



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, October 23, 2003**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 23, 2003

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1005)  
[English]

### ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

The House resumed from October 22 consideration of the motion that Bill C-49, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003, be read the third time and passed, and of the motion that the question be now put.

**The Speaker:** It being 10:05 a.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the previous question at third reading stage of Bill C-49.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre on a point of order.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention a serious situation that arose yesterday in the Standing Committee on Finance during the testimony of the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

**The Speaker:** I would invite the hon. member to do that after the vote. I will be more than happy to hear the point of order then, but we have a vote scheduled for 10 a.m. I think we might proceed with that first and then we will deal with the point of order.

The hon. chief government whip on a point of order.

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, I think you would find consent that the motion before the House be deemed carried on division.

**The Speaker:** Which motion is the hon. member referring to?

**Ms. Marlene Catterall:** Mr. Speaker, the motion that the question be now put.

**The Speaker:** Perhaps I will put the question and then we will see if it carries on division. Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** The question is on the previous question. Is there unanimous consent to have this motion carried on division?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**The Speaker:** The next question is on the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Speaker:** In my opinion, the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1035)

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

(Division No. 253)

### YEAS

#### Members

Abbott	Adams
Allard	Anders
Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands)	Anderson (Victoria)
Assad	Augustine
Bagnell	Bailey
Barnes (London West)	Beaumier
Bélangier	Bellemare
Bennett	Benoit
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blaikie
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Breitkreuz
Brison	Brown
Bryden	Bulte
Burton	Byrne
Cadman	Calder
Cannis	Castonguay
Catterall	Charbonneau
Chatters	Coderre
Collenette	Comartin
Comuzzi	Cullen
Cummins	Cuzner
Davies	Dion
Discepola	Doyle
Duncan	Easter
Epp	Farah
Fitzpatrick	Fontana

*Points of Order*

Frulla	Fry
Gallant	Galloway
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Gouk	Graham
Grose	Harper
Hearn	Herron
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hilstrom	Ianno
Jackson	Jaffer
Jennings	Jobin
Johnston	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Keyes
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Knutson
Kraft Sloan	Lastewka
Lee	Leung
Lill	Lincoln
Longfield	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacAulay	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Macklin	Maloney
Marcil	Mark
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Masse
McCallum	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough East)	McLellan
McNally	McTeague
Meredith	Merrifield
Mitchell	Moore
Murphy	Myers
Nault	Neville
Nystrom	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Parrish	Penson
Pettigrew	Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Pratt	Price
Proctor	Proulx
Provenzano	Rajotte
Redman	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Reid (Lanark—Carleton)
Ritz	Robillard
Robinson	Rock
Saada	Scherrer
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	Skelton
Solberg	Spencer
St-Jacques	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Stinson
Stoffer	Strahl
Szabo	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Thompson (Wild Rose)
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Tirabassi
Toews	Torsney
Ur	Valeri
Vanelief	Vellacott
Volpe	Wappel
Wasylycia-Leis	Wayne
White (North Vancouver)	White (Langley—Abbotsford)
Wilfert	Williams
Yelich — 175	

**NAYS**

## Members

Asselin	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bigras	Borotsik
Crête	Dalphond-Guiral
Duceppe	Fournier
Gagnon (Champlain)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Gagnon (Québec)	Gaudet
Gauthier	Girard-Bujold
Guay	Harvey
Laframboise	Lancôt
Loubier	Marceau
Ménard	Paquette
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Rocheleau
Roy	Sauvageau
St-Hilaire	Tremblay — 30

**PAIRED**

## Members

Alcock	Bergeron
Cardin	Cauchon
Desrochers	Duplain
Guarnieri	Guimond
Lalonde	Peterson — 10

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I declare the motion carried.

The hon. government House leader on a point of order.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT**

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to a commitment I made to House leaders and others in the House, I believe that you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That Bill C-53, an act to change the names of certain electoral districts, be deemed to be amended in clause 23 by deleting the word "Woodwich" and substituting therefor the word "Woolwich" and that the bill be deemed to have been read a second time, referred to a committee, reported from committee and concurred in at report stage without amendment, and read a third time and passed.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** **The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read a second time, referred to committee, reported without amendment, concurred in, read a third time and passed)

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to your attention a serious matter that arose yesterday in the Standing Committee on Finance during the testimony of the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that during this meeting the actions of the chairperson, supported by the government majority on the committee, denied me and other members of the committee our right to question the witness as is allowed by the rules of Parliament. As such my freedom of speech, which is a fundamental right to every MP in this place, was denied.

The facts are fairly simple. The meeting was held to examine the Bank of Canada's monetary policy. The witnesses were the Governor of the Bank of Canada and the senior deputy governor.

During the meeting, when recognized by the Chair in my proper order and within the time allowed to me, I attempted to question the credibility of the witness, given the past record of the Governor of the Bank of Canada as a manager of a scandal at the Department of Health. All attempts to question the credibility of the witness were ruled out of order by the chair.

*Points of Order*

I fail to see the point in having free speech in the House if it is arbitrarily denied to me in committee. It is my job as an MP and as my party's finance critic to explore the governor's ability to run our monetary policy and that question involves his credibility. We cannot study a policy without looking at the bank's chief manager's ability to implement the policy effectively.

I know that my immediate remedy for this problem was to raise the matter with the committee, and that I did. My only option was to challenge the chair, and that I did. The committee split along party lines and the chair's ruling was upheld.

I know that we have partisan debate in this place and that in committee there are votes along party lines. That is common and I understand that this is normal; however, the House and its committees are more than a partisan battleground.

We are an institution where a variety of ideas are expressed and where the facets of public policy are explored to improve the lives of those who send us here as representatives. The expression of those ideas is the right of all members within the confines of the rules. Freedom of speech is a fundamental right of MPs in this place.

We do not allow the majority to gag the minority, but that is what happened yesterday. When the tyranny of the majority runs down our rights as members, then our only remedy is to ask for your wisdom on this matter. I have listened to your rulings in the past on the independence of committees and I have taken them to heart.

Mr. Speaker, you have recognized that committees are their own masters on matters of procedure, but my point of order is not procedural. It is a question of my rights being denied.

Mr. Speaker, you are my only viable protector against a gag order from the majority of this place. I am only trying to do my job within the rules. I therefore ask you, Mr. Speaker, to review the transcript in question and overrule the chair of the finance committee on this matter.

• (1040)

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is bordering on the ridiculous. Yesterday the Standing Committee on Finance considered, as it was said, the Bank of Canada's monetary policy report and, of course, it had as a witness the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

I understand that the member for Medicine Hat, and perhaps others, asked about the situation of the governor when he was working in a previous position at the Department of Health at the time of the so-called Virginia Fontaine incident. As the record will show, the governor said that, as every member will appreciate, the issue was before the courts and that he would not want to jeopardize it in any way.

Therefore we all know the issue is before the courts. Actually in the House that same rule would apply invoking the sub judice convention.

The chair noted that the committee meeting was to discuss matters relating to monetary policy and ruled that this matter should not be considered at this meeting. The witness properly invoked that this was sub judice and the chair properly said that it was not before the

committee anyway. On both sides we had the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, the member for Medicine Hat and others rebuked in a sense.

The chair advised the member for Winnipeg North Centre that she could appeal the ruling if she wanted to. The committee then voted to sustain the ruling of the chair, which a committee is entitled to do.

The member cannot come to the House and say that somehow procedurally something went wrong. She has acknowledged that the procedure was correct.

If the procedure was correct, simply to say that there were more people who disagreed than agreed with her is not grounds for bringing this to the attention of your honour. In my view, this is an inappropriate attempt by the hon. member to interfere, first, in a ruling of the court, and second, to divert the attention of the committee from the consideration of national issues to a partisan point that she was trying to make.

Finally, it is certainly not an issue that is properly before your honour.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I think the government House leader has not been properly apprised of the facts as they actually occurred in the committee.

My understanding is that the witness did not invoke the sub judice rule. In fact, the witness appeared as if he were ready to answer the questions because perhaps the witness understood better than the government House leader that the question of confidence, that is to say, the confidence that the people of Canada can have in the Governor of the Bank of Canada, is central to monetary policy and central to the health of our economy.

That is why the questions that the member for Medicine Hat and the member for Winnipeg North Centre wanted to raise were not and should not have been ruled out of order.

How the Governor of the Bank of Canada operated in his previous position, if in fact things have come to the attention of the public and the media, is something that should be the proper realm of questioning for the committee.

I would submit that the government House leader has it wrong because the question of confidence in the Governor of the Bank of Canada is not sub judice. It is a political matter. That is why I raised it in the House yesterday and why the member for Winnipeg North Centre raised it.

It seems to us that what is happening here is that the government does not want the Governor of the Bank of Canada to answer these questions. It is trying to protect the governor. It is trying to keep him from having to answer these questions as to why this kind of misuse of public funds could have happened under his auspices when he was the deputy minister of health.

• (1045)

**The Speaker:** I am sure we can have motives bandied about in the House for all kinds of goings on but it is not the purview of the Chair to involve himself in these matters. We are really dealing here with a point of order raised by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre concerning proceedings in a committee.

*Routine Proceedings*

As she herself acknowledged in her point of order, which I admit was very capably argued, and I appreciate all her kind comments about the wonderful authority the Chair supposedly possesses, committees are masters of their own procedure. She obviously knows the rules very well because she did what she could in the committee to appeal to the chair to reconsider the matter. I gather she asked for a vote in the committee on the chair's ruling and so on. The committee made a decision that it would not have questions on the subjects that she was raising in the committee during that proceeding.

For the member to raise the matter here and expect me to overrule a committee chair who made a ruling that was decided in the committee, I think, as she acknowledged in her own argument, is beyond my competence. As greatly as she lauded it and as much as she suggested that I had wonderful powers, I do not believe that it is proper for the Chair of this House to be a sort of court of appeal for committees. I have indicated that in past rulings on this kind of point of order and I am afraid I will have to make that same decision today. I advise her to pursue remedies in other places.

I point out to her that there is more than one committee that might be involved in this matter and that might ask the governor to come and give evidence. She is free to raise the matter in various committees and maybe she will get a different ruling in a different committee. This is one of the great bonanzas of the House of Commons and I know that she will want to take full advantage of that in all her work.

Accordingly, I do not find there is a point of order here.

## PARLIAMENTARY PRECINCT

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, this morning some of our members, and I also understand other members from other parties who are in the Confederation Building or the Justice Building, almost missed the vote because of the circuitous route of the bus. I know this can be addressed in a different forum but it could and can affect members' performance in the House, certainly if they cannot make it for a vote.

I would ask for your consideration, Mr. Speaker, in the right forum, if this is not the proper one, to make sure the buses take a more direct route when we have votes in the House. It appears the bus drivers may not be aware of when there are votes and it could certainly cause major problems in the performance of our duties here in this great institution.

**The Speaker:** I thank the hon. member for raising the matter. I am sure the point he has taken up will be raised in the appropriate forum and resolved to the hon. member's satisfaction. We would not want members delayed on buses. We will certainly do our best to expedite the transport.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker,

pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 29 petitions.

\* \* \*

● (1050)

**FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL FISCAL ARRANGEMENTS ACT**

**Hon. Don Boudria (for the Minister of Finance)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-54, an act to amend the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act and the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Regulations, 1999.

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

\* \* \*

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Paul Harold Macklin (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Pursuant to its order of reference of Friday, September 19, 2003, your committee has considered Bill C-45, an act to amend the Criminal Code (criminal liability of organizations), and has agreed to report it with amendments.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Joe Comuzzi (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by many residents of northwestern Ontario.

The petitioners state that marriage is the best foundation for families and for raising children; that the definition of marriage as being between a man and a woman is being challenged by the courts in this land and by some members in the House; that this hon. House passed a motion in June 1999 that called for marriage to continue as it was defined as the union of one man and one woman.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to retain this definition irrespective of what three people have decided in the Court of Appeal of Ontario. I support this petition.

## CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have quite a few petitions here today which are grouped into four different categories.

*Routine Proceedings*

In the first petition, the petitioners call upon Parliament to protect our children by taking all necessary steps to ensure that materials promoting or glorifying pedophilia or sado-masochistic activities involving or concerning children are outlawed. They are passionate about that. I have several petitions on that issue.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, second, I have several petitions on the definition of marriage. The petitioners call upon Parliament to maintain the current definition of marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

## STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the third set of petitions have to do with something that will be before the House in the next few days, which is the issue of reproductive technology.

The petitioners are asking Parliament to focus its attention on the benefits of adult stem cell research as opposed to any other type of stem cells that are quite controversial.

## HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT CANADA

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition is a lengthy one by folks who have asked the government to reconsider its decision to close down the HRDC office in Chilliwack. This is a local issue but it affects the entire region of Hope, Boston Bar and Chilliwack. This is the last HRDC office open to people for a couple of hundred kilometres around. To close the HRDC office in Chilliwack means that those folks will be denied access to a government service that they feel is necessary.

## MARRIAGE

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition to the House of Commons and Parliament on the right of Parliament to determine and preserve the definition of marriage.

The citizens of Saskatchewan in my constituency state that in 1999 Parliament voted to preserve the traditional definition of marriage but that a recent court decision has redefined marriage, contrary to the wishes of Parliament; that now the government wants Parliament to vote on new legislation but only after it has been approved by the Supreme Court; that this is a dangerous new precedent for democracy in Canada; and that elected members of Parliament should decide the marriage issue, not appointed judges.

Therefore the petitioners call upon Parliament to immediately hold a renewed debate on the definition of marriage and reaffirm, as it did in 1999, its commitment to take all necessary steps to preserve marriage as the union of one woman and one man to the exclusion of all others.

•(1055)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of signatures here, not only from my constituency but from across the province. Many of these people tell me that this is the most important issue facing the country today.

The petitioners call upon the government to preserve marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I, too, have a number of petitions. The first petition calls upon the government to take all necessary steps to preserve the definition of marriage as being between one man and one woman, even to the point of invoking section 33, the notwithstanding clause, of the charter.

The second petition, from a number of voters across the country, asks that Parliament actually pass legislation that would recognize and maintain the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union between one man and one woman.

## CHILD SUPPORT

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I have two other petitions that deal with the tragedy of marriages that separate. The petitioners are calling upon the government to design legislation considering the principle of shared parenting and to modify the child support guidelines and the taxation system so the children of divorced parents will actually receive the child support payments in their entirety and that these payments would not be taxed.

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour this morning to table five petitions on behalf of the good people of Dauphin—Swan River.

The first one deals with the current BSE problem. The petitioners call upon Parliament to take immediate action to develop internationally recognized protocols designed to restore confidence in Canadian beef products and to open international beef markets to Canadian producers.

## UKRAINIAN COMMUNITY

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with my private member's bill, Bill C-333, which is the Ukrainian Canadian restitution act to recognize injustice done to the Ukrainian community during the first world war.

## CHINESE COMMUNITY

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition deals with another issue in my private member's bill, Bill C-333. The petitioners call upon the government to recognize and redress the issues of the Chinese history and promote racial harmony.

*Routine Proceedings*

## FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition deals with Bill C-68, which we have heard about many times. The petitioners call upon Parliament to freeze further spending on implementation or privatization of the firearms registry and to repeal Bill C-68 in its entirety.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition deals with the issue of the traditional definition of marriage. The petitioners call upon the government to retain the traditional definition of marriage as the relationship between one man and one woman.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of Canadians, including my own riding of Mississauga South.

I have been a member of Parliament for 10 years and there is no issue that has had more attention from my constituents than the issue of the definition of marriage.

The petitioners would like to draw to the attention of the House that the invocation of section 33 of the Constitution can override the decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal.

The petitioners therefore call upon Parliament to invoke the notwithstanding clause so that the definition of marriage retained in our laws would be the legal union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

## STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of people in St. John's East who make the point that non-embryonic stem cell research has already shown encouraging potential to provide medical cure and therapies and that adult stem cells have shown significant research progress without the immune rejection or ethical problems associated with embryonic stem cell research. The petitioners further state that Bill C-13 continues to permit people to kill human embryos.

Description of Item	#of Items	Cost per Item	Total Cost	Amount Recovered	Total	Unit/Location of Theft	Charges Laid
ACER Laptop	1	\$2,400.00	\$2,400.00	\$500.00	\$1,900.00	31 Canadian Brigade Group/Windsor	Yes
COMPAQ Laptop	1	\$3,195.00	\$3,195.00	\$0.00	\$3,195.00	31 Canadian Brigade Group/London	No
Binoculars	6	\$324.51	\$1,947.06	\$0.00	\$1,947.06	31 Canadian Brigade Group/Fort Custer USA	No
Total					\$7,042.06		

## Question No. 250—Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:

What actions has the government undertaken, as of September 15, 2003, to respond to and prepare a plan for implementing the recommendations which the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women made at the time of its review of Canada's 5th Report on its compliance with its commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); in particular, what steps have been taken to: (a) solicit input from federal government departments regarding steps they will take; (b) solicit input from provincial and territorial governments regarding steps they will take; (c) solicit input from women's organizations and aboriginal women's organizations, in particular regarding the best ways of implementing the

They call upon Parliament to ban embryonic stem cell research.

\* \* \*

• (1100)

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 147 supplementary, 250 and 252.

[Text]

Question No. 147—**Mr. John Williams:**

With regard to the answer provided to Question No. 47 by the Minister of National Defence on January 27, 2003, regarding the rubric "Losses of Public Property Due to an Offence or Other Illegal Act" for the Department of National Defence as listed on page 3.24 of volume II, part II, of the Public Accounts of Canada 2001-2002 and the cases of theft listed thereon; of the information not provided yet which represents approximately \$127,000 of the \$220,000 addressed in Question No. 47: (a) what was stolen in each individual case; (b) what was the value of each individual item; (c) what was the location of each theft; and (d) were there any charges laid in the case?

**Hon. John McCallum (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):**

The attached chart contains information representing the final \$7,000 that the department undertook to provide.

The recording and reporting of this information is complicated by the wide dispersal of responsible units throughout Canada and overseas, often multiple levels of reporting between the primary unit and National Defence headquarters, and the manual nature of the process.

The department has taken steps to improve the recording and reporting process to ensure adequate validation and documentation in support of losses of public property reported in the Public Accounts of Canada for current and future years.

## Theft of Military Kit

Description of Item	#of Items	Cost per Item	Total Cost	Amount Recovered	Total	Unit/Location of Theft	Charges Laid
ACER Laptop	1	\$2,400.00	\$2,400.00	\$500.00	\$1,900.00	31 Canadian Brigade Group/Windsor	Yes
COMPAQ Laptop	1	\$3,195.00	\$3,195.00	\$0.00	\$3,195.00	31 Canadian Brigade Group/London	No
Binoculars	6	\$324.51	\$1,947.06	\$0.00	\$1,947.06	31 Canadian Brigade Group/Fort Custer USA	No
Total					\$7,042.06		

recommendations; (d) initiate a cross-departmental process to develop and coordinate an implementation plan; (e) involve non-governmental organizations in developing the plan; (f) disseminate the Committee's concluding comments widely in Canada; and (g) address other issues raised by the United Nations CEDAW Committee?



*Routine Proceedings***Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.):**

The concluding observations of the United Nations committee on the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, CEDAW, are not considered binding in international law but are considered authoritative, that is, they carry moral obligation and weight. States are expected to undertake follow-up measures on recommendations and to respond to the issues of concern to the committee in subsequent reports. While there is no requirement to develop an overall implementation plan in Canada, several steps are taken to ensure that the views of all human rights treaty bodies, such as the CEDAW committee, are given due consideration.

This follow-up process begins with the immediate distribution of the concluding observations to all concerned federal departments and to all provincial and territorial governments. Federally, each department then discusses the issues to determine whether and what measures can be taken to address those issues within its area of competence. Interdepartmental meetings are held to coordinate efforts. Provinces and territories engage in their own intra-governmental discussions. To coordinate efforts between jurisdictions, discussions are held through the appropriate established federal-provincial-territorial government mechanisms. These mechanisms include the continuing committee of officials on human rights, and in the case of the CEDAW, meetings of federal-provincial-territorial ministers and senior officials on the status of women.

In response to the sub-questions: (a) and (d) Four interdepartmental meetings have been held to discuss the concluding observations. The next meeting is expected to be held in October. A working group has been established to develop a strategy for improved reporting. In addition, the CEDAW and the concluding observations have been discussed interdepartmentally at meetings on related subjects, including discussions on the agenda for gender equality and human rights issues generally.

(b) The continuing committee of officials on human rights, which includes representatives of all jurisdictions, discussed the committee's recommendations on five occasions. The federal, provincial and territorial ministers responsible for the status of women also discussed the CEDAW at their meeting in September.

c) and (e) At the request of the Feminist Alliance For International Action, FAFIA, officials from several federal departments met with representatives of women's non-governmental organizations to hear their suggestions regarding follow-up to the concluding observations. Status of Women Canada has provided funding to FAFIA to develop strategies and coordinate action by women's organizations throughout Canada concerning follow-up to Canada's international commitments on women's issues.

Federal departments are expected to include discussions of the issues raised by this and other human rights treaty bodies within their usual consultations with non-governmental organizations on issues within the responsibility of the department. There is no formal process in place to solicit input from women's, aboriginal or human rights non-governmental organizations specifically in regard to follow-up to the views of the CEDAW committee. The possibility of establishing such a process in future, however, is one of several issues that will be examined by federal departments that are engaged

in discussions on how to improve the implementation of, as well as reporting on, all six human rights instruments that Canada has ratified.

(f) The concluding observations are available to all Canadians on the website of the Department of Canadian Heritage at [http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw\\_e.cfm](http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/pdp-hrp/docs/cedaw_e.cfm). Paper copies are available free of charge on request by calling the human rights program at 819-994-3458.

(g) Each jurisdiction is in the process of determining what will be done within its area to address each of the issues raised by the committee. Efforts to address the issues are expected to be ongoing over several years. In accordance with the requirements of the CEDAW committee, information on the measures implemented and the results achieved will be included in Canada's next report.

**Question No. 252—Mr. Loyola Hearn:**

In respect to prescription drug costs in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, will the government commit to increasing the exemption for seniors from the current \$15,935.99 to a more reasonable amount, which would make it much easier for them to qualify for the Guaranteed Income Supplement?

**Mr. Bryon Wilfert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, Lib.):** It is up to provinces to define the eligibility criteria for their prescription drug benefit plans and other social programs. Some provinces have chosen to provide benefits for low-income seniors based on their eligibility for the guaranteed income supplement, GIS, provided under the federal old age security program, (OAS).

Under the OAS, seniors with limited income may be eligible for the GIS. The amount of GIS benefits is dependent on both the marital status and the family income.

For a single, widowed or divorced pensioner, the monthly maximum GIS, which is adjusted to CPI inflation every quarter, currently stands at \$548.53. The maximum amount for the whole year, 2003, is \$6,496.26. This amount is in addition to the OAS benefit of \$5,497.62 in 2003. The GIS benefit is reduced at the rate of 50¢ for every dollar of other income, non OAS and non-GIS. This means that the GIS benefit is fully phased out when other income reaches \$12,992.

For a two-pensioner couple, each spouse can currently receive GIS benefits up to \$357.30 per month, \$4,255.83 for the whole year, in addition to OAS benefits of \$5,497.62 each. The GIS benefit is reduced for each spouse at the rate of 25¢ per dollar of other family income. For the couple, this implies that total GIS benefits are reduced by 50¢ for every dollar of other income and are phased out when other family income reaches \$17,020.

Similar benefits are available for low income pensioners' spouses and widow(er)s who are between the ages of 60 and 64.

### Supply

Newfoundland and Labrador's seniors drug subsidy Program provides prescription drug coverage for residents 65 years of age or over who are in receipt of the guaranteed income supplement. Even though the eligibility for the program is based on the GIS, it is the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that designed the program in this way and is ultimately responsible for setting the eligibility criteria. The federal government has therefore no control over the design of provincial programs.

\* \* \*

[English]

#### QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

**Mr. Geoff Regan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if Question No. 245 could be made an order for return, the return would be tabled immediately.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 245—**Mr. John Cummins:**

With regard to emamectin benzoate, the unlicensed drug used to treat infestations of sea lice in farmed salmon: (a) how many requests for emergency release have been received for each of the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; (b) how many requests for emergency release have been approved for the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; (c) what quantities of the drug were approved in the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; (d) how many fish were treated with the drug during the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; (e) what are the known effects of the drug if ingested by shrimp, prawns and lobster in the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; (f) what are the known effects of the drug on humans ingesting seafood that has been treated with it; (g) how many times has the drug been used as a preventative measure against sea lice in the following years: 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003; and (h) what areas of Canada's coastlines have been exposed to this drug?

(Return tabled.)

[English]

**Mr. Geoff Regan:** I ask, Mr. Speaker, that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

### SUPPLY

ALLOTTED DAY—DEMOCRATIC IMBALANCE

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ)** moved:

That, although the Prime Minister has a mandate and should be able to end it as he chooses, given the democratic imbalance that currently prevails and that results in the government's decision-making occurring outside this House, and more broadly outside any public institution, this House calls upon the Prime Minister to leave office as soon as possible after November 14, 2003.

He said: Mr. Speaker, at the outset, I want to stress the fact that the issue now before the House is extremely important, since it deals

with the very foundations of the democratic system in place in Canada, in Quebec and all the other Canadian provinces.

Indeed, those who are watching this debate should realize that, with a government where the powers are concentrated in the hands of one man, the Prime Minister, the opposition is there to provide the necessary checks and balances.

That being said, everyone knows how important it is to have, in a properly balanced Parliament, a strong opposition that is able to debate public policies, make suggestions and monitor government action, an opposition that stands up for those who do not share the government's position.

Our system needs proper balance to function, since the government speaks for a huge segment of the population, has all the power and spends all the money, and basically does whatever is needed to reach its goals.

Nevertheless, with all that concentration of power, our role in the House of Commons is to provide balance. The opposition members have a responsibility to prevent the government from going too far in using public money or from considering only one point of view when making its policy decisions.

Among the excellent mechanisms that enable the opposition to play this role are the parliamentary committees, which are extremely important and whose role I certainly would not deny, and in particular there is the oral question period every day in Parliament.

There is a reason why question period attracts so much interest from journalists, the media as a whole and the general public. It is not because of its more spectacular aspects, but because of the importance of what happens at that time. The government's actions often come under scrutiny during question period.

For example, take the sponsorship scandal; how often were the government's decisions and approaches, which we thought reprehensible, pointed out to the public by opposition questions?

How many people have had to give an accounting of themselves to the public during question period? And how many government policies have been changed or modified because of opposition insistence during question period? Question period is the best opportunity our fellow citizens have to be heard in Parliament. It is time set aside for all those who do not share the government's views to be heard through the opposition members. The government knows that and has a great moral obligation.

It has an obligation to give an account of its mandate to the other elected representatives who have the time to dig, to research, to look, to challenge points of view. That is democratic balance.

All this rests on the basic concept that the government is responsible. The government makes decisions. The government is responsible for its decisions. The government can change its decisions. The government can consult the people. The government can reverse itself. The government can launch an inquiry. The government can decide to proceed further with any of its policies.

*Supply*

●(1105)

The government has all the powers, but they are kept in check by the opposition, particularly in Parliament. During the summer or Christmas recess, there is a democratic deficit, to some extent, because this process does not work as well. As a result, the media, conferences and press conferences are used by the various parties. This ensures balance, but one that is not as perfect or as complete.

So all this power is concentrated in the hands of the government, particularly the Prime Minister's. The Prime Minister has the power of political life or death over each member of his caucus. He has the keys to the limousines. He has enormous power to influence his ministers. Everyone knows the role of the Prime Minister's office. For example, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration wanted to get involved in the matter relating to the Montreal Grand Prix and was told by the Prime Minister's chief of staff, "You, shut up".

We know the importance of the Prime Minister's office and the Prime Minister when it comes to government policy. No one has a problem with that. Everyone knows that the opposition members are not subject to that pressure. The government members are unhappy. They are fighting for a spot in cabinet, but once they get picked, the Prime Minister is the one who set the policies.

But what is happening now? The problem raised by this motion is that the person with the keys to the limousines is now outside Parliament or hiding behind the curtain. That is the current problem. In a few months this individual will have the ultimate power to tell the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, "You are the minister and you accept or do not accept those responsibilities". That person is hiding behind the curtain. He is not sitting in the Prime Minister's seat. No need to be partisan to understand that this gives enormous clout to an individual designated in advance, who will be in place in a few months and who can therefore influence all the ministers interested in keeping their jobs.

The Prime Minister, who usually holds the power, now finds himself in the back seat because everyone knows that he is on his way out. I can hardly see him shuffling his cabinet in October when his successor will be chosen in November. The Prime Minister is powerless. The person who is supposed to be holding the power in a parliamentary system like ours is now powerless. Everybody knows that he is leaving.

At least, if there were a real leadership race, things would be different. But no, the successor is known. There is not a single member in this House, not a single reporter in the press gallery, not a single person in all of Canada who does not know that the member for LaSalle—Émard will become the next leader of the Liberal Party. It is a done deal. The delegates are known, and the ratio is 90 to 10. The event itself no longer has any significance for anyone.

So we know who the successor will be. The man who is supposed to have the most power has become powerless. His successor is known, he is a member of this House and he exerts his terrible influence on the government from behind the curtains. This is what is unhealthy for our system.

Allow me to give some examples, like the prebudget consultations, a key step in the preparation of the government's budget. We are talking about billions of dollars in taxes that belong to our fellow

citizens, to those who are watching us. They pay those taxes with their hard-earned money and want their tax dollars to be managed in the best interests of the community. What is happening? The Minister of Finance is holding consultations. However, our next prime minister—at least for the remainder of this mandate, after that, we will see—is not taking part in these consultations.

●(1110)

So we have the Minister of Finance, who moreover is apparently not in the good books of the next prime minister, trying to hold consultations. He is apparently preparing the budget. While these consultations are being held, the present PM and finance minister indicate to us that the government should invest in social programs. In the meantime, a single obscure adviser to the future PM says that 10% should be cut from all departments, so everyone realizes that the entire prebudget consultation process is a farce.

I would go so far even as to say that the present prebudget consultations, which are an important exercise for our fellow citizens as well as for MPs, are of no greater importance than if I personally decided to hold them all across Canada. If I did, the public would at least be assured that the opposition would bring back to Parliament the policies they had asked for.

The only thing people can be sure of now with this headless government is that any policies they might ask for will be systematically brushed aside by the person who is going to take over, he who is locked in an internal struggle with the others.

The Kyoto protocol is one issue that stirred up members of this Parliament, and in fact all over the world. The government finally signed the protocol, to our great satisfaction moreover. Objective as we are, we congratulated them on this. We encouraged it, pushed them to do it. It is a fine example of what we have been able to accomplish here. They signed it, and we agree.

Yet the man who is now experiencing his finest hours behind the curtains of this Chamber, and in the corridors of this Parliament, has always expressed some strong reservations about the signing of the Kyoto protocol. What would happen to the budgets allocated to Kyoto implementation in order to protect the environment, when we know that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Environment, and all the ministers of this government, agreed to sign, to invest funds, and to move on this issue?

But he whose presence is occasionally felt in this Chamber does not agree. As members of the opposition, we would love to see him seated here so he could answer our questions, answer the questions of the people through us, in this House, questions the government has a duty to answer.

In the present situation, and given the fact that the principle of responsible government is not being upheld, we now have before us a government that is not responsible because of the Liberal Party, because of the ambition of the present Prime Minister and because of the ambition of his successor, whose presence is felt in the House. That is the problem.

### Supply

We have more recent examples that are unfortunate. I would like to draw the attention of those who may think this motion is irrelevant to a story in *La Presse* dealing with the Prime Minister. I will change the names in my quotation in order to stay within the rules:

The Prime Minister said, “[The public works minister] speaks on behalf of [the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard]. He does not speak on my behalf. I am not the one who will prepare the next budget. This is none of my business. I will lead the government up to a certain day, and there will be a new government on the following day”.

This is a serious matter when the Prime Minister of a country like Canada, who is carrying out his duties abroad, has to declare from a distance to a minister, the public works minister, “What you have just said is not correct, since you are the spokesperson for the next PM. I am the Prime Minister, and as long as I am, for the next few months, this is not going to happen”.

• (1115)

Is the Prime Minister of Canada himself not telling us that the motion of the Bloc Québécois is more than relevant? It is necessary.

This is terribly disturbing. Put yourselves in the citizens' shoes. Who do they believe when the Minister of Public Works and Government Services announces that cuts will be made in all the departments? People are worried, but they know that opposition members can do nothing, because members on the other side of the House are part of an irresponsible government. This is a government that no longer has a real leader. It no longer has political strength.

It is disturbing to a society when the future prime minister, supported by the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, tells us that cuts will be made. The current Prime Minister is forced to say from Asia, “Just a minute; perhaps it will be true in four months, when I decide to retire or when my international farewell trip is over, but it is not true at this time”.

Everyone knows this is the case and that we cannot discuss these policies. We ask questions to the government and it tells us, “This is not our policy”. However, we know that its policy will apply as long as the Prime Minister decides to remain in his darned seat. This is an indication of how long the current government will last and how real much power it wields.

As a result, is it not logical for us as democratic people to demand a government that can provide answers? Is it not normal to demand a real Prime Minister, one who has the authority he needs to manage the affairs of the state?

All the ministers of this government are worried and are no longer making any decisions. The administrative machinery is in neutral and everyone knows it. Senior officials no longer want to move projects initiated by this government forward, because they know the government is counting down the hours. That is the reality.

I know this hurts the other side of the House. Those who are listening to us know that none of the current ministers, who are looking at us and making comments, can bet on their future. In four months, they might be backbenchers and, in six months, they might be defeated in the election, because people are going to turf out this irresponsible government.

If the government does not exercise self-discipline, if the Liberal Party and the Liberal government continue to use Parliament to stage

the black comedy unfolding with respect to the leadership of their party, they will be harshly judged by the public. Those who are listening to us cannot accept announcements as important as a \$7 billion surplus, cuts in all the departments and uncertainty for a number of programs, knowing that we are unable to ask a single question to those responsible.

To quote my friend, the member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, the current member for LaSalle—Émard, who will become prime minister, currently has all the advantages of being prime minister without having the courage to take the risks that come with this position. We do not accept this either. We want this man to face us in Parliament. We want the public to know him, we want to question him and we want him to be faced with democracy here, which is where it is exercised.

• (1120)

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the points the member made in his opening speech and I think it important that the House reflect upon the elements, but to me it appears that there are some contradictory elements. Let me explain.

As a member of Parliament for almost 10 years now, I have come to know many members of the Bloc Québécois. I consider many of them my friends. We have always dealt with each other on a respectful basis. Beyond that, we have to understand that we have principles which we continue to defend. I understand that there is this defence that continues even today, in today's debate.

One of the aspects of the character of the Bloc Québécois always has been to protect the jurisdictional authority of others, including the Province of Quebec, and often the Bloc has made the argument, very eloquently, that the federal government from time to time would encroach on provincial jurisdiction. I do not have to go into the sovereignty question. The sovereignty of Quebec is another aspect of the same principle of jurisdictional authority.

Having said that about this being a founding or a fundamental principle of the Bloc Québécois, I would ask, is it not contrary to that philosophy of the Bloc, then, to come to this place and to suggest that somehow Parliament should interfere in the jurisdictional authority of another political party?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. I welcome it and think it will give me an opportunity to provide a necessary clarification, because this was raised many times in this Parliament. I am sure that my hon. colleague will approve of the arguments I will make.

Many wonder why the Bloc Québécois is acting against its nature by sitting in this place. We are asked this question often, and legitimately so, by federalists who regard us as seeking to destroy this Confederation by making Quebec a country, which is contrary to the philosophy of the central government.

I will tell them this. In our political system, all citizens are equal. I know that the hon. member agrees with me on that. All citizens are equally required to pay taxes and contribute to the effort made by the government. Regardless of their thinking, political views, ethnic background or religion, all citizens are asked to contribute to this collective effort on an equal basis. In return, all the taxpayers of this country have the right to be heard.

Quebeckers pay a significant portion of the taxes paid in this country and, historically, they made a very significant contribution to the creation of this country. Like all taxpayers, they have the privilege and the right to elect representatives. So, they elected representatives to come and defend, democratically, their views in this federal Parliament.

The Quebeckers who have sent us here are full-fledged citizens. They have the same rights and obligations as all Canadians. They elected a great team of representatives who are not afraid of voicing their concerns in this Parliament.

• (1125)

[English]

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting debate we are having today. With today's motion, the Bloc Quebecois has focused what has become obvious over the last several months about the dysfunctionality of the government and the way it is making the transition of power.

We need to get something important on the record, and I would ask the Bloc to consider this. We are going to be hearing from the government House leader in a moment. He is going to argue that this is a motion of confidence in the government. He will say that by passing this motion it is a vote of non-confidence and if the government falls, we will have to go to an immediate election. It is part of a scare tactic; I saw it in the paper this morning. I am sure it is going to be part of his argument.

Marleau and Montpetit on page 37 states that motions of non-confidence have to be:

—explicitly worded motions which state, in express terms, that the House has, or has not, confidence in the government;

implicit motions of confidence, that is, motions traditionally deemed to be questions of confidence, such as motions for the granting of Supply...motions concerning the budgetary policy of the government and motions respecting the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Those motions are expressly motions of non-confidence.

In order to assure the government House leader before he gives his speech, I would like some assurances from the Bloc that this is not a motion of non-confidence in the government. I would like the Bloc to confirm that this motion simply addresses an administration idea that we should have access to one of two prime ministers, the one actually making decisions, not the one who is before us day after day.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very good question. Let me tell you this: the motion, as worded, is not imperative in nature. It does not demand that the Prime Minister leave office immediately. It invites him to do so at a moment that seems appropriate to us for the sake of democracy.

### Supply

That being said, it is not a motion of non-confidence in the government. The government House leader made it a non-confidence motion for a very simple reason, namely because most members of his party no longer support the Prime Minister and were tempted to vote in favour of our motion.

The government would then have been forced to tell the Prime Minister, "The majority of the House wants you to leave. Could you please leave?"

This is what it is all about. It was made into a motion of non-confidence in the government to threaten Liberal members, telling them that if our motion were carried, there would have to be an election with the current leader.

Out goes the challenger. This is what it is all about. This is why the government House leader made this decision.

[English]

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleagues, I admire the work of the member for Roberval. I have watched him here in various roles. He knows this place as well as any of us. He also knows that this is a very complicated and very important operation, costing roughly \$1 billion a working day. It is part of a complex federal system. The changeover from one government to another is not a simple process.

In the United States where it is even more complex, it takes at least one year in eight, sometimes one year in four, for the changeover. It involves an elaborate electoral process, then a swearing in ceremony, then a period of time for the changeover.

The member knows that the change here is already going on. The bureaucracy is preparing for the change. The House is preparing for the change. For example, it is only 11:30 and we have already dealt with two bills this morning. Psychologically across the country, preparations are being made. The change is actually going on.

I suspect, and I am disappointed in the member for this, that behind the motion there is a personal concern about the present Prime Minister. After 40 years in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister deserves more respect than he is getting this morning from the motion.

• (1130)

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague. I know he respects the House and has a good knowledge of it. However, he is wrong, and I will explain why.

When there is a general election, no one can anticipate the result. Thus, no one can quietly prepare for a transition. However, the government that is elected, generally in the following week, takes charge of business. Ministers are appointed. They start working in the following days.

If we can replace a prime minister, all the ministers and all the senior staff in the PMO, if we can do all this within a week, why would it take six months to replace a Liberal leader?

*Supply*

I want an explanation. This is what we have a problem with. We do not have a problem with the Prime Minister. We do not have a problem with the member for Saint-Maurice, who is probably considered as a nice guy by many of you, but you no longer want him, and neither do we.

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether my speech will be as dramatic as the one we have just heard. Probably not, but I hope it will have some substance.

[English]

I am not surprised that members of the opposition are trying these tactics to attack the Prime Minister once again. It is a mystery to me though to see why they would choose such a blatant motion of non-confidence to accomplish the objective.

[Translation]

Marleau and Montpetit tell us, and I quote from pages 36 and 37:

An essential feature of parliamentary government is that the Prime Minister and the Cabinet are responsible to, or must answer to, the House of Commons as a body for their actions and must enjoy the support and the confidence of a majority of the Members of that Chamber... This is commonly referred to as the confidence convention.

I was reading from Marleau and Montpetit. The hon. member opposite has the right to disagree with Marleau and Montpetit, just as she has the right to disagree on other matters. That is her business, but it does not change the truth.

I quote again from Marleau and Montpetit, who say, on page 42:

Resignation may be prompted by a defeat in a general election, [or] by the operation of the confidence convention alone—

[English]

Therefore by calling on the Prime Minister to resign, it may be a polite motion to resign, one that is felicitous of the government, such as is the case this morning. The motion is so praising of the Liberal Party that it recognizes that a Liberal prime minister will be succeeded by another Liberal prime minister. On that score, I have no disagreement with the folks across the way that the next prime minister will be another Liberal prime minister and, might I add, will be a prime minister for a very long time as well.

**Mr. Bob Mills:** Stay arrogant.

**Hon. Don Boudria:** I am not being cocky here. I am merely agreeing to that extent with the one who proposed the motion, but of course only to that extent.

Regardless of how felicitous it is, the fact is not changed that the House would not have confidence in the Prime Minister. If they are asking the Prime Minister to resign, whether they are asking him to resign on October 23, today's date on the calendar in front of us, or whether they are asking the Prime Minister to resign on November 7, November 8 or November 9 does not change anything. They are still asking the Prime Minister and of course his government to resign.

Calling on the Prime Minister to resign is a motion of non-confidence. That is well established. It is a call for a change of prime minister and therefore a call for a change of government.

If a party in power changes government on its own, it can do so. It is a different ministry but the same Parliament. Ample precedents in Marleau and Montpetit, Beauchesne and all our other procedural manuals will attest to that. If a government is called upon to resign and is voted on by the majority of the House, it causes a dissolution, not invented by your humble servant, Mr. Speaker. That has been the case from time immemorial. It is a call to change a government by way of a vote of the House.

Mr. Speaker, being the non-partisan person that you are, you will understand this. This is a motion of non-confidence. Marleau and Montpetit state that such cases, and I quote from page 43, in talking about a case where the prime minister, being defeated on a motion of the House, has to resign and the motion passes "the prime minister must either resign or seek a dissolution". He must then call a general election. This means that the government would have been defeated on a motion of non-confidence.

Let us look at the blunt political facts of the matter. To use parliamentary language, this is a Prime Minister who has kicked the back of the front of some of the members across. He is a Prime Minister who has stared down eight leaders of the opposition, including three leaders of the Bloc. He is a Prime Minister who has defeated 10 leaders of the so-called disunited right, and that is only since 1993. That is not a bad record. It has forced the party of Sir John A. into a merger—well, not a merger, a takeover is more like it—by another group of people.

**An hon. member:** A hostile takeover.

**Hon. Don Boudria:** A hostile takeover perhaps, as one of my colleagues has said so eloquently.

Of course the Prime Minister has made it such that the Bloc can no longer try to get this country divided by way of facile imprecise motions and so on. He has made it such that clarity enters the debate. He is a Prime Minister who has won three straight majority governments, a feat unequalled in almost 100 years. If ever a Prime Minister has earned a right to set his future date of retirement and the termination of his mandate, surely this Prime Minister has earned that right, but that is another point.

• (1135)

[Translation]

We could perhaps take a few moments to talk about this government's accomplishments, recognizing, of course, as the Bloc says, that there will be even more great Liberal achievements after the next Liberal leader takes over, when the current leader is replaced, again according to the Bloc, by another Liberal leader.

At least we can congratulate the Bloc on having already conceded defeat on the other side of the House. The hon. member may lack some judgment, but at least his judgment on this point is very good, as the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has said.

Let us look at the accomplishments of this government. This government has been in place since 1993 under the current Prime Minister. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard was a member of cabinet for quite a long time; the hon. member for Hamilton East is also a member of the cabinet, as is your humble servant. And then there are all the current ministers, and those of the future, along with the Liberal backbenchers who will remain on the government side, according to the Bloc.

The House will recall that in 1993 we inherited a country on the verge of bankruptcy, with a \$42 billion debt. We have had six consecutive budget surpluses, including the one announced yesterday by the hon. Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister of Canada—

**An hon. member:** The employment insurance fund

**Hon. Don Boudria:** The minister spoke to us about Canada's great success, when most western countries are in recession. That has been achieved by this government under the leadership of the current Prime Minister.

Today, the Bloc members want to defeat the current government led by the current Prime Minister in the House of Commons. Today, under the Prime Minister's leadership, this country has brought in six balanced budgets. Better still, the Prime Minister created almost three million jobs while in office. The future looks very bright.

Canada is no longer in danger of becoming a third world country, as the *Wall Street Journal*, I think, claimed years ago. We are now known as the Northern Tiger.

There is much more. We have cut income tax by \$100 billion. This is the largest reduction in income tax ever in Canada. Who voted against these cuts? Those same members opposite. Believe it or not, they voted against these cuts.

To make Canada an economic leader in the 21st century, we invested in science, research and development and created the Canadian Foundation for Innovation, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and Genome Canada. Once again, in most cases, the opposition voted against these initiatives.

Thanks to the connecting Canadians strategy and our community access program, we have helped make Canada a world leader in high technology. This government is responsible for these achievements, which the members opposite choose to ignore. Today, they want to defeat this government with this non-confidence motion.

The hon. members opposite want to talk about other government programs. Naturally, I have a long list here, and thanks to their encouragement, I can name more of them. I could talk about the billions of dollars invested in modernizing infrastructure. Who can forget the excellent initiative of our government and our Prime Minister to upgrade the highway to Saguenay, for example.

I remember a few Bloc members who said that this announcement would never be made. It was, thanks to the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord and, of course, our Prime Minister and our cabinet. This is just one of many initiatives with which the hon. members opposite are familiar. In fact, the day this announcement was made, the other side of the House did not find much to criticize.

### Supply

To fight homelessness in Canadian cities, we established a strategy to prevent homelessness.

To prepare our farmers for the 21st century, we created a new agricultural policy framework.

• (1140)

We have invested in our environment. In fact, the Bloc Québécois just congratulated us for supporting and advancing the Kyoto protocol.

This morning, the Bloc Québécois asked this government to step down, but congratulated it for its accomplishments such as the Kyoto protocol. They also recognize in advance that the Prime Minister's successor will be from the same political party. This is paradoxical.

If an opposition party moves a motion that might defeat the government, this is usually because it wants to replace the government itself. That is the parliamentary convention. The Prime Minister is appointed by the Governor General to form and lead a government. What is odd this time is that the opposition is saying that the Prime Minister and his government should step down, but that this government is so deserving of praise that it should be replaced by another government from the same political party. This is unheard of.

I challenge you, who are so objective in these matters, to find another example in the history of Canada where a non-confidence motion was presented with the hope of replacing the government with the same political party. I have never heard of such a thing. This is extremely inconsistent, as the deputy government whip says.

I could list other accomplishments, for there have been many in recent years.

• (1145)

[English]

We are certainly not finished. We intend to continue, of course, with the support of Canadians, to provide good governance or, as Karen Carpenter once put it, we have only just begun.

I want to get back to the issue of the confidence convention just in case the hon. member across the way is not 100% convinced, which I doubt, because of course he is a very understanding person and should understand these things readily.

Nevertheless, I refer to page 37 of Marleau and Montpetit. For the benefit of viewers, although I am not speaking to them but to the Chair, they might know that this is our procedural bible around here. It is what expresses how this place works. Page 37 states:

What constitutes a question of confidence in the government varies...Confidence is not a matter of parliamentary procedure, nor is it something on which the Speaker can be asked to rule. It is generally acknowledged, however, that confidence motions may be:

explicitly worded motions which state, in express terms, that the House has, or has not, confidence in the government;—

*Supply*

Now, what is the government, in parliamentary terms? It is the group of parliamentarians asked by one person to form a ministry: the Prime Minister. The Governor General does not ask a group of people to form a government. The Governor General asks one person, in this case one man, the Prime Minister, the member for Saint-Maurice, to be the Prime Minister and to form a ministry.

So when the Prime Minister is asked to resign pursuant to a vote of this House, it is asking him and his ministry, in other words, his government, to resign. That is a fact. It cannot be otherwise. People across the way can consult as many constitutional experts as they like. I am sure they could not come up with a different conclusion.

Let me read from page 43 of Marleau and Montpetit:

When the government is defeated on a vote on a question of confidence in the House, the Prime Minister must...resign—

This is calling for the resignation of the Prime Minister and his government. This is not a matter of interpretation.

[*Translation*]

It is not my interpretation. I am reading from the rules of the House.

[*English*]

In one case, the government of Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, there is an historical precedent which I am sure will interest the Chair if not the members across the way. It was in 1873, and I quote, that the Conservative government of Sir John A. Macdonald, “embroiled in a scandal, resigned rather than face near-certain defeat” on a non-confidence vote.

In other words, in 1873, the Prime Minister, faced with a very serious question, knew that he would be defeated in the House and knew that this would cause the resignation of his government. Rather than have that occur, which would have occurred, as established, he chose to resign himself. This leaves no doubt. As early as 1873, then, the Prime Minister of Canada recognized that if he and his government were defeated on a motion that asked him to resign, it would cause a dissolution. There is no doubt about that. We have a tableful of procedural manuals that tell us that and nothing that tells us anything else.

[*Translation*]

Now the hon.member over the way is asking me to read the motion, and I will be pleased to do so. It says:

That, although the Prime Minister has a mandate and should be able to end it as he chooses—

True, and we certainly agree with that.

—given the democratic imbalance that currently prevails and that results in the government's decision-making occurring outside this House, and more broadly outside any public institution—

All that is their fancy introduction, and then we have the motion itself:

—this House calls upon the Prime Minister to leaveoffice—

In other words, to resign. The hon. member adds:

—as soon as possible after November 14, 2003

The member over the way is telling us that, if the PM is asked to step down, and a date is specified in the motion, it does not count.

That is what he is saying, and a similar motion with no deadline, would.

Referring to the motion calling for John A. Macdonald's resignation, I do not know whether it proposed he do so after November 7. Surely he would not have stepped down if the date of November 7 had been specified in the motion.

That is what the members across the way are trying to tell us, and it is ridiculous. This motion calls upon the Prime Minister and his government to resign. If such a motion were passed by the House, it would be an expression of this House's non-confidence in the government. This is crystal clear. We know what the outcome would be.

If the members across the way wanted to congratulate the future leader of the Liberals, as they now claim they do, they could very easily have said that this House congratulates the future leader of the Liberal party, since he or she will surely be the next prime minister of Canada. In fact, that is in part what the motion says. To take away the non-confidence aspect, maybe they might want to just amend their motion to simply congratulate the Liberals.

• (1150)

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it might be crystal clear for the government House leader, but I find his arguments rather muddy and inconsistent.

Several months ago, the current Prime Minister announced that he would be leaving office in February. When he made his announcement, did anyone think it would mean the dissolution of Parliament? No, which goes to prove how ridiculous the member's arguments are.

Our request is based on the fact that we currently have a two-headed government. We have two prime ministers. One who sits here but has no power, and one who is on the outside, enjoying all the perks that come with the job without taking any risks at all.

The government is left paralyzed. We ask questions and get answers that are in fact non-answers. The members opposite do not want to answer us. They do not want to take any position that would go against the positions of the one who is standing behind the curtain. There has to be a limit to such demagoguery.

What the minister said has nothing to do with this issue. Maybe we should ask John A. Macdonald about this, but unfortunately he is no longer with us. But presuming to know what John A. Macdonald would think of this is going a bit too far. The precedent the member mentioned has nothing to do with this motion either.

All we are asking is for the current Prime Minister to leave office earlier than what he has announced, so that we can deal with the real prime minister and ask him real questions about the real agenda of the government.

**Hon. Don Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, I once again thank the member, who said that the future leader of the Liberal Party will be, and these are his words, “the real prime minister”. I thank him for this show of confidence, in spite of the motion of non-confidence.



At the beginning of the comments period, the hon. member tried to draw a parallel along these lines: a Prime Minister who announces his resignation eventually loses the confidence of the House, so to speak. According to him, to pursue the parallel, this should also cause an election to be called. Of course, this is not the case. I would draw the attention of the hon. member to Marleau and Montpetit, at page 42, which clearly states:

The end of a Ministry is triggered by the death, resignation or dismissal of the Prime Minister.

Under “Resignation of a Prime Minister”, at the bottom of the page, it states:

Resignation may be prompted by a defeat in a general election, by the operation of the confidence convention alone—

Back to that.

—by the operation of the confidence convention followed by a defeat in a general election, or by other reasons, including the Prime Minister's desire to retire from public life.

Further, if a Prime Minister retires from public life, this does not have the effect of resulting in an election or an expression of non-confidence. Non-confidence is caused by a vote in the House demanding, asking or calling for the Prime Minister to leave the public office he or she is holding and to which he or she was appointed by Her Excellency the Governor General. That is what confidence is all about. It has nothing to do with the Prime Minister's desire to retire in February.

No one remains in office forever. Even the hon. member opposite may no longer be a member some day. To say today that he will be leaving does not mean that his seat will become vacant overnight. It will become vacant in due course, and not because someone said today that he will be resigning at some point in the future. That is not how it works. The hon. member is confusing, perhaps to suit his purposes, or perhaps inadvertently—

**An hon. member:** Or both.

**Hon. Don Boudria:** Fine, or both. At any rate, there is confusion in the hon. member's mind about a Prime Minister announcing he will be resigning in the future and a vote in this House demanding his resignation. There is a difference.

• (1155)

[English]

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will have an opportunity to rebut a lot of what the chief technocrats from the government have to say, but I am very pleased to be involved in this Alice in Wonderland explanation that the member has given.

I guess my question would be, after all the accolades the House leader of the government has given, that he would not be adverse to having the next election fought with his current Prime Minister. After all the wonderful things he said about the Prime Minister and his government, why would he not vote for this so they could go to the polls with the current Prime Minister and let the people decide whether he should or should not resign?

Would the hon. House leader not suggest that we go there sooner than later with the current Prime Minister as his leader?

### Supply

**Hon. Don Boudria:** There we go, Mr. Speaker, finally one member across the way recognizes that it is a vote of non-confidence. He has just indicated that the result of this vote would cause the election. He has asked why we would not vote with them which would cause us to go to the polls now.

It has been said by a member across the way, in the House of Commons, notwithstanding the fact that several others have pretended that it is the opposite. Now we know the true motivation of this item.

Should this vote have carried, does anyone seriously believe that members across the way would not, five minutes, later say that the government has been defeated, which of course it would have been, and that this causes a dissolution, which of course they would say?

The vote is two days away and some of them are saying it already. Finally the truth is coming out.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure that it is Alice in Wonderland, but it is certainly in a dream world that the government House Leader is living in today.

I would like to read to him a quick summary of a story that he heard probably back in 1998 when Preston Manning gave him a little lecture on how this actually worked.

The story is like this. Once upon a time there was a king named Jean I and he had two classes of people who worked with him, the lords and ladies who occupied the front rows and then all the peasants who occupied the backbenches.

One day a group of them went out and faced the fiery dragon of the confidence convention. Many of them were consumed by fire. He mentioned in this story that Lord Boudriavere, whoever that would have been, who had once been a busboy in the castle cafeteria but had risen to high prominence through his faithful service to King Jean, said “I see an opportunity here to maintain and increase our control”.

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We do not name members in joke or otherwise, or in quotations.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I am sorry, I did not hear it personally, but if the hon. member for Fraser Valley did, I ask him to please refrain from doing so.

• (1200)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, this entire thing is in *Hansard*. The member may want to look it up. I am just paraphrasing.

Anyway Lord Boudriavere said to King Jean “I see an opportunity here to maintain and increase our control over the peasants. Let us imply”, indirectly of course, “that fired dragon of confidence still lives. We can point to the smoke belching out of the fire as evidence. Let's tell the backbenchers that henceforth they can only go out castle with royal permission and I will give it or deny it”.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just quote quickly from Beauchesne's, page 49, it states:

...the House removed references in the Standing Orders which described votable motions on allotted days as questions of confidence.

The rules have been changed, Mr. House Leader—

*Supply*

**Hon. Don Boudria:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. First, our Constitution is not a fairytale.

Second, page 37 of Marleau and Montpetit explicitly indicates to us what confidence is.

I thank the hon. member for having raised the busboy issue. I am pleased to say that today is October 23 and we are two days away from October 25, which I sometimes call jokingly busboy day. It will represent the 37th anniversary of the day when I arrived here on Parliament Hill as a busboy of the parliamentary restaurant. Therefore, I thank the hon. member for raising it, although I know he was doing it in jest.

To be more serious, on the issue of the dragon, it is a very important issue for those who are spooked by fairytales around here. I once knew a Reform leader, the same guy who had this morbid fear of dragons. If I remember correctly, a whole bunch of people around here chewed him up pretty badly. He was kicked out to be replaced by a new dragon and he too, after about a year or a year and a half was kicked out again to be replaced by the present dragon Leader of the Opposition who will soon be consumed by the offsprings that he has created at the other end of the House in the Conservative Party.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, in a sense I feel bad for people watching this because people are throwing out quotes from Montpetit and Beauchesne's, to which the folks at home of course do not have access.

Let me summarize it by saying that the rules are quite clear. Unless the government designates this motion as a motion of non-confidence, it is not. It is simply not a motion of non-confidence. What it is, is a concern expressed today by a motion from the Bloc Quebecois that we do not have the most accountable and responsible government that we could or should have because the person calling the shots on the government side is not here to answer for his actions day after day in the House of Commons. That is what it amounts to.

**An hon. member:** Neither of them.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Neither of them are here. We ask questions. We try to get at important details of government policy, we try to find out initiatives, we try to detect a vision over there and we try to get some clue to help guide Canadians as they make decisions about their future, but unfortunately that is proving very difficult.

The motion tries to address it by saying that as soon as possible we should make the transition. This is not a judgment call. I have lots to say about why I do not think the Liberal government is the best one, but that is not really what this is about. This is about it being in the best interest of Canada to have a leader of the Liberal Party answering questions in the House for the actions of his party and his government. Failure to do that means basically that we are adrift. We are adrift in a bone yard right now while we try to detect some semblance of vision, order and good government. We are having extreme difficulty doing that, as are Canadians generally.

Right now we basically have a parallel universe going on. We have a government that pretends to be governing here. Some of the members sit in the front benches. They do not answer questions but they go through the facade. They try to formulate political answers, but really they are answering to a commander who is simply not here. It is a parallel universe in which we live.

The member for LaSalle—Émard is in control of the Liberal Party. We could debate whether that is good or bad, but that is not the debate for today. The debate today is, if he is in control, which he is, if he is calling the shots, which he is, if the cabinet is consulting with him on a day to day decisions, which it is, if he is planning the next budget, which he is, if he is announcing things across the country, which he has been doing continually, if he is promising things to people, lobbyists, interest groups and so on day after day, then he should answer for it here in the House.

That is all it is about. I think that is pretty straightforward. It is called responsible and accountable government. This place exists to ensure that it continues in good stead, that democracy is not shunted aside, that it is not a frivolous afterthought, that it is a key part of what makes Canada a great country. That is very difficult, for all the reasons I just listed.

The member for LaSalle—Émard will take control eventually. He will be the next prime minister up to the next election, perhaps not afterward, but certainly in those months in between. He should take control now and come to the House and respond to our concerns.

This is not idle chatter or just a wish list. It is key and critical to good government. Right now what we have is the member for LaSalle—Émard, who is not in the cabinet, travelling the country making announcements. He is acting like the minister of everything right now. He is the minister in charge of all things, yet he accounts for and is responsible for nothing.

He goes to Nova Scotia or out to Kelowna. We are glad to see him out travelling the country. He announces disaster relief programs. I would love to ask him, here in the House, what are the plans, how many dollars are involved, when can we expect that, how will it be delivered. However it is just an announcement made out in the field with no accountability here in the House. He did the same thing in British Columbia.

He is convening a parallel universe first ministers conference in and around the Grey Cup game, not as a prime minister, just as a lowly backbencher interested in what the score of the game is. He is holding parallel caucus meetings. He is talking about the democratic deficit. That is an ironic one. He goes behind closed doors, they order in the pizza and beer, apparently, and they talk about the democratic deficit. However they do not come into the House where they actually have to address the democratic deficit.

● (1205)

The other night he held a meeting about social policy, which is interesting. One day his minions are in the press saying they will cut every single department's spending, except the day after that, they say they are not actually going to cut any spending, but maybe they will cut spending. It all depends on what people want to hear.

How do departments plan for that? How does the government function under this parallel universe that seems to be going on?

*Supply*

The member for LaSalle—Émard acts like the defence minister, travelling the country talking about how he will use the armed forces to aid the civil powers in disaster relief. He acts like the intergovernmental affairs ministers by promising to meet with the provincial leaders at his whim and on his schedule, even though he is not a member of the cabinet, let alone forming his own government. He is the de facto finance minister. He is making decisions on financing, telling Canadians how they will be governed and how many dollars are available, yet he has no accountability for any of that here in the House.

In the short term, this 18 month transition from one prime minister to the next started off as a serious problem among the Liberal backbenchers. It has now become a serious problem for Canada. It is making a laughingstock of the democratic process.

Having an accountable and responsible government means that it is accountable and responsible to whom? To the voters. And, through the voters, to their elected representatives here in the House. Failure to do that makes a mockery of democracy, which is what we are seeing here day after day.

Why does it matter? Why does it matter to the average Canadian who runs things over there? It may be true. That is a different debate, but we could argue that it does not really matter which Liberal is in charge because they all act like Liberals. That is a good debate for the stump when we hit an election next year, but that is not today's debate.

Today's debate is about why it matters to Canadians who is in the prime minister's chair. It matters for the following reasons.

First of all, it is important that the people in charge, the actual government, do not contradict one another day after day about the vision, the purpose, the role, and the future of the country. How much longer are we going to have what I mentioned earlier, where they are going to cut back every single department, except that they are going to not cut back any of the departments, except that they are going to spend more in some of the departments? How can the government plan anything with those kind of diverse messages?

What do we do when the current Prime Minister, the one who is not here right now but is overseas somewhere, is over in Malaysia embarrassing the country by shaking hands with people who are accusing the Jews of ruling the world? Meanwhile, the member for LaSalle—Émard says it is an atrocious thing and that we should be standing up to people like that and putting them in their place. Who is in charge? Is it the new Liberal leader from LaSalle—Émard who thinks that should be condemned? Or is it the current Prime Minister, who does not think any note needs to be taken of it?

Their contradictions in their messages are continuous. They are not good for the country and they are not good for our reputation abroad. Frankly, they are not good for our reputation at home.

Why does it matter? It affects federal-provincial relations. The member for LaSalle—Émard went to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities and basically said, "I am going to make sure that we transfer federal gasoline tax revenue to the cities." He promised that at the UBCM and got a standing ovation. This is something that has been in our policy book on this side of the House for 15 years.

The member for LaSalle—Émard did not do it during his nine years as finance minister, but he has seen the light. I say hallelujah, good on him. Let us make the change in policy and let us make it a part of our government efforts. Let us rally around the flag and make the change necessary to give municipalities, through the provinces, the money they need to get the job done.

But what happened here when we brought that motion to the House? It passed, except that the finance minister refused to vote on the motion. The finance minister left the House rather than vote. He never voted on it. The current finance minister says he does not believe we should transfer gasoline tax revenue to the cities and the provinces. He does not believe in it.

• (1210)

In fact, during the leadership debate when he was still in the leadership race, he said that the member for LaSalle—Émard was never going to do it, that he will never be able to do it, that it is strictly a campaign promise and is not serious or legitimate. That is what the finance member said about the member for LaSalle—Émard. He refused to endorse the motion, yet the member for LaSalle—Émard, the future prime minister, the Liberal leader, the man who is calling the shots, says, "Let's do it". However, we see the finance minister refusing.

How can provinces or cities plan their revenue streams? We are getting no assurances from over there. We are getting completely contradictory messages from the two of them, in this case, the finance minister and the former finance minister. It is not good for federal-provincial relations. This sort of stuff is confusing to the provinces as they plan their future.

It also matters, as I mentioned earlier, in regard to accountable and responsible government. When we have ministers currently sitting in the front row and saying that before they make announcements they vet them with the member for LaSalle—Émard, then the member for LaSalle—Émard has to be in this House to account for it. Not only is he not in the House, he does not sit on—

**The Deputy Speaker:** I will ask the House to give the Chair a moment, please. I do not believe there is any intent to do anything to circumvent any rules or traditions of the House, but certainly with reference to members' absence from the House, I think we are all familiar with the tremendous strain on our time to be at different places at different times for different reasons, all very valid. I know the hon. member for Fraser Valley is very respectful of the practices of this House.

I might take the opportunity also to add the following, and this is not specifically for the member for Fraser Valley. As the debate continues to unfold today, I also ask members to be conscious of the practice in terms of reflecting on past votes of the House.

I simply ask people to be judicious in those areas.

*Supply*

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I accept what you say. I was not clear. I was not mentioning whether someone is here in the House right now. I just mentioned that it is impossible under our rules to ask the member for LaSalle—Émard a question during question period, for example, because he is not part of the cabinet. That is what I meant by not being in the House. I should be clear. I am not talking about this instant. I am talking about day after day, week after week, month after month, when decisions are being made by him and his supporters. I do not mind that, as it is the way democracy works, but when the decision maker sits outside of cabinet, then this place does not work as well as it should.

I am just saying that the member for LaSalle—Émard is not available to us to ask questions of day after day. He is not appointed to any committee in the House of Commons. We can never talk to him or find out what he wants to do in a committee structure, where we could relate to one another. He is not a member of a committee. He is not appointed to any task force or special committee or travelling group of parliamentarians where we or Canadians could ask questions of him. There is no official way to get at him, yet he controls the apparatus of government. That is what this motion is about today.

Once one controls the apparatus of government, it is time to switch leaders, folks. It is time for them to say they accept that the member for LaSalle—Émard is the next prime minister between now and the next election, that he calls the shots, that he is the leader. Good on him, but that therefore would mean that he should be accountable for what he does.

He says he wants to address the democratic deficit. We cannot even ask him the first question about anything. He completely avoids democratic accountability. Completely. How is that improving the democratic system here in Canada? There is nearly a crisis, he tells people somewhere in the country, but he will not come to the House of Commons. The system is set up in such a way that it is impossible to even ask him about his priorities there.

Let me go further on why it matters and why we should we care about this. It matters, for example, on the issue of Kyoto, which has been raised. Again, leaving aside whether we think Kyoto is the best thing since sliced bread or an apocalyptic agreement signed somewhere overseas, leaving that aside, the government says Kyoto needs to be implemented and as rapidly as possible, while the member for LaSalle—Émard says he needs more consultation on this subject. He is not sure that it should be implemented that way. In fact, he has some concerns about how it will affect the business climate and wants to consult broadly before he implements a Kyoto implementation plan.

What are people supposed to do with that? Do they want to invest \$2 billion in the tar sands or not? Do they want to renovate their homes or not? Do they want to buy a fuel efficient car or not? Do they want to have research and development funds available or not? Are they sure? They cannot be sure. They cannot be sure because someone other than the current cabinet and Prime Minister is in charge behind the scenes.

Whether it is Kyoto or another business plan, an industrial development plan, a shipbuilding subsidy plan, whatever it might be, how can we choose what to invest in when the person calling the

shots and making the plans is not the person who can answer the questions here in the House of Commons?

We get conflicting reports. We hear that Kyoto now is in danger of not being implemented. We hear that we will not be able to meet our targets. Does the member for LaSalle—Émard think that is good or does he think it is bad? Does he think we are going to have to double our efforts or cut them in half? No one knows because we cannot ask him a question. The business climate is affected. Decision making is affected. Investment decisions are affected.

It also matters because the personal decisions of Canadians are affected. As an example, this side of the House has been fighting for months to get the government to be fair on the pensions paid to war veterans' widows. We want the VIP pension applied to all of them who deserve it. We think it is a relatively small budget item, but it is not small in the lives of those widows, I can tell everyone. They need that supplement. We think they deserve it. We think we should follow through on committee recommendations to make it universal for all those who deserve it. What does the member for LaSalle—Émard think? Who knows? We cannot ask him. We cannot find him. We cannot put it to the government, which he in essence is running, because he is not in the cabinet.

● (1215)

He is not sitting over there answering the question whether or not a pension for VIP recipients is a good idea? It is a personal thing to tens of thousands of widows who need to know, not next year, not after the next election, not six months or a year from now. They need to know before Christmas. That pension may only be \$200 a month, but to a pensioner \$200 a month is the difference between a can of dog food and a decent meal. What is the matter with the government? This matters.

Personal decisions are being affected because of indecision in the federal government. It is because the member for LaSalle—Émard is not sitting in this place where he can answer these questions and make decisions. If he does not want to give widows a pension, then let us find out. Let us put it on the list of things for the campaign trail. In the meantime, let us not leave those widows hanging.

*Supply*

Personal decisions are being affected by this. This has gone on long enough. Let us get the member into the Prime Minister's chair, hold his feet to the fire, and let him be accountable, not just for the issue of widows' pensions, but for all decisions affecting people in a personal way. I am talking about everything from GST rebates to how we handle tax breaks for certain citizens. Student loans is another example. All of these matters are being held in abeyance while we wait for the Liberal Party to get its act together and transfer power to the Prime Minister who would call the shots.

This matters because of transparency. We have been asking questions in the House over the last while, and while they probably can be answered, they are not being answered by the current government. We have asked why millions of dollars in assets that were on the member for LaSalle—Émard's disclosure of assets, when he was finance minister, have mysteriously disappeared. They are gone. He did not sell them. They have been conveniently left off the list. The company that conveniently received millions of dollars in government contracts was conveniently left off the list.

We tried to chase this matter down by using the rules of the House. We put an Order Paper question. We asked, how many dollars in contracts did the member for LaSalle—Émard's companies, the CSL empire, receive from the government? The response was \$137,000. It is public knowledge that at least \$25 million in contracts had been given to him and his companies. This is again about transparency.

I would like to ask the member for LaSalle—Émard a question, but I cannot. I can rhetorically ask a question, but I cannot ask him personally. Maybe there is an explanation. I do not think so, but maybe there is something he could say about how it happened, maybe he forgot, maybe he signed the wrong paper. I do not know what his excuse might be.

Day after day these revelations come up and there is no transparency. We cannot ask about them; we cannot get clarification. We are left with responses from the government that do not jive with the facts. That is not transparency. That is not open. That is not democratic. It is not what Canadians expect.

The country always needs a vision of where it is going. That vision comes at election time. We are putting together, I hope, a big conservative option for Canadians that will detail a vision of the country and will excite them. It will be one that will be positive and one that they could vote for. We cannot just have a vision of the country at election time. Without a vision, the people perish, it says in scriptures. That is not just a theological expression of belief.

It is the fact that without explicit direction from the top on everything from accountability, transparency, democracy and fiscal accountability, where are Canadians supposed to go? What is the emphasis of the government? What is the passion that it has for the country? That is hard to see in this place.

The Bloc Québécois brought this motion forward today. I agree with it in that it is not an expression of non-confidence in the government because that will come at election time. It is an expression, a desire, almost a begging, to give us the Prime Minister who will call the shots so that we can get on with painting a vision for all Canadians for the 21st century.

● (1220)

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to the comments from my colleague. He suggested that the member for LaSalle—Émard should be in the House and should be answering questions.

I have a question for the hon. member. Should the member for LaSalle—Émard be trying to renew some relationships with the United States that have been severed very badly over the last couple of months?

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her question.

It is hard to imagine a government that could have done more damage to our relationship with our American friends than what has been done by the current administration.

That being said, hope springs eternal. We always hope that the next leader will be better. Certainly, I think it will be a cornerstone of the Conservative Party's foreign policy not to kowtow to the Americans, but not to poke them in the eye with a burnt stick either just for the fun of it.

I hope that the member for LaSalle—Émard charts a new course in foreign policy that includes a kinder, gentler approach toward our American trading partners, whether it be the mad cow problem, the softwood lumber issue or the 95% of our trade that goes back and forth across the border freely and without encumbrance which we must maintain in order to maintain our standard of living.

My position, though, is that until the member for LaSalle—Émard gets into the Prime Minister's chair, he can theorize about this and he can talk about how it would be nice to improve relationships. However, right now the current Prime Minister is over in Malaysia shaking hands with George Bush and other leaders, with some of whom he should not be shaking hands. He is the one calling the shots. He is the one either establishing relationships, improving relationships or maintaining the status quo.

Meanwhile, the status quo is not good enough for Canadians, but that is all we have on the table until such time as the member for LaSalle—Émard actually grabs the reins of power. The sooner the better on foreign and fiscal policy. The sooner the better on the democratic deficit. There is no indication at this stage that things will be any different than they are today because we have nobody over there who can represent Canada except, of course, the current Prime Minister.

I would argue that even if we do not like Liberals and even if we cannot stand the member for LaSalle—Émard, it is still better for the country to have the person calling the shots behind the scenes to be the figurehead who represents Canada at home and abroad. We need that person to be the personification of the government, good or bad.

I believe we will hold the government's feet to the fire for what it has done over the last 10 years. The member for LaSalle—Émard will not escape this unscathed. He was there when all these decisions were made. He sat at the cabinet table mute, silent, while mistakes were made in dealing with our American counterparts.

*Supply*

However, whatever we think of all of that, surely we would agree that the better place for the person calling the shots is in the Prime Minister's chair answering for the country in question period, representing the country abroad as the leader of our country, and fixing the problems that have been manifested over the years by a Liberal government which has not cared to treat our major trading partner with the decency and respect it deserves.

• (1225)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague points out the truth of the matter, which is that there is a parallel government in place right now. It is simply behind the scenes.

We see the member for LaSalle—Émard, the next Prime Minister, travelling around the country, visiting disaster sites and doing the kinds of things a Prime Minister would normally do while in office.

Earlier we heard from the government House leader. He was making the assertion that because the motion was before the House today, it was a confidence motion and that because members would possibly support the motion, this would replace the government with the same kind of government.

Something that the House leader forgot to mention was that members of the Liberal Party have called on the current Prime Minister to step aside. He must apply that same argument to his own colleagues if he is saying that about opposition members, which he did not allude to. That is surprising.

We will have an unusual situation here. We will have the leader of the Liberal Party who will take the reins of his party likely on November 14 yet not take the office of the Prime Minister until February some time. There will be a lag time of several months, unprecedented in Canadian history, when these kinds of important decisions will have to be made. How will that be operationalized? It is for that reason that the motion is before the House, so that democracy can be served.

My colleague alluded to that. I was wondering if he might be able to elaborate specifically on how the country will operate during the lag time between the time the next leader is leader of his party and when he formally becomes Prime Minister, even though he is acting as the Prime Minister behind the scenes now?

• (1230)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question.

I would like to address the issue of confidence. The government House leader has continually said over the years that everything is basically a motion of confidence. If we wanted to see the clock as 5:00 p.m. and the government House leader said it was only 4:30 p.m., I bet he would call that a question of confidence. He would probably bring the House down over that.

It is absolutely clear in Beauduchesne's and Marleau and Montpetit that unless the government designates this as a motion of confidence, it is not. That is the end of the argument.

We could look at England. It has motions that it passes and defeats day after day, including government bills and amendments. It does not bring down the government unless expressly followed by a motion of non-confidence. The government House leader knows

that. He simply uses it to threaten the backbenchers. He should stop it. I hope the new Prime Minister from LaSalle—Émard, in his democratic deficit package, will expressly say those words when he takes the reins of power.

The member for LaSalle—Émard says we must give more power to committees and more influence to backbench MPs. I will use an example of the aboriginal fishing strategy that we are dealing with right now. It is currently in the courts because the government chooses to ignore Parliament. Parliament has disallowed the aboriginal fishing strategy in its scrutiny of regulations. The regulations giving the government power to initiate the aboriginal fishing strategy exceed the legislative mandate. That is clear. It has been unanimous from the scrutiny of regulations committee, yet the government ignores it.

The fisheries committee unanimously said that the aboriginal fishing strategy should be stopped, but did that change the mind of the government? No, it ignored the unanimous, all party agreement from all sides of the House, including Liberals. It was ignored.

The courts have said that the aboriginal fishing strategy is racist and should be stopped. Those are not my words, the courts have said it. Parliament has said it through committee and Parliament has said it through the scrutiny of regulations, which says that it exceeded the government's legislative authority and mandate. What does the member for LaSalle—Émard think of that?

We are in the middle of salmon fishing season. In my riding, aboriginal folk are threatening and have already blocked the CN railway. There are threats of violence on the river. There are people fishing out of season, using the wrong equipment, ignoring government regulations and doing it publicly.

**An hon. member:** It is chaos.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** It is chaos.

What does the member for LaSalle—Émard want to do about this? I would like to know. Does he think that committees should give direction to the government and the ministers? Does he think ministers should ignore court rulings and override the scrutiny of regulations committee? What does he believe about the issue itself?

Meanwhile people's lives are at stake. The comments in the paper at home about the Fraser River are that there are going to be lives lost over this. It is not a trite matter then. What does the member for LaSalle—Émard think?

The Prime Minister needs to take control of this issue. He needs to give direction to his ministers. He needs to listen to the committees that have unanimously told him about the problem and solution. When he does that, then he would be giving a vision to the country and to the aboriginal people about where they should go from here. We can debate whether it is a good idea or not, but where do they go from here?

*Supply*

The fact that he cannot, does not and will not, means that the country suffers, democracy suffers and the country wanders like the Fraser River.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for St. John's East, who would like to share some of his comments with respect to the motion.

I appreciate that my colleague from the Bloc has brought forward the motion. I listened to the convoluted logic of the government House leader and as I said earlier, I can honestly say I was very confused with his Alice in Wonderland logic as to whether it is or is not a confidence motion.

In my opinion, this is not a confidence motion. This is a question that is being asked in every coffee shop across the country. It is a question that is being put to me constantly in the shopping centres, on the streets, in the parking lots, in phone calls. People are asking why is the Prime Minister hanging on by his finger nails when he should be passing the baton to the next prime minister, the soon to be leader of the Liberal Party, and provide Canadians with what they are desperately searching for, and that is good government?

Unfortunately we do not have that. We have a Prime Minister who, for any number of reasons which I will get into, has decided that he will hang on for as long as he can. I must admit it will be to the detriment not only of good governance but to the detriment of this country. He is doing a disservice not only to the country and to the people who demand government, but he is doing a disservice to himself.

I wish, if nothing else comes from this debate today, that we pass the message to the current Prime Minister, "Please, sir, quit doing this disservice to yourself. Please get on with your retirement years and do what it is that you wish to do, write a book or smoke some marijuana", which is the last thing I heard that he wanted to do when it was legalized. "Please get on with your life and let Canadians get on with what they would like to see right now, which is good government".

To the chief technocrat of the government benches, the government House leader, no, this is not a vote of confidence. This is simply a motion that has been put forward which says, "Please, Mr. Prime Minister, with all your good graces, as soon after the new leader is chosen in your party, please make way for that leader and let Canadians get on with their work".

It was said earlier that this is without precedence. This is something we are living in history. It is a historic moment because never before has there been this kind of transition from one leader to another. We have seen that within our own parties. I have lived through a leadership convention and when it was over the new leader took over the day after. We have seen it in the Alliance Party. We have seen it in the Reform Party. We have seen it in the Bloc. We have seen it everywhere except on the benches of the government.

The fact is there are forces at play. Unfortunately they are forces of personal egos, which I do not think have any place right now in the form of good government in this country.

Why can the Prime Minister not leave? Why can he not accept this as being a friendly motion to suggest that once this move is taken,

Canadians would like to see this transpire very amicably between him and the member for LaSalle—Émard? The problem is that there may be a little more animosity between the member for LaSalle—Émard and the current Prime Minister than we would wish to have in our country.

There are a number of issues. One is ego. We have talked about that. As a matter of fact, there is a headline that reads "PM's delay delivers 'bad government': The Prime Minister letting ego dictate lengthy good-bye". That is not good for the country.

That sentiment, which is shared not only in the newspaper headings but as I said earlier, in the coffee shops, is one which we and the backbench members of the government get to listen to on a regular basis. I do not think there is one soul over there on those benches who has not heard it, if not once, at least a thousand times. There is not one person on those benches and on these benches who does not realize that the next leader of the Liberal Party will be the member for LaSalle—Émard.

• (1235)

Let us get on with business. Let us not drag this thing on until February and keep a rudderless government in office when Canadians are crying out in desperation to deal with issues that are so very important. That is where we have to get.

There is no magic about February. The only magic is that there is an individual who does not want to let go, an individual whose ego is bigger than the country and certainly bigger than Centre Block. It is a person who probably just wants to stick around to celebrate a birthday in the House again. It is an individual who probably just wants to stick around because there is something magic about 40 years. We just heard about 37 years from the chief technocrat on the government side. Maybe he wants to stick around simply because it is 40 years.

The motivation of why we should be here in the House is to provide good leadership to Canadians which they so justly deserve. Maybe he just wants to stick around and have those fingers hanging onto the power because he wants to do his swan song. He wants to have his meeting at the summit of the Americas. Maybe he wants to take his international travel to a new height.

That is not good government. That is not what Canadians deserve. Let us make sure that the individual who is going to replace him does so sooner than later.

There is also a serious problem. I have been involved in business for a number of years. When an individual stays a little too long and when that individual is not wanted, there is a real danger of sabotage. There is a danger of that same sabotage taking place here in the government. That is really a concern.

If the existing Prime Minister wants to make it so unhealthy for the new prime minister, the only ones who will be affected are the country and its citizens. We should not put ourselves in that position. We should not allow the outgoing Prime Minister the time to be able to sabotage the incoming prime minister, because nobody wins. The only thing that wins is ego.

### Supply

There are so many issues which are unable to be attended to right now. We heard the finance minister say he could not put forward a budget in February because he does not know the direction the new prime minister is going to take. We need a fiscal plan put forward. If we cannot have a fiscal plan put forward until after the new leader is prime minister, we are going to be rudderless again for that four or five months.

The finance minister said that we cannot have that fiscal stability which we crave and need so much in this country. We have a loonie that is soaring which is good. There are some issues that have to be dealt with but the finance minister cannot deal with them because he has not been given direction by the new prime minister. We have to set the budget. We have to have the long term vision defined as to where we are going. We have heard other members talk about the democratic deficit. We have to talk about that and put it forward to Canadians but we cannot do that because the new prime minister does not have the ability to do it.

We have to deal with one of the most serious issues right now, which is Canada-U.S. relations. We have a Prime Minister who should not be there after November 15, who cannot even get a meeting with our major trading partner, the President of the United States. Sure, he had the photo op. I am sure there were a whole bunch of little bureaucrats, little minions running around so that the Prime Minister would be seen with President Bush, and he was. It was wonderful. He went on a tour up the river but they cannot sit down in a room and talk prime minister to president right now about softwood lumber. They cannot talk about mad cow disease which is devastating my community. It is devastating agriculture as it has never been devastated before.

We do not have a Prime Minister who can sit down with the President of the United States to deal with major issues because the president does not want to talk to him. Let us fix the problem. Let us not wait until February. Let us fix the problem after November 15 so we can get those relations back together.

Our economy depends on this. This is not about ego. This is not about hanging on just because there are some personal animosities. This is about our country. This is about what we have to achieve in order to retain our standard of living the way we want it retained. Let us get off the pot and make sure we redevelop those relationships with the U.S.

• (1240)

What about federal-provincial relationships? Cooperative federalism has been in a deficit in the government for the last 10 years. The prime minister in waiting has attempted to develop those cooperative federal-provincial relationships.

Let us start now. Let us not wait until February. Let us start in November. We can work toward a great plan to bring the provinces together instead of trying to divide them. We now have an opportunity to make our country much stronger with the provinces and territories. Let us not wait for six months just because of ego, just because somebody wants to hang on to power for that much longer.

What about our military? What about the military that we have sent to Afghanistan? What about their requirements? Some tough

decisions have to be made not only by the Minister of Finance, but by the Prime Minister in order to put the resources together and into a priority for the military at the current time. We need that desperately.

What about natural disasters, as was talked about? Mad cow is one, the fires in British Columbia are another and the hurricane in Nova Scotia is another. There is a great need. I have always stood in the House and said that what we really need is a natural disaster plan. We need something we can take off the shelf and say "Here is a consistent plan", but that is a whole speech for a different day. What we need now is a Prime Minister who is prepared to tell his ministers to go forward and fix the problems, to put some financial compensation packages on the table that we can accept and which Canadians deserve right now with some leadership.

I am going to let my colleague take over from here. This is not a non-confidence motion. This is a motion that should be and has to be accepted by everybody, especially the government of the day. Now is the time to get the message across and have the current Prime Minister retire, and retire with some shred of dignity, which we have to insist that he take.

• (1245)

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, more along the line of a comment, the member opposite made a suggestion that the current Prime Minister might want to sabotage the chances of his successors. I have to say that in my entire 10 years of experience under the current Prime Minister, he always, always puts the country first. He would never, ever in any sense, make things difficult for his successor if it in any way had an impact on the country.

I would point out to the member opposite that if he would make such an allusion, he should consider making a similar allusion to his former party leader and prime minister, who came under tremendous criticism from Canadians and who lost massively in the election of 1993. I do not believe for one second that that previous Conservative prime minister ever would have sabotaged the chances of the nation for his own personal animosities or personal peccadillos.

I think it was a cheap shot and the member should reconsider his remark.

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, I will not reconsider my comments. It is there. It is seen by Canadians on a daily basis that in fact the current Prime Minister has absolutely nothing good to say with respect to the new prime minister coming in. If he did, he would quit on his own volition. He would be out of the chair once the new leader of the Liberal Party was chosen on November 15. That would be the right and honourable thing to do.

I cannot for the life of me understand why the timeline of November 15 to February has to be taken by the current Prime Minister for the transition of power. I cannot for the life of me understand that.



*Supply*

The prime minister elect has already had plenty of time to put into place his people, his systems, his programs and his visions. It is not going to take five months to get that in place. The only thing I can understand as to why the current Prime Minister would stay is to try to finish what he considers to be his minefield for the prime minister elect. That scares me.

I will not apologize for that, because that is a serious concern that Canadians have. Do not put into place budget constraints that we cannot deal with after the fact, after the Prime Minister has left. Do not put in policies, do not make decisions that have to be lived up to after the Prime Minister leaves office. Canadians are begging that the Prime Minister leave after the leadership convention. Make no mistake about that. I will not apologize at all for those comments.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member for Brandon—Souris, unless he is preaching for a call to the Liberal Party, would not want to let the Liberal Party off the hook. Whatever culpability the Prime Minister may have in this situation, and I am sure he is not blameless, the fact is that it is the Liberal Party that helped to create this three month period by calling a leadership convention with the full knowledge that the Prime Minister had indicated he would step down in February 2004.

I find it a little odd that anyone should be letting the Liberal Party off the hook here. It is the Liberal Party, controlled, frankly, by the member for LaSalle—Émard, which I think everyone will admit, who chose to have the convention three months before the date that they knew the Prime Minister would be stepping down.

The member might want to argue, as he seems to want to do, that the Liberal Party, having called the convention for November, should now ask the Prime Minister to bend to the will of his party, but it is the Prime Minister's party itself that put the country in this position.

• (1250)

**Mr. Rick Borotsik:** Mr. Speaker, as usual, my good friend, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona, makes another very valid point. He is absolutely correct.

The Liberal Party could have held this convention in February 2004 and there would not have been the concerns of the transition for that three and a half or four months. Why they did not, I do not know. There are always behind the scenes political machinations and manoeuvrability. I suspect there was some hope that had the Liberal Party made the decision to have their convention on November 15 that perhaps the Prime Minister of the day would see that as being an early exodus.

That has not happened, obviously, because of some of the reasons I have gone through in this speech. However, the member is right. The Liberal Party is to blame equally as much as the current Prime Minister is to blame in not giving way to the new leadership and allowing the prime minister elect to be answerable and accountable in the House.

**Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Brandon—Souris, who has quite eloquently laid out the case as to why the current Prime Minister should be leaving office and allowing the incoming prime minister to sit here and be accountable to the people of Canada.

I would like to make a few remarks on this motion by the Bloc that calls upon the Prime Minister to leave office as soon as possible after November 14. I know it must be difficult for an individual like the current Prime Minister of Canada to leave office. He has been in political life in this nation for a 40 year period. Many of us, who have had a much shorter of period of time in office, can readily understand how difficult it is to leave political life and seek another direction.

However the current Prime Minister of the country is in grave danger of destroying any legacy he might have built up over the last 40 years in office by remaining too long. I think it is safe to say that the people of Canada want the current Prime Minister to step down as quickly as possible. As a matter of fact, I recently saw a television survey rolling across the bottom of my TV screen indicating that 57% of the people of Canada feel it would be in the best interests of the country to have the current Prime Minister leave office as quickly as possible.

In our parliamentary system of government, as we all know, the Prime Minister is generally the leader of the majority party in the House of Commons. The current Prime Minister, as we are all aware, said that he would leave office in February 2004. The Liberal Party, however, decided to hold its leadership convention, as the member for Winnipeg—Transcona rightly pointed out, in November 2003.

That leaves us now in the very unique position of seeing the new leader for the Liberal Party not becoming the prime minister until some time in February, which is very inappropriate because between November 2003 and February 2004 Canada will have both a Prime Minister and a prime minister in waiting.

We have to ask ourselves if it is in the best interests of Canadians and if it is good government to have that kind of situation in our country. This country deserves better. As I said a moment ago, if the Prime Minister has any legacy to leave the people of Canada, that legacy will be destroyed if he hangs on to power too long.

Only the Liberal Party of Canada would have the monumental arrogance of foisting that kind of awkward arrangement upon the Canadian people. We have already been treated to scenes of unofficial Liberal Party caucus meetings taking place on Tuesday nights and the official Liberal Party caucus meetings taking place on Wednesday mornings like the rest of us.

Obviously the Liberal Party is so sure of its unassailable position that it can play out its internal workings on the national stage. It is not in the best interests of our country to be witnessing that kind of disagreement between the Prime Minister and the prime minister in waiting.

• (1255)

Simply put, the Liberal Party feels that it can play fast and loose with the parliamentary system and has absolutely no fear of retribution from the people of Canada for the actions it has taken.

As so many speakers before me have pointed out, the member for LaSalle—Émard, who will become the prime minister of Canada, should be accountable to the people of Canada after November 13. He should be in the House of Commons to be accountable and to answer questions from the various opposition parties regarding his actions when he was minister of finance.

### Supply

Is it any wonder that citizens have been demanding that the various opposition parties in Parliament get their act together and present some kind of a unified alternative to the present government? What I have been hearing from my constituents all across St. John's East is that there should be a better and more unified alternative to the government. They feel that the government is becoming arrogant by the very actions it is displaying with its leadership process.

Word has it, and I think we are all aware that the word is accurate, that the House will be closing soon and we will not be called back until the new Liberal leader is ready for a throne speech and a spring budget. I am sure, as the country is sure, that a general election will soon follow after that.

However, in the interim, which is very important, the country will not get a chance to put the new prime minister to the test here in the House of Commons. We will, in effect, have two prime ministers between November and February.

The Liberals have indicated that they intend to avoid that kind of awkward arrangement by closing down the House for the period between November 7 of this year and the middle of February next year. It is unheard of that the House should be closed for that long a period of time. In the meantime, we will have two parallel administrations in place in Canada, one in the House and one behind the curtain of the House. That simply is not good enough for the people of Canada and it is not in their best interests.

Over the last number of months we have been treated to the spectacle of the Liberal Party washing its dirty linen in public. The outgoing Prime Minister and incoming prime minister have made no secret of the fact that they dislike each other. They seem to have absolutely no shame in letting their personal disputes dominate the public arena. With the two feuding, overlapping prime ministers, the Liberal Party's answer now is to wash its dirty linen in private by closing the House of Commons and not opening up again until some time in February.

I think it is fair to say that Canadians want leadership, not arrogance, from the prime minister and the majority party here in the House.

Nobody is saying that there should not be a reasonable transition period for the outgoing Prime Minister and the incoming prime minister. Given the fact that we have known for quite some time who the new prime minister will be, one would think that a period of a few weeks would be enough for the incoming administration to take office. However, what we are talking about here is a number of months, and that is not good enough.

An election was held recently in Newfoundland. There were two parties of different political stripes and the new one will be taking office. That will be done quite smoothly in a matter of probably a week or so. Since we have known for about two or three months who the incoming prime minister of Canada will be there is absolutely no reason the transition could not have taken place within a couple of weeks.

• (1300)

As I said, the current Liberal government does not have to worry about the niceties of governance. It feels as if it has a divine right to govern because its parliamentary opposition is so fractured and there

are so many different parties. I think we will see that coming to an end fairly soon. The incoming prime minister has every reason to worry that he will have a unified opposition going into the next election.

In the meantime, I call upon the Liberal Party to treat Canadians and their parliamentary institutions with a little respect and to provide for some kind of timely transition, yes, but certainly not a two or three month period in which the nation is held to ransom by the government.

[Translation]

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we realize that there is no legislative agenda left. There are only a few bills under consideration.

More bills may die on the Order Paper, like Bill C-38, decriminalizing marijuana, or Bill C-13, respecting assisted reproductive technologies. These bills may not be passed before the House adjourns.

It is clear that the hon. member for LaSalle-Émard is behind the scenes blocking various bills. This week, a caucus was held to discuss all these questions. Obviously, this does not allow the House to go about its business as usual. The whole parliamentary process is grinding to a halt.

With this, I would like my Conservative colleague to tell me whether he agrees that decisions are now being made outside the House, something which prevents the House from doing its work. I would also like him to tell me whether he thinks the motion moved by the Bloc is appropriate.

[English]

**Mr. Norman Doyle:** Mr. Speaker, yes, I agree with the member totally and completely. The business of the nation has certainly been postponed and the business of the nation has been placed on hold while two warring factions do what they have been doing in the House of Commons. It is a very awkward arrangement for Canadians.

As I said a moment ago, this arrangement is really nothing less than having two prime ministers at the same time. It is not in the best interest of Canadians.

Therefore I think the motion is indeed an appropriate one, one which we can readily support. We feel that if the current Prime Minister would leave, then the people of Canada would have the opportunity to question and to hold accountable the real prime minister of Canada. There is absolutely no reason why that arrangement should be so difficult to come by.

Therefore, we support the motion by the Bloc and we think it is entirely appropriate that the incoming prime minister should have the opportunity to come here, lay out his own legislative agenda and be held to account by the people of Canada.

• (1305)

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Other members may be satisfied to speak to an empty House but I am not, so I call quorum.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The House now has its quorum. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thought if I were going to take the same position of the government, that some of members might want to be in the House to hear why. We can always call quorum again if we have to.

It is a very interesting situation that we find ourselves in today with the Bloc motion.

First, I want to say that we understand, from the point of view of the NDP, that one thing the Bloc is trying to point out is that the situation we find ourselves in, with the member for LaSalle—Émard being a certain successor to the Prime Minister and the fact that there is apparently going to be a three month period between when the member for LaSalle—Émard becomes the leader of the Liberal Party and when he becomes the Prime Minister, creates problems in terms of accountability. It already has in the sense that we would like to ask the member for LaSalle—Émard questions because we know he is consulting behind the scenes, sometimes not even behind the scenes, and that decisions are perhaps being made about what the future direction of his government will look like.

However it is interesting, having said that, because it is a legitimate problem, as I said earlier, that it was created not just by the Prime Minister but by the Liberal Party itself, controlled by the member for LaSalle—Émard, a party which decided to have the convention in November knowing full well that the Prime Minister was not going to resign until February. A party that had the interests of the country at heart, and not the interests of a particular leadership candidate at heart, would have said “We know what the Prime Minister wants and when he is going to resign, so we are going to have our leadership convention in February”.

One thing we find difficult about the motion is it lets the member for LaSalle—Émard off the hook, it lets the Liberal Party off the hook, and it tries to pile everything onto the Prime Minister, who no doubt is not blameless in this matter, do not get me wrong. Nevertheless, there is something fundamentally flawed about the motion because it does not take into account the role of the Liberal Party and the member for LaSalle—Émard himself.

In fact a strange thing has happened in the House today. We have all the opposition parties, with the exception of the NDP, singing from the member for LaSalle—Émard's hymn book. They are all part of the choir that says “Bring on the member for LaSalle—Émard”. It has been described as the sooner the better that we have the member for LaSalle—Émard. The member for Brandon—Souris said that we should fix the problem and bring on the member for LaSalle—Émard.

Are all these people secret members of the campaign for the leadership of the Liberal Party by the member for LaSalle—Émard? It is really kind of funny to hear all the people hailing and wanting to bring on, as soon as possible, the rein of the member for LaSalle—Émard, but we do not share this view.

We are in no rush to jump from the frying pan into the fire. We think the member for LaSalle—Émard is even more right wing than the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister himself is no left wing

### *Supply*

Liberal in many respects, although lately he has shown the odd sort of attack of progressiveness, perhaps in the absence of the influence from the member for LaSalle—Émard. Why something has happened to the Prime Minister in the last year, we attribute it in part to the fact that he is finally listening to the NDP and he is doing some things he ought to have been doing for a long time.

The fact of the matter is the member for LaSalle—Émard, the new Liberal leader, is promising the country 100 days of cuts. Perhaps I could ask about this, particularly of my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois. I can understand why members in the Canadian Alliance and the Tories, or whatever they come to call themselves, might be anxious for 100 days of cuts, because that is their view of the world: cut, cut, cut. Cutting anything that is good is good government as far as they are concerned. However I wonder why members of the Bloc are anxious to bring on 100 days of cuts.

We have a projected surplus for next year somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$6 billion to \$7 billion. We do not need cuts. We need that money to be spent appropriately on health care, on a new equalization formula with the provinces, on relieving student debt and on a number of other things that have been waiting the attention of the government.

As I said, we think it is like jumping from the frying pan into the fire because we know, as do so many other people, that basically the member for LaSalle—Émard is a conservative himself. He is right wing Liberal.

• (1310)

In fact the member for Tobique—Mactaquac said that he was not worried about the Tories and the Alliance getting together because as far as he was concerned, “Mr. Martin has impressed fiscal conservatives with his ability to slay the federal deficit”. I am just quoting from a newspaper, Mr. Speaker. I would not refer—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Let me stretch my legs a little here. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona, being a tremendously well experienced parliamentarian, I simply remind him that we cannot indirectly what we cannot do directly, notwithstanding the quote from any other publication or otherwise.

I think we are all referring to the member for LaSalle—Émard and not someone of the same name from another riding, of his own party for instance.

I think we should keep the reference to the member for LaSalle—Émard. I think we all understand that.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly never want to do indirectly what I could not do directly. I always prefer to do it directly. You get my drift, Mr. Speaker.

It is a well known fact even on the Liberal side the member for LaSalle—Émard is a conservative, which raises the question of why there would be any need to unite the right in this country, when the right is already so well united behind the member for LaSalle—Émard.

### Supply

Although, on the other hand, we see here today a new version of unite the right. We see all these other opposition parties apparently united behind the notion that the best thing that could happen for the country is for this right wing Liberal to take over the country as soon as possible. That is what I call uniting the right. It is why the NDP is not supporting the motion. It is not because we have any particular affection for the Prime Minister and his 10 years of government, the first nine of which were shared with the member for LaSalle—Émard and with which we find great fault.

We have noticed that in the last little while the Prime Minister has shown strains of something that we might want to encourage, like the idea of an independent Canadian foreign policy. Yet what has been said about the position that the Prime Minister took with respect to the war in Iraq? What has been the theme on this side of the House with a number of speakers is that we have to have the member for LaSalle—Émard quickly to repair our relationship with the United States. We have to have the member for LaSalle—Émard undo that brief shining moment of independence when Canada said no to a war on Iraq.

We have members on this side of the House, and apparently others who support the member for LaSalle—Émard, who cannot wait for the member for LaSalle—Émard to become the prime minister, so he can go down to Washington on bended knee and make up for the terrible sins of the current Prime Minister.

We do not share that view. We do not share the view that the Prime Minister has done something wrong by not allowing Canada to be involved in the war in Iraq. We agreed with him on that. We take exception to the view that this is somehow a terrible thing that the Prime Minister has done.

Are my colleagues here on the opposition side in such a hurry for the program of reform that the member for LaSalle—Émard has announced he will implement when he becomes the Prime Minister with respect to the democratic deficit? Have we spent all these years, many of us here in committee, on special committees and standing committees talking about parliamentary reform, to pretend that what the member for LaSalle—Émard is promising in terms of parliamentary reform is meaningful reform?

Have a look at what the member for LaSalle—Émard's parliamentary reform package is about. It is about 10% of what the McGrath committee recommended in 1985. It is a pale imitation of anything that has ever been recommended by any committee of this House.

It is a crime against the truth that the member for LaSalle—Émard gets to parade around the country pretending that he is the big parliamentary reform guy, when what he is proposing is just so much minutiae compared to what has been recommended over and over again by committees of the House and recommended individually by so many parties in the House.

Yet today we say bring on that minuscule reform, as if somehow that will be better for the country. Bring on the facade and bring on the scam of curing the democratic deficit. There could not be anything more undemocratic than the way the Liberal leadership itself is run, with million and millions of dollars and legitimate candidates being unable to even consider putting their names in the

ring because they cannot raise that kind of money. They cannot fight that kind of money. What the heck is democratic about that? Nothing at all.

While I am on the money issue, and we are talking about the current political context here, many on this side have alluded, sometimes directly, to what is happening between the Canadian Alliance Party and the Progressive Conservative Party.

● (1315)

What is going on here? Some have referred to a parallel government. They do not like the fact that the member for LaSalle—Émard may be conducting a sort of parallel government.

I will tell members where the real parallel government is in this country. The parallel government, the real government, the invisible government, call it what we like, is the people who have decided that they want to bankroll a new right wing party in this country and they want it done before the end of the year, because as of January 1 they will not be able to do so. Let us not kid ourselves. On this side of the House, that is what is going on. It is not unconnected to the new regime that has been brought in with respect to campaign financing.

What else? Speaking of democracy, it is interesting to hear the member for Brandon—Souris and others in the Canadian Alliance get up and talk about democracy when it is clear that the big money on Bay Street and other places has said, "We don't care what the membership of the Progressive Conservative Party thought they were doing when they voted in the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. We don't care what David Orchard thought the new leader of the Conservative Party was promising. We don't care what the membership of the Canadian Alliance thinks, for that matter. We are going to buy ourselves a new political party because we are the real parallel government in this country. We are the real invisible government in this country".

That is what is going on here, and yet we hear members on this side of the House get up and say they are concerned about a parallel government.

We are concerned about a parallel government, the same one that has existed for decades in this country, one which likes to fund two parties, one that is in and one that is out. And there should not be too much of a distinction between the two of them because every once in a while the people need a change, and God forbid we should have a real change, so we need a kind of a pale imitation of the one that can take over from the other, and so goes Canadian history.

I will resist the temptation to recite the Tommy Douglas story about mouse land, where the mice keep picking between the black cats and the white cats and maybe at some point they should actually be electing one of their own.

Members do not have to take my word for it. They can read an op-ed article in the paper today by Senator Lowell Murray, a distinguished colleague in the other place and a Conservative of long standing, who feels that the Progressive Conservative Party has made a horrible historical mistake. I share that view, not just for its own sake, but for the sake of the country.

*Supply*

These are just some of the things we wanted to bring to the attention of the House today. As I said, we are not interested in jumping from the frying pan into the fire any quicker than we have to. We think the member for LaSalle—Émard has already united the right. We look forward to meeting the member for LaSalle—Émard on the hustings next year and we wonder what the members here today who were so anxious to have him as the prime minister will be saying then.

I can hear what the member for LaSalle—Émard will be saying. He will be saying, “I don't know why you guys are so unhappy with me. You wanted me to become the prime minister three months earlier than I became the prime minister. In fact, when I wasn't the prime minister, you said to make me the prime minister, to fix the problem, the sooner the better”, and on and on, all the things that have been said here today.

It is a curious business indeed that so many opposition parties could be united around the very person they intend to run against in the next election.

• (1320)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always good to hear from the member for Winnipeg Transcona, and on a number of issues. He is a long-standing and respected member of this place.

Earlier I asked a question about jurisdictional authority and whether Parliament should be involved in decisions made by any political party, knowing about the political infrastructure of each of our parties. I also looked at the parliamentary calendar. It appears to me that following the Liberal convention, which will pick the new leader on November 14, Parliament then has four weeks before its scheduled recess from December 15 to January 26.

The member is probably familiar with the historic experience in regard to transition of governments. The member will know that until a new prime minister is sworn in and he or she has selected members of cabinet and they have been sworn in, et cetera, a transition would take a minimum of two weeks, if not four, to do it properly so that a new government being sworn in could appear in the House and would be able to properly respond to the questions from all hon. members.

Having said that, it appears that the motion, which basically says that the Prime Minister should step down “as soon as possible after November 14”, would have virtually no impact at all on the number of days in which the Prime Minister would be in fact sitting at his desk, because it is going to take virtually the four weeks between November 15 and December 15 for an orderly transition and the House is normally scheduled to be off between December 15 and January 26. That basically brings us to February 1, the date at which the current Prime Minister has indicated he is going to be stepping down.

Having said that, I would be interested to hear the member's comments on what benefit could be achieved by some other arrangement for stepping down, an arrangement that would somehow improve the number of days in which the next prime minister would be able to be here before the House to take questions.

• (1325)

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. I want to make it clear that we feel the House should continue to sit. We do not feel that what is happening within the Liberal Party, or whatever the succession rights may be, should get in the way of the House doing its business between now and the projected time of adjournment just before Christmas.

We have made that clear. Just the other day I was up on my feet in question period urging the government House leader to commit to having the House sit at least beyond the period in which the Auditor General could report to the House, because we know that the Auditor General has much to report on in the way of Liberal misspending and mismanagement. We do not want the Auditor General to be unable to report as a result of the House being prorogued.

So if the member is asking me what we think of whether or not the House should continue to sit, we think it should

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, it is a kind of twisted logic that we have from the member for Winnipeg Transcona and this Jack Layton fellow.

Here in Parliament we have opposition parties, all four of them, including the New Democrats, that are supposed to be holding the government accountable. The way we hold a government accountable is to point out what it is doing that is contrary to the best interests of the people of Canada. On that, we have all been doing a pretty good job.

In order to enforce that accountability, just as we are doing with the industry minister, we are asking for resignations when incompetence and other mistakes reach a point at which a minister has to be removed from his or her position. I think our Prime Minister has reached that point and he should be removed from the House. I do not understand why the member is saying he is not going to vote to have the Prime Minister removed from his job due to incompetence and other mistakes.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, as far as I am concerned, the job of the opposition is to oppose that which is worthy of opposition.

I do not understand why my colleagues in the opposition today would want to act in such a way as to lend credibility to the view that the member for LaSalle—Émard represents change, that the member for LaSalle—Émard is something that the country cannot wait for. If he represents change at all, it is change going further to the right, which maybe the member for Selkirk—Interlake would like, but it is not something that the NDP would like, and therefore we have taken the position that we have.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona is using the expression “jumping from the frying pan into the fire”.

This is one way of looking at things. We have a different way. We believe that we must get the real decision maker to come out from behind the curtains and step under the spotlight, since he is the one making the decisions. We have examples of this.

### Supply

We have had enough of facing Fantomas or the Phantom of the Opera, who is pulling the strings from behind the curtains, so that we no longer have a government in front of us. We are not afraid of the member for LaSalle—Émard. He should come and take the Prime Minister's seat. We have questions for him.

What are the policies of the next prime minister for the next budget? Is he willing to continue to plunder the employment insurance fund? Perhaps it is time we asked him these questions.

This is also the case for provincial transfers for health care, where we have huge problems. The Minister of Finance just announced a \$7 billion surplus. Suddenly, he does not know whether he will give the \$2 billion to the provinces. Is he the one talking or is it the Phantom of the Opera behind the curtain?

This is what is going on, across the board. We are anxious to put him in the frying pan. He is the one we want to put in the frying pan. He should be here to answer questions from the opposition. This is his real role. As he will be chosen on November 15, he should take his seat and stop playing around behind the curtain and making all sorts of proposals.

We feel there no longer is a government in front of us. There is only His Holiness from LaSalle—Émard, who decides what the government's policies are. He should take his seat, and we will see if he can take the heat, because we will put him in the hot seat.

• (1330)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I understand where my colleague from the Bloc is coming from. I opened my remarks by saying that I understood the Bloc's argument, but our argument, which we think trumps the Bloc's argument, is that we already know what the member for LaSalle—Émard is going to be about. We already know what he is going to be like and we do not want that to happen to the country any sooner than it has to.

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg—Transcona alluded to the idea that the opposition parties, the Conservatives and the Alliance, are eager to see the member for LaSalle—Émard become the next prime minister, but I would remind the member that the former finance minister raised the level of spending in the last three years that he was finance minister, in the range of 8% to 9% per year, levels that we have not seen since the time of the late Trudeau era, which put us into all this financial difficulty to begin with.

I would suggest to the member for Winnipeg—Transcona that this is not what we would like to see at all. We are looking for the earliest opportunity to change the other side of the House and move over so we can accomplish some fiscal responsibility in this country.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, there we have the inconsistency of the Alliance Party, and before that the Reform Party, which hopefully will soon be at an end. We will have a new form of inconsistency, I am sure, but at least the one that we are so tired of will be gone from the House.

Because there the member is, pretending that somehow the member for LaSalle—Émard is a big spender, when he is one of those same guys who, day after day, get up in the House and accuse the former minister of finance of gutting the health care system,

taking billions out of the health care system, not spending enough on defence, not spending enough on this and not spending enough on that.

Yet in the same breath, he stands up and says that the problem with the member for LaSalle—Émard is that he is a big spender. He is not a big spender. He cut the guts out of a lot of good programs in this country. The percentage of government spending as a percentage of the economy is way down from what it historically was.

The member for Peace River is a good guy, but he is just wrong on this.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis.

Others before me have already said this, but the situation is so serious I feel I have to repeat it: the government is paralyzed. When we ask questions of ministers, they do not dare answer, for fear of displeasing the future prime minister, who will take over in the coming months.

The Liberals are not even taking their work seriously in committees, because they know that there could be a change of policy within weeks.

The fundamental question is this: is anyone at the controls? Yes, there is, but he is sitting back with the passengers, which is not very reassuring. That is pretty serious. Just as airline passengers would not be reassured by a pilot sitting with them, the public is not reassured by a government that is paralyzed, blocked day after day, because we are in a period of transition, a period when the future prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard, has already decided to start pulling the government's strings.

There are two parallel governments. Things cannot work that way. We cannot have any budget policy, although this is being discussed within the budget consultation process in the Standing Committee on Finance. There is a total lack of interest. A policy is being set, but no one knows if it is the right one, because someone else will be taking over before long.

The member for LaSalle—Émard talks of slashing 10% from the departments in order to save money, while the present Prime Minister is telling us, "We will invest the amounts previously agreed to in health, education and social assistance". The Minister of Finance, in a real bind as to what to say, tells us, "If we have the funds, maybe, and if we do not, maybe not".

We have, moreover, just learned that the true surplus, as at March 31 last, was \$7 billion. Nevertheless, the present finance minister does not dare speak up and make any commitments because, sad but true, the government no longer exists.

As a result, everyone is dependent on what is going on within the Liberal Party. I have just heard my colleague from Mississauga South ask the member for Roberval and House leader of the Bloc Québécois if it is normal for one political party to interfere in the affairs of another.

*Supply*

Yes, it is normal. And why? Because it is not just an issue for the Liberal Party of Canada; it concerns every single citizen of this country. There is no government facing us that can give us an answer.

With regard to such basic issues as the Kyoto protocol, which was ratified by this Parliament, the government said it would be establishing measures to implement the various parts of the protocol. The government says, "Yes, we are moving forward". But the other prime minister, the one hiding behind the curtain, who has all the benefits of being prime minister without coming in to take the risks of debating his ideas here in Parliament, says that he is questioning this policy and that he would prefer a made in Canada policy. But the Kyoto protocol, as we all know, is an international plan and an international commitment. We should be worried.

When even the current finance minister says, "Well, we really do not know very much about how to approach the prebudget consultations, and I cannot make a prebudget statement as I usually do each year, because I do not know what the future prime minister is thinking", it can paralyze a government.

Normally, at this time of year, the bulk of the consultation has already been done. We know what is coming. We know what the government's priorities are. Today, we know nothing.

There were also commitments that seemed to have been made. Let us take for example the high speed train in the Quebec City-Windsor corridor. It seemed that the government was in favour of this. But now, the member for LaSalle—Émard says that no, the government no longer in favour of it. We do not know where the government stands any more, and that is a fact.

Earlier, I heard my colleague from Winnipeg—Transcona say that we want to put a man from the right in power ahead of time. I want to remind him that the man from the right is already running the government. He even making his presence felt on the international scene. It is not the current Prime Minister who was seen in Bangkok at the APEC summit. It is the future prime minister, who was seen on the front page of an international newspaper.

He is already shaping Canada's international policy. However, NDP members always make politics far too complicated. It would appear that they have difficulty remaining at the first or second level. It is always so complicated. In other words, they are difficult to follow.

We are anxious to see this man here in the House, and I am talking about the member for LaSalle—Émard, who, right now, has all the advantages of the office of prime minister and holds caucus meetings on Tuesday night when the regular caucus meetings are held on Wednesday morning. Members do not know what to do. They do not know whether they should attend the caucus meeting on Tuesday night or the one on Wednesday morning.

• (1335)

We would like him to be here, because he has a past. He has over a decade of political experience already. He has a track record. For nine years, he was the minister of Finance and, as such, he made decisions. He had better not try to tell us that he was not comfortable with the decisions he made. For nine years we questioned him, and he was quite comfortable. He even made fun of our questions.

He had better not try to tell us that he was not comfortable with the gutting of federal transfer payments for health, education and social assistance, and that it was not his decision. He was the Minister of Finance after all, and he is the one who set the course to get the federal public finances under control. He is the one who picked the targets to get our fiscal house in order. He targeted students, the sick and the poorest members of society.

He has to show up in this House without delay. Since memory has a way of fading, some may have forgotten the true face of the member for LaSalle—Émard and future prime minister. We are looking forward to seeing him here as soon as possible. That is the essence of the motion we put forward. Not only do we want a government that is accountable for its actions and statements, but we want the prime minister to come before us and answer our questions regarding the decisions he made in the past when he gutted social programs.

We want to see before us the man who essentially stole the \$45 million surplus accumulated in the employment insurance fund. We want to see before us the man who, for the past 10 years, has steadfastly refused to terminate the tax convention with Barbados, because his own shipping company benefits from it. We want to see before us the man who refused to reform the federal tax system, which is unfair to middle and low income earners. We want to have him before us to question him and ask him why he did not do it.

We want to ask the member for LaSalle—Émard, the former finance minister, why it is that every time we ask a government representative a question and an answer is given, he then says the opposite outside the House? This morning, the government House leader ridiculed the Bloc Québécois motion, saying that it was a non-confidence vote against the government.

Why? That was their only way out, but there is more to it than that. No one wants to admit that the majority of members and ministers from the governing party supports the member for LaSalle—Émard, while hypocritically, behind the scenes, they are working to push the current Prime Minister out to make room for the future prime minister as soon as possible.

The motion has been ridiculed and described as a non-confidence vote. It has been said that if the Liberal members or ministers vote in favour of it, the government will have to call an election because the government will have been defeated. Honestly. The Prime Minister himself announced a few months ago that he would step down in February 2004. Moving this deadline ahead three months is not a non-confidence motion, it is gently showing him the door to allow a real government to govern and a real prime minister to answer our questions, in order to prevent that prime minister from pulling the strings from behind the curtain and contradicting the current government. That is all we want.

Earlier I asked, "Is there anyone at the controls?" I would say yes there is. However, this pilot is not where he should be, he is not in the cockpit. He is seated here with the passengers and is doing nothing to reassure the passengers, the citizens of this country.

The current situation is serious. World leaders want to know who the future prime minister is rather than ask the current Prime Minister about Canada's position.

*Supply*

It is serious when even the social groups ask the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard directly and no longer the current Prime Minister to restore the funding they lost before the destroyer of social programs, the future prime minister, takes over.

It is serious when the financial world no longer pays any attention to the current Prime Minister or the current Minister of Finance, because most of the ministers here probably will not keep their jobs when the new prime minister takes over.

Furthermore, when the future prime minister, in the crucial context of planning the next budget, consults first those involved in Canadian and international high finance, second the bankers and third, industry, we have the right to ask, “What will be in the next budget?”

It will only include measures to benefit the rich, who are friends of the future prime minister.

• (1340)

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will make a few comments. I find this somewhat absurd. This is probably a sad day for Canadian parliamentarism. Not only do we hear members use the word “s’assire” instead of “s’asseoir”, which is rather poor French, but we also hear the future former member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot using rather derogatory language.

We know that some Bloc members, like Pierre Brien, did some good work. He decided to run as a candidate in the provincial election and joined the ADQ. The Bloc is this same party that worked against Pierre Brien during the provincial election.

It is true that renewal is tiresome. Strangely, when I was using the headphones, I heard a ticking sound. It probably was the countdown that has begun. The member talks about the curtain, but I have the feeling that the curtain has come down. During the last byelection, Quebecers showed they were fed up with the Bloc Quebecois.

I really look forward to the next general election, because we will take care of the Bloc in Quebec. This is the party that supported Bernard Landry, who was the appointed premier for eight months, almost a year. Is that democracy? He didn't have the decency to call an election immediately after his appointment.

For our part, there is a renewal. Not only did we have an exceptional Prime Minister for ten years, but we had a Prime Minister who showed his capacity as an administrator: yesterday, the finance minister announced a \$7 billion surplus. We saw all those jobs created as a result.

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

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Unfortunately for them, that is what makes them panic. They are panicking on the other side. We can hear it. They are complaining, and they have every reason to do so.

With the member for LaSalle—Émard, the next Prime Minister of Canada, we will even have more members to show how well things are going to be in Quebec.

That being said, I would like to know from the future former member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot if he believes, since Quebec is fed up with the Bloc Quebecois, as shown by a poll, if he should not move a motion that he himself should resign, to be consistent?

• (1345)

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, let me answer the future former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration by quoting a statement he made to the *Devoir* on September 23, 2003. He said, “The facts are clear. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard is our de facto leader”.

Therefore, I find it rather strange, to say the least, that the future former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration would answer by praising the current Prime Minister when his statement kind of paved the way for the current Prime Minister to leave earlier than planned. The members opposite are all the same.

That is why they are turning today's motion into a non-confidence vote. They are scared witless. They are all afraid of being turfed out as ministers, the future former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration included. They will vote according to a very narrow interpretation of the motion brought forward by the Bloc Quebecois and say that it is a non-confidence vote that could bring the current government down.

That is what they are going to do in order to keep hiding their true colours and behaving like hypocrites. By showing the current Prime Minister the door—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot has one more minute left to complete his answer. I would urge members to show some cooperation and be more careful in their choice of words so that we can proceed with this debate in the tradition of this House.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier:** Mr. Speaker, I greatly respect the future former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I respect him too much to use such terms. You are quite right.

However, the fact remains that the majority of members on the government benches take part in caucus meetings on Tuesday evenings, the future prime minister's caucus. Today, if this vote is being turned into a non-confidence vote, it is because they needed a reason to vote against the Bloc Quebecois' motion.

Even if the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard is present during the vote, he will vote against this motion, because he will say that it is a non-confidence motion and that it is a threat to the government, which is entirely untrue. Consequently, on his part, this is not hypocrisy—perhaps this term is too strong—but it is just like him.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this debate needs to focus on the real issues. The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona does not appear to have understood the essence of our motion. Since we have been talking about former this and former that, I was surprised to learn that the former NDP leadership candidate did not understand our exact intention. We want the person calling the shots to take over, nothing more.



When I was a kid, we used to have a hymn that went, “The old and the new, there is only one god in the heavens”. Here, two people are trying to rule. That is why nothing is working.

I was listening to the speech by the hon. government House leader. He trotted out everything he could find in Montpetit-Marleau. He tried to make us believe that it would be really horrible if, by some chance, the Liberals dared to vote the way their conscience tells them to.

What would happen if, by chance, the Bloc's motion were carried? Are the Liberals even able to answer that question? Something very simple would happen. In our British parliamentary system, the Governor General would urgently call back from Asia the Prime Minister—who must have travelled there on his Challenger bought from Bombardier—and tell him, “Minister Prime Minister, I think you have a little problem”. He would say, “You are right, Your Excellency. It would seem that I have lost the confidence of the House”.

Having come to that conclusion, what could the Governor General do? She could ask, “Can you think of anyone in your party who could form a majority government?” Now, the cat would be out of the bag. The Prime Minister would say, “Sadly, yes, the member for LaSalle—Émard is ready to take over and form a new government”. The Governor General would then ask him to form a new government. We would not be facing a crisis, as the government House leader would have us believe. We would be out of the current crisis. That would make a big difference.

My hon. colleague and friend from Hyacinthe—Bagot said earlier that the picture of the future prime minister was making the front page of newspapers. That is not all we could see in the papers today. Eddie Goldenberg made a remark in a conversation that was overheard. The PMO is pretty sophisticated now. It can overhear conversations. Mr. Goldenberg, from the PMO, suggested that Team Canada missions abroad would be cancelled under the future prime minister. That is what came out of China today. The Prime Minister was asked about it. He said that, naturally, it would be up to his successor to answer the question.

We could go on for hours listing all the problems we are having because the man pulling the strings and running the show is not among us. He is the invisible man. Yet, like God, he is omnipresent. He influences every government decision. He is just everywhere. We can see him making comments here, and cancelling this or that there. He said we could pass legislation if we wanted to but that, once in office, he would not enforce it.

•(1350)

So, what did the government do? It shelved the bill. It is no longer dealing with it.

Consequently, I think that the fundamental meaning of our motion needs to be understood. We are tired of hearing that, on November 7, we will all go home because we have to wait for the Liberal convention, which will be held on November 15. The current Prime Minister wants to go to Africa, because he has not seen his friends in a long time; he wants to go to Mexico in January and he will do some major house cleaning on Sussex Drive in February. Then, he will let the other one take over.

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We are saying that this is taking too much time. As members of Parliament, what are we going to do in the meantime? We will be waiting. We will not even be able to see the Quebec-Windsor train go by, because the Liberals cannot make up their mind; the future prime minister does not want the train, he prefers to fulfil his promises in western Canada and keep the money.

He surely will have plenty of time to choose his cabinet. If the Liberals are to be believed, I think they will break the record of Bangladesh, which has 63 ministers. I believe the Liberals will appoint 64 ministers, because so many backbenchers think they should be appointed to replace the current ministers.

Since the time is short, I believe it is important to get serious about this process. I tried to put some levity in my speech, because it is lunch time. We need to give this motion all the importance it deserves and we need to know that it is in the interests of Canadians that the Bloc motion get massive support from members of the House.

•(1355)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I remind the House that it is difficult to ask a member to begin a speech a few minutes before question period. However, if someone wants to ask a question, we could entertain it.

The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the few minutes remaining before question period, I would like my colleague from Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis to comment on the statement made, on September 23, by the new future former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

The facts are clear. The member for LaSalle—Émard is the de facto leader. Is this not a case of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds?

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting comment. My friend, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, could very well end up with another portfolio. Maybe that is why he opened that door; who knows? In politics, to have any kind of future, one must know how to position oneself. Maybe he did say that the person he recognizes as the de facto prime minister is the member for LaSalle—Émard.

Maybe the member for LaSalle—Émard was pleased with that comment and maybe he will remember it and find a limousine somewhere on the hill so that the member for Bourassa—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. We will now proceed to statements by members.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### GEMINI AWARDS

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television for its production of the 18th Annual Gemini Awards.

*S. O. 31*

I would also like to offer my warmest congratulations to the winners and the nominees of these awards which honour excellence in English language television.

In our ever-globalized world, protecting, promoting and celebrating our country's cultural life is increasingly important. The Geminis help us in this cause by celebrating Canadian cultural achievements and by heightening public awareness of the tremendous work of our gifted performers and producers.

[*Translation*]

Our government did something remarkable when it invested in the arts and culture industries; however, they constitute an ongoing challenge and we must continue to look for effective and innovative measures to ensure that Canadian talents will continue to shine brightly and obtain all the success they deserve.

[*English*]

Congratulations once again to all those who continue to bring vitality to the telling of Canadian stories.

\* \* \*

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the old post office and the current federal fisheries office in Campbell River are partially sitting on fuel contaminated soil. The municipality and the developer have waited more than two years for competing federal departments to determine liability for cleanup.

Campbell River downtown development is stymied and the stewards of fisheries and oceans in the salmon capital of the world are housed on top of contamination.

I wrote to the Minister of the Environment in July to break the deadlock. His response in August referred me back to the deadlocked departments, which solves nothing. I talked to the environment minister in September and again yesterday.

The community deserves a solution. Patience is wearing thin and the environment minister must act now.

\* \* \*

• (1400)

[*Translation*]

#### SCOUTS IN SAINT-NICOLAS

**Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on October 11, the Scouts in Saint-Nicolas celebrated their 25th anniversary. Just over 2,000 young men and women have benefited from this organization, thanks to the time and support provided by over 350 adult volunteers.

Belonging to the scouting movement enables young people and adults to take an active part in the life of their community. The movement provides access to numerous activity programs geared to various age groups. Focusing on participation and not on competition, on helping others and developing know-how, scouting provides young people with a basic system of values and ethics. Scouting offers an environment where young people learn to be tomorrow's adults.

Thanks to the involvement of the Government of Canada, the festivities surrounding the 25th anniversary of the Scouts in Saint-Nicolas was a great success.

Long live the Saint-Nicolas Scouts.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that this week is Small Business Week in Canada.

This year's theme is "You're the power behind the Canadian economy, let's share the energy". As the theme suggests, Small Business Week 2003 focuses on the power within every entrepreneur who has taken an idea and used it as the foundation for building a business.

During this special week which began as a small event in 1979, Canadian entrepreneurs will have an opportunity to celebrate their innovative ideas and to demonstrate the benefits of nurturing research and development with Canada's small businesses.

A recent survey shows that small enterprises employ close to 4.8 million people, or 49% of the total private labour sector. Between the first quarter of 2002 and the first quarter of 2003, small businesses created 163,000 jobs, or 39% of the new jobs in the economy. Their role in the Canadian economy is increasingly important and their contribution to total employment is constantly growing.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all small business employers and employees in Canada.

\* \* \*

#### SHAE-LYNN BOURNE AND VICTOR KRAATZ

**Mr. Jerry Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to give tribute to one of the world's greatest ice dance teams, Shae-Lynn Bourne and Victor Kraatz, who just announced the end of their brilliant 13 year skating career. Bourne and Kraatz mesmerized the skating world with their captivating artistry on ice. If they did not always get the credit they deserved from the judges, they always won the hearts of audiences in Canada and around the world.

This twosome represented the very best of young Canadians every time they stepped on the ice. Their talent captured for them 11 Canadian titles, four bronze and one silver world championship medals, and finally in 2003, the world championship title.

We know that their success on the ice will carry forward to successes in other walks of life in the future. We wish them very well.

Although there remains a little sadness from seeing them bow out of competition, the images of their skating magic will remain in the hearts and minds of all in Canada as they go into Canadian history.

## AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the prime minister in waiting is claiming that he is working to improve relations with Washington even though he did very little as finance minister. Considering the damage the government has done to our relations, I would say that he has a huge challenge ahead of him.

What about Canada's relationship with Japan? The Japanese requested three times to participate in the BSE investigation and three times their requests were denied. Japan is a key player in re-establishing our ability to export our beef to Asia and to the United States. Good relations would help expedite the reopening of the U.S. border to live cattle and to the reopening of our beef trade with Japan.

If the member for LaSalle—Émard wants to play leader, he should not only be reaching out to the Americans but to the Japanese as well. Unfortunately he will continue to ignore agriculture generally and the BSE crisis in particular.

\* \* \*

## JIM BRADLEY

**Mr. Walt Lastewka (St. Catharines, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in rising in the House of Commons today to acknowledge and congratulate my provincial counterpart, the hon. Jim Bradley, who was named Minister of Tourism and Recreation by Ontario's new premier, Dalton McGuinty, during the swearing in ceremonies at Queen's Park this morning.

Jim's 26 years of exemplary service truly make him a dean of the Ontario legislature. He served as environment minister from 1985-90. He served as deputy house leader, interim leader of the Liberal Party in opposition from 1991-92 and official opposition leader from 1992-99. Prior to provincial politics, Jim was a teacher in the Lincoln County Board of Education and a member of the St. Catharines City Council from 1970-77 and served on many boards.

Even with the new responsibilities that Jim will have as tourism and recreation minister, he will continue to strongly represent the constituents in St. Catharines. We have developed one of the best cooperative services for both levels of government to the benefit of our St. Catharines constituents.

My congratulations to Jim. The people of St. Catharines and Ontario are fortunate to have Jim as their new Minister of Tourism and Recreation. I know that my friend will serve them well.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[Translation]

## VIDEO GAMES

**Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a video game to be launched by Sony early next year portrays Quebec sovereignists as terrorists who kill innocent people in the Toronto subway.

This is very close to hate propaganda. Reality or fiction, who can tell? We must remember that video game players are mostly young people who could be negatively influenced about Quebecers.

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Quebeckers are a peaceful people. It was in Quebec that the demonstrations against Canada's role in the war in Iraq had the highest turnouts, despite the cold weather.

The game, called "Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain", instead of fostering better understanding between two groups of people, is a divisive factor and casts doubts on the legitimacy of the democratic process that may one day lead the people of Quebec toward independence.

The Bloc Québécois is shocked that an apparently serious company like Sony could be involved in such propaganda. We demand that the company keep this game off the market and apologize to all Quebecers.

\* \* \*

## UNESCO

**Mr. Yvon Charbonneau (Anjou—Rivière-des-Prairies, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce in this House that UNESCO and the Inter-Parliamentary Union, or IPU, have launched an international network of parliamentarians to support UNESCO's mission and activities.

This network was officially launched on October 6, in Paris, during UNESCO's General Conference. The IPU will appeal to its 140 national branches to each designate a member to act as a focal point with UNESCO and its national commissions in 190 countries.

This international network will allow parliamentarians around the world to become more familiar with UNESCO and to better publicize this essential UN organization dedicated to the promotion of education, culture and science, and to humanizing globalization.

This network is totally consistent with the wishes of our own UNESCO Friendship Group of Parliamentarians and the Ottawa Declaration that closed the conference held here in June.

I am very pleased with the step that has been taken. Parliamentarians around the world will be able to contribute more to debates on current issues at UNESCO, such as the protection of cultural diversity, ethics and genetics, and the information and knowledge based society.

\* \* \*

[English]

## ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to comment on the important democratic exercise that was conducted in Steinbach, Manitoba on October 22.

A referendum was held at the request of city council to determine whether to continue the 30 year prohibition on serving any alcoholic beverages in public dining rooms within the city limits.

While the voter turnout was approximately double what it was during the last municipal election, this was one of the largest municipal voting exercises in Steinbach's recent history.

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In the end, residents voted to approve the sale of alcohol with meals in public dining rooms by the narrowest of margins. Regardless of which side individual residents supported, most agreed that this was an important exercise in democracy. It demonstrates how referendums can help decide important social issues.

Canadians across the nation should take note.

\* \* \*

**LITERACY ACTION DAY**

**Mr. John Maloney (Erie—Lincoln, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to recognize the annual Literacy Action Day.

Literacy engages and impacts upon every aspect of our individual lives. It is at the core of early childhood learning, our personal development, our economic opportunities and our capacity to participate fully in society. Regrettably, 40% of Canadians between the ages of 16 and 65 have very low or limited levels of literacy, while two in five working age Canadians do not have the necessary literacy levels to fully participate in society.

I am encouraged, however, by the government's skills and learning agenda and the government's commitment to knowledge as the engine of the new economy with the imperative of literacy at its core.

At this time I would call upon members of Parliament to join me in recognizing Literacy Action Day and the efforts of those who work tirelessly toward improving literacy across this country.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the federal government has overtaxed Canadians in the last fiscal year to the tune of \$7 billion. At the same time, the Canadian working poor have been struggling to make ends meet while paying their taxes.

The government has the opportunity to take the bold but important step to help low income Canadians by raising the basic personal exemption to \$15,000. Doing so would take 2.1 million low income Canadians, the Canadians who can least afford to foot the bill for the massive federal surplus, off the tax rolls altogether.

It is just plain wrong for the government to boast of massive surpluses while overtaxing these low income Canadians. A progressive tax system should recognize that somebody making less than \$15,000 per year should not be paying taxes.

The government should increase the basic personal exemption to help these struggling Canadians by giving Canadians a fairer tax system.

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[*Translation*]

**LITERACY DAY**

**Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, October 23 is International Literacy Day. For ten years, delegates have been

meeting with us to discuss rationalization projects, and literacy services and expertise.

In Canada, more than 10 million people have a moderate or limited level of literacy. This creates a loss of productivity and a major obstacle to social integration. We know to what extent the ability to read and write is a daily necessity.

In a report by the Standing Committee on Human Resource Development, we have acknowledged the importance of emphasizing the effectiveness of literacy. I would like to think that the minister responsible would firmly support the committee's recommendations for better suited action.

I applaud and thank the stakeholders who came here today to discuss the values and significance of literacy outreach.

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**LITERACY ACTION DAY**

**Ms. Hélène Scherrer (Louis-Hébert, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague who preceded me, I want to rise today in recognition of Literacy Action Day.

Literacy influences all aspects of our lives. It is at the heart of our learning during our childhood and is what makes it possible to earn and contribute fully to society.

Literacy is also vital to us as a nation given its crucial role, in a knowledge based economy, in ensuring Canada remains productive and competitive. Although we live in a prosperous country that is rich in resources, there are still far too many adults unable to read and write properly.

We are aware of the challenges we face, and we are working hard to meet them.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**LITERACY ACTION DAY**

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the 10th annual Literacy Action Day on Parliament Hill.

Close to 80 literacy teachers, learners and administrators have come to Ottawa from every region of the country. They want decision makers to know that Canada's literacy challenge is serious. According to StatsCan, almost half of our adult population do not possess the literacy skills they need to thrive in the new economy and information driven society. This deficit undermines the economic and social vitality of families, communities and our country, and must be addressed.

Today there are many inequalities in access to literacy services across the country. Only one in ten Canadians who could benefit from services is being helped. Literacy organizations are working flat out while resources remain static or effectively diminish from year to year.

*Oral Questions*

In keeping with the spirit of Literacy Action Day, I call upon the government to take action and adopt the recommendations of the HRDC committee report to ensure that all Canadians have the literacy skills they need to succeed.

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#### LITTLE MOUNTAIN NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE SOCIETY

**Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, recently I attended the 25th anniversary celebrations of the Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society in my Vancouver riding. This outstanding society has successfully provided many programs for the local residents, such as childhood development, young mothers' groups, employment services for youth and new Canadians, plus seniors activity groups. The society has been an active and vital resource in the community.

Recently it submitted an application under the Canada-B.C. infrastructure program and it has my full support. I wish to congratulate Joel Bronstein, executive director, and Ingrid Steenhuisen, president of the board, and all members and volunteers for their hard work over many years.

\* \* \*

●(1415)

#### POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, figures released yesterday indicate the Liberals have cut more than \$16 billion from health and social transfers to the provinces, funds that support health care, social services and post-secondary education. For college and university students this means escalating tuition fees, increased debt, and particularly for students with low or middle income backgrounds, fewer opportunities to pursue high end educational programs.

A report in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* reveals that at Canadian medical schools, there are fewer students from low income families in general. Students in my riding say the increased financial pressure can be the difference between a successful education and having to put aside their studies.

Today's post-secondary students do not expect a free ride. They know they will benefit from their education and they should pay for that privilege, but when tuition and other costs double, triple, or more over a period, the financial burden can be overwhelming for students and their families.

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### ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

#### ETHICS

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the industry minister has been repeatedly asked questions this week about his actions on the Irving file. Yesterday I reviewed his answers from *Hansard* and what I found was that he was giving the same pre-rehearsed, scripted response to every single question.

I would tell the minister that this is simply not good enough. I am going to ask one of the questions I asked yesterday and I expect a specific answer. Has he consulted the new Liberal leader to see whether his standards of actions on this file were acceptable?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. There seems to be a lot of yelling whether the question is in order or not.

The Minister of Industry is free to consult with whomever he wants. Whether he wishes to answer the question is up to him. If he does not wish to answer, then he does not have to answer. That is the rule in question period. There is a freedom to consult people. It seems to me it is legitimate for members to ask. If a member has consulted a particular individual, he might have consulted me.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the person I consulted was the ethics counsellor. He is the person to whom I made complete disclosure.

If there is a sameness to my answers, it is because I am telling the straightforward facts that are relevant to the issues being raised. The fact is that I spoke to the ethics counsellor, sought his advice and followed his advice to the letter.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the same stonewalling as yesterday.

The ethics counsellor already gave the minister his judgment. It was not to be involved in the Irving file. He got involved. He is now forced to consult the ethics counsellor again.

Has the minister consulted either of his leaders to see whether his standard of behaviour on this file is acceptable to the government?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what is relevant to the question is the question of ethics. The counsellor is there for that very purpose. It was the ethics counsellor I consulted. I made full disclosure of the relevant facts. I sought his advice and accepted it.

**Mr. Stephen Harper (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the minister still has outstanding questions in front of the ethics counsellor.

Frankly, the Prime Minister or the new leader should be able to say whether these standards are acceptable to the government.

[Translation]

I am asking the question again, because we have asked questions but we have not yet got any answers.

The industry minister continues to give his prerecorded answers, scripted in advance. It is inappropriate for him to shirk this responsibility.

Has he consulted the new Liberal leader in order to determine whether his conduct meets the government's ethical standards?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have answered every question concerning my behaviour in this matter. I have responded to the issues raised by the opposition. I consulted the ethics counsellor about the real questions raised by the opposition and I can say that I sought, accepted and followed the ethics counsellor's advice.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, article 23 (1) of the conflict of interest code states clearly that “A public office holder shall take care to avoid being placed”—or the appearance of being placed—“under an obligation to any person or organization”.

The Minister of Industry has admitted to enjoying a family vacation paid for by the Irving Corporation far beyond the \$200 allowable limit.

My question is simple. Exactly what part of being placed or the appearance of being placed under an obligation to any person or organization does the Minister of Industry not understand?

• (1420)

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, at the time this occurred I was minister of health and, for one reason or another, I did not perceive a conflict.

When I became Minister of Industry and began dealing with files that affected this sector and this particular family, I did consult the ethics counsellor. I made full disclosure and I asked for advice on how I could continue my work and avoid a conflict of interest.

I received that advice and I followed it.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Industry would like Canadians to believe that his not reporting his free vacation from the Irving empire was a simple oversight and yet we know he clearly knew the rules.

On six occasions the Minister of Industry filed declarations with the ethics counsellor claiming such gifts as tea cups, a clock and some CDs. However he did not report the greatest gift of all. He hid his free, all expense paid vacation from the ethics counsellor.

As a result, will the minister do the right thing and resign?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was a mistake not to declare the trip at the time. In fact, it was a mistake to go on the trip.

The fact is that when I was in circumstances that brought the possibility of conflict into focus, and before I was involved in any decisions that affected the interest of the family, I did make disclosure. I told the ethics counsellor about it. The ethics counsellor gave me advice, which I followed to the letter.

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*[Translation]***TEAM CANADA TRADE MISSIONS**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the successor of the present Prime Minister has made it known that he questions the appropriateness of Team Canada's trade missions, which were initiated by the present Prime Minister. Eddie Goldenberg, chief of staff to the present PM, who is currently in China, has reacted by calling this “stupid”.

Is this not just one more example, actually the perfect illustration, of the fact that the motion before this House calling upon the Prime Minister to leave soon so as to get the government working again is totally justified?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I believe Mr. Goldenberg has clearly explained what he said in China. It is clear, I think, that each government makes its own decisions while in power. It will be up to the next government to decide whether or not it wants to continue the Team Canada missions.

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is in China, trying to develop trade connections with that country, his successor back here is stabbing him in the back. That is reality.

Does the government not realize that this cannot go on, because the infighting within the Liberal Party is not only paralyzing Parliament and the workings of government, but is now spilling out onto the international scene?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in China at the present time representing Canadian trade interests. The government is, therefore, continuing to do what is required to promote the interests of Canadians.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, try as it may to defend the indefensible, the government will not convince anyone. There is infighting within the government; all this squabbling and backstabbing will have serious repercussions.

Will the government admit that the infighting and intrigue have degenerated into a diplomatic incident and that it is high time to put an end to it?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker. In fact, we noted yesterday the extraordinary success of this government. I think that anyone looking for examples of internal problems need only look across the way, at the Bloc Québécois.

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the situation is deplorable. The Prime Minister is not running anything any more. The member for LaSalle—Émard is pulling the strings behind the scene. There is no one in charge any more and backstabbing has become the order of the day.

How can the government tell us with a straight face that all is well?

• (1425)

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite simple. Because this is the only kind of questions being asked in the House. If there were problems, they would come up with other questions.

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*[English]***ETHICS**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, finally the industry minister has released a statement in which he admits he was wrong. He also said in the statement that he immediately went to the ethics counsellor when he was dealing with an Irving file, but that is not true.

The industry minister was appointed in January 2002. He did not contact the ethics counsellor until the end of May 2002.

*Oral Questions*

My question for the industry minister is simple. Why did he wait five full months before he contacted the ethics counsellor?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Because, Mr. Speaker, it was about the time that I was dealing with this file and the issue was brought into focus.

However I do want to emphasize that I was not involved in decisions that affected the Irving companies. I went to the ethics counsellor before that happened.

The member has made reference to a statement, which I will be making public this afternoon, in which I go through the chronology, in which I also say that it was a mistake for me to go on that trip without making immediate disclosure, and in which I apologize to members of the House, to my colleagues and to Canadians.

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is the industry minister was involved with the Irvings in at least two incidents. One was in February 2002, not in May 2002 when he contacted the ethics counsellor, when he wrote the letter to ExxonMobil. He has now admitted he was wrong. He was wrong to lobby on behalf of the Irvings. He was in a clear conflict of interest.

The honourable thing to do is for him to stand up, take responsibility and resign. Will he do that today?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker, and the facts are not as the member just stated them; the letter to ExxonMobil for example. In May 2002, I wrote to ExxonMobil because I was told that ExxonMobil was going to satisfy its need for major equipment in the offshore in Canada by going to the United States to get it built there. I wrote to the company and said "buy Canadian, have that equipment made in Canada, use Canadian people because it is a Canadian resource". I made no reference to Irving.

That is what a minister of industry is supposed to do, is stand up for Canadian interests.

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**FINANCE**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance.

The Minister of Finance said that he wanted different kinds of questions from the opposition and I have one for him.

I wonder if the Minister of Finance could tell us why it is that he refuses to use the surplus, which he now knows about, to meet the commitment the government made to add another \$2 billion to medicare funding in the country, to relieving student debt, to helping hospitality workers who have suffered from the SARS epidemic and to helping ranchers who have suffered from the BSE problem. Why will he not commit to using the surplus to meet the needs of Canadians?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, the surplus we announced yesterday pertains to the year that ended March 31, 2003. We are in a new year that started April 1.

The conditional commitment to increase the funding for health care that was given to the provinces in the health accord was conditional upon the budgetary surplus for this year, ending March 31, 2004, being in excess of the normal \$3 billion contingency reserve. It is too soon yet for me to say whether that will be the case.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, obviously we feel that this last year's surplus could have been used for some of those needs.

I have a question for the Minister of Foreign Affairs who, in response to a question by the member for Winnipeg Centre yesterday, said that it was up to American Secretary of State Colin Powell to decide whether the Devil's Lake diversion violated the boundary waters treaty. What happened to Canadian sovereignty here? Surely it is not just up to Secretary of State Powell to decide whether this violates the boundary waters treaty.

Will the minister agree to the request of the Manitoba government to refer this matter to the international joint commission so we can have an independent judgment on this?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a serious question but it is also the subject matter of a serious misapprehension by the hon. member as to what I said yesterday.

In internal law in the United States, the secretary is obliged to ascertain, through his department in consultations, as to whether this act is in contravention of the boundary waters treaty. The secretary has assured us that he is doing that and he will do that because it is an internal U.S. matter. When that matter is completed, at that time, if he determines that the matter is to go ahead, it will be appropriate for us to raise it and perhaps take it to the joint commission.

However that is premature. We must let the Americans do their internal work first and we will work with them, and as we already have, urge Canadian interests with them when we deal with them.

\* \* \*

● (1430)

**EQUALIZATION PAYMENTS**

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the government wants to delay dealing with important equalization renewal legislation. This is another example of how the Prime Minister's stubborn determination to cling to power is paralyzing the government. The Prime Minister is turning the House of Commons from a place of action into his own personal retirement home.

Will the Deputy Prime Minister ask the Prime Minister to retire in November so that this House can get back to the business of the nation?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I met with the provincial finance ministers on October 10 here in Ottawa to discuss the renewal of equalization. At the time we noted the fact that under the existing statutory authority for equalization payments that authority ends on March 31, 2004.

*Oral Questions*

We discussed a lot of issues around equalization. We will be meeting again, as I undertook to do with them. I told them that I expected we would have time to pass renewal legislation but I discussed with them the possibility that we might buy a little insurance, which is what the bill tabled today is doing.

**Mr. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, PC):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister has also mused publicly that there may not be a budget in February due to the Prime Minister's retirement schedule. The provinces are now waiting for a new equalization deal due to the Prime Minister's long goodbye.

It is bad enough that Canada has a Prime Minister who is halfway retired, but why is the government allowing him to turn the House of Commons into his own personal retirement halfway house?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am not quite sure what the question was, nor do I recall musing about there not being a budget in February. The government will decide when to bring in a budget. There is no fixed budget time in our system.

If I were in the hon. member's seat, I would want to be very careful about inviting too imminent a disaster. In the face of what those members saw on the highway ahead, they have already taken the steering wheel of their particular party vehicle and driven it off the road and crashed it on the side.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BUDGET SURPLUSES**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the Minister of Finance has underestimated the surplus. He forecast a \$3 billion surplus in June, but the surplus has now turned out to be \$7 billion for the previous fiscal year. The minister is systematically wrong. The minister is systematically wrong and systematically gives us incorrect information: in the past six years, he and his predecessor have underestimated the surpluses by the astronomical amount of \$35 billion. No public debate could be held on this \$35 billion.

Given such surpluses, how can the Minister of Finance still make Quebec and the provinces wait for the \$2 billion they need for health? He has the money; he should hand it out now.

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the estimated surplus is based on revenue and expenditures. For the Government of Canada, these total approximately \$360 billion.

Yes, we forecast a surplus of \$3 billion. We were off by \$4 billion. Our margin of error is about 1%, one of the closest forecasts of all the G-7 countries. That is not too bad.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the margin of error is over 200%, and this is not the first time. Last year, it was 300%, and it has been as high as 500%. When there is money left over at year-end, the Prime Minister can buy Challengers simply by snapping his fingers. When it comes to finding the money for public health, it is not that simple.

How can it be impossible to transfer the \$2 billion to the provinces, which need it right now?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a commitment was made during discussions between the first ministers in February. This commitment was conditional on the estimated surplus in January 2004. It is only October 23. It is not yet January. We will address this in January.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

[English]

**ETHICS**

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we all know that the Minister of Industry does not know his ethics when he trips over them.

Perhaps he can tell us why he broke all the Treasury Board rules on sole source contracting and on hiring employees when he hired Joanne Meyer as his personal assistant so that she could continue to collect a government pension while she was also collecting a government paycheque.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as far as I am aware, all Treasury Board guidelines were respected.

**Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the Treasury Board guidelines were not respected in any way.

Let me also ask the Secretary of State for Western Economic Diversification, who also broke the same rules and hired the same person under the same conditions, why is that person still working for him?

Will he fire her and get the pension plan payments repaid to the government because she cannot have a pension and a paycheque at the same time?

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Secretary of State (Western Economic Diversification) (Indian Affairs and Northern Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the employee mentioned is a valued and highly respected member of my exempt staff. She is not employed on contract at this time. She is employed as a direct employee.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BUDGET SURPLUSES**

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every surplus the government racks up is more evidence that the fiscal imbalance is not fiction, but fact. In short, it means that the federal government collects more taxes than it needs to discharge its responsibilities.

Will the Minister of Finance admit that such large surpluses are not due to exemplary management on his part, when we realize that administrative costs have risen by 34%, but rather that he has collected much more money than he actually needs?



*Oral Questions*

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I met with the provincial ministers of finance on October 10, here in Ottawa, we had discussions. They recognized the fact that the reputation of all the provinces, like that of the Government of Canada, is based on the fact that we have a balanced budget.

It is important, not only for the reputation of the Government of Canada, which still has too great a debt load, but also for that of all Canada's provinces, which are also seen in the context of a very positive frame work in relation to—

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

**Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, will the Minister of Finance agree that the strategy established by his predecessor, the member for LaSalle—Émard, has not changed by one jot and is still the same? They underestimate the surpluses, hide them during the fiscal year, and six months later—surprise—the surpluses are taken to pay down the debt, so that there is never any money for health, for the unemployed, or for senior citizens.

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is not a matter of underestimating. In fact, we have adopted the most responsible and prudent behaviours. We have created a contingency fund. We have tried to make very prudent decisions.

By reducing the debt, we have now been saving \$3 billion a year in interest charges. This is the money that is now available for—

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the wife of a senior government bureaucrat in the Canadian Environmental Protection Agency has staked a number of mineral claims along the route of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. She did this years before the route was made public. But her husband, who worked on the file, knew the proposed route.

It seems that there is a clear breach of section 29 of the Territorial Lands Act.

Could the environment minister perhaps tell us if he has investigated this case; and if he has, what has he done about it?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the civil servant in question asked to be removed from the case as soon as the matter was brought up in a press release from the first nation band involved.

The issue has been sent to the Treasury Board which is responsible for possible conflicts of this type among civil servants. We are awaiting the investigation of the allegations. As soon as I have information, I will be pleased to inform the hon. member.

• (1440)

**Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this incident could significantly delay the construction of the Mackenzie Valley pipeline.

This pipeline is critical in ensuring sufficient gas supplies are available for Canadians at a reasonable price.

How will the government protect the timelines of the regulatory process for the Mackenzie Valley pipeline?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the timetable will not be affected by the investigations taking place.

If there is any reason to doubt this, I will once again be in direct communication with the House or with the hon. member.

\* \* \*

**TRADE**

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as it stands now, the text of the free trade area of the Americas agreement incorporates investor-state rules, similar to NAFTA's chapter 11.

To ensure that private sector abuse at the expense of the public interest and in defiance of Parliament is avoided, can the Minister for International Trade assure the House that the chapter 11 experience is not repeated in the final text of the free trade area of the Americas agreement?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his important and quite timely question.

Canada does not advocate the replication of a chapter 11 in the free trade area of the Americas agreement.

We do, however, believe that investors need clear rules on the treatment and protection of investment in a free trade environment; however, these rules must not enable investors to circumvent domestic laws, or things such as labour standards, environmental protection or consumer protection.

I would like to assure the member, and this House, that our experience with NAFTA's chapter 11 would be fully taken into account in the negotiations.

\* \* \*

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Deputy Prime Minister.

The family of Maher Arar has asked for a public inquiry. The announcement from the RCMP complaints commission begins with a premise that much of its inquiry will remain secret. Canadians have no confidence in this.

Why is the government hiding facts from the many foreign born Canadians who are rapidly feeling like second class citizens? Why is the government not ordering a public inquiry under part I of the Inquiries Act?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday and a number of other times, I have certainly indicated to the House and to the public that the commission for public complaints against the RCMP is available to those who want to avail themselves of that process. In this case, Mr. Arar may want to avail himself of that process.

This morning the chair of the CPC announced that she would look into the matter and lay it out for potential allegations that she would also look into. I am pleased at that and we will let the process take its course.

\* \* \*

**VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, PC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Liberal government once again showed contempt for our Canadian veterans and their surviving spouses when it had its members vote to stop the debate on the unanimous report from the veterans committee.

The chairman of the National Council of Veteran Associations, Mr. Chadderton, has stated that the Minister of Veterans Affairs has lost all credibility on this issue.

The Minister of Finance is crowing about his surplus, but he owes a debt to all those widows. The Prime Minister knows it and members opposite know it. When will the government end this discrimination and pay the VIP to all—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs.

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I gratefully acknowledge, on behalf of the government, the motion moved by the member for Nipissing and unanimously adopted by the committee. It has been tabled in the House. Certainly, we will continue to do more for our veterans.

In addition, I am pleased with the Royal Canadian Legion and Army, Navy and Air Force Veterans in Canada press release which says:

At that meeting it was made clear by Veterans Affairs Minister Rey Pagtakhan, and fully understood by all in attendance,—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

**INTERNATIONAL AID**

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister for International Trade.

The minister knows that the government has promised to urgently table a bill that would allow the export of affordable generic drugs from Canada to deal with the desperate plight of sub-Saharan Africans fighting diseases such as HIV-AIDS, TB, malaria and cancer.

I want to ask the minister, when will he table this urgently needed bill, and will he respect the WTO agreement that it not list diseases for which generic drugs can be used? Will he put public health of the

poor ahead of corporate profits for multinational pharmaceutical companies?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is pleased with the historic, multilateral WTO solution to the agreement on trade related aspects on intellectual property rights.

We are pleased that this country is taking a leadership role on this file. There are expectations all around the world to see how Canada will progress on the file.

We will ensure that Canadian industry can contribute to the fight against HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria in Africa. We will work with the industry and with all the partners involved to do that.

\* \* \*

**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today at the industry committee we were warned of an auto assembly trade deficit within a few years. The Minister of Industry sees no urgency to this matter.

He claims a low dollar, health care and CAPC are enough. Well, our dollar has risen, our health care is in crisis, and CAPC will not even come to the minister's own committee.

Now that he has returned from his fishing vacation, will he deal with this urgent matter? We do not want any more auto plant stories that are about the one that got away.

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in June 2002 I created the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council with the CEOs of the big five, labour unions, provincial ministers, parts dealers, and everybody involved in the industry in order to work together to develop an effective auto policy for Canada, to attract investment, and to build on what we have.

Last year, Canada was third in the world in the amount of money invested in the auto sector. We are going in the right direction, but we must do more.

I assure the member and the House that the auto sector is a priority for me. I will continue to work away to broaden and deepen investments in Canada.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, more government corruption. The answer of the Minister of the Environment's to my colleague about the Mackenzie Valley pipeline sounds like just more internal cover-up.

Will this minister immediately ask the RCMP to investigate this very important issue?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said a few moments ago, the issue is being investigated by Treasury Board. That is the appropriate channel for handing an issue of this type.

Anyone can suggest a different way of doing it, but that is the standard procedure. If I deviated from that procedure, I am quite sure the opposition would complain.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we are dependent on that gas from the Mackenzie Valley pipeline. The very price of it across this country is dependent upon that pipeline going ahead.

The Territorial Lands Act strictly prohibits government officers, employees or persons acting for those persons from acquiring territorial land unless they have special permission from cabinet. Either this government official had cabinet approval, or was clairvoyant or broke the law. Which is it?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the issue is being looked at by Treasury Board in the appropriate way, in accordance with the regulations and in accordance with the law. That is the appropriate way of handling an issue like this.

With respect to the second aspect of the hon. member's question, as I said earlier, this will not delay the Mackenzie application. There is at this time no application. We are looking into creating a cooperative environment review to have a future application considered at some future time.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government has nothing to be proud of with respect to the \$7 billion surplus, when we know that more than \$3 billion of it comes directly from the EI fund. In other words, 48% of the surplus that the government is bragging about comes from cuts that the unemployed suffer daily.

Honestly, does it make any sense to have the unemployed pay off half of the debt?

• (1450)

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since this government took office in 1993, we have reduced EI premiums ten times and we have already announced in this year's budget another reduction for next year.

I will also say that we, myself and the Minister of Human Resources Development, have formed a committee to develop a new system for determining EI rates, which, at most, will be as high as the cost of the program.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister cannot deny that \$3 billion of the \$7 billion surplus comes out of the pockets of the unemployed who are not receiving benefits.

Does the minister realize that while he is paying down Canada's debt, he is forcing families to take on personal debt to survive when they become unemployed? Does he realize that, yes or no?

**Hon. John Manley (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am very respectful of the member's passionate pleas for the unemployed, but frankly, the unemployed do not pay EI premiums, they receive benefits. The surplus did not come from the unemployed. It may have come from employees and employers, but not the unemployed.

[English]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, there are reports today that a deal with the U.S. on softwood lumber could be reached within weeks. The last softwood lumber agreement with the United States included quotas and other market restrictions to Canadian softwood lumber.

Could the trade minister tell us today whether the rumour is true and whether he has given up on free trade in softwood lumber?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Alliance for asking me my first softwood lumber question in a few months. Indeed, the negotiators for Canada and the United States have met recently. They have—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. minister has to be able to have his answer heard and everyone wants to hear it. It is the first one in months and the hon. minister will want to be heard.

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew:** Mr. Speaker, the negotiators of Canada and of the United States met recently and compared notes to see the progress of the file since the July proposal, the best effort they had put on the table.

We are looking to the WTO and NAFTA decisions that have come our way to strengthen our hand. We will take into consideration, when continuing this dialogue with the United States, our progress before the courts.

**Mr. Charlie Penson (Peace River, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the reason he has not had any questions for months is we have been waiting for him to do something in the meantime.

The trade minister has been boasting that Canada has won the dispute before a NAFTA panel and only needs to wait until December for confirmation of this. The final report is only eight weeks away.

Why then would the trade minister consider a deal that would limit Canadian softwood lumber access to the United States during this time?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister for International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, our government has not changed its strategy on that one. We are before the courts. We will continue to push these cases. We have six of them at the WTO and at NAFTA. However we continue to explore with the United States other possibilities that could advance this file in the best interest of our industry.

We always do it in close communication and close contact with the industry, but we will get the best possible outcome for the Canadian softwood lumber industry.

*Oral Questions***LITERACY**

**Mrs. Judi Longfield (Whitby—Ajax, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, literacy skills are linked to work skills, health and self-esteem and play a key role in ensuring that Canada continues to be productive, competitive and economically secure. Today is Literacy Action Day and we know that far too many Canadians still do not have the literacy skills they need.

Could the Minister of Human Resources Development tell the House how the government is addressing this critical issue?

**Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while it may seem unbelievable, eight million Canadians do not have the literacy and numeracy skills that they need to fully participate in Canada's knowledge based society and economy.

While the Government of Canada invests \$30 million a year in literacy programs and services through the National Literacy Secretariat, more needs to be done.

I congratulate the hon. member and indeed all members of the standing committee on human resources for their recent comprehensive report that gives us good direction on how best to tackle Canada's literacy challenge.

\* \* \*

• (1455)

**RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian research scientists are crying for government funding and a proposal is on the table, approved by cabinet to build a neutron facility in Canada.

Why then is the government giving \$15 million to a neutron research laboratory in the United States?

**Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Industry, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the point raised by the member must be looked into. I will look into it and respond to her when I have the information.

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, research and development contributes to a knowledge based economy and jobs. The decision not to fund a Canadian neutron facility in Chalk River means that Canadians are falling behind every other G-8 country that has or is building a neutron source.

Why is the government forcing our best and brightest researchers out of the country along with Canadian research dollars?

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Veterans Affairs and Secretary of State (Science, Research and Development), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we can take pride as Canadians that we have doubled our expenditure for research and development and for science. In fact we can continue to take pride that we have some of the best scientists in the world right here in Canada. We have made excellent discoveries in many fields: medicine, physics and so on. We can continue to be proud.

[Translation]

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Quebec minister of agriculture was a guest speaker at the annual general meeting of the UPA of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. In her speech, she again solicited the support of the region's dairy producers to convince the Canadian government to take part in another compensation program for farmers affected by the mad cow crisis.

Will the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food listen to reason and come to the rescue of the Quebec farmers hit by the mad cow crisis?

[English]

**Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have had numerous meetings this week with the cattle industry, including representation from the cattle industry in the province of Quebec. We recognize the situation with the older animals in the Canadian beef industry today and we are working with the industry and with all provincial governments, including the provincial government in Quebec.

We look forward in the near future to be able to make some further support to the slaughter and the feeding of older animals in Canada.

\* \* \*

**MULTICULTURALISM**

**Ms. Paddy Torsney (Burlington, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada prides itself on being a country that is ethnically diverse, that we celebrate our ethnic diversity and our multiculturalism.

Could the secretary of state tell the House how her recent announcements will enhance and allow Canadian communities to enhance their social cohesion.

**Hon. Jean Augustine (Secretary of State (Multiculturalism) (Status of Women), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the multi program continues to work in partnership with community organizations for projects that support the goal of inclusion and work to combat racism and discrimination.

Yesterday, I announced four projects: one to provide journalism and anti-racism training in Toronto, Halifax and Winnipeg; one in community builders at 11 schools in Sudbury; a conflict alleviation project in partnership with the Somali-Canadian Association; and a family violence initiative with COSTI immigrant services.

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, when we send our children off to school we expect a high standard of care for them. If the fire alarm does not work, the emergency exits are broken, outside windows are broken, kids have to drink from a filthy fountain, we would expect the school to be closed. Health Canada has let this condition continue for three years at the Marten Falls first nation.

Why does the government discriminate against children on reserve when these conditions would never be tolerated anywhere else?

**Hon. Robert Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know the particular details of Marten Falls and the member would have been well positioned to have given us a heads-up that he would be asking the question.

I can say that the process of ensuring that schools are in good condition is part of our capital plan. We go through the school process. We look at the situation. We monitor it. Health Canada monitors it. However I will look into this on behalf of the member because I have no idea to what he is referring.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

[Translation]

**ST. LAWRENCE SEAWAY**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government has signed an undertaking to cooperate with the United States on joint studies into deepening and widening the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Before joining the Americans in these studies, would it not have been standard procedure to begin by consulting the governments of Quebec and Ontario, as well as those living along the seaway, instead of jumping into a venture the outcome of which is a foregone conclusion? Has the government not put the cart before the horse here?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no plan at this time concerning the St. Lawrence Seaway.

Yes, the U.S. Congress has asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to look into this. There is, however, no plan in place, or not that we have seen. All we have done is to begin discussions in order to find out what this entails, but nothing has been discussed yet with the Province of Quebec or the Province of Ontario, because there is no plan as yet.

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[English]

**CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, through access to information, a reporter was able to gain access to CSIS files. He received information on the Palestinian Islamic jihad fundraising activities, yet at the same time Canadians cannot find out about the Canadian Wheat Board activities. It is exempt from access to information.

*Business of the House*

We cannot get an explanation as to why farmers received less for their wheat last year than the going world price. Why are the activities of the Canadian Wheat Board more secretive than our spy agency?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, indeed the Canadian Wheat Board publishes more information in the public domain than any other grain marketing agency in the world. All its records are thoroughly audited. It has undergone a special audit in the last year by the Auditor General.

If the hon. member is at all interested in really getting answers to his questions, I invite him to call the Canadian Wheat Board and its auditor before a standing committee of this House and get every bit of information for which he could ever ask.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**The Speaker:** Before orders of the day, we do have another important question from the hon. member for Fraser Valley.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, we would not want to forget the Thursday question. Could the House leader tell us what the business of the House will be for the remainder of this week and into next week and whether or not he plans to table a motion that will allow the Auditor General to table her report even if the House is prorogued this fall?

**Hon. Don Boudria (Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, insofar as the last part of the question, in fact such a motion would not change a law in any case. Let me first of all start by saying that this afternoon we will continue with debate on the opposition day non-confidence motion.

[Translation]

Tomorrow we shall consider Bill C-50, respecting veterans benefits, followed by the Senate amendments to Bill C-6, concerning first nations. Then, if we have time, we will consider Bill S-13, an act to amend the Statistics Act.

On Monday, we will consider bills left over from this week, as well as Bill C-32, the Criminal Code amendments, Bill C-13, the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, and Bill C-45, the corporate governance bill.

Tuesday shall be the last allotted day in this budget cycle.

On Wednesday and on subsequent days, we shall return to any unfinished business, adding to the list any bills that may be reported from committee. We will also start debate on Bill C-19, the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act, and Bill C-43, an act to amend the Fisheries Act.

### Supply

This is the part of the session when it would be normal for bills that have been in committee for some time to be reported back to the House. I am hopeful that committees, such as the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration and the Standing Committee on Transport, will soon complete their legislative work, so that the House may dispose of them in an orderly fashion.

If I have time I will make allusion to some of his successes in the past, which include reducing the debt by \$100 billion, turning back the forces that would split the country apart, the forces of separatism, and most importantly, the position he took on Iraq, which led Canada away from a traditional course and into a new course of independence in foreign affairs that I think will reverberate down through the ages.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1505)

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe if sought it you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, in relation to its study on solicitation laws, one research officer of the Subcommittee on Solicitation Laws of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights be authorized to travel from Ottawa to Victoria on October 23, 2003, to attend a three day conference.

**The Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

It is not easy being a leader. I think one of the characteristics of a good leader is the ability to make decisions knowing full well that from time to time a mistake will be made. It is not easy, sometimes, to make these decisions and be brave. It is easy in hindsight or easy to sit on the side benches or from behind the curtains to second guess the decisions of a leader, but the reality is that to lead is a difficult task. So long as we, the members of the team, have confidence in that leader, then we should be supporting him. I do so now.

Let me address two points that have come up in this debate. One is the question of why the Prime Minister chose to leave in February 2004 rather than at some earlier time. I was there at Chicoutimi about 14 months ago at the national caucus meeting where the Prime Minister announced that he would leave in February 2004. Now, I have watched this person for a very long time and I understand his knowledge of the House, and I have acquired some knowledge of the House myself. You will appreciate, Mr. Speaker, that February is a very appropriate time because it is budget month and budgets for the government are prepared 11 months in advance.

So in fact, in February the presentation of the budget marks the end of a year of governance. Reading the current Prime Minister's mind, I am sure he would think that February would be an appropriate time to leave office because he would obviously have the satisfaction of leaving government in very good shape, because as we know from the current finance minister's remarks yesterday, it does appear that we are going to continue with a surplus situation. This means that the current Prime Minister is going to leave the financial situation of the country in good state and I think I can say quite confidently that this would be part of his strategy to ensure that his successor, whoever that might be, will have the best ammunition possible to go forward in the next election.

There is a second reason, which I think came up subsequently to his original choice of February, as to why the current Prime Minister would want to stay on until the new year, even though the convention date at which the party will pick a new leader is in mid-November. I refer to Bill C-24, the political financing act, which kicks in on January 1, 2004. This legislation overhauls and reforms much of the political financing mechanisms that are used at the federal level.

• (1510)

In fact, the federal Parliament had fallen well behind many of the provincial legislatures in terms of the transparency and the rules that should apply to political financing of riding associations, political parties and so on and so forth. Obviously not only would the Prime Minister want to see the next election fought under these new rules, the only way he could be certain of that would be to stay in office at least until the new year.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—DEMOCRATIC IMBALANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. John Bryden (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

I rise to defend my Prime Minister. When I say that, you, Mr. Speaker, will know well from your experience in the House that I am one backbench MP who has many times disagreed with my Prime Minister, many times spoken in the House against my leader's legislation, and many times expressed in the most candid way that not always has the government policy been correct, although by and large, obviously, because I am on this side and not on that side, I believe it to be so.

The reason why actually I take some satisfaction in standing here with the motion and defending my Prime Minister is that I believe it is incumbent on a team and the members of the team always to support their leaders, so long as they have confidence in those leaders, and I certainly have confidence in the current Prime Minister.

*Supply*

I am not suggesting that his successor would not want to fight an election under these reformed political financing rules, but the reality is that in the debate on Bill C-24 there were a lot of reservations among MPs on this side of the House and on the opposition side.

The reality is that a new leader chosen in mid-November would come under immediate pressure, no doubt about it, to call an election at that time. By staying on until the new year, the current Prime Minister guarantees that his successor does not have to deal with that type of pressure and that his successor can, in an orderly fashion, work toward preparing himself for his new role as the prime minister.

There has also been quite a bit of debate here that in this sort of interregnum period we are in right now government legislation and government operations are stalled. I think that we on this side of the House have to be candid and admit that this is indeed, to some degree, the case. Some legislation has been stalled. We are not advancing forward as quickly as we should on some bills. I particularly refer to Bill C-7, the Indian accountability bill, which is a very important bill. Also, the citizenship bill is stalled as well in committee, and there are other examples like that.

But I do not think that we can lay the blame either on the current Prime Minister or on his possible successor, because what has really happened is that my colleagues on this side are experiencing something they have never experienced before, and that is a leadership race, which always, I am told, because this is my first experience, activates loyalties, because politics and leadership races are very partisan processes. I think that some members on the Liberal side have indeed had trouble understanding where their loyalties should lie while this debate goes on.

I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that the weakness that the opposition is seeing is really a certain amount of confusion among my colleagues. That confusion is reflected sometimes in the lack of attendance at question period and sometimes in the lack of participation in open debate.

I am absolutely confident that after November 15 when the question of party leadership is settled and it is very clear that there will be a change in prime minister in three months, I fully expect my colleagues will have no problem then differentiating between the party leader and the prime minister.

I would expect, Mr. Speaker, that you can look forward to an active Parliament, not a Parliament that is dismissed, not a Parliament that is prorogued, but MPs who are willing on this side to continue to tackle aggressively the issues of the day. I am very confident that it has been simply a question of a new experience where suddenly members of the Liberal caucus have a sense of divided loyalties, but that shall pass.

Finally, I would just like to reiterate that the Bloc motion makes it very clear that even the Prime Minister's traditional political enemies in terms of separatism acknowledge that this Prime Minister has earned the right to go when he chooses. I think the NDP is correct in supporting this side, which will most assuredly defeat this motion.

• (1515)

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to challenge the member on a couple of things.

A longstanding tradition which I believe has never been broken is that the prime minister of the country is the leader of the party that has the most seats in the House. The day the member for LaSalle—Émard is elected and chosen as the leader of that party, by that tradition and in fact it is almost a rule, that member then becomes the prime minister and of course we would expect a couple of days, maybe a week, for the transition. If members checked the record, they would find that is always true.

When Mr. Mulroney resigned and Kim Campbell was chosen, I think it was a week before she was sworn in, but it was expected. He announced he was quitting, there was a leadership vote, she was selected and within five days she was the prime minister.

I wonder whether the member has any comment on the fact that there will be a transition time of around two months. It is unheard of and unnecessary. There will be two months of no direction and a lack of leadership.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, I have to disagree with the member opposite.

A prime minister gets his mandate from the people when he leads his party to an election, wins a majority and then takes his place. That is why I said that when we get a situation where leaders change while a government is in office, then an election is immediately called. That is why the member for LaSalle—Émard or the member for Hamilton East, should they win the leadership, would be expected to call an election. I do not think that would be in the public interest in that Bill C-24 does not kick in until January 1.

So no, I have to reject the premise of the member opposite.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, you know how carefully I listen to the member opposite when he speaks. He has my undivided attention.

This time, I asked myself all sorts of questions while he was speaking. I asked myself what kind of dance he is doing now. Is it the tango, the waltz or the cha cha?

During his speech, he said that he had unlimited confidence in his Prime Minister. We know that this government currently has two prime ministers, one who is in his seat, and one who is behind the curtain.

First, I would like him to tell me who is Prime Minister right now. I think that he knows the answer.

Second, when he spoke about the motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois, I was disappointed. I know how intelligent this Liberal member is and I also know that the Bloc Québécois motion would help all the Liberal members and all the members in this House, because this government would finally have to answer questions from the opposition for the good of democracy in Canada.

• (1520)

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, it is very simple; my wife also tells me that I do not know how to dance.

*Supply*

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member said he has no problem with the current PM not performing his duties and the aspiring PM holding parallel caucus meetings. But it has been made clear to us that this is causing serious problems.

For instance, on the one hand, the current PM has said that the government should open the tap wide, spend as much as it wants and, in particular, try to meddle in provincial matters to get as much visibility as possible. On the other hand, the PM in waiting has warned us that he would cut 10% across the board, regardless of the needs. The government will keep spending in areas outside of its jurisdiction, but will cut in areas badly in need of additional funding, like employment insurance, health care, and so on.

Both of these very different approaches are being considered. They are at the root of some of the discussions being held within the government. In closing, I have to wonder if there is not a very clear message here, that it would be better for all Quebecers and Canadians if Parliament were to vote in favour of our motion so that the whole situation can be cleared up as soon as possible.

**Mr. John Bryden:** Mr. Speaker, there is only one cabinet and only one Prime Minister. The problem may be that the Liberal caucus is not giving full support to some issues being considered in the House and in committees.

However, there is only one government and if members opposite want to argue to the contrary, they are free to do so, but it will not change anything. The government is the government.

**Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my Bloc Quebecois colleagues are nervous. In my opinion, they fear that their holidays in the Canadian Parliament are coming to an end.

I only have to hear my colleague from Jonquière to know she is nervous. They fear the next election although it is not for tomorrow. Luckily for them, we do not support their motion, otherwise they might have to face an election very soon.

I am convinced that no other party has more to lose if an election campaign took place in the near future than the Bloc Quebecois.

I only want to say that, fortunately, being inconsistent does not make one sick, otherwise my Bloc Quebecois friends would be quite ill. The PQ government always applied a double standard with regard to the federal government.

The federal government is always to blame for everything. The motion concerns a democratic imbalance. The Bloc members are talking about democracy and imbalance. And yet their founding father, Lucien Bouchard, was Quebec premier designate for a long time. There was no motion then mentioning a democratic imbalance and demanding that an election be urgently called to change the government.

The former Quebec premier, Bernard Landry, was premier designate for many months, and yet there were no demonstration asking for a quick election. I believe, and it is quite understandable, that they are in a slight panic. Our Bloc Quebecois colleagues are nervous. I listened to my colleague, the member for Roberval, who keeps wringing his hands. I can understand his nervousness.

They are all the more nervous as they really love being federal members of Parliament and sitting in this great Parliament, the symbol of western democracy. They are quite concerned, and understandably so, about losing their seat. That is why I will vote against the motion, because it would result in an early election and I want to make sure they stay here a bit longer, to benefit from their ideas and have the opportunity to debate with them.

I will add that the Prime Minister of Canada, who is like everyone of us—we all have our shortcomings and our qualities—is doing a more than commendable job. The government track record shows that it has focused its action on areas that are of the utmost importance for the future of Canadians, including young people across the country.

I am used to hearing this type of demagoguery from my Bloc Quebecois colleagues. They are nearby in my region. I have grown accustomed to them. The idea is that, since here in the Parliament of Canada we deal mostly with regional matters, the Bloc members have decided they would take national issues, try to turn them into endless fights, and constantly bring up senseless figures.

Here is a good example of that. A few weeks ago, the Canadian Labour Congress published a report. Bloc Quebecois members and the central labour bodies in my riding held press conferences to say that the Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay region had been shortchanged by \$157 million. I told myself that, instead of reacting too swiftly, I should sit down and go over the figures. That is what I did and then I reacted very objectively.

You know that the Bloc Quebecois loves to harp on employment insurance. They keep bringing up unemployment again and again. They are not interested in jobs and successes. They want to capitalize on disappointments.

In 2002, the employment insurance program paid \$239 million to people in my region. The figures provided by some residents, particularly Bloc Quebecois members and the central labour bodies, were not accurate.

Often, general themes are applied to specific regions, but they have nothing to do with the reality of life in those regions.

They also speak a lot about the fiscal imbalance; it is a buzzword these days. I said to myself that I should do some research and find out if there were such a major fiscal imbalance between Quebec and the rest of the Canadian federation. They always end up convincing the social and community stakeholders in Quebec that they are right.

• (1525)

Concerning the fiscal imbalance, each year, Quebec gets several billion dollars more out of the federation than it puts in.

Canada's is a country of growing prosperity. At present, it ranks first among G-8 countries. Obviously, all Canadians can benefit from equalization, a program from which the Government of Quebec greatly benefits, as the recipient of 50% of all equalization payments made. Under this program, the provinces can invest in whatever area they please without any federal restriction.



*Supply*

That is quite apart from all the social transfers. This is very important to governments. The central government has trade relations, with the American people, that generate a trade surplus of \$90 billion a year. There are obviously spinoffs for all the regions, and Quebec in particular. All the better if they benefit from this.

One must be careful not to fabricate, to take general notions and say they are doing us harm. That is not true. As far as the government's record is concerned, the Prime Minister has played a lead role in research and development. I notice colleagues from my region, the hon. members for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay and for Jonquière. Our region has benefited in terms of R and D. In a few weeks, we will be opening a Canadian aluminum technologies centre. This represents an investment of more than \$60 million by our government.

It is easy to understand, because our region produces aluminum ingots, but producing ingots no longer creates jobs. We have lost in excess of 6,000 jobs in our region.

I have convinced my government of the importance of processing. We will be processing aluminum. National programs were developed in cooperation with the National Research Council and Canada Economic Development for that purpose. All these areas of research are important for the future of our country, and the future of my region in particular. I fight first and foremost for the future of my region.

I am trying to target sectors where our government has proven a major player. Genetics is one. I could talk about infrastructure programs. We created a special infrastructure program for the highway between Quebec City and Chicoutimi. This is a \$2 billion program. The Bloc members voted against it, and then they try to make people believe that they deserve all the credit.

We have to be realistic. The Bloc's motion is totally unacceptable. This motion refers to a democratic imbalance, but given how the Bloc interprets democracy, we have absolutely nothing to learn from it. In my riding in 2000, I witnessed the democratic process according to the Bloc. It rejected young people without member cards. It refused to let one young person run in a convention in 2000. It decided, arbitrarily, to have the reeve run against me in the 2000 election. I was quite happy when, despite all odds, I still managed to win hands down.

In short, the Bloc motions are always vague and meaningless. Upon closer examination, this motion does not hold water. I am convinced that the Bloc members did not even read their own motion. I know perfectly well that they do not want an election to be called right away. They are well aware of the polls. They know all too well that Quebecers want more for their money from the Canadian federation. That is what members try to do, as I am trying to do to the best of my knowledge and abilities.

It is a pleasure for me to share these comments with the House. It will always be a pleasure to talk about our government's record and our efforts to improve all our programs.

The Bloc's favourite topic is employment insurance. It will never mention that premiums have been lowered by 30%. It will never mention that parental leave has increased from six to twelve months. It will never talk about the elimination of the intensity rule. In short,

it is not interested in solutions. It is only interested in problems. The Bloc is not interested in talking about jobs, it prefers to talk about unemployment.

The best thing we could do is vote against this motion and think about what is in the Bloc's best interests, because it is in its best interests that this motion be defeated.

• (1530)

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there are a great many questions that could be asked of my colleague, but I will limit myself to a couple of ideas.

My colleague spoke of the fear of losing the next election. I would like to pick him up on two flip-flops on his part since yesterday. In connection with the anti-scab legislation, he spoke out against it over the past few months, but now, realizing how many unionized workers there are in Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, he has been forced to admit that he must support the workers. Yet the Bloc Québécois has introduced such a bill on more than one occasion.

As for moving up the effective date for the electoral map, at first reading my colleague sided with the government. Now, in response to the pressure from the people of Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, who understand our demands—there is a problem, we have just lost a riding—my colleague has been forced to face the fact that he ought to side with the Bloc.

At any rate, I would invite the hon. member to reflect about all these positions, which in some ways are closer to those of the Bloc Québécois than to those of the Liberals. He is, however, constrained by the party line and its potential advantages. He is always torn between the values of the people of Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay and those of the Liberal Party, and in some ways there is a huge gap between the two.

My colleague spoke about employment insurance. Employment insurance is something of huge importance. Yes, indeed, and just how important for the region? It has one of the highest levels of unemployment in Quebec.

If the federal government he defends had a record as good as all that, there would not be high unemployment. How then does he explain that the CEGEPs in Chicoutimi and Jonquière are training tourism students who will not be able to work in their own regions? Why not? Because of the EI criteria.

Eligibility for benefits requires 900 hours. A student could very easily be involved during the tourist season, develop the tourist season over a year or two, benefit from the EI program to create a self-sufficient tourist industry. But no, the Liberal government sets a requirement of 900 hours, thus doing away with all opportunities.

Now for the softwood lumber crisis. My colleague could have pressured for the elimination of the two-week waiting period. What happened here? When it came to SARS in Toronto, the two weeks were done away with—

*Supply*

•(1535)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I am a patient man. When speeches last 20 minutes and members split their time, they have 10 minutes each. That leaves only five minutes for questions and comments. We are already three minutes into that five-minute period. So, if the member has a question, he might want to put it now.

The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, here is my question. I would urge the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord to think about this whole mess. I would like him to comment on the fact—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation can answer all of these questions in the two minutes he has left.

**Mr. André Harvey:** Mr. Speaker, it will not be easy. It is a huge challenge. It will show that their reputation is well deserved. They make statements that have nothing to do with reality. They compare people who were quarantined because of the SARS outbreak in Toronto with unemployed people who have access to the normal benefits available through the plan.

Do you see that? Bloc members are here to exaggerate instead of analyzing the facts objectively.

With regard to Bill C-49, the electoral boundaries readjustment bill, I too complained. I attended, with my colleagues, the meetings of the subcommittee that studied this issue. Beyond that, I even wrote a letter to the subcommittee asking that the legislation be amended, next time it is reviewed, so that factors other than numbers can be taken into account in defining new ridings. That was in the legislation.

The commissioners work at arm's length from politicians. However, I told myself that we could ask the government, particularly the subcommittee, to change certain aspects of the current legislation so that the commissioners would have to take into account other parameters, not just numbers.

Regarding tourism in my region, my reputation is made. With all the work that I have done to put the Saguenay Fjord in the spotlight and in all the other files on which I have had the opportunity to work with my constituents, I trust them for the next election campaign. I too am anxious to face my colleagues from the Bloc—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Everybody is so anxious. In the meantime, we will give the floor to someone else.

The member for Champlain.

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Jonquière.

Today, we are discussing an important issue. I will not have the time to respond to the Liberal member who just spoke, because I have some things to say on this issue. However, I think it is somewhat deplorable to hear that a lot of employment insurance benefits have been paid out in a region. It is sad news when EI benefits are paid out in a region.

When the government says it has reduced EI premiums I do not know how many times, the important thing is not the number of

times I have robbed you, but the amount of money that I have robbed you of, if I did rob you.

The government has a surplus of \$3 billion. It has almost \$50 billion in the employment insurance fund. This money comes in part from taxpayers, that is workers and employers. This money is used to reimburse the debts of everyone and particularly the debts of those who have found a way to pay their taxes outside the country, in tax havens. They are the ones who put the government into debt, not the unemployed that the government refuses to pay EI benefits to because it wants to build up a surplus.

It is quite painful to listen to someone actually saying things like that. I think that a billion dollars too much in the employment insurance fund is a billion dollars too much, however many times they have been able to reduce the amount of premiums. If a thief breaks into my house and says he was a good guy to only have stolen \$10, when he could have stolen \$15, that does not change the fact that he did steal \$10. Come on now, that is nonsense.

At the same time, they boast about their great results. Everyone is scandalized about how much money the federal government can waste. Michel Vastel made a list of the unbelievable sums that have been wasted. Federal government spending has increased by 35%. Money is being thrown everywhere.

Do not talk to me about good management. The surpluses have not come from good management, but from the fact that taxes are too high and transfer payments to the provinces, including Quebec, for health, education and the municipal sector, have been cut severely. It is painful to listen to what they are saying this house.

There is something I think is even sadder. The Prime Minister is the member for Saint-Maurice, which is a riding in the Mauricie region. Even though not everyone in Mauricie shares all the opinions of the hon. member for Saint-Maurice, he is still the one we call, affectionately, "the little guy from Shawinigan". He is the one who started life in Baie de Shawinigan and worked very hard all his life before becoming Prime Minister of this country.

I do not agree with the Prime Minister's opinions, but I recognize that this man has devoted 40 years of his life to his country. He comes from back home, just a "little guy from Shawinigan". Although he has done things I do not agree with, I think it is sad that, as his reward for a 40-year career in political life, he is being stabbed in the back by a colleague who wants to take over as fast as possible. I think that is sad.

I can tell you that at home we feel sad. Recently, two or three weeks ago, the Prime Minister's wife attended the same ceremony I did. The master of ceremonies said, "You must feel hurt, let us dress your wounds. We thank you for being here and we are proud of you". I thought it was nice that the people of Mauricie would dress the wounds of a man who, after all, has been very committed.

It does not matter whether or not we agree with what he has done, the past cannot be undone. He followed his convictions. Nonetheless, I find it painful and sad to watch this man being crucified the way he has been for the past few months. It is immoral and unacceptable.

I am not the only one to think so.

*Supply*

● (1540)

A major retailer in Cap-de-la-Madeleine, who is a close friend of the Prime Minister's and whom I see often, asked me when the Prime Minister was going to step down and stop allowing himself to be crucified.

It is painful to see him stuck with responsibility for the country, while decisions are being made by someone else behind the scenes. That someone has good reason to lay low. He does not want to be questioned on the awkward position he has put the Prime Minister in time and again. This former minister is the one who stole the EI fund. It is because of him that roughly \$3 billion was stolen from the seniors I defend. He arranged things in such a way that they could not get guaranteed income supplements. They are the poor and the least fortunate in society. This member, who is running the show as interim prime minister, who is the prime minister in waiting, is hiding behind the curtain. He will not be here to vote on this motion. We are often ashamed of what he does.

He used to tell this House that we had no reason to criticize him for the EI situation because he had just reduced the EI premiums. He had good news for the unemployed. The government would be continuing to rob them, but not as much. It is a rather sad thing to hear. If he had any honour, he would stop stabbing the Prime Minister in the back.

We would like him to show up here as soon as possible, to answer our questions. We are asking the little guy from Shawinigan, the member for Saint-Maurice and Prime Minister of this country, to step aside. We are telling him, "You deserve better than this backstabbing. You have done enough for the country. You deserve better. Let him take your place, so that we can question him and get answers once and for all".

We keep hearing that he cannot answer. We would like him to answer our questions. We would like him to account for his actions, for what he is doing with his ships while doing business with tax havens. We want him to question him about the shores of the St. Lawrence River and the pollution in Lake Saint-Pierre. He must account for his actions. This way, when the time comes to vote for or against him, we will know who this man is and what his plans are for the future.

This is a sad day, one of many since we have had this two-headed government, one where the Prime Minister is constantly being contradicted by a man who does not have the courage to show up here.

In my riding of Champlain alone, I note that the shores of the St. Lawrence River have suffered damages to the tune of \$4.5 million, and this man's ships are partly to blame for that. Still, he refuses to repair the damage.

I would have many questions for him. I cannot wait. He should stop stabbing his colleague, the Prime Minister, the little guy from Shawinigan and member for Saint-Maurice in the back and take the steps to officially replace him. Then, we will put our questions to him.

● (1545)

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Champlain. What he says is true. In bringing forward this motion, members of the Bloc Québécois never meant to hurt the current Prime Minister. On the contrary, this motion is meant to help him. Right now, his credibility is being undermined by his colleagues within his own party.

I would like to ask a question of my colleague, who comes from the same region as the current Prime Minister of Canada. Could the member for Champlain tell me if he has ever been in a similar situation? He sat as MP in the Quebec National Assembly. Has he ever experienced such ambiguity? Also, is what is happening now in Canada healthy for democracy and are taxpayers getting their money's worth with this situation?

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Jonquière for her question.

I was indeed elected to the National Assembly under Premier René Lévesque. There is no doubt that any leader goes through some rough times. In 1984, when René Lévesque felt it was time for him to quit politics, he naturally waited for the right time to go.

I remember that, because he made his last official visit in my riding. I heard some of his opponents tell him, "Premier Lévesque, you have done too much for us to go this way. We need to thank you before you leave. Don't let them get you down".

When there is a leadership convention, things can get complicated. However, when Mr. Lévesque left, he made way for his successor, and that is what the current Prime Minister and member for Saint-Maurice should do. That is all we are asking for in our motion.

The Prime Minister has decided that he would be leaving in February 2004 and he is being stabbed in the back not only by the future prime minister, but by all those who want to be in the good books of the future prime minister or want the keys to a limousine. Members opposite are putting on a very sad show, indeed.

They think nobody is noticing. But we only have to read the papers and listen to the people. Every weekend, our constituents tell us that it must be hard to work in Parliament with everything that is going on. They are making life miserable for the current Prime Minister. Basically, our motion is a friendly gesture. We are asking the Prime Minister to make way for his successor. We will thank him for his hard work and then address our questions to the future prime minister.

● (1550)

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be briefer than during the previous period.

At home, we now feel the effects of this whole mess. The question I would like to ask my colleague is this: in his riding, at various events, does he really feel this internal crisis in the Liberal Party? Could he tell the House about it?

*Supply*

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay.

I mentioned something to that effect earlier. It is the case every time I stop at a gas station and I meet people. Last Monday, people were celebrating a 100th birthday in Sainte-Anne-de-la-Pérade. I was a bit late, I had had quite a busy day and the first question I was asked when I arrived was, “Do you think that the Prime Minister will go? How can he stand all this?” I told them that was not my party, my man and my policy.

However, I find this spectacle thard to take. This is inhumane, it makes no sense to do this to a man who has given 40 years of his life, to the best of his knowledge, to this country. This makes no sense, this is unacceptable.

Also, this must stop as soon as possible, so that we can get on with the business of the House. We are wasting our time here. Just think of how much it costs Parliament for every hour, every day of sitting. It is horrible to see how little has been accomplished since we came back to the House, and even in the last year.

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, before beginning, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Champlain. What we heard from him is just common sense.

That is what Bloc Quebecois members are all about. They have common sense and they understand the reality that voters in their ridings have to face every day. They are the ones who defend the interests of all Quebecers and Canadians.

I am pleased to speak to this motion brought forward by the Bloc Quebecois. Finally, one political party in this Parliament has decided to expose what has been going on behind closed doors within this government and within the Liberal Party.

The situation that currently exists in the Parliament of Canada is very troubling. It is almost like total paralysis. Nothing is happening. What do we see when we ask questions during question period? Ministers contradict one another, as we saw again today. The Minister of Transport was contradicted by the Minister of the Environment.

That is what we witness every day. Canadians and Quebecers have the right, through opposition members, to obtain answers regarding issues of real concern to them.

I was listening earlier to what several government members were saying. I realized that they were totally out of touch with reality. Is it normal that the Liberal majority, which runs the country, has two leaders? There is a democratically elected Prime Minister. In August 2002, he decided that he was going to leave office in February 2004. And behind the curtain stands the man whom I call the Phantom of the Opera.

Is it normal that behind the curtain stands a man who has not yet been elected leader of his party but who is already exercising the powers that his colleagues in the Liberal Party have decided to confer upon him? And most of the time, in exercising these powers, he is going against the broad objectives set by the Prime Minister. The Kyoto protocol is one thing that comes to mind.

I will talk about highway 175 in my region. In August 2002, the Prime Minister of Canada came to my region. You know how many times I talked about this issue during oral question period. I asked many questions about this highway, which is called the route du parc des Laurentides. It had become an urban legend. After nearly a year, the Prime Minister came to our region to announce that his government would pay 50% of the cost of this highway.

No one can convince me that it is because of the former Parti Quebecois government that no agreement was reached. This is sad. All the ministers I was able to talk to never said that the PQ government had done something to delay the agreement. Nearly a year later, there is still no agreement on this issue. Is it bad faith?

Who is making the real decisions? The current Prime Minister, whom I trusted, made a commitment on this. However, does the member for LaSalle—Émard really want to reach an agreement that was signed in Quebec when Bernard Landry was the premier? This highway is very important for the development of my region.

People in my region are asking this question. They tell me that I should hurry up and ask the Liberals to sign the agreement, because they fear that, with the member of LaSalle—Émard, there will be no agreement.

● (1555)

This is a source of considerable concern. The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord was just talking about EI benefits and saying that they are being improved. Ours is an industrial region that was a model for the aluminum and pulp and paper industries, but there are no longer any jobs being created. We know that it is not good for one's self-esteem to have to go on EI, particularly when one gets 55% of what one used to earn, not good at all. So let us not exaggerate here. People do not want to be on benefits, people in our regions want to work.

What did the government do about the softwood lumber crisis? Three million workers in my region have lost jobs because of it. Two years later, the Minister for International Trade is standing up to pat himself on the back and announce that we are going to win out. In the meantime, most workers in my region are no longer even on EI. This is being unrealistic.

When we see the way this government is deteriorating, I think that all Liberal members ought to be congratulating the Bloc Quebecois and ought to be voting as a block themselves in favour of this motion. Not because it is against the present PM, but because it will get this Parliament back up to speed, get things settled and force the future PM to come out from behind the curtain and provide some answers to the real questions we are asking democratically.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that we are elected by people who wanted us to be sitting here in this Parliament to play the watchdog role they wanted over this government, and wanted the opposition to ask the real questions. Ordinary citizens cannot come to this House and question ministers and the rest of the government themselves. We have to speak for them.

I sometimes wonder whether those members actually go to see their constituents from time to time. If they do, do they listen to them or is it just a matter of popping in, delivering a fancy speech, and popping out again?

As the hon. member for Champlain has said, our constituents are constantly asking us when the situation in Ottawa is going to be settled. We do not know any more than they do, we are not able to solve our own problems. We are well aware of what is going on. Only the hon. members across the way do not realize that everyone knows. People are not blind. The press is constantly reporting on what is going on with this government, particularly the arm twisting and backstabbing that is going on.

With this motion we merely want to get out of this mess. The present situation is really quite detrimental to democracy.

The government House leader argues that this is a non-confidence motion that would bring the government down if it is carried. The government House leader is using that argument because he is scared; he does not know if the future PM will let him keep the keys to his limousine. That is what he and his colleagues on the front benches are afraid of.

Several of the partisans of the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard are getting ready to take their places. They want to keep enjoying their perks for a few more months. We are not here to enjoy perks but to ask real questions and get real answers. We pay taxes.

The finance minister has been bragging now for two days about the budget surplus he just announced. The Bloc Québécois had predicted an even greater surplus. The minister is bragging when he knows full well that he had to take \$3 billion out of the EI account to get this surplus.

We are entitled to put real questions to the real PM, that is the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. We are told it is not a done deal. Come on. We know it was settled a long time ago. Do you take us for fools, do you take the people for fools? Do you think they believe that this might not happen on November 15?

• (1600)

We are entitled to get answers to our questions and to address our questions to the real PM. This motion would ensure that, as is done in any great democracy, the real PM, who is hiding behind the curtain, will answer real questions.

When you have someone who owns boats and does not pay taxes in his own country, you have a serious situation on your hands. If you did not pay your taxes, Mr. Speaker, you would be prosecuted. The member has not paid his taxes, so we want to ask him some tough questions.

I hope that members will all vote in favour of the motion brought forward by the Bloc Québécois.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for Jonquière. I would like to direct a comment to her and ask for her opinion on the matter.

Just now, we heard an hon. member from the other side of the House telling us about the fiscal imbalance, the famous fiscal imbalance. The hon. member let it be understood that all the finance ministers of all the provinces of Canada, including the Liberal finance minister of Quebec, Mr. Séguin, are a bunch of fools, zeros, or are just careless, because all of them agreed there is a fiscal imbalance, except the member opposite.

### Supply

Who is right and who is wrong?

• (1605)

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the member opposite got his figures because it is the first time that the premiers and finance ministers from all the provinces agreed that there is a fiscal imbalance in Ottawa.

Indeed, the federal government taxes Canadians too heavily for the services it provides them. Everybody agrees on that. However, all of a sudden, the government is the only one saying that there is no fiscal imbalance. We were able to see that again yesterday. If there were no fiscal imbalance, the government would not be in a position to announce such a huge surplus.

Let us not forget that, under the Constitution, health care, education and social welfare are provincial jurisdictions. These services are provided by the provincial governments.

Even in the area of health care, we know that, since this government took office in 1993, all the provinces were affected by cuts to the Canada Health and Social Transfer. Even with the commitment that the current Prime Minister made to his colleagues, the provincial health ministers, when he told them that the federal government would give them an additional \$2 billion, that would not even make up for the cuts made to the CHST since 1993.

The fiscal imbalance is so large that the government is being asked to give the excess revenues to the provinces right away. It has to give them money for health care. This is no secret. I am not a chartered accountant, but one plus one always makes two. If the current Minister of Finances denies that, then he should go back to school to brush up on his arithmetic.

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend my hon. colleague for her speech and the issues she raised. She shares the same administrative region as the member opposite.

Since he mentioned employment, can my hon. colleague describe to the House the impact the softwood lumber crisis has had on employment? What negative impact has it had on her region? That is my question to my hon. colleague.

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay for his question.

As we all know, my region is primarily engaged in forestry and is the leading lumber producer in Quebec. We do rank first in that industry, my region and that of the member. We were hard hit. In fact, we lost 3,000 jobs. Forestry jobs are specialized and very well paid work. Three thousand workers have lost their jobs so far.

My colleague opposite, the hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, said that these workers got EI benefits. That is not what they want. First, these workers paid EI contributions, but the government is not investing anything in the EI account. The member says it is charity. The government is not giving these people all they are entitled to, since there is still an EI surplus.

*Supply*

We do not want to hear any more bull from this member, who is totally disconnected from the concerns of my constituents. We must deal with the softwood lumber crisis. We must get these workers back to work. We told them to go to phase 2 and allow the businesses to resume their operations.

[*English*]

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to join in the debate today on this opposition motion. May I note off the top that I will be splitting my time with my very capable colleague from York West.

Certainly I will never pretend to have a vast or deep technical appreciation for the complexities of the procedures of the House. However, I assure members that any light that I would shed would be pale in comparison to the comments in the intervention that was made earlier in the debate from the government leader of the House.

I will not be quoting from Marleau and Montpetit or citing passages from Beauchesne's. I believe as far as the technical aspects of the motion, they were very much addressed during the presentation by the government House leader.

I would like to make comments about the current Prime Minister, but I will not reach back too far and try to celebrate the 40 year career of our current Prime Minister and his commitment to public life. I will leave that to the pundits and the biographers and let him take his rightful place in history, which I am sure will be smiled upon by all.

I would like to talk about events that have occurred recently and more, the recent initiatives shown by this Prime Minister, including some of the brave, decisive decisions that have been made while he has been on his watch. He has presented legislation, rendered opinions on everything in our day to day activities in the House that have really made Canada a better place to be and one of which all Canadians can be proud.

I must make note first of some of the comments that have been made on the other side of the House during the course of this debate. They would like to think of late that things have slowed down in the House and that the work of the government is not being done. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Since 2002, over 55 pieces of legislation have come forward. Of those, 22 have been passed by the House, the Senate and have received royal assent. We really should celebrate some of this significant legislation.

I look at Bill C-2, the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act, Bill C-5, the act respecting the protection of wildlife species and species at risk in Canada and Bill C-12, an act to promote physical activity in sport. That is the first piece of sport legislation that has cleared this House since the late 1960s. Bill C-44, an act to compensate military members injured during service is legislation that addresses some obvious inequities in how we deal with members of the military who have sustained serious injury and debilitating injury.

Of late we have had a tough time as a country. We have to look at some of the things we have experienced over the last 12 months such

as SARS, mad cow and the forest fires and floods in western Canada. My home province of Nova Scotia just suffered the effects of hurricane Juan. We have had our own array of difficulties and none through any cause of our own. We have been very fortunate. Because of our financial situation, we have been able to offer assistance. We have been able to move in and make decisive, benevolent moves to help in each of those areas.

The pain is far-reaching on several of those issues, but certainly the federal government has been there. Had we not been in good financial stead, then perhaps we would not have been able to assist as well as we did.

● (1610)

Obviously, on our financial house, everything comes back to the economy and what has gone on with it. Sometimes as Canadians we suffer from a short memory. It is convenient not to remember back to 1995 or not look back and remember when this country operated with a \$48 billion deficit. The state of the books as of the mid-1990s was deplorable. We were close to being recognized as a third world nation. We just could not continue as a country.

Under the leadership of our Prime Minister, a vision was set. If we could get our financial house in order, then we could to reinvest in the social programs, those programs that Canadians hold so dear. That is what in fact took place. Cuts were made, and, yes, every Canadian shared in the pain of those cuts. However they were imperative. We had to lasso the deficit and gain control of our financial well-being. That was done in the mid-1990s.

Since then we have been able to reinvest. Our economy continues to grow and continues to strengthen.

Since 2002, 612,000 jobs have been created under the Prime Minister, two-thirds of them full time. While other members of the G-7 continue to experience huge difficulties with their national budgets, we are firm on the controls of the budgets here with the Government of Canada.

From 1997 to 1998, Canada became a deficit free country for the first time in 30 years. In the year 2000 the recorded surplus was \$12.3 billion. In 2003 the government under, the Prime Minister's leadership, recorded its sixth consecutive surplus budget. In doing so we have applied \$52 billion to the national debt. That alone this year will save the people of Canada \$3 billion in interest payments on that national debt, which is significant and that has to be noted.

It is great to talk about the big numbers and about the national picture in terms of our financial position. Let us bring it down and let us talk about what has been accomplished at the grassroots for the average Canadian. How have they benefited from the leadership and the stewardship of the Prime Minister?

I remember that it was not that long ago, two or three years, when we all talked about the brain drain and the loss of our best and our brightest as they moved across the border to seek employment in the States. The government saw this as a problem and the Prime Minister saw this as a problem and part of his vision was to invest in innovation and research.

By doing so we were able to keep those students and professors in Canada, to have them study here and perform their research here. What we have seen is really a shift, where now the drain is coming from the States. These people are coming back to Canada or they are staying in Canada and we are attracting some of the best and brightest minds from other countries.

I can take that down to a personal level. I see the investments that have been made in the universities in my area, St. Francis Xavier and the University College of Cape Breton. They are benefiting from programs such as the national research chairs, the Atlantic innovation fund, those types of investments. We are keeping those kids here.

I see the reinvestment in health care of \$34.8 billion following the Romanow commission. We have an MRI machine in Sydney. We have digital x-ray machines in Inverness and in Richmond County. People can get x-rays which can be digitized, then sent and read by specialists anywhere in the world. That was not available two years ago.

I see improvements in infrastructure in my home communities, in Birch Grove and in St. Peter's through the Canada-Nova Scotia infrastructure program. Tomorrow I will attend tomorrow the opening of a water treatment plant in Glace Bay, where a \$10 million investment by all three levels of government will provide clean water to the residents of Glace Bay. I am very happy to be part of that announcement.

I could talk about species at risk legislation that is important to the people and Kyoto that will secure a healthy environment as we go forward to the future.

●(1615)

What I would like to finish on is the Prime Minister's guidance and leadership through the Iraqi crisis. He took a brave, strong and principled position throughout the Iraqi crisis, identifying that Canada stood as a sovereign nation, much to the criticism of the official opposition. When we look at the polls now, well over 70% of Canadians know that he did the right thing.

Our Prime Minister has provided great leadership in this country, and well beyond this motion today, he will continue to provide that leadership to the people of Canada.

●(1620)

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member spoke eloquently about his support for the present Prime Minister. I suppose we ought not to be surprised since his title is Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister. I do not know whether he wrote his own speech or whether it was written for him, but it was a pretty supportive one.

He did not say too much about the next prime minister and he did not really address the issue that is before us today at all. That is the issue that when the leadership vote is held and the Liberal Party chooses a new leader, by tradition, as soon as the transition can be organized, the leader becomes the new prime minister. I compared it earlier with the transition between Brian Mulroney and Kim Campbell. That transition happened relatively quickly after the vote was held.

### Supply

The member has not addressed that question at all and I think it is an important one. After November 14, Canadians and certainly we in the House are going to have a very difficult question, which is, who is really in charge? Is it the leader of the party with the greatest number of seats in the House, or is it the member from Shawinigan who, so far at this stage, has failed to hand in his resignation as he should probably do after the new leader is selected?

I would like to hear the comments from the member on that topic. It is an important one and it needs to be addressed.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, we have one prime minister, and the Prime Minister is sitting. We will have a leadership convention. Certainly the Prime Minister has set his date for retirement. The member that we anticipate will be the next prime minister is active on the ground. I think he is proactive on the ground in trying to develop policy in certain areas so that when the time comes he will hit the ground running. However, I do not think the Liberal Party of Canada will take any cues on organizational mentorship from the party across the way. I do not think we will hold up Kim Campbell's short reign as what we want to aspire to as a party.

As I said, our Prime Minister is in complete control. When the transition is made, I know that the people of Canada will continue to have good leadership under the Liberal government.

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, the member referred to the Kim Campbell-Brian Mulroney transition. I would remind him that there was a transition from St. Laurent to Pearson, there was a transition from Mackenzie King to St. Laurent, and there was a transition from Pearson to Trudeau that definitely reflected the principle that my colleague referred to.

It is unprecedented in Canadian history that this could carry on. Quite frankly, to ridicule other parties or refer to Kim Campbell and Brian Mulroney, the member should look at the precedents set in his own party. This is unprecedented. He should look at the history of his own party before he makes rather quick, sharp comments like he just did.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment from the member. We do live in interesting times when I see the Canadian Alliance Party and its hostile takeover of the Progressive Conservative Party. Well over 100 years of history have been cast aside in that current marriage of convenience.

I will stand by my party. After the convention and after the change in leadership, we will continue to provide that good leadership to the people of Canada.

**Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to a motion which I think is quite outrageous. For any of the viewers who are trying to follow the debate, the Bloc motion reads as follows:

That, although the Prime Minister has a mandate and should be able to end it as he chooses, given the democratic imbalance that currently prevails and that results in the government's decision making occurring outside this House, and more broadly outside any public institution, this House calls upon the Prime Minister to leave office as soon as possible after November 14, 2003.

*Supply*

As I said, I think it is an outrageous motion and is wasting valuable time. The opposition has the opportunity once a week or so to raise an issue of importance to Canadians. To choose to stand up and tell our Prime Minister when he should be leaving office I think is an insult to the institution. I would suggest that Bloc members should look after their own leader. If we continue to do the work that we and our Prime Minister are doing to preserve the country and to prevent it from being separated by the Bloc, they may not even be here after the next election.

I am quite pleased to have a few minutes to talk about this issue and to illustrate that there are huge costs to operating the House of Commons. We are wasting a day's debating time. We could have been talking about the issues that really face Canada and which are important to Canadians, such as global security, health care, or any of the other issues. Putting one of those issues on the table today would have been a much more effective use of the expensive time of the House of Commons.

I am quite proud of the Liberal record and the things that have been accomplished since 1993. Our country is in an enormously positive economic position. It is moving forward. As my colleague has said, it is more prosperous than any other G-7 country. That did not happen by itself.

When the Liberal government led by the Prime Minister took power, there was a huge debt. Approximately 40¢ of every dollar was going toward paying down the debt. We have been able to reduce that through lots of hard choices that we made and that Canadians made, to where today it is about 22¢ of every dollar that goes toward the debt. There were a lot of sacrifices made by a lot of people, but there was also strong leadership by our party and our Prime Minister.

When the Bloc members say that nothing is getting done in the House, I can say that this week I put about 18 hours into committee work. I am sure some of the other members have done exactly the same. Of the 55 bills that my colleague referred to earlier, 22 of them have already been through debate at first, second and third readings in the House, have been approved by the Senate and have moved forward. They suggest that the House has been hijacked and that work is not getting done. It may not be getting done on their side of the House, but it certainly is getting done by the Government of Canada.

If we look at the confidence Canadians have in the Liberal government, they have given us three straight mandates and have given the Prime Minister in particular 10 years in office. That says quite a bit about what people think of us as a government and the priorities we are moving forward on.

The Bloc members say we have done nothing, but I have to wonder when the Bloc members started to take an interest in the importance of effective national leadership. They certainly have never been interested in it before. It is precisely because there is effective leadership at the national level in Canada that their option does not cut it at all.

I would like to address a few of the issues in and around my colleagues in the NDP. I thank them for their tacit support for a wide range of policies and legislation that our government has brought

forward. I am well aware that the NDP caucus wishes to continue to push forward with the legislative agenda that the Liberal government has established. I look forward to the NDP continuing to put its solid support behind our Liberal agenda.

Perhaps Mr. Layton and the NDP are supporting this Liberal government because the Liberal government continues to shape policy which reflects the values of Canadians, something which the NDP frankly has never been able to do. Whatever the reason, we on this side of the House appreciate the NDP support. Nevertheless, we ask its caucus members to remind their absent leader that he is boasting of Liberal achievements, not NDP achievements.

• (1625)

Through three elections the people of Canada have demonstrated their confidence in our party and we will move forward on all of those issues. The Prime Minister will leave when he is good and ready. As we move forward, Canada's success has been a direct result of the successful decisions that we have made on all of the policies and directions that truly matter to Canadians.

I would suggest that the Bloc already realizes that its intention to try to embarrass us or the Prime Minister is clearly failing. We are moving forward in a very positive way. The Bloc should rethink its position, especially as the opposition. We do not need any lessons from the Bloc members on how to run our country and how to treat our leaders. They are the last people who should suggest that we do that.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a few comments. I will try not to be too tough on my colleague.

When I hear that you do not need any lessons from the Bloc, I think the member is fantasizing a little. There is nothing in today's motion that says the Prime Minister did not do his job. What the Bloc wants through this motion is that for government to get on with its work.

This morning, the government House leader started to say that the motion was a non-confidence one. I would like to quote the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia and I would like the member to comment on this. I quote:

[*English*]

My guess is that [the Prime Minister] will step down maybe two, three or four weeks after the convention. I think it's in the interests of all.

[*Translation*]

The member said this on September 23, 2003 and it was reported in the *National Post*. These words from the member sum up exactly the Bloc motion we are debating today.

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, when the Bloc has its convention, the Bloc members can choose their leader and decide how to do that transition. We are doing exactly the same.



On November 14 we will choose the next leader of the Liberal Party. The Prime Minister has already indicated what his plans are. We will respect that and we will continue to work on behalf of Canadians.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance):** Mr. Speaker, this is totally different. We are talking about the government, the party that is supposed to be giving leadership to the country. In other parties, including our own, when there has been a transition, we have arranged for interim leaders when appropriate. When the new leader was elected, within a day that leader was in place and the previous interim leader stepped aside.

Now we have a party that is pretending to lead the country. It is saying that it will have one person who ostensibly is the prime minister but not really, because by tradition for centuries in this system the leader of the party with the most seats is the one who is the prime minister. It is an aberration.

I think the purpose of the motion today is to correct that aberration and to make it clear that once the Liberal Party has chosen a new leader, that leader should then become the prime minister. It would not necessarily be the next day. We know that transitions take maybe five, six or eight days but then the new person should be sworn in as the prime minister and should carry on as the leader.

I would ask a very obvious question. We would not be here except for the fact that the Liberal members themselves pushed the Prime Minister out. He would not have resigned had it not happened that at the convention he was being threatened and then finally to kill it he promised that in February 2004 he would resign. It was the party members themselves who put pressure on him to step aside in order to give the new person a chance. If they will not have him, why should the rest of Canada have him?

**Ms. Judy Sgro:** Mr. Speaker, this is so ridiculous it is hard not to laugh. Every time we turn around we have a party that replaces its leader every year. There is another one struggling and the one at the very end is trying to deal with the whole issue of who is leading the Conservative Party.

We have these members trying to tell us about leadership. The Prime Minister is the Prime Minister. He is the one who is showing leadership. Along with all of us in the government and the rest of the party, he has provided the leadership that has put our country in the number one spot.

•(1635)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on this subject. I will share my time with the member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

I will tell a story to try to inculcate to you how today, at 4:30 p.m., we have a government that is not working. In order that members understand me well, I will compare the government to a ship, which I will call CSL. No, do not be afraid, my ship is not called Canada Steamship Lines, it is called Canada Sans Leader.

In 2000, during the last election, voters chose a ship, the CSL. It was red and white, with large maple leaves. The Liberals chose a captain, who is the current Prime Minister. The first officer on the

### *Supply*

ship was the former Minister of Finance, the member for LaSalle—Émard. When the ship was sailing, some people noticed that things were not going very well and that the first officer, our member for LaSalle—Émard, wanted to become the captain.

There is a lot of jockeying going on; all kinds of deals have been made. The captain of the ship had to say, “Enough. First mate, if you want to take my place, fine; but it has to be done right and by the book”.

What did the first mate do? He left and became a deckhand. He started a mutiny. He became a mutineer. During his mutiny, all the Liberal sailors put on their life jackets and grabbed a flotation device so they would not drown if the boat sank.

For the past few weeks, or about a month, they have picked the delegates who will choose the new captain of the CSL ship. Unofficially, not officially, the nod went to the former first mate, former finance minister and member for LaSalle—Émard. At that point, things started to go wrong.

The deckhand from LaSalle—Émard already has half the wheel since he will be the next captain. So he started to take a port tack. The other took a starboard tack. The ship started to roll from side to side. It was impossible to tell if the ship was going forward or backward. That is where things stand now.

The ship is in dry docks. The anchor has been cast, and the ship is at a standstill. Work in committees has ground to a halt. The mechanics are unable to do anything because they do not know who they report to, the current captain or the future captain.

The proof is that the first mate, the current Minister of Finance, has a \$7 billion surplus.

•(1640)

On the one hand, the current captain had promised to give the provinces \$2 billion for health. But the future captain, the member for LaSalle—Émard, is saying, “No decision has been made on that”.

So what do we do? The new first mate, the current finance minister, is staying put and waiting. The future captain, who is currently a deckhand, has started putting his team together to form a government. That is terrible. No wonder the ship is not moving.

Where does this inertia lead? Bills are not going anywhere. Everything is on the rocks, so to speak, because it does not please the future captain. The current captain wants to move his bills forward as his legacy, but the future captain is saying no. They are at loggerheads. That is what happens when a ship has two captains. It does not work, as we can see. I am not the only one who says so. Let me quote a few others.

The hon. member for Vaudreuil—Soulanges is not a member of the Bloc Québécois or the Canadian Alliance, but a government member. Since the ship is at a standstill, he says, “It is clear that some major projects are on hold. If the Prime Minister decides to remain in office until January 28, we could find ourselves, as a government, paralyzed”. These remarks were reported in *La Presse*, on September 13, 2003. That was before we moved our motion. What he said then is along the lines of our motion.

*Supply*

I could also quote the hon. member for Verdun—Saint-Henri—Saint-Paul—Pointe Saint-Charles. She said, “If the Prime Minister announced he is retiring from politics, everyone would be relieved”. That is from *Le Nouvelliste*, on August 5, 2002.

I could quote many others, but I am running out of time. Nevertheless, I will quote the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead, who said, “The best time for the Prime Minister to leave is immediately after the leadership race. It would make no sense for him to stay on after that. How could things work with two leaders?” That is from *La Tribune*, on August 27, 2003.

On these brilliant quotes from members of the Liberal Party and potential cabinet material—since they openly support their future captain—I leave you to ponder. Our motion must be seriously considered. I cannot fathom why one would choose to remain at a standstill and vote against this motion.

• (1645)

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague to explain how government members go about their work, especially in his committee. I would like him to give us examples of the strange behaviour of the government right now. We have no choice but to ask the present Prime Minister to step down, so that the government can behave more appropriately.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

In all committees or most of them, it is crystal clear that if we are examining a bill the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard is pleased with, Liberal members try to make things work and to push the bill forward.

However, if it is a bill sponsored by the one who is still captain of the ship, they try to stop it, instead. When it is a bill promoted by the present Prime Minister, the inertia is complete.

It is there for everyone to see. There is no need for lengthy explanations.

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Sgro (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member should be sitting on a different committee. Those of us who have been sitting on the Government Operations and Estimates Standing Committee have been able to do some fabulous work over the last six months or so, regardless of the issues he says are big problems.

So, maybe he should change committees. He might want to join some of the other ones that are frankly being very progressive and doing a lot of work on behalf of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** Mr. Speaker, I wish my colleague had listened carefully, and I do not want to pick on the interpreters. I said in my answer to the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel that this was happening in most committees. There are exceptions. The committee on which I sit with my colleague works just fine, but this is a committee whose mandate is to scrutinize everything that has to do with the administration of the former

captain. It has nothing to do with anything the new captain could have been or could be implicated in later.

Picking on the former captain is fine. We hope the problem will be settled before the new captain arrives.

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague. That is how we need to react. We need to tell the truth to the people who are watching us tonight. I commend the member for having had the fortitude to say what is going on here, something the Liberal members would never tell their constituents.

Following his comments and all the speeches made by the Bloc members in this House, does my hon. colleague think that the Liberal members will support our motion?

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron:** Mr. Speaker, they cannot vote in favour of a motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois. Why? This morning, the government House leader came up with all kinds of reasons and excuses, even going so far as saying that the motion could lead to an election. It is not true.

The motion would only bring about what the Liberal members have been telling us since the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard is in the hot seat, since he has been chosen as the next captain. Their statements keep popping up in newspapers.

They should be consistent and vote in favour of the motion. But we know they will not do so.

• (1650)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville, Royal Canadian Mounted Police; the hon. member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, Coast Guard; the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Foreign Affairs.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion presented by the Bloc Québécois. This motion simply asks the Prime Minister to leave office as soon as possible after November 14, 2003, for the good of the government.

I would like to give a very striking example. I sit on the Standing Committee on Transport. This committee has felt the impact of a change in direction by the members of the party in power, the Liberal Party. In effect, the Liberals on the committee were mostly pro-Prime Minister, that is pro member from Shawinigan. Obviously, after we returned from the break last January, there had been a change. Those who favoured the member for LaSalle—Émard had taken control.

The Transport Committee actually did some work then, because there was the airline crisis to deal with. It submitted a unanimous report, agreed to by all members of the committee. Finally, the report was flatly rejected by the government. None of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Transport were retained by the government.

The recommendations were intended to help the industry. They included reducing airport rents. They included lowering the tax on aviation fuel in order to help the industries. They also included completely abolishing the airport security tax. It was a unanimous report. It was completely rejected by the Department of Transport. It is well known that the Minister of Transport is a supporter of the member for Shawinigan. That is recognized here in the House. In fact, he is the person whom the Prime Minister trusts to lead the Department of Transport.

But now, since the month of September, since we returned to the House, nothing at all is happening in the Transport Committee. There are two bills, C-26 and C-27. I predict that they will not be passed by this House because the committee and the Liberal committee members who support the member for LaSalle—Émard have decided that these bills are not to their liking.

So, discussions will go on. We have more than 60 witnesses to hear on Bill C-26. I am giving this example and I believe the hon. members know why. In Bill C-26 there is one part, part 3 of the bill, which establishes the new VIA Rail company.

For example, the Minister of Transport announced several times officially a new rapid rail service along the Quebec City-Montreal-Windsor corridor. Obviously, it was his baby. He wanted this to happen. Since the team headed by the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard came to the Standing Committee on Transport, it is clear that the members of this team are opposed to any investments in rail transportation. They do not want this project to happen. Obviously, they are using all the means at their disposal so this bill will not be adopted.

The Minister of Transport announced that this bill was on hold. This morning, against all expectations, the Minister of Transport appeared before our committee. We expected instead to hear from government officials about budget increases. The minister arrived. He was nice enough to answer all our questions, like any other minister at the end of his mandate, meaning a minister who knows he will not be Minister of Transport much longer, in a new government.

He quite openly answered all our questions. As for VIA Rail and the Quebec City-Montreal, Montreal-Windsor rapid rail service, I want to quote him to make sure that his words are understood, "I am keeping this option for the next government".

That was what he said. That is what the Minister of Transport said about a matter concerning Quebec and also, no doubt, Ontario. It concerned the implementation of this important corridor and rapid rail service between Quebec City-Montreal-Windsor. This is important to Quebec. Why? Because Quebec City and Montreal are tourist destinations, as are the other destinations along the corridor, including Trois-Rivières. It is important so that we can attract tourists, particularly Americans. It is important so that they can travel quickly by train so we can try to promote tourism. This is an important project.

• (1655)

In response to my questions, the minister said that cabinet did not support him and added that the current government—and he said the name of the current Prime Minister, the member for Saint-Maurice—

### *Supply*

could not afford to invest several hundreds of millions of dollars, that we would have to wait for the next government.

Why would there not be a motion in this House today dealing with this current issue, when even the Minister of Transport tells us to wait for the next government for major investments? I am saying this because the journalists are asking for the minutes. There will be talk about it tomorrow. That is the reality. The reality is that the government is paralyzed. We are waiting for the next government.

What should we tell our constituents in Quebec, those who are hoping for a Quebec City-Montreal-Windsor rapid rail service? What do we say to those who would also like there to be a Montreal-Boston corridor to attract American tourists to enjoy the sights of Quebec and the rest of Canada? What do we say to them? We are waiting for the next government.

The point we are trying to make in this House is that we want to see the next government as soon as possible. We want the current leader of the government, the member for Saint-Maurice, to step down after November 14, and no longer be the leader of the government. It is as simple as that. We should not have to go through what we went through today, where government decisions are blocked and delayed because we are waiting for a new government.

It is not just any member who made that statement. I am not quoting Liberal backbenchers. It was the Minister of Transport talking about a current issue, and what he said was "I am keeping this option for the next government".

Again, this is unacceptable to us. Quebec needs as much investment as possible to develop tourism, among other things. I need hardly tell you how difficult this past year was for the tourism industry. We all know it.

After the war in Iraq, the number of American tourists decreased. And SARS also had a negative impact on the number of foreign tourists. We need to do everything we can to create projects that will attract tourists. For example, we could reduce the waiting time to travel to Quebec City, Montreal, Trois-Rivières, the Drummondville area and all the most beautiful places in Quebec and in the rest of Canada. This is a current issue that needs to be discussed.

Today, in the Standing Committee on Transport, this issue was totally swept aside for the simple reason that the present government is unable to commit funds. We have to wait for the new government, or at least that is what the transport minister said.

It is just as if we were waiting for the next election. It makes no sense. It makes no sense that we do not even have the support of Liberal members. When they hear that, they should understand very quickly that the point is not to have a new government. If they want a new government, they just have to call an election immediately after November 14. Otherwise, nothing will get done until next spring, until the member for LaSalle—Émard takes over as head of the government. That is the reality.

*Supply*

I am aware that, like my colleague from Rivière-des-Mille-Îles said, some committees can go about their work. They scrutinize the former administration. But as far as I know, the sponsorship program has been put forward by the former finance minister, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard. They would have us believe that he will do away with the sponsorship program, but he is the one who set it up.

We should be consistent. I hope a few Liberal members, at least in Quebec, will demonstrate some consistency. And I hope they listen to what their constituents have to say.

The federal government has a lot of money, as we saw again yesterday. The news has been repeated today. The budget surplus stands at \$7 billion instead of the forecast \$3 billion. Important decisions should be made. If all the ministers say the present government cannot make commitments of millions of dollars because they have to wait for another government, it means the government will stay put until next spring, and that the economy in Quebec and the rest of Canada will be paralyzed.

I am not surprised that the unemployment rate is rising, for the simple reason that Liberal members are unable to take their responsibilities. Otherwise they would vote with us for this motion so that we would have a new leader, so that the government would keep doing its work, and so that the present Prime Minister would leave office after November 14.

• (1700)

**Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my hon. colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel on his speech. I do not know if the Liberal members paid attention and listened carefully. Our colleague just provided glaring evidence of how important it is that all the members of this House vote for the motion put forward by the Bloc Québécois.

He referred to the Standing Committee on Transport and the promises made by the Liberals. They have been promising a Quebec City-Montreal-Windsor train link for decades. The current leader of the government wants it to happen, but the one behind the curtain does not.

I would like my hon. colleague from Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel to expand on this a little and tell us what lies beneath all this? Does he want an election to be called? For the sake of the Canadian democracy, should there be an election after November 14?

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Jonquière for her question.

It would be the perfect solution to sort out once and for all this situation, which is adversely affecting the economic development of Canada and Quebec.

I am speaking very candidly. All is not always well everywhere in Quebec. Given what the tourism industry has gone through this past year, substantial support is necessary. The reason for a rapid rail link between Quebec City and Montreal is to promote the development of the tourism economy in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, Jonquière, Chicoutimi, the North Shore and the Gaspé. That is what we are seeking.

The government is saying that any major spending or substantial investments—for a rapid rail link between Quebec City and Montreal, and Montreal and Windsor for example—will have to wait for the next government.

I hope, therefore, that the Liberal members, particularly those from Quebec who are well aware of the sorry state of the tourism industry over the past year, will support us. We really need to move on. The Prime Minister should leave after November 14, 2003. This is the way to go, even if it means calling an election in the fall. That is fine with us; we are not afraid.

**Mr. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Cooperation, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, my colleague just said that he is prepared to go to the polls the day after the leader of our party is chosen. I think that he cannot seriously mean that.

Polls show that Quebecers are disappointed by the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons. They went from 54 members in the House to 35 members. This number will fall to 10 or 15 after the next election. I think he cannot seriously mean what he said.

I think he cannot mean that because, when a \$2 billion strategic infrastructure program was adopted to repair the highway between Quebec City and Chicoutimi and repair highway 30 to Montreal, they voted against it. There is no better example of inconsistency.

They are talking about rapid rail. Mr. Pelletier, the President of Via Rail, and the Minister of Transport have met and have reached an agreement. This type of deal does not happen overnight. It is important to put the issues on the table, declare firm intentions and say that you will move forward in certain areas. That is how things get done, whether it be for infrastructure, research and development, or the environment. The government had good policies with the budget, as a result of the decisions we made.

Therefore, I think the member cannot mean what he said. I think it is a pity for my colleague, whom I got to know very well on the Standing Committee on Transport.

**Mr. Mario Laframboise:** Madam Speaker, I hope that he will read the Minister of Transport's words tomorrow. I would like to say that we are not afraid of an election, because we are defending the interests of our fellow citizens. We are not here to defend the interests of the Liberal Party, which chooses its moment carefully so as to win as many seats as possible. We are not afraid of that and we will leave it up to the people to make their choice.

• (1705)

[English]

**Mr. Joe Jordan (Leeds—Grenville, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, when I read this motion this morning what went through my mind was whether this was a valuable use of the House's time. With the challenges that face governments today, with the number of issues and the number of forces at play in a global world, I really thought this would be a waste of time, but the fact that we are here and debating it certainly gives me an excellent opportunity to reflect a bit on the gentlemen whom the motion is intended to embarrass.

## Supply

I tell a lot of groups that I speak to about politics of my own personal experiences, and I say that because as a former parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, I think I was privileged to have a window into the world of this man.

I came to Ottawa as an MP in 1997. My family was an extremely political family. My father was a member of Parliament. My grandfather, although he ran unsuccessfully, managed a number of campaigns in very tough areas of the country to try to get the Liberal vote out. I came here with that very partisan grounding.

One of the things that struck me when I got here was that for the good politicians, the effective politicians, although they can engage in the rhetoric of question period, the real work that goes on here is at committee. I can say that for the most part my work on committees has been very rewarding and very non-partisan, much to my initial disappointment. We get excited about things and it takes a few years to sort things out.

The thing that strikes me about the business of government and governing a nation is that the black and white issues are easy to deal with, and governments do an easy job of dealing with them. It is the grey areas that cause us problems. The grey areas are a small portion of what we do, but they get a disproportionate amount of attention given to them in the media, which brings me to my point.

As the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, one of my jobs and one of the things I concerned myself with was my minister. One gets a little protective. I was constantly frustrated when confronted with this ongoing paradox of the Prime Minister and the opinion people would have of him if all they did was read the *National Post* and the opinion that I had from working with him on a daily basis.

What struck me was that this seemed to bother me a lot more than it bothered him. He was constantly providing me with advice, and one point was not to read the newspapers, which he did not do; he made it very clear to me that this is not leadership. One does not stick a wet finger in the air, see which way the wind is blowing and make decisions. He made his decisions based upon a very deeply entrenched set of principles.

What bothers me about this motion and its intent is that here we have a politician with 40 years of service in this country. This gentleman has been around this place longer than the eternal flame on the front lawn. When the Prime Minister showed up for his first day of work, the member for Leeds—Grenville showed up for his first day of kindergarten.

We have a country that is infinitely better off because this Prime Minister chose public service. We have an economy that is infinitely better off because this Prime Minister chose to accept the responsibility of leading the Liberal Party in the last 10 years. When this party came to power, we were facing a \$42 billion a year deficit. If government were a business, we would have been bankrupt. Tough decisions had to be made. It is very easy now to gloss over this and gloss over this period. Certainly the Tories tried. I can remember that the finance minister of the Tories at one point was preaching belt tightening. It appealed to Bay Street. It appealed to the fiscally responsible business people in our society.

● (1710)

When that plan of belt tightening got around the cabinet table, it was completely decimated. What would have been a little belt tightening then ended up being the equivalent of the Atkins diet in 1993. We had to make tough choices, tough choices for Liberals, tough choices for politicians who understand that things like investing in children are not costs. They are just that: investments. Things like investing in the environment are not costs on a balance sheet. Even with those deeply held principles, the job was done and the economy is much better off. We lead the G-7. *The Economist* magazine has highlighted Canada as the place to invest internationally. International agencies point to Canada as a market with the least amount of corruption in terms of a market for international business.

If we listened to the opposition, we would think the sky is falling. That is its job. Its job is to oppose and that is fine, but I think that in the twilight of this career this type of motion really is insulting.

I know that the current parliamentary secretary touched on the fact that in the last year we have seen the benefit of 40 years of experience in public life, certainly as a political party. I do not want to get partisan, but the job of political parties is to get power and put in place the principles and the values that the members hold. That is the job of the party, not the government.

In terms of the Liberal Party, the success of this current Prime Minister is unprecedented. People can spin it any way they want and they will not find a more successful political party leader than this particular gentleman, so that debate is moot. The opposition members may think that what they are looking at is a light at the end of the tunnel. I can tell the House that they may very well be looking at the light of a freight train. They do not want another election. One can only take losing so many times. I do not want to appear arrogant, but on a partisan political basis they cannot argue with his ability to win elections.

But let us look at what he does when he wins. I have never been prouder of the stand of our Prime Minister in the wake of what happened in Iraq. Certainly I was not proud of how that unfolded. I was not proud of some of the personal statements people made, but at the end of the day history will show that this Prime Minister's instinct was absolutely correct in terms of how we handle those types of situations and in terms of the fact that multilateralism, with its flaws, is the only option in dealing with issues of international crisis.

One of the issues that I feel very strongly about is the environment. I am of the view that we must structurally change our economy so that activities that harm the environment are taxed and activities that do not are not. We must encourage the self-policing concepts of profit and competition to make buckets of cash for companies that are good for the environment and to make sure that pollution does not pay. If we do not change structurally, we are in trouble.

*Private Members' Business*

The Prime Minister ratified the Kyoto Accord in the wake of some of the most ridiculous fearmongering and naysaying from the opposition. He stepped up to the plate, and generations and generations from now will look back at that small step. That is all that it was. The reductions that are inherent in the Kyoto accord represent about 10% of what we actually need to do if we are serious about sustaining life on this planet.

In the wake of that crisis and knowing that international agreements take decades, not years, to ratify, the Prime Minister stepped up and ratified Kyoto. I think we are seeing now with Russia's potential ratification that we are going to move on the file. It is not a panacea. It is not going to solve the problems. But that is leadership. That is what we have had and that is what we have from this Prime Minister.

When I woke up this morning I looked at the motion and thought, "This is ridiculous. This is a waste of the House's time. This sort of tips the scales when we have this debate about whether the House is going to prorogue or not". I thought that we have more important things to spend our time on. We have more important things to do.

• (1715)

At the end of the day, the motion is designed essentially to run out of town a gentleman who has given 40 years of his life to a very high level of public service. He has always considered public service to be the most noble of professions. We should not be running him out of town. Canada should have a parade in honour of one of the finest prime ministers that we have ever had or ever will have.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** Pursuant to order made Tuesday, October 21, the recorded division stands deferred until Tuesday, October 28 at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

Is it agreed to see the clock as 5:30 p.m.?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

### CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from May 8 consideration of the motion that Bill C-416, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act (sentencing principles), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**Mr. John Duncan (Vancouver Island North, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today to my colleague's bill, which would have the effect of reversing changes the government made in 1996, which my party opposed because they created non-equality before the law.

A basic premise of our law is that all citizens are equal before the law. What the amendment did was create a two tier system of justice, one for aboriginal Canadians and one for all other Canadians.

What those nine words in section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code did was suddenly discriminate against Canadian citizens and native people by creating a system of differential sentences. This goes against every principle that most Canadians hold dear.

The government would argue, of course, that this levelled the playing field because of the high rates of incarceration for our native peoples. That is a symptom of a whole different set of circumstances. We are not saying anything about community sentencing not being appropriate. We think it is highly appropriate.

What we are opposed to are the changes to the differential provisions under the Criminal Code. These have led to exactly where we thought they would lead. It has now put an onus onto judges to make decisions that fly in the face of common sense.

One of the implications of the current situation with our aboriginal population, in many situations, is that crimes perpetrated by aboriginals are perpetrated on aboriginals. Therefore they are the perpetrator and the victim. The aboriginal victims are being victimized all over again by this provision of the Criminal Code because it means they do not receive justice either.

Once more we have another symptom of the government promoting not criminal justice but justice for criminals. This is most inappropriate.

I have been very aware of community efforts to divert people from the sentencing procedures under the Criminal Code to a community sentencing option that judges can make reference to for all Canadians, not just aboriginals but some of them are specific for aboriginals. This can happen under the old law where all Canadians are treated equally.

Some of the alternative sentencing programs are most appropriate and have had very good results in terms of rehabilitating people. As we know, straight incarceration is often not the best alternative.

A judge on a case with which I am familiar said that the perpetrator had a cycle, a cycle of freedom, drunkenness and jail, and that cycle perpetuates itself and has perpetuated itself for a long time.

• (1720)

The individual in that case, after seven very serious violent assaults over a short period of time, has suddenly been given a conditional sentence. This means he will not be incarcerated but he will be expected to stay at home. This is most inappropriate since all the testimony and all the evidence has indicated that the person is not capable of meeting those requirements and will once more be a danger to his aboriginal community. The cycle of violence and abuse will begin all over again. This is most inappropriate.

That is why this amendment to the Criminal Code, proposed by my colleague from Manitoba, is endorsed by the First Nations Coalition for Accountability and others. We have had many well-intentioned moves by government that have been very counter-productive in this whole area.

I can provide another example of a problem. The federal government attempted to move female federal offenders closer to their communities so that rather than all of them being housed at Kingston, they would be dispersed across the country. The net result of all that, according to the Elizabeth Fry Society, and despite the monstrosity of the Kingston Penitentiary, is that these women are now worse off than they were before because there was no more money spent on them. When they were all in one place, programming was affordable for them, but now it is not given the resources that have been allocated.

This is a typical, ill-conceived methodology that the government is operating in its corrections system. It is changing the Criminal Code to suit its objective of incarcerating less people without putting the resources in place that will ensure that individuals who are sentenced in some other way are indeed rehabilitated and will not pose a further risk to their communities.

There are some very obvious examples of areas where I think the public would readily see why this amendment would be appropriate. For example, we all remember the sad story in December 2001 when RCMP constable, Dennis Strongquill, was murdered in the line of duty by Robert Sand. Mr. Sand's lawyer argued that he should receive a more lenient sentence because he was aboriginal. Mr. Strongquill was also an aboriginal who left six children fatherless.

A system of discounted sentencing based strictly on race divides our society and creates further victims. It does not assist or abet the development of the fabric of our society in the way that we should be using the Criminal Code. Once again we find the government promoting policies that divide Canadians rather than unite Canadians.

• (1725)

I want to conclude by saying that justice must be blind. Justice must not be peeking out from behind a blindfold, which is what this change to the Criminal Code has created within our system.

### *Private Members' Business*

I urge all members to support this most enlightened bill coming from the member for Portage—Lisgar.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marcel Gagnon (Champlain, BQ):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak today, on behalf of my party, on this bill to amend the Criminal Code by removing the obligation for the courts to pay special attention in the case of aboriginal adolescents or other groups of adolescents. I find it hard to talk about the fact that aboriginal peoples should not be considered in a particular way, and that they should be judged in the same way as everybody else.

Members need to have aboriginal communities in their ridings, as I do, and see the particular circumstances in which they live, to know that judges must be asked to consider these particular circumstances when judging aboriginal teens for any offences they might have committed.

We must try to act more justly toward this community. It is not true that aboriginal peoples have the same opportunities. It is not true that they are not influenced by their environment. It is not true that they have the opportunity to develop like everyone else.

It is true that we hear all kinds of things about the aboriginal peoples. Each time I have the opportunity to visit a reserve, as I did recently and as I will again in two weeks, I realize that there are people who live in trying circumstances. Without excusing them, I can understand that, at times, a despairing young aboriginal may commit reprehensible acts. On the contrary, I ask judges to consider the unique situation of these people.

We will vote against this bill, because we feel that sentencing alone is not enough, there must be understanding too. Recently, on my way back to Ottawa, I was listening to a show on Radio-Canada hosted by Marie-France Bazzo. She was interviewing an expert who showed how punishment, revenge and violence, even if reprehensible, begets only violence.

He showed that the United States, for example, has the highest prison population. Over the past few decades, the prison population in the U.S. has risen from one-third of a million to 2.3 million today. If violence is on the rise anywhere, it is in the United States.

Given all the measures that would prevent a judge from understanding the situation and analyzing the facts, particularly when it comes to adolescents, I will vote against this bill.

The House will remember the debates on the Young Offenders Act. My hon. colleague, Michel Bellehumeur, who is now a judge in Quebec, travelled around Quebec and fought to get Quebec's system adopted instead, since it had proved effective. Quebec's system is based on understanding and helping young offenders. It is not a system that seeks to impose harsher sentences, but rather one that ensures young offenders will be helped and reintegrated into society.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1730)

I am personally acquainted with some young people who today are a credit to Quebec society, but might have been put behind bars for life had they been judged with the severity that is being proposed.

I do not believe we should vote in favour of this legislative amendment. What is needed instead is to make an effort to take into consideration the conditions in which aboriginal people live and to, in the words of the law “respect gender, ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences and respond to the needs of aboriginal young persons and of young persons with special requirements”. This position, as a minimum, must be retained.

Looking at the latest census, we see that the average income of Canadians over the age of 15 years is \$25,196. The average for aboriginal Canadians, however, is \$14,283. So I do not want anyone to try to tell me that aboriginal young people lived in the same conditions as other Canadians.

These people need understanding. They need help. They need consideration of their situation. Let us try to help them and to understand them, rather than try to punish them, disregarding the fact that they are aboriginals and live under special circumstances.

I could certainly repeat the speeches made in this place by Michel Bellehumeur when he was an MP. They would show that what is needed is understanding, not repression. I share that opinion, and I am sure my party does as well. We will, therefore, be voting against this amendment.

• (1735)

[*English*]

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-416, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act introduced by the hon. member for Portage—Lisgar.

This bill would result in amending the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act so that a court would no longer have to consider the particular circumstances of aboriginal offenders when passing sentence. The amendment would apply to both adult and youth offenders.

The specific section of the Criminal Code that is at issue is section 718.2(e). It states that:

—all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders.

The proposed bill would delete these last nine words as well as similar provisions in the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The primary purpose of this principle is to encourage our courts to use restraint when considering imprisonment as a sentencing option. It is important to point out that this principle of restraint applies to all offenders, not just aboriginal offenders.

However, based on the fact that aboriginal offenders continue to be drastically over-represented in our criminal justice system and in our prisons, the principle stresses the importance of paying special attention to aboriginal offenders. Based on the history and current

plight of aboriginal peoples in Canada, this special recognition is both necessary and justified. I therefore cannot support Bill C-416.

This relatively new principle of requiring courts to consider the circumstances of aboriginal offenders came into effect in 1996 by virtue of Bill C-41. This is one of a number of principles that were codified in that bill. Since that time, the courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, have had an opportunity to consider this sentencing principle. I would like to share some of the comments that the Supreme Court made about paying particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders.

In 1999 the Supreme Court concluded in *Regina v. Gladue* that in sentencing aboriginal offenders section 718.2(e) required judges to consider the unique systemic or background factors that may have contributed to the offender having committed the crime, and then to consider whether there were traditional or cultural sentencing practices or sanctions that may have been appropriate for that particular offender in the circumstances.

The Supreme Court stated that aboriginal offenders:

—differ from those of the majority because many aboriginal people are victims of systemic and direct discrimination, many suffer the legacy of dislocation, and many are substantially affected by poor social and economic conditions.

In *Regina v. Wells*, a unanimous 6 to 0 decision in 2000, the Supreme Court upheld a lengthy prison sentence for an aboriginal offender who had sexually assaulted an aboriginal woman. When considering whether a conditional sentence would be appropriate, the court stated that the application of section 718.2(e) did not mean that a sentence for an aboriginal offender would automatically be reduced since the determination of a fit sentence required consideration of all of the principles and objectives of sentencing set out in part XXIII of the Criminal Code.

The court stated that while section 718.2(e) mandated a different methodology for the sentencing of aboriginal offenders, it did not necessarily mandate a different result. Section 718.2(e) did not alter the fundamental duty of the sentencing judge to impose a sentence that was fit for the offence and the offender.

The court further restated the principle set out in the earlier decision of *Gladue*, that at the more serious end of the range of offences it would be more likely that non-aboriginal and aboriginal offenders would receive similar sentences. The court confirmed that the section did not mean that aboriginal offenders must always be sentenced in a manner that gave greatest weight to the principles of restorative justice and less weight to goals such as deterrence and denunciation.

In the *Wells* decision, the Supreme Court confirmed that the trial judge, in imposing a 20-month sentence, correctly applied the sentencing objectives of denunciation and deterrence to a serious sexual assault.

The Supreme Court in *Wells* said, however, that in appropriate circumstances, a sentencing judge may accord the greatest weight to restorative principles notwithstanding the fact that an aboriginal offender committed a serious offence.



•(1740)

The court stated that a just and appropriate mix of accepted sentencing goals depended on the needs and current conditions of the particular community where the crime occurred. The court also rejected the notion that restorative sections were necessarily lenient. In fact, the court pointed out that making reparations to the victim and the community might be more onerous than serving a short prison sentence.

The Supreme Court, after fully considering that section, concluded that this provision did not give preferential treatment to aboriginal offenders but sought to treat aboriginal offenders fairly by recognizing that their circumstances were usually different.

I fully support the balanced approach that has been set out by the Supreme Court in applying section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code.

I am also pleased that section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code has encouraged the development of programs and services to assist aboriginal offenders across the country. For example, in Toronto, a "Gladue court", if we want to call it that, has been established and that makes section 718.2(e) work the way the Supreme Court has set out.

The government continues to be concerned about the over-representation of aboriginal offenders in the criminal justice system. This was confirmed by the statement made in the Speech from the Throne in 2001, opening the first session of this Parliament. It said:

Canada must take the measures needed to significantly reduce the percentage of Aboriginal people entering the criminal justice system, so that within a generation it is no higher than the Canadian average.

In conclusion, there is no doubt the aboriginal community is vastly over-represented in the criminal justice system. The government is continuing to make efforts to change this; however, the causes of over-representation involve complex social and economic factors, additions and disadvantages. These are historical and not easily dealt with.

Despite indications that the courts are supporting the sentencing provisions in the Criminal Code that encourage restraint in the use of incarceration, the government continues to be concerned about the incarceration of aboriginal offenders. The government will continue to make efforts to ensure that aboriginals are not over-represented in our prisons. Paying particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders at the sentencing stage is only one small part of the overall plan to reduce this over-representation.

Our society needs to focus on the root cause of crime so that long term changes will result. For example, we are funding programs for aboriginals through the national crime prevention strategy, the aboriginal justice strategy, and the youth justice renewal initiative.

The government is committed to working with our aboriginal people and all Canadians to contribute to a safer and more just society.

**Mr. Inky Mark (Dauphin—Swan River, PC):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservation Party to take part in the debate on Bill C-416.

This bill amends the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act by removing the obligation of a court to consider with

### *Private Members' Business*

particular attention the circumstances of aboriginal offenders when imposing a sentence.

Let me remind our viewers that during this hour the House deals with private members' business. Essentially this is business initiated by private members and does not necessarily reflect the views of the parties. As we know in the House, as members we will have a free vote on this, probably in the following week.

We in the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada are not supportive of this type of amendment. It is imperative that we recognize social and cultural differences and that this recognition not be a type of reverse discrimination. The recognition by the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act of the societal differences do not prevent a judge during the sentencing process from examining the same type of differences for non-aboriginal people. In fact, judges do take into account all the factors of the accused all the time.

The bill brings to light a very serious issue. If positive discussion stems from this debate, it will come in the form of recognition that there are societal and cultural differences that need to be acknowledged. We talk about the diversity of the country. In a sense we are talking about the same topic. We know that there are homeless in the country and that there are millionaires who drive Cadillacs.

The debate tonight centres on what would be an amendment to the new Youth Criminal Justice Act and the Criminal Code. I will begin by talking about the Youth Criminal Justice Act and then move to the main issue which surrounds the recognition of aboriginal offenders during the sentencing process.

Arguably one of the most important tasks that we undertake in this place is to put in place a more effective and accountable system of youth criminal justice.

This summer I met with a number of aboriginal communities to deal with that very same topic, lack of youth justice. I found that if the government of the day wishes to be successful on that portfolio, it will have to put a lot more money into making sure that its programs are happening at the grassroots level because today that is what is lacking. We do not have the resources, the money or the manpower to make sure that the youth justice system works. We cannot operate like we did before with a new act if we do not put in the resources.

As legislators we have to be adamant about recognizing that no bill will satisfy everyone. That is pretty commonplace in the House.

*Private Members' Business*

The Youth Criminal Justice Act was intended to simplify and streamline the system. Young people in particular, their parents and those who were tasked with the enforcement of youth criminal justice would be able to work in a more suitable and responsive fashion that would be quick to adapt to the changing times in which young people found themselves facing tough decisions which led to involvement in the criminal justice system. The intent clearly was to somehow codify a system that would allow for early intervention and the proverbial pre-emptive strike in dealing with young people when they made those decisions that challenge the law.

Sadly, what we have done is put layers on top of layers and created a system that will result in numerous delays and new court challenges. In fact, the justice system basically echoed the sentiment in dealing with aboriginal youth, is it better to deal with it at the local level through a justice committee or is it better to wait a year before the accused shows up in court? It does not make any sense. Community problems have to be solved at the community level.

● (1745)

This new approach that was supposed to achieve so much will have the polar opposite effect. It will result in delays which follow the old legal maxim that justice delayed is justice denied. That is the example I just gave.

The system will not allow young people and their parents in particular to grasp what is happening. Many who work in the system would certainly agree that accountability and responsibility are paramount to any youth justice system. What this will do is separate that nexus of accountability.

What we are doing here is trying to somehow codify the system of discretion, telling police that they can now issue warnings, that they can now issue cautions and that these have to be written up in a certain way. We are superimposing these responsibilities in an artificial way, telling police that they must be counsellors and caseworkers, that they must document all of this, do the paperwork and spend less time out on the streets and more time being administrators and paper shufflers. That is the problem that exists today.

This imposition on top of the current responsibilities of law enforcement and the demands upon the men and women who are currently carrying out that important task would result in a great deal of delay. It would result in a great deal of unnecessary, unsubstantiated work that is currently outside the realm of police in terms of where they should be concentrating their efforts.

There are a number of serious flaws in this bill. The amendment passed by the Senate last year does manage to shed light on a very serious problem that can be found not only in the youth system but the criminal justice system at large.

Noting differences for differences' sake is unacceptable. What we see in the Youth Criminal Justice Act is a recognition of the inherent differences that do exist, sadly, on native reserves in this country. The fact of the matter is there are social and economic differences and the consequences those have on young people are very acute. The problems found on our reserves are very serious and highlight some of the inequities throughout our entire country. These differences need to be addressed.

The inclusion of the recognition that circumstances differ is an important one for courts to consider, not only through the adjudication process but when considering sentencing. This is not tantamount to the solution. It is simply a reminder to those in the judiciary that this has to be taken note of.

If there is one positive that can come from the debate today, it may be that the bill proposed by the member for Portage—Lisgar demonstrates that the societal differences between aboriginal and non-aboriginal youth are officially recognized. In my opinion they should continue to be recognized.

I admit that justice should be blind to race, ethnicity and gender. In a perfect world we would not need the leviathan, but this is not a perfect world and these societal inequities remain and are evident today.

These directions are provided in the Criminal Code and the new Youth Criminal Justice Act. I would submit that the youth and the adult systems have to be consistent. We have to have similar protection under the new Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Statistics and studies have consistently shown that there are a disproportionate number of aboriginal youth incarcerated in our system. We have heard already this evening that 85% of people incarcerated come from aboriginal communities. I do not believe that there is a race or ethnicity issue associated with the particular clause we are considering.

The addition of aboriginal recognition during youth sentencing is consistent with current Criminal Code provisions. It is not about specializing the interests of the accused or the victim. It simply puts into legislation a recognition that the situation in which aboriginal people find themselves today is worthy of note in coming to a conclusion as to what the appropriate sentence is that is meted out by the sentencing judge.

Some have argued that it is in and of itself discriminatory to have a clause like this in the Criminal Code at all. Yet in our justice system we have to recognize that the courts have made a very important pronouncement, alluded to in the *Queen v. Gladue* which sets out quite clearly that we can improve upon the situation of aboriginals in our legal system by this recognition of their circumstances. It is one of simple consultation and it allows judges to recognize what is inherent in the country today.

I close by saying that justice is about helping people to better themselves. It is not about locking them up and throwing away the key.

● (1750)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Madam Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to add my voice and the voice of the New Democratic Party to oppose Bill C-416, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

*Private Members' Business*

For five years I was an employment specialist for youth at risk, be it employment or counselling for a vocation. I can say that provided there are the right programs and services, youth who are at risk can turn their lives around and make incredible contributions and strides in a matter of weeks or months. More important, they can become leaders and mentors.

This amendment goes in the wrong direction for youth. It singles them out in particular. I find I cannot support it.

I fail to see what the bill has to contribute to the elimination of crime, the improvement of the corrections system or the development of society. Rather than focusing on the causes of crime or the adverse situational circumstances affecting aboriginals, the Alliance is wasting the time of the House debating a measure that will contribute nothing to reducing crime.

I also point out that in aboriginal communities there are things that have been allowed to fester and to grow and have created conditions that are unique and special and challenges that require the commitment of the nation. We know that right now 50% of aboriginal children are living in poverty. We also know that the suicide rate of aboriginal children is more than five times the suicide rate of non-aboriginal children. These are statistics that come from troubled environments that need support and enhancement, not further unfair practices.

The Alliance is not proposing methods to tackle the causes of crime. It is proposing nothing to improve the circumstances faced by aboriginal people. Rather than getting tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime, it is getting tough on a convenient scapegoat. That is youth, youth that have perhaps made wrong decisions, or because of their background, require some assistance and some mentorship. That certainly could be developed a lot more strategically as opposed to this amendment.

Both the Liberals and the Alliance are reactive rather than proactive on this issue. The Liberals amended the legislation to deal with the particular circumstances of aboriginal offenders. The Alliance wants to do away with the amendment. Neither party is proposing measures that will resolve the underlying causes of crime in aboriginal communities. Why are they choosing to focus on the after the fact issues such as sentencing rather than getting serious about preventing crime and the underlying causes of crime within a particular community?

The whole situation reminds me of a scene from the TV program *The West Wing*, where a campaign strategist said, "We don't want a solution, we want an issue". That seems to be the whole Liberal-Alliance agenda.

The Liberals are false friends of the aboriginal people in this. Really, the clause is an admission that Canada's aboriginal people should not expect things to get better: "We will let far too many of you live in despair, but don't worry, we'll take that into account when we decide how long we put you in prison". Meanwhile, the Alliance claims that aboriginal people are getting off too lightly.

In the end, it is two sides of the same coin. Both the Liberals and the Alliance get an issue they can try to play to their mutual political advantage. Whether it is Liberal inaction or Alliance prejudice,

victims of crime continue to suffer. Canadian communities continue to suffer and aboriginal people continue to suffer.

Finally, any allegations that the Criminal Code extends preferential treatment to aboriginals is absolutely false and manipulative of the public's understanding. The code permits judges to adopt the sensitivity and understanding required when sentencing aboriginals. This degree of understanding is not extended because the justice system favours aboriginals, but because it allows judges to implement sentences that are more fully complete and achieve the public and individual good.

This specific discretion protects the public by allowing judges to impose sentences that are tailored specifically to the rehabilitation needs of a section of society, rather than confining a judge's discretion to imposing a one size fits all punishment that ignores the needs and realities of particular individuals, groups or a community.

Simply put, Bill C-416 has nothing to offer, nor will it change anything. Supporting the bill would only lend credibility to those who wish to conceal and manipulate the real issues.

• (1755)

**Ms. Val Meredith (South Surrey—White Rock—Langley, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, I have listened with interest and I do not disagree with some of the comments that have identified. There is a higher population of aboriginals in our corrections systems. I really find it amazing that their logic would say it will solve everything by giving them special sentences after they have committed crimes. I do not buy that.

I spent 15 years in Canada's north. I lived in a community that was 50% aboriginal. The aboriginal community got high offices on our local council because we treated them as equals. They ran businesses and were treated with respect in the business community because we treated them as equals. They rose to significant influence in our community because the community treated them as equals.

To have this philosophy that the only way aboriginal people will rise from oppression is by treating them differently is false. Our justice system is based on all people will be treated fairly and equally under the law. The fact that aboriginals have horrible living conditions on reserves will not be resolved by giving them special consideration under law.

What they need is substantial support from the federal government. The federal government has to stop treating them like children and stop denying them their proper place in society. The government does not give them good health care, which is its responsibility and it does not give them good education, which is also the government's responsibility.

Yes, there is a high suicide rate among young people on reserves. Yes, there are poor living conditions on reserves. We should be dealing with those kinds of issues.

To in law assume that it is only aboriginals who live in poverty is not true. Many non-aboriginal people live in poverty. Many non-aboriginal people are uneducated, do not have jobs and incomes and are on welfare and social assistance. To say that the way to solve all problems is to treat them differently in law will not resolve those issues.

*Private Members' Business*

To take our legal system and break it down on special conditions for this and special considerations for that, that has already happened. It is not codified. It is not written down in law. When a judge looks at all the circumstances and deals with anyone who appears before the court who has committed a crime, all these circumstances that have a place in the crime which was committed are taken into consideration by the judge when a sentence comes down, and so it should be.

We have argued that much of this does not need to be codified because it is already in practice. However, when we start codifying stuff, then we are starting to say that the law is not equal and is not fair. When we go down that slippery slope, we start breaking down what law is and what the justice system is to Canadians.

I do not argue with my colleagues that something is wrong and that a higher percentage of aboriginals are in our prisons and system. I do not argue that it is because of deplorable circumstances and living conditions. However, I do argue that codifying that a judge has to take that into special consideration and treat that person differently than they would treat a non-aboriginal is wrong. This is not the way to go.

When we look at the circumstances, I know the federal government spends a lot more money on different programs, restorative justice programs for the aboriginal people, and that is good. However that does not deal with the inherent problem that causes the higher number of aboriginal people to be in the court system.

• (1800)

We have to break down some of the prejudices that we see in perhaps our policing community that will throw an aboriginal in the drunk tank but take a non-aboriginal home. We have to change that attitude because it is not right. We have to change the attitude of some people who might say that these people do not have any better place to go so we should incarcerate them.

I know of a personal case in the community in which I was raised. A person who did not have a place to live was left alone during the summertime, but come fall he would be incarcerated because some people decided he would at least have a roof over his head and three meals a day.

Those are the wrong reasons for putting a person behind bars, but it was done for compassionate reasons. This guy would end up spending his time locked away during the winter months because people were concerned about his health and well-being. There has to be a better way for society to handle that sort of thing.

We have to deal with those kinds of issues that may skew some of these numbers. This comes down to root causes such as poverty, poor living conditions, poor health conditions or poor education. This does not happen just on reserves. A large community of aboriginals in Canada are not treaty Indians and do not get the protection of the federal government, albeit it is not much protection. That aboriginal community needs something.

Those aboriginals need economic development in their communities so that they can get jobs and have pride in having work and having income. We can restore their sense of pride because they do

not have to depend on federal government largesse and, in essence, the federal government treating them like children.

We need to do something substantial, but treating them separately and differently is not the way to do it. The aboriginal community will only become accepted in our society as equals when we as a society start treating them as equals. By always separating them, making special conditions for them and treating them as different, we will never reach a point where we are treating them as equals. I know this from my own experience in the community where we have a large native population. Only when they are treated as equals, will we be able to meet them face to face as equals.

My colleague who presented the amendment in Bill C-416 is only trying to get down to the basic point of the law, which is to treat all Canadians with fairness and with equality.

I rest my case. That is the essence of this issue. There are problems with our aboriginal people, but let us deal with those problems. Let us not get mixed up in corrupting a legal system to deal with problems that do not belong there.

• (1805)

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, Bill C-416 brought forward by my colleague, the Canadian Alliance member for Portage—Lisgar, is a good bill and it is an attempt to restore equality in the sentencing principles of the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Presently the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act include sections that instruct sentencing judges to “pay particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders”. These provisions can result in more lenient sentences for offenders based on race.

To sum it up for our viewing audience and for members who have just stepped into the chamber, the bill would remove that race based sentencing instruction in the Criminal Code and the Youth Criminal Justice Act and restore equality to our justice system.

Sentencing reforms adopted in 1996 created that two tier justice system; one for aboriginal Canadians and one for non-aboriginal Canadians. These reforms in the view of many of us actually stigmatize aboriginal Canadians by creating the false impression that they are more likely to commit crimes because of their race.

It is true that there probably is a greater percentage of native, aboriginal and first nations people in jail but that is not because of their race. It is because of other conditions that definitely and clearly need to be addressed, issues of poverty, family instability, low education rates and so on.

However this reform, which was instituted in 1996, actually creates the stigma that someone is an aboriginal person and because of that, the person is more likely to offend. As well these sentencing provisions in my view fail to acknowledge that the victims of crime committed by aboriginal offenders are usually aboriginal also. Aboriginal victims should have the same right to justice as non-aboriginal victims.

*Private Members' Business*

On December 21, 2001, RCMP Constable Dennis Strongquill, himself an aboriginal person, was murdered in the line of duty by Robert Sand. It was a brutal murder. Mr. Sand's lawyer argued that he should receive a more lenient sentence because he was an aboriginal and so we had justice at least argued to be denied, by that judge, to six fatherless children, which was something perpetrated against another aboriginal person. Imagine how his wife and six children feel about the murderer of their father getting off light because he is aboriginal.

Discounted sentences come at a high price. When the Liberals introduced these amendments, it was obvious that they chose criminals over the victims. These sentencing provisions deny aboriginal victims the full and equal protection of the law.

I have another story from the Montreal *Gazette*. It tells about one of the scariest nights of a particular aboriginal woman's life when two men went on separate drunk shooting sprees in her community of Mistissini, 90 kilometres northwest of Chibougamau. It goes on in the story to talk about the fright that took place. After it was all over, police chief Blacksmith said that the real problem was the justice system. He said:

We're not getting the appropriate sentences for these guys. Every time we bring someone in on serious charges, they're back out again in a few months.

Chief Blacksmith is a Cree who has lived on that reserve for more than 30 years. He points back to a 1990 Supreme Court ruling requiring judges to consider background and other social factors in sentencing aboriginal offenders. He said:

They always bring it up to get a more lenient sentence. It means we end up babysitting all sorts of serious offenders.

My colleague's intent is to put some equality back into the justice system. In particular, victims are victimized all over again by the very lenient or lighter sentences without the seriousness of the crime taken into account and the kind of treatment delivered or dished out by the individual who has offended and has committed that very serious offence against another aboriginal person.

We who are in the Canadian Alliance support the bill. There should be due consideration for the bill in the House. In the meantime we have a kind of racism in that we are not giving proper justice to aboriginal people based on their skin colour. That is clearly wrong.

• (1810)

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, justice should always be blind to race. What my private member's bill, Bill C-416, will do is achieve the removal of the references to race, both in the Criminal Code and in the Youth Justice Act. These are unique to Canada and it is sad when these references compel judges to consider in the determination of a sentence whether a convicted offender is an aboriginal person.

I have listened intently to the arguments put forward by my colleagues, some thoughtful, some less thoughtful. Certainly in some of the comments there is no evidence that people have read the actual bill, in fact. The government's argument seems to be that because there are too many aboriginal people in jail, there should therefore be special consideration to reduce the percentage of aboriginal people in jail. That is a kind of quota system. There is no logic or fairness to that. The justice system is supposed to look at the individual person

in determining sentencing, and that is exactly what the judge has to do now.

What this provision does is require the judge to be a social worker and take a look at the race of the person, to peek out from under the blindfold and see what colour of skin the person has. That is supposed to influence sentencing. There is no logic or fairness in that.

There are too many aboriginal people incarcerated. That is a problem, but they have committed a crime and they have received a sentence. That is why that person, who has made that individual decision, is in jail. Sixty per cent of federal inmates in Manitoba are aboriginal, versus an aboriginal population, though younger certainly, of 13%. In Saskatchewan, fully two-thirds of young offenders incarcerated are aboriginal. There is a problem, but those figures, while shocking, are no excuse for a requirement that instructs judges to be lenient based solely on racial characteristics. There is no fairness in that. That is tantamount to providing a volume discount for crime.

It is an absurd proposition to suggest that we will reduce the rate of incarceration of aboriginal people, or any other group, for that matter, by simply sentencing them more lightly. Nor will we reduce the rate of criminal activity of such a group by doing that. The correct approach would clearly focus on preventing the crime in the first place. This is something the government has had precious little success in doing.

Members from the New Democratic Party and the Liberal Party talk about crime prevention mechanisms, but they fail to adopt common sense changes which would empower individual aboriginal people to a greater degree, such as human rights protection. These are the kinds of things the Canadian Alliance supports: human rights protection for all aboriginal people, the only group in the country that does not have it, and matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women so that they would have the security and confidence that all other women in Canada now enjoy.

These are meaningful changes that the Canadian Alliance has brought forward. The government has failed to act on them. In so doing, it has continued to perpetuate the strength of chiefs at the expense of vulnerable individuals on reserves. I grew up next to a reserve. I have spent my whole life with aboriginal people. I urge the government to take steps to prevent crime, meaningful steps, by empowering individual aboriginal people against the concentrated power of the chiefs and the elites on reserves.

The fact of the matter is that we have advanced matrimonial property rights proposals, as I mentioned, which would give aboriginal people the right to own their own homes, human rights protection, as I mentioned, and consumer equality for aboriginal people so that they could obtain credit and engage in transactions that we take for granted. There are so many proposals we have brought forward. None were adopted.

*Adjournment Debate*

I listened to the member from the NDP, who, with his poorly researched and idiotic comments, was saying that all this is about is punishment. My God, that is pap. The fact of the matter is that we have brought these ideas forward because we believe in them strongly. We in this caucus represent more aboriginal people than everyone else in the House combined. For heaven's sake, I say, show some respect to people when they present ideas in the House and do not go with the idiotic political correctness and the poorly researched ideas. It is absurd.

Aboriginal people are diverse. There are over 600 first nations communities. Half the aboriginal population in this country lives off reserve. Aboriginal people have a complete gamut of skills, vocations and familial environments. They do not all grow up in alcoholic households, they do not all come from broken homes, and they are not all on welfare. These old stereotypes are dangerous and the government plays to them when it references group membership in the Criminal Code.

• (1815)

The fact of the matter is that we have to deal with this issue in a meaningful way. I believe that what the government has chosen to do is favour aboriginal criminals at the expense of aboriginal victims. That is grossly unfair. Adopting this bill will change that. I urge my colleagues to support it.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The time provided for debate has expired. Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

Pursuant to Standing Order 93, the recorded division on the motion stands deferred until Wednesday, October 29, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[English]

ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, on October 8, I asked the Solicitor General to explain why registering firearms is a higher priority than uncovering DNA evidence that would put real criminals behind bars.

I am here tonight once again because the Solicitor General failed to answer the question. I am also here tonight to provide evidence that refutes the minister's claim that the Liberals are doing a good job at the forensic labs and on gun control.

I did not have to go very far to find this evidence that the Solicitor General either does not know what he is talking about or is being fed a line by the RCMP under his command. It appears in a letter to the editor from retired RCMP Staff Sergeant and forensics expert Mr. Dave Hepworth. He has over 30 years' experience in the RCMP labs, including a stint as the laboratory section head.

On October 18, Mr. Hepworth responded to two letters, one from the Solicitor General published in the *Regina Leader-Post* on October 11, and one from the RCMP assistant commissioner in charge of the forensic labs.

Mr. Hepworth wrote:

In an Oct. 17 letter in the *Leader-Post*, the RCMP assistant commissioner in charge of forensic lab services reported 615 DNA cases in active analysis, 30 cases open and ready to be entered into analysis, and 38 cases unopened. This equates to a total of 683 DNA cases in backlog across Canada. By any measurement, this is a huge backlog that has resulted in average response times of 55 days for urgent cases—those involving suspected serial offenders such as rapists or murderers.

He went on to say:

Internally, the RCMP has a corporate diary date of 15 days on urgent cases, but so far this year has only met that diary date in approximately 26 per cent of the cases submitted as urgent. From the standpoint of both a forensic scientist and citizen of Canada I find this unacceptable.

Timely DNA analysis used in conjunction with the national DNA databank is not only capable of solving crime; it has a great potential for preventing crime.

In his letter, the solicitor general points out that Regina is to become "our national centre of scientific expertise on firearms," but does he know the state of that facility?

At present, there is approximately one-half the number of firearms specialists there were five years ago. Case backlogs within the firearms discipline have reached the 400 zone and response times have grown from approximately two weeks to four months. Currently there are only three people in training and within the next few years a large percentage of the senior specialists are due to retire.

Recently, it was announced that firearms examination services would no longer be provided to provincial wildlife enforcement officers anywhere in Canada. Why? The answer is simple: "insufficient resources". This means that with hunting season at hand, withdrawal of firearms section services has, in effect, declared open season on poaching. I would simply ask the question, "does this sound like our national centre of scientific expertise on firearms?" It sounds more like a system in crisis!

That is a very long quote, Madam Speaker, but you get the idea, and this man is an expert.

Just yesterday, in a column that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, Mr. Hepworth wrote:

I urge each and every one of you to ask your MP this simple question. If you had a tool that could prevent crime and needless suffering, save the taxpayers money and solve crimes, why wouldn't you use it?

As Canadians, we deserve an answer to that question. After all, our government was willing to spend \$1 billion on a gun registry; a system that has yet to provide evidence it has saved a single life. We have the tools to make a difference. We only need the motivation and vision to use them.

The Solicitor General will not answer our questions. Will he answer Mr. Hepworth's questions? He makes the very good point that we have resources, and we have seen within the last little while \$10 million—

•(1820)

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Parliamentary Secretary to the Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, let me assure the House and all Canadians that the RCMP is fully committed to delivering forensic laboratory services that provide scientific and technical assistance to law enforcement agencies in a timely and efficient manner.

It is standard practice for the RCMP to perform regular reviews of programs to ensure the most effective use of resources in line with its priorities. In 1998, the forensic laboratory services commenced an organizational review of the laboratories to improve and streamline services to better meet the needs of law enforcement partners across Canada.

The member for Yorkton—Melville mentioned the Auditor General's report of 2000. Yes, it made recommendations for a more efficient national laboratory system. As a result of those recommendations and the organizational review, a new service delivery model is now in the final stages of implementation and will be completed in April 2004.

Contrary to what the member for Yorkton—Melville would have Canadians and other members of the House believe, this restructuring will be accomplished without staff layoffs or the closure of laboratory sites.

The recent reports of massive backlogs of DNA casework at the forensic laboratories, which we heard about again today from the member for Yorkton—Melville, are misleading. The backlog of DNA casework is being addressed and significant progress is being made in eliminating this backlog.

Prior to the rationalization, there was a backlog of cases and the average processing time for a DNA case was more than 365 days, as the Auditor General mentioned. This has improved, as the member himself states, to an average of 55 days for urgent cases. I do not know what Canadian would not say that is a heck of an improvement. I do not want to use the other "H" word which also has four letters, but it is a heck of an improvement.

It is standard that all cases be opened within five days of receipt at the laboratory. The RCMP works closely with its policing partners to ensure that their needs are being met and the forensic labs will expedite the processing of samples from high risk cases as warranted. The police have only to ask.

The member himself mentioned that as of September 26, 2003, there were 683 cases in the entire country being worked on. That was the entire so-called DNA backlog. Of those cases, approximately 615 were in analytical processes or were completed and were waiting to be reported. Of the 683 cases, approximately 20 cases were of an urgent nature and had received a priority rating within the forensic laboratory services. So even though the restructuring of our forensic laboratory services is not yet complete, there have been real,

### *Adjournment Debate*

significant improvements in the timeliness of processing and reporting of DNA cases.

The RCMP forensic labs turnaround times of 15 days for urgent cases and 30 days for routine cases is an ambitious target and will be realized as a result of the restructuring exercise as it reaches its completion.

I will leave it there. I am sure the member opposite has other comments he wants to make.

•(1825)

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz:** Madam Speaker, this is a gross miscarriage of justice. DNA analysis prevents crime. It helps solve crime and it puts real criminals in jail.

As all hon. members know, I am familiar with that useless \$1 billion gun registry. It does not prevent crime, does not solve crime and completely ignores real criminals. If we were to put just a fraction of that money into the DNA lab we would accomplish something.

I ask those who are listening, do they believe the hon. parliamentary secretary or do they believe an expert who works in Regina and knows exactly what is going on there? He knows what he is talking about. He is an expert in that field.

I would like to conclude by reading a section of an October 17 column by Doug Beazley in the *Edmonton Sun*. He summed up this whole Liberal mess this way:

One thing we do know: money can fix this.

Hepworth estimates another \$5 million a year could beat the backlog down—chickenfeed compared to the \$1 billion our federal government has squandered on a gun registry which has yet to save a single life.

What a warped sense of priorities. What a bloody waste.

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Madam Speaker, I personally do not know the expert the member from Yorkton is talking about.

However before coming into politics I was in the law enforcement milieu. I have a great deal of respect for our police and law enforcement agencies, and what they have to say. Two years of survey results from the police who use the laboratory services show that 92% believe the services are timely and 98% say that the laboratories are responsive to their needs. I take that as solid information.

The other information I have is that the RCMP forensic labs have been recognized and meet international quality assurance standards, including ISO 17025 accreditation.

I hope the member from Yorkton knows what an ISO accreditation is all about.

### COAST GUARD

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I gives me great pleasure to again raise one of my pet concerns, the issue of the Coast Guard.

The other day in the House I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, on behalf of all Canadians, a question which I thought was very simple.

*Adjournment Debate*

When the commissioner of the Coast Guard, John Adams, appeared before the fisheries committee hearings—and the hon. parliamentary secretary was there to hear his comments—the committee asked Mr. Adams if the mandate of the Coast Guard was to guard the coasts. Mr. Adams' answer was, no, that was not its mandate.

Since we have three very large ocean coastlines and a large Great Lakes water system, I am thinking, very nervously, that if it is not the Coast Guard's responsibility to guard the coastlines, then who does it.

We have had indications that it is the responsibility of the RCMP and defence. Therefore we went to the RCMP and the defence department. The RCMP in Windsor said that it did not have the resources or manpower to do the Great Lakes protection at all. We then went to officials at DND and they told us that they did not have the resources or manpower to patrol our three oceans, even on an irregular basis.

It makes us think that it is no wonder the United States would be nervous about us in terms of a security risk when ships of any size can come on to our coastline completely undetected.

If the House does not believe that to be true, last year we had two incidents just outside Halifax harbour, including one at Chebucto Head where a freighter landed on shore. We did not know about it until authorities went to see it. Nobody was on board and the crew was caught hitchhiking down the road. How does a freighter land on the shore right next to Halifax harbour, with a population of almost 380,000 people? One has to wonder who is guarding our coastline.

We have a tremendous problem in terms of environmental spills. In fact, the commissioner of the Coast Guard said that 75% to about 80% of all spills in Atlantic Canada are mystery spills. Officials have no idea where the pollution comes from and yet it is destroying our marine life and aquatic species that many people rely on for their economic opportunities.

It begs the question, who exactly is providing security for our coastlines?

I will say that a company called Provincial Airlines, which operates out of Newfoundland but has offices in Nova Scotia and British Columbia, does some surveillance on contract but even it has a contract with the government that clearly says that it does not have the resources or manpower to do everything it would love to do for the government.

Once again, on behalf of all Canadians who think the Coast Guard's role is to guard the coast, I will ask the question. If it is not the mandate of the Coast Guard to guard our coasts then who exactly is in charge of protecting our Great Lakes system and the Pacific, Arctic and Atlantic Oceans?

• (1830)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Georges Farrah (Bonaventure—Gaspé—Îles-de-la-Madeleine—Pabok, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I am pleased that the member raised the issue tonight so that we can clarify the facts. Indeed, people sometimes get confused about the mandate of certain government departments.

If the member wants a debate on whether the various organizations are adequately equipped, this is one thing. However, if he asks me specifically who has the mandate to patrol the coasts and the territorial waters of Canada, I can tell him that it is the Department of National Defence. This is quite clear. If he wants a debate on whether it is adequately equipped, this is another matter.

When the member says that problems might have occurred not far from the Halifax harbour, perhaps this is true, except that the Halifax harbour is an important harbour of the Canadian navy. With the frigates and the vessels that are there, we can certainly say that Canadian territorial waters, particularly in the Atlantic region, are very well protected, and that the Department of National Defence is doing an absolutely extraordinary job.

The role of the Coast Guard is simple. It includes search and rescue, boating safety, ice-breaking services, assistance to vessels underway, marine communications and traffic services, aids to navigation, environmental protection, response to pollution incidents, navigable waters protection, safe use of ship channels, support to conservation and habitat protection programs, support to scientific programs and assistance to other departments.

What matters from a government point of view is that the various departments with a capacity to act with respect to our territorial waters can work in a coordinated fashion. The Coast Guard's traffic, radio and service centres are working closely with the Department of National Defence.

If there is any indication that our security could be threatened, information is systematically directed to DND, and the RCMP may also become involved. This ensures a concerted action, under the auspices of DND whose role this is. This is how we can respond. Since the events of September 11, 2001, international security has become a greater concern than ever.

Within the government, we have an interdepartmental committee chaired by the Minister of Transport. Around the table where we coordinate our actions, we have National Defence, Fisheries and Oceans, because it concerns the Coast Guard, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency and the RCMP.

All this demonstrates that the government is very concerned about the safety of our navigable waterways. Still, the mandate of providing security on Canada's coasts belongs specifically to the Department of National Defence, which works in collaboration with various parts of the government to ensure the safety of all Canadians.

• (1835)

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter Stoffer:** Madam Speaker, with tongue in cheek I say to the hon. member, for whom I have the greatest respect and who sits on the same committee as I, that he has heard almost every organization, which appeared before our committee on the Coast Guard, very clearly say that the Coast Guard was in an absolute mess. It does not matter how one looks at it, the Coast Guard is in serious trouble. However that is an argument for another day.



*Adjournment Debate*

The member said that it was up to the defence department to guard some of the largest coastlines in the world, which are the Pacific, Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, as well as our Great Lakes system. I do not think too many frigates are patrolling the Great Lakes at this time.

I do have a very simple and perhaps facetious question. If the member says that it is up to the defence department to guard our coastlines, why the drastic cuts to the Aurora flights that used to patrol the Arctic? Could he tell us how many frigates or patrol vessels are patrolling the waters of Canada right now, not only in defence but in actions of prevention of pollution, overfishing, drug interdiction or illegal immigrants?

If he says that it is up to the defence department to guard our coastlines, exactly how many vessels are actively patrolling our waters at this time, or within the week, and giving blanket coverage—

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Georges Farrah:** Madam Speaker, objectively, the hon. member should recognize that the government is investing over one billion dollars to supply National Defence with additional equipment.

I have been told that the Aurora aircraft destined for surveillance use are part of a program that has not been cut. I have also been told that the minister is very concerned about this issue and will soon make announcements about it. Investments will be made.

Very objectively, if the hon. member would like to debate whether the Coast Guard is receiving sufficient funding, that is another thing. At the moment, we are talking about who is responsible for the safety and security of Canadians along our coasts. That responsibility falls to National Defence. With the amounts invested by this government, I do not think anyone can accuse us of not taking this seriously.

[*English*]

## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Canadian Alliance):** Madam Speaker, it is with disappointment that I find it necessary to call into question the response I received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs regarding Canadian participation in a ground based missile defence system.

In the past, reporting of our exchanges in the House of Commons have been manipulated and misreported into something entirely false. As fellow professionals, I know the minister understands and accepts this as I do.

Although I appreciate the element of partisanship that follows ministerial responses, the government does have a responsibility to adhere to the issues when answering to the Canadian public. It is simplistic on behalf of the government to state that if we support our friends and allies, and in this case our largest trading partner, we do so to the detriment of our own national interest.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs would have Canadians believe that by supporting our traditional ally, the United States, we are somehow being unpatriotic Canadians. This is false.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs made the suggestion that it was the official opposition that said Canadians were anti-American but he knows it was a member of the minister's caucus, the member for Mississauga Centre, who went on national television to make her anti-American comments. It was the Minister of Natural Resources, the colleague of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who made the anti-American comments.

Blaming the official opposition for the anti-American rhetoric of government members is like saying that we forced the industry minister to climb aboard the Irving company jet for a free plane ride.

We in the official opposition understand the necessity for good relations with our largest trading partner. I am pleased to acknowledge the efforts of my leader and members of our party who travelled to Washington on behalf of thoughtful Canadians. We support civil relations with our southern neighbour to repair the damage done by the government with its unfortunate pandering to anti-American sentiment for certain segments of the population.

Canada has an international reputation as defence freeloaders. There seems to be a pattern here.

Defence business is vital to Canada's aerospace industry and, in the words of the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada:

Key to our success in the global market is unfettered access to opportunities in the United States, the single largest market for aerospace goods and services.

While Canada's aerospace industry became the fourth largest in the world in 1999, the bulk of its output is civil aviation. As it has been pointed out, there needs to be a balance in the industry.

Billions of dollars in export revenues and thousands of jobs depend on the aerospace industry. By Canada signalling a willingness to participate in national missile defence, Canadians will benefit in a number of different ways.

First and foremost, we are participating in the defence of our own nation, in the name of our sovereignty. What could be more patriotic? Maybe we could start to shed the reputation of the Liberal Party as defence freeloaders with a firm declaration.

Second, Canada would be sending a clear signal to our strongest ally and our largest trading partner that we are serious about repairing the damaged relations that currently exist between Canada and the United States. Only then will we see some progress on issues like softwood lumber and mad cow disease.

Third, we would be securing thousands of Canadian jobs with the prospect of creating more employment in a value added, knowledge based industry.

● (1840)

**Mr. Dominic LeBlanc (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, as the House is aware, on the 29th of May the Minister of National Defence did exactly what the hon. member has asked and signalled a willingness to discuss with the United States the concept of ballistic missile defence.

*Adjournment Debate*

Since that announcement, discussions have taken place on a number of occasions and have proceeded very well. These discussions have addressed a number of issues important to Canadians, including the potential for industrial benefits to Canadian companies should Canada ultimately decide to participate.

The hon. member is perhaps jumping ahead of herself. There has been no final decision to sign up to a ballistic missile defence system at this time. Some people in the House, including the hon. member, have suggested that we should put our name now on the dotted line because substantial industrial benefits might accrue to Canadian companies. In our view, such haste is imprudent.

Decisions regarding the security of Canadians should not rest upon whether or not there would be some commercial benefit to Canadians, or whether or not, in the member's exaggerated and I find rather dramatic view, we need to somehow correct policy decisions that the government is proud to have taken in the past. We justifiably place the security of Canadians as the main priority in assessing whether or not to participate in something like ballistic missile defence.

Canada has for many years taken a comprehensive approach to the issue of ballistic missile proliferation based upon the diplomatic engagement of Canada, promotion of multilateral arms control mechanisms and the examination of potential defensive capabilities. Through this approach, we have sought to address the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology in a manner that respects Canada's longstanding policies on arms control and strategic stability.

I have every confidence that Canadian companies would be well qualified to compete for defence contracts. Our expertise in many sectors of these industries is world leading. I think the member acknowledged in her comments the great example of the Canadian aerospace industry. Furthermore we have a long experience in cooperative industrial ventures with the United States. Our cooperation with the United States, for example on joint strike fighters has earned Canadian companies substantial industrial benefits.

We have taken seriously our joint responsibility for the defence of North America. Canadian security cannot be separated from continental security. That is why we have a longstanding commitment and have participated as a full partner in the North American Aerospace Defence Command, Norad, a binational defence institution that has conferred substantial security benefits upon both nations.

The case for participating in ballistic missile defence will be made in a principled way. The government will make a principled decision. Once that decision is made, if in fact the government decided that, for example, Canada's longstanding policy against the

weaponization of space could be respected, if Canada ultimately decided to participate, I have every confidence Canadian companies would benefit greatly. However, the decision to participate should not simply be based upon that narrow interpretation.

• (1845)

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant:** Madam Speaker, I think the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence must be indicating that we are going to be freeloading again on this defence system.

He was at the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs today, in which it was outlined that the United States plans on implementing its missile defence program by October 2004. That is less than a year away.

The government has poured billions of dollars into the aerospace industry to support companies like Bombardier, only to take away its market, which results in it asking for and receiving billions more in subsidies. The Prime Minister has defended the \$100 million jet purchase as a bailout for Bombardier. Maybe Bombardier would not have to keep on looking for taxpayer handouts if the government would coordinate what the left hand is doing with the right hand.

One way or another, it is time for a firm decision to be made to end the uncertainty in the Canadian aerospace industry over whether or not we will be able to share the technologies of the national missile program.

**Mr. Dominic LeBlanc:** Madam Speaker, I do not think anybody in the House needs to be lectured on freeloading from the Alliance Party. It has appropriated the word conservative. It is freeloading on the reputation of the Progressive Conservative Party to try and pull itself out of the electoral ditch that it is in.

Freeloading in national defence is not something that Canada has done at all. It is disparaging the major commitments that Canadians are making and our troops are making in many operations around the world.

As we stand here tonight I find it unfortunate that the decision to participate in something as important as ballistic missile defence should be mixed up with the Alliance's obsession about denying a wonderful Canadian company like Bombardier a chance to participate in the global market in aerospace.

We on this side of the House are committed to pursuing the interests of Canadian sovereignty and the defence of North America.

**The Acting Speaker (Ms. Bakopanos):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:48 p.m.)





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