

Rural issues are big and we have a lot of good solutions and I have mentioned a few of them here.

• (1520)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, years ago when we had a government that cared, particularly about agriculture and western Canada, it passed an act known by western farmers as the Crow rate. It persuaded farmers to get rid of that and there would be no more subsidies.

I would like to ask the member who has just spoken a question. The last year that we had the Crow rate, this government paid out \$760 million in benefits that went directly into the pockets of farmers. Does the member realize that less than 10% of what the government receives in road taxes goes toward grain road improvement in western Canada?

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, when the Crow rate was eliminated in western Canada, the Reform Party of the day had agricultural policies written in our policy book. The Canadian Alliance has those same policies. We would not lower subsidies except in conjunction with those lowered in other countries. While the U.S. and the Europeans were building up their domestic subsidies, the Liberal government was getting rid of all our farm support for western Canadian farmers. That was a direct punishment by this government on our Canadian agriculture, particularly on western farmers.

The other issue he brings up is about roads. We know that some \$4 billion to \$5 billion a year is sent to Ottawa in road taxes. Of that

### *Supply*

amount, I think a few hundred million is spent on roads. I know there was a special program that the government put in place in regard to rail line closures, which would put some extra money into roads in the west. However it was very insufficient. I have driven on roads in the member's riding. The infrastructure money needed there has not been forthcoming from the government and it should be. We need to press the government to get that infrastructure money.

• (1525)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his remarks. I know he has long been a defender of rural Canada and his part of the world.

He spoke recently about a government that cares. The previous speaker who asked him a question alluded to a time when there was a government that cared for western Canada. The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada cared for western Canada. It did not engage in cutting back subsidies that hurt rural Canada. It did not engage in severe cuts to transfer payments to provinces like Saskatchewan and Newfoundland, provinces that needed assistance. They need these subsidies now because of decisions that were made to build this country from the centre.

I would like to ask the hon. member a specific question about aid to farmers, and he is very knowledgeable on the issue. He referenced the fact that there was a need because of drought and conditions over which farmers had no control and because of decisions the government made which took the rug out from under farmers affecting their ability to deal with crops and to get their product to market.

Is he talking about an aid program similar to what we saw with the TAGS program? That program, which was well intended and aimed toward helping fishermen was abused. Surely he would agree that, with the record of HRDC and the government in ensuring the money gets into the hands of the people who need it most, there has to be stringent application of the principles for which one is eligible. There also has to be enforcement and follow up to ensure that the process in place is not being abused.

Is that the type of program for which he is looking for farmers in his riding?

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom:** Mr. Speaker, the trade injury compensation program which farmers and farm organizations are talking about is directly related to grains and oilseed production. We know from government statistics that that has been hurt. Between 1995 and 2000, each year it was \$1.3 billion. That \$1.3 billion was directly related to each of those bushels of production. As a result, any program that the government would come up with or should come up with, would be targeted to the point that there would be no possibility of misuse or abuse of it because the statistics are there as to who produces the grain and how much.

### *Supply*

The government of the past, which kept the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly, cannot be credited with too much in that regard. I know that Charlie Meyer, a former agricultural minister, tried to bring in a voluntary barley market to take the barley out from under the wheat board, but I think the prime minister shot him down. That was really too bad at that time.

I guess we get a little partisan here at times, but it was Kim Campbell who brought us the great firearms bill. She initiated it by saying that we had to figure out how to take firearms away from Canadians. That is the Tory legacy that I remember.

**Mr. Richard Harris (Prince George—Bulkley Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion put forward by my hon. colleague.

We have been debating in the House today the request and demand that the government cease and desist its direct attacks on rural Canadians and rural Canada in general. Those attacks can take place either through action, bad legislation that is aimed to benefit the large urban areas at the expense of the less populated smaller rural areas, or no action at all where rural areas of Canada can suffer economically and socially for whatever reason. Because the Liberals do not see the massive amount of votes that they do in Toronto, for example, they simply choose to ignore the problems that are happening in parts of rural Canada.

I only need to speak to two issues to make my case on this. The first issue of course is the government's gross mismanagement of the softwood lumber issue. In 1996 the government entered into a softwood lumber agreement with the United States. We find that it had no action plan ready when the five year plan was to expire.

We discovered last Friday that the government signed and entered into a five year agreement, in a sector of international trade with the United States that produces the largest balance of payment benefit to Canada of any other industry in Canada, without doing a cost benefit analysis to ascertain whether or not it would be good for Canada.

The member for Okanagan—Shuswap and I went through access to information and asked for all the documents that showed a cost benefit analysis done by the government before signing the softwood lumber agreement. There was not one. On top of that there was no plan on how Canadian softwood lumber producers would carry on after the softwood lumber agreement expired in 2001.

The government watched the SLA merrily go along, oblivious to the warnings of this party. Our members spoke constantly over the last five years about the dangers of the SLA and what to expect at the end. The government walked blindfolded through the cemetery whistling while the SLA was about to expire and the Americans were rattling their sabres. We knew our softwood lumber people were in trouble, but the government did not do a single thing until it was crisis time and then there was a knee-jerk reaction trying to put a band-aid on a massive wound that started five years earlier.

• (1530)

We have talked about how the government can discriminate against rural Canada. This has caused massive layoffs in the forest industry, primarily people who work in rural Canada, in British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec, parts of Ontario and the maritimes where they have softwood logs. The government has virtually

paralyzed many communities in rural Canada that depend on the forest industry for their livelihood because of its inaction.

This inaction displays nothing more than the contempt that the government has for rural Canadians. Why? Because the government considers anything out of the big, mass voting areas as simply not important. The Liberals have looked at rural Canada and seen no fertile ground for votes out there so why give them a hand?

It is so funny. Every election the candidates from the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party say if constituents vote for them, they will make sure that the area of Prince George—Bulkley Valley is well looked after. Both parties had their chance and neither one of them has given any type of recognition to Prince George—Bulkley Valley. That is why the residents in my riding do not really believe the nonsense and the out and out lies that come from the candidates—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would ask the hon. member for Prince George—Bulkley Valley to remove the word lies.

**Mr. Richard Harris:** I will, Mr. Speaker, and I apologize. That is why the constituents of Prince George—Bulkley Valley do not believe the hollow promises that come from Liberal and Tory candidates at election time.

Another example of how the government holds in contempt rural Canada, particularly British Columbia, is by ignoring the massive pine beetle infestation in central British Columbia. This could be considered equal to a natural disaster and the government knows that. The government of British Columbia has made a formal request for help with its five year plan to try and salvage whatever wood it can from this mega area of British Columbia. The area of infestation is three times the size of Vancouver Island.

The government has done nothing. It has stood by and ignored this problem despite requests in the House from myself and the members for Cariboo—Chilcotin, Prince George—Peace River, Skeena, North Vancouver and my colleague from Kamloops. The government has ignored requests from the province of British Columbia itself. Billions of dollars in taxes have gone into the federal coffers from the forest industry in British Columbia and the government has simply not responded to the plea for help from the province and the people who depend on the forest industry for their livelihood. That is another example of the contempt the government has for rural Canadians.

The Minister for International Trade has called the tariff duty slapped on us by the softwood lumber people in the United States obscene. He blamed the breakdown of talks on cynical U.S. lobbyists. The Prime Minister said that he is disappointed that the softwood lumber talks have failed. They are using words like obscene, cynical and disappointed, but let me use those same words. It is obscene the contempt that the government has for rural Canadians. I am disappointed it has treated rural Canadians this way. I am very cynical in any belief that it will recognize the importance of rural Canadians and the contribution they have made to this country.

The government has brought in the endangered species bill. This bill would put rural Canadians at risk of being charged with perhaps accidentally stepping on a wild seed plant that has grown onto their territory. They are apt to have land seized by the government and quarantined without compensation.

• (1535)

The government has brought in Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals bill. This bill will put farmers, dairy people, horse breeders and medical researchers at risk of harassment charges brought forward by some of the more wacko animal rights groups that run around this country.

All of this flies in the face of rural Canadians. If this government were ever to expect to have any type of respect from rural Canadians, it would have to start recognizing that rural Canada is an important part of this country. It should not throw all of its eggs into the baskets of Metro Toronto, Winnipeg, Montreal or Vancouver.

It is unfortunate that our party's motion is not votable because it would be supported by large numbers in the House. It would also be supported by massive numbers of rural Canadians who refuse to believe the hollow promises of the Liberal government. Rural Canadians have demonstrated their refusal to believe those hollow promises by their lack of support at the polls and the support will continue to fall for that party.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest to the rather fiery, freewheeling and somewhat frivolous rhetoric coming from the hon. member.

We had seen a lot of this mean-spirited, mealy-mouthed attack throughout the debate but I have yet to hear anything productive from the hon. member. It is the same old Reform wrecking ball approach, tar everyone with the same brush, and throw in some snide references to the Conservatives and previous governments. He will be the last person to be intellectually honest and admit that there were previous governments that did good things for rural Canada.

The Progressive Conservative Party did a lot to help the west. It brought in free trade, put in infrastructure such as the Confederation Bridge, put in projects such as the frigate project in Saint John, New Brunswick. It helped people in regions who needed the government's help.

What are we hearing from this member and from his party to help build a targeted strategy for rural Canada? What are we hearing from him? We are hearing some vague references to everything that is wrong in the country and the fact that his party brought up questions of this for the past five or ten years.

Thankfully it has never been in government where it had to make hard decisions, where it had to spend political capital to get things done, as did the previous Progressive Conservative government.

It is all about besmirching people's names, tarring the record and repeating baseless allegations about people's reputations. That is what we get from this member constantly.

Why do we not hear something productive about what we can do for regions that need help? Regions like his own. What will we do in terms of improving relations between the provinces and the federal

### *Supply*

government to do away with things like clawbacks from provinces such as Nova Scotia, which has its offshore oil and gas revenues clawed back by the federal government? What will we do about fuel tax money that is being taken out roads instead of being put in or the ways in which we can improve upon legislation, improve upon the tax regimes that hurt students and entrepreneurs? What sort of positive initiatives could we hear from this member?

I fully expect that he will ignore the question. He will get up and make some other snide comment about a previous government. Let us hear something positive from his mouth for a change.

• (1540)

**Mr. Richard Harris:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted that the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough has become the latest apologist for the Liberal government. I am sure it will welcome him with open arms.

Obviously he was not listening because I did talk about the requests that the province of B.C. had made to the federal government to assist with its plan to fight the mountain pine beetle. It is a \$500 million five year plan that would include salvaging whatever wood is salvageable in that infested area, and cleaning out and trimming old growth pines, which are the most attractive tree for pine beetles.

The federal government has received billions of dollars in tax money from the forest industry over the last several decades. Yet now in a time of need when the forest industry is suffering, workers are out of work and families are suffering, and despite the fact that we have the senior minister from British Columbia here who knows well the beetle infestation problem in British Columbia, the federal government has not lifted a finger to respond to the request that the B.C. government has made for assistance in fighting the mountain pine beetle.

Earlier I talked about the need for the federal government to have people negotiating with the Americans who actually knew what they were talking about and who knew the severity of the crisis that the softwood lumber impasse was causing working Canadians. The member down there did not hear that as well.

I talked about the 30,000 British Columbia forest workers and workers in related industries who are out of work. I talked about the fact that the Minister for International Trade has failed to recognize this problem and has instead simply said that is the way it goes.

There are a number of ways the government could address the problems of rural Canadians. It simply has not done it, and that is too bad.

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with some interest to my colleague from northern British Columbia who spoke a moment ago. I am interested, of course, as to why the Alliance has brought forward this motion at this time. It is very clear that if you analyze the questions that have been asked in the House over the last period, and we can pick any period we like, six months, one year, two years, we will find that the Alliance has not been doing its job for rural Canada. It is quite understandable what those members have decided to do now: suddenly have a whole day's debate on the issue of rural Canada.

### *Supply*

However, I can understand why, with them having dropped the ball so badly in support of the people who are their constituents while they rushed off to find imaginary scandals here and imaginary scandals there. They did all of this stuff while ignoring the constituents, ignoring the people of northern British Columbia and ignoring the people in the softwood lumber industry. They did all that, sure, and now they recognize that they are being severely criticized by the people out there in rural Canada and they are trying to recover.

It is a pretty shabby performance so far. It is the usual over the top rhetoric, which we heard from the hon. member, and of course the usual appeal to divisions in rural Canada and urban Canada. It is the usual approach, which has nothing to do with any of the problems of rural Canada.

Let me pick up on the hon. member's comment with respect to the pine beetle infestation in northern B.C. which he mentioned—

**An hon. member:** Are you really from British Columbia?

**Hon. David Anderson:** Now of course he is shouting to prevent me from talking about it.

He is right, it is an area of twice the size of Vancouver Island. What is the cause? The cause is the change in climatic conditions, which is leading to less cold weather in winter and more snow, resulting in these beetles' overwintering and survival. Does he know that? He apparently does not because he is shouting at this time in his usual way, talking about something, but not talking about the issue in front of the House.

The reason for that is of course climate change, and rural Canada is suffering from climate change far more than urban Canada and it is suffering far faster than other countries such as the United States, which this party regards of course as the sine qua non which we must always follow in every respect.

Those members are wrong, because rural Canada is suffering. We have, as I mentioned, the problem of the pine beetle in northern British Columbia. We have the problem of drought year after year in southern Alberta. The problems we are facing simply cannot be papered over with yet another spending program, which that party keeps insisting is the solution for every ill: spend more money. Whenever the Alliance comes to any detailed problem, it is "spend more money". Of course they are against it in general, but when it comes down to winning proposals, "spend more money" is the only thing they have to offer, as the hon. member has just done.

With respect to southern Alberta it is the same thing. With respect to areas such as the fisheries of British Columbia we are seeing the Pacific salmon move out of the Pacific and into the Bering Sea because of water temperature changes. We are seeing the same types of effects on the Atlantic coast. We are seeing problems such as the Red River flood and the Saguenay River flood and the ice storm here in eastern Canada in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick. We are seeing all these extreme weather events hitting rural Canada and the Alliance has not bothered to pick up on it. Those members have not made the connection between the climate change problem on the one hand and the problems of rural Canada on the other.

In fact, when questioned recently, on April 4, just about a month ago, the hon. member for Red Deer, the Alliance's environment critic called the Alliance position opposing Kyoto "a political advantage" that "will help our fundraising".

This is the approach the Alliance members take to the problems of rural Canada: ignore them so that they can improve their fundraising. That is the approach they take and that is the approach they think the government should follow. No way will we follow the lead of those people when it comes to rural Canada or indeed any other part of Canada, because it is a wrongheaded approach, it is a selfish approach and it ignores the interests of rural Canada.

My hon. friend from northern British Columbia who spoke earlier talked about the species at risk bill. We have consistently worked with rural people on this legislation. We had 155 consultative sessions, the majority of which were in rural Canada. They talked and we listened. We adjusted our policies. We changed our approaches. We deleted and altered sections of the bill because we listened to rural Canada.

● (1545)

Bill C-5 on species at risk is rural friendly, because if it were not I would not be here presenting it. I said last year before committee, before the House and everywhere I have spoken throughout the country that if the bill is not accepted by rural people, by people who are farmers, who are ranchers, who work in the woods or who are trappers or fishermen, then the bill is a failure. The reason is straightforward: those people live where the endangered species are. All these lawyers and professors are in classrooms and courtrooms and there are very few endangered species in classrooms and courtrooms, very few indeed. Out there where the rural people are is where the species are and that is why the legislation has been tailored to be rural friendly to the very people I have mentioned.

There is a balance here between the rights of landowners and land users and of course the species at risk. It is based upon co-operation, not coercion. It is based upon building trust, not just looking tough, as some have proposed. It is a part of the overall strategy to assist rural Canadians. In fact, at the present time we are spending some \$10 million in rural Canada, right now, before the legislation has even come in, on about 108 recovery programs for species at risk. We are working with the rural people and creating stewardship programs, working to make sure that they are comfortable with what we are doing to protect endangered species. We have 160 habitat stewardship programs, currently engaging more than 400 individuals and organizations across the country. I have many examples here, but I will skip them because of course we are pressed for time. However, I will point out that this is what we are doing. We are getting out there with rural people to do what they do very well. I reject and will continue to reject the concept that we need to use the whip or a coercive law to get rural people to do the right thing. Instead, we will use incentives.

*Supply*

The issue of compensation has come up a number of times. There are compensation provisions in the bill, as I have replied to members here, but if we try in anticipation to write out every single possible eventuality whereby we think rural people might get assistance, then we will undoubtedly write laws which will exclude some because we have not had experience with the legislation. We have tried. We have had some very detailed work done by experts in this area. We have tried but failed to write that kind of legislation, so we will get three or four years of experience working under this legislation, whereby we will provide compensation where it is appropriate, on an ex gratia basis, and then we will write the regulations because we will then have the experience that we do not have now.

I would just like to end on this note. I have in my hand an editorial from the *Edmonton Journal*, which states, look, we have discussed the bill and discussed the bill, and it is high time now to simply get on with it, get it passed and get it working, and we can make the changes that we may need four or five years hence. I think it is really important to do that. I would suggest to the hon. members opposite that if they have the slightest interest in rural Canada that is what they should do too.

• (1550)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I find it pretty hard to sit here and listen to the minister, having had so much to do with him over the last year and a half, and really believe that he thinks any farmer out there, anyone in rural Canada, those he calls the frontline soldiers, would trust that tirade that he just went through in telling them that the whole thing is coming down, the sky is falling, and saying to look at the science.

The science does not confirm that. We have just had the coldest April and the second coldest March in history. Is that climate change? Maybe we have climate cooling occurring. We had two feet of snow this past weekend. Maybe that is climate cooling. Maybe an ice age is coming.

This is the kind of garbage that we have to listen to from this minister. He puts everything onto Kyoto. If we have an ice storm, if we have a flood, it is Kyoto right now. The reality is that there are better ways. There are alternative fuels. There is alternative energy. There are all kinds of transitional fuels out there.

However, the government has no dedication. It is sitting on its hands and kowtowing to the Europeans. Meanwhile, it could be doing something. It could be doing something to really make a difference for the agricultural community of the country. This government does not care about farmers.

• (1555)

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I gather you cut me off because my time is being shared with the member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, but I would like to respond to the hon. member.

He talks about the science being bad. What he forgets to point out is that scientific opinion on a ratio of about 1,000:10 has confirmed that the general feeling of scientists is that these extreme weather events are linked to climate change. He has forgotten that 110 of the living winners of the Nobel science prize agree that science shows climate change is a cause for these extreme events and we are suffering climate change now.

It is easy for him to get up and shout in the House that the science is wrong, but the other side never provides any science that suggests it is wrong. It just provides the usual Alliance rhetoric, which is so much like all the rest of the rhetoric it produces that it really does not add up to a sensible statement.

Furthermore, it is fine for him to say that no people in rural Canada support the government on species at risk. I can assure him he is quite wrong. We have substantial support and the reason is that we have written the bill and we have protected the bill from people who would change it to be coercive. We have written it to support rural people. He should know that. He is the very member who said that the his party's Kyoto position would help its fundraising. Now he stands in the House to say the government is all wrong and the Alliance is okay. No. The Alliance sacrificed the rights and the interests of rural people to its fundraising campaign.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a very straightforward question for the Minister of the Environment. He knows that the Americans have put an extra \$73 billion in their farm bill, and now it is \$180 billion. It is devastating for our farmers and devastating for our economy.

We now have a surplus in the federal budget estimated at being between \$7 billion and \$10 billion. Would the minister be in favour of spending \$1.3 billion of that, as the ministers at the provincial level are asking for, in order to help farmers in this time of crisis? I ask the minister that, not the parliamentary secretary.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that I am being followed by an expert in the area of agricultural financing, so I will defer to the member from Hastings on this question.

I know, as he said to the House so eloquently and effectively today, that last year we put \$3.7 billion into farm support. That shows that we on this side are willing to listen to a good case being made by people who may be suffering or who are in difficulty. It is clear from our record that we are willing to do that.

I will put the question regarding details of any further expenditures in the hands of my hon. colleague, who is more knowledgeable than I am.

**The Deputy Speaker:** A brief question, please, from the member for Wild Rose.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Brief, Mr. Speaker? It is too bad that it has to be brief. This minister deserves more than that.

For about half of my life I lived in the United States and for the other half I have lived in Canada. During my time in the United States I saw the effect of the laws brought in regarding endangered species. They have been proven over and over again to be a dismal failure in the United States. I have relatives who have lost land, with no compensation. I have friends who have lost land, with no compensation. Along with all that, we have examples down there of endangered species that were destroyed because of foolish legislation that is very similar to what this minister is attempting to bring into this country. Why can he not be smart enough to learn from the mistakes of others and fix this document before he dares to bring it in as legislation?

*Supply*

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, it is one of those times that I am delighted to agree with virtually everything the member for Wild Rose has said. I have consistently said we do not want American style legislation because it does not work. That is why we have made this legislation rural friendly. That is why we have avoided the stick and talked about the carrot instead.

I entirely agree with him. I have had experience with that American legislation on the west coast with regard to coho salmon. The American legislation was not worth anything in protecting coho while the Canadian Fisheries Act was quite successful. On the east coast it was the same situation with Atlantic salmon. Indeed, I read something in the paper not too long ago about the right whale off the southern coast of Nova Scotia, and the hon. member from Nova Scotia will know this, where the Americans are asking why it is that the Canadians are so much more successful in their programs to protect this animal than the Americans when Canadians are using the Fisheries Act and the Americans are using endangered species legislation.

I agree with the hon. member entirely. We do not want American legislation here in Canada.

**An hon. member:** Get rid of it. It's worse.

• (1600)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, there is obviously a lot of global warming going on in here.

I have a very straightforward question for the hon. member who comes from the province of British Columbia. He has talked a great deal about his policies and his government's enactments. Could he tell the House and Canadians what one meaningful legislative change in almost a decade has his government brought in? What meaningful legislation has his government produced in almost a decade to protect the environment? We know that the Kyoto position was made up in the back of a cab on the way to the conference, but when will his government actually deliver a piece of legislation that will help protect the environment?

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I am amazed the member would ask that question when his party is holding up the species at risk legislation which is in the House and should be passed right now. It is not the time to join with his cousins in the Alliance who seem to think it should be cancelled.

It is time for the Tories to take a wake-up call and do the right thing.

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. It is a very rare occasion when we have an opportunity to ask a minister questions. It does not happen very often in the House. I wonder if he would consent to allowing us to ask him a few more questions.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I am sharing my time with the hon. member for Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington who is more knowledgeable about some of the questions being asked.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to give the hon. Minister of the Environment five more minutes to answer

questions? This will not encroach on the time of the Parliamentary Secretary for the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Larry McCormick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague who brought forth the motion today. The wording of the motion was not exactly what we would have agreed to but any time we get to talk about rural Canada in the House is very important.

As someone mentioned earlier today, for rural Canada to be healthy we also need a healthy urban Canada. Guess who the consumers are in the country? They also live in urban Canada.

We are concerned about the U.S. farm bill and yet 75%, 85% or 87% of everything we produce goes to the United States. After we argue we have to work together. I do appreciate this opportunity to work together on behalf of rural Canada.

I appreciate the opportunity today to talk about how the policies of our government support the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians and the communities in which they live.

The Government of Canada has confidence in the future, unlike my hon. colleagues across the floor. More specifically, the Government of Canada has confidence in the future and confidence in our rural communities.

The drought situation and the U.S. farm bill only underline the importance of the work we are doing to move the sector beyond crisis management. That is why the government is working with the provincial and territorial governments, the industry and Canadian citizens on an action plan to put in place an agricultural policy framework.

This policy is about the future. It is designed to improve the long term livelihood and the profitability of Canadian farmers. I say improve because we already have various measures in place to help Canadian farmers be successful in the face of adversities such as drought.

The Government of Canada knows the serious impact drought can have on producers and on their businesses. Accordingly, we are actively engaged in helping farmers mitigate the effects of drought in both the short term and the long term.

The 2,400 projects approved through the Canada—Saskatchewan livestock farm water program, for example, will be available to help alleviate the impact of drought on Saskatchewan livestock producers for the year 2002. The federal government has provided an additional \$1.1 million to this program to help producers for the current crop year.

The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration delivers numerous programs that assist producers in adapting and mitigating the effects of drought. This work builds on the \$1.1 billion we have invested so far this year in agriculture to help our farmers manage the short term and the income losses due to perils such as drought.

*Supply*

We are dealing with today's challenges but there are a lot more challenges coming at us. For farming to survive and thrive as a modern industry in the 21st century, we must be ready to meet the challenges they hold. This industry has always adapted to the face of challenges. We did it through innovation, adaptation and change. Challenges have taught what works and what does not work. We know what does not work and, first and foremost, it is subsidies.

The Americans have said that their farm bill is about trade liberalization. Well they are wrong. It is about protectionism. They say that the farm bill is market driven. It is not. The U.S. farm bill is mailbox driven. Instead of encouraging American producers to reap the rewards of trade liberalization, the new farm bill will encourage many to harvest handouts from the American treasury, handouts that often go to the landowners rather than to the producers.

I certainly share the frustration felt by our producer groups over the outrageous action being taken by the Americans to heavily subsidize their industry. These subsidies are not only harmful to the U.S. farmers in the long run but they have a serious effect on our Canadian farmers. American agricultural policy distorts food prices, frustrates innovation, limits product diversity and subsidizes a select group of farmers at enormous public cost.

Its inherent protectionism qualities confound American efforts to reduce protectionism abroad and gain access to new markets. By the way, those are not my words. They are directly from an American legislator.

This spiraling of subsidies discourages adaptation, diversification and profitable business growth and expansion. It saps creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

• (1605)

In Saskatchewan, for example, farmers have adapted to new market demands by tripling production of non-wheat crops. Now the U.S. has shown its brut strength by flexing its farm bill muscles.

Canada cannot compete on equal terms but we must fight smarter, and that we will do. We must get away from farm policies that merely prop up the past, as the U.S. has chosen to do. Rather, we must adopt policies that work toward building the future.

We need to guarantee Canadian farmers success for the future. We need a comprehensive, integrated approach to help our industry adapt to the demand of consumers and take advantage of the opportunities in the global marketplace without production and trade distorting subsidies.

The proposed agricultural policy framework aims to promote innovation among producers so that we can better focus on the concerns and demands of consumers who are the ultimate clients, whether they happen to live above, below or beyond our common borders.

We recognize, however, that our policy decisions in agriculture impact not only farmers. These decisions must also meet the needs and expectations of all citizens. Benefits, such as healthy and safe food, a clean environment, vibrant rural communities and responsible use of taxpayer money, all enhance the quality of life of all citizens.

We are working together, governments and industry, to increase the profitability of the agriculture sector by branding Canada as the world leader in food safety and quality, innovation and environmental protection, and providing the tools for Canadians to thrive and prosper in the 21st century.

The agriculture policy framework has five components that are integrated with each other: risk management for farm businesses; on farm food safety; protection of the environment; renewal for the sector; and innovation through research and science.

Business risk management is critical to the agriculture policy framework. We are working with farmers to develop a risk management approach that rewards the use of best practices in food safety and environmental protection, the adoption of innovations to expand and diversify the farm business, and the improvement of managerial and strategic planning skills acquired through the renewal activities.

We recognize that farmers face unique risks. We also recognize that we need to move away from an approach based on past performance to one based on the future potential, an approach that will encourage farmers to take action to address risk.

Combined with the other elements of the policy framework, this approach would put us in a position to address new challenges and capture new opportunities.

We want to build on Canada's reputation as a producer of safe food by strengthening our on farm food safety systems. Safety runs through the entire food chain, including on the farm. That is why many sectors in Canada are well on their way to implementing comprehensive systems such as HACCP based programs. These programs help prevent hazards that could cause food borne illnesses by applying science based controls throughout the production chain, from raw materials to finished products.

In addition to improving food safety, these additional systems, which may include product tracking and tracing, can be a valuable tool for non-food safety reasons when suppliers and producers align their systems to meet the needs of buyers, such as product identity preservation.

Consumers' concerns about food safety are matched by their concerns about the health of the environment. Canadian farmers are good stewards of the land but new farming production techniques and a shift toward larger, more intensive operations can sometimes mean greater risk to the environment if we do not do it properly.

### Supply

Governments and industry are working together to develop a comprehensive system in which every farm in Canada is taking the best steps to ensure that its practices strengthen our stewardship of water, soil and air quality, and foster compatibility between agriculture and biodiversity.

That is why science and innovation are such an important part of the new policy framework.

Science has tremendous potential to help us deliver on farm food safety, strengthen environmental stewardship and create new products for the benefit of farmers and the public. It is imperative, though, that we have the confidence of the public and that we are seen to be applying sound science responsibly and with environmental benefits.

•(1610)

Innovation is certainly the key to unlocking the door to success in the 21st century. By being innovative we can develop new products that meet consumer choices and we can capture new markets. All the elements of the agriculture policy framework: business management; actions on food safety; measures to enhance environmental performance; better use of science and innovation; and more opportunities to enhance business management through renewal skills; all these components are integrated to help ensure the success of the sector.

The agricultural policy framework is the agricultural sector's muscle. It needs to be strong and it needs to have all of us working together. That is how we will build a successful and thriving agricultural sector which is the best contribution we can make to rural Canada.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I just realized I will not have to do much in the way of fertilizing this year. I will just scatter the member's *Hansard* record on the field and I will have a bounteous crop with the fertilizer he just spread.

He went on and on about how the Liberals are taking their time to come up with sound policy that will benefit the future of farming and that farmers will be better off in the future because of the sound policy. What about the present? These folks have to get through this year. They have come through three or four bad years.

There are programs that the government did implement and AIDA and CFIP, the son of AIDA. The member talked glowingly about the \$1 billion that went in. Of the farmers in Saskatchewan that I represent, nobody qualified. Most of it was eaten up in administration. The problem we are running into now is that the people who did qualify for a few nickels and dimes in 1998 are having it clawed back because the rules were changed arbitrarily. It is being clawed back plus interest and penalties.

I would like the member to explain to my farmers why when they finally received a few nickels and dimes from the government, the rules were changed arbitrarily, retroactively. It is being clawed back plus interest and penalties. Anywhere else that would be called loansharking.

•(1615)

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure about the exact riding of my hon. colleague, but I have been to Saskatchewan quite a few times since September. I have met with many farmers.

Our previous programs have not always been the best but in the last three years, \$2 billion went to producers in Saskatchewan. It was not enough and yes, last year more than \$1 billion went directly to the producers. We are not like the United States. It did not go to all the landowners. It did not go to all the business people. It did not go to all the people in the cities. It went to the farmers.

At the moment, the federal minister of agriculture and Clay Serby, your minister of agriculture—

**An hon. member:** He is not the minister.

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** Yes he is your minister. He is the deputy leader.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would caution members to address their comments through the Chair. It would be helpful from time to time. Besides, I kind of like it up here and I do not want to be left out.

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we would not want to leave you out because I know you work very hard on behalf of your producers. I know that your producers were here in town the other day.

That is why our ministers are meeting across the street. The new minister from Ontario and all the provincial ministers are there.

We are all on the same side of the issue. We have to get all the available resources possible. That is why a week ago Friday I congratulated the member from western Ontario and the Prime Minister's task force. I also thanked my colleagues in the Alliance for the good work they did on the standing committee for agriculture, along with my colleague from Miramichi, New Brunswick.

It is unfortunate that we happen to have a person here today who wants to be very political with his question and say that nickels went to Saskatchewan. Not enough money went to Saskatchewan but in the throne speech we had to move beyond crisis management. That is why we are working together.

The minister from Saskatchewan has asked for more money. Whether there is going to be \$1.3 billion more, I do know that but more than \$1 billion has already gone out this year. I happen to have the figures here. I would be glad to show my friend who just spoke how much money has gone to Saskatchewan. It is more than \$1 billion.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the hon. member's remarks. He has a great deal of compassion for the struggles of rural Canada and for farmers in particular. I ask the hon. member, how is it that he lives with the policies that his government has been producing? They are not consistent with being empathetic and sympathetic toward the plight of rural Canada.



*Supply*

He knows that in the species at risk bill, it is not the species that are at risk, it is the property owners. They are the people in rural Canada who might have their property seized or may have to foot the bill for the relocation of an endangered species. How does the member live with the fact that the government has brought in legislation that hurts rural landowners and farmers in particular with respect to the cruelty to animals legislation?

Bill C-15B and Bill C-5 are two perfect recent examples of his government's attack on rural Canada, not to mention the ill-fated useless gun registry that is still being perpetrated at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. These are concrete examples of his government's policies.

The hon. member from Miramichi is shaking his head because it is good for his riding but it comes at a huge cost to the rights and privileges of farmers, fishermen and people who legitimately use guns.

How is it that the member can defend that record and say that he stands for rural Canada?

**Mr. Larry McCormick:** Mr. Speaker, representing rural Canada in the House is sometimes a challenge because many people live in urban Canada.

I am happy about the progress we are making with many of the bills in the House. With regard to the species at risk legislation, the government is not seizing land. It is a partnership and we are working with farmers and ranchers. I have met with many ranchers and farmers in western Canada.

I am not sure the previous Conservative government should have started up the firearms registry the way it did. I am not sure that was handled well.

There is a difference between rural and urban Canada. To have a wealthy rural Canada and for our farmers to get the best prices for their products, we also need a good, vital, rich urban Canada. We have to work together in the House on behalf of rural Canadians.

• (1620)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Provencher.

I represent a riding that is both urban and rural. My riding has a lot of farmers. The endangered species in my riding certainly are the Liberals, because no one who is a farmer would vote Liberal. Farmers know what the government is like. They know what a lack of concern the Liberals have for agriculture.

We had to listen to the minister talk about the sky is falling and all the bad weather with not signing Kyoto. In actual fact if he were to admit it, it is a flawed agreement. There are much better ways to handle global warming. Yes, we should deal with it but certainly not through that flawed Kyoto agreement.

When farmers in my area hear about Kyoto they understand they will lose 30% of their jobs because most of them have to work off the farm. When national energy program one came along, 30% of them lost their houses, their land and their jobs. They know that Kyoto will cost at least that and more.

I want to talk primarily about Bill C-5 and the assault on rural property owners that it represents. We sat in committee for nine months. The minister talked about the farmers, the ranchers, the foresters, the oil and gas workers, the miners all being frontline soldiers. He said here again today that they were the people who had to co-operate if we were to protect species at risk.

We as a party want to protect species at risk. We want legislation that will work. That is the key difference.

Witnesses appeared before the environment committee month after month. We came up with over 300 amendments. We worked as a team on the environment committee to build something we all felt would work.

When the bill came back to the House the government turned back 138 of those amendments. It reversed them and went back to legislation that is exactly the same as legislation we would find in the United States which for 28 years has been nothing but a failure and has resulted in litigation instead of any kind of conservation.

That is what the government really stands for. Obviously it has not worked and it really does not care. The Liberals do not care about environmentalists. They do not care about business. They do not care about farmers. That is what the bill tells us. There is no habitat protection. There is no compensation. There is no mens rea.

There are horrendous penalties. Even though a farmer does not know that he has an endangered species on his land, and the government will not tell him, the farmer could get a \$250,000 fine, five years in jail and a criminal record. There are not a lot of other offences with those kinds of penalties, except maybe gun control, as has been mentioned. Those kinds of penalties do not say the government wants to co-operate with rural landowners. They certainly are not farmer friendly.

There is no money budgeted for compensation. The minister says that the government is going to see how it works and in special cases it will give money. There is no money budgeted. Yes, there is \$45 million to handle the administration, but that is for the administration. We have found what happens when the government talks about the administration of things. It said that Bill C-68 would never cost more than \$85 million and now we know it is \$1 billion and growing. That is the kind of shell game and misrepresentation we have seen.

There is not a farmer in the country who would believe the government is really going to give them compensation.

Clause 64 of the bill states "The minister shall"—it was "may" but now it is going to be "shall", because that means everything—"in accordance with the regulations provide fair and reasonable compensation".

### Supply

•(1625)

What is fair and reasonable compensation and what does it mean to have it in the regulations? What it really means is that if there were no regulations there would be no compensation. There is no money budgeted for compensation. How can the government stand in this place and say there would be compensation?

Fair and reasonable is just that, whatever that means to whomever is making that decision. Some would say the Pearse report. It said if people suffer under a 10% loss they should get 50% compensation. Farmers and ranchers are not a bunch of greedy people waiting to sell their land. All they want, if they lose their piece of land, is to get fair market value. I have talked with a lot of people about what the difference is. Fair and reasonable is anything. It could be the Pearse report or whatever the government dreams up. But fair market value is taken by the sale of land around and an appraisal. This is a shell game.

The chairman of the rural caucus stated there were serious flaws pertaining to land compensation. He said:

Landowners must be compensated for loss of property enjoyment that results from compliance with the provisions of the act. Farmers tell me that any coercive approach to species protection will inevitably lead to many cases, with farmers and others faced with taking land out of production, resorting to a three S scenario — shoot, shovel, shut up.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association seemed to have bought into the government's shell game, but it said there were problems with: lack of certainty regarding availability and scope of compensation, use of strict liability offence as opposed to *mens rea*, and lack of species notification. It also found fault with it even though it was told to follow the government line.

Farmers are saying the legislation will not work. Why did the government put forward the legislation? Why does it keep saying there is compensation? It is saying that because in actual fact the Minister of the Environment lost the battle at the cabinet table. In fact, one cabinet minister stated:

Removing compensation from C-5 altogether would be the ideal case from my point of view, but this is unlikely given the expectations of resource users.

That is what we have. Rural Canadians out there have no compensation. It might be in the regulations, but we will not draw them up. It will be fair and reasonable, but we will not define what that is. So in actual fact, when Canadians want to save a species, they will not contribute to the saving of that species. That is all that rural people in this country want. It is simply to be dealt with fairly.

Obviously there would be no regulations and no compensation. The government should stand up and honestly say we need this piece of legislation because we agreed to it in 1992 in a biodiversity convention. That is why it is putting it in. It is not going to enforce it. It has no money to enforce it. It has no money for compensation and so this piece of legislation is on the books, but it is really of little use. It will not save habitat. It will not save species at risk. It will not help farmers and is a total failure to rural Canadians.

•(1630)

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. friend is a valuable member of a committee that has worked very hard, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

I sometimes hear his colleagues who are anxious to speak on this piece of legislation and I have been prompted to suggest to my good friend that he could perhaps read the legislation to some of his colleagues.

I hear a bit of a theme in his comments. I must say that it puzzles me somewhat. Members opposite talk about Kyoto, the fact that the science is flawed and that we should not continue down the road of consulting with Canadians so that we have the figures. We have a framework in place so that there is some surety, when we do ratify, about where we are going with this. This would seem to me and to the government as a sound way to go about bringing in good public legislation.

Members opposite talk about species at risk. Again, they want something in the legislation that is devoid of the kind of consultation and experience that we feel is necessary. Compensation is one of the tools that needs to be in the kit for species at risk because the government realizes that there is a continuum.

I am a little puzzled at the \$45 million that my hon. colleague mentioned. That money has been put in and is being spent as we speak in stewardship programs to invite the very rural people to whom he is referring: ranchers, fishers, farmers and trappers. We have active programs where people are building nesting boxes for the burrowing owl and great programs in Ontario protecting the loggerhead shrike in its habitat. This year alone we have spent \$10 million. The government is showing its good intent and is putting its money where its mouth is.

We need experience on the ground because the framework of the species at risk legislation is one of co-operation and voluntary partnership. There is no intent to have side door expropriation. I am a little bit disconcerted that Alliance members continue to talk about species at risk as if the government were looking for a side door entrance into expropriation. We have a regime of expropriation if that was the intent of the government, however we are looking at partnerships with people on the land.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of issues to deal with there and the first is the Kyoto issue. Government members say how wonderful Kyoto will be and how much it will accomplish. The reality is emissions trading for example. When we have a dirty company and a clean company, the dirty company pays the clean company by emissions credits, but we still have the same amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the air. Internationally, a country that is producing CO<sub>2</sub> buys from some poor country that does not have any industry. Do we really expect that will help clean the air? We are still releasing the same amount of emissions. We are just transferring wealth. Kyoto is politics.

*Supply*

Let us get into something that will really help the environment. Let us get on with alternate energy and transitional fuels. That is what it is about. It is common sense, not anything to do with this game the government wants to play. Emissions trading equals bureaucracy.

The member just confirmed there is no money for compensation because \$10 million of the money we thought might be there for helping the environment is already spent. Members should wait until the court actions start. We want compensation but not just in dollars.

There are wolves in Yellowstone. A private trust has been set up so anybody who suffers a wolf kill in that area is paid full market value for the cow, the calf or whatever. That works. Wolves are there and we are happy to have them there, but the landowner has been compensated. It does not have to be compensation from the government. It can be private trusts or all kinds of things but the government refuses to look at that. The government will just not listen to common sense.

The hon. member mentioned the committee. The committee worked very hard and then had 138 amendments turned back after all the work it did. That is an embarrassment to the House.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for South Shore, Fisheries and Oceans.

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak in favour of today's Canadian Alliance motion that calls on the Liberal government to stop its legislative and political attacks on the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians and their communities. I believe we have heard enough patronizing and naive comments from the other side in respect of this serious issue. We must look at the issues before us and look at ways to resolve some of these difficult concerns.

As the member of parliament for the primarily rural riding of Provencher in southeastern Manitoba I am proud to represent a large population of farmers and other rural Canadians who are some of the hardest working, honest and law-abiding citizens in this country.

However they are faced with an unholy trinity of legislation, some of which is still under consideration by the House. I fear that this legislative package would put our farmers into an unworkable situation. Time and again we have seen the government implement ineffective and costly legislation that pits rural Canadians against urban Canadians.

The legislation I am referring to is Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals legislation and Bill C-5, the species at risk legislation. They have been on the House agenda for over a year, but it is only because of sustained opposition efforts that public awareness about the true nature and anti-rural character of these bills is finally being understood. Bill C-68, the Firearms Act, has been in place since 1995 and every year the price tag increases while crime is getting worse.

The new species at risk bill, if passed, would give the federal government the right to expropriate land from farmers and other rural individuals without any obligation to compensate for losses.

Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals legislation, introduces the risk of harassment to farmers from private legal prosecutions funded by radical urban based animal rights organizations who are claiming the debt that they claim the former justice minister owes them for supporting her during the last federal election.

Even if prosecutions by these radical animal rights groups were not successful, the legal process involved would impose a financial burden that few could afford. In addition, we also have the Kyoto agreement that threatens to dramatically push up costs without any substantive evidence that it will improve our global environment. The member for Red Deer stated that all we are doing is playing a shell game. The earth is a global entity. We cannot simply push off dirty air in exchange for clean air and think somehow the dirty air is being reduced in the process.

The third bill, Bill C-68, has targeted primarily rural Canadians for owning long guns and yet these individuals have been law-abiding families for generations. We heard today from one of the Canadian Alliance members that while farmers are being harassed and prosecuted for not registering long guns, the government is busy handing out licences and registrations to leaders of criminal organizations in Canada. This is at a cost of \$700 million and climbing at a cost of \$100 million a year. Last year's estimates showed that the registry would cost \$35 million. The true numbers came in at \$149 million in direct costs.

I do not believe that the government is against rural Canadians. It is indifferent to rural Canadians. It is banking on passing legislation that will build support in urban areas at the cost of rural Canada. Instead of looking at Canada as a whole whereby we should be working together, the government takes advantage of a smaller population to impose politically expedient but ineffective programs.

● (1635)

By calling for discretionary compensation in Bill C-5 the environment minister is asking Canadians to trust the government with their land and livelihood. He says compensation should not be such a big issue because the government is willing to pay landowners dollar for dollar for any losses they would face. If this is truly the case why does he not make the commitment explicit in the legislation? Why does he not say in the legislation that farmers and landowners would be compensated dollar for dollar at fair market value?

### *Supply*

The government is trying to get the legislation through the House by offering vague assurances that regulations would be formulated to compensate landowners. Such regulations would be drafted in the secrecy of cabinet meetings. Even the government's own backbenchers would have no input into them. There may well be Liberal backbenchers here today who say we should trust the government. However they do not realize that the regulations would be passed in the same secretive way in which the government acts on matters crucial to the integrity and effectiveness of our rural economy and the larger Canadian economy.

Our farmers are unable to take any more financial blows. While some landowners in the past have voluntarily co-operated in species recovery programs without full, fair or, in some cases, any compensation the large majority of farmers and landowners today are not financially able to make such sacrifices in the name of the public good.

If a species at risk is important and worth saving why should it be done on the backs of rural Canadians? Why could we not all share in the cost? If it is good for the country we should let the country as a whole pay for it. We should not take it out of the livelihood and land of our rural people.

Bill C-5 sets out some scary criminal provisions. Its low requirement for mens rea or guilty mind would enable prosecutors at the direction of the minister to prosecute farmers for even inadvertent destruction of habitat. This kind of legislation is not worthy of the dignity of the House. If we are to make people criminally responsible for their actions let us make sure they are criminals. Let us not convict people simply because we want to terrorize rural people into not doing anything with their land and for their livelihoods. The government's heavy handed approach would lead to uncertainty and confusion for land and resource owners including the majority of rural Canadians who in good faith tried to comply with the law.

Bill C-15B is poorly drafted. Had it not been for the perseverance of the Canadian Alliance Party, Liberal backbenchers would not have woken up to the dangers posed by the bill. Finally they are waking up. They are saying it is their livelihoods and the livelihoods of their constituents that would be affected. I am happy the Liberal backbenchers have finally woken up. However when will they take a real stand? When will they stand and say they have had enough of the government's abuse of rural Canada? When will they stand with the people who are concerned about the country as a whole?

I am profoundly concerned about the direction of the government. There is some optimism now that Liberal backbenchers are finally waking up. However it will not be until the Liberal cabinet is gone that rural Canadians can be equal partners with their urban cousins.

• (1645)

I urge hon. members to think carefully about the legislation before the House before they do anything untoward and damage rural Canada any further. Let us think carefully about Bill C-5 and Bill C-15B. Let us remember the lessons of Bill C-68

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. I agree with what he said. It is true. They say that in relationships the opposite of

love is not hate but indifference. If we want to drive people away we show them indifference. We do not need to be malicious.

I will run through four examples of how the Liberals have failed us in their rural policies either through benign neglect or outright indifference. First, they have failed us with respect to the fisheries. The east coast cod fishery is an example how the government has driven an industry completely into the ground and out of business. The west coast coho salmon fishery has also been a disaster.

Second, farmers have experienced falling incomes. We have seen the reports and heard the statistics. However statistics cannot possibly show the anguish of what is happening in Saskatchewan where the province is being depopulated. It seems rural Canada and the farm sector is being targeted for continued low incomes and problems.

Third, the government has mismanaged the forestry industry. It has shown a complete failure to manage the softwood lumber issue. I do not know what to suggest any more because it is now in the hands of U.S. producers. We had five years to plan a better approach with regard to the softwood issue. The government has shown a complete and utter failure in its handling of the softwood industry and the forestry workers who have been displaced as a result.

Fourth, the government seems to have a complete and utter disconnect with reality when it comes to rural development plans and the patronage ridden mess it calls regional development. If the regional development programs the government champions were effective for rural Canada, Atlantic Canada, northern Canada and the people they are supposed to help, every worker would have two jobs rather than one, or none as is often the case. It is a complete failure.

Does the hon. member think this is due to benign neglect or outright malicious legislative attack? I do not know which is worse. However the net effect is that rural Canada has taken it on the chin on the east coast, the west coast and in the middle of the country. Is it due to indifference or does the government have it in for rural Canada?

**Mr. Vic Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think it is an issue of malice on the part of the Liberals. They want to do whatever they can to remain in power even if it means being indifferent to the people of rural Canada and ignoring their needs. The government would avoid making any decision that could affect its ability to stay in power. If there is one thing we have learned about the Liberal government in the last nine years it is that it desires to stay in power.

*Supply*

When we look at the government's performance with respect to rural and western economic development we see disaster after disaster. Members and ministers across the way can point to certain programs that have worked. I will not dismiss all the programs nor the hard work of some good public servants in trying to administer them. However in most situations it is more a matter of luck that programs work or a dedicated public servant makes a difference in the community he or she lives in.

The issue is one of indifference to rural Canada. It is motivated by the desire to stay in power. That is why there is no accountability for the moneys spent. The Liberal government could not be responsible for the money.

● (1650)

**Mr. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, many members may recall when I stood in the House several months ago to talk about the various programs for rural Canada the government had embarked on. I said it was important that all members from rural Canada support the programs and work together because we in rural Canada are outnumbered. Rural ridings have fewer people and members of parliament than the rest of Canada so we must work together on these things. I am therefore glad the Alliance has brought up the topic and joined us in supporting programs for rural Canada and championing rural Canadians. It is important to my riding.

There may be thoughtful members on all sides of the House who can add to the debate in a positive way, as the secretary of state has mentioned. Most of my speech will be devoted to this. However it is hard to be positive when a member of the loyal opposition uses the words obscene and cynical. The hon. member is not here now. The comment was made much earlier in the afternoon.

What is obscene and cynical is the way the Alliance last year referred to people from Atlantic Canada and their work ethic. Apologies were made, the person resigned and it is over. I would not have raised the issue because I thought attacks on regions of Canada were over. However in Saturday's *Financial Post* the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition said the government was only interested in Quebec based industries and had failed to protect hard-working Canadian families. Why would the Alliance Party attack another region by saying Quebecers were not hard workers?

The opposition leader went on to say if it had been Bombardier and not hard-working families the government might have taken action. That is pretty sad. The Alliance is almost working its way back west. The leader of the Alliance must be happy to the point of rolling over because the Alliance is working its way back west behind its firewall. However it will not work because, as we have heard in the speeches of a number of its members, the Alliance wants to cancel Western Economic Diversification Canada. Even in its home base of western Canada the Alliance is turning a blind eye.

Let us look at some of the projects this would cancel. The Tumour Tissue Repository at the B.C. Cancer Agency would be cancelled and its many employees would be out of work. What about Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba? All are onside in contributing to the telecommunications resource laboratories in Edmonton. Along with 30 small and large companies and \$10 million from Western Economic Diversification Canada, all would be partners in putting westerners on the cutting edge of research and technology. However

the Alliance Party is not in favour of this. What about the Brando strategic plan for Functional Foods and Nutraceuticals in Winnipeg which could employ 90 researchers in western Canada? What about the Canada/Saskatchewan Film, Video, Production and Education Centre?

I will not talk about the negative comments of the Alliance. The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough lit into the Alliance for being negative but then went on to talk about corruption. Before he gets into that line of attack I would be interested in hearing his comments on the many charges of Stevie Cameron which have never been challenged in court. It is ironic that a member of his party would go into such unfounded allegations.

● (1655)

Before I speak to the rural initiatives I will comment on a couple of questions asked during debate. I commented about expenditures. We were talking about debt and tax reduction to help rural Canadians and all Canadians. It was mentioned that the Alliance members had come up with perhaps \$30 billion worth of things they wanted money for yet they were still promoting tax and debt reduction. It was said that figure had come from out of the air but that figure came from *Hansard*. Members can look it up.

Earlier in the debate both the Tories and the Bloc mentioned administration and HRDC. We had a debate about that last year. I have been getting comments from NGOs, those groups that help other people and which depend on those grants. They say that because there is so much inspection of the process, it has almost gone too far the other way. It is not very helpful to the people who are helping those in need when the groups cannot get the money for the excess bureaucracy in continuing to make comments such as those.

I would also like to ensure that the press caught a comment made earlier this afternoon. It was something to the effect that it is cold out today so maybe we have climate cooling. I hope the scientists send in letters responding to that, especially considering that later on members suggested it was just politics. It would be good to hear the reaction from scientists.

I want to read from an e-mail I received about two weeks ago from two of my constituents, Sylvie and David, relating to Kyoto. It states:

Canada has a responsibility to protect the environment, control and regulate its use of fossil fuels and look into using far more renewable energy resources in order to sustain our quality of life.

### Supply

Another comment that was made earlier in regard to expenditures was that we provide funds from Indian affairs to first nations bands and poof, it is gone, that it vanishes and is a big waste of money. In my riding and in other parts of the country more and more we have been moving toward self-government of first nations. We have been moving toward transferring programs to the first nations so that they can deliver the programs and services they need to themselves and be responsible for taking care of those programs. It is working very effectively. If we look at first nations that have these powers, there is a world of difference in the confidence and effectiveness compared to those who have not moved that far ahead.

The member who made such a statement should look at the audits. All of these bands and organizations are audited and have an exceptionally high positive audit record. Only a few have had negative consequences. If the member is suggesting that Indian affairs take those programs back and deliver them, I appreciate his confidence in Indian affairs but that is not the way to successfully govern first nations.

There was also a comment about rural and urban task forces. I definitely agree that urban and rural people have different lives, different opinions and different outlooks on certain things. In my riding, like many other ridings, people are quite frustrated with a lot of urban people who think that people with guns are criminals just because they have guns. We could understand that perhaps living in a big city. It is very frustrating to people in rural ridings who use guns in their daily lives and first nations people who have guns in their cabins for hunting and protection in the wild. Urban people think that they are criminals just for carrying on their lives as they always have.

The member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough said that we had set up rural and urban task forces in conflict to build differences. That is not true. We have an urban task force and we also have a task force relating only to farming. It is a special task force. Many of the members in today's debate have mentioned how important farming is. I would think that they would applaud such a task force.

● (1700)

Members have been mentioning two bills today, one being the species at risk bill. There were simple statements that there is no habitat protection and no compensation. We have discussed this at length in debating the bill. Both of those items are included in the bill. There are provisions that will allow habitat protection, remembering that most of the habitat protection and species protection will be done by the provinces and territories and that the federal government will be the last safety net. There are provisions for habitat protection and compensation. If they do not work down the road, I fully expect the opposition to bring that case forward.

I want to refer to a number of areas where things have been done. I am not sure if these have been covered today.

The rural secretariat was created by the Government of Canada. I have said a number of times, even before I was elected, that it has been tremendous for rural Canada. Rural deputies and members of parliament from all sides should ensure it is well supported. There are three elements of the rural secretariat initiative of the

Government of Canada that I want to remind Canadians of as they may not be aware of them.

The first was to find out the needs of rural Canada and to discuss solutions to fill those needs and the government felt it was important to go to rural Canadians themselves. There was a dialogue across all of rural Canada for a number of years. A number of rural conferences were held. People from rural Canada were brought together to create action plans.

The Secretary of State for Rural Development has worked on those action plans and has implemented a number of solutions coming out of those conferences. In fact, there was going to be an entire debate on the last conference tomorrow night because so many positive things came out of it, including much input from rural Canada on ideas of what all levels of government could do by working together to help them.

The second element of the rural secretariat I want to comment on relates to the rural lens. This is a lens that the federal government has implemented. All departments, when creating new programs or legislation, subject them to a rural lens to see how they will affect rural Canada. I am sure that every rural member of parliament appreciates that. They want to make sure that when the Government of Canada originates something in Ottawa that it is looked at from the rural perspective to see that it is effective for rural Canadians. It improves the legislation in that respect.

The rural pilot projects are something I have been championing for many years. They are part of the rural secretariat. There are hundreds and hundreds of pilot projects that the federal government has done on new ways of doing things, for solutions in rural Canada that are unique. A number of these projects could be transferrable. As an example, once a pilot project is implemented, then hopefully it will carry across the country. There have been a number of successful projects. I am only talking about the ones in my riding but if we multiplied this by the number of ridings in the country, we can imagine how many that might be.

In my area two exciting megaprojects that will help rural Canada are on the verge of happening. In the Mackenzie Valley in the Northwest Territories a pipeline will be installed that is financially feasible. It will carry Delta gas to that area. It will help out with the oil sands. It will be a great boon to people in some of the most remote and rural regions in Canada. The pipeline will be a great benefit to Canada in jobs and training, in input to the gross domestic product and of course in tariff revenues and royalties.

● (1705)

The second project is yet another pipeline. Alaska gas would come down the Alaska Highway, which is the Canadian route for Alaska gas. The most disastrous thing would be if it went directly through Alaska without touching Canada, but the Canadian route comes down the Alaska Highway and through Alberta and B.C.

*Supply*

That would provide 108,000 person years for Canada and \$13 billion in expenditures, over half of which would be in Canada. It would be a massive influx to that area of the country. It is so tremendous that even the United States congress is in the process of passing a bill that may even help that pipeline go through with all of these benefits to Canada, which include \$1.2 billion in tariff revenues every year and over 1,000 jobs in my riding.

The American assistance to provide all of these benefits to Canada would include possibly a \$10 billion loan guarantee and also a guarantee on the floor price of natural gas at \$3.25. That would be in repayable tax credits. It is not a subsidy. They have to pay it back as soon as gas goes over \$4.85.

These exciting projects are on the verge of helping a number of people in my area in rural Canada. The federal government has been working very hard to make sure that they will be the regulator to approve these projects because that is their role. They have to date fulfilled their responsibilities in that area.

I will close by mentioning some of the projects funded under the rural pilot project. I am sure all members will remember the ones in their own ridings. I will mention the ones in my riding.

There is the Yukon lodgepole pine wood attributes study. It came up with the commercial attributes of one of our two major species of wood. It was totally different from what was originally anticipated. It provided valuable input for those companies that were trying to market and produce products in that part of the timber industry.

The Yukon reading readiness project relates to literacy. I am sure all the parties in the House are on side in supporting literacy, which is especially essential to our modern economy. Years ago some jobs would be for life; people learned the skills and that was it. Now people need continuous learning throughout their lives. They need a high degree of literacy and numeracy because jobs are so technical these days.

Another project is the identification de l'état de santé de la communauté franco-yukonnaise. Another is the rural Yukon first nation P.C. technician project. I do not think anyone is opposed to training first nations people in remote villages to fix their computers and technical equipment. Some of these places are so far away in my riding that it would cost as much as a new computer to get a technician from an urban centre to fix the equipment.

There is also Yukon River watershed assessment and awareness project. The Yukon River is one of the biggest watersheds in Canada. The rural people living along its shores in Yukon learn what they can do to protect that watershed.

Another project which I am particularly excited about is the Yukon volunteer bureau. Most parts of Canada have such centres, but in small rural areas as rural MPs can appreciate, there just are not the funds to start them up. There is a transient population and volunteers can register and go to all the organizations. There are several hundred in Yukon that help people which is a great benefit.

I will read the others because I am running short of time. These include the Yukon work information network, the Yukon rural business mentorship service, the Yukon CHR peer monitoring pilot project, the farming enterprise, the first nations furbearer monitoring

project, and the building healthy communities and capacity building through partnerships project.

I am sorry if that was not very descriptive. However I want to mention them to show that in just one riding many things are being done for rural Canada. If we multiply that by the 301 ridings, certainly a lot of positive work is being done in Canada to find solutions to the special characteristics under which rural Canadians live.

● (1710)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, the member talked about compensation being in the bill. I have heard that from other members. What do they not understand when it says that it shall be in the regulations if the minister chooses to do up the regulations and that it will be fair and reasonable without any definition of what that means? It does not say fair market value but fair and reasonable.

He talked about building trust. How can trust be built when all Canadians are not prepared to share in helping those people to preserve that species. Environmental groups, industry, farmers and ranchers know it will not work on the ground. How can the member stand and say that he really cares about the rural members or that he really thinks this thing will work on the ground to save a single species?

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, the member just made my point. It is in the bill and I expect him to call us to task if it does not work. As he said, the regulations are there and the regulations will be made. If it does not work I expect the members opposite in great numbers to be up in question period asking why we are not putting it into place and why it is not working as we said it would when we made the legislation.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, one of the things the government has done that has affected the remote regions of the country, like Yukon, which the member represents so well, has been to put every elementary school, high school, college, university and virtually every library on the Internet through the Schoolnet program. That program began in the rural areas and moved to the cities which was very symbolic. That is the way it should have been.

I would like the member for Yukon to talk about that, in particular with respect to Yukon College. I understand that in the last year another initiative of the government has been to put our colleges in remote regions in touch with the new University of the Arctic. Yukon College has taken advantage of that through the Internet and is one of the success stories of the international University of the Arctic.

*Supply*

I do not know whether it is fair to ask the member but could he tell us something about the government putting our educational institutions on the Internet?

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, that was a great question because I forgot to say something in my speech.

The connection is definitely far more important for rural Canada. Our schools and communities are all connected. Being able to obtain different information and information on health care through these networks means a lot to the people who cannot drive to a government office or to obtain other services.

As the member suggested, the Yukon College is a leader in what is now being called the University of the Arctic. We could never have an international university north of 60 because of the numbers and the expertise but by putting them all together through a virtual method like the Internet such a university was made possible.

I meant to begin my speech today talking about how disappointed I was with the unprecedented attack—and I apologize to my colleagues for being so negative today because I enjoy them all and they are very thoughtful and care for their constituents—that some members, not all, from the Alliance made in November and December on connecting rural Canadians to the Internet.

It was not just a small, shy statement saying that they thought that fiscally the Internet was not the best positive choice. It was a vitriolic, on TV attack saying that connecting rural Canadians to the Internet was a boondoggle.

We definitely needed that connection to rural Canada, and it included the phones and computers, so we could have the same access as the rest of the country. I cannot believe they would not support rural Canada and not support connecting rural Canadians to the Internet.

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, one of the things I hope comes out of this debate is that people from urban areas realize how much interdependence there is between urban and rural areas and how uncomfortable many rural people feel.

It is hard not to be cynical when a constituent phoned me recently from Bella Coola on the west coast telling me that after spending tens of thousands of dollars for the fishing licences he needed for his boat, the fishery closed and he did not even have the opportunity to recover the money he spent for the fishing licences.

Another issue that troubles me terribly is the issue of the mountain pine beetle. This bug problem has gone on for many years starting with the fir bark beetle. Many discussions were held with the Department of National Defence because this beetle infestation took place on federal lands for which the federal government was entirely responsible. The government did nothing about it after repeated consultations and commitments indicating that it would do something. The same thing has happened with the mountain pine beetle. After at least two consultations with me and after debate in the House, the federal government has twice said that the provincial government had not even applied to it. This comment was absolutely false. It is this negligence that makes it frustrating.

The mountain pine beetle infestation has cost approximately \$3.4 billion worth of wood and another \$12.5 billion is at risk. The Minister of the Environment said that this was a natural thing and that nothing could be done about it. What he did not mention was that we put out the fires that normally kill the pine beetle. He also did not say that the wood was not being cut and that nothing was being done to retrieve the money that will be lost as a result of the wood rotting and going to waste.

I cannot understand why the federal government does not heed the concerns of rural Canadians when so much value and wealth is at risk, not only to the government but to the urban centres of Canada. Could the member comment on that please?

• (1715)

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, I will not comment on the specifics but people have lots of frustration in relation to governments. I am glad the member started out the way he did. I agree with him fully that it can be very frustrating.

I may bore members by talking about my riding all the time but Yukoners want their voices heard here in Ottawa. I agree with the member when he says that there are frustrating situations. We all go through them. That is why we are here fighting today to get this issue on the front burner. I congratulate the member for bringing up the issue very forcefully and hopefully that is what we can all do to help our ridings.

**Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I commend the previous speaker for wanting to talk about his riding. It is important for the people back in his constituency to know he is doing that, and in fact it is important for all of us.

After the 1993 election the Liberal Party sent committees around the western part of the country to determine why people in those areas were not voting Liberal. An election was held in 1997 and things did not get better for them, it got worse.

After the 1997 election more people were sent around the country to again find out why people were not voting Liberal. I travelled with those committees and listened to what people said. I listened to them as they talked to the agriculture committee. Things once again did not get any better, they got worse.

I have attended these meetings for quite some time and have listened to the messages. I have heard them over and over again. Growers of grain are asking for a choice on how to market their product. They do not want to be forced to go to the wheat board. They want to be able to use the wheat board if they desire but they want the choice. When a disaster strikes, such as a drought, they want the government to put something in place that will assist them. That has not happened and it is not happening today.



I listened to these people when the last softwood lumber agreement came to an end. When the committee was travelling, members were asked to do something about the catastrophe that was coming regarding softwood lumber. People asked for the government's help.

What I want to say to the hon. member is that the Liberal people heard these voices but there was absolutely no adherence to those voices. In 2000 the Liberal Party once again did worse than ever in an election.

When are Liberals ever going to learn that these people are trying to get a message to them? When will they hear it? When will it happen? The Liberals do not listen and that is a serious problem they have to overcome.

• (1720)

**Mr. Larry Bagnell:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the member's comment. I think we do need to listen to the people.

The member mentioned four topics. The western task force was before my time in politics but the member made a good point when he said that we should be accountable to answer for the ideas that came out of that task force.

I was going to begin my comments by asking members to please not ask farming questions. I will not talk about wheat because Yukon is just too far detached but I will talk about drought. I am glad the member brought that up again because it is a very serious problem in western Canada. I am sure Liberal members and all members in the House understand the seriousness of that situation. In fact we are glad there is snow right now. We hope there will be a lot more water this year which will solve the problem, and that whatever else needs to be done will be done.

On the softwood lumber issue, as we know all members of the House have worked very hard and have spoken very passionately on this. Any further suggestions would be very helpful.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I will sharing my time with the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

I appreciate this opportunity to participate in the debate regarding the sustained legislative and political attacks on the lives and livelihoods of rural Canadians and on the communities where they live.

The current federal government is the most anti-rural Canadian we have ever seen. Policies and programs of the government consistently undermine our rural communities on a daily basis. What has evolved in Canada today is a two tier government, one for urban Canadians and one for rural Canadians. This divisiveness is not helpful for Canadian unity. While the government may trumpet the death of separatism in Quebec, the rise of a new separatism stalks the land as one group of Canadians is pitted against another group, all for short term political gain.

Whatever happened to statesmanship and nation building? It died the first day the Prime Minister encouraged his cabinet ministers to cry racism and resort to personal attacks rather than being held accountable for government policy. No wonder 70% of Canadians think this government is corrupt.

### *Supply*

One way the government has assaulted rural Canada has been through the policy of military cutbacks. Most Canadians are familiar with the cutbacks that have resulted in severe equipment shortages and the need for the military to continually fix old equipment rather than receive the equipment it needs on a timely basis. This has led to delays in purchases, like the 40 year old Sea King helicopters to buying second-hand equipment, like submarines that turn out to be junk. The reduction in our military has led to base closures which have had a devastating impact on the local economies where those bases were located across rural Canada.

Now a new threat looms in the remaining communities where bases are still located. It is called the supply chain project, or ASD, alternative service delivery. The minister of defence will tell us that this project is not to contract existing DND developed civilian jobs but to match the current chain of supply in DND with cost savings. I would be very interested to hear the thoughts of the member for Simcoe—Grey on this issue and what the supply chain project did to Meaford when the base staff there went from 150 employees to less than 50.

The Union of National Defence Employees contacted the head of the business association in the town of Meaford and it was confirmed that since the supply chain process started the downtown had become a ghost town; another ghost town created thanks to the Liberal government policy.

What is particularly tragic about this example is that under the guise of cost saving there is no indication that the taxpayers are saving money at all because of the job losses due to the contracting out of base services. Research into the contract revealed that it was awarded to a company called Black & McDonald, which is 20% based out of Australia and 80% based out of the United States. It was awarded the contract to run all the services on the base at Meaford which had previously employed about 150 local people for \$25 million.

Overall the Meaford area training centre was being operated under a \$40 million five year fixed price contract from 1995 to 2000. Jobs were cut to 50 employees and most were identified as being pensioned off ex-military personnel at a wage slightly better than the provincial minimum. What this amounts to is a foreign company profiting by putting Canadians out of work with no financial commitment to the community or to Canada itself.

Requests to DND show any cost savings to taxpayers have not been provided. The auditor general had this to say about the ASD program at national defence:

Many of the business case analyses for the 14 projects we audited were poorly done. Options were not always adequately assessed or the best option chosen. Personnel appeared to lack the necessary skills to undertake analyses...

We could not find a formal business case analysis or any other supporting evidence to justify the ASD contract at Meaford Area Training Centre.

### Supply

• (1725)

The audit found that rather than the DND projected savings of \$200 million at that point, the estimated savings were \$68 million primarily at the expense of the local community. This represents a 70% failure rate to meet the savings target.

Finally, the audit revealed that the competitive process was not always followed in the awarding of contracts and that contracts were let with no competitive bids at all. Sole source contracts mean that there is no way to know if the taxpayer is getting the best service at the best price.

The problem with ASD, in addition to their questionable value, is that the companies who do get the contract buy their goods in large cities like Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal with a loss of millions of dollars in the local rural communities where the bases are located.

In my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, base, now ASU, Petawawa is an important generator of economic wealth to the area. When the government directs procurement out of the rural communities where the bases are located, everyone suffers. Our retail stores, restaurants, service stations, grocery stores, the local housing market and so on all have trouble making ends meet.

Less money circulating in a community means support for sports, like hockey, baseball, soccer and figure skating are no longer available and the quality of life suffers as a consequence.

The federal government's neglect of our military has a human cost that is largely being ignored because government has felt a greater need to pander to the urban vote. The time to stop underfunding the military is now.

The ASD program led to a 20 year \$2.8 billion untendered contract for a flight school being awarded to Bombardier. However when it comes to providing much needed infrastructure dollars to repair our nation's highway system, rural Canadians receive nothing.

Personal transportation in rural Canada is not a luxury. It is a necessity. In the case of the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 17 from base Petawawa to Ottawa, upgrading the highway from two to four lanes is not only an issue of public safety, it is one of national security. The provision of safe, efficient transportation networks is at the heart of prosperity for rural Canada.

This also includes the skies. The decision of the Liberal government to implement the air security tax on a flat tax rate penalizes small rural airports. A \$25 surcharge on a \$150 ticket is a bigger burden than the same flat rate surcharge being applied to a \$2,000 ticket from a big city airport for an international flight.

The Liberal government tells us that by providing government services over the Internet it can shut down government offices in rural communities. What the Liberal government has chosen to ignore is the fact that in Canada today there are still individuals who live in areas that do not have basic land line service. How can someone go online for service with no phone or cable with which to go online?

To rub salt in an already open wound, rural and small town phone subscribers recently received a CRTC sanctioned rate increase for long distance service. Apparently this was approved to pay for the

lost business from urban phone users who switched to using one of the savings plans offered by Bell's competitors. Now a surcharge of \$1.50 a month may not seem like a lot to some people, but for a senior on a fixed income, all these increases add up.

I have a letter from constituents who wrote to tell me that they moved out of the big city because rents were too high. Having left the city and friends of a lifetime, the phone was an important way of keeping in touch. By allowing the CRTC to approve the surcharge, it was as if the Liberal government was penalizing people for not living in the city.

I understand that the surcharge only applies to small town and rural customers. Therefore, when rural members talk about rural Canada, we are not just referring to Canadians. We are talking about an entire way of life.

• (1730)

In my limited experience as a member of parliament, nothing is more distorted or portrayed in a negative fashion that is completely unfair than is the whole issue of hunting and gun control. Gun control is a prime example of the cookie cutter approach to legislation. Problems or concerns in urban Canada are not the same as in rural communities. The decision to make law-abiding citizens into criminals and spend or plan to spend \$1 billion to do it has been one of the worst decision that this government has ever made.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Madam Speaker, when the hon. member was talking, I was unable to hear all her speech. What I did hear covered such a broad spectrum and I would like to just hit on a couple of points.

First, I would like to hear her opinion on the government's record on primary industries because they run rural Canada, in particular forestry, the fishery and agriculture. It is certainly my belief the government has a dismal record on all three.

My last question is on government services. It has always seemed to me that the only government agency that is in every town is the post office. We had a vote not long ago on rural delivery. A number of her colleagues voted against allowing the rural delivery people, who are subcontractors, to become full time federal employees. It would seem to me that if we want delivery of services to rural Canada, the only way we can do that is to ensure that our post office, which is the only federal department that is represented in every small town, is represented by federal employees.

Could she comment on that and on primary services?

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the compliment on the wide range of topics I touched on in the short time allotted.

*Supply*

How has government policy implemented forestry? Eight hundred thousand Canadians in Ontario alone are employed as a result indirectly or directly by the forestry industry. The lack of putting together a softwood lumber agreement in time, when the government knew full well for five years that it was coming, has devastated our softwood lumber community. Mills are closing every day.

In Ontario we virtually have no fisheries left. Cutting and cutting to the fisheries in the Great Lakes has resulted in there being very few fishermen left.

It is the same story for agriculture from one end of rural Canada to the other. Uneven playing fields have put farmers completely out of business.

Every day it seems that there is a problem with the post office, be it mail not getting delivered, or the dirty little secret about theft in the post office, or people who are ready to go through the border or board a plane are told that certain sharp items will be mailed back to them but they never receive them, then they start closing post offices.

The post office is not only a local means to mail things, because phone service is not available for Internet use, but it also provides the important service of having a person who can verify passport applications. As more and more postmasters and postmistresses are eliminated and commercial people are put in their place, fewer people who can sign these applications, putting many people in a very bad situation. They have to go to a doctor, if they are able to get an appointment.

• (1735)

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, that is a remarkably mixed message. I am a strong supporter of post offices and rural post offices, as is my colleague, but I also support the fine work that is done by postal workers all across this great country.

I thought I heard the member say, and I know she would not want to mislead the House, that 70% of Canadians think the government is corrupt. The last figures I saw was our approval rating in her own province was well over 60%. Nationwide, it was much higher than it was after the last election. The figure I heard was 70% of all politicians. I heard that the number of people who think politicians are corrupt is higher in Alliance ridings than in other ridings.

Would she care to correct the record on this and perhaps table the document from where the 70% came.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite, who comes from the party of mixed messages. It was not 17% of Canadians, but 70% or over. The problem with the performance of the government is that it is not just the politicians who are guilty of corruption who get painted with it. The people who want to do good, who are following the rules and who want accountability are also painted with the same corruption brush. It is true that members in Canadian Alliance territory—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Hon. Joe Jordan:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I realize the member has trouble with polls but the poll is that 70% of politicians are corrupt. I think she should stand in her place, if she has any integrity, and correct the record.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** It is debate. The hon. member may finish her sentence.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, as I was saying, in Canadian Alliance held ridings, they are even more aware of the fact that there is corruption in government and that is why they have voted in Canadian Alliance members of parliament.

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, there seems to be a growing split between rural and urban Canada. There is a perception that government caters to the urban population. Is this a perception or has it become reality? There are several issues that point to the fact that it has indeed become reality. It is a reality that those in rural Canada could live without. The government, by its policies and legislation, continues its assault on the lives and livelihoods of those residing in rural Canada. The lives, interests and well-being of those individuals are not seen to be important. These people are being marginalized by the government.

Only a few days ago in committee a member of the government stated that a majority of Canadians live in large cities and we have to listen to their views. It is that very mentality that drives the agenda of the government. According to 2001 census results from Statistics Canada, the population total for Canada's five largest cities was 12.5 million. That would leave a population of 18.6 million, or 60%, as the total for smaller centres and rural populations.

We have seen the effects of rising populations in Canada's largest urban centres: pollution, poverty and homelessness. Rural living should be encouraged. Whether one chooses to live on a picturesque island off the coast of Newfoundland, on the western prairies or in the interior of British Columbia, rural communities offer much to the life of this nation. Instead of encouraging the sustainability of our smaller centres and rural populations, the government continues to bring forward legislation that only hinders their growth. Rural populations offer much to this nation. Many of those in our rural communities are the producers of our food, our clothing and shelter for the rest of Canadians.

In the last year alone, the attack on rural Canada has been unprecedented. Let us begin with the government's Bill C-5, the species at risk act. The bill seeks to offer absolute protection to a wide variety of animals, plants and habitats. While the official opposition supports the need for legislation to protect endangered species, we do not feel that it should be done at the expense of landowners. Co-operation is the only way that the bill will be completely effective. The government fails to realize that landowners, farmers and ranchers remain among the finest conservationists in the country. Instead of working with these people, the government chooses to form adversarial relationships. Farmers, ranchers and landowners are left without assurance of compensation. They are not included in the consultation process. They will be treated as criminals and punished as such.

### *Supply*

Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals legislation, is also an affront to law-abiding rural people. This legislation leaves the door wide open for frivolous lawsuits by animal rights activists. These groups have openly stated that the legislation cannot be proven effective unless it is challenged in court. This is not what we need for rural Canada.

The vast majority of farmers and ranchers are well aware of effective, humane animal practices and choose to implement those practices on their farms and ranches every day. The government is blatantly catering to lobby and special interest groups without a second thought for the massive negative implications that the legislation would have for farmers and ranchers. When the livelihoods of farmers, ranchers and landowners suffer, there is a direct impact on the surrounding communities. The economic repercussions must be taken into account when discussing legislation affecting all rural communities.

Agriculture as a whole has been ignored or minimized by the government. In western Canada, the continuing drought is causing severe difficulties for producers. We are in need of effective safety net programs that are run efficiently and adequately funded. In western Canada the Canadian Wheat Board is also an area that demands attention. Western producers are cut off from opportunities to market their products like the rest of Canadians. They are limited by the monopoly of the Canadian Wheat Board. If the government is serious about helping producers in western Canada, then the concerns over the function and mandate of the Canadian Wheat Board for western Canadians must be addressed.

● (1740)

The Liberal government's inaction over subsidy issues will continue to lead to loss of profits and livelihood among rural Canadians. The American government continues its protectionist stance in the areas of agriculture and forestry, but we do not see any definite action being taken by the government on behalf of our Canadian producers. The government has called the new U.S. farm bill foul and insidious. Its repulsion for that legislation is laudable but means nothing if not backed by action. That is something we rarely see from the government. The proposal of a 70% increase in subsidies to American producers will have catastrophic effects on our Canadian market. Now is the time for action. Words alone cannot save a national industry. Words alone will not keep producers on the family farm. Words alone will not ensure a viable future for rural Canada.

In 1999 the official opposition formed Action for Struggling Agricultural Producers in response to the growing farm crisis in the country. Surveys were distributed to producers. At that time, 74% of the producers said that continuing with farming would be difficult or impossible and 79% said that the government must immediately launch an aggressive international campaign to reduce foreign subsidies.

Those results are from three years ago. Producers were well aware of the crisis facing their industry. They were aware of the need for the government to act on their behalf. They were aware that changes had to be made.

The government's own need for awareness is evident by the \$21 million announced for an advertising campaign to promote soil conservation. Spending that kind of money to tell producers

something they already know is a waste. Because the minister of agriculture visited Saskatchewan last year and saw a dry field of summerfallow, he decided that he would take on an advertising campaign to stress conservation to farmers on no-till. That farmer summerfallowed that field because he could not afford to chemfallow that field. Chemfallow has been carried on for years by no-till farmers in Saskatchewan. It is not something new. However, that farmer could not afford to put chemical on that field, so he summerfallowed it.

The government's lack of awareness of the problems facing rural Canada is appalling. I would urge the Liberal government to open its eyes and start fighting for rural Canadians. I would urge the Liberal government to talk to the farm families where both mother and dad are working to keep the farm alive and to pay the bankers. They do not know how they will pay their power or fuel bills or how they will feed their families, let alone pay the telephone bill. The government is great at talking about how the solutions are on the Internet, but a lot of people in Saskatchewan cannot pay their telephone bills.

I have a very good friend who lives in my riding. She lost her husband last year to cancer. She and her son were farming. They decided that they could not afford to farm any more because they were going further and further into debt. Her son is the kind of young man that we would like to see farming in Saskatchewan. The lady and her son advertised the farm this spring. It is prime land, wonderful land. When we have rain it is some of the best grain growing land in our province. They did not get one offer to buy that land. They did not get one offer to rent that land.

They had an auction sale. I phoned her and asked how her auction sale went. She said it was terrible. They bid in the combine and they bid in the tractor. They kept the air seeder. The \$25,000 to \$30,000 sprayer sold for \$4,000. It was a disaster. That lady is now working. She has her house on the farm. We do not know what will happen to her. I would like to see the Liberal government come out and talk to some of the farm families I know and find out just how serious the drought is.

● (1745)

The government can spout off about the \$1.5 million that was given to PFRA this year but that money and the 2002 budget was spent in January. The \$1.5 million is now gone. There is no water anywhere. There is no more money for wells and dugouts, and the cattle are starving.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the comments from the member for Saskatoon—Rose-town—Biggar. She spoke with real feeling about people who are on the land and close to the land, and the problem with the lack of assistance from the current government.

In her opening statement she touched on two pieces of legislation that are still before the House and are important to rural Canada, the species at risk legislation which we expect to be reintroduced and the cruelty to animals legislation. I want to make two points on each one of those pieces of legislation.

*Supply*

The cruelty to animals legislation is problematic to every farmer across the country because it takes animals out from under the property act. That is the most dangerous aspect of the bill. Farmers list their animals as collateral, not as animals, to the bank. The bank recognizes them as collateral. If we were to take them out from under the property act and put them under something else, I expect the bank would recognize them as collateral but it would put us into the pet category. They are not pets and that is the most open, flagrant and serious mistake in this particular piece of legislation.

In any proposed new species at risk legislation the Progressive Conservative Party consistently has asked for greater compensation. Farmers and rural woodlot owners are more than happy to protect species at risk but they do not want to do it with their own dollars.

I have heard the statement made by rural Canadians about wildlife and especially about urbanites who like to see wildlife but they do not like to suffer the consequences of it. I have heard them saying that people in the cities can keep their public wildlife off my private land. It becomes a confrontation and that is a mistake. Somehow we must learn to coexist but we cannot do it if we expect the rural landowner, who is under pressure now, to pay the bill. I would like the member's comments on that.

• (1750)

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Madam Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comments. I agree with him. I know he comes from eastern Canada. I come from western Canada and our province right now is in the driest period since the 1930s. We are going through a cold spell now. Someone said the other day that the snow did not melt, it just wore out. We are that dry.

I want to tell the member that we have 40 federal fisheries officers in the province of Saskatchewan given to us by the federal government who cause great havoc to our rural municipalities. We cannot put a culvert into a road with a dry slew on each side. There has not been water there for 30 or 40 years but there may be a little dip. If we want to put a culvert in, just in case we do get some water and the fields might flood in the spring, we cannot do it without getting a permit. It takes these guys six weeks to two months to get a permit to put a culvert in. It is totally absurd. We have rules and regulations from fisheries officers. There has never been a fish in some of those slews. It is a Liberal priority.

We have farm families who cannot put food on the table. They are well educated with university degrees. The hon. member talked about educating people. Most of the agriculturalists I know are well educated. The majority of them have university degrees. I am hearing that we must educate these people. We do not live in overalls and chew straw. The farmers drive tractors with GPS. They seed. They know how to conserve the land. We fertilize, look after the land and conserve it the best possible way but we have a major catastrophe going on. We have a drought in western Canada and the Liberal government just stands back and studies it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Portneuf.

[*English*]

I would like to take the opportunity provided by the motion on rural issues to clarify some issues regarding cruelty to animals and specifically the provisions of Bill C-15B which the opposition has been systematically delaying.

I wish to commend the hard work of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. The committee spent over two months hearing a wide spectrum of witnesses including farmers. These witnesses had a wealth of experience and knowledge. The committee has heard all the arguments for and against further change in the bill, changes suggested by rural members like myself on this side of the House and by the science community, the medical community and many others.

There is absolutely no question that the committee carefully considered all aspects of Bill C-15B including whether there was anything in the bill which eroded current protections for industry and others who use animals for the benefit of humans.

The bill considers the importance of ensuring protection of the legitimate use of animals. Members opposite know full well that the courts have specifically recognized the use of animals in industry but they still persist in fearmongering among the farm community. The leading case is *Crown v Menard* in 1978. Many years ago in the decision of the Quebec court of appeal Mr. Justice Lamer expressly made the point that they are contradictory. He said:

The animal is subordinate to nature and to man. It will often be in the interest of man to kill wild or domestic animals, to subjugate them and, to this end, to tame them with all the consequences this may entail for them and, if they are too old, or too numerous, or abandoned, to kill them. This is why, in setting standards for the behaviour of men towards animals, we have taken into account our privileged position in nature and have been obliged to take into account at the outset the purpose sought.

Members critical of Bill C-15B also know or ought to know that the use of animals by industry is already taken into account when deciding whether pain, suffering or injury caused to an animal is unnecessary. Again, Mr. Justice Lamer makes this very clear that the task of assessing unnecessary pain, suffering or injury is twofold. The first part of the test considers the purpose for which the pain was inflicted. The second part of the test determines whether the means used to achieve the purpose causes avoidable pain. Mr. Justice Lamer makes it very clear that the law allows pain to be inflicted on animals if it is done for a lawful purpose. He stated:

It is sometimes necessary to make an animal suffer for its own good or again to save human life. Certain experiments, alas, inevitably painful for the animal, prove necessary to discover or test remedies which will save a great number of human lives. Section 402(1)(a) does not prohibit these incidents, but at the same time condemns the person who, for example, will leave a dog or a horse without water or without food for a few days, through carelessness or negligence or for reasons of profit or again in order to avoid the cost of a temporary board and lodging, notwithstanding that these animals would suffer much less than certain animals used as guinea pigs.

*Supply*

For the benefit of members section 402(1)(a) is currently section 446(1)(a).

Members know or ought to know that the pain inflicted must not be unreasonable having regard to the purpose for which it was inflicted in the first place.

● (1755)

Again, Mr. Justice Lamer said:

Considered in terms of the means by which one seeks the purpose which is justified, the expression "without necessity" takes into consideration all the circumstances of the particular case including first the purpose itself, the social priorities, the means available and their accessibility etc. One does not kill a steer in the same way as one kills a pig. One cannot devote to the euthanasia of animals large sums of money without taking into account social priorities. Suffering which one may reasonably avoid for an animal is not necessary. In my opinion, in 1953-54, the legislature defined "cruelty" for us as being from that time forward the act of causing to an animal an injury, pain or suffering that could have been reasonably avoided for it taking into account the purpose and the means employed.

I am using these long quotations because they are decades old. They have been in the law for generations. The onus is always on the prosecutor to show beyond reasonable doubt either that the purpose for inflicting pain, suffering or injury was unlawful, or if it was lawful, that the pain, suffering or injury caused was unnecessary.

It is not the defences which legitimize the use of animals in industry. That use is recognized by case law as in the example I just gave, under common custom, in regulations and in codes of conduct. If members do not know that they should know it. I believe members opposite who are critical of Bill C-15B know this and have been deliberately misleading farmers.

Some members have asserted that the defences referred to in subsection 429(2) of the criminal code regarding legal justification, excuse or colour of right, provide upfront protection for the industry. One translation of upfront protection is the word exemption. These members argue that if individuals have a lawful purpose in doing something then they can achieve that purpose by any method they choose. This is not the case. These members either know or ought to know that this argument is wrong in law because it completely ignores the tests for unnecessary pain and suffering and for criminal neglect.

It is misleading to suggest that anyone who uses animals has an exemption from the application of the criminal law. There was not a single witness before the committee who suggested that industry or anyone else should have an exemption under criminal law. Doctors and hockey players are not exempt from the law of assault when they engage in their legitimate activities. Similarly, why should anyone be completely exempt from the reasonable requirements of the criminal law in relation to treatment of animals?

The criminal law applies to everyone and imposes a minimum standard of behaviour in everyone. The Canadian public will not tolerate anyone having an exemption for inflicting unnecessary pain, suffering or injury on animals or humans. Let us be clear about this. That has never been the law and it certainly was never the intention of the animal cruelty amendments to provide exemptions of this nature.

The animal cruelty provisions of Bill C-15B are another example of the government's commitment to assuring that the criminal law,

which is what we are talking about, is a balanced reflection of the objectives and desires of the Canadian public, be they rural or urban.

Opposition members who are opposing the bill are doing farmers, including farmers in my riding, a great disservice. No group in Canada has a greater interest in healthy, pain free animals than farmers. Farmers are overwhelmingly opposed to unnecessary cruelty to animals. The opposition is hanging the farmers out to dry on this matter for its own political ends.

● (1800)

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I will attempt to draw the hon. member back to the subject of the day. He seems to be about 40 miles off. What he says has nothing to do with the Alliance motion. The hon. member made a wonderful defence of a government motion. I am surprised he was not called out of order.

The government has a way of getting in the way. We just saw that. It has a way of getting in the way and getting in the farmers' way. It has a way of keeping them from being able to run their own businesses and make their own opportunities and make their own choices.

Of course sometimes it does not affect all of the country. There is a little organization called the Canadian Wheat Board that some people guard like it is a Canadian institution, but it seems to have no impact this side of the Manitoba border. It involves only the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and a portion of B.C. The board brings things upon farmers such that even if they survive they are not being treated fairly. Since when is it fair to be forced to pay for a service that is not received?

Does the hon. member believe that there is anything the Liberal government could do to allow farmers in western Canada to have some fairness through a choice in how they market their grain? Would it be possible for the House to do anything to legislate against a monopoly such as the wheat board, which really only impacts westerners?

● (1805)

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Madam Speaker, it is interesting that the member stands up and accuses me of being irrelevant by addressing Bill C-15B, which I think has been mentioned by every Alliance member except him this afternoon. It was to that I was responding. He then proceeded to ask me a question on a topic I did not mention in my speech. This is surely irrelevance.

I would like to say that my point of view on this is very strong. I represent farmers. I have represented them since Bill C-15B was Bill C-17. I believe that it is our job as members to examine the legislation and to explain it as well as we can and truthfully to our constituents. That is what I have tried to do since the days of Bill C-17.

An Alliance member stood up earlier today and said that rural members on his side have recently discovered something about this legislation, but we have been working on it for three years and, by the way, to the satisfaction of many of our farmers. I believe this is what has happened. A year or so ago supporters of the gun lobby got a spurious legal opinion that included the matter of property, which is also an irrelevance, and they have been arguing that spurious legal opinion they have developed on the backs of the farmers.

As it came from the gun lobby and the hunting groups, why do they not use hunting examples when they are considering cruelty to animals? Why do they persist in raising all these standard practices of the farming community, which, as I have explained, have been protected for a half a century? Why do they do that?

I would say they are hanging the farmers out to dry. They should be talking to their farmers and educating their farmers on what not just this legislation but all legislation means.

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Madam Speaker, I have a direct question. The hon. member is talking about a decision made 50 years ago. We are talking about a new piece of legislation that would completely change the animal cruelty legislation that is on the books today. Most rural members I know expect that we need to bring in new legislation. The bill is 104 years old. Obviously it needs to be updated.

The people I am listening to are the federations of agriculture from coast to coast in this country and especially the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, the farmers I have the pleasure to represent and who come to my office and say they are chicken farmers or turkey farmers or dairy farmers and they are afraid they are going to be out of business under the provisions of that bill. I am not worried especially about how this affects the dog and cat owners of this country, because I think the provisions are there for them. I think the pet owners are protected. I am worried about people who make their living on the farm. The problem is that they are worried about it too.

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Madam Speaker, these are relatively minor amendments to the criminal code. The main changes are the increases in penalties, bringing the penalties from the 1950s and 1960s to the present time. One of the changes is a definition of animal, which is essentially a vertebrate that can feel pain, which I believe is much better than having no definition so that people could bring in a cockroach or a worm and say someone is being cruel to it. That is a change which is to the advantage of the farmers.

On the matter of property, which the member suggested, the criminal code is huge. There are 800 items all grouped for convenience, not for legal significance. Moving animals from property is simply a recognition of the fact that they are not like this desk, which I can kick. It does not affect property rights. Property rights in the criminal code are provincial and are not changed in the slightest by this legislation.

• (1810)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to have this opportunity to explain what the Government of Canada is doing for rural Canada, especially farming communities,

### *Supply*

in response to concerns about the environment. Good farming practices go hand in hand with healthy farming practices.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with all stakeholders to increase the farming sector's capacity to manage its soil resources, to provide the public with better access to a safe supply of water, to adjust to climate change, and to support the adoption of practices which will maintain soil and water quality.

The sustainability of the environment becomes particularly important when one is confronted with exceptional situations such as the drought which, once again this year, is of tremendous concern to many rural communities.

The measures we are taking to protect the environment cannot prevent drought, because no one can control meteorological conditions. But these measures can help to attenuate the effects of a possible drought. We must therefore have methods and programs in place, because writing a cheque is no guarantee of rain.

In order to put such measures in place, the federal government is working in partnership with the provinces and territories, with the sector, and with interested Canadians to develop a national strategic agricultural framework.

The agriculture strategy framework will build on our past successes in order to create a more solid structure for success. It is based on five key components which are integrated one with the other. These are risk management, food safety, renewal, science and innovation, and environmental management.

The federal and provincial Ministers of Agriculture have committed to working together to achieve a set of common objectives which will make it possible to improve the environmental performance of agricultural operations. The purpose of these concrete and quantifiable objectives is to enhance the quality of our water, our soils and our air, as well as ensuring compatibility with biodiversity.

To that end, the strategy framework contains provisions for greater use of regional environmental management plans, and improved practices relating to the use of manure, fertilizers and nutrients.

The framework encompasses the following: advantageous practices for pest-control practices and pesticide use; reduced fallow periods; increased use of no-till methods with a view to soil conservation; better management of areas along waterways, and range land and water use; and the adoption of better management practices in order to reduce odours and particulate matter emissions.

The proposed government objectives would make it possible to improve the long term sustainability of our farm operations during drought years and non-drought years alike.

This approach is based on the progress already made, thanks to the programs and practices that protect farmers against drought, and that incorporate weather conditions and other environmental factors in the farmers' daily planning and risk management processes.

### *Supply*

These programs include initiatives such as the Environmental Farm Plans, which apply to over 20,000 farm operations in Ontario and the Atlantic provinces; Quebec's Clubs conseils en agro-environnement, which include over 4,000 farmers and encourage them to develop sustainable farm practices, while also supporting them when they make representations; and the promotion of an integrated environmental approach of agriculture, through the Agriculture Canada Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, in western Canada.

Since the catastrophic droughts of the thirties, the Agriculture Canada Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration has helped farmers greatly increase their ability to deal with the unexpected forces of nature. Thanks to increased knowledge, technological progress and better management practices, we have now significantly reduced the consequences of droughts.

On a practical level, we have built dugouts specially designed to help farmers put up with two years of drought, and irrigation systems made up of dams and reservoirs that supply water to farmers. When there is a risk of drought, it is critical to use sound soil conservation methods.

So, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada co-operates with other stakeholders to develop and promote management practices, such as conservation tillage—which allows the soil to retain water and prevents it from evaporating—chemical fallow—which helps the roots of dead weeds retain water—plans to use nutrients, grassed waterways, grazing management of native grasslands, cross slope cultivation and contour farming.

• (1815)

The Soil Conservation Council of Canada, which has its headquarters in Saskatoon, has set up a national network of soil conservation organizations and is trying to promote the conservation and enrichment of Canada's soils for the benefit of present and future generations.

The use of healthy, ecological soil management practices can appreciably reduce the levels of greenhouse gases and help attenuate the effects of drought.

The federal government encourages producers to adopt practices which will increase the amount of organic carbon deposited in soils and vegetation. It also encourages producers to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases such as nitrous oxide and methane, which are by-products of farming. These practices also lessen soil disturbance and increase crop yield and the effectiveness of fertilizers.

Other methods are used to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as reducing soil tillage, incorporating more forage crops in crop rotations, planting more windbreaks, switching to grass and forage crops on marginal lands, and improving management of pasture land.

The national strategic agricultural framework being proposed emphasizes these initiatives and promises a healthier agricultural environment and a healthier society. It includes an exhaustive plan for the accelerated adoption of environmental protection measures. This plan covers Canadian farming operations and will help us to meet the measurable objectives applying to all facets of our environment.

Let us be clear. Healthy ecological practices are not just good for the environment. They also make good business sense. Consumers the world over are demanding that food production methods respect the environment. A more rational use of resources could reduce costs and increase the revenues from new green markets. By adopting these methods, the sector will become more cost-effective.

In conclusion, the Government of Canada will continue to support our farmers and their efforts to manage the environment with respect. Their efforts and their proper management of the environment, through the programs we have put in place, as well as the promise of a new approach to our environmental responsibilities, will strengthen our agricultural sector, a key component of rural Canada.

[*English*]

**Mr. Joe Jordan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I come from a rural riding in eastern Ontario. We certainly have experienced some difficult times recently. Some plants have closed. It has a lot to do with our proximity to the border. We are putting together a recovery plan. We did a very detailed analysis of the rural economy and the drivers of the rural economy. We came up with some specifics that we required.

One of the barriers to economic development in eastern Ontario, and I think most rural communities, was found to be a lack of bandwidth. One of the benefits of being in a rural area is the lifestyle. Technology allows businesses to decentralize but without the bandwidth we are not in the game. Bandwidth is an important aspect to rural development. When we proposed bandwidth expenditure in the budget, it was openly mocked by the Alliance Party. It did not present debate about the pros and cons of bandwidth. It dismissed it as an absolute waste of time and money.

My riding has a number of plants that are restructuring. One of the major contributors to the turnaround is HRDC. For six months the Alliance Party mocked HRDC, although today in question period we could see the theme. It is absolutely trying to encourage this kind of development which it should have been doing all along if it understood how rural economies work.

With respect to the Farm Credit Corporation, we changed the rules for farm credit so it could get involved and finance businesses that are associated with rural economies and not strictly farms. The Alliance Party stood and voted against it.

Does the hon. member not think it is strange that we spent an entire day of the House's time listening to Alliance Party members moan and whine about rural Canada when they do not have a clue of how the rural economies work? Every time there has been a piece of legislation in the House to help the rural economies they have sat in their seats and have not supported rural Canadians.



*Supply*

• (1820)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Duplain:** Madam Speaker, as you know, I am a new member, having arrived after the last election. I had the very pleasant surprise of discovering some wonderful things when I arrived as a member of this government.

When I arrived here, I was particularly interested in rural communities. It was a very important issue to me. I discovered just how well we could work together. The government members work together to find ways to ensure that rural communities survive and flourish.

I also discovered things that make the work difficult. Indeed, I often hear the opposition talk about things they have not even taken the time to learn about. When it comes time to debate and pass bills, the opposition raises arguments that they claim will do this, or they claim will do that.

However, what about arguments that have been thought out on paper, based on real facts and on which people work? The members are assisted by competent people. They work with researchers. Often these researchers come from their riding. Often, the opposition shouts and argues with us, but they should know that these ideas come from people from their riding and their communities, people who work tirelessly and who understand what is happening in the community and who are often in contact with people in their region. As such, they have developed these bills with the evolution of rural areas in mind.

This is why I would like the opposition to be more progressive with the government, so that they can indeed improve, rather than always contest, what the government is trying to build in rural communities.

[*English*]

**Mr. Philip Mayfield (Cariboo—Chilcotin, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, the member used rather vague and symbolic language in his speech. Is he saying that we need to study the problem more? Is he saying that there needs to be more research done and more rules applied to the rural segment of our country? That was the impression I was left with from what he said.

I find it hard to understand how in the light of the suffering that people are undergoing in the prairies and in the forest industry in British Columbia, he could suggest that we need to follow him through another study to understand things better. It makes absolutely no sense. I have no patience for that kind of rhetoric when there is so much hurt and suffering and loss going on in our country.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Duplain:** Madam Speaker, we live in a century of rapid change. Mention must be made of the efforts that have been made for the farming sector, be it research, or committees that have been struck under the auspices of the agricultural research group and the minister of agriculture, carrying out research and consultations across the country. These are real accomplishments by this government.

In fact, time is being taken to go out and speak to people where they are at, in order to be able to meet their expectations. It is not merely a matter of answering a phone call and then getting into an immediate panic because of a fear of change. The time must be taken to consult, to look at the data, and then to create new programs to meet the needs.

• (1825)

[*English*]

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, we are debating the long list of attacks the government has made on farmers across the country. Quite frankly, it turns my stomach to hear the member of parliament who just spoke, my colleague across the floor and others say that somehow they are going to tell our farmers how to farm better. The last thing we need is for them to tell farmers how to farm better.

When it comes to these conservation techniques the member was talking about, farmers in my part of the country have been using them widely for 10 years. They are so far ahead of the government it is not funny. All farmers ask of the government is to take care of a few specific things and then get out of their way and let them do their jobs. Instead government continues to attack and interfere. I do not have much time to talk about that but I am going to mention some of the ways the government attacks and interferes with our farmers.

All farmers want from the government is to properly negotiate the unfair trade practices which are destroying their prices and driving prices down. Government is very weak on this. It does a pitiful job in terms of negotiating trade deals and dealing with unfair trade practices. That is what farmers want it to deal with. They want a basic safety net program. What the government has put forth is a disaster. It simply has not delivered the few things farmers want from it, yet it keeps throwing other things at farmers. I could go through a long list but I do not have the time.

The government has forced farmers to pay for inspections through the Pest Management Regulatory Agency and other places. The inspections are done for the good of the general population yet farmers are made to pay for them. That is unfair. It is that kind of attack our farmers do not want.

The government has made farmers and other taxpayers pay for 200 Department of Fisheries and Oceans employees who were sent to the prairies. It destroys the fisheries off the east coast and then sends DFO people to the prairies to further interfere and make it more difficult for farmers and communities to do their business. That is the kind of attack the farmers do not need from the government.

The gun registry is another government interference which has just been devastating. It cannot even keep guns out of the hands of Mom Boucher for Pete's sake. He is one of the biggest organized crime figures in the country and he still successfully registered his guns. The registry is a complete disaster. That is what the government throws at farmers. The registry is expensive, intrusive and unnecessary.

*Adjournment Debate*

Bill C-5 and Bill C-15B are before the House. The government throws these bills at farmers and they are devastating. Bill C-5, the species at risk legislation, will not protect a single species. We know that. It is a very heavy-handed approach and the penalty is extremely high. There is so little co-operation in the legislation that if a species is found, the farmer, cottage owner, or whoever it is as this will affect a lot more than farmers, will make sure that the species will not remain one way or another. It will lead to more harm to endangered species rather than less.

Members of the rural caucus stood and said they got compensation for the farmers. That is a deceitful statement to farmers. They are deceiving their own constituents with those statements. They are absolutely untrue. I challenge them to show us where compensation is written in the legislation. I challenge them to show us where in any regulation there is a fair market value guarantee. It is not even suggested. The compensation those members have talked about is not there. They are being dishonest with their constituents and that has to change. That is not an acceptable thing for government members do. The rural caucus members from the Liberal Party will have a lot to answer for when their farmers find out what is in the legislation and what is not. That is unacceptable.

In Bill C-15B, the cruelty to animals legislation, the government again is attacking farmers. That is what our motion is about today. The government is making it very difficult for farmers to operate. Farmers will be subjected to court challenges at their own expense. The government does this and says that everything is okay.

The member for Peterborough had the nerve to stand and talk about 50 year old legislation that already determined what is going to happen in terms of allowing farmers to use animals the way they do and produce animals the way they choose. If that is the case, then why did the government bring forward this legislation? He said the legislation has been fine for 50 years. The judge ruled 50 years ago that it is okay, so why do we have this intrusive legislation which will make life difficult for farmers?

• (1830)

I know my time is up, but the list is very long and I have been able to mention only a few of the key attacks of the government on farmers. The members of the rural caucus ought to be ashamed because they will only get caught in their own deception.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** It being 6.30 p.m., it is my duty to inform the House that proceedings on the motion have expired.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

### FISHERIES AND OCEANS

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore, PC):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise on what we informally call the late show to ask for an answer to a question that I have previously asked in the House.

The question was put to the minister of fisheries. It was:

—since the minister still refuses to assert Canadian custodial management outside the 200 mile limit, will he agree to increase coast guard and DFO presence inside the 200 mile limit?

I went on to say:

It is absolutely shameful that the minister expects one coast guard vessel to patrol all of the Grand Banks inside the 200 mile limit. What is he going to do about it?

The minister's reply was that he knew it was a serious problem, he would look into it and he would do something immediately.

The issue, especially on overfishing and on surveillance, is an important issue for Atlantic Canada. The entire DFO fleet for surveillance in the country consists of 27 rotary wing aircraft or helicopters stationed at 11 bases and 5 DFO regions specifically in Atlantic Canada.

In the maritimes region alone, we have only four helicopters. There is one at Saint John, there is one at Charlottetown, there is one at Yarmouth, which is a secondary helicopter, and there are four based out of Halifax.

Certainly if we are ever going to attempt to control the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap, we will need to have more long range helicopters, not small choppers, and fixed wing airplanes and some type of geographical positioning instrumentation on board all ships fishing on the Grand Banks. There are a number of things that could be done and implemented immediately. None of these have been done.

We have a total of four coast guard vessels on the east coast. We have one stationed in Newfoundland to patrol all of the nose and tail of the Grand Banks and the Flemish Cap. It is absolutely impossible. When we go to the NAFO meetings in Europe, we come back with our tail between our legs. We cannot reach an agreement. We do not get the assistance from those who should be our European allies.

Certainly the 10% of the Grand Banks that lies outside the 200 mile limit is a major problem. We have complete overfishing, which even the government admits has increased since 1995. We need something that can be done today, immediately.

Let us look at a couple of things that we can do. We can go to the NAFO meeting and ask for assistance to curtail overfishing. We can put observers on every ship fishing off the Grand Banks, including Canadian ships. We can check for netliners. We can make sure undersized species are not caught. We can make sure that moratorium protected species are not ground into fishmeal. There was a Russian trawler in Newfoundland with 35 tonnes of fishmeal on it. No one knows what that fishmeal was made of, but I will guarantee that a lot of it was made out of undersized fish. That is what fishmeal is made out of: heads and undersized fish.

Let us do something about this. Let us do something about this right away.

*Adjournment Debate*

**Mrs. Karen Redman (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, non-compliance in NAFO regulatory areas conducted by foreign fishing vessels has been a longstanding concern for Canada. Indeed information provided to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans by NAFO shows that non-compliance continues to be a significant problem and, as a matter of fact, appears to be on the rise. Canada presented an analysis of the data at the last NAFO meeting. The analysis clearly showed that there was a disturbing trend of increased non-compliance by vessels of some NAFO member countries. The information was obtained by analyzing NAFO observer reports.

Fishing vessels of all NAFO contracting parties must carry aboard fishery observers as required under NAFO's conservation and enforcement measures. Each member state is responsible to hire and deploy the observers for its own vessels. Observers check key fishing restrictions such as location fished, catch composition and fishing gear used. A report of their observations is filed with NAFO after each fishing trip. These reports are an invaluable source of information. As a matter of fact, it was the analysis of these reports that showed the trend of increased non-compliance. Canadian officials will continue to review and analyze these reports very carefully to identify further trends and non-compliance issues that need to be addressed.

Canada does not solely rely on fishery observer programs to monitor fisheries in the NAFO regulatory area. Canada has made a major commitment to produce surveillance and inspection of fishing activities by other means. This includes a very extensive air surveillance program and patrol vessel capability operated by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. This capability enables Canada fisheries officers in their role as NAFO inspectors to monitor the whereabouts, movements and activities of foreign fishing vessels.

Patrol vessel coverage is a key element of all our NAFO surveillance and enforcement programs. DFO has dedicated the use of a large offshore patrol vessel, the *Leonard J. Cowley* to NAFO patrols. The vessel is used as a platform for Canadian fisheries officers acting in their role as NAFO inspectors to conduct boardings and inspections of foreign fishing vessels to verify compliance.

Information gathered by air surveillance patrols and from observer reports helps direct patrol vessels so that inspections can be conducted in the most cost effective and strategic manner. At sea inspections are conducted so that such things as bycatch, mesh sizes, catch size limits and fishing apparatus can be inspected firsthand.

When suspected infractions are found the member state is promptly notified so that appropriate follow up action is taken.

Other Canadian coast guard vessels are sometimes utilized by NAFO patrols. DFO also has an agreement with the Department of National Defence whereby naval vessels conduct a certain number of fishery patrols each year. These patrols often take place in NAFO regulatory areas with DFO fisheries officers deployed.

All this inspection is only worthwhile if there is follow up. We are determined as a government to use the most effective monitoring and follow up processes that are available because we take this topic very seriously.

• (1835)

**Mr. Gerald Keddy:** Madam Speaker, a minute is not long enough to sum up this broad and extremely important issue but I will attempt to do it. My question is still not answered. Will we dedicate more people, resources, ships and helicopters to patrol the Grand Banks or will we not? That was my question. I assume from the parliamentary secretary's answer that we will not.

The other issue is that there are a number of things we can do right away. Non-compliance is on the rise. To have the members responsible for checking compliance on their own ships is akin to having the fox guarding the chicken coop. There should be a Canadian compliance officer on every ship fishing off the Grand Banks, along with a foreign national so that we have some common sense applied in checking for compliance. We cannot expect countries to check on themselves.

**Mrs. Karen Redman:** Madam Speaker, I believe Canada has implemented a very credible and effective program for monitoring the activities of foreign fishing vessels operating in NAFO regulatory areas. We will also press NAFO member countries to take action in response to evidence of violations committed by their vessels. We believe this is an appropriate approach that deals with partnership and will continue to be effective as we monitor some of these disturbing trends.

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10.00 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.39 p.m.)



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