



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

---

VOLUME 139 • NUMBER 002 • 3rd SESSION • 37th PARLIAMENT

---

OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 3, 2004**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

## **CONTENTS**

(Table of Contents appears at back of this issue.)

All parliamentary publications are available on the  
"Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire" at the following address:

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 3, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

---

*Prayers*

---

• (1005)

[English]

## CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table a special report from the Canadian Human Rights Commission concerning the treatment of federally sentenced women in federal institutions and community correctional services.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

**The Speaker:** It is my duty to inform the House that pursuant to the act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act, Chapter 32, Statutes of Canada, 1997, the following appointments were made to the Board of Internal Economy: Mr. Saada and Mr. Bélanger, members of the Queen's Privy Council, will replace Mr. Boudria and Mr. Mitchell.

---

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (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 444 petitions.

\* \* \*

### PETITIONS

#### STEM CELL RESEARCH

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from citizens of the Peterborough area who are concerned about stem cell research. They point out that hundreds of thousands of Canadians suffer from debilitating diseases such as Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, diabetes, cancer, muscular dystrophy and spinal cord injury.

These Canadians support ethical stem cell research. They call upon Parliament to focus its legislative support on adult stem cell

research to find the cures and therapies necessary to treat such illnesses.

#### KIDNEY DISEASE

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens concerned about kidney disease who point out that kidney disease is already a great and rapidly growing problem in our society. They appreciate that real progress is being made in dealing with kidney disease. They appreciate the work that the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are already doing to improve solutions to kidney disease, but they call upon Parliament to encourage the Canadian Institutes of Health Research to explicitly include kidney research as one of the institutes in its system, to be named the kidney and urinary tract diseases institute.

#### OVARIAN CANCER

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to present two petitions to the House of Commons. The first one is from women right across Canada. Over 2,600 women are diagnosed with ovarian cancer every year, one in 70 women in Canada, and over 1,500 Canadian women die each year of this disease because the symptoms are often vague and diagnosis is usually made in the later stages when a cure is less likely. If ovarian cancer is found early and treated, the survival rate is as high as 90%.

Therefore your petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to focus its legislative support in ensuring that the Government of Canada join the government of United States of America by proclaiming the month of September as ovarian cancer month and support research into finding early detection tests for ovarian cancer and in raising awareness about the seriousness of this women's disease across North America.

#### MARRIAGE

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition to the House of Commons and Parliament assembled supports marriage as the foundation for families and the raising of children.

#### STEVEN TRUSCOTT

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I wish to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex who call upon Parliament to ask the Minister of Justice to undertake a thorough re-examination of the Truscott case within a reasonable time period and to ensure that justice is restored to Mr. Truscott.

*S. O. 52*

## MARRIAGE

**Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, pursuant to Standing Order 36, calls upon Parliament to take whatever action is required to maintain the current definition in law of marriage in perpetuity and to prevent any court from overturning or amending that definition.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very happy this morning to be able to present to you and to this House four petitions from across Saskatchewan, not just from my constituency, calling upon the government to re-examine the definition of marriage. They want it to be as it was in 1999 and they are strongly convinced that there should be no changes.

## NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions related to the sale of natural health drugs. The petitioners are crying for support for private member's motion No. M-83 in these petitions.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Ovid Jackson (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to present on behalf of 650 of my constituents of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound a petition confirming the traditional definition of marriage.

## DIVORCE ACT

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present today from the constituents of my riding of West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast and from people across British Columbia.

The first asks that the Divorce Act be amended to require that both parents of every child of a divorce be equal parents of their children.

• (1010)

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls for the government to retain the protection in the Criminal Code for the freedom of speech and freedom of religion.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. John Reynolds (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls upon Parliament to renew debate on the definition of marriage and reaffirm its commitment to preserving the traditional definition of marriage.

## SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have thousands of names here petitioned in the House of Commons asking that government assembled in Parliament amend Bill C-23, allowing for retroactive inclusion of sex offenders serving a sentence or paroled for sexual offences and that sex offenders automatically be included on the national sex offender registry, removing the possibility of using the registry as a bargaining chip in going through the criminal justice system.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I have another petition with hundreds of names.

The petitioners are concerned about the definition of marriage and ask Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being a lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others, and I certainly concur with that.

## AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Finally, Mr. Speaker, I have another petition that asks Parliament to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to raise the age of sexual consent for sexual activity between a young person and an adult from 14 years to 16 years. This is highly regarded in my community.

## SALMON FARMING

**Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to present a present a petition from several hundred members of my riding, specifically the Prince Rupert area, regarding salmon farming. In the petition, they ask that Parliament pass the necessary legislation to make farmed salmon a truly sustainable and healthy food choice.

\* \* \*

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

## REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

## BOVINE SPONGIFORM ENCEPHALOPATHY

**The Speaker:** With regard to emergency debates, the Chair has received a notice from the hon. member for Huron—Bruce.

**Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you will note, and as you will probably comment in a few moments, during the recess period I made it known to you and to others that I would encourage an emergency debate on the seriousness of the BSE issue, the mad cow disease issue.

I am trusting you will rule favourably that we will, at the earliest time convenient to this House, find it possible to be able to debate that on all sides of this House, because this is an issue that affects all Canadians and primarily our cattle producers in this country.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that tomorrow evening, at the conclusion of government orders, there will be a take note debate on this issue in response to the initiatives taken by my two colleagues and to questions that have been raised by other members of this House.

*The Address**[English]*

**The Speaker:** Under the circumstances, I assume the request for the debate for this evening is withdrawn.

---

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

*[English]***RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed from February 2 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to offer some remarks in response to the Speech from the Throne presented yesterday by Her Excellency the Governor General.

Before getting to the substance of my remarks I would like to take a moment, if I may, to make reference to the new political configuration in the House. The past year has been a tumultuous one for Conservatives everywhere in Canada. The bottom line, after all the tumult, is present here before us all today: a united Conservative Party of Canada.

- (1015)

*[Translation]*

This past year has been a very busy one for Conservatives across the country. The final result is before us today: the new, united Conservative Party of Canada.

*[English]*

I think I can say without fear of reproach that as parliamentarians, as politicians and as people interested in the welfare of our fellow citizens, we all owe a serious debt of gratitude to the member for Calgary Southwest and the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough. These two men found a way to get over past battles and to focus on the future. They reunited the Conservative family in this country and, as I said a moment ago, I believe we are all the better for it. Parliamentary democracy functions best when there is competition, accountability and respect for the rules of fair play and political courtesy.

*[Translation]*

I am confident that now that the uncertainty is behind us, Canadians will witness a much more dynamic exchange of ideas here in Ottawa. Our friends who form the government will have to start taking more interest in what is going on here.

*[English]*

This will be good for Parliament and it will be beneficial to our democracy and our country.

As I listened to Her Excellency's remarks yesterday I must say I was more than a little disappointed. This was in fact the Prime Minister's first opportunity to address the nation. It was his day to put a road map on the table telling Canadians where he wants to go, what he wants to achieve and how he intends to achieve it.

Unfortunately, instead of a map we were shown a rather blurry set of directions that gave little indication where anyone was going. There were pages and pages full of carefully crafted claims that did little to tackle the challenges we face as a country, and, in the best tradition of the member for LaSalle—Émard, it made ambiguity appear to be a national virtue.

Her Excellency's speech yesterday spent a lot of time touching on issues dear to the hearts of Liberals everywhere. Unfortunately it had little of substance to say about the more prosaic, more important business of governing the nation and paying for the promises.

The pundits tell us we are going to have an election in the spring. Canadians might well wonder why. Why another election? After all it has only been three and a half years since the last one. We are told that our new Prime Minister needs a mandate from the people. He wants members and friends of the Liberal Party to vindicate him; to put their stamp of approval on his long and ultimately successful campaign to evict his predecessor.

That may well be true but I cannot help thinking that a hasty spring election will also be about rushing to re-election before some nasty truths emerge about steamship contracts, campaign dirty tricks and problems with drug laundering. This is probably the most important point. It will be about denying Canadians the opportunity to express their opinions about a host of contentious issues, from the definition of marriage to the actions of our security forces in the Arar case.

One has to wonder just what the Prime Minister and his colleagues think they are going to talk about during this election campaign. What will they have accomplished during the month or two of this government that would be worth taking to the people? A bunch of promises.

The answer to what he will talk about certainly will not be found in the legislative agenda before the House. It is nothing but legacy leftovers and puffy promises. In fact, it is the stuff of Cottonelle ads.

The government would like Canadians to believe this throne speech is a document that lays out a vision for what the Liberal government intends to do for Canadians. This document is nothing of the sort. This document is no more and no less than an election pamphlet for the Liberal Party of Canada. Given this, it deserves a response worthy of an election pamphlet.

Yesterday's speech was a great pile of platitudes and promises that, if the past is any guide, the government has no intention of keeping.

Canadians remember well another election document, the so-called red book that was written by, guess who, the current Prime Minister. They remember his promises to scrap the GST, to renegotiate NAFTA, to create an independent ethics counsellor, to name but three. I am not quite sure whether they are expecting these current promises to be kept. Liberal election documents, it seems, have a very short shelf life, and with good reason.

The second thing about the government's speech that we need to keep in mind is that it has nothing to do with an agenda for Canada and everything to do with an agenda for the Liberal Party of Canada.

*The Address*

•(1020)

[Translation]

The promises and vision so clearly stated yesterday by Her Excellency on behalf of the government, are not intended to improve life for average Canadians, but are meant to improve the chances for Liberal MPs. This is nothing new.

[English]

Yesterday's speech spent quite a bit of time talking about social issues, as well it should. The Prime Minister has let it be known that health care will be a top priority for the government.

As a medical practitioner, who could disagree? I certainly cannot. However as someone who has heard the promises for a decade now, I am not going to hold my breath.

[Translation]

I believe we can all see that these promises to improve the health care system are nothing but platitudes and that, as with so many other promises, the Prime Minister and his colleagues have no intention of keeping them.

[English]

Last week the government promised to give the provinces an additional \$2 billion to help fund their health care system; a laudable promise, but should we have faith? One week the government says that it will pay that amount and the next it claims it has no money. It is like a political yo-yo.

Speaking of yo-yos, the Prime Minister says that public servants play an important role in government and in the formation of public policy. I agree, they do, so why has the Prime Minister been playing games, playing games in fact with their lives?

Since coming to office he has ordered a hiring freeze, frozen salaries, except for his government's senior political staff, and has sent mixed messages to thousands of employees about their jobs and their futures in the public service. The public service needs stability to function properly. Long term planning means just that. It cannot be done properly if the Prime Minister muses publicly, as he has been doing, that he just might or might not make major changes to the public service.

In any event, let me finish my thoughts about the Prime Minister's promise to give the provinces another \$2 billion in health care funding. The real story here is the \$25 billion the Prime Minister cut as finance minister, not the \$2 billion he is grudgingly giving back, strings attached and all. I admit that \$2 billion is nothing to sneeze at, but when we are trying to fill a \$25 billion crater it is not really that much. It is a little like trying to fill a bomb crater with a bucket full of sand.

The government also says that it intends to work with the provinces to develop co-ordinated approaches for disease control and to help reduce waiting times in hospitals and health clinics. The Prime Minister and his colleagues had 10 years to do these important things and for 10 years they have done little but cut funding and, frankly, play shell games where ministers promised: funding but not now; new equipment but only later; and more personnel but only after negotiations and endless collaboration. In the meantime, the

hospital lists get longer, the number of Canadians seeking diagnostic equipment grows larger and the ability of our health care system to respond adequately to a rapidly aging population is diminished.

At the Orleans Clinic, where I am currently retraining to return to medical practice, I met a young woman the other day who told me how the Liberal approach to health care translates into the real world. Her doctor moved to an inconvenient location for her and she was not able to visit him any longer. When she saw this new face in the clinic she said "You haven't been here before. Are you coming here to practice, doctor?" I had to say that I was simply retraining and would be going back to Alberta. She literally begged me to stay so she could have a family physician. Here in this big metropolitan city of Ottawa this woman cannot find a GP who will take her on his roster.

Health care a la Liberal Party of Canada; that is an embarrassment and a shame.

The throne speech has made significant mention of a new approach to providing modern AIDS drugs for underdeveloped countries. As a compassionate nation I support those initiatives, but let me contrast that with a domestic issue. It does remind me of a domestic issue that was handled so poorly by the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party. I cannot understand why individuals infected with hepatitis C from tainted blood were turned down for help from this government. They begged for help and the government cried that it could not hear them. I would like an explanation from this Prime Minister for that approach.

By the way, we did find \$100 million. What was that \$100 million for? It was for executive jets, Challenger jets. They can fly on Challenger jets while the hepatitis C victims, sorry, can do without.

Aboriginal people face some of the most pressing social problems of any group in our society. What does the government say about that? There will be a new cabinet committee on aboriginal affairs and a new aboriginal secretariat in the Privy Council Office.

•(1025)

We also heard that the government does not intend to reintroduce Bill C-7, the first nations governance act. We did not hear anything original, and that is the problem. There were lots of platitudes and process but no real substance.

Members opposite like to boast that the federal government spends billions of dollars every year on aboriginal issues, but money does not solve all problems, although I am sure we would never be able to convince our friends across the aisle of that fact.

At the risk of being castigated, what I think our aboriginal people need is hope. They need hope that the issues that are important to them will actually be addressed, not just talked about.

*The Address*

Let me tell the House about Skipper Potts, a young native educator from Pincher Creek. This is a man who gives hope to the students in his school. He determined that the kids were not graduating from grade 12 so he set about, with no funding, no big programs and no big help from anyone, to speak with the parents and talk about the school programs, the sports programs and the importance of education in their lives. In a few short years he took the one native graduate in that school to a dozen graduates this year. Skipper Potts gives hope to the kids.

Aboriginal people need improved health care. They need more opportunities for education and employment close to where they live. Like everyone else, they need affordable housing and support for their young people and local communities. They need, indeed they deserve greater recognition for the unique role they have played in Canadian history but, above all, they need hope and commitment. They need hope and a commitment from the federal government to actually do something. They need more Skipper Potts.

Yesterday's speech also referred to education, quality of life and allowing Canadians to develop the necessary skills that will permit them to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Apart from the fact that education is not the domain of the federal government, I find all this talk from the other side about the plight of our university students most interesting. I wonder where the Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues believe the problems arose from if not from their very own policies as a government over the past number of years.

Today our sons and daughters are graduating from institutes of higher learning with large and, in some cases, crippling debt load. Students in medicine, business and other such courses that demand years of extra training are particularly hard hit. They are coming out of school with thousands of dollars in accumulated debt.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Each year, more and more young people are finding that they do not have the financial resources they need for post-secondary education. Those who choose to go to college or university and take on the resulting debt load face an inflexible and outdated loan system.

It is not that there is no money available; there are a number of bursary and loan programs. The problem stems from accessibility, eligibility and flexibility in the repayment structures. The fact is that the whole student loan system should be reviewed, because education is of the utmost importance.

[*English*]

Education is the gateway to knowledge, career success and a rich, vibrant and successful culture. Young people thirst for knowledge. They are banging at the doors of universities and colleges everywhere. Surely we owe it to them to see that they can fulfill their dreams.

The Prime Minister has been making much ado about his so-called new deal for the cities. My question is: Why should we limit ourselves to Canada's large metropolitan areas? Yes, they are the home to a large portion of our population. Yes, their municipal

infrastructure is in a desperate state of disrepair. Yes, they are engines that drive our economy.

However, if our cities are economic engines, then it is the farmers, the fishermen and the forest workers who provide the fuel. We on this side believe there must be a new deal for Truro, not just Toronto; for Vulcan, Alberta, not just Vancouver; and Mont-Joli, not just Montreal.

[*Translation*]

It is true that after years of federal neglect, the sidewalks in our urban areas are falling apart and traffic is clogged, sometimes becoming intolerable.

According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Canada's infrastructure deficit has now reached \$57 billion—an alarming level.

[*English*]

The Prime Minister promised the cities he would help fix the problems facing these large cities by cutting them in on a portion of the excess federal gas tax back in September of last year. He was pretty clear on that promise. Everything he could do he would do to make that happen. Now just last month he did a small U-turn or a big U-turn, I am not sure. He has said his commitment remains to be determined. It now depends on negotiations with the provinces and the cities.

That is another flip-flop, and a big one this time. It was a solid commitment to the cities, repeated month after month as the Prime Minister sought the leadership of his party. It has now been downgraded to a long term plan, and not only that, a plan dependent upon negotiations with others. Now we know why the Prime Minister owns all those boats. He is an expert fisherman. He likes to dangle political bait and just see who might take a bite. Clearly the Prime Minister is in no hurry to fulfill this promise, and why should he be? Might I remind him, when he was finance minister he was totally opposed to that plan.

Speaking of the cities, I note that the government is promising to eliminate the GST from municipalities, and is doing so with a straight face. Need I remind the House that these are the same people who brought us "I will axe the tax?" These are the same people, including the Prime Minister himself, who were forced to apologize to the Canadian public for blatantly misleading it during the 1993 election issue. As the old saying goes, plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

Over the last seven years the government has increased spending by over 30%. At the same time it has failed to cut taxes, as the finance minister, now Prime Minister, promised Canadians he would. The member for LaSalle—Émard promised Canadians a \$100 billion tax cut. What did he deliver? The great tax cut in fact was a great sleight of hand. It included such things as increased child benefits and promises to cancel future tax hikes, both of which the then finance minister called tax cuts. When we add it all up, less than half of the promised tax cuts will ever see the light of day.

*The Address*

At the same time the government continues to rake in huge amounts of people's money through a rise in Canada pension premiums, new taxes like the airport security tax and on and on.

**An hon. member:** Employment insurance.

**Mr. Grant Hill:** I heard someone say “employment insurance”, and on and on.

● (1035)

[*Translation*]

We all remember how, year after year, the former finance minister, today the Prime Minister, underestimated the surplus. Every year he told Canadians that there was not enough money to provide them with real tax relief and carry out high-priority social spending. And every year, he did a U-turn, and presto: another surplus on the record, at least until 2001, when the extravagant expenses of the former finance minister began to catch up with him.

[*English*]

The Liberals call this little game of fiscal hide and seek good politics. Canadians call it cynical manipulation of their money for political gain.

This year again the government is at its Old Mother Hubbard routine and claiming the cupboards are bare, but if my memory serves me correctly, during his recent leadership campaign, the Prime Minister made almost \$35 billion in promises. Where will all that money come from? Maybe he will tell us. I suspect it was just another case of platitudes, promises the Prime Minister has no intention of keeping. However, if history is any judge, we can be sure of one thing: any excess surplus will be spent before the next election is called, and we wonder why voter participation has fallen to record lows under this government.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister likes to talk about the need to reduce the debt. And yet in his last three budgets as finance minister he announced huge end-of-year expenses that transformed the billions of dollars in debt reduction into expenditures.

[*English*]

The Liberals talk a good game on fiscal restraint, but the reality is that spending at the federal level is rising faster than at any time since Pierre Trudeau, the granddaddy of profligate spenders.

Look at the whole issue of debt and taxation. Despite all the talk, our national debt is \$32 billion higher today than it was when this Prime Minister first became finance minister. Why is this? Is it because the Prime Minister loves to spend money, at least other people's money? In fact over the past seven years alone, the government has increased annual program spending by over 30%. It now stands at an unprecedented \$146 billion according to the government's own audited financial statements. How is that for a legacy?

The Prime Minister also likes to talk about investing in a 21st century economy. That is a very pithy phrase, but what does it mean? All this talk, these platitudes about the new economy coming from the government, is just a smokescreen for what is really happening,

and that is the continuing escalation of corporate welfare. Clearly the Prime Minister needs to be plain and come clean on this issue.

Canadians need to be reminded that at the same time the Prime Minister cut nearly \$5 billion annually from health care, he increased spending on business subsidies by \$700 million a year: less money for hip replacements, more money for corporate friends. Welcome to Liberal Canada.

● (1040)

[*Translation*]

Now the Prime Minister wants to use the Canada pension plan fund for his new industrial strategy. That is like taking the workers' hard-earned money, intended for the support of seniors, and giving it to his corporate friends.

All I can say is that, when the government decides to choose the winners, we can be sure of one thing: Canadian citizens are the losers.

[*English*]

The government in its speech made abundant reference to Canada's place in the world. Indeed, to underline this, it has invited the former secretary general of the UN to address us next month. Personally, I cannot help thinking that it would have been more worthwhile, more useful, to invite the Japanese prime minister, given the problems we have selling our beef there. How about the U.S. President? I am sure the softwood lumber people, not to mention the agricultural sector, would have been happy.

Then again, agriculture has never been much of a priority for the Prime Minister and the government. In fact over the last decade, the largest spending cuts to agriculture came when the member for LaSalle—Émard was finance minister and the current finance minister was the man in charge of agriculture.

Sadly, the tendency of the government to ignore the plight of farm families is also reflected in the voting record of the current Minister of Agriculture. In March 2001, for example, the member for Haldimand—Norfolk—Brant voted against a motion calling on the government to provide an additional \$400 million in emergency funding for Canadian farm families. I am sure that sends a positive message to farm families struggling with the fallout from the BSE crisis.

Canada has been too long in a cocoon. We have lost our place on the world stage. We no longer enjoy the respect we once had.

[*Translation*]

Today our fellow citizens in other countries are being imprisoned, tortured and killed. And what are we doing about it? Our government shrugs its shoulders and says there is nothing it can do. What a lot of comfort that is for the victims' friends and family.



*The Address**[English]*

Since the present and former prime ministers assumed high office together, Canada has pretty well gone back to the dark ages in terms of its international relations and commitments abroad. Soft power, quiet diplomacy, are all code words for doing nothing, for a lack of vision, for concentrating on getting re-elected instead of taking our rightful place as a leader in the community of nations.

Our armed forces are in a deplorable state. We have helicopters that will not go up. We have submarines that cannot go down. We have a government that sends its troops to a desert in jungle fatigues. If there was a political equivalent to the Keystone Kops, they would be sitting across the aisle there.

The government has starved our armed forces. It has humiliated them, ignored them, and turned professional soldiers, sailors and air force personnel, our finest, into international boy scouts sent abroad into war zones without weapons or with instructions not to use the ones with which they have been provided. National Defence headquarters has too many spin doctors and not enough warriors. Political correctness rather than military necessity has become the order of the day.

The Sea King saga says all that needs to be said about the government's attitude toward the military. If a picture paints a thousand words, I will never forget the picture of the battered, shattered Sea King helicopter on its side on the deck of one of our warships. That was worth a book.

- (1045)

*[Translation]*

Ten years ago, the member for LaSalle—Émard spent \$500 million of the taxpayers' money to cancel the contract for renewing the helicopter fleet, \$500 million just to bolster his boss's ego.

And since then? Years of inaction, year of games between entrepreneurs and public servants, years of playing with the lives of Canadian pilots.

*[English]*

And for what? To save the Liberal government from the ignominy of having to admit publicly that it was wrong.

The bottom line is that our armed forces need funding. Getting rid of boondoggles like the gun registry, the long gun registry and shot gun registry, eliminating corporate welfare, and tightening up advertising rules to prevent millions of dollars going to friends of cabinet would be good places to find some of those funds.

The government has also said that it will be putting the issue of improving our relations with the United States on the front burner. All we on this side of the House can say is that it is about time.

*[Translation]*

The childish anti-American sentiment that characterizes the government may go over well in certain constituencies and in the press, but at what price?

*[English]*

Our relations with the Americans are at an all time low. Boorish outbursts by undisciplined ministers have closed important doors to this government in Washington. Look at the BSE issue: it is a prime example.

Last year one cow was found to have the disease. The Americans closed their borders. Thousands of people's lives and livelihoods were suddenly thrown into upheaval. Billions of dollars in revenue were lost. Entire communities came under the gun, and the government dithered. For weeks it talked about dialogue with the Americans. It announced inadequate compensation packages. It blackmailed the provinces into signing an agricultural policy framework in order to gain access to further compensation.

On and on the crisis dragged until one thing became crystal clear: the U.S. border would remain closed and we had no power to force it open. We had no leverage. The Americans were not listening because they were tired of our insults. They had no respect for our plight or our pleas.

*[Translation]*

Let us not forget the softwood lumber issue. There is a powerful American softwood lumber lobby in Washington, and they are far from pleased that Canada has a 30% market share. Not surprisingly, there are constant attempts to reduce that share. So we go from one crisis to the next.

*[English]*

What we need is a plan. Instead of whining about the Americans and their tactics, the federal government should get together with the provinces and develop a strategy to hammer out the most beneficial deal possible with the Americans. It is not rocket science.

Canada needs to get beyond the crisis management stage in our relationship with the U.S. Rather than insults and hyperbole, we should be working on formulating a new strategic partnership with the Americans on a wide variety of fronts that will serve the interests of both countries. That would be the bright and proper thing to do.

What, for example, do we know about the new plan for continental missile defence? What deal has the government made in relation to this initiative in order to create some movement in other areas?

Our relationship with the United States is a close one, both by geography and necessity. Their worries, particularly when they are all consuming, become our worries. This is the case with terrorism.

Much has been made of the measures that have been put into place in the U.S. since 9/11. Some say there have been excesses. There may well be excesses. However, the Americans are determined to improve their border security. The longest undefended border in the world has become far less so since 9/11. Nothing we do will change that. Let us see how we can deal with the concerns being expressed by our neighbours in a way that will satisfy their legitimate fears, while protecting our sovereignty and the interests of our citizens.

*The Address*

•(1050)

[*Translation*]

The government's decision to create a department of public safety and emergency preparedness is one positive step, but we need to do more than merely create an administrative shell.

Is there a real political desire to make this into an efficient department, or is this just window dressing? Are we going to really do something, or are we just trying to put one over on the Americans? How can we seriously enhance our own public safety and our own national security system, while at the same time protecting civil rights?

These are just some of the most important and urgent questions that need answers. It is pointless to cut corners and just do some administrative shuffling. No major changes will come out of this, I am sure.

[*English*]

There is a further issue that the government has so far failed to adequately address and that is the question of validation and recognition of foreign credentials. This is an issue that affects not only skilled immigrants wishing to come to Canada but also individuals with foreign credentials who already live here. We have all heard stories of individuals with Ph.D.s driving taxis and engineers working as bellhops.

In last year's throne speech the government promised to do something about this. It promised to break down the barriers of foreign credential recognition, to fast track applications by those skilled workers with jobs waiting for them here, and to position Canada as a destination of choice for talented foreign students. So far it has failed to live up to these grand promises. The lines are as long as ever, the frustration as great, and the loss to Canada as important. In sum, the government has ignored the issue of skilled immigrants for as long as the Prime Minister has been in Ottawa.

We should be developing a more coordinated approach involving provinces and professional organizations as active partners. Canada needs skilled workers and other countries are producing them. Let us solve this equation by getting off our collective duff and figuring out how to meet the demand for skilled labour within the boundaries imposed by our social goals.

I should mention as well that it is not only those wishing to come to our country who have difficulties. I participated in surgery here in Ottawa two or three weeks ago. Observing with me was a Canadian medical student. He is studying in the Dominican Republic. His folks are both physicians here in Ottawa. He will pass his board exams in a year. When he passes his board exams, having studied in the Dominican Republic, he will be admitted to the U.S. There he will find a residency. When he asks in Canada if he can, with the same board exams, get a residency position here, the answer will be no.

There are 200 other Canadian students studying with him in that school. What sense is there when we take a Canadian from the City of Ottawa and force that person to go overseas to study, where the qualifications are good enough to get into the U.S. but are not good

enough to get into Canada? The government says health care is its number one priority.

The last issue I want to deal with today is one dear to the hearts of all of us and that is the state of our democracy. It goes without saying that our democracy and our democratic institutions have gone into steady decline, a spectacular decline I think, some of it since the Prime Minister came to cabinet about 10 years ago.

I remember the Airbus scandal, the Pearson airport affair, the Somalia inquiry, Shawinigate, the HRDC boondoggles and the advertising scandals. On and on the list goes. Ministerial responsibility has now become a thing of the past. No one is responsible for anything any more. Another scandal? No one is responsible.

Did a minister pass on gossip to the RCMP that resulted in an innocent man, a former Prime Minister, being tarred and feathered in the media? Not my responsibility. Did a minister close down a public inquiry into military affairs because an election was forthcoming and friends of the Prime Minister were being asked uncomfortable questions? Not my responsibility. Did a Prime Minister involve himself in financial dealings in his riding that all agree failed the smell test? "You call who you know", came the reply. Remember that line? It surely has to be a classic in Canadian politics.

The government's response to scandal has been to put the hand-picked ethics counsellor on speed dial. No matter how questionable the ethical circumstances, the Prime Minister and his cabinet could count on the ethics counsellor to exonerate them.

•(1055)

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister has already publicly acknowledged the unacceptable nature of such a subjective appointment. He and his colleagues campaigned on the promise of an independent ethical watchdog. But, you guessed it, these were just more empty platitudes. What we need, what Canada needs, is an ethics commissioner who is chosen by Parliament and answerable to it.

[*English*]

It seems so simple. It has been promised twice now. Yet we are as far away from having a truly independent ethics counsellor today as we were a decade ago. We are as far away because the new proposal being put into place, being brought forth by the government, will leave members of cabinet free of real scrutiny. Where has the source of the real scandal been? The cabinet. Our House is ill and we need to find a remedy.

For a decade the Prime Minister sat in the House and said nothing as committees were neutered, free votes squelched, private members' bills ignored and democratic debate muzzled a record 82 times. Not a word was heard from him until his leadership ambitions became an uncontrollable lust.

Suddenly then, it was the democratic deficit here, there and everywhere. That he and his cabinet colleagues were the prime authors of this deficit phased him not a whit. He needed an issue to help destroy a Prime Minister and he found one in the democratic deficit.

*The Address*

[*Translation*]

The member for LaSalle—Émard tells us that things are going to change, that parliamentary secretaries will have more responsibilities, that committees, with members from all parties, will have more work to do, that there will be annual first ministers meetings, that Parliament will address patronage appointments.

That is all very fine on paper, too much so in fact. I share the opinion of many Canadians that this is just one more fake promise.

[*English*]

Since coming to Ottawa I have watched the Liberal government bamboozle, bully and ignore parliamentarians to a point where many say we truly resemble that famous description offered by former Prime Minister Trudeau some 30 years ago. Why anyone should believe things would change now is simply beyond me.

I do not intend to go into the bog that is the Prime Minister's dealings with his business holdings and the effect these may have on his ability to do his job properly and impartially, nor do I intend to dwell upon the clear lapses in veracity surrounding the Prime Minister's access to his blind trust.

I will note however, because it captures the essence of what many of us feel about this subject, that the issue of government subsidies to the Prime Minister's former shipping company has once again come to public attention and in a particularly egregious fashion.

As the House is no doubt aware, it was revealed last week that the Prime Minister's former shipping company and its subsidiaries received not the paltry hundred or so thousand dollars the government said, but millions upon millions of dollars. All of them from the public treasury, all of them from the taxpayer, doled out between 1993 and 2002 when he was the finance minister.

I do not intend to go any further on this for the moment, but I reiterate that the discrepancy between the two figures, the amount of that discrepancy and the fact this figure only came out now, give me and many Canadians great pause for thought.

For a decade now the Prime Minister and his colleagues, in this and previous cabinets, have presided over some of the most dubious practices in modern Canadian politics. They said nothing as the ethics counsellor turned into a lapdog for the Liberal Party. They opposed attempts to make government more transparent. They refused to support an inquiry into the HRDC grants and contributions scandal.

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

They refused to hold Alfonso Gagliano, or anyone else, responsible for the sponsorship scandal. Instead, they rewarded Mr. Gagliano with an ambassadorial appointment, and a pay raise to boot.

[*English*]

It is hardly a record most people would be eager to take to the people.

Speaking of elections, a new red book is no doubt soon to be hitting the bookstands. It will be chockablock with yet more

promises and platitudes, swaddled in the vague and ambiguous language for which the Prime Minister is so justly famous. But this time things are going to be different.

There are big differences between the Conservative Party's vision for Canada and the realities of Liberal rule. While the Liberals feast on filet mignon aboard their new Challenger jets, we will be in the trenches fighting for the equipment so desperately needed by our armed forces. Liberals will be pork-barrelling by the millions. We will be working to allow hardworking Canadian families to keep their money. The Liberals will be adopting policies that undermine Canadian families. We will be toiling to strengthen our shared traditions. When the Liberals sit on the fence as our friends are attacked, we will stand shoulder to shoulder with our allies. We will work to build our communities, strengthen our nation and stake out our role in the international community.

Canadians are great people and with the right leadership, I truly believe Canada can once again become the greatest nation in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the motion be amended by adding:

And this House regrets that the Speech from the Throne is an advance copy of the Liberal election platform filled with empty rhetoric and promises that does nothing to address the very real problems facing Canadians.

• (1105)

**The Speaker:** The debate is on the amendment.

Resuming debate, the right hon. Prime Minister.

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like first of all to congratulate the hon. member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, the mover, and the hon. member for Kitchener Centre, the seconder of the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Over the past year, I spent a great deal of time travelling across Canada to listen to Canadians talk about their hopes and their concerns. Recently, I was asked if I had grown tired of it—all the flying, the dinners, the speeches. The answer is no. It is an incredible privilege to witness Canada's diversity, its distinct regions and Canadians' ambitions for their country.

[*English*]

One of the places that I visited was Charlottetown, Labrador. It is a small port of roughly 350 people. I met with a group of children who told me about what interested them, what they were going to do and who they were going to be when they grew up. Through their eyes the future was an ocean of opportunity. Canada was where their ambitions would be launched. Let me say that these small children have big plans.

*The Address*

Two weeks ago I went to Toronto to meet with the fourth graders from Fenside Public School. Two of the students are here today, Steven Natskoulis, the creator of the famous Flat Mark, and Peter Lu, with their teacher Karlo Cabrera.

**The Speaker:** Order. I know the Prime Minister of course will not want to refer to the presence of persons in the gallery of the House.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that at some point they will be sitting here.

Each of the grade 4 students wrote a page or two telling us of their hopes and dreams for Canada. For instance, nine year old Peter wrote, "My wish is that everyone in Canada is free like the birds flying in the sky, that people should be free because everyone deserves to be free".

That is about as eloquent a statement on liberty as I have read in a while, for young Peter's words challenge us to put people at the centre of our every effort. In fact, that, putting people at the centre, is what good government is all about: enabling citizens to take charge of their lives, making them free by removing barriers and fostering opportunity. Canadians want in. They want to build Canada. They want their government to understand and help them to achieve their potential. They want us, quite simply, to get it.

This government does get it. Our goal is the success of Canadians in every region of our country. To achieve this we must strengthen our social foundations. We must build a 21st century economy and we must ensure that Canada's role in the world is one of influence and pride.

We begin with our values: fairness, generosity, respect, caring. We create a more level playing field for all, not by lowering the stage upon which we stand but rather by raising the heights toward which we reach.

There are some who argue that the path to prosperity lies only in self-interest, a vision that diminishes us all and provides no place for the less advantaged. We on this side of the House and in that corner reject that vision. Canadians reject that vision, for our path is one of shared prosperity and shared prospects. To those on the other hand who say spend and spend more, we say that never again will Canadians borrow from their children and their grandchildren. Never again will we ask them to pay our way.

Ours is an ambitious approach but it is as well responsible and balanced. We are moving neither right nor left but in the direction that Canadians demand; we are moving forward.

• (1110)

[*Translation*]

What kind of Canada do we want? What kind of country do we want to build?

We want a Canada where our universal health care system sets an example for the world and is a proud example of our national values at work; a Canada where people with disabilities and their families, where the elderly and their families, have the support they need. A Canada at the leading edge of the 21st century economy. A Canada where good jobs are accessible in every region of the country. A Canada overflowing with artistic creativity, where our official languages are celebrated from coast to coast to coast.

[*English*]

What kind of a Canada do we want? What kind of a country do we want to build?

We want a Canada where every child arrives at school ready to learn; a Canada where everyone has the opportunity for post-secondary education regardless of geography or means; a Canada where universal literacy and lifelong learning are part of the national fabric. We want a Canada with safe and healthy neighbourhoods, with clean air, clean water and plenty of green spaces; a Canada where we close the gap in life chances for aboriginal people; a Canada that respects and celebrates the great diversity of our population; a Canada which is at the leading edge of the world technologies; a Canada where today's small businesses are tomorrow's global leaders; and a Canada where there is no glass ceiling for women entrepreneurs.

We want a Canada that speaks on the world stage, heard by our closest neighbours and our distant friends, with equal conviction and independence. We want a Canada where no individual, no community, no region of the country is denied the opportunity to fully participate in the building of an even greater nation.

This agenda is ambitious but Canadians expect no less of themselves and they should expect no less of their governments. The time to make this agenda real is now. The throne speech has proposed the first significant steps, concrete actions on the things that matter most.

Health care is the nation's first priority, quality care, timely care, care that is accessible regardless of income, portable right across Canada and fully funded. We are committed irrevocably to the principles of the Canada Health Act. They are part of who we are, a moral statement about fundamental fairness that all Canadians should stand equal before their health care system.

For most of our fellow citizens, the test is the length of time that they have to wait for an important diagnostic result for badly needed treatment. Their judgment is that critical waiting times need to be reduced. We agree. We must ensure that care delayed is not in effect care denied.

That is why the new national health council is so important. Accountability requires having the right information on what is actually happening out there in doctors' offices and hospital wards. Quite simply, measurement matters.

*The Address*

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

During the past year, Canadians have seen and felt the challenge of SARS and West Nile virus. Clearly, we need new ways of managing global health risks. Public health is more than just a local matter. No one jurisdiction can manage the challenge alone. We need an approach that is collaborative; national; in fact, global.

To this end, we will establish a Canadian public health agency, centring a network of excellence and expertise across the country, and linked to its counterparts globally. We will create with our partners a network of labs and services to rally public health expertise from across the nation to help those on the front lines deal with health emergencies.

Last Friday, I met with the provincial and territorial premiers, and we agreed to work closely on this task in the coming months—working as we should in common cause for common purpose.

[*English*]

It is in our communities that we truly experience Canada. It is in neighbourhoods that we develop our personal values and commitments, and come to understand our larger responsibilities to our country and to the world. Here, newcomers learn about their new home. Here, we develop and express our citizenship daily.

Canada's municipal governments, big and small, urban and rural, are responsible for creating the conditions for communities to thrive. And they are cash-strapped.

They are working from outmoded financial models. They need stable, reliable and predictable funding. Many lack the resources to deliver affordable housing, modern transit, green spaces, clean air and water—the prerequisites to healthy and safe communities.

They carry much of the responsibility, often without adequate resources, for integrating recent immigrants and serving the increasing number of urban aboriginals. As a country we cannot permit this to continue.

We all want our municipalities to be great places to live, to be able to compete for talent and investment, and to play a role in strengthening our regional economies.

We want our small towns to be able to share in our prosperity. We want our large cities to be international and internationally competitive, to be centres of commerce and culture, and we want them all to provide safe and healthy homes for our families.

That is why we have made a new deal for Canada's municipalities one of our highest priorities. That is why we have created a new secretariat. We want the voices of our municipalities to be heard nationally. That is why we have asked former premier Mike Harcourt to head an advisory committee to help shape our policy thinking while respecting the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Recently, some have questioned the depth of our commitment and wondered whether we would match rhetoric with results. Well, we have answered those questions. The new deal is a real deal.

We are committed to providing a portion of the gas tax if, eventually, that is what works for municipalities

Yesterday's throne speech announced a significant down payment, a 100% GST rebate for municipalities. They will now get back every penny of the tax spent in providing municipal services and community infrastructure.

Furthermore, we will act now—not in a year or even a month. I am pleased to announce that as of two days ago, February 1, the GST rebates for our municipalities have already begun to accumulate. This will mean \$7 billion over 10 years for housing, transit, clean air and water, and roads in communities right across Canada.

However, this new deal is not only about money. It is about engaging municipalities as partners, and so too, it is about engaging and building on local initiatives.

•(1120)

[*Translation*]

Enhancing quality of life in our cities is about wanting to help each other. It is about a willingness to work together to build great places to live.

Today this willingness is everywhere in Canada. We see it in the efforts of a million Canadians working in the voluntary sector. And they have our support.

We see it in the efforts of the people who are applying entrepreneurial creativity—not for profit, but rather to pursue social and environmental goals.

That is what we call the social economy—and while it may be a less familiar part of our economy, we must not underestimate its importance. Its contribution to the social fabric and to the economic vitality of our municipalities, urban and rural, is real and is growing.

Here are some examples. The social economy is about community groups like RESO in southwest Montreal, with which I have been involved since the start of my political career. RESO is a large coalition of unions, businesses, community groups and active citizens, all concerned about the future of their communities.

Several years ago they joined forces. Southwest Montreal, a struggling district in the 1980s, today is revitalized. RESO played a pivotal role then, and still does

The social economy is everywhere. For example, just a few blocks away from the Parliament buildings is the Roasted Cherry coffee house. This wonderful social enterprise was created to offer employment and a welcoming environment to young Canadians, particularly those at risk. The creators of this coffee house understood how valuable it is for youth at risk to work side by side and to share their life experiences with other young people who are still in school.

*The Address*

Through the interaction, youth at risk can see that anything is possible. What is more, the coffee house management sets aside part of its profits to create scholarships to encourage these young people to go back to high school.

Canada abounds with similar examples. The people who are dedicated to these efforts understand the power of the social economy. The people themselves represent a powerful social resource, and it is high time that the federal government recognizes this.

We intend to make the social economy a clear, key part of Canada's social policy tool kit. For the first time, these organizations will have access to our small business programs. Over the course of the next year, we will work with these groups to develop the tools they require.

Just as entrepreneurs are essential to a strong economy, social entrepreneurs are essential to strong communities. They require our support, and this government will offer it.

● (1125)

[English]

A great place to live starts with a neighbourhood with clean water, unspoiled land, and air we can safely breathe. We have much to do and many old habits to break.

The Speech from the Throne sets out an ambitious agenda on air, water and climate change. It reconfirms our intention to meet the Kyoto challenge. It makes environmental technologies an important part of both our economic and social agenda. We must be ambitious if we are to leave the planet in better shape for future generations, and so we must.

The throne speech commits the government to an aggressive plan to clean up federal contaminated sites and to return land to its natural state. This will ensure in our municipalities opportunities for new housing and new parks.

This will ensure in the north an environment as clean as our children believe it should be. It will ensure that we do not leave a heritage of pollution to aboriginal communities.

For that reason, as Her Excellency said, we are committing \$3.5 billion over 10 years to this goal. What could be a better investment than an investment in our children, in our future and in our health?

We are not stopping there. We need to do more. We need to do more for Sydney, Nova Scotia, for example, where the tar ponds have stood as a national disgrace.

There is one aspect of Canadian society, one aspect of our history, that casts a shadow over all that we have achieved. The continuing gap in life conditions between aboriginal and other Canadians is intolerable. It offends our values and we cannot remain on our current path.

To turn the corner will require a new partnership. It will require a shared commitment to improving aboriginal governance, essential to self-government and economic development.

We will expand health care, education, skills development and entrepreneurship. We will match our training programs to real

economic opportunities from Voisey's Bay to northern pipelines, as is being done in a pioneering fashion in Alberta's tar sands.

With our partners, we will tackle head-on the particular problems faced by the increasing number of urban aboriginals and Métis. We will not allow ourselves to be caught up in jurisdictional wrangling, passing the buck and bypassing their needs.

[Translation]

Who would have imagined the remarkable and hard-earned economic success Canadians have achieved in the last 10 years? Red ink has turned to black. Job creation is up. Interest rates are down. We are on the right track.

However, we cannot be complacent. The markers keep moving in the face of global competition and technological innovation. We need to boost our competitiveness and productivity, not as an end in itself, but rather because today's world demands that we do so in order to keep and create good, well-paying jobs for Canadians.

● (1130)

[English]

What must the government do to ensure that Canada continues to be one of the world's top economic performers? First, we need a sound foundation.

Some in the House will tell us that we can spend our way to the promised land, but they are wrong. That has been tried and it does not work. Neither social justice nor economic strength can be achieved under a government that answers first to its creditors and only second to its citizens.

As the Minister of Finance has said, the government is committed to fiscal prudence, unalterably committed. We have proved that by maintaining a balanced budget even as other nations have slipped into deficit. We have proved that by steadily reducing the debt ratio. We have also proved it by reforming the Canada pension plan so that all Canadians, today's pensioners and tomorrow's, have a public pension on which they can count.

Hard decisions taken in 1995 to get our fiscal house in order have allowed us to reinvest in Canadians' priorities, our social programs, science and technology, and to return more of their hard-earned money to them.

Since 2000, low and middle income Canadians have been reaping the benefits. As of January 1, 2004, our most recent tax cut took effect allowing them to spend more to invest in their own future. These tax cuts, combined with low interest rates, have allowed more Canadians than ever to buy a house of their own.

We have cut taxes for medium and small businesses too. Cutting taxes for small and medium sized businesses, those that are creating most of the jobs in the country, has allowed them to hire more people. It has allowed them to invest in their businesses. It has allowed them to build a vibrant Canada. We have cut those taxes to help create jobs and to build a more dynamic economy, and there is nothing wrong with that.

*The Address*

Equality of opportunity is the pillar of a successful society. What parent has not held up their newborn child wondering what tomorrow holds, knowing that their future depends on the best possible education? Readiness to learn is shaped at the earliest stages of childhood, and that is why early childhood development is a national priority. That is why we will accelerate the implementation of the federal-provincial agreement on early learning and care. That is also why we will provide communities with the diagnostic and remedial tools they need to assess and enhance the learning readiness of their children.

Equality of opportunity is also why we must do more to encourage families to save for the education of their children. The registered education savings plan and associated grants have been very successful, but not all families have received the full benefits of these instruments. A change is required to increase the awareness and use of the RESP among low income families. To that end, the government will develop a new learning bond for every family and for every child born to low income families.

Building on the Canada education savings grant, we will provide a starter grant, a new incentive, to encourage savings for post-secondary education. Over time the value of the learning bond will grow and over time the government's contribution will be increased as well as resources permit.

It is our responsibility to provide a solid foundation for the future education of our children. This is among the finest commitments that we can make. Today we have taken an important added step toward fulfilling that commitment.

• (1135)

The situation facing those who are about to decide on a post-secondary education path, or those who are currently embarked upon it, requires immediate action. To this end, the Speech from the Throne sets out our plan to overhaul the student loan and grant program. We will increase access for moderate and low income families to better reflect the higher costs of education. We will help those who earn while they learn and better address student debt. We will help low income students get in the door with a first year education grant.

In the new economy education comes in many forms. Over the last several years I have visited many union training centres. They are an essential part of our education system and they should have a much stronger relationship with government.

There are many union leaders, some are in the gallery, with whom I have had—

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

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister knows that referring to the presence of persons in the gallery is against the rules. He would not want to set a bad example for other members, however interested, and I would urge him to refrain from this.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** There are many union leaders, none of whom I will point out anywhere, Mr. Speaker, with whom I have had the opportunity to work and whose advice the government could benefit from. That is why we intend to work with unions on their training sites, businesses in the workplace, through the sector

councils to develop a new workplace skills strategy boosting literacy and other essential skills.

In the same vein, all of us have heard stories of highly trained immigrants who cannot get a job because their credentials are not recognized. We have also heard of Canadians who cannot get their credentials recognized when they move to another province. Neither case is acceptable. I raised these issues with the premiers last Friday. There was unanimity at the table that we must work together to achieve demonstrable progress as soon as possible.

[*Translation*]

A world made small and integrated has changed the international rules of the game. I believe Canada has a unique perspective. We must lead the way in developing new thinking about how the international community governs itself.

Everyone agrees: globalization must be made to work for everyone, if it is to work at all. In that context, few countries are as well positioned as is Canada to be the catalyst to make this happen.

In the same vein, peace and freedom, human rights and the rule of law, diversity, respect and democracy are the values that form the foundation of Canada's experience and our success. They are, in truth, potentially our most valuable export. For this reason, we must take up the challenge of building democratic societies, assisting countries broken apart by conflict and giving them life and hope.

One of the distinct ways in which Canada can help developing nations is to provide the expertise and experience of Canadians, in justice, in federalism, in pluralistic democracy.

This is also an opportunity to more fully harness the idealism of young Canadians in this effort. We will therefore create a new initiative, which I am announcing today, called Canada Corps, to help Canadians to participate in this international assistance program, particularly by harnessing the energy of young Canadians and allowing them to learn while they contribute.

This same spirit animates the proposed legislation that will provide anti-HIV/AIDS drugs, and others, at low cost to African countries. I am pleased to advise the House that we will proceed with this legislation. And in recognition of the former Prime Minister's efforts, it will now be titled The Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa Act.

Building on this, Canada's National Science Advisor will work with the research community to identify additional steps we can take to bring the benefits of our research to bear on the challenges faced by the developing world, from learning technologies to environmental and life sciences.

*The Address*

Our long-term goal as a country should be to devote no less than 5% of our R and D investment to a knowledge-based approach to develop assistance for less fortunate countries. We in Canada are rich in medical science and research. We have a moral obligation to share our capability with those in desperate need.

Our engagement with the world is why it is fitting and most welcome that next month Kofi Annan will be speaking in our Chamber. This demonstrates the importance to Canada of multi-lateralism and the reform of its most fundamental institution, the United Nations.

• (1140)

[English]

My first foreign trip as Prime Minister was to meet with the countries of the Americas at the Monterrey summit. This was an important opportunity for us to develop our hemispheric relations and, significantly for Canada, to take a first step in our new relationship with the United States.

Our government is committed to a more sophisticated approach, not only to manage our shared objectives but also to manage difficult issues such as BSE and softwood lumber, which have exacted such a terrible and troubling toll right across the country. Indeed, it was these subjects that formed a major part of my meeting with President Bush. We want to buttress our mutual understanding by having greater parliamentary engagement with members of the U.S. Congress, greater engagement between Canadian officials and their counterparts, between the representatives of our provinces, our territories and American states and between mayors.

It has been 10 years since we have conducted a review of Canada's foreign policy: the extraordinary influence of the United States worldwide; the economic emergence of China, India and Brazil; the explosion of the global movement of people, goods and capital; the new threats of non-state terrorism; and the rise of new doctrines, such as the responsibility to protect in the wake of genocides, Rwanda and Kosovo. All of these things have changed the way the world looks at itself.

However during these past 10 years Canada too has changed, but our outreach to the world has not, and it needs updating. Therefore the government is developing a contemporary approach to our foreign policy objectives, our trade and our investment needs, our defence requirements and our development assistance programs. This may seem remote from the daily experience of some, but in truth it is about our role in the world. It is about our interests and it is about how to make our trade and our diplomacy advance. It is about ensuring that as we invest in defence that we do so to meet the next challenge and not the last one. It is about our values and how to make international assistance reflect them.

The ideas that I have described here are part of an outline of a future Canada. To achieve that future, Canada requires the participation, the engagement and the active debate of all Canadians. That means a democratic debate, resting on open discourse where good ideas win through persuasion and not coercion.

Canadians do not send members of Parliament to Ottawa to simply fill seats. They send them here to fulfill expectations. I believe that begins with adherence to rules and procedures that

ensure the integrity of the institution and the individual. That is why we have a stronger code of conduct and new ethical guidelines. It is why we will also have an independent ethics commissioner and a Senate ethics officer. Let there be no doubt about it, the new ethics commissioner will report to the House and will have the authority to review the actions of all members of Parliament, including ministers and the Prime Minister.

The government has a new expenditure review committee to ensure that spending remains under control and accountable, and is closely aligned with the priorities of Canadians. It is also why we will promote continued public service excellence and achievement. Our goal is nothing less than the finest public service in the world, and I believe that goal is shared by each and every public servant.

We will do all of this and we will do more. We will re-engage Canadians with their Parliament. In 1901, after barely a year in the British House of Commons, Winston Churchill gave a speech in which he lamented the party discipline that overrode free thought and free debate. Nothing would be worse than that independent people should be snuffed out and that there should be only two opinions in England: the government opinion and the opposition opinion.

"I believe in personalities", Winston Churchill said. This government believes in personality too and the responsibility of private members to represent their constituents as they see fit.

• (1145)

I have no doubt that some votes may not go our way, but it is my firm belief that from debate comes strength and from dispute comes clarity. Some in the House and perhaps in the media may try to say that a lost vote is an embarrassment for me or for our government. Well, do not believe them. The real embarrassment would be to have members of Parliament playing silent extras in the epic story of Canada.

I am proud to announce that the government will table tomorrow an action plan for democratic reform. Our goal is clear: to make Parliament what it is supposed to be, a national forum in which citizens of Canada, from every region of our vast land, make their views known and their interests heard, a place where the voices of all Canadians and all its regions are included.

What does that mean? I said that alienation in the west and in British Columbia is not a myth, it is a reality. We must address that reality. It is a question of earning people's trust. So too, we must ensure that the north has greater control of destiny. We must ensure that the people of Quebec recognize themselves within Canada. We must ensure that Ontarians see their ambitions fulfilled and that the hopes and dreams of Atlantic Canada, as reflected in the report, *Rising Tides*, are realized.



*The Address*

•(1150)

[*Translation*]

We are entering one of the most important decades in our history. A decade where we will seize the opportunities before us. And with a new Parliament, and a new government, we will honour the unparalleled values of our proud nation, a nation confident in its future, our country, our Canada. And that is only the beginning.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to say that it is an epic experience to have the speech by the Prime Minister.

I know that a number of people, probably on both sides of the House, would have a number of questions for the Prime Minister. I would therefore ask for unanimous consent to enter into a short time for questions and comments.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we have just heard the new Prime Minister state his intentions to be an agent of change.

Last week, the Bloc Québécois stated its expectations with regard to the Speech from the Throne. At that point, I identified the major concerns of Quebecers who are calling for change, and the issues on which we could measure the Prime Minister's intentions.

The first issue is the most fundamental one for Quebec: respect for its difference. Second, there is the issue of social justice, as seen in the pillaging of the employment insurance fund. Third, we are concerned about the direction the Prime Minister wants to take in foreign policy and defence. The fourth issue is the democratic deficit. The fifth concerns the environment and sustainable development. And finally, there is the issue of government ethics.

The Prime Minister has not responded to any of these. He talks about them but offers no real solution. This is a throne speech that worries Quebec a great deal, one that looks exactly like all the others we have seen in the past. This speech could just as well have been written by Jean Chrétien.

The Prime Minister talks about change. If there is one change that Quebecers have been waiting for, for a long time, it is a change in the federal government's attitude toward the distinct identity of Quebec. What the people of Quebec are waiting for is that Ottawa will move from a position of denial to one of real recognition of this Quebec difference.

In his speech, the Prime Minister announced that he will be doing exactly the opposite: he will continue to deny the existence of the Quebec nation, no better or worse than other nations, no better or worse than the Canadian nation, but simply different.

The Prime Minister recognizes the first nations, the aboriginal nations—something Quebec did long before Ottawa, by the way—and that is good. But why can he not do the same for the nation of Quebec?

The Speech from the Throne opened with some rather banal observations, but one little sentence caught my attention. That was:

We have our Canadian values—

I could have said exactly the same thing, referring to our Quebec values. The nation of Quebec also has its own values, different ones, and a different way of doing things. This throne speech not only ignores the different nature of Quebec, but announces that it will do everything to remove such a difference.

The Prime Minister has told us, and I quote:

Jurisdiction must be respected. But—

The important word is the word “but”, because his throne speech is stating that, given the multiplication of federal intrusions into Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, jurisdiction will be ignored. Jurisdiction must be respected, but if the needs are there, Ottawa will interfere, even if it lacks jurisdiction or even expertise. Quebec and the provinces will be shown how to handle emergencies, although this government is responsible for the administration of almost no hospitals, with the exception of a few for veterans and the military.

But Ottawa knows best. Ottawa knows everything. It will hire lots of public servants to keep statistics. That is not what we need. We need direct public services, which were cut by this Prime Minister when he was finance minister.

Of course there are needs in health, education and in terms of family policy. We know that, but these needs were created by the current Prime Minister when he cut transfer payments and steadily created the fiscal imbalance.

He chose to give the municipalities the benefits of the GST. We are in agreement there.

•(1155)

But, if the Prime Minister cares so much about health care and education, why not do the same for school boards and hospitals, which also pay GST? For those claiming to be concerned about health care and education, this is something concrete.

The intrusions announced by the Prime Minister abound: health care, education, labour—we learned this morning—families, day care, early childhood education, people with disabilities, research, training and municipalities. The Prime Minister wants to define Canada's priorities, priorities that will once again be imposed on Quebec.

Curiously, there is not a single word in his speech about parental leave. But it is a good example of what makes Quebec different. Quebec is the only jurisdiction in Canada that wants to implement its own, distinct, parental leave program. We had to go to court to get things moving. The Prime Minister has decided to appeal the decision because Ottawa wants to continue to stick its nose where it does not belong, because it finds it unacceptable that Quebec express this difference.

*The Address*

The Prime Minister also makes no mention of the most basic problem in Canada today: fiscal imbalance. While Quebec and the provinces are scraping the bottom of the barrel to fund basic health services, education and help for young families, Ottawa is paying out billions on administration, office furnishings and polls, not to mention sponsorships, the gun registry or the endless scandals at HRDC. Over five years, there has been a 39% increase in the cost of operating the federal machinery, its departments and its programs. That is where our tax dollars went.

On top of that, the Prime Minister tells us he is going to increase the number of intrusions. Having strangled Quebec financially, at a time when needs are growing, the one with the funds takes advantage of the situation to intrude still further.

In no way are the expectations of Quebec and the provinces being met as far as funding, transfer payments and equalization payments are concerned. He has decided to continue with building a Canada in which all the decisions are made in Ottawa and the policy of strangling Quebec financially. If there has been any change at all, it is in the speed at which this Canada is being built; it has picked up.

There is only one conclusion Quebeckers can draw from this statement of intention: sovereignty for Quebec is more urgent than ever.

As for social justice, an important value for Quebeckers, the Prime Minister skipped over this, as usual. There is not one single word about employment insurance, yet this was a serious blot on the Prime Minister's copybook when he was finance minister. His government helped itself to more than \$43 billion from the employment insurance fund. This behaviour bears a strange resemblance to that of employers who help themselves to money from their employees' retirement fund and take off with it, often to some tax haven. The Prime Minister has some personal expertise in this area.

Only four out of ten contributors to the fund will be eligible for benefits if they lose their job. The situation is even worse for women and young people.

The Prime Minister, who loves to draw attention to his success in business, knows very well that any insurance company doing such a thing would have gone bankrupt in no time, and its directors would have ended up in court.

The Auditor General says the government failed to respect the intent of the Employment Insurance Act. What more will it take for the Prime Minister to understand that this profound social injustice must be addressed? By ignoring this injustice, he is confirming that he has no intention of changing his attitude and that he is using employment insurance as an employment tax.

How does he who presided over massive cuts in that area plan to address the glaring problem of social housing? Not a word about that.

How does he plan to address the unfair treatment of those seniors who were denied the guaranteed income supplement? Not a word about that either. Seniors are being told, "We are looking out for your good, and we have got your goods".

● (1200)

This goes completely against Quebec's values, and against my understanding of the Canadian values of solidarity as well. There is nothing new in the area of social justice.

The Prime Minister announced his intention to address the democratic deficit through measures to enhance the role of MPs. That is all very fine and well, but it does not go far enough. The first test will be for the Prime Minister to allow a free vote in the House on the missile defence shield; we want a free vote on this issue.

In addition, the Prime Minister does not say a word about allowing MPs to debate and vote on international agreements entered into by Canada. Yet, there lies the main democratic deficit. While more and more of these agreements affect the lives of people, parliamentarians do not get to debate and vote on them.

Quebeckers are hit twice as hard by this democratic deficit, because they are represented at the international level by a government that does not recognize Quebec's distinct character.

Moreover, the Prime Minister said that the debate on foreign policy and defence is being postponed until next fall, after the election. This is not very democratic, especially since the Prime Minister has already announced that Canada would participate in the missile defence shield, spend billions of dollars on new military equipment, yet allow the Bush administration to develop the foreign policy and have Canada play a complementary role. Washington decides and Ottawa follows. George W. Bush makes the decisions and Canada's Prime Minister follows.

In this speech we should have seen something about the true sources of contention with the U.S.: the missile defence shield, the softwood lumber issue, mad cow disease, or expanding the St. Lawrence Seaway just to keep the U.S. Army happy.

His new Minister of National Defence is a hawk who is for the war in Iraq. At the end of the day, all the fundamental decisions have already been made and the Prime Minister is saying that we can debate all of this after the election. In fact, the Prime Minister is cynically adding to the democratic deficit.

The only area where the Prime Minister seems to be taking the right step is on the issue of decontaminating federal sites. On the face of it, that is good news. However, he has it all wrong when it comes to climate change.

The Prime Minister is placing the burden of Canada's commitment to reduce greenhouse gases on individuals when he says, "Environmental stewardship must be everybody's responsibility". Pollution comes from a few sectors in particular. I am talking about oil, gas and coal production. The Prime Minister is quite familiar with this sector since he has participated in it.

One day the Prime Minister should explain to the public how he intends to meet Canada's commitment to reduce emissions by 6% based on 1990 levels, while doubling oil production from the tar sands for export to the United States.

How is he going to do that? Is he going to make Quebec pay for the oil industry again? The Prime Minister is careful not to enforce the only valid principle under the circumstances: the polluter pay principle. To read his comments and to hear and see his reactions during debate on Kyoto, he might well favour a polluter paid principle in order to please his friends in Western Canada. Whose interests is he protecting?

There is not one word about the mandatory labelling of GMOs. There is not one word about the widening of the St. Lawrence, a project harmful to the environment and Quebec's economy, just to please the U.S. military.

What about ethics? The Prime Minister has failed in this regard. A bit like those Groupaction reports, all he is promising, for the third time, is to appoint an independent ethics commissioner who reports to the House, as we have long demanded and which seems impossible.

What about the decisions, totally lacking in credibility, made by the current ethics counsellor, Howard Wilson? Will the Prime Minister have those decisions, including those which directly concern him, reviewed by the new commissioner? Will the Prime Minister launch a independent public inquiry so as to finally shed light on all the patronage scandals and misappropriation of funds that accompanied the Liberal government's propaganda campaigns when he was second-in-command?

• (1205)

Will we get to the bottom of the HRDC scandal, which has been under investigation for the past four years, as well as the sponsorship scandal and the CINAR affair? Who is he protecting this time? Will they try to cloud the issue, like his predecessor did?

Speaking of ethics, it took the opposition's stubbornness for the full amount in federal contracts received by the Prime Minister's family business to be made public. We now know that he received \$161 million in contracts and not \$137,000 as the government claimed for so long. The Prime Minister is saying that when he heard the amount, he knew it was not right. It took him three months to tell us that. He thought things would blow over. That is what he thought. How can he talk about transparency without blushing?

The Prime Minister is also a strong supporter of tax havens. To date, his company, Canada Steamship Lines, has saved over \$100 million by opening a financial holding company in Barbados. He told Canadians and Quebeckers, "Tighten your belts and pay your taxes. I am not paying, because I am going elsewhere". Canada is good for contracts and subsidies, but not for paying taxes. That is what Canada Steamship Lines says; it belongs to the PM's family and used to belong to him.

Under these circumstances, how can he talk about ethics and transparency? There is a great deal of cynicism on the part of the Prime Minister. When it comes to ethical issues, the Prime Minister is doing exactly like his predecessor, except that, this time, we are not talking about a few thousand dollars, but millions of dollars. The situation could get worse for all our fellow citizens.

The Prime Minister had told us to expect changes; he did not deliver. As I said, his throne speech could have been written by his predecessor, Jean Chrétien. This is not a new government. What we

### *The Address*

have here is the fourth Chrétien government, taking the same attitude in refusing to recognize the Quebec nation, multiplying intrusions and perpetuating the fiscal imbalance that is choking Quebec.

The Prime Minister also clearly showed his intention to perpetuate the social injustices that he himself created by remaining totally silent on issues such as the funnelling off of money from the EI fund; the fact that elderly people were deprived of the guaranteed income supplement; and the acute problem of social housing.

The Prime Minister claims to want to eliminate the democratic deficit, but he does the opposite. His foreign policy is based on the direction taken by the Bush administration. He says there will be a debate on foreign policy and defence after the election, once the money has been spent. He refuses to allow members of Parliament to debate and vote on international agreements.

Speaking of democracy, his cynicism is unprecedented. He also claims to want to protect the environment and to respect Kyoto but, in fact, he is making sure that polluters are protected.

This Prime Minister refuses to respect Quebec's distinctiveness. He is going against the values of solidarity of Quebeckers. He is protecting the interests of rich companies instead of protecting the environment. He would rather defend the interests of the Bush administration than those of ordinary citizens. He is a strong believer in the worst practices related to globalization, tax havens and flags of convenience. He is very proud of Canadians, but not enough to fly the Canadian flag on his own ships.

His sense of ethics is flexible to say the least. If there is a change from the previous government, it is that this one is more cynical. This is why I am moving the following amendment to the amendment:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following: "and that this House finds that the Speech from the Throne denies the existence of the nation and values of Quebec and that it reiterates the federal government's desire to increase its intrusions into the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces".

This amendment to an amendment is seconded by the hon. member for Drummond.

• (1210)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** The question is on the amendment to the amendment.

Questions and comments. The hon. member for Elk Island.

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wish that we could have engaged the Prime Minister in some questions because he wanted to have some debate in the House.

He wants to improve parliamentary democracy and make this a place of true debate. I was very sad that unanimous consent was denied at that time.

However, I would like to ask a question of the leader of the Bloc who just spoke. I feel deeply concerned about the fact that, as per his subamendment, he actually expects the government to talk about a Quebec nation within the country in the throne speech.

*The Address*

Canada is a nation and Quebec is one of the provinces, as are all of the other provinces. To say that it has some unique characteristics is certainly true and acceptable.

However, for the Bloc members to continue after 10 years to say that they no longer want to be part of this wonderful country is a great regret to me. I wish that they would change their theme, that they would start singing a new song, and participate fully and wholly in our Confederation in order to make Canada a very strong country from coast to coast.

I know that this has been their *raison d'être* for all these years. I was hoping, through debate and by reaching out to the Quebec people, that we could make them feel warm and comfortable in our Canadian family.

I would like to hear the member's comments on that specifically, since that is the subject of the subamendment.

● (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, I have been here for more than 13 years. Far from changing my mind, my presence here has strengthened my resolve to make Quebec a country because I truly have a better understanding of what goes on here. It is regrettable that, after ten years, my colleague still does not understand that Quebec is a nation. It is such a shame.

The first nations are being recognized, and rightfully so. In 1985, under René Lévesque, the Quebec government recognized that the first nations were not simply groups of individuals, but nations that are no better or worse than others.

I thought it was utterly stupid of former Prime Minister Chrétien to say that Canada was the best country in the world. To George Bush, it is the United States. Every country is the best. It is utterly ridiculous. God cares for every nation equally, even those at war. This is a concept we have to get rid of.

We do not want to be better or worse than any other nation, just different. We are a nation. I am not surprised that my colleague fails to understand; he knows so little about Quebec. His party does not have any support base in Quebec, and I think his question explains why.

What is even sadder than hearing my hon. colleague ask this question—as I said, I understand—is knowing that some Liberal members from Quebec have the same opinion. It saddens me to see that Liberal members from Quebec can sit here and say that Quebec is not a nation, that it does not exist. We have something called the National Assembly. Why National Assembly? Could it be because there is a nation? Maybe. If we were only a society, it would be called a societal assembly, I suppose. But it is called the National Assembly. It was federalists who did that.

Jean Charest also talks about the nation of Quebec. All parties in Quebec refer to the nation of Quebec. Still, there are people who do not understand that. To them, everything has to be exactly the same. It reaches its height in a fit of integrated and institutionalized madness.

When we discussed the mad cow crisis, the former minister of agriculture and agri-food told me, “There is no question of making this a regional issue. In Canada, everyone is equal; the same regulations apply everywhere, and it will be the same thing for mad cow disease”. When you make a mad cow into a symbol of national unity, there is a serious problem. That is where we are at. All the little boxes have to be equal; Prince Edward Island has to be the same as Quebec. We are not a province like the others. We do not even want to be a province like the others; we want to be a country like the others.

In the opinion of this freshly-arrived Prime Minister, things are going to change. From now on, not only will all provinces be the same, but Moose Jaw and Quebec City will be the same, too. I mean no disrespect to Moose Jaw when I say that.

We are a nation. We have a fundamental belief that we are a nation, no better or worse than the rest, but certainly different, a nation that can make its own way in the world, one that has a diversified economy, ranking 14th or 15th in the world. There are smaller countries than ours. There are Nordic countries—I am thinking about Denmark—that are smaller than us and are doing very well. We would have a better relationship because you would then understand that we are a country, we are a nation. We are a nation that does not yet have a country. It will happen, and you will be welcome there.

● (1220)

[*English*]

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I wish others would get into the debate as well.

I certainly agree with the Bloc members when I observe that on many instances the federal government has encroached on provincial jurisdiction. I think that is wrong and I agree with them.

From the western perspective, the problem with Ottawa is in that sense very similar to the problem that Quebec has with Ottawa. The federal government has adversely used its spending power. It has intruded into areas of provincial jurisdiction and usually to considerable detriment to the outcome, for example, health care. I think there is a lot of room for working closely with the provinces. We must always recognize the supreme jurisdiction of the provinces over the delivery of health care.

There are a number of other areas. I recognize and acknowledge that. I also recognize and acknowledge that Canada is a wonderful country. Canada is comprised of all the provinces from Newfoundland and Labrador in the east all the way to British Columbia in the west and the Northwest Territories.

I was born in Saskatchewan. I am a member of the Saskatchewan community and a strong Canadian. My parents immigrated to this country when they were very young, and so I am a first generation Canadian. I cannot forget how my grandparents were grateful that they could come to this country.

I love Canada and I wish that they too loved Canada as the rest of us do.

*The Address*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe:** Mr. Speaker, we have things in common. My grandfather too came from another country. He was from Great Britain. My mother's maiden name is Rowley, and she is a proud sovereignist and Quebecker. This has nothing to do with the fact that my grandfather was born in London.

[*English*]

I also love Canada. It will not stop me from loving Canada because Quebec is a sovereign country.

I am sure the hon. member likes the United States. Does he want to be an American because of that? Certainly not. It is because he is proud to be a Canadian. We see the difference and the importance in being a sovereign country. I am sure that the member believes in that.

I also believe that Quebec should be a sovereign country. Sovereignty is good for Canada. It is certainly not a disease for Quebeckers and that is the point.

I respect the United States as he respects the United States; however, he does not want to be an American. I respect Canada, but I do not want to be a Canadian. I am proud Quebecker and I want to have friendly links with Canada and that is it. I have nothing against Canada, just a plain difference.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, may I begin by breaking a rule and noting the presence of the Prime Minister in the House. I wish to thank the Prime Minister for sticking around to hear what we have to say to him.

[*Translation*]

I want to congratulate the Right Honourable Prime Minister. He has been a conservative politician for a very long time, but there is no way he can suggest he is progressive.

What counts is not what is in the throne speech, but what is not there. This speech does not reflect the Canadian values, and it offers no assistance to Canadian families.

[*English*]

This to me is a good example of what is wrong with this attempt by the Prime Minister to sort of fake to the left as he is going down the political field. It is a fake. It is not just a fake to the left. It is a sort of fake left. We see through it and many other Canadians will see through it as well.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

The word “Romanow” does not come up in the throne speech even once. The Liberals have been talking for 10 years about the need to modernize medicare. How is it possible that the throne speech would not mention a home care program, a drug insurance plan, and the Romanow commission recommendations?

[*English*]

I thought that the Prime Minister might make up for the absence of the word “Romanow” in the Speech from the Throne today. I listened carefully what he had to say about health care. Still, it was as

if there had been no royal commission on health care by the former Premier of Saskatchewan, Mr. Roy Romanow.

This was something that was commissioned by a government that he was part of. The Prime Minister will have a chance to comment after I am finished. We will have a 10 minute question and comment period. I am sure he is skilful enough that he could get up and in the form of a question, answer my question or make a comment as to why he did not mention the Romanow report and why there is not a commitment to closing the Romanow gap.

I am sure all the premiers have told him behind closed doors, even though they have to sing his praises when they come out, that they want Romanow. They want what Roy Romanow recommended, particularly with regard to funding of health care.

The Prime Minister talked about long term stable funding for health care. Why not Romanow? I would hope that the Prime Minister at some point answers that question. He says he wants to debate, let us have one.

What is it that he has against the Romanow commission that he did not mention it in either the Speech from the Throne or in his speech here today? Is he committed to meeting the recommendations of the Romanow report, particularly with respect to the fiscal recommendations of the report? That is very important to us. If the Prime Minister is not prepared to do that then this faking left leaves something to be desired. Of course, it leaves something to be desired in any event.

[*Translation*]

As concerns foreign affairs, it is strange that the throne speech would not mention the missile defence system project put forward by George Bush, even if this is the Prime Minister's top priority in foreign affairs.

[*English*]

Here is a good example. The Prime Minister has made a career lately—just lately because I do not remember him saying much about this before, but in the last year or so—of talking about the democratic deficit. Why not a commitment in the Speech from the Throne to have a real meaningful debate in the House sponsored by the government.

We could have the government put down what it thinks about star wars or national missile defence. Let us have a debate and let us have a vote on it. Will we have a free vote like the Prime Minister promised? He promises more free votes. Will we have that kind of free vote on something as significant as whether or not Canada will participate in something that the Liberals have always said they are against, which is the weaponization of space?

I say to the Prime Minister, why not? Why no commitment to this kind of debate? That would be a real commitment to dealing with the democratic deficit.

The leader of the Bloc mentioned a whole lot of other things that he would like to see Parliament deal with: the ratification of treaties and all kinds of things.

*The Address*

Here is a topical example for the Prime Minister. I would hope that he might get up at some point and say to us whether or not he agrees with the idea that this should be decided on the floor of the House of Commons and not revealed by stealth over a period of time by various statements made by the Minister of National Defence or others that they have just eased a little bit more into national missile defence but that they still have not had a debate in the House of Commons nor have they consulted Canadians.

[*Translation*]

The Prime Minister likes to quote Bono: “The world needs more Canada.” I agree. But the Prime Minister will not commit himself to increase our international development assistance, which is one of Bono's proposals.

• (1230)

[*English*]

There was not a word, not a commitment. It might have been a kind of a tip of the hat rhetorically, but there were no commitments there to international development assistance or to meeting those goals. Maybe we could say this about the Prime Minister: at least he is not being a hypocrite.

I think I am on my 14th throne speech, Mr. Speaker, and I have seen a lot of commitments to increase development assistance that never ever got realized.

Now maybe the Prime Minister is just an honest guy; he is not even going to pretend. And of course, as I am reminded by my colleagues, the Prime Minister when he was the minister of finance was responsible for cuts in development assistance and of course for cuts in many other things.

This strikes me as odd. I am sure that somebody watching might wonder how the Prime Minister can pretend that he has somehow landed here from another planet and has come upon the crime scene. He is able to pretend that this is a shame, that this should be done and that should be done, all these things that were promised in the red book. They have not been done during the 10 years when he was the minister of finance. He is prowling around in a crime scene that has his fingerprints all over it and he is saying, “Terrible. We have to do something about this”. Maybe the Prime Minister has something theological to tell us about this incredible power to forgive himself that he has been able to muster.

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

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** My colleagues are getting very excited, Mr. Speaker. It is hard for me to contain them, but let me deal with another subject.

[*Translation*]

Let me turn to the theme of democracy. If the Prime Minister were really sincere, he would hold a referendum on the principle of proportional representation instead of just making minor and superficial adjustments in the chairmanship of parliamentary committees.

[*English*]

There have been some other little tinkering that the Prime Minister has been able to wonderfully spin over the last six months

as real parliamentary reform. I happen to be one of the last surviving members of the 1986 McGrath committee and the things that we recommended then have still not been implemented. Also, what the Prime Minister has suggested as part of his package—unless he surprises us tomorrow with something real—does not come anywhere near what we recommended back in 1986.

The guts of our recommendation with respect to committee reform was that when members are appointed to committees they should be appointed for the duration of a session or a Parliament and they should be beyond the reach of the whip: no more goon squads.

If the Prime Minister can do that tomorrow, he will have done something. If he can say that from now on when Liberal members begin to have independent thoughts they will not be yanked from the committees, and that when they leave or have to be replaced, they can replace themselves, that they, not the whip, will decide who their replacements will be, that is what the McGrath committee recommended. That then would give true independence to committees, or at least a kind of independence that committees have never had.

So I urge the Prime to take seriously that recommendation as well as others. Otherwise, if the whips, and ultimately the Prime Minister, retain that leash, if at any time the people on the committee can be yanked if they are threatening to make a career ending move, this is not parliamentary reform.

But democratic reform, and the Prime Minister used this phrase, is not just about the House of Commons. We all love this place, some of us more than others, but it is not the only thing happening. How we get here also counts. That is where electoral reform comes in, I say to the Prime Minister. Why could the Prime Minister not have announced—and perhaps he is willing to consider—an all party committee to look into electoral reform, to look into forms of proportional representation? It does not have to be a commitment to a particular kind of electoral reform. Why not allow a debate to take place either here in the House or across the country about ways in which we can make every vote count?

If the Prime Minister is concerned about the health of Canada as a democracy, then he should be concerned that there are so many people out there who feel that their votes do not count. In various first past the post scenarios that voters encounter, they feel that it does not make a difference. We could design a system where it did make a difference and where everybody wherever they vote would be contributing to the ultimate makeup of their Parliament. I commend that particular suggestion to the Prime Minister.

Again with respect to the democratic deficit, I did not really expect the Prime Minister to deal with this one: the trade agreements. What is more antithetical to a healthy democracy than to have more and more decisions made not in legislatures, not in parliaments and not by elected people, but behind closed doors as a result of arguments being made by high-priced trade lawyers, bean counters or whatever? That is not democracy. For more and more of the things that we were able to decide in this House when I first arrived here almost 25 years ago, we are not able to decide those things anymore. They are decided somewhere else. I say that is the real threat to democracy.

*The Address*

The fact is that we cannot decide what kind of drug patent legislation we want to have. We must have the kind of drug patent legislation that conforms with trade agreements. The fact is that apparently we could not allow a Canadian company to do a portion of the census work that is now being done by Lockheed Martin because a former minister of industry, now the ambassador to the UN, said it was the trade agreement that made him do it. When it comes to sovereignty, when it comes to culture, when it comes to all kinds of things, we have seen the ability of this House to make decisions constricted by trade agreements.

Again I would say to the Prime Minister that if he is concerned about democracy he should look at the way in which the trade agreements are taking away the power of parliaments to make decisions in the public interest. Nothing could be more threatening to that ability of countries or parliaments to act in the public interest than chapter 11 of the NAFTA, the investor state dispute settlement mechanism. While the Prime Minister was part of the last government, I thought for a while that the former minister of trade, now the Minister of Health, at one point was actually coming around to the view that there was something wrong with that investor state dispute mechanism.

• (1235)

But now he defends it—although now he does not have to defend it anymore as somebody else has the job of defending it, of defending the indefensible—and we in Canada are left as one of the few countries in the world that has this mechanism built into an agreement with our biggest trading partner. It will never be in the FTAA. It will never be at the WTO. The European Union and others have seen what a threat this is to their ability to act in the public interest, particularly with respect to the environment, which the Prime Minister expresses a concern about. Is the Prime Minister not concerned that if we act in the best interests of the environment, and if that act conflicts with the profitability of certain corporations, if they are foreign corporations they can they take the Canadian government to court? Should that not be a concern? Is that not anti-democratic?

So I will say to the Prime Minister that I think he should be looking at the trade agreements but I do not really expect him to, because I remember 1988 when the Prime Minister first came here. It was right after he was first elected that we had the final debate and vote on the free trade agreement. I do not know if the Prime Minister remembers this, but just after the vote I remember stepping into an elevator with him right out here—with the Liberals of course voting against it—and saying, “You’re not really against this thing, are you?” Because he was a right-wing business Liberal, the Prime Minister, and he still is. He knew enough not to answer the question. He just smiled and got off the elevator.

The Liberals have been, after Mulroney, the architect of more and more free trade. They have shored it up politically and rhetorically and with more agreements. So it is hard to take all this democratic deficit stuff seriously without some kind of commitment to electoral reform, without some kind of re-examination of the trade agreements, particularly chapter 11, and without real parliamentary reform that actually puts members beyond the reach of the whips when they are on committees.

There is a lot more I could say. Right now the steelworkers in Hamilton are worried about their pensions. They are worried about the future of Stelco but they are also worried about their pensions. Was there some kind of commitment in the throne speech to do something about safeguarding the pensions of the workers who count on these pensions? I would have thought that the Prime Minister might have had a passing interest in Hamilton. Maybe he just does not want to even think about Hamilton, and the steelworkers get sideswiped because he does not want to think about Hamilton so they do not get thought about. But we should be thinking about them. We should be thinking about workers all over this country who are insecure about their pensions and about what happens to their pensions when the companies that they work for go under.

What about the strategy for the auto industry in this country? Nothing was mentioned. There was no hint of an industrial strategy. Perhaps the auto strategy has to be left up to one of the leadership candidates for the other party, who seems to have her own auto strategy.

In any event, as I have said, I have heard a lot of throne speeches and I would say that this one was particularly light on details. Maybe that is because we are so close to an election and the Prime Minister does not want to have to defend anything in particular.

But I will say to the Prime Minister through you, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP is on the move. And the Prime Minister knows it. That is why we have had this sort of fake to the left while he is going down the political football field, but it is not going to wash, because there is no Romanow and no debate on missile defence, and a whole lot of other things are missing. If the Prime Minister really wanted to be authentically moving to the left, we would have seen it in this particular Speech from the Throne.

• (1240)

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to congratulate my colleague on his remarks. I also want to thank him for his comments on the throne speech. All of this is part and parcel of a very valuable discussion.

[*English*]

The hon. member mentioned the fact that I had stayed until the end. I think we would all agree that the hon. member is one of the great parliamentary performers and it requires absolutely no sacrifice to sit here and to listen to him.

I will be very quick because I know I only have so much time. Let me simply say that I was one of the first to support Roy Romanow and the report. It is a milestone in the development of our health care policy in this country. I also very much share the view of Mr. Romanow when he says that we cannot talk about the Romanow gap unless we talk about the report in its entirety, and I mentioned that when I spoke to the provinces. I absolutely am a supporter in terms of the importance of the Romanow report.

*The Address*

If I might perhaps ask two questions. In the hon. member's speech he said that there was no reference to overseas aid. Of course we also have to review the way in which we do it. Saying that five per cent of all new government expenditures should go to research and development to deal with the problems of foreign aid is a very important milestone. As well there is Canada corps, where we are going to allow young Canadians basically to develop a huge involvement in overseas aid in terms of justice. The hon. member might comment as to what he thinks about this.

The last thing I would say is on the democratic deficit. I understand that the hon. member would like to have us go further. However it is hard for us to accept the seriousness of the statement that he wants us to go further when in fact his party is governed by a ghostly voice from outside Parliament which simply says that whenever a major issue comes up, they are not allowed to have free votes.

• (1245)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It would seem that no one is too rusty since we are now back from the most recent parliamentary break.

The hon. member for Winnipeg—Transcona.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what ghosts the Prime Minister sees in the chamber here, but I hope he does not end up like Ebenezer Scrooge, some day confronting a ghost that has much to tell him about what he should have done when he was Prime Minister.

I am happy to hear the Prime Minister say what he said about the Romanow report, but I do not think he actually said, and we will have to check the blues, "I intend to cover the Romanow gap". Yes, the report does have to be taken in its entirety.

I would hope that the Prime Minister would pay attention to that part of the report which is particularly praiseworthy of non-profit public health care and talks about how the privatization of health care is not a good idea. It is not enough for the Prime Minister to just get up and say that we are going to abide by the Canada Health Act because the Canada Health Act was not designed to deal with that issue and I am sure the Prime Minister knows that. We need to have a debate in this country, not just about the Canada Health Act because that is not good enough. If we actually want to stop the privatization of our health care system, then we may need to amend the Canada Health Act, or go beyond the Canada Health Act in some way. It would be interesting to know the Prime Minister's views on that.

I take his point about the Canada corps. I hope that we are going to learn more about that in the days to come. Perhaps that could be an initiative that all would want to support. We will have to know more about it.

The five per cent on research and development is about research and development. It is not a commitment to development assistance per se, and so our criticism still stands.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rushed into the chamber as soon as I heard the hon. member speaking about the McGrath committee. As soon as he mentions the McGrath committee, I am in here. He quotes it often. I was worried he was going to get to the Lefebvre committee which would start to date him

just a little bit, but the McGrath committee is certainly worth quoting.

I would like the member to comment a little bit more on electoral reform. I am glad that the Prime Minister is engaged in this debate. There are five provinces in the country that have actually appointed some form of electoral commission to review the first past the post system at the provincial level.

In B.C. we have an extensive citizens assembly system that is now outside the power of the premier to control. It has been given its own power. It must report and must be voted on in British Columbia. I think we will find some positive changes to the electoral system, the first past the post system.

It is not in the McGrath committee report but perhaps the member could comment on the idea of a citizens assembly of some sort, something that is even bigger than a parliamentary committee, something where we could review the first past the post system, as he said, without preconceived ideas of whether it should be proportional representation, preferential ballots, a runoff system, or whatever.

Five provinces have already committed to study the idea of a process that would change the way we would elect members of Parliament. I think it would increase the credibility of all of us, make Parliament more respected in the coffee shops of the country. I think it would be a good thing for democracy itself.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member always gets excited when I mention the McGrath report. I am not sure that he ever read it but I have recommended it to him over and over again. Of course the Lefebvre report was before that, in 1983-84.

I think all of us here would like to see some kind of process, a citizens assembly or whatever. We need to have something happening on the ground that engages citizens on how we can change our democracy, our electoral system and make it more representative of what the people actually want.

People want to be able to vote for something and they want that reflected in their Parliament and legislatures. I think what is happening in these other provinces is a good thing and I hope it eventually happens right across the country.

I do not think that the provinces should necessarily have to show leadership on this. The national government should be showing some leadership on this. That is why I mentioned it to the Prime Minister. I asked his predecessor this question once and he just made fun of the whole idea. He said, "Well, you know, the NDP, they don't like the system because they always lose".

It is not a question of losing and winning. It is not a question for the NDP, for the Liberals or for anybody else. It is having the population win. It is having them win in seeing what they vote for reflected in their Parliament and legislatures.

It seems to me to be a perfectly harmless and advisable idea to set up some kind of parliamentary process for looking at the issue.



*The Address*

•(1250)

**Hon. Paul Bonwick (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (Student Loans), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my hon. colleague on many things with respect to parliamentary reform. I even make mention of the fact that he commented on the NDP being on the move. I remember them being there and then moving to the right over there and then moving farther to the right, up against the wall. I just hope he is recognizing the trend of movement to the right and where he will end up next.

It is imperative that we make our arguments in here based on fact. The hon. member made mention that the PMO has the right to unilaterally or arbitrarily remove people from committee if they disagree. I would ask the hon. member to recant that comment simply because it is no longer fact based. Those changes were made and the PMO no longer has the ability to exercise that type of authority. Members are able to express their opinions without fear of intimidation or of being pulled from a committee.

Clearly, the hon. member erred in his information. It was outdated and I would ask him to recognize that point.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of withdrawing the remark because I was not wrong.

It is the Prime Minister who appoints the whip who exercises that power on behalf of the Prime Minister and it is that power that I think is ultimately destructive. Whips can pull people from committees. In fact, they did that just recently, just in the last Parliament. I have to disagree with the hon. member.

While I am on my feet, one of the other things the government could do is take the parliamentary secretaries off the committees.

**An hon. member:** That's McGrath.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** That was in the McGrath report. The member is right.

We tried that for a couple of years but Prime Minister Mulroney did not like it because prime ministers like to have their coaches on the committees so that when the guys are sitting there they will know how to vote.

**An hon. member:** Guys?

**Mr. Bill Blaikie:** I use that term broadly speaking. The parliamentary secretary is there as a kind of coach as to how to vote. Take the coach away and let people think for themselves on committees. Take the coaches out. Take the parliamentary secretaries out of there and that would go a long way toward actually reforming Parliament.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Durham.

The Speech from the Throne is something of which we as a government can be very proud in terms of the direction in which it wants to move the country. Let me first put the speech in some perspective.

The Speech from the Throne is an opportunity for a government to set forth for Canadians a new vision and outline a new direction in

which the government intends to take the country in the coming months and years. The Speech from the Throne certainly sets forth some interesting and new directions for the government and for the country.

One of the major themes that will challenge all members of the House, government and opposition, is the addressing of the democratic deficit. What does this mean? This will mean that Parliament will be both more accountable and more proactive in setting policy which responds to the needs of Canadians. Hopefully, and I underline hopefully, we can make it mean policy delivery that addresses the concerns of individual Canadians on the ground. It will take the goodwill of all parties and all sides of the House to ensure this comes about. There is an opportunity and we need to seize that opportunity. However, I worry that this opportunity could be lost by partisan politics. I will provide an example from the last Parliament.

The opposition always cried about free votes, but if we look at the record, the only place where there were free votes was on the government side because the opposition voted together to try to embarrass the government. Free votes are important, but they only mean something if everybody, as individuals, votes in a free vote and does not try to use it to embarrass the government. There is a great responsibility on us all, including us on the government side as well as members of other parties, in terms of seizing this opportunity.

New directions will challenge the status quo. This is critical if Canadians are to have confidence in the statements of the government. Making speeches, giving assurances and outlining commitments are relatively easy. The difficult part is in the implementation, in the acceptance by the opposition and by the media that to address the democratic deficit, the government and all stakeholders in the public policy process, including the bureaucracy, must be prepared to abandon conventional thinking in terms of where policy initiatives originate. We in this House have a chance to seize that opportunity.

I want to suggest the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as a place to start. Several times, in fact three times, the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans recommended that DFO at 200 Kent Street be decentralized. That would mean decentralizing some of the power. Yes, there are 1,000 people there and more in the outlying regions. That is true, but that really would mean changing the power structure itself.

I have suggested and the committee has suggested that maybe we need to decentralize that office and move at least one office west for Pacific fisheries and one office east for Atlantic fisheries. I would challenge the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to task the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to see how that kind of policy would be implemented. If the Prime Minister says that the House and committees will have more say than we already have on the record, that kind of a recommendation would be a good place to start.

The speech does much more than talk about the democratic deficit. It talks of key interests. To my constituents it is health care. On health care, the Speech from the Throne says that the government will support the health council in the development of information on which waiting time objectives can be set and by which Canadians can judge progress toward them.

*The Address*

•(1255)

The government will take the lead in establishing a strong and responsive public health system, starting with a new Canada public health agency. The government will appoint a new chief public health officer for Canada and undertake a much needed overhaul of federal health protection through a Canada health protection act. We will do that consistent with the Canada Health Act. I think that speaks to where Canadians want the government to go and we will do it.

Another key area for us in Atlantic Canada is the emphasis on regional and rural development. As a government, we have to be concerned about the future of rural Canada and give greater recognition to the reality of rural Canadians. For example, emphasizing rural issues is related to regional issues.

In Canada, only 20% of the population is rural. In Newfoundland and Labrador, 42% of the population resides in rural areas, and in Prince Edward Island, 55% are rural residents. We must ensure that the policies emerging recognize the resource based, seasonal nature of the economy in many of these communities.

While a document prepared by the Atlantic Liberal caucus, *Rising Tides*, was not referred to directly, I want to mention some of the key themes in the document. Perhaps more important, the Prime Minister, in his remarks just a few moments ago, did recognize the *Rising Tides* document and said "We must ensure that the hopes and dreams of Atlantic Canada, as reflected in the report *Rising Tides*, are realized.

That is the kind of message we want to see from the Prime Minister and from the Government of Canada.

Specifically, in terms of regional development, the government will assist in increasing economic activity through the use of advanced technology, pursue opportunities to develop energy resources and maximize the potential of our coastal and offshore areas. It is critical, in this pursuit, that we keep a focus on those industries which have been and remain the backbone of so many rural communities in Atlantic Canada, which are the fisheries and the agricultural industries. As such, development of resources, such as oil and gas, must always remain subject to the assurance of the sustainability of our fisheries.

On agriculture, the Speech from the Throne states clearly that the government will stand with farmers and ensure they "are not left to bear alone the consequences of circumstances beyond their control". I applaud this statement, for while it directly refers to the current BSE crisis and the impact it has had on our domestic beef industry, the statement will be read by the farm community as a new commitment to stand with farmers who are suffering the consequences of unfair trading practices by our major competitors, such as the United States and the EU.

We as a government must stand behind our grain farmers, our supply management industry and all our agricultural industries in the face of these challenges that are before them in these times. This statement I believe will go a long way to reassuring the farm community.

Since time does not allow me to get into a lot of other points, I will close by re-emphasizing some points in the throne speech.

The throne speech does address the democratic deficit through parliamentary reform but, as I emphasized, dealing with the democratic deficit cannot be done by those on the government side alone. It requires the opposition to quit playing partisan games and get to dealing with the needs of the country and, when free votes are called, to actually have a free vote, not just on the government side.

We are ensuring that key social programs, such as health care, remain a priority. It said that in the throne speech. The government makes a further commitment to lifelong learning in the workplace. The speech talks about developing opportunities which will add greater value to our natural resources and maximize the potential of our coastal and offshore areas through the ocean action plan.

The throne speech pursues the development of new green technologies to address environmental concerns.

•(1300)

Finally, the throne speech provides direct support to Canada's municipalities to assist in preserving and rebuilding critical infrastructure.

It is an important document. It sets out the vision for the country. It does change the direction. We need to move forward in a more positive way for the sake of all Canadians and our nation as a whole.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member what he thinks about what has happened to Saint John, New Brunswick since the Liberals came into power 10 years ago.

We were building the ships for the navy. Now we buy new submarines, for heaven's sake, that will not even float. Over 4,000 people were working in that shipyard. Some of those men came to see me last week. They needed help to go to the United States to find work and had to leave their families back in Canada.

What does the hon. member think about his colleague who was head of the sugar caucus and we lost the sugar refinery? Another 500 workers were out of work.

What does he think about VIA Rail? When I was mayor I cut the ribbon on the brand new train station built by the federal government and it took the train away.

Saint John, New Brunswick has lost 30,000 people in 10 years. This has never happened before.

I want the hon. member to tell the House what he thinks should be done.

I heard the Prime Minister today say that he was going to do wonderful things for the Atlantic region. He was the finance minister for the last 10 years and he certainly did nothing whatsoever for the Atlantic region.

How is the hon. member going to get our 30,000 people back?

*The Address*

• (1305)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, maybe the hon. member opposite did not hear the first part of my remarks about what a throne speech is all about. It is about looking ahead and, yes, recognizing that there are very serious difficulties at the Saint John shipyards with the loss of jobs as a result of the ridiculous subsidization by some of the other countries in the world.

The past regime of the government tried to deal with that problem. As a result, it is one of the reasons that I mentioned the report *Rising Tides*. The *Rising Tides* document recognizes the reality that there are some struggles in Atlantic Canada. It recognizes the reality of the problems of shipbuilding in Saint John. It recognizes that we need a shipbuilding policy for Canada, yes, but it also recognizes that we have to move ahead.

The document talks about using regional development to move us ahead, and the throne speech referred to that. I think that is important as we look forward to the future to put some meat on the bones and ensuring that Atlantic Canada has the same opportunities as have other Canadians in other areas of Canada.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, speaking of *Rising Tides*, I do not know what happened to *Catching the Wave*. Before the 2000 election, the Liberals had a report called *Catching the Wave*. From 2000 to 2004, I think we lost the wave and now it is the *Rising Tides*. What is going to happen after *Rising Tides*?

It is nice to have all those nice words but I think *Catching the Wave* and *Rising Tides* went over the Atlantic and ended up in some other place. That is the problem we have had with this government for the last 10 years.

What happens to the farmers? The farmers are losing their jobs today. When we look at the foresters because of the softwood lumber situation, they are losing their shirts too.

We can look at the fishery and the way it was managed. Our colleague on the other side of the House will probably agree with me. He agreed that the management of the fishery was done wrongly and now today people are losing their shirts.

I have to agree with my colleague from Saint John when she talks about all the job losses. It is a shame when about three years ago one of my brothers, at 58 years of age, had to sell his house and try to find a job somewhere else. It is a shame when last year another one of my brothers at the age of 54 lost his house and had to go find work somewhere else in the country. That is what happens in Atlantic Canada.

Does *Catching the Wave* or *Rising Tides* mean that those people will be able to come back home? Is that what the member means? It is not enough to just blow air, which is all we have been getting for the last 10 years.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, I will clarify a couple of points for the hon. member. This shows how the government, which is the Liberal Party, builds on what it has done before.

In 1995 we dealt with the deficit, which is why we were able to do some of the things since then that we have been able to do. In 1997 a group of us from Atlantic Canada got together to talk about how to

put Atlantic Canada in a position where we would be taking a long term approach. We wanted to establish a plan where in 15 years Atlantic Canada would at least be equivalent to the rest of the country and it would not have to depend on EI and those kinds of programs. We wanted Atlantic Canadians to be able to seize their economic opportunities.

The first document we worked on was *Catching the Wave*. We built on that with *Rising Tides*. As a result, we can look at the increased R and D in the area: \$500 million out of the Atlantic investment partnership that has come into Atlantic Canada as a result of our work as an Atlantic caucus.

The throne speech talks about building further on that through regional development programming, lifelong learning, giving greater opportunities to our students, assisting the agriculture and fisheries industry. That is vision and leadership. That is what we have in this Prime Minister and on this side of the House.

• (1310)

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am always delighted to share my time with the member for Malpeque who has great insight into the economy and the people of Atlantic Canada.

The people of Durham in my riding in southern Ontario are quite pleased with this throne speech. This is very much an innovative document that addresses change, and I do not say change just for change sake. The fact of the matter is our country is changing in some very fundamental ways. We have the demographics of the aging baby boomers and the fact that people are emulating more toward urban centres. This is causing a great deal of strain on municipalities.

I have three municipalities in my riding. Officials are constantly talking to me about the fact that the province has downloaded so much responsibility on them and yet have given them no resources. In some ways that is an outgrowth of our taxation system. I hope we can talk about how to finance municipalities more effectively and more efficiently. I hope we also can spend some time talking about our taxation system. Taxing people on their property values to support things like schools is in some ways very counterproductive. Older people living in their homes are often forced to leave them because the fair market value assessment and taxation on that is out of whack with their fixed incomes.

I was at a meeting last week with the mayor of one municipality who told me that the municipality could not carry on with the services it was expected to provide with the existing cash flow from the province. There is a recognition that the federal government must try to address this kind of issue in our communities.

People might not understand what is called the mush sector of taxation for the GST. Unlike ourselves who have to pay 7% tax, municipalities only pay 4%. They already have a rebate on the purchases they make for their operations, whether they be purchases of equipment or supplies. Municipalities have to pay a certain amount of GST, and that is currently 4%.

*The Address*

The throne speech talks about relinquishing that 4%. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister stood up earlier today and talked about the fact that this already had been rebated to municipalities. The throne speech is better than a budget speech in some ways because the government has actually started to act on it. Money will be flowing into our municipalities within the month. The municipalities of Durham are thankful that the federal government has recognized this. That it is very important.

We can sit down and argue with the provinces and have long protracted debates, but people think a very sinister part of our governmental system is that we never deal with these things. There is some concrete proof that this issue is being dealt with almost immediately.

I previously talked about demographics, and demographics are important to Durham. The Ontario Institute of Technology, which is Ontario's newest university, is in my riding. It is the only university that is expanding right now in the province of Ontario. Some debate is going on in the provincial legislature about that. Be that as it may, this is a great opportunity for the nucleus of about two million people who surround the Durham area. This area is related to General Motors and other kinds of manufacturing concerns, but there is a recognition that things are changing. There is a recognition that we have to get on with the new technologies that are important to Canada and that will make us a competitive country in the 21st century.

I was happy to see the document dealt with things like student loans. There is nothing else that bothers parents more today than understanding the importance of a knowledge based economy, but knowing that they cannot afford that post-secondary education for Sally or Sam. Even if Sally or Sam gets that education, they come out with such high debt, which can frustrate them in starting their career paths.

●(1315)

The question is how much are students willing to invest in their own knowledge base. More important, we as a nation have to recognize that our future depends on having a highly skilled labour force and a good knowledge based economy because clearly we are not going to compete with countries that have a huge labour base with a low knowledge based economy. Therefore, our role is to promote a more knowledge based economy.

The document talks about increasing the eligibility for student loans. There is recognition that a computer is a necessary piece of equipment. When I went to school, a pencil, a pen and maybe a ruler were necessary pieces of equipment. Today, it is necessary to have a computer. Therefore, the student loan application process will be expanded to include computers as an expenditure. That is very forward thinking. We need some similar reform in our taxation system to realize that computers turn over in one or two years rather than being amortized for depreciation purposes, sometimes indefinitely. These are some other things that we could talk about on another day.

The Speech from the Throne also addresses the issue that even with the student loan program there are people in low income families who cannot make it. They cannot pay those high tuition fees. That is not right. One thing a nation owes to its people is to

educate them, to keep them well and in good health. We owe our people a good education, to give them the qualities and skills to go forward in the future. That should apply to everybody, whether they are wealthy or poor. They should have those opportunities.

The Speech from the Throne impressed the fact that within the first year a grant would be given to provide for tuition assistance directly related to tuition. As we know, education comes under provincial jurisdiction. The federal government is always trying to find ways to help those students without directly confronting provincial administrations. I think this recognizes that we have to do these things. Another aspect of the whole intent of the throne speech is to look for a new era of cooperation with the provinces.

The same thing really holds true of health care. We talked about reducing waiting lists. I think most of us know that those things are within the jurisdiction of the provinces well.

When I have meetings with my constituents, they do not care whether it is the federal government or the provinces that are responsible. They want somebody in an elected position to come forward and solve these problems. They know that their Aunt Martha has been waiting three or four months for open heart surgery, and that is not right. They are concerned about that. They want the federal government to take some leadership in this role.

It is clear that we have to get the consent and cooperation of the provinces to proceed on those issues. I am hopeful we will have an era of new cooperation rather than the confrontation we have had in the past. It seems that is happening, and I very much look forward to the new Prime Minister's objectives of attaining that.

Finally, what really has impressed me about the throne speech is it is a well knit document. I talked about the importance of a knowledge based economy. It would appear to me that it has a specific focus on research and development. It is a realization that Canada cannot be excellent in all fields of endeavour. In fact it is to find the fields of endeavour that Canada should pursue.

The throne speech talks about health sciences, biotechnology, environmental sciences and nanotechnologies, which is nuclear research. My riding also includes the newest nuclear reactor in Canada, the Darlington nuclear reactor. We are very concerned that this is another opportunity for the people of Durham to experience this new agenda of research. Canadians like to be all things to all people, but I think there is a recognition that we need to have a better focus.

There has been a lot of talk about our relationship with the United States. However, the world is changing rapidly in front of us, and the name China comes up constantly as an ultimate trading partner, as a great nation with which we have to get involved. I know these kinds of technology are very important to the developing area of China and Southeast Asia.

●(1320)

I can see all these issues coming together in a very specific agenda. It is a very refreshing agenda, and I look forward to supporting the government as we move this through the House.

*The Address*

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned cooperation a great deal. I am old enough and have been around long enough to see a great deal of that cooperation disappear.

In the 1930s we created the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act which assisted farmers to build dugouts and dams. They would pay a portion to collect that valuable water for farming and livestock. There is now a waiting list of 200. All those farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan, whose lands have dried up, are looking now at huge amounts of snow. While they are grateful for it, they want the runoff, but no dams and dugouts have been built for years.

Is that the kind of cooperation western farmers can expect from a government, a government that put only three lines for farming in the entire budget? The government has once again ignored the farmers of western Canada. I for one will not sit idly by and listen to any bragging about federal-provincial cooperation, because it has disappeared.

**Mr. Alex Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, I actually farmed for eight years. I understand a little about the problems of farmers and I understand the program about which he is talking. I believe it was brought in by Alvin Hamilton, the minister of agriculture at the time. These were actually wonderful projects throughout the western provinces.

I am not even going to pretend to understand the argument about why these things have contracted. The reality is this is a big country and we have limited resources. We are talking about the past and I hope we can focus on a new era of cooperation.

However, the early 1990s was a very difficult time in government, whether it was federal government, the province of Saskatchewan or others. I can well remember the province of Saskatchewan being close to receivership. The reality is we have limited resources. Some of those resources had to change, and no question some people were hurt by it. Things they had before were pulled away from them.

We have all suffered to some extent, but that suffering is behind us. We should look at a new agenda. Wonderful things are happening in Saskatoon in biotechnology. These are things in which we are interested in investing. These are a part of Canada and it is a new era of cooperation in which this government will be very much a part.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, one interesting part of the Speech from the Throne and one I often hear from Canadians is the question of accountability and integrity. The Prime Minister has spoken a great deal about those, everything from ethics to a number of different initiatives that he feels will improve the Canadian belief in democracy and ensure that Canadians are re-engaged.

However, one thing really troubles me, and it really goes to the heart of democracy. The Speech from the Throne did not mention the debate about how we spend our resources. Whether one is a resident, a business or a group of citizens who contribute, we have to decide where we want to put our resources. As in our homes or businesses, we know we have a budget and we know we have choices and priorities.

What we continually see from the government is the mismanagement and an attempt at deception to shortchange Canadians from that debate by having surpluses emerge at the last moment.

We know what has been happening over the last couple of weeks. We have been hearing there is not enough money, that there is just over \$2 billion. Then we hear that within the next couple of days we might actually find some more billions. This is from the same government which has been here for 10 years. All of a sudden it is going to come up with billions of dollars without any type of due process that allows Canadians to debate where those billions should go.

That deception should have ended with the throne speech. There should have been some accountable practices to say that this nation has a certain amount of resources. Let us choose together and debate in earnest how we want to spend our money.

● (1325)

**Mr. Alex Shepherd:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that we have had successive elections in this country and that Canadians have continued to elect our party tells me that they have made very serious choices about the results of how we have spent or not spent money.

The leader of the member's party, in a dissertation I read today, talks about how we should never reduce the deficit, that if we have a surplus we should spend it. This is absolutely irresponsible. This is the kind of irresponsible spending philosophy that the New Democratic Party has had since its inception. It is the very kind of thing that the people of Canada do not want today.

[Translation]

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in today's debate on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Canadians should be suspicious of this government and of the Prime Minister. They should know that this Speech from the Throne is nothing more than a new Liberal red book. It is yet another misleading document.

[English]

This opportunity to respond to the Speech from the Throne is indeed a pleasure. It is, however, challenging when one looks at the litany of promises that have been made over the years by not only the Prime Minister himself but by his own government.

It was more than a little ironic that it did arrive on the Canadian political scene on Groundhog Day. It is very reminiscent of that Bill Murray movie where we kept seeing the same thing happen time and time again. The mythology that surrounds Groundhog Day itself is where the little animal comes out of its hole and looks for some sign of what is going to happen. Yet, as we know, in the case of Shubenacadie Sam and Warton Willie this year, like the throne speech, Canadians saw nothing. They saw lots of promise and lots of indication that there would be something substantial there, but nothing at all revealed.

*The Address*

Canadians need to question the intention of the Prime Minister. Was it really to set out a vision of a bold, new plan for the country or was it really just to bait them? Was it really simply to set out what this election plan might be all about and what was going to be promised, as we have seen promised now in three successive elections of what the Liberal government would do? What Canadians need to do most of all is connect those previous promises with the reality of what happened during this 10 years.

Then they have to look a little further as to who was the centrepiece, who was the number two minister in that government, the minister of finance, while those promises were being made.

I need not go into great detail about the red-faced red book reversals that we have seen on GST, free trade and the exorbitant promises that were made about what we would do or what we would see in terms of funding for our Canadian military. All of that is awash.

The *Hansards* of this place are littered with those particular promises that were made and subsequently broken. The work of this government is there. The record has been laid bare before Canadians when one starts to scratch a bit below the surface of much of the rhetoric, the pontification, and pompous promises that were made in yesterday's throne speech.

The Prime Minister himself has spent much of his energies and much of his political career, often to the detriment of his own colleagues, advancing his own cause. The direction that the Prime Minister is about to embark on right now is about as predictable as perhaps some of the financial logs of his steamships.

What wasn't included in the throne speech is almost as telling as what was included. Nowhere did we see any mention whatsoever of the fisheries and the plight of fishers in this country today on all coasts and all bodies of water in between. There is nothing of the role of Canada's future participation, if there will be participation, in the missile defence program. There is no real commitment to clean up some of the indiscretions and massive waste of taxpayers' money that we saw under his guidance as finance minister.

There is no contrition or humility whatsoever about his own role in the record of the Liberal government and in all those offences. He was there. He was a part of those decisions sitting at the cabinet table. Some of those decisions, we now know, impacted directly on business holdings that he has in Canada.

The complete absence in the throne speech of the fishery is one of the most glaring omissions and is most offensive. The issue is not only of importance to the coastal communities on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, but it remains a huge priority for all Canadians. Every body of water, every stream, and every lake in this entire nation is affected by the lack of insight, the lack of foresight and the lack of having a fisheries plan.

Fishing communities throughout the country are in dire straits because of the mismanagement of the Liberal government in the last 10 years. The Prime Minister has forgotten that fisheries are not limited to any one region. Clearly, this is something that is impacting the resource sector across the country, as we have seen with agriculture, and our mining and forestry industry. These are the areas of the economy that most affect rural Canada.

While there was much emphasis placed on a new deal for cities, which I would suggest is really coming out of a decade of a raw deal for cities, there was very little mention of a strategy, an approach, or a compassionate word to encourage our rural communities.

● (1330)

Clearly, the Prime Minister's own offshore investments in shipping also betray the fact that there have been a lot of environmental violations by his own company. In fact, one of the most recent criminal prosecutions involved a CSL ship off the coast of Atlantic Canada.

In light of that, I would suggest to look a little deeper and ask the question, why should Canadians accept the word of the Prime Minister now? Why trust him this time? There has been a long record of indiscretions, words given, and promises made and little delivered.

In light of recent events, I also found it startling that there was no mention whatsoever of civil liberties. The reference comes in the wake of what surely has to be of great concern to Canadians today in the home invasion of a reporter here in Ottawa as a result of an article written last November. Yet there was this lengthy lag time before any action was taken whatsoever, and no connection as yet that reflects on this fear of there being a national security breach. I find that most disturbing.

The government has really relegated to the backbenches of the speech itself any connection to what I would consider to be one of the most serious violations of the freedom of the press in this country's history.

At a time when terrorism certainly remains a world threat, the government is deliberately diverting attention away from its plan on how it will co-operate with international efforts, North American efforts, to secure our borders and coastal communities. This is clearly a sleight of hand.

We need to remember that it was this government that disbanded the ports police. In fact, it put the safety of all Canadians at risk. We are a coastal country. The government disbanded the ports police, a specialized police force that was tasked specifically with the training, the expansive knowledge and authority to enforce the Criminal Code and the Customs and Immigrations Act, and to stand guard on our Canadian coastal waters.

This is underscored as well by the declining Canadian navy, the lack of ability we have now to patrol our waters. Dare I mention the cancellation of the Sea King helicopter program, which has again left, not only the coastal communities, but the country itself at risk in terms of not solely the protection of our citizens, but those in the waters off the coast of Canada and the perils that can clearly result from the challenges that lie on the open waters.

There was reference made already today in the throne speech by my colleague from Saint John and the deputy leader of the Conservative Party about the submarines and the money that will be entailed in upgrading these submarines to make them operational. There was the deception in initially saying what great savings and great benefit would come to Canada with the purchase of these submarines, knowing that the Australians and other countries had looked at these submarines.

*The Address*

The British themselves found them wanting. Why could we not, as has been suggested, have built those submarines in Saint John? Why could we not, as part of a national shipbuilding program, have embarked upon a plan that would have employed Canadians and used Canadian technology as we have seen in the past, when a Conservative government granted those programs to Saint John to build navy frigates? We were to see the component parts built in Langley and Abbotsford for helicopters that were to be purchased, the EH-101, which, if we take the partisanship and the political football away from the Liberal government, no doubt will be purchased. Those were the best for the money and the best purchase. The long term benefits of development, research and technology was to be done right here in Canada.

It is obvious that much of what has happened under this particular finance minister, now Prime Minister of the government, is being whitewashed. It is being put aside.

The Liberals are trying to purge the memories of Canadians of the record of failing to deliver on what was promised in the past. Budget cuts and the restricted mandate that have been given to some of our policing forces in the country today have also jeopardized our national security.

Canadians are left to wonder why they should accept the man now responsible for the delivery of Canada's first throne speech from this supposedly new government that contained no less than 30 odd references to new. Why would they accept this as anything more than a pre-election, pre-planned bag of tricks and bag of promises once again?

For 10 years the current Prime Minister has held the most powerful and influential portfolio in the government. He was called upon to serve the country in a manner fitting to this great nation and to use sound fiscal policy that would benefit Canadians.

•(1335)

Yet when one examines some of those decisions and some of that use of money that I have referenced already, such as the cancellation of the helicopter programs, I cannot rise in this chamber and talk about fiscal management without referencing the massive distortion of the truth as well as the waste of money surrounding the long gun registration. There has been an outcry from Canadians, from the police and from those individuals who recognize the one simple truth: that no matter how much money and resources and energy are put into this boondoggle, criminals are not going to register their guns. It is simply not going to happen.

And so it is perpetuated, just as we have seen with the helicopters. It is a simultaneous face-saving and rear-end covering exercise that is going on in this country. The decisions that have been made are highly questionable. When one puts that in the context of the pronouncements made yesterday in the throne speech, one really has to wonder why Canadians would accept the word of this Prime Minister and this government.

In addition to the loss of life and the loss of money that have resulted from some of these decisions, after 10 years of being in government the Prime Minister is now asking people to simply take him at his word. The previous decisions that he made—and that his government made—as part of the caucus and the cabinet have left

another sector of the country reeling. I am referring here, of course, to students in this country. Although there was great pomp and ceremony surrounding the commitment to students, one again has to look at the actual facts here. For many students, student debt now is equivalent to a mortgage, the difference being that after graduation they have no house, not to mention a car to get to work if they can find a job.

At St. FX University, which was recognized as the number one undergraduate university in the country, I deal regularly with students. I spoke as recently as two days ago with a father whose daughter has now embarked on another program. She is being chased by debt collectors because of missing a single payment on her student debt, which was turned over to a collection agency. This is the reality of what is happening to many students.

Many students are faced with the fact that they have to leave the country in order to get employment in their chosen field. Almost the entire graduating class of nurses in some undergraduate programs such as St. FX's is leaving the country to find work, yet there is a shortage of nurses in the country. It is perverse when we look at the facts and the promises and the failure to deliver.

Opposition members of Parliament in both the Progressive Conservative Party and the Canadian Alliance Party have put forward previous attempts to address the situation of student debt. The current Prime Minister in his previous incarnation voted against the ability of students to write off some of that student debt when they stayed and paid taxes in this country. Now, while he waxes eloquent in platitudes such as “investing in people...Canada's most important economic investment”, we see the facts unfolding. Students are still suffering, feeling the effects of crushing accumulated student debt.

I also could not help but laugh when I saw the reference that children are in fact Canada's future. What a vacuous, inane statement to put in the throne speech. If that is the case, why have we seen children in this country still living in abject poverty? Why have we seen children who are in school still unable to access things like the breakfast program that is provided by the province of New Brunswick?

All of this leads to some of the bigger economic decisions about transfer payments. While much was made of the promised and re-promised \$2 billion that was going to be allotted to the provincial governments to divvy up for health care, what is not told and is not spoken about is the clawback in transfer payments. The net loss to most provinces will actually leave them with a lower operating budget for the coming fiscal year.

Again health care, education and infrastructure take the hit while the government continues to laud its Prime Minister for such sound fiscal management for the country and while the downloading and the trickle-down effect continues, an effect that is felt not only by the provinces and municipalities but clearly by the individuals who should be in receipt of programs and infrastructure that meet their needs and allow them to prosper, get to work and do the important things that do generate growth in the country's economy.

*The Address*

• (1340)

The stories I hear from my own riding on these big issues are echoed across the country. While not every specific example in different communities is the same, the plot is the same. The students, the children, the people of this country, are burdened with much of the debt we see in Canada today.

There have been numerous studies done by very eminent individuals and those with economic prowess and know-how, like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. They have pointed out that Canadian productivity continues to lag behind that of the United States by about 16% and that our own standard of living in Canada is 15% lower than that of our North American counterparts in the United States. Canada's tax system remains significantly less competitive than that of the Americans. That study went on to talk about how the government has now abandoned all pretence of spending discipline and about how fiscal program spending has jumped by more than 30% in the past four fiscal years, part of which was shepherded through Parliament by the current Prime Minister.

The last budget that we saw in this country, last February, launched a new scattergun of spending commitments. The Prime Minister at that time, coupled with the able assistance of the recently retired John Manley, talked about the theme of getting back to providing Canadians with more access to their own money. What it really should have been deemed as was a "return to spender" approach.

Now, I would suggest, we are seeing much of the same approach outlined in this throne speech, the difference being that there will be no follow-up. There will be no hard cash. This is very much a "cheque is in the mail" type of approach, but there is one step that has to happen first. The Liberal government has to be re-elected, of course, and that is where this official opposition, the Conservative Party of Canada, intends to be very diligent in proposing to the country alternatives that make good sense, alternatives that will affect people's backyards and back pockets, giving them access to their own hard-earned money to make those spending decisions for themselves. I know it is an often repeated and trite truism, but I dare say that Canadians know how to spend their money better than the government does, and they will generate the wealth. They will generate the activity and the productivity in their communities, in the cities, towns and small rural areas throughout Canada.

Here is where the answer lies when it comes to the issue of democratic deficit. Again I would suggest, not to sound too flippant, that there is really a credibility deficit in hearing the Prime Minister talk about how he is going to rejuvenate and renew the democracy of this place and throughout this country. This is a Prime Minister who was part of the government that used closure on debate in the chamber of the House of Commons more than 80 times, going far beyond any previous administration. This is a Prime Minister who as finance minister himself invoked the use of closure no less than 13 times.

We know, as I referenced already, that he had his hand all over the initial 1993 red book, but let us look a little deeper at his own record. He stood up and opposed numerous attempts, including an attempt by this opposition party, to have an independent ethics counsellor reporting directly to members of Parliament. The words were taken

directly from the 1993 red book. Those words were served up in such a way that there was no denying them and no room for anyone to suggest that this was simply an attempt by the opposition to put one over on the government. These were simply words offered back, saying, "Agree to your own commitment. Embrace what you promised to do over 10 years ago". The Prime Minister voted against it.

There is ample factual evidence to suggest that there is no credibility whatsoever when we hear about empowering the opposition—

**Mr. Wayne Easter:** What about Orchard?

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** I hear some chirping coming from a potato eater from the other side. I remember this same member standing up as the former solicitor general and telling Canadians that they did not provide any evidence to the Americans on the Arar case. We know that to be a complete whopper. Actually that has been proven to be completely untrue, so I take no lessons on credibility from the member opposite.

• (1345)

Time and time again we have seen the bait go out. It is the old bait and switch: "Here is what we are offering today. Elect us and we will do whatever we please". I think that Canadians' patience is waning. They have seen this ruse perpetrated on them now for over a decade. We have seen the evolution of a parliamentarian in the Prime Minister himself, who promised on so many occasions that he was going to do such grandiose things as get rid of the GST. In fact, I have a quote here from an article penned just over a year ago that talks about this pre-election prime minister, this pre-election member of Parliament, who is now in a position to actually do something, to actually implement the changes he talked about before he was empowered and anointed.

Before he even became a member of the government, in 1990 during his leadership bid, he promised, "I think (the GST) is an incredibly stupid, inept tax. I would promise to get rid of it. In the first six months of a Liberal government, I'd abolish the damn thing". Those were his words. The member for LaSalle—Émard, the current Prime Minister, said those words.

The Prime Minister has informed us time and time again of his 101 priorities. He has talked about how his government is going to implement this visionary, forward looking agenda for the country and yet there is little evidence to back up that suggestion. Here is what this is really about. I refer back to the groundhog theme. What we Canadians are going to see will be like those groundhogs scurrying out of their holes. They will come out and Canadians will get six more weeks of electioneering, six more weeks of vacuous promises that mean nothing and are not worth the paper they are written on. We are going to see very little except an attempt, as we have seen before, to delay, to deny, to distract and to draw Canadians' attention away from the fact that this Prime Minister has been there for 10 years, has a lot of ink on his hands, has a lot to answer for and really is interested in nothing more than perpetuating power for him and his Liberal government.



*The Address*

**Hon. Joe Comuzzi (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to speak to my friend from Antigonish, who has just made a statement with respect to the Speech from the Throne. I am a little amazed that he would speak in those terms inasmuch as he is from Atlantic Canada. If in fact there were to be that kind of criticism on the Speech from the Throne, one would think that perhaps he was from some other section of Canada inasmuch as the Prime Minister, just a few short hours ago, mentioned Atlantic Canada in three specific areas with what he proposed to do with this government and how it would assist Atlantic Canada.

Let me be more specific and let me ask my friend from Antigonish what he would prefer us to do today. He said there were just promises, no commitments. Let me ask about the commitment that was made just an hour or so ago in this House: that as of yesterday every community in this country is going to take a benefit from not having to pay the GST. That happened yesterday. Every community in this country, as of now, is no longer required to pay GST.

My friend over here, also from Atlantic Canada, has indicated that perhaps the colleague sitting next to the member would not want Saint John to be a recipient of that money that is going into her treasury in the very city of which she used to be mayor. How about an area like Halifax, which is an immediate recipient of additional funds that it did not have on January 31? This is a firm commitment of the government to assist communities in this country and everyone should be absolutely totally onside and completely proud of that single move.

We have also made a commitment to reduce lines and for diagnostic care in health care. It goes without saying that this is part of the commission, that this is part of our undertaking. That is something we will do.

We have also said in the Speech from the Throne that we protect rights. We have appointed a royal commission to protect the rights of the individuals in this country.

With respect to the democratic deficit, tomorrow members will see that our colleague from Sarnia will make some statements within this House as to how we will be addressing the democratic deficit.

So let me say to my friends across, particularly those from Atlantic Canada, "Go back home this weekend and tell your mayors and your reeves and your citizens that you do not want the GST rebate".

• (1350)

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by congratulating my colleague for his elevation, his long-earned position in the government. However I do have to take issue with the suggestion that somehow now provinces and municipalities should get down and kiss the shoes of the Prime Minister for, after 10 years, decimating their budgets by these cuts to transfer payments.

I find some of these poor mayors of municipalities and the provinces are suffering from Stockholm syndrome. They are now feeling that they should somehow thank their captors. What we have seen is that they have been forced to do so much with less that it is

like getting hit on the head with a ball-peen hammer. It feels good when it stops.

There is the suggestion that we should be thankful in Atlantic Canada because the government is now going to stop pummelling us and stop ripping money away from our provincial and municipal budgets and allow us to sort of revel in the fact that the Prime Minister will finally live up to a portion, probably 2%, of the decrease in the GST that has been collected.

Well we all know that huge whopper about how it would axe the tax, get rid of it. Ten years later it is lingering like a great big elephant that has been sleeping next to the Prime Minister, from which everybody in the Liberal Party wants to avert their eyes.

We all know that one of their own members went so far as to resign over that promise. Now she possibly will have to resign again because of the way she has been treated by her own colleagues.

I take no history lessons whatsoever from the member opposite, even though he has a long history here. I have great personal respect for his commitment, however, in Atlantic Canada all we are looking for is a fair share and an opportunity to participate fully in the economy of the country. We want the ability to use our own resources and to produce things that we can export.

The rising tide has really been something that has washed over us and carried our most valuable resource away: our young people who have had to leave the provinces of Atlantic Canada, have had to leave the country and, in many cases, will never return.

It is only when we elect a Conservative government in the country to work with Conservative provincial governments, to work with mayors and councillors at the municipal levels, that we will see a return to true equalization in Canada.

• (1355)

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough for pointing out an important point about the Speech from the Throne regarding student debt.

I, like he, know of many students who will be hounded to their graves until they pay back every nickel of their student loans and the horrendous debt that has piled up from their student loans.

Does the member share with me the outrage in the contrast. Some 96% of student loans are paid back fully. The remaining 4%, Revenue Canada goes after every nickel, as I said. It garnishes wages. It even changed the bankruptcy laws so that a student could not file bankruptcy for 10 full years to ensure that it gets every penny back.

I would ask the member to contrast that with the technology partnership loans, of which \$2 billion were given away to mostly members on the Liberal donor's list, and only 3% out of that \$2 billion in TPC loans has been paid back, while 96% of all student loans, as horrific and massive as they are, have been paid back. Could the hon. member comment on this incredible contradiction?

*S. O. 31*

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with my colleague from the New Democratic Party. There is not only a huge contradiction but there is an absolutely huge imbalance and assault on the fact that young people, who are paying for their own education to further their ability to participate in the economy, are being unfairly punished.

This has been the disproportionate approach that has been carried out now for so many years under the tutelage of the Prime Minister and former finance minister.

The fact is that the member has correctly identified that students predominantly work for years to pay off those student debts. They do so in an honourable fashion. They do so, as I said, in some cases by leaving the country so they can earn sufficient income to pay that money back. I know that there are young people in the country who, given the opportunity, would stay. The focus that should be placed in any sort of student loan program is one that encourages participation in the economy here in this country.

Members of the Conservative Party have proposed in the past changes to our tax structure that would allow for that to happen; rewards in fact for staying in their communities, in their country, paying and contributing to the economy in such a fashion.

What we have seen in the past is a government that uses a very heavy hand. I do not want to mix apples and oranges here but we have seen it in the immigration matter. If the diligence that is used to pursue students who are behind on their student debts were used to pursue some of the illegal immigrants in the country I am sure we would have much more equitable system.

---

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is appropriate that the first member's statement of the new Parliament be on the tragedy which is BSE.

I urge the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food to remember beef and other ruminant farmers who are still suffering from the closure of the U.S. border as a result of BSE.

One cow, which did not get into the food chain, caused the U.S. border to be closed to Canadian products. Now one cow with BSE in the United States has further complicated things.

The government did well in getting the border open to some meat exports but the export of live animals from Canada to the U.S. is still embargoed.

This is a very tough winter for beef and other farmers and those associated with their industry.

Although hundreds of millions of dollars have been put into relief programs, the only solution to the problem is to open the border.

I urge the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and the Prime Minister himself to keep this file active until the Canada-U.S. border is fully opened.

## GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):**

Mr. Speaker, today I pay tribute to members of the Renfrew County Private Landowners Association who have come to Ottawa to protest the rising tide of government over-regulation and rising taxation.

Property reassessments will see taxes on some rural woodlots rise 300% to 400%. In the case of maple syrup producers, reassessing their operations from agricultural to industrial means a tax increase in some areas of 1,400%.

While the government talks of forests and carbon sinks in the Kyoto accord, government policy will force landowners to clear cut their woodlots in order to pay the taxes and drop the assessments.

It is time for the government to back off. Between the softwood lumber dispute, BSE, high taxation and overzealous government inspectors, rural Canada is at the breaking point.

The time has come to fix Trudeau's mistake and put the right to own private property into the Canadian Constitution.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

## CANADIAN COUNCIL OF THE BLIND

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I ask the House to pay tribute to the Canadian Council of the Blind, an organization of the blind and visually impaired which is this year celebrating its 60th year. The council was founded in 1944 by veterans of the second world war who felt the need for a voice for the blind.

Since 1947 the first week of February has been designated as White Cane Week. During this week events take place in communities across the country that are designed to increase the public awareness of the challenges faced by the blind and visually impaired, and to build the understanding that a lack of sight is not a lack of vision.

Today the white cane is a symbol of independence and the courage of the blind and visually impaired Canadians as they strive to function independently.

Blindness is not defined by age but, as our population ages, increasing numbers of our citizens will face the challenge of a deterioration of their sight. The national challenge is to ensure these Canadians can live as independently as possible. The white cane is a sign of independence not dependence, of ability not disability.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec enjoys a good reputation among Canadian and North American mining companies. According to a survey, directors of mining companies consider it their favourite province.

Quebec ranked fourth on a list which included the Canadian provinces, a number of American states, some of Australia's states, and 20 countries with mining potential, such as Peru, Ghana, South Africa, Russia and Indonesia.

The respondents, heads of 159 mining companies, mainly Canadian or American, want clear, transparent and stable regulations, along with a competitive taxation system.

The federal Liberal government and the Government of Quebec encourage mining development with a competitive tax policy and clear regulations. Those issuing mining permits are clearly in favour of finding solutions, not creating problems.

Quebec has good mining potential.

\* \* \*

[English]

### BOREAL FOREST

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is endowed with some 520 million hectares of unique ecological value, the boreal forest. Of great alarm then is the boreal forest conservation framework proposed by four forest and mining companies and four environmental NGOs whereby half the boreal forest would be exploited for commercial purposes.

The proposed framework was concluded without public consultation, without approval by governments and without assurance that once the agreed upon first half of the boreal forest will be cut other forest companies would not come forward and claim the second half.

In addition, the framework would seriously impact Canada's Kyoto commitment and Canada's biodiversity convention obligations.

Finally, aboriginal peoples' livelihood, way of life and traditions would be affected.

For the sake of future generations, I therefore urge the federal government to protect the boreal forest and dismiss the framework.

\* \* \*

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on May 20, 2003, BSE created a corral full of troubles for the Canadian beef industry: borders were fenced off, international markets dried up faster than a prairie creek and ranchers stared at the horizon waiting for leadership.

Eight months have passed, a summer, a fall and a winter, a long time, but not enough time for the government to solve the problem.

While yesterday's throne speech totally ignored agriculture, there are solutions. Can we investigate the packers, as the agriculture committee asked months ago? Can we increase slaughter capacity to deal with the surplus of culled cows? Can we conclude the necessary international protocols?

Ranchers are sick of the government's inaction. How long will it take farmers to see real change? How long do ranchers have to wait for real leadership? The answer is: when the Conservative Party of Canada forms the next government.

*S. O. 31*

### FISHERIES

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years those involved in the fishing industry throughout Canada have criticized the decision making process within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans as being too remote from the regions in which the activities of Canada's fisheries are conducted.

The Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans itself has recommended the decentralization of the department on three separate occasions. In light of that persistent concern among those active fishermen throughout Canada, I have called upon the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to task the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans to undertake a study focusing on the merits of implementing those recommendations and, at the very least, enhanced Pacific and Atlantic offices.

In the new spirit of giving greater autonomy to the views of members of Parliament and committees, and through them to the people of Canada, I propose the committee be so tasked forthwith.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[Translation]

### PARENTAL LEAVE

**Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the very man who has a penchant for using tax havens rather than contributing to the collective tax effort of the country he heads missed a great opportunity in the throne speech to show some openness toward Quebec, by sidestepping the issue of parental leave.

Why such a stubborn refusal to treat those who have brought a new life into the world the same as those who have lost their jobs? There is no gesture as selfless as producing a new life, and Quebec has chosen to acknowledge this by creating a family policy that is the envy of all.

Having saved one billion dollars at the expense of the \$5-a-day daycare centres, the Prime Minister is at it again. He is now hindering Quebec's implementation of a parental leave program tailored to the needs of its young families.

The Prime Minister ought to be acknowledging this progressive move by Quebec, and announcing loud and clear that he will not be appealing the Quebec appeal court decision, and that he will comply with his own Constitution and transfer all that is owing to Quebec in connection with parental leave.

*S. O. 31*

[*English*]

**JAMIE MURPHY**

**Mr. Lawrence O'Brien (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today a brave Canadian soldier was buried in Conception Harbour, Newfoundland. I know I speak for all when I say that our deepest sympathies and condolences are with the family, loved ones and comrades of Cpl. Jamie Murphy.

Sadly, attacks against Canadian troops in Afghanistan are stark reminders of the sacrifices that our soldiers make on behalf of all Canadians. They leave behind the safety and security of Canada to face dangers abroad.

The professionalism and expertise of the Canadian Forces are renowned worldwide. They are remarkable ambassadors and promoters of Canadian values and ideals. They are tangible expressions of our nation's beliefs. Their work in Afghanistan and other countries is making each and everyone of us proud.

Canada's men and women in uniform are fighting a force that threatens our freedoms and our way of life. For this we thank them. For this we remember Cpl. Murphy's sacrifice.

\* \* \*

**CURLING**

**Mr. Rick Borotsik (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, time and time again I have boasted in the House about Brandon—Souris and its curling prowess. In the past we have hosted major national and international curling events and have been represented by some exceptional curlers but this year we have truly succeeded in our claim of becoming the curling capital of Canada.

This year Brandon—Souris has no less than five teams representing Manitoba in national curling events: the Manitoba seniors men, Neil Andrews and his team of Darryl Andrews, Jim Horn and Doug Carvey; the Manitoba seniors women, Joyce McDougall and her team of Helen Fenwick, Pam Horn and Karen Dunbar; Manitoba mixed champions, Terry McNamee, Jill Officer, Brendan Taylor and Tanya Robins; Manitoba junior women, Tasha Hunter and her team of Jocelyn Foreman, Karen Hodgson and Roxie Trembath; and representing Manitoba at the Scott Tournament of Hearts is Lois Fowler's team of Gerri Cooke, Maureen Bonar and Lana Hunter.

This is truly an amazing feat, by truly amazing curlers, from a truly amazing constituency. I send congratulations and thanks from all of southwestern Manitoba.

\* \* \*

**GEORGIAN EXPRESS FLIGHT 126**

**Hon. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today under the provisions of Standing Order 31 to pay our respects to the 10 passengers and crew whose lives were so tragically lost in the crash of Georgian Express flight 126 into Lake Erie on January 17, 2004 shortly after takeoff from Pelee Island.

The passengers' families, friends and their communities sadly lost loved ones who had shared the enjoyment of one another's company on a hunting trip to the island. Also tragically killed were the young pilot and his friend from California. The names of those lost are: Jim

Allen; Robert Brisco; Fred Freitas; Larry Janik; Jamie Levine; Wayne Price; Ted Reeve; Tom Reeve; Walter Sadowski; and Ronald Spencler.

In an instant our world can change. We can only imagine the anguish of the victims' survivors as the recovery efforts were hindered by severe weather and ice conditions out on the open lake. On behalf of the House, I extend my deepest sympathies to each of them, and our thanks to the courageous men and women of the Canadian Coast Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Transportation Safety Board, the coroner's office, and all others who made recovery possible while Erie was in winter's icy grip. God bless them all.

\* \* \*

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Speech from the Throne and today's debate highlight the difference and widening gap between those of us in Canada in the NDP who want to build this country as opposed to the government that attempts forgiveness for past sins.

The government desperately attempts to address the problems created by a decade of neglect. On health care, there is still no commitment to the Romanow commission. On the environment, there is still no plan for safe water, clean air or clean food. For students, there is still no commitment to address their lifetime debt load. On the economy, how is it possible that we do not have an auto policy, we do not have a shipbuilding policy, and we do not have a steel policy?

It was ironic to watch the Liberals give a standing ovation to the Prime Minister for a legacy of corporate tax cuts at the expense of building this country for all, not just for some.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

[*Translation*]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's throne speech has confirmed that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Quebeckers were hoping to find real solutions in the throne speech, such as annual and ongoing funding for health, a commitment not to appeal concerning parental leave, a commitment to provide full retroactivity on the guaranteed income supplement for seniors, a commitment not to participate in the missile defence plan with the Americans, a commitment not to accept the expansion of the St. Lawrence Seaway—a project that would increase the risk of pollution all along the river.

*Oral Questions*

Moreover, one group of fellow citizens was forgotten in this Speech from the Throne: unemployed men and women, particularly seasonal workers. There was nothing, not even one line, about a commitment to change the EI system to permit the creation of an independent EI fund to administer a system in which the number of hours required to qualify would correspond to the real situation of seasonal workers, many of whom now have to get through the coming weeks of the spring gap.

Where are the wonderful promises that were made in Baie-Saint-Paul on June 11, 2003, by the Liberal Party leadership candidate who has now become the Prime Minister of Canada?

\* \* \*

**LIBERAL GOVERNMENT**

**Mr. Gilbert Barrette (Témiscamingue, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure for me to rise today to highlight the incredible opportunities available to this government.

Its firm intention to inaugurate a new era of harmonious relations with its provincial and municipal counterparts is a very good sign for all Canadians.

We can face the future with confidence because, in Canada's big cities and provincial capitals, we are seeing that Canada's elected officials have a real commitment to working hand in hand with this government.

The goodwill that undeniably emanates from this government must signal a historic turning point. We know that by bringing together the efforts of all Canadians, our country will live up fully to its reputation for valour and take its place as the true north strong and free.

Together, we will be able to meet and overcome all challenges we may face.

\* \* \*

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a difference a decade makes.

Ten years ago the government cancelled a contract to replace our Sea King helicopters. Ten years ago this April, two Sea King pilots were killed when their helicopter went down outside my riding of Saint John. Since that tragic day we have seen countless incidents involving the remaining Sea Kings.

Ten years ago the government said that replacements were not needed. Now, just weeks away from a federal election, the government announces that it is a priority. Like a bolt of lightning, it suddenly occurred to the Liberals that the time had come to do the right thing, yet the most important question remains unanswered. Which replacement will we have, the EH-101 or the cheapest helicopter?

Surely we owe our greatest citizens the best equipment available as they risk their lives in the defence of our country, and I ask the government to do it.

**DR. BURTON C. MATTHEWS**

**Mr. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life of a great Canadian, Dr. Burton C. Matthews, who passed away on January 2 of this year.

From 1970 until 1981 Dr. Matthews guided the University of Waterloo through a period of substantial growth and development into one of the most respected universities in the country. Dr. Matthews was dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence. After stepping down as the president of the University of Waterloo, he was the chair of the Ontario Council on University Affairs. In 1983 he was selected as the president and vice-chancellor of the University of Guelph until his retirement in 1988.

To his wife Lois, his sons David and Tom and their families, and his brothers Jim and George, I offer my sincere condolences on their great loss.

I thank Dr. Matthews for his years of continuous commitment to shaping the minds of future generations and for challenging those who knew him to be the very best they could be. His legacy will live on in the lives of the many people he touched.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

**ETHICS COMMISSIONER**

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the media is falling for the government's catchphrase regarding the establishment of an independent ethics commissioner, but saying so does not make it so.

We all want a truly independent ethics commissioner, but the proposal in Bill C-34 simply perpetuates the Chrétien status quo. I was upset when court testimony exposed the fact that the former prime minister vetted any ethics commissioner report before it was presented to him formally. I guess in dealing with the Shawinigate scandal he must have said, "Well now, what should I say to myself about myself?"

It is clear that the proposed ethics commissioner will be appointed by the Prime Minister and will be answerable to the Prime Minister when investigating alleged ministerial misconduct. This is not acceptable. This is one parliamentary officer that should be chosen, appointed and held accountable independently of the Prime Minister.

---

**ORAL QUESTION PERIOD**

[English]

**CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES**

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to congratulate the new Prime Minister. In fact, it is our hope that he will be in that position about as long as I am in mine.

Last year the government reported that CSL, the Prime Minister's company, had received only \$137,000. This figure was obviously wrong. The Prime Minister must have known it was wrong. He could have spoken up last year, but he remained silent.

*Oral Questions*

Why did the Prime Minister remain silent? Why did he not just come clean with the truth?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his congratulations. I would like to congratulate him on once again being named interim leader of the Conservative Party. As far as I am concerned, I hope he makes a habit of it.

In answer to the hon. member's question, there is no doubt that I was otherwise involved on a particular issue. I was involved in the leadership race. The fact is that somebody should have spoken up. As soon as I focused on it, and again I admit—

**The Speaker:** Time has expired. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, is it not interesting that he was otherwise engaged.

This is a fairly significant matter for Canadians since it surely is Canadian taxpayers' money that is at stake here. The latest figure we have is \$161 million that was given to the company. I want to know, is that figure correct? Is that the full figure, \$161 million?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I said that somebody should have spoken out. I felt that the government was in the process of dealing with it. At the time when I did focus on it, I asked the government to develop a comprehensive answer. The comprehensive answer is now public and is extensive: every single contract, every single amount dealing with those periods when I was in cabinet, the periods before I went into cabinet and after I came out.

There is the most complete answer that the government is capable of coming up with. I did not compile the answer, but the fact is that it is as complete as the government is able to come up with and it is certainly open to investigation by the Leader of the Opposition and his party.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if this response will satisfy the Canadian taxpayer. Here we have a Prime Minister who says "trust me".

I will ask the question again that I just asked. Is the figure that we have now come up with through ATI, the figure of \$161 million, the full figure, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I did not compile those numbers. I have not been involved in the company for some 15 years. It is without a shadow of doubt the best answer that the government is capable of coming up with.

I am prepared to say that if the hon. member would like, I would be quite prepared to ask the Auditor General why there was a delay between the original question and the provision of those numbers. I am prepared to ask the Auditor General if she would like to take a look at this.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

**MAHER ARAR INQUIRY**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no answer forthcoming. It seems to

me unbelievable that a person would not know how much money they received from the government.

The Prime Minister capitulated on the issue of having a public inquiry into the Maher Arar case. The terms of that inquiry we know must be independent. It must be broad enough to get to the truth and to ensure that public confidence is restored.

The terms of reference currently do not appear to be broad enough to include an examination of what led the RCMP to raid the home of reporter Juliet O'Neil. Will the Prime Minister guarantee that the public inquiry will be broad enough to include delving into this issue of the raid, the home invasion of that reporter—

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

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is probably aware that the terms of reference of the Arar inquiry are presently being worked out between government officials and Mr. Justice O'Connor. As soon as those terms of reference have been finalized, they will be made public for all to see.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again that was a very vague answer and no commitment.

We know that the results of this public inquiry touch on areas fundamental to public access to information, the rights of citizens and public security, so they have to be broad enough to answer these allegations of a police state.

I am asking the newly minted Prime Minister if he will ensure that the secrecy provisions of the new Canada Evidence Act will not be used to prevent a full public inquiry into the reasons behind the home invasion of reporter Juliet O'Neil nor the criminal charges that are apparently still under investigation.

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have made it absolutely plain that the terms of reference for this inquiry are being discussed between Mr. Justice O'Connor and government officials at this time.

We have also made it absolutely plain, and of course Mr. Justice O'Connor would expect, that he would have access to all information that bears upon the mandate of this inquiry, which is to look into the actions of Canadian officials around the deportation and detention of Maher Arar.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**HEALTH**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while people consider health to be the number one priority and the \$2 billion from Jean Chrétien is already all spent, the Prime Minister could find nothing better to do in his throne speech than to create indicators to measure the damage that he himself has caused by his shameless cuts to the health transfer payments to the provinces and Quebec.

*Oral Questions*

Will the Prime Minister admit that what is needed to provide people with health care is not statistics, but rather new funding, and new funding right now, to help Quebec and the provinces provide people with good care?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that, given the aging population and the new technologies, more funding will be needed for health care.

The leader of the opposition ought not to downplay the importance of indicators. All experts in the country have made it clear that, taking the matter of waiting lists as an example, we need the ability to gauge the situation with indicators. These are very important; all the experts agree.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, here we have a government that, basically, administers not a single hospital anywhere in Canada yet plans to tell the provinces and Quebec what to do. Here we are again with the same old “Ottawa knows best” attitude.

The Prime Minister puts his money in areas he considers true priorities. Can he explain to us why he puts money into the armed forces but no new money into health care? Let him explain that to me.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, not only did the previous government invest \$35 billion into health services, but we have just confirmed another \$2 billion. We did that last week. The amount of \$37 billion, to me, is real money.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the number one priority for Quebec and the rest of Canada is health care, an area that has been underfunded ever since this Prime Minister reduced the federal share of funding from 22% in 1994 to 16% today.

Why has the Prime Minister not taken concrete action, as he did for the municipalities, and reimbursed the hospitals for the GST they are paying? This would have been a worthwhile and significant action, instead of mere words.

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last Friday the Prime Minister took some very concrete action by confirming the \$2 billion promised, provided, of course, there is a surplus. Since mid-December, this government has made sure that there will indeed be a surplus, in order to be able to provide that \$2 billion.

I can assure you that we will continue to work with my colleague, the Minister of Finance. That was the agreement between the Prime Minister and his colleagues, that there would be a meeting of finance and health ministers in order to solve the problems in health care. We are all aware of one thing: money alone is not the solution.

•(1425)

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonnette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the same thing has been repeated three times.

In the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister said that the municipalities need stable and recurrent funding to meet their priorities. Does he not see that the same is true for health, that the system also needs stable and recurrent funding, as the provincial

premiers told him, and that a full GST rebate would be the first solid step toward reaching this objective?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am astounded. The \$34.8 billion over the coming years is a major investment for the next five years. We have increased this five-year \$34.8 billion investment by another \$2 billion. If that is not a significant amount of funding then I do not understand what more the Bloc Québécois wants.

We intend to address the number one priority of Canadians as it should be addressed. In other words, we will continue to work on funding and reforming our system.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister found \$100 billion to reduce taxes when he was the finance minister, but now he is dropping his progressive ideas from ten years ago, such as home care and pharmacare. There was not a word on the topic in the Speech from the Throne.

[English]

Why can the Prime Minister always do the right thing by the corporations, but he does not even appear to have given a thought as to how Canadians can deal with the rising price of drugs?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the meeting with the provincial prime ministers and the territorial leaders there was extensive discussion of health care. We agreed that we would meet again this summer on essentially the whole question of sustainability, financing and reform.

At the same time, there will be a meeting of finance ministers within the months to come, and many of the health ministers.

We made it very clear that the entire health accord, as agreed to between the provinces and the federal government, is an incredible priority for us. Home care and the other issues are a very important part of that.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure Canadians would have felt more comfortable if the Prime Minister would have at least flagged these issues in his Speech from the Throne. He is good at flagging other things. He could have at least flagged this.

The other thing he never flagged was the Romanow report, not one mention of the Romanow report.

We had a little exchange on this earlier. The Prime Minister did not commit to meeting the Romanow gap, to meeting the Romanow recommendations with respect to the kind of money the provinces need, not a one shot \$2 billion payment, but meeting the 25% goal, for instance, that Romanow recommended, and also other things having to do with privatization. What is the Prime Minister's position on that?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's position is very similar to that which Commissioner Romanow himself set out, which is we cannot cherry-pick. We have to look at the entire Romanow Report.

When we talk about the Romanow gap, which is after all a financial target, then we have to look at the wide range of recommendations made by Mr. Romanow. That is why the health accord between the provinces and the federal government is so important.

\* \* \*

**CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES**

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, moments ago in response to our leader, the Prime Minister said that the \$161 million was the best answer the government was capable of giving. We have already uncovered an error with the government's \$161 million response with respect to another of the Prime Minister's companies, Canarctic Shipping.

I would like to ask this of not the Prime Minister, who obviously does not know, but of the House leader who sent this document over. How many more errors are in this document and when will Canadians finally know the truth about how much government money was given to the Prime Minister's companies?

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I was given the mandate to look into this file, I did so very scrupulously, meticulously and thoroughly. I personally have gone through all kinds of cross-referencing of the figures provided to me. I made sure that we covered all the angles that were available to us. Documents are normally kept for six years in government. We went back 11 years for whatever was available.

If my colleague has anything else to add to that, I would be pleased to receive his documents.

• (1430)

**Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, they had every government department at their disposal and they still got the information wrong.

The fact is it was what is called a non-repayable contribution to one of the Prime Minister's companies, a subsidiary of CSL called Canarctic Shipping. This company received a non-repayable contribution which, to translate for everyone here, is a situation where "I found a suitcase and I do not have to return the money".

Again I wish to ask the House leader this. We have waited a year and a half for a straight answer. We have still not received it. How much money has the Prime Minister's former companies received from the Government of Canada?

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have made sure to provide a document which is unheard of in terms of the size of what I posted on the website to make it public to Canadians. I have sent you a letter. I have sent a letter to each leader. I have covered all the angles I had to cover.

I repeat to my colleague, if he wants to be straight why did he not put this thing on the table in the first place?

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first there is the \$161 million administrative error. Then the new revised list, the best answer the government is capable of, proves to be erroneous and incomplete. That is on top of the fact that the Prime Minister signed four false declarations of assets regarding the content of his blind management agreement. It seems somehow he forgot that he owned the one company that got the majority of the contracts from the government.

Finally, it was all made possible because his company's ships were registered in the one tax haven that he did not shut down as finance minister.

How does this square with the Prime Minister's statement that he wants Canadians to believe in government?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, I have had no involvement with this company, and indeed anybody who signs one of these blind management agreements has no such involvement. Under those circumstances, when one signs the declaration, it is prepared by the ethics commissioner's department and one basically signs it on that basis. The hon. member knows that.

Now I have made the offer. If the hon. member has doubts about the veracity of the procedures that were followed, I am quite prepared to ask the Auditor General to look at that. If that is what the hon. member wants, all he has to do is take us up on the offer.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I did not expect such a colossal cop-out from the Prime Minister on his first day in the House.

Let us talk specifically about Lansdowne Technologies. Lansdowne was partly owned by the Prime Minister and received 52% of the government contracts that went to CSL companies, yet coincidentally it was left out of the blind management agreement four years running, an agreement that the Prime Minister declared was a true accounting of his assets.

Why should Canadians believe their government when they cannot even believe the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely amazing. When the Prime Minister decided to follow the code of ethics and the rule of ethics applying to ministers and therefore had a blind trust to deal with this issue, they wanted the Prime Minister to know what was in the blind trust. Either he was distanced from it or he was not. In this case he was distanced from the blind trust.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SOCIAL PROGRAMS**

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the matter of parental leave, the Quebec Court of Appeal handed down its ruling, confirming that this was indeed an exclusive jurisdiction of the Quebec government.



*Oral Questions*

Given that thousands of Quebec families are still waiting for the implementation of the Quebec parental leave program, which is more comprehensive and more generous than the federal one, will the Prime Minister face the facts and state today, in this House, that he will not appeal this decision and that he agrees to give to the Quebec government the funds for setting up its own program?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Prime Minister had the opportunity to discuss this issue with the Premier of Quebec on Friday, during the federal-provincial conference of first ministers. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development continues to examine, along with the Attorney General of Canada, the ruling to determine whether we should appeal it or not.

However, the Prime Minister has already made it very clear that he is fully prepared to see our government sit down with the Quebec government to discuss the parental leave program.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister realize that, because of his government's stubbornness, Quebec families are losing millions of dollars, simply because the federal government refuses to admit that it is interfering in an area in which it has no business?

• (1435)

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois may still want to resort to confrontation in this House. What we want is cooperation with the Quebec government.

Last Friday, the Prime Minister of Canada offered to sit down with the Premier of Quebec and take a look at the future of parental leave.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government announced in the throne speech that it had undertaken an integrated review of its international policies, the results of which will not be made public until the fall.

How can the government explain that, at the same time that a study on foreign policy is being carried out, the results of which will not be made public until the fall, it is already negotiating Canada's participation in President Bush's missile defence shield?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think all the members of this House are well aware that the world is not waiting for the results of our reviews. The Prime Minister said that we are going to consider how to give Canada a stronger world presence, and we will. However, at the same time, we must act in the best interests of Canadians.

As a result, the Minister of National Defence and I are examining the best way to protect Canadians. Naturally, we are holding discussions with our American colleagues on this.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's Minister of National Defence, who supported a war in Iraq, wrote last month to the American Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, to say that he was prepared to negotiate Canada's participation in the missile defence shield and even split the costs.

Since the throne speech makes no mention of the missile defence shield, are we to understand that this silence confirms, for all practical purposes, the government's unequivocal commitment to President Bush's project?

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member knows very well that discussions are under way. My colleague, the Minister of National Defence, wrote a letter to Mr. Rumsfeld. We must now participate in the discussions. We have to wait to see what the outcome will be.

The Government of Canada always acts in the interests of Canadians and their safety, and determines the best way to proceed for Canada. We would never agree to anything that would threaten our sovereignty or undermine our control over our own destiny. That is what we are doing. That is the spirit in which we will conduct all our negotiations.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, administrative errors, typos, where will it all end?

I asked a relatively simple question a few months ago and I would like an answer to it. There is still no clear answer.

The government's actions cast doubt on the answers to all previous Order Paper questions.

I want to know whether or not there is more money to be added to the \$161 million figure in contracts and grants received by Canada Steamship Lines and its subsidiaries.

Will the government House leader give us the final definitive figure as to how much money the Prime Minister's companies have received? How much money?

[Translation]

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after my colleague raised the question on October 22, 2003, a process was begun to compile all the figures available to us.

As I explained, government documents are kept for six years. We went back eleven years. I checked all the documents available to me and I was assured by those who worked on compiling these figures that they were complete and accurate and a true reflection of reality.

\* \* \*

[English]

**CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister claims that he is working with a blind trust, but Canadians do not have blind trust in the answers coming from the government.

### Oral Questions

The information that we have received from the government is not accurate. We know of contracts that do not jibe with the report that the House leader has given us.

The Prime Minister is asking, where? I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, through grants with CIDA. I can tell the House that we have not received information from the Canadian Wheat Board regarding contracts that came through the Canadian Wheat Board.

We want a complete answer, not a whitewash like we are—

**The Speaker:** The hon. government House leader.

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Wheat Board is an organization which must keep its own rates confidential for competition purposes. It has published all the volumes. All the information provided to us by the Wheat Board is part of the document that we have put on my website last January 28.

\* \* \*

• (1440)

### MUNICIPALITIES

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last year the federal government brought in nearly \$7 billion in gas tax revenues, \$4.7 billion in excise taxes, and \$2.2 billion in GST on the fuel and on the excise taxes themselves.

The GST scheme that the Prime Minister announced yesterday will give \$580 million to cities which is less than 8% of the gas tax revenues that the government will collect from drivers in municipalities across the country.

Does the Prime Minister really believe that taking \$1 out of the pocket of taxpayers and giving back 8¢ is a new deal for cities? Is he really proud of that?

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is a very substantial down payment

I quote the President of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, “It’s a big shining light at the end of the tunnel”. I quote David Miller, the Mayor of Toronto, “This is the beginning of a beautiful friendship”. I quote Mayor Pat Fiocco of Regina, “It’s exactly what we asked for”. I could quote Bob Chiarelli of Ottawa, Gérald Tremblay of Montreal, Glen Murray of Winnipeg, Gilles Vaillancourt of Laval, and Hazel MacCallion of Mississauga. What more does the hon. member want?

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all that list proves is that a starving man will be thankful for just a few crumbs from the Liberal government.

The Minister of Finance asked me, what more do we want? We want the Prime Minister, who preached to Canadians about ending a democratic deficit, to end the democratic deficit.

He ran for the office of Prime Minister saying that he was going to give more money to municipalities. He is giving them 8¢ on the dollar. He promised that he was going to end the democratic deficit and respect the wishes of the House.

The House voted in October to give substantive gas tax dollars back to municipalities. Why is the Prime Minister betraying the very mandate that got him his office of—

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

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is absolutely no betrayal. In fact, exactly the opposite.

We have made a very substantial down payment on the commitments that were made over 10 years. That down payment will add up to \$7 billion.

On top of that, we are prepared to sit down, and talk to the provinces and the municipalities about how to properly deal with the fuel tax or to find some other mechanism that accomplishes the objectives that the municipalities of this country have set. We have said that city hall will have a place at the national table.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Bras d’Or—Cape Breton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday’s throne speech clearly stated to the people of Cape Breton, and in particular the people of Whitney Pier, that the federal government remains committed to the cleanup of the Sydney tar ponds.

The people of this area understand the complexity of the problem and they have shown incredible patience over the years while JAG developed and researched potential cleanup technologies.

My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Now that these technologies have been brought forward and the federal government has reaffirmed its commitment to the cleanup, when will the cleanup begin?

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the basis of the commitment yesterday in the throne speech, we can begin to negotiate with the Province of Nova Scotia which has the lead responsibility here, but I would like to pay tribute to the work done by the two members from Cape Breton in the Liberal Party.

I find these two members are a clear example of what was said today by the Prime Minister when he said the government believes in the responsibility of private members to represent their constituents as they see fit. These two have done so with distinction and I congratulate them.

\* \* \*

### HEALTH

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

Recently, Dr. Brian Day, who is the head of the biggest private for profit surgery clinic in British Columbia, bragged that the Prime Minister, at a \$1,000 a plate dinner, had said that he was wide open to experimentation in Canada’s health care system. Now, the Prime Minister has hired his top lobbyist, Bruce Young, as part of his B.C. campaign team.

*Oral Questions*

I want to ask the Prime Minister, will he now tell Canadians clearly that he will put a stop to the growth of private for profit health care in Canada and will he commit to publicly delivered and publicly funded health care in Canada?

• (1445)

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was absolutely clear this morning. Our government remains absolutely committed to the Canada Health Act and its five principles. We are committed to it and we will continue to work jointly with the provinces to implement each and every one of them.

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, no wonder Gordon Campbell is thrilled with this privatizing Prime Minister.

I have a supplementary question. There was not a word in the Speech from the Throne on the Romanow recommendations and a whole range of areas. There was not a word on home care, pharmacare, the national drug agency and diagnostic services.

I want to ask this Prime Minister, is he seriously committed to the Romanow recommendations, and instead of shovelling bucks to his corporate buddies, will he put some money into home care and pharmacare in this country?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the opposition member for giving us the opportunity to remind the House and Canadians that in the health accord of 2003 we have been dealing with pharmacare and home care.

This is the reason we have guaranteed \$34.8 billion over the next five years. It is precisely to meet the needs that Canadians have.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week's audit of the Virginia Fontaine Addictions Foundation revealed that Health Canada paid \$1.2 million in perks, including \$153,000 for jewellery purchased while on Perry Fontaine's Caribbean vacation and an additional \$8,000 for two tombstones. Perhaps there was a plan for a funeral for transparency and accountability.

This audit raises serious questions of departmental incompetence. I would like to ask the minister, will he immediately call for a full public inquiry?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we know, Health Canada has already launched a forensic audit. We have contacted the RCMP over this very matter. We have launched a civil litigation to recover the public funds. We have fired the officers who were responsible for this misconduct.

In the interest of openness and transparency, Health Canada has posted an executive summary of the forensic audit on its website.

That is for absolute public accountability and we will continue to behave that way.

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister will have trouble convincing Canadians he is clairvoyant. He has already addressed the problems that were only revealed last Friday when this audit was released.

If the minister is so confident that his controls are effectively in place and protecting Canadians, perhaps he could explain to the House how it is that Health Canada could approve Phil Fontaine's request and use \$1 million of Virginia Fontaine money to fund a hockey school.

Will the minister immediately commit to launching a full public inquiry into the Virginia Fontaine debacle, or failing that, explain why he wasted \$2 million on his department's audit which he is choosing to ignore now?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us not confuse issues here.

Health Canada funds a variety of programs through the national native alcohol and drug abuse program. Its program in hockey and sport was in line with its prevention and promotion strategies.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, agriculture is a cash flow business like any other. Due to a single case of BSE, that lifeline has been cut. AIDA, CFIP and now CAISP are all Liberal programs that failed to deliver and do little to address a crisis like BSE.

Why does the new agriculture minister carry on the old Liberal tradition of advancing programs that never reach the farm gate?

**Hon. Bob Speller (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am certain there is not a member in the House who does not feel for the farmers, the farm families and indeed the communities across this country impacted by the BSE situation.

The Government of Canada takes this situation very seriously as evidenced by the work of the Prime Minister and other ministers on this, to work toward getting that border open.

In the meantime, these are difficult times for Canadian farmers and we will do everything within our power to ensure that the impact this is having on them is not an impact that will remove them out of the industry.

• (1450)

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new minister claims he is a big listener and another committee will be structured; however, the industry out there is more interested in what he will do. Actions speak a lot louder than weasel words.

*Oral Questions*

The head of the Alberta Cattle Feeders' Association said yesterday that his industry can survive another 45 days under the Liberal government. The clock is ticking.

When will the minister announce his new plan and the budget to go along with it? When will he do that?

**Hon. Bob Speller (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, what the Government of Canada did first and foremost was to sit down with the industry to get an understanding as to where it saw the role of the federal government.

We then took the responses from the industry which told us that we needed to get out to market Canadian beef around the world. This is why I, along with one of the member's colleagues and another one of my colleagues went to Japan. We went to Korea and Washington.

In fact, in Washington, we received agreement from the governments of the United States and Mexico to work together on a North American strategy. This is an issue for all farmers in North America and it is one of—

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

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the Speech from the Throne, there is absolutely nothing on the terrible softwood lumber crisis, nothing on the mad cow crisis, and nothing on the EI fund. The government is using the poverty in which many of our fellow citizens live to justify its education and early childhood initiatives.

Will the Prime Minister admit that, by taking \$45 billion from the EI fund, he was and remains the biggest creator of poverty in Canada because he denied thousands of families the bare minimum to survive?

[English]

**Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will know of course that there is no such thing as a surplus in the EI account.

All of those moneys have gone for a series of programs. Many of them have gone to help out the poor, for skills development, to provide benefits in periods of unemployment, and to develop skills for students, unemployed workers, et cetera.

They have gone for a series of items that the member will acknowledge have gone to community building to provide employment and sustenance when it is needed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, not only did this Prime Minister make the poor poorer, but he made the rich richer. Canada's big five banks pride themselves on having saved \$2 billion by using tax havens approved by the former finance minister. The latter saved his own company, CSL International, more than \$100 million in Canadian taxes by means of tax agreements signed by the finance minister.

How can we trust a man who says he wants to help the poor when all he has done in the past is to make them poorer and add to the wealth—

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

[English]

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Minister of Finance, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are a variety of measures that I am examining now as we prepare for the 2004 budget, measures that will improve the fairness and the integrity of our taxation system, both as it applies within the country and as it relates to external tax treaties. I will take the hon. gentleman's question as a sincere representation that this is one area that we should look at, and I undertake to do that.

\* \* \*

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday's Speech from the Throne mentioned the word fishing only once in a passing manner. Not a single time was the fishery mentioned as a whole.

What priority is the government and the new minister going to give this renewable resource that affects so many Canadians?

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had actually read or listened to the speech, he would know that it does include a mention of oceans, a cornerstone of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

I invite my hon. colleague to read the speech and to inform himself about Canada's ocean strategy and the new oceans action plan. I think that an honest assessment of these would show that the government has a forward looking plan for the management of activities in all of Canada's oceans.

• (1455)

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very familiar with the government's plan for oceans.

While the minister was recently flying over the Grand Banks stating that more resources are necessary to protect our fishery, his chief officials were silently meeting, planning to reduce his staff and his departmental employees by 600. How can the minister explain these conflicting initiatives?

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the information that my hon. colleague is purporting is inaccurate. There are no such plans.

Like every other department, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is assessing all of its policies, programs and expenditures to ensure that resources are well managed and that they are well aligned in support of these important objectives of our department. This is good management and a responsible use of tax dollars. We are going to keep on in that vein.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**REGULATIONS**

**Hon. Don Boudria (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the excellent Speech from the Throne yesterday and the excellent speech by the Prime Minister today, we unfortunately heard very little mention of the government's modernization of its regulatory system.

Therefore, I would like to ask the President of the Treasury Board this: Is he prepared to tell the House today that the government remains committed to modernizing the regulatory system and that the advisory committee, under the able chairmanship of Dr. Gaétan Lussier, will continue its work?

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell for the work he has done on this file over the last few years as chair of the cabinet committee on regulations.

The work of that committee has been transferred to Treasury Board. In naming a parliamentary secretary to work with Treasury Board, the Prime Minister has given him special responsibility for smart regulations.

We indeed will be proceeding with this file and I will look for the member's involvement.

\* \* \*

**CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the CSL scandal is rife with duplicity and deceit right from the get-go. After originally stating that the Prime Minister spoke to the ethics counsellor a few times, it turns out that he had over 33 conversations.

How does the Prime Minister expect Canadians to believe that he did not know how much money he received from his own government, how much money went from coffers that he controlled into companies that he owned? How does the Prime Minister expect Canadians to accept his word on this important issue?

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us talk about that new party with its old ways, throwing mud and trying to attack character instead of going to substance.

We took hours and days and weeks to work on an answer, a few hours within which those members asked for an inquiry. They were not even concerned about the contents. All they were concerned about was the political aspect of it. Shame on them.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after all of those hours and research, evidence that is turned over to the opposition that is repeated in the House of Commons, in a court of law they call that perjury when it is not correct.

The Prime Minister has talked endlessly about—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough I am sure was not suggesting that any hon. member would possibly be involved in perjury. I hope that that was not the implication of his remarks and if it was, I know that he would want to undo any such suggestion at once.

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, what could be more fundamental to the cause of open transparency than a complete disclosure of all of the moneys received by CSL and subsidiary companies? What could be more fundamental than coming clean to Canadians through the chamber today?

The question, I repeat, is the figure of \$161 million received by CSL and its subsidiaries the full and accurate disclosure of moneys received from the government to CSL?

• (1500)

[Translation]

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of pages on the website to inform Canadians about what has been done. They are not interested in that.

The Prime Minister referred earlier to the possibility that the Auditor General might look at this file. They are not interested in that. They are not interested in the truth. They are interested in playing political games. That is unacceptable and outdated. They are not ready for democratic reform.

\* \* \*

**ALCAN PLANT**

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Alcan announced it was closing its aluminum plant in Jonquière and eliminating 550 jobs in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. This is equivalent to losing 11,000 jobs just in Montreal, and in just one month.

Can the Minister of Industry identify the programs, among the many at her disposal, that she has already targeted to mitigate the loss of 550 jobs in this region?

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the effects associated with this closure, and my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord immediately contacted me so that we could look together at ways to monitor this situation.

For several years now, Canada Economic Development has worked hard to develop the aluminum processing sector, and we succeeded in setting up a \$57 million research centre. All regional strategic initiatives, in that region, focus on aluminum processing.

So, yes, we are going to monitor this situation closely.

\* \* \*

[English]

**GEORGIAN EXPRESS FLIGHT 126**

**Hon. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, January 17 just off Pelee Island, Georgian Express flight 126 tragically crashed into Lake Erie with 10 people aboard.

*Privilege*

As the minister responsible for the operations of the Canadian Coast Guard, could the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans please update the House on the recovery efforts which took place?

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, on behalf of all hon. colleagues in the House, I would like to express our sincere and deepest sympathies to the families of those lost in this tragic crash.

In terms of the recovery efforts, I can confirm that recovery efforts were completed last Friday. I want to take a moment to thank all of the Canadian Coast Guard personnel who played a very important role in the aftermath of this tragic crash.

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC SERVICE OF CANADA**

**Mr. Jim Pankiw (Saskatoon—Humboldt, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, government figures show that anglophones were denied 71% of all federal jobs and 68% of the promotions designated bilingual.

As the government expands the bilingualism restrictions that have discriminated against anglophones in the public service and armed forces, the treasury board and defence ministers would fail to qualify for work in their own departments.

Double standard aside, will the government end the systemic discrimination against anglophones in civil service hiring and promotion?

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, Minister responsible for la Francophonie and Minister responsible for the Office of Indian Residential Schools Resolution, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after touring western Canada, particularly Saskatchewan, I realized that bilingualism was an intrinsic value for people in Saskatchewan and western Canada.

He should be ashamed of spouting such nonsense.

\* \* \*

**POINT OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during oral question period, certain opposition members claimed to be in possession of information on a company and certain contracts that had allegedly not been disclosed in the documentation we released. I would like to have this information tabled officially in the House, please.

• (1505)

**The Speaker:** I am sure that the hon. government House leader is well aware that, with the exception of cabinet ministers, hon. members may table documents in the House only with the unanimous consent of the House.

If there are documents people want tabled, then the hon. members who have those documents may seek the unanimous consent of the House, or hand them to a minister for tabling. Perhaps, after discussions with the hon. members who have documents, the

government House leader could come back shortly with these documents.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRIVATE MEMBER'S BUSINESS**

## PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Motion No. 386. On the Order: Private Members' Business

February 2, 2004—Member for Nanaimo—Cowichan: That, in the opinion of this House, the government should work with the provinces and territories and other partners toward a comprehensive labour-market strategy for persons with disabilities.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to withdraw private member's Motion No. 386, standing in the name of the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan from the order of precedence.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent for the withdrawal of the matter?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Order discharged and motion withdrawn)

**The Speaker:** The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

\* \* \*

**PRIVILEGE**

## FIREARMS PROGRAM

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege. On October 31, 2003, the minister of justice tabled his department's performance report for the period ending March 31, 2003.

There are a number of factual errors in the section of the minister's report on the Canadian firearms program. These errors have misled the House and impeded my ability to function as a member of Parliament.

This is the first opportunity I have to bring this matter to the attention of the Speaker as Parliament has not been sitting since November 7, 2003.

While some of the so-called facts in the minister's report may be debatable, the errors I will itemize for the Speaker today are not. I will be providing the Speaker with copies of our supporting documentation.

On May 16, 2003, in response to Order Paper Question No. 194, the government stated that the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade had spent \$45,000 since May 2001 on the firearms program. The minister's performance report erroneously reported that the Department of Foreign Affairs had spent nothing. The Speaker will know that foreign affairs issues import and export permits for hundreds of thousands of firearms annually. I do not think anyone in government believes that this is done for nothing or for a mere \$45,000. That is the first example of an error.

In response to the same Order Paper Question No. 194 on May 16, Treasury Board stated, "The 2002-03 Departmental Performance report for the Department of Justice will report Firearms Program expenditures accordingly". The justice minister's performance report provided no such costs for Treasury Board.

I followed up Treasury Board's broken promise to Parliament with an Access to Information Act request. On December 31, 2003, Treasury Board had the nerve to say that it had no records of what it had spent during its eight years of aiding and abetting the billion dollar boondoggle. Now members cannot even believe the government's response to our Order Paper questions.

The first paragraph of the minister's performance report on the Canadian firearms program states:

The attention to the Program sparked by the December 2002 Auditor General's Report emphasized concern about both costs and reporting, while confirming that the program continues to be supported by the majority of Canadians.

If the Speaker reviews chapter 10 of the Auditor General's December 2002 report to Parliament, he will find no such statement confirming that the program continues to be supported by the majority of Canadians. That is an incorrect statement.

The first paragraph also states:

In addition, initiatives were undertaken to address the complexities of the compliance requirements and ensure successful completion of firearms registration by the deadline of December 31, 2002.

This statement is misleading because it leaves the false impression that the firearms registration phase of the program was actually successfully completed.

How could firearms registration be successfully completed, as the minister states in his performance report, when on October 23, 2003, William V. Baker, Commissioner of Firearms, testifying before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, stated, "We've had over 1 million long guns registered since January 1, the original deadline".

Further statistics and information obtained by my office through the Access to Information Act, prove that the gun registration is still far from completed. However, none of this information was provided in either the departmental estimates or the minister's performance report on the firearms program.

For example, the total number of valid firearms license holders that still have not registered a gun is 414,283. How can it be said it is completed when there are that many gun owners who have not even registered a firearm?

The total number of gun owners that still have to re-register or dispose of their handguns is 318,846.

• (1510)

The government estimates of the total number of firearms that still have to be registered is 1.1 million. The total number of hand guns that still have to be re-registered is 625,829.

The CFC also admitted that it did not collect statistics on the 288,000 guns brought into Canada by foreign visitors. Non-compliance is now so bad that the CFC has developed a national compliance strategy and program. If the government hides these

### Privilege

important facts from Parliament, it should make everyone wonder what else it is hiding.

In the fourth paragraph of the report it states, "The Minister of Justice accepted the Auditor General's recommendation to improve reporting to Parliament".

The truth is the government still refuses to provide the major additional costs recommended by the Auditor General in paragraph 10.29 of the Auditor General's December 2002 report to Parliament. The Speaker can find this fact in the government's response to Order Paper Question No. 202 in *Hansard* for May 26, 2003.

We have also identified a number of other departments that have incurred direct and indirect costs implementing the Firearms Act and regulations that were not included in the minister's performance report as recommended in the Auditor General's report.

I could go on, Mr. Speaker, and I have documented many other examples of factual errors. I have given you five in the minister's report to Parliament that are enough to prove our case.

On page 225 of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege* in Canada, he describes contempt as an offence against the authority or dignity of the House.

On page 119 of Erskine May's 21st edition, it states:

The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt.

The 22nd edition of Erskine May, on page 63, describes ministerial responsibility and states:

—it is of paramount importance that ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister...

On February 2, 2002, the Speaker ruled a question of privilege to be *prima facie* even though the minister of justice who made misleading statements in the House said that he had no intention of misleading the House. The Speaker felt that it was in the best interests of the House to have a committee look into the matter.

To perform the fundamental functions, the House has always insisted on accurate and truthful information. That is why the making of erroneous and misleading statements in the House may be treated as contempt.

On October 31, 2003, the justice minister tabled a report that was factually wrong in a number of ways and clearly misled the House. I have here a much longer list and evidence of how the report was factually wrong and I can give this to the Speaker as he wishes. This continual cover up and contempt of Parliament has to stop. We are getting fed up.

I am prepared to move the appropriate motion should the Speaker rule that the matter is a *prima facie* case of privilege.

*The Address*

● (1515)

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the question of privilege raised by my friend opposite. He has referred to a great number of reports, questions and documents, obviously none of which I have had the opportunity to peruse.

However the fundamentals of his reasons, as I understand them, for believing that his privileges have in some way been offended or broken rest on Order Paper Question No. 194 which was raised at some point in the past.

I refer to Marleau and Montpetit, 2000 edition, page 443 where the general principle is laid out that there are no provisions in the rules for the Speaker to review government responses to questions. In fact, in the last 10 years at least, on various occasions members have raised questions of privilege on the premise that the information given in an answer to a question on the Order Paper was in some way inaccurate. In those cases they asked for a finding of a prima facie case of privilege.

I point out that in footnote 204 on page 443 it refers to a number of cases in the past 10 years where that was raised. In fact, in all cases the Speaker has ruled that it is not the role of the Chair to determine whether or not the contents of documents tabled in the House are accurate, nor to assess the likelihood of any hon. member knowing whether the facts contained in a document are correct.

In other words, in the response to a question on the Order Paper, it is not a question of privilege to go behind those responses to ask or to suggest that this is in some way a question of privilege.

The second part of the question of privilege raised by my friend opposite, as I understand it, deals with a report that was tabled in the House. He is saying that there are some inaccuracies in that report. Certainly inaccuracies in reports are matters which are always debatable and open to question, and that is essentially what my friend opposite is raising.

The most serious part of this is that he is suggesting that there is some contempt in this bundle of documents which have been referred to by the member opposite. He is saying that some of the contents of these are deliberately misleading statements, that in some way a minister has knowingly misled the House.

Once again I will say that I have not had the opportunity to review all of the matters raised by the member opposite but we do know that there is no breach of privilege with respect to the answer to Question No. 194, as raised by the member opposite. That is an established parliamentary ruling for which there are many precedents.

We also know that to find contempt requires a considerable onus on the person alleging that to establish that someone knowingly inserted false information into a report and, in doing so, attempted to mislead the House and the members of it. I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that that in no way has been established. Again I would say that he disagrees with certain statements made in a large body of documents that he has referred to over a long period of time, but the veracity of that is debatable.

Having said that, I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that there is no, on the face of it, prima facie case.

I have appreciated the intervention made by the member opposite but in this case I cannot agree that this is a prima facie case of privilege.

● (1520)

**The Speaker:** I thank the parliamentary secretary and the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville for raising these matters and offering their advice to the Chair in this regard.

I will have an opportunity now to review the materials that were referred to by the hon. member for Yorkton—Melville in his original submission and then, having seen those materials, I will run over the arguments advanced by the hon. parliamentary secretary to the government House leader and come back to the House with a decision in due course. I thank them again for their interventions.

---

## SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[*English*]

### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

[*Translation*]

The announced program is a balanced and forward-looking program. It is a pleasure to be the Minister of the Environment within a government that understands that economic progress and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive, but rather complementary.

I take great pride in the importance this government attaches to enhancing the role Canada plays in the world.

[*English*]

Critical to a nation's standing in the global community is for others to know that the nation in question will keep its word. The Speech from the Throne made it clear that Canada will be keeping its international commitments, and that this country will meet its obligations under the Kyoto protocol.

It is important to understand clearly why we ratified the Kyoto protocol some 14 months ago. Climate change, if left unchecked and unaddressed, will impact on virtually every aspect of our lives, here as well as elsewhere in the world, and this impact will be overwhelmingly negative.



*The Address*

We are already beginning to see those impacts. The mountain pine beetle infestation that is destroying timber worth hundreds of millions of dollars in my home province of British Columbia is one example. The increasing droughts and change in rainfall patterns in the great plains on the Canadian Prairies is another. The 5° Celsius temperature increase in Arctic regions, with the consequent loss of sea ice and damage to permafrost, is yet a third. Of course we have recently seen the extreme weather conditions, such as hurricane Juan, and they will become all too common in the future.

A study by the company Munich Re, which is the world's largest re-insurance company, has found that the frequency of extreme weather events around the world over the past decade was more than two and a half times that of the 1960s.

Insured losses due to extreme weather events in the past decade reached some \$84.5 billion U.S., which is 14 times what they were only 30 years ago. That is the view of the private sector, on the private industry. A private company in the insurance industry telling us that climate change is real and climate change is here now.

As plants and animals cease to exist we lose important resources for pharmaceuticals. The flexibility to handle the impact of climate change in the future on crops is reduced.

Climate change is much more than an environmental issue. In the words of Sir David King, the chief scientific advisor to Prime Minister Tony Blair, "In my view, climate change is the most severe problem that we are facing today, more severe even than terrorism". I agree with Sir David King.

What are our actions to address this threat? Kyoto is not in itself an end. It is a global international response to a global international problem. Without this response, the economic costs will be staggering. It is truly something that for economic reasons we simply cannot afford not to do.

• (1525)

[*Translation*]

As the standard of living improves in countries all over the world, as development spreads and as the rate of consumption of resources increases, pressure on the environment becomes greater and greater.

By developing and rapidly implementing new technologies and industrial processes that are cleaner, Canada can facilitate the transformation of the traditional structures of economic growth, improve the protection of human health and the global environment as well as consolidate quality.

This is not a mere matter of doing some good to achieve some abstract objective. Those nations that will show leadership in using existing environmentally friendly technologies and in developing new and innovative technologies will enjoy economic opportunities that can only be described as massive.

It is estimated that the world market for environmental technologies will exceed US\$1 trillion over the next 10 years.

[*English*]

Real world examples of what can be accomplished with technologies that are now currently available are all around us. It is not rocket science or still to be developed. It is a matter of will,

which many corporations in the private sector are, fortunately, demonstrating.

Royal Dutch/Shell, one of the biggest petroleum concerns in the world, has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions to 10% below its 1990 levels. In the words of Sir Philip Watts, the chairman of Royal Dutch/Shell, "We cannot afford not to take action".

There is a businessman who understands that when corporate responsibility is part of the corporate ethic the bottom line improves.

The senior management of BP, another petroleum company, understands this too. BP has invested \$20 million in emission reduction initiatives, which have led to direct cost savings of some \$550 million and reduced greenhouse gas emissions by nearly 20%, while at the same time increasing its production.

Dupont, the chemical company, has reduced its total greenhouse gas emissions by more than 65% since 1990. Since that time it has kept its total energy use flat.

These corporations, and many others, show parliamentarians and people in government what can be accomplished with the technologies and processes that are available today.

Today we can save energy in homes, in vehicles and in industrial processes with existing technologies and existing design. In the near future we will be able to achieve even greater reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

[*Translation*]

This focus on research and development will lead to a steady increase in our ability to use energy cleanly and efficiently. Canada is already a leader in many of these areas, in that of fuel cells for instance.

We must, however, do more. We must take advantage of our innovative and entrepreneurial abilities to fuel a healthy and clean economy and provide a better quality of life for all Canadians.

This government will do more by following an integrated approach that will enable it to achieve its objective, which is to build, for Canada and for Canadians, a strong and growing 21st century economy based on the principles of sustainable development.

These principles transcend all facets of government. By incorporating into our approach issues such as trade, foreign affairs and international development, we will ensure that Canadian technologies and know-how contribute to environmental health and to the public health of other nations while helping us build a strong economy.

*The Address**[English]*

Actions by individual Canadians account for almost 25% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions of some 150 megatonnes a year. Through the one tonne challenge, Canadians are being encouraged to tackle climate change by reducing their personal greenhouse gas emissions by some 20% through more efficient uses of energy and smarter consumer choices.

The Speech from the Throne's environment focus was not exclusively on climate change. Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions also reduce emissions of other pollutants, contributing to cleaner air and to reduce water pollution, not to mention a reduction in health costs.

The Government of Canada will continue to work with the provinces, territories and our United States neighbours to ensure that it achieves improved air quality for all Canadians.

This value of the collaborative approach has already been proven with actions on cleaner fuels and cleaner vehicles, new source emission guidelines for thermal power plants, and dramatic reductions in the levels of lead and other pollutants in our air. It has taken place over the last few years, particularly the last decade.

Actions under the Canada-U.S. air quality agreement and the ozone annex agreement have already begun to reduce acid rain and ozone levels in both countries. We must enhance those initiatives.

We have an environmental debt and deficit in Canada and it must be paid off. We did not incur this debt overnight and we cannot pay it off tomorrow, but we will be accelerating our efforts with a 10 year, \$3.5 billion program to clean up contaminated sites for which the Government of Canada is responsible.

In addition, another \$500 million will go toward cleaning up other key sites of environmental contamination, including the Sydney tar ponds.

• (1530)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, coming from Saskatchewan, where we have scored the coldest place on earth, not just in Canada, I must admit that I have not heard very much about global warming, even when I phoned my wife this morning for the wind chill factor.

I also would like to let the hon. minister know regarding emission controls and emissions from lawnmowers and so on that I now have four pieces of property butting up against mine on which they do not cut the grass or the weeds.

That is just joking, but I want to ask the minister if he does not believe that Canadians are doing more on their own without any concrete proof, let us say, on the idea of emission controls and cleaning our air and so on. It is taking place not necessarily because of the government but rather because of the nature of world events, which are zeroing in on the same topics.

**Hon. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question. Certainly as I mentioned briefly there is a big role for the individual Canadian and we expect Canadians to undertake the very types of activities that the hon. member I believe was alluding to. That said, the individual Canadian cannot deal with a central electricity plant that is coal fired, such as Nanticoke. Of course they

can reduce the electrical load by reducing consumption, but they cannot deal with some of these fundamentals.

Further, the individual Canadian is faced with a tremendous, bewildering array of vehicles to choose from, but they themselves cannot insist on certain technologies being in each vehicle, because from an individual point of view it is prohibitively expensive.

I think the hon. member would agree with me that there is clearly a role for individual Canadians and we applaud the work they are doing, but there is also a role for regulations. There is also a role for industry, both voluntarily and indeed through cooperation with government, it is to be hoped, but if not, through regulations as well.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there have been reports that the minister agrees that with the plan he has authored we are short of meeting our Kyoto targets by 25%, the target being a reduction of 240 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions, with us being on line to reach only a 180 megatonne reduction. How does the minister expect to be able to make that up and how quickly will the new programs that make up the extra 25%, if in fact that is an accurate reflection, be in place?

• (1535)

**Hon. David Anderson:** That is a good question, Mr. Speaker. It is quite correct that the plan brought into the House in November 2002 had in fact 25%, some 60 megatonnes, which was a gap area we were working on. Part of this will be dealt with by other programs such as, for example, provincial programs. Part of it will depend on some choices made at federal-provincial-territorial meetings. Inevitably, until such agreements are inked in place and signatures are on the documents, there will be some uncertainty as to what can be done.

To answer the rest of the hon. member's question, yes, we are working to fill in that document of November 2002 to give more precision and to analyze more fully what can be done to achieve these goals. I would add that there is one thing that is very difficult to calculate and that is the work of private corporations and individuals, which my hon. friend who questioned me earlier spoke of. It is hard to say how successful we will be. I gave the example of Royal Dutch/Shell and BP. There is a host of companies that have done the same thing. Almost invariably they have made more money by reducing the input costs on the energy side. In other words, they have become more productive because of their efforts to reduce emissions. So quite often not only is there a benefit in terms of reduction of emissions, but there is a substantial benefit in terms of reducing the costs of their inputs and thus productivity for Canadian industry and indeed for other industries as well.

*The Address*

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Her Excellency the Right Honourable Governor General Adrienne Clarkson delivered the first Speech from the Throne of our government under our new Prime Minister. Its wide-ranging agenda included: aid to cities; environmental programs; new measures for aboriginals, students, children, and people with disabilities; and several proposals incorporating recommendations from the former prime minister's task force on women entrepreneurs, whose report was released on October 29, 2003, and which I had the privilege of chairing. Task force members included: as vice-chair, the Hon. Senator Catherine Callbeck from Prince Edward Island; the Hon. Senator Ross Fitzpatrick from British Columbia; the member of Parliament for Kitchener Centre; and the member of Parliament for Portneuf.

Both personally and on behalf of over 1,000 women entrepreneurs who either appeared before the task force or made submissions to the task force, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for acknowledging the important role that women entrepreneurs play in our economy by including the reference to women entrepreneurs in the Speech from the Throne and in his reply to the Speech from the Throne today here in the House of Commons.

Moreover, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for implementing some of the task force recommendations in the Speech from the Throne. In fact, I would like to take this opportunity to confirm how proud I am to be a member of this Liberal government and a member of the Prime Minister's team.

Just 15 months ago, the creation of the task force on women entrepreneurs was announced at the innovation and learning summit in Toronto. The task force members were invited to engage women entrepreneurs in a dialogue aimed at advancing their contribution to Canada's economy as part of the federal government's innovation agenda. The work of the task force was undertaken between November 2002 and June 2003. In fact, 38 public consultations were held in 21 cities in all the provinces and the Yukon. Task force members travelled to the United States and the United Kingdom to investigate international best practices. In addition, 21 federal government departments and agencies appeared before the task force and discussed the programs in place to support women entrepreneurs or entrepreneurship in general.

All major Canadian financial institutions and all other interested stakeholders, such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, were invited to appear before the task force and/or make submissions. Participation was sought at the provincial, regional and local levels. Individual women entrepreneurs as well as organizations were invited to make submissions to the task force by attending the consultations or making submissions to the task force in person, on line or in other written format.

The task force reached thousands of women entrepreneurs across Canada, including aboriginal, immigrant and rural women. The response to the task force was overwhelming. Just recently, Gordon Nixon, chairman and chief executive officer of the RBC Financial Group, noted and recognized both the important contribution made by women business owners as well as the challenges that they indeed face. They also realize that there is more to be done, and it is only

through strong leadership and partnerships within both the public and the private sectors that long term change will be achieved.

The task force is being viewed as a best practice at the OECD, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. On January 20, I was invited to the World Bank in Washington to discuss the work of the task force. Let me share with members some of the things the task force learned.

According to Statistics Canada, small business is the fastest growing segment of the business sector in Canada. Women-owned businesses are the fastest growing part of that segment, with women creating twice as many businesses as men. However, across Canada the task force heard repeatedly that women entrepreneurs are still not taken seriously by government departments and agencies or financial institutions. Yet self-employment has grown faster in the past 25 years than paid employment, and in the 1980s, just over 20% of job growth came from self-employment and small business. In the 1990s, this sector accounted for nearly 45% of job growth. In fact, from 1990 to 1997, at a time of extensive public and private sector restructuring, it accounted for nearly 60% of all employment growth.

● (1540)

It is interesting to note that between 1981 and 2001 the number of women entrepreneurs in Canada increased by 208% compared with a 38% increase for men. In fact, according to data from the OECD, women in Canada make up a larger share of the self-employed than in any other country.

Recognizing the growing impact and importance of women entrepreneurs, the OECD has convened two conferences on women entrepreneurs and SMEs and will be convening another one this June.

Members may ask why these statistics and facts so important. Our government needs to look at the implications of the rising number of self-employed women in Canada and their economic contribution and status. Under the old economy, women made gains due to higher education levels, increased labour force participation, and public policy and legislation supporting women's work, such as pay equity, maternity leave, employment insurance and the Canada pension plan.

However, under the new economy there are growing numbers of women who are self-employed and therefore fall outside the scope of the public policy and legislation that have improved women's working lives. It is clear that Canadian women are creating a range of businesses that fall outside the traditional model of paid employment.

The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor studies entrepreneurship and public policy in over 37 countries. In its 2001 *Global Report*, it made six public policy recommendations. One of its strongest recommendations was to facilitate greater levels of female participation. The Monitor states:

*The Address*

There is perhaps no greater initiative a country can take to realize higher levels of entrepreneurial activity than to encourage more of its women to participate.

Yesterday, in the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister foresaw “a Canada that is a magnet for capital and entrepreneurs from around the world”. More importantly, he also foresaw “a Canada where the increasing number of women entrepreneurs have every opportunity to succeed and contribute a vital new dimension to our economy”.

As I said earlier, today, in his reply to the Speech from the Throne, the Prime Minister again reinforced his support for women entrepreneurs. In asking the question, “What kind of Canada do we want?”, he noted the following: a Canada which is at the leading edge of the world's technologies; a Canada where today's small businesses are tomorrow's global leaders; a Canada where there is no glass ceiling for women entrepreneurs.

Task force recommendations were also included in several other sections in the Speech from the Throne. Under “Caring for Our Children”, the government promised to accelerate initiatives under the existing multilateral framework for early childhood learning and child care, which means more quality child care more quickly.

This commitment is virtually identical to recommendation 4.04 of the task force's report. The task force put forward this recommendation as it truly affects not only the participation of women in the workforce but also the ability of women to consider self-employment as an option.

Under “A New Deal for Communities”, the government pledged to “work to widen the scope of programs currently available to small and medium-sized enterprises to include social enterprises”. I am sure that it will not come as any surprise to you, Mr. Speaker, that if we look at the number of women actually involved in social enterprises we will find that number even more overwhelming.

Under “Lifelong Learning”, the Prime Minister committed the government to “update labour market programming to better reflect the realities of work in the 21st century, such as the growth of self-employment and the need for continuous upgrading of skills”. In the “Science and Technology” section of the Speech from the Throne the government notes the following:

Our small, innovative firms face two key obstacles—access to adequate early stage financing; and the capacity to conduct the research and development needed to commercialize their ideas and really grow their businesses.

The Government will help to overcome these obstacles—building, for example, on the venture financing capabilities of the Business Development Bank.

This recommendation closely follows recommendation 3.04 of the task force report.

To conclude, I am delighted to tell women entrepreneurs, and I am sure they are glad to have read, that not only has the task force listened, the government has listened. But most importantly, our new Prime Minister has listened to them and to the work of the task force.

●(1545)

I would invite women entrepreneurs across Canada to come forward to ensure that the rest of our recommendations are implemented, to do it together.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on her speech. Also I want to commend her

colleagues for their fine work on the Task Force on Women Entrepreneurs. This is a very fine piece of work. I was pleased that the Speech from the Throne echoed many of the recommendations of the task force.

Perhaps the member could comment on the fact that the Speech from the Throne suggests that it is going to be an extension of the multilateral framework for early learning and child care. That matter is very important for all small business people, for all entrepreneurs but particularly for women entrepreneurs.

The throne speech also mentioned the extension of the scope of programs currently available to small and medium size businesses to social enterprises. I think I understand what that means but I would be grateful if my colleague could explain that to us.

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the multilateral framework regarding child care, this is part of our national children's agenda and also the importance that the national children's agenda places on early childhood development. Certainly in our last budget there were moneys specifically targeted for that multilateral framework.

As I said during my speech, it is important that we address this issue because the women who are self-employed are falling through the cracks when it comes to maternity leave, for example. That is why one of the recommendations of the task force was that this government as quickly as possible should consider extending maternity benefits to the self-employed.

We have also asked the government to look at other tax incentives such as the deductibility of child care as an expense for the purpose of producing income. We are looking at that altogether as a framework of what needs to be done to ensure that the children of all women, not just women who are in the workforce, but children of women who are working for themselves, are taken care of in the early childhood years.

●(1550)

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I would ask the government House leader to be patient, since there are only two minutes left for questions and comments, following which he will have the floor.

The hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

[*English*]

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague opposite with a great deal of interest. If we are going to make this applicable, we have to take a look at Canadians whether they live north of the 60th parallel or on the 49th parallel.

In my area there are some huge ranches run by families. The partners in those businesses, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, but having said that, they too should be eligible for some type of care even if it is not possible geographically. If there is childcare, money or deductions for others who are geographically available, then there must be some levelling of the playing field for those women who are in business with their husbands in a large enterprise but who have been left out of the picture and always have been left out of the picture. That is grossly unfair and grossly wrong to many Canadians.

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte:** Mr. Speaker, that was one of the things that we actually looked at. I find myself agreeing with my colleague across the floor because it is unfair that the current EI system discriminates against family owned businesses, especially when the wife is a partner in that business. Although she perhaps pays into EI or she should be able to, she is not eligible to collect it just because of that. That was one of the issues our report identified.

The other issue my colleague opposite identified is the problems and challenges and barriers that rural women encounter are greater than the ones in the city. We need to work with those women to ensure that the programs are in place, either regionally or across Canada to ensure that those barriers are overcome.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among the parties and I think you will find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That a take-note debate on bovine spongiform encephalopathy shall take place for four hours from the ordinary time of daily adjournment on February 4, 2004, provided that the provisions of Standing Order 53.1 shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to this debate.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Is there unanimous consent to adopt the motion?

**Some members:** Agreed.  
(Motion agreed to)

---

#### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

[Translation]

##### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, of the amendment and of the amendment to the amendment.

**Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this throne speech, so carefully prepared for such a long time because the Prime Minister had ample opportunity, will not go down in history for its renewal or its vision or for its concrete initiatives, with the exception of one short sentence. Naturally, I am making a prediction, but I do not think I am wrong. This short sentence reads as follows:

#### The Address

Jurisdiction must be respected. But Canadians do not go about their daily lives worried about which jurisdiction does this or that.

This short sentence read slowly by the Governor General stated very clearly for the first time that the Liberal Government of Canada does not care at all about the Constitution. A constitution is the basic principles and rights that establish legal standards, particularly in a federation.

The federal Liberal government does not care, and yet, it claims to be a model of democracy and federalism, to the point of creating a “Canadians Corps” to spread the gospel about the “Canadian” federation. But this is good news for a country whose government has forgotten its history and cannot recall it without a certain unease.

This history, this Constitution, reminds us that Canada would never have existed if Lower Canada, called Quebec after the 1837-1838 insurrection, had not been crushed and forced to unite with Upper Canada. If the “French-Canadians”, in Lower Canada, with the English-Canadians who fought by their side in the insurrection, had not agreed to discuss a constitution of principles, rights and the respect for individual and collective rights, which were ultimately adopted by the assembly and introduced as legislation in London—had things been different, they would have been better—, there never would have been a country called Canada.

Even at this assembly joining eastern and western Canada, the proposal passed with a very small majority. I also remember that the Liberals of the day, called the nationalists, had asked for a referendum. Their request was not granted until they agreed to form, with the other colonies, the country that would become Canada.

The Constitution is a contract that allows the provinces, in a federation such as this, to have sovereign authority over areas of jurisdictions, while the federal government has sovereign authority over other areas of jurisdiction.

However, this Constitution has been trashed repeatedly since the failure of the Meech Lake accord.

● (1555)

Even in Quebec, the Liberals under Jean Charest are having a hard time finding their place in this federalism, because federalism as studied through history and as developed by history no longer exists. The majority is speaking as one voice in Quebec, a nation that is different, as our leader pointed out earlier this morning. We are different, no better no worse, just different. We have the right to be different and we still believe that that right was enshrined in the Constitution when it was written.

The word “but” on which the Governor General put emphasis told Quebecers, even those who still believe in Canada, “You live in a country where we form the majority, so you need to accept the fact that we will not recognize you as being different.”

A constitution is a contract. People do not look at their lease, their mortgage or their house contract on a daily basis. However, when major rights issues are raised, we are rather glad to have a document which we can bring to court, if need be.

*The Address*

Although we have a Liberal government, the country is now being led according to the philosophy of John A. Macdonald. I remember, and I hope other members remember as well, that John A. Macdonald wished for a unitary government, which he was never able to implement.

The throne speech is quite eloquent about what the government intends to do outside its jurisdictions, but remains strangely silent on several crucial problems it is having in its own jurisdictions. I would be remiss if I did not mention mad cow disease. In fact, we want to have an emergency debate on this issue tomorrow.

How is it that this issue is not addressed when there are so many cattle producers and people in the agri-food industry that have gone bankrupt or are on the brink of bankruptcy? The problem affects Quebec as well as western Canada. Not a word was said about softwood lumber, even if thousands of jobs, 20,000 to be exact, have been lost because of the crisis in this industry.

How is it that there was no mention of marine transportation? Was there not a reference in the red book to shipbuilding and was a committee not struck? Reference to the Quebec appeal court judgment, as significant as it is in relation to this government's intentions in connection with one of the major problems of the Quebec nation: its demographics. How could this not have been addressed? This question involves Quebec's ability to create a parental leave program which will really enable couples to have the family they desire.

Why no mention of dredging the St. Lawrence? This is a matter of concern to thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands, millions of Quebeckers. In connection with this dredging, Senator Hillary Clinton begged Canada not to bow to the wishes of a number of major shipping companies, as well as the U.S. army.

● (1600)

Why was there no mention in the Speech from the Throne of women and children living in poverty, despite the numerous poor showings in UNDP reports? All of these are important questions, and there are others I have not touched on. There are, however, two major ones I wish to speak about.

This Speech from the Throne, claiming to support transparency, democracy and renewal, makes no mention of the missile defence shield. If there is one single issue of importance to the future of the people of Quebec, this is it. So why no reference to it? Do they want us to conclude it is encompassed by the term "security"? It is impossible. The missile defence shield is far too broad an issue.

Yet the Minister of National Defence sent a letter to U.S. Secretary of Defence Rumsfeld in which he stated as follows:

It is our intent to negotiate in the coming months a missile defence framework memorandum of understanding with the United States, with the objective of including Canada as a participant in the current U.S. missile defence program and expanding and enhancing information exchange.

Then, to be sure there was no misunderstanding, he went on:

We believe that our two nations should move on an expedited basis to amend the Norad agreement to take into account Norad's contribution to the missile defence mission.

They are working on the necessary political and financial arrangements.

This is extremely serious. The U.S. missile defence system is part of the comprehensive program of preemptive strike and new world domination strategy. The United States is acting as if it were an empire. From the very beginning, the missile defence system provides for the use of space for nuclear purposes.

This missile defence system will not guarantee security for Quebec and Canada, but it will surely reignite the arms race. For example, China is prepared to sign an international agreement to eliminate all weapons of mass destruction. Those who think that China will let the Americans build this missile defence system without doing anything about it are sadly mistaken.

The missile defence system is an extremely important issue. Quebeckers do not want such a system. Yet, the throne speech is totally silent on this.

There is also the issue of international assistance. I must say that I cringed when I read that Canada can do more than the other countries. As regards international assistance, Mr. Pearson, who, at one time, was the Deputy Minister of External Affairs, had recommended to the United Nations that such assistance be set at 0.7% of our GDP. If only Canada had done its share, the situation in developing countries would not be as bad as it is.

When the current Prime Minister was in charge of the finances, Canada was in sixth place; it was at 0.45% of the GDP. Last year it was 0.22%. This year it is 0.28% because the OECD took into account some \$500 million for Africa. This will not be a recurrent expenditure. Next year, this money will be gone, and Canada will slip back down the list of donor countries to 19th out of 22.

I feel discouraged when I read that Canada can do more than its share. If we want the public to be involved in political projects, it should at the very least to be told the truth.

● (1605)

Truth is at the root of democracy, at the root of the trust that the Prime Minister says he wants to restore.

I cannot help but make the connection with what was often the topic of discussion following the events of September 11, 2001. It was often said that we must fight terrorism, but if we do not root out the conditions, such as ongoing conflicts, injustices, poverty, hunger and disease, that create a breeding ground for terrorism, failing that, whatever claims they make about the openness of the world and opportunities available to Canada, they are not telling the truth or making the proposals the Prime Minister says he wants to make.

This is a very sad Speech from the Throne. The Prime Minister wanted to raise a lot of hopes. Unfortunately, all I see is a lot of general and generous ideas and very little to help Quebeckers and Canadians feel more secure.

The Prime Minister said he wanted Quebeckers to feel part of Canada, but I am sorry, this Speech from the Throne will not help.

● (1610)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The hon. member for Mercier has two minutes left. She can take a moment to get her voice back and then carry on with her speech.

*The Address*

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Speaking about the importance of discussing the missile defence program, I started explaining earlier that Canada could not participate in it without harming the independent foreign policy it wants to conduct.

The position it took on the attack on Iraq helped Canada to partly regain its international reputation. In the current environment, participating in the missile defence program would make it lose this independence.

In fact, Ambassador Cellucci has made it very clear that Canada could have a different foreign policy but that it had to be complementary.

The prime minister says he wants Canada to regain its position. Regarding the decision that was made, I believe that the demonstrations and the mobilization of the Bloc Québécois and the people of Quebec led Jean Chrétien to say no the war against Iraq.

Should Canada participate in the missile defence program, it will lose the benefit presently drawn from a foreign policy that is not hostile, since there is no question of being hostile to our American brothers. The American people are our friends and allies. The policy of the current American administration is an aggressive one. It is not consistent with what Canadian diplomacy and policy have been all about. It is certainly not what Quebeckers want.

**Mr. Jean-Yves Roy (Matapédia—Matane, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

I believe she explained quite well the underlying elements of the throne speech. I wish she would speak again on this point, because she may not have had enough time to describe the consequences, for the citizens of this country, of this government's direction with respect to American policies and our participation in the missile defence plan. We do not know the costs involved, but we know full well that huge investments will be required, that it will cost a fortune.

The Speech from the Throne refers to substantial reinvestments in defence and security. All those plans are clearly outlined in the throne speech. Reference is also made to more dredging in the St. Lawrence Seaway, which, for the Americans, is not only a question of transport but also a question of security.

As far as costs are concerned, what is proposed in the throne speech is absolutely gigantic, and the amounts will be spent at the expense of health, education or transfers to provinces, in fact, at the expense of all services.

I hope my colleague will expand on how the public will be affected by the directions outlined in the throne speech. I would like to quote a short excerpt from that speech to show to what extent the federal government has withdrawn from services, particularly in the regions.

At page 17, the Speech from the Throne states:

A Canada where the benefits of the 21st century economy are being reaped from coast to coast to coast... But government has an essential enabling role.

Do you know what that essential enabling role is? It is not to invest in the regions; it is a role of moderator. We will only be

moderators. We will go and tell people, "Do the development yourselves". It is written:

This will be achieved primarily through the efforts of Canadians themselves.

Therefore, the federal government continues to withdraw from all services and from the regions. I would like to hear my hon. colleague on that.

• (1615)

**Ms. Francine Lalonde:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and his reminder. Both were extremely important.

The missile defence shield project of the U.S. administration will be very costly. I would simply point out that the technology is not up to par. Many experts have agreed that the costs would be huge. And as I said earlier, the missile defence shield will be useful not necessarily to protect the United States but rather, with all the billions of dollars invested in that project, to ensure the technological predominance of the U.S. military industry. That is quite obvious.

What would be the impact on Canada? What would be the nature of such an impact, if there is to be one? The offset could be quite harmful in terms of foreign policy.

However, I just want to add—and that is why the hon. member's question was so interesting—that several experts recently said that, where the relationship between Canada and the United States is concerned, if Canada thinks that by yielding on some of the U.S. security concerns it can score points on trade issues, such as softwood lumber or mad cow disease, it is wrong, because those decisions are not made by the same people. The U.S. administration, whether at the Pentagon or in the White House, is responsible, of course, for defence decisions. But it does not have a say on trade issues, which are more closely related to what is being done in Congress.

In the process, we have to be careful not to be conciliatory to the point of losing sight of the interests of our citizens, our democracy and the freedom enjoyed by all Quebeckers and Canadians, just in the hope of quickly coming to an agreement on some trade issues. That would be a huge, a terrible mistake.

I thank my colleague for giving me the opportunity to make these comments.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth. He is a colleague who has worked very hard on environmental issues and shares my concern about the north.

Canada is a northern nation. The huge expanse of the Arctic which makes up 50% of our country's land mass is an integral part of our national identity and a strategic component of our country's future.

Being a northern nation carries distinct responsibilities. These include respecting and responding to the needs of northerners, preserving northern ecosystems, safeguarding our sovereignty and taking leadership in circumpolar activities, particularly in areas of northern science and social development.

*The Address*

In the Speech from the Throne we heard that Canadians are uniquely positioned for the new global realities, open to the world, comfortable with the interdependence of nations, aware of our global responsibilities and that Canadians want to see Canada's place of pride and influence in the world restored.

Canada is the largest land mass in the circumpolar north, an area of increasing geopolitical significance. We have obligations that arise from our participation in circumpolar north institutions, for example, the Arctic Council.

We must as an important national priority recognize Canada's place as an arctic nation and act to enhance our leadership among other arctic nations. From both economic and political perspectives, the north has the potential to become a significant factor in world affairs.

Canada was once acknowledged to have a world class expertise in northern science and research. Unfortunately the last 10 years of downsizing of Canadian polar research capacity has led to an exodus of Canadian scientists from critical northern research fields at a time when many other nations are significantly expanding their arctic science operations, even in Canada.

We have made commitments to a number of international obligations such as the Kyoto protocol, the United Nations framework convention on climate change, the Stockholm convention and the Montreal protocol, all of which should be better informed by northern science. As well, active engagement in fulfilling these international commitments will enhance our sovereignty.

At the current rate of global warming, arctic sea ice will disappear in the summer allowing navigation through the Northwest Passage. A report written by the U.S. Arctic Research Commission indicates that as the Arctic Ocean thaws, the U.S. Navy will increase its surveillance of the area.

Given the United States' current sensitivities to security issues, it may come to view the Canadian north as a security gap. In addition, Canadian jurisdiction over the Northwest Passage is not accepted by the United States, the European Union and even, as some suggest, Japan.

As George Hobson, a former head of the Polar Continental Shelf Project with many decades of experience in the north has said, if we do not demonstrate our claim to our land, water or airspace in some manner, we will lose it. Conducting science in our northern lands is a peaceful way to underline our claim to sovereignty. We need to build a stronger sustained national presence in our north.

The Speech from the Throne outlines an important objective of the government to ensure that every region of the country has the opportunity to move forward socially and economically on a rising tide of progress. As we share opportunity, so too will we share prosperity.

Demographically the north is different from the rest of Canada. In Nunavut, 56% of the population is under 25 compared with 33% of the Canadian population as a whole. At its current growth rate, Nunavut's population will double in two decades. Unemployment rates are unacceptably high in many northern communities.

The settlement of aboriginal claims has paved the way for new developments in the energy and mineral industries. These opportunities are also being influenced by the availability of new technologies in the north. R and D activities include research on renewable energies and other things.

There is tremendous potential to increase indigenous and northern capacity for innovation, commercialization and job creation. The success of these emerging economic development opportunities rests on the creation of knowledge to better inform social and ecological impacts of economic development.

● (1620)

As Canadians know, resource extraction, global warming and contaminants pose significant threats to sustainability. A wide range of indicators shows that the northern environment is changing at an unprecedented rate. Sea cover is thinning and retreating, wild life habitation is shifting and shrinking, and the permafrost that supports communities and infrastructure is at risk of melting. Our understanding of many of the stressors responsible for these changes require ongoing and enhanced contributions from scientific and scholarly research.

Northern issues, most importantly, have a human face. We must not lose sight of how massive ecological change affects aboriginal peoples and other northerners. As my friend, Sheila Watt-Cloutier, president of the ICC, repeatedly says, for the Inuit, this is a cultural issue. Inuit wonder if their country's food is safe as contaminants work their way into northern ecosystems. As a result of climate change, hunters are less able to read sea ice as the ice is thinning and thaws are occurring earlier in the season.

In the words of the Prime Minister, Canadians deserve equality of opportunity. This means that the young people who are born and live in the north deserve to be educated in the north. We need to work with northern colleges and northern research institutes to ensure that a full array of educational opportunities is offered.

An important objective of the government is to support the aspirations of northerners and find northern solutions to northern challenges. Fundamental to achieving this objective is recognizing and respecting the link between public policy and science and research. A sound public policy process requires that as a tool, science and research play an integral role in identifying problems, setting priorities and implementing solutions. What is the condition of this very important tool? I am afraid to say that northern science and research as it currently exists in government is in a very sorry state. Canada has lost its place in the world by abdicating its scientific leadership in the north.



*The Address*

In many ways the government has acknowledged the unique nature and magnitude of change facing the north as reflected in the various departmental programs that address northern concerns. However, response to commitments and problems tends to be ad hoc and piecemeal. There is no coherent and coordinated strategy. Programs are fragmented across a dozen departments and agencies. Conflicting mandates often exist between and within these departments. Unbelievably, there is no one minister responsible.

Northern science and research lacks continuity and as a result suffers from an erosion of resources. As a consequence, government, industry and northern communities do not have the necessary capacity to address challenges and find solutions.

For example, the owner of a private sector firm sent me a letter. In it he said, "Years of environmental work done by the government in the Beaufort Sea, the Northwest Passage and other northern areas are in the process of being abandoned when their results are needed most urgently, leaving planners and decision makers without reliable answers to basic questions. Cutbacks have virtually eliminated opportunities for private sector firms in the field of ocean technology".

I have met with members of the northern science research community both in the north and the south and have been repeatedly told that Canada has lost a generation of northern researchers.

The government must take immediate steps to reverse the decline in northern science and research by developing a comprehensive northern science research strategy that would provide coordination, efficiency and effectiveness to the programs that are currently delivered in an ad hoc and piecemeal fashion.

We have received a signal from the government that recognizes this need. In the Speech from the Throne the government made a commitment to develop a northern strategy, ensuring that economic development is conducted in partnership with northerners and is based on stewardship of our most fragile northern ecosystems. Clearly this cannot happen without a focus on and an enhanced investment in northern science and research.

Another important signal that the government is serious is the appointments of the science adviser to the Prime Minister and a parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister for science and small business. Equally reassuring is the Prime Minister's personal commitment to ensure that top federal decision makers get the best possible scientific advice.

Today the Prime Minister told the House that Parliament must be a place where the voices of all Canada, all of its regions, are included. More specifically, he went on to say that we must ensure that the north has greater control of its destiny. The new governance realities of the north, the massive ecological change impacting northern ecosystems and northern peoples, emerging economic development opportunities and Canada's role as a leader in the circumpolar north demand that as a Parliament, as a government, we no longer delay in accepting this as a national responsibility.

• (1625)

**Mr. Dennis Mills (Toronto—Danforth, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by acknowledging the work of my colleague from York North. Over the years in the House of Commons, she has

had a focus on the environment, a passion and a sensitivity which all of us on all sides of the House celebrate.

Today she has pulled something out of the Speech from the Throne that I had not seen reported in any newspaper. It is the fact that our Prime Minister in the Speech from the Throne has made a commitment to northern science. Canada's commitment to the Arctic is going to be in the front window. I hope this will be the beginning of a journey that will make our Prime Minister a green Prime Minister.

I want to move from the Arctic to downtown Toronto. As everyone can imagine, over the last few months I have had some concerns about whether or not there was going to be sufficient commitment from the new Prime Minister, the leader of our party, around issues that concern the inner city, especially my inner city in downtown Toronto. I was delighted yesterday when we heard such a forceful commitment, a commitment of real gravity not just to the city of Toronto but to all municipalities throughout the country.

It is very rare in our city, which has become a little partisan lately, when one can pick up the *Toronto Star* which, as I have said in the House of Commons over the last year has essentially become an NDP paper, and read that the mayor of Toronto, David Miller, has said that this is a fantastic commitment, a great commitment. What I like about Mayor Miller is that he has taken the higher ground.

We all know that it is really easy to be partisan; it is a natural temptation. But every now and again there are special moments in the House when members from all parties on both sides come up with very solid work. In this particular case I think we would acknowledge that this commitment for cities is unprecedented.

One of the things that makes this so dramatic is that over the last 10 years, and it is not widely known, we as the Government of Canada spent approximately \$22.5 billion in the greater Toronto area. A lot of people do not believe that. I have been working on this for the last two years and I am happy to report today that I finally have from the researchers a list that describes close to \$16 billion of that \$22.5 billion in the greater Toronto area. For anyone who may be listening to this, including opposition members, and would like to see the federal presence in the Toronto area, I would be happy to make this document available to them. It is quite an incredible story.

One of the problems we have had as a government is that we really have not been pushing our communication strategy strongly enough in telling the people in our city, and I am now speaking as a Toronto member, about the good work that all the various departments of government are executing in the greater Toronto area. The whole issue of communication is a real challenge. When we cannot get the message out clearly and succinctly, there are people out there who will take advantage of it. I want to deal with a very specific issue.

*The Address*

I have been campaigning in the House of Commons since 1988 around the whole important issue that every one of us in the House be sensitive and caring toward the small business men and women in the country. They essentially employ 80% of our nation. I do not think anyone would question that fact.

●(1630)

A few weeks ago there was a question by Jack Layton in terms of giving tax breaks to business. Let us imagine.

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Four billion bucks, Dennis.

**Mr. Dennis Mills:** I hear the NDP saying \$4 billion. This is the NDP philosophy on business, but it focuses on big business. It does not realize that in that envelope there were one million small businessmen and women. I wonder what the NDP has against small businessmen and women. Small business needs that kind of stimulus.

When we bring small business into the communication, the NDP gets a little fragile.

The reality is that 80% of the tax revenue that comes to the Government of Canada in the business envelope comes from small and medium sized businessmen and women. That is where the bulk of that tax credit goes.

I cannot believe for a second that the members of the NDP would not clarify that they support small businessmen and women in the country. If they do, then they would have to change the statements that are being made about the exact dollars that are going in, and that is the problem.

People take statements and they parse them. They look at a few big businesses and forget the million small businessmen and women. The NDP has made an art form of taking pieces of a specific announcement and sticking it on a group within our community. In this case, it says big business is benefiting.

Now that we have clarified that small businessmen and women are getting a huge benefit here, I want to go to big business.

I do not believe for a second that anyone in this place would try to curry favour with large businesses. However, at the same time, we must have a competitive economic environment in the country for those businesses that employ thousands of people and that are competing globally. There is absolutely no acknowledgement of this from the NDP. It says to take a tax break and just stick it on big business because that is where the media will get sucked in.

I have made the point about the NDP and its attitude toward small business, but I want to go back to the Speech from the Throne.

The Speech from the Throne has identified commitments to our cities which most people in the media, including the NDP, have been surprised by. It has made a commitment to the environment that most people are shocked by. I personally believe that once the words in this Speech from the Throne go into deeds that we will be back here for a fourth time.

●(1635)

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, where do I start with my friend from Toronto—Danforth? We only have five minutes.

However, he does say when the words are translated into action. Well, some of us remember another set of words that were authored by the now Prime Minister and it was called the red book.

We are still waiting for those words which were more than 10 years ago to be translated into action. Where is the affordable, accessible child care that was promised by this Prime Minister more than 10 years ago? Where is the affordable home care? Just this morning we learned of a study which was published that showed that nearly one in four Canadians suffer a serious complication after they are released from hospital. Why? Because there is no proper home care. This government and this Prime Minister promised that. Cry me a river about the poor suffering corporations that got their big tax increase.

I want to ask a specific question because I know the member would want his constituents of Toronto—Danforth to know where he stands on the issue of equal marriage rights for same sex couples. He ducked the vote on this issue and now he is in the House.

Does he or does he not support the position of his government which is that equal civil marriage rights should be extended to gay and lesbian couples?

**Mr. Dennis Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I knew this question was coming from the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

My views on this issue are well known. My stand has been stated. I have said that I support the traditional definition of marriage. That is a simple fact. The whole issue around intimacy and rights is being debated now. It is in front of the courts. We will continue to work on this issue and debate it. At this particular point in time my position has not changed.

●(1640)

**Mr. Andy Burton (Skeena, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a western MP I am extremely disappointed with yesterday's throne speech.

There was nothing in it that addressed the absolutely critical softwood lumber issue in British Columbia and in fact all of Canada. The BSE issue which has devastated the beef producing industry was not mentioned. Fisheries issues on either coast, including the huge issue of straddling stocks off the east coast of Canada, were not addressed in any meaningful way whatsoever.

There are regulatory roadblocks to our resource industries, especially in British Columbia, where we are trying to get the economy back up and running. We cannot get on with the oil and gas issue. Mining companies are trying to go into production with new properties and are running into horrendous red tape and problems with DFO and various other environmental problems. There is nothing for rural Canada.

Why did the government choose to ignore rural Canada in this quasi throne speech election document?

*The Address*

**Mr. Dennis Mills:** Mr. Speaker, I find this really strange. On page 17 of the Speech from the Throne there is a special section entitled regional and rural development. It is close to a page and a half in length. The last paragraph, which is on page 18, states:

The Government is dedicated to Canada's farm economy and to taking the steps necessary to safeguard access to international markets and to ensure that farmers are not left to bear alone the consequences of circumstances beyond their control. It is also committed to fostering a technologically advanced agricultural sector with the supporting infrastructure of transportation and applied science to make the competitiveness of Canadian farmers and the safety of our food second to none in world markets.

**Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a member of the greater Toronto area. I happen to be at the northern end. I think we are seeing a little similarity here with the focus on York North and the northern part of the GTA. There are a lot of farms in my riding. In fact, my hon. colleague himself has lived in my area and understands the concerns of York North.

My hon. colleague has been absolutely diligent and tenacious about looking for the moneys that have been spent in the GTA on behalf of the federal government. Could he elaborate on that?

**Mr. Dennis Mills:** Mr. Speaker, we know that one of the painful tasks that we have as members of Parliament is finding out all of the Government of Canada activity that goes on in our communities. It has been a real painful task finding out where the \$22.5 billion has gone in the greater Toronto area. Anyone who would like to know line by line where this money has gone can call my office.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and address the throne speech.

I wish to thank the constituents of Medicine Hat for putting their faith in me again. We are starting a new session of Parliament. I would like to acknowledge the faith my constituents have placed in me over the years. It is a pleasure to represent them and stand up for them. My constituents are great people. It is a privilege and an honour to be their representative in the House of Commons.

The first thing that came to mind when I listened to the Speech from the Throne and then read through it later was that it reminded me of one of those ads for a furniture store where it is stated, "Buy now and pay later". In this case it will be, "Buy now and pay sometime perhaps in June".

The government is delivering a throne speech with very few numbers attached, but all kinds of promises. The idea is to convince Canadians that the government will fulfill this wonderful shopping list of ideas. However, the government is not telling Canadians what the cost will be. The cost will be very substantial in a number of ways.

What I will do today is run through a number of the different commitments that the government is making in the throne speech and then talk a little bit about each one of them. It is important to address some of the specific commitments the government is making, especially when we have a new Prime Minister and a new cabinet who are endeavouring to fulfill these commitments.

I will start on page 3 of the Speech from the Throne. There the government talks about changing the way things work in Ottawa. In the document, the first very line of that section says:

The path to achievement begins with making sure that Canadians believe their government, so that they can believe *in* government.

We all agree with that. We want Canadians to believe their government. To some degree we want them to believe in government. We do not want them to place all their faith in government. We all know that government too often lets people down. Rather obviously, some things are the sorts of things that we should rely on our family and ourselves to achieve.

Having said that, generally speaking and those caveats attached, we all agree with that statement. However, I want to argue that the government is doing a terrible job already of fulfilling that commitment. The path to achievement begins with making sure that Canadians believe their government.

Today in the House of Commons, during question period, my colleague and I from Edmonton Southwest, and my colleague from Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, asked questions about how transparent the government is and how forthcoming it is with details surrounding the Prime Minister's own company and its dealings with the government over the past 10 years.

We pointed out that the government had been far less than forthcoming when it came to giving information about contracts and grants that the company had received from the government. We pointed out that it had been about a year and a half before we received a remotely accurately picture of the actual amount of business that the company, CSL, had done with the Government of Canada over the last 10 years.

The initial figure was \$137,000. It took roughly 18 months to get the real figure. The real figure is \$161 million. However, even that is not the total picture. There is more to it than that. We pointed that out in question period. We pointed to the fact that there was a discrepancy between the figures that the government House leader had given us and what we had found ourselves respecting at least one contract. I think there were 528 contracts. We found one right away with a \$20,000 discrepancy. That caused us to question again this commitment that we find in the throne speech.

We then noted that in the letter that the House leader had prepared for my colleague from Edmonton Southwest that it did not actually include numbers, for instance, from the Canadian Wheat Board. It claimed that the Canadian Wheat Board said that it wanted to protect its competitive advantage and did not want to release all the numbers.

● (1645)

I argue that when the Prime Minister prepares a throne speech saying that transparency has to be paramount, then the concerns of the Canadian Wheat Board come second, because the public's right to know has to be supreme. In this case we are protecting the Canadian Wheat Board, and that is a whole other issue that I would like to talk about, but we cannot get into today. We just do not have time.

Right away, I think the government is failing its own standards that it set on page 3 of the throne speech. It is not producing all the information. In fact we will have more to say about this in the next number of days in the House of Commons.

*The Address*

I want to address another issue that is raised shortly thereafter, on page 4 of the throne speech, where the government talks about an action plan for democratic reform.

The government is already failing its own standards when it comes to the issue of democratic reform because very recently the Prime Minister talked about the fact that he would refuse to acknowledge that the people of Alberta had chosen elected senators. He basically stated that he refused to put them into the Senate, and he came up with some reason.

My point is that the Prime Minister has talked at length about the democratic deficit. The most important democratic deficit to the people of Alberta right now is to ensure that their democratically elected senators find their way into the Senate, ultimately. The Prime Minister has said that he will not respect that.

When it comes to dealing with his very first test to fulfill the so-called democratic deficit he has talked about, he has failed his own standard. He is refusing to do what he should do in the eyes of hundreds of thousands of Albertans who have voted for these people to go into the Senate of Canada. Two were chosen by the people of Alberta, and in a couple of days, we will have two Alberta vacancies in the Senate, but the Prime Minister refuses to address them.

I want to go on. There are so many issues we could talk about, but I have limited time.

One of the issues I am concerned about is that on page 5 of the throne speech the Prime Minister talks about an independent ethics commissioner reporting to Parliament and an ethics officer for the Senate. We know that when he talks about an independent ethics commissioner, he is not talking about the same sort of independent officer that we have in the Auditor General.

For the information of the House, the Auditor General is selected through the Treasury Board by a committee that contains, for instance, chartered accountants, CGAs and auditors of Canada. They get together and select someone from among the possible candidates, and ultimately that person is appointed to become the Auditor General of Canada. That happened the last time around, and the person is an officer of Parliament.

The Prime Minister is talking about someone he would ultimately choose, and I cannot accept that. That is too much like the system as it is today.

Even the Prime Minister obviously does not have faith in the ethics counsellor today or else he would not be proposing the change the system. The very same ethics counsellor, by the way, has whitewashed scandal after scandal on the government side, and there have been dozens in the last 10 years that I have been here. I cannot count them all, but they are well known to Canadians who have seen this place in action.

That ethics counsellor is not acceptable. We do not want the same system, but with a different name for the independent ethics commissioner. Again we feel that the government is failing to meet its own standards that it lays out in the throne speech.

Here is one that really sticks in my craw. This is the respect for the tax dollars reference in the throne speech. Now this really boils me, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister has made a point of saying that the government will not scrap the firearms registry. The government will review it to find ways to make it more efficient. We know that government members will sit on this committee and they have already said they would prefer to see it scrapped. However, the finance minister has ruled out the one thing that would get rid of the inefficiency of the firearms system, which is to scrap it. By its very nature, it is bureaucratic. It is a money sucking hole, by its very nature. We have to get rid of it.

• (1650)

Already we have wasted a billion on this. In 1994, when we asked the justice minister about it, it was going to cost \$2 million. I have a videotape of myself asking a question of Allan Rock, the justice minister at the time. It had been pointed out that some experts at the time were saying that the firearms registry could cost \$500 million or perhaps even a billion. Allan Rock, the justice minister, said that there was no way that would happen. They were forecasting \$2 million. It is now headed for \$1 billion, the Auditor General says it could go to \$2 billion and the government will not do the one thing that will get rid of that huge expenditure and waste. How committed are the Liberals to respecting tax dollars? Clearly they are not committed to it.

For those people who say that it is a way to protect us from crime, I say if they do not believe me then they should listen to people like the chief of police in the City of Toronto, Julian Fantino, who used to be a believer in the firearms registry. He used to buy into it. He now says that it is a waste of money and that money could be used to put cops on the beat in Toronto to stop the gun crime there. That is where that money should go. It could go to 100 things that would be more useful than pouring it into a large bureaucracy that basically registers the shotguns of duck hunters across Canada. What a complete waste. Again, the government fails to meet its own standards.

There are so many things we could talk about. I know I will not get through the document, but I turn to page 6, where the heading is "Strengthening Canada's Social Foundations". In the second line of the second paragraph it states:

It means removing barriers to opportunity. It means building on the fundamental fairness of Canadians. Because our enormous good fortune demands nothing less.

Right away I note that one of the ways the government again fails to meet its own standard is that it is the protector of one of the most fundamental injustices that it could possibly defend. It defends the fact that in Canada today a two-income family pays less tax than a one-income family making the same amount of money. We are talking about social programs.

One of the best social programs is a strong family. What if people make the decision to stay home with their children and make a financial sacrifice? Then they discover that their income is taxed at a higher rate as a single-income family than a two-income family making the same income. How is that fair? How does that help families? How does it repair the social fabric of the nation? It does not.

*The Address*

I would argue that if the government wanted to change something to really help Canada's social infrastructure, it would change that one thing so single-income families making that kind of sacrifice would not be penalized for it. If they are not rewarded, at least they would not be penalized for it. I argue again that the government is not meeting its own standards when it comes to the issue of being fair to Canadians.

I also want to argue that when it comes to social programs, I think the best social program of all is a good job. If people have good jobs, they do not have to rely on social programs. They do not have to rely on employment insurance and all those things. Sometimes it is necessary and that safety net must be there. We must always have a safety net for people who lose their jobs through no fault of their own, but if the economy does not move at anywhere near capacity, we will never produce the types of jobs to help Canadians.

This year the economy in Canada will grow about 1.6%, which is frankly pathetic. I know there were issues over the course of the year. We had the SARS problem and we have had BSE. If our economy had been more robust in the beginning and if we had put in place all those policies that would ensure that Canada was truly a magnet for investment, then we would have rebounded much more quickly. We would have produced many more jobs in the first place and we would have recaptured those jobs much more quickly after we had gone through the problems with SARS and BSE and some of the other problems, such as on the east coast with the fishery.

**An hon. member:** Shipbuilding.

• (1655)

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Shipbuilding is another example. If the economy is there to scoop up all those workers and help those people get jobs because the government has made the right public policy decisions, then ultimately there is less reliance on Canada's social programs.

The very first emphasis of the government, when it comes to a strong social safety net, must be to ensure that we make the right decisions to produce good, long, well-paying jobs. To date there are not hundreds of thousands but millions of Canadians who are either unemployed or underemployed. That is unacceptable.

We see the government defend these crazy policies year after year with the same results. We underachieve in terms of our ability to create jobs and to raise the overall standard of living for Canadians. We underachieve in our productivity. Our productivity is 15% below that of the United States. A generation ago Canada had the third highest standard of living in the world. In the last number of years there has probably been six countries that have surpassed Canada in terms of standard of living: Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, the Netherlands have all shot past Canada.

That is unacceptable especially when we consider that we have a unique trading relationship with the United States, the wealthiest market in the history of the world. We should be minding that. Some people are concerned that the United States will roll over us. We should take advantage of that market, but we do not have the right public policies in place to do that. As a result, all those people are unemployed or underemployed and they do not need to be.

I would argue the throne speech fails when it comes to addressing how our economy should work and the ability of the economy to really be the best social program of all. However, our government fails to understand that and in its stead we see crazy programs in some cases. We see spending going through roof.

In Canada today we spend more per person than we have ever spent in the history of the country. That may surprise people. They may ask about the Trudeau years when government was huge, but the facts are we spend more per person today in real dollars than we have ever spent in the history of Canada. Yet do people feel wealthier, do they have more jobs, do they feel the health system works for them? No they do not despite the fact this government has been there for 10 years.

This is not really the Prime Minister's first throne speech. In many ways it is his fourth because he has been there through the whole time. He was the right hand man to Jean Chrétien, the former prime minister. He was partially the architect of all that has gone before. I know he does not want to talk about it, it is embarrassing to him, but it is a fact. Here we are still trying to fix all the problems that he has been unable to fix in the past.

I want to talk for a moment about aboriginal Canadians. This is so frustrating for me. I have been here 10 years. The Liberals have produced initiative after initiative to try to help natives. They have been an unmitigated disaster.

I have to refer for a moment to the issue of Davis Inlet. Many of us on this side and probably many in the House knew it was going to turn out the way it did. The Prime Minister was ashamed, like we all were, of the images on TV. It was a disgrace. Anybody with a heart would want to help. What did the government do? It thought the way to help was to move the community with all its problems to a new location. It has not worked. It is the same problems now in a different location.

We cannot continue to do the same things over and over again and expect to get different results. We spend billions of dollars a year on Indian affairs. We have to make that work. We do not need more studies. The government would like to put together a cabinet committee on aboriginal affairs. That will fix it? It is time for a new approach. It has to change.

I have very little time left and I want to touch on an issue which consumes my riding these days, the issue of BSE and agriculture. The document speaks very vaguely about agriculture. It says that we cannot let farmers hang, swing in the wind, because of problems caused through no fault of their own. That is the situation with BSE today, but we will see an entire industry go down the tubes if the government does not help.

*The Address*

Some people say that the feeder cattle industry is 45 days away from a complete and total wreck in southern Alberta where there are something like 900,000 feeder cattle. The government has to step up to the plate and tell ranchers in my part of the world that it is prepared to support the industry through a short-term downturn because the border will open eventually.

In conclusion, the government has failed over and over again to meet its own standards in this document. It truly is time for a change.

• (1700)

**Mr. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the member for Medicine Hat, who was obviously very agitated and very frustrated and emotional. We heard a lot about what he did not like about the throne speech, but we did not hear a lot about what the new Conservative Party's approach would be to stimulating economic growth.

If we look at the Canadian economy, we will see that in fact it has been a miracle of economic growth compared to the G-7. This year, admittedly, we have a little bit of a bump because of a whole range of issues—SARS, mad cow disease, forest fires in British Columbia, the hurricane, and a whole number of factors beyond our control—but I am sure our economy will start to regenerate as these problems are dealt with.

I know that the former Alliance Party or Reform Party talked about the flat tax. It is interesting, because Russia recently introduced a flat tax. My understanding is that it is planning to flatten the tax. Then, when everyone is on the database, it will increase the flat tax to a higher rate of tax. Maybe that flat tax is something that the new Conservative Party would espouse in terms of economic development. I know that in Russia it is being implemented as we speak.

Perhaps the policies of the Conservative Party are under development and it is a bit unfair to ask the member what the policies of a Conservative government would be.

Before they merged, we also heard from the parties on their attitudes toward regional economic development. There are some who would espouse scrapping all the regional economic development programs and agencies, like Western Economic Diversification, which I am sure has done some good work in Alberta, but the member probably would not acknowledge that, and the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, FedNor, and a number of these agencies. Would the new Conservative Party scrap those programs? What would it put in their place? Perhaps nothing. I am not sure.

I wonder if the member for Medicine Hat would comment on the new Conservative Party approach to the flat tax and also to regional economic development.

• (1705)

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I can say that the new Conservative Party will not flatten taxpayers like this government has done.

It is pretty pathetic that in a throne speech at a time when a new poll comes out which says health care is a big issue and Canadians want tax cuts and debt repayment, there is not one mention in this entire document about lowering taxes, despite the fact that the

government talks about the need to make Canada more productive and have more innovation. I am sure the member acknowledges that.

The government fails to acknowledge the one policy that every economist agrees would be a way to help Canada become more productive, which is to have selected tax relief in certain areas to ensure that we attract investment.

In the document, there is talk about Canada being a magnet. Magnets can either repel or attract. In this case, I think the government is repelling investment. Its magnet repels, because too often the government leaves in place outmoded policies that drive people away.

One instance is its policies on depreciation. We need to accelerate the depreciation on high tech equipment to attract investment to Canada. The government cannot get it through its head. It keeps the old policies in place despite the fact that it is driving away high tech businesses and, of course, all the jobs that go with them. I think this government is wrong.

My friend asked me about regional development. I can say one thing. Here is what we will not tolerate. We will not tolerate unemployment rates of 15% or 20% in Newfoundland. We will not tolerate 10% or 12% unemployment in Atlantic Canada or northern parts of this country, because that is a great human tragedy, and I am tired of the government proposing the same ideas over and over and over again, suggesting it is going to cure it, when for 10 years it has done nothing but make it worse.

**Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a good number of excellent comments.

Toward the end he was mentioning the unemployment in Newfoundland and other areas. I am just wondering what he would see as the answer to addressing unemployment in first nation communities where it is up as high as 90% or 95%. What should be done to ensure that first nation communities have the same opportunity in Canada?

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, this is a little beside the point, but I do want to mention it. I think one of the very first things we have to do—I cannot believe the government has not addressed it and it should be in the throne speech—is that native women, first of all, should have property rights. Their property rights should be protected. They are not today. They do not even have the full protection of the Canadian charter, which is a disgrace. This government has not addressed that in 10 years. We have raised it year after year. My friend from Manitoba, when he was the critic, raised it month after month. It has never been addressed.

Having said that, what do we do about the unemployment rate on reserves? It is a disgrace. It is terrible, but I can say that the answer is not to keep doing what we are doing. I think part of the answer is to argue for the same things that rank and file Canadians have.

*The Address*

I had an aboriginal Canadian in my office the other day. He was talking about the farmland that he farmed on the Siksika Reserve. He pointed out that the council took away a chunk of the land that he has traditionally farmed. The council just took it away. He had no property rights to that piece of land; he and his brother farmed it.

I think it is time to give aboriginal Canadians the same rights that the rest of us have, which is to own property on a reserve so that someone who goes out and makes something of the property can build up equity in it, can own their own home or ultimately own their own business. Why do we deny that to Canada's first nations? I do not understand it and I think it is something that finally has to be addressed if we are ever going to allow first nation Canadians to get out of the situation they are in today. It is a disgrace that it has taken this long but we need to help them in that way. I think it would be a big first step to really help them get out of the problems they are in today.

• (1710)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member his opinion on some glaring omissions from the throne speech when it comes to dealing with the west. The Prime Minister spent an awful lot of time travelling the west during the last two or three months and promising all and sundry that things were going to be different.

Here is the shortlist I have. These are glaring omissions for many western Canadians, which they would have liked to have had addressed in the throne speech.

There is no commitment to Senate reform. There is no commitment to scrap the \$1 billion gun registry. There is no commitment to tax relief. There is no mention of the softwood lumber issue and how to resolve it. There is no mention of the mad cow disease problem and how to solve it. There is no mention of electoral reform. There is no mention of offshore exploratory drilling off the west coast. There is no implementation plan for Kyoto. There is no plan on how gas taxes are going to be transferred to the provinces. There are no ideas on foreign affairs, cultural policy and health care reform. The government will have to study that, because it just does not know what to do. It will have to ask the provinces for their opinions.

The government has admitted that the state of student loan debt is deplorable, that aboriginal affairs is shameful, and that Canada's cultural policy is adrift, that things are bad and getting worse.

This is from the government that caused the problems to begin with. In western Canada, for that list that I just read off, to ignore those western Canadian dreams—and they are the dreams of many other Canadians, not just those in the west—in the west we have been saying that these are the sorts of issues we want the government to address in the House. To have travelled through the west and to pretend that those issues do not exist is a slap in the face of western Canadians, who are saying the government must deal with them or else deal with an angry electorate.

I would like the member to address this, because I think the Liberals have missed the boat in a serious way on western Canadian issues, which is causing us to again get frustrated with this federal government.

**Mr. Monte Solberg:** Mr. Speaker, I think they have missed the boat. Frankly, I wish they would get on the boat.

The Prime Minister at one point said that western alienation is real. What has he done about it? He has done everything except listen to what Albertans and westerners are saying. He has not done anything about the issues. My friend went through the list. He has done nothing about all those issues that my friend, Albertans and westerners in general are talking about.

When he says he is concerned about it and the solutions are things like a listening tour through the west or a travelling prime minister's office, which are the big solutions to this, he really misses the point. The point is that people in the west do not want words. They want action. They want the Prime Minister to address the democratic deficit and put into the Senate those senators who were elected by Albertans. Is that so hard to understand? That is what they want.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Nunavut.

After the Speech from the Throne yesterday, I did some checking in my riding. The first thing we members of Parliament do, here in the House of Commons, is to go find out what the people in our ridings are saying. That is what I did.

I would like to mention to the House that my riding, Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, covers more than 800,000 square kilometres; it includes Nunavik, the Inuit, the James Bay Cree, the future Chapais-Chibougamau sector, and to the south, the Abitibi-Témiscamingue, with a total population of about 100,000. It is important to mention this, because Quebec is a big place.

I listened to the Radio-Canada news broadcast where stakeholders were interviewed. The municipal elected officials were very pleased with the throne speech, especially the fact that Ottawa promised to completely absolve municipalities from paying the tax on goods and services, the GST. The possibility of returning part of gasoline taxes to municipalities will also be considered.

In total, the amount being invested to help Canada's cities is around \$7 billion over 10 years.

I was listening to the comments from the mayors. The mayor of one big city, namely Val-d'Or, Fernand Trahan, said that it is important and that the Government of Quebec should also take this kind of initiative to help Quebec's towns and cities, especially in remote areas. This year, in Val-d'Or, it will mean an additional \$458,000 in revenue. That is significant for the remote areas.

We also heard that the mayor of Rouyn-Noranda is very happy. He says it is a very useful measure because there is an immediate return, and that is true.

The Government of Canada is still expecting to sign a tax agreement with the municipalities in order to share a part of its billions of dollars in revenue from the GST or the gasoline excise tax. We know that the Quebec government of Jean Charest opposes this.

*The Address*

In any case, our Prime Minister, the Liberal MP for LaSalle—Émard, intends to sit down and begin negotiating with all the provinces and with the Government of Quebec before he transfers any money at all, even if it means negotiating individual agreements with each one of them or using other fiscal measures that would produce the same results.

The Government of Canada is committed to a new deal for Canada's municipalities. This is not the first time we say so. For several months now, the Prime Minister of Canada and member for LaSalle—Émard has been saying that we will negotiate and move forward to find new ways of helping municipalities.

This new deal will target the infrastructure needed to support quality of life and sustainable growth. This new deal will deliver reliable, predictable and long-term funding.

The Speech from the Throne also deals with the environment. We want to develop an equitable national plan, in partnership with the provinces, to meet and even exceed the Kyoto targets requiring Canada to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 6% from 1990 levels by 2012.

We are also asked to put our own house in order. We are responsible for contaminated sites. The Government of Canada will undertake a \$3.5 billion program on 10 years to clean up federal sites.

We have contaminated sites in our big area of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik. Even in the Nunavik territory there are over 100 contaminated sites. We have to find solutions, always in cooperation with the province of Quebec, but also with the Inuit from Nunavik and the Cree from James Bay, depending on the agreement that can be reached.

In the health area, the Government of Canada says it is committed to reducing the wait time associated with diagnostic and treatment services. This is important. There is much talk about health. We all know what the Prime Minister thinks about that. We know the present government's vision on the matter. There is a level of cooperation with the provinces. There is much to do. This will take time, but many things are being settled between the Government of Canada and the provinces or the Government of Quebec.

We also have to invest in research centres. In our area, a remote area, Canada wants to create innovation bases equipped with first class university research centres.

• (1715)

In Abitibi-Témiscamingue, there is the Université du Québec. Smart regulations have to be implemented, as well as innovative financing, in order to make our country a world leader in marketing bright ideas.

Consequently, it is important for small universities in the resource regions to obtain budgets to conduct studies on the environment, the mining and forestry sectors or the boreal forest.

It is also important to have a Canada where all the regions are represented. For example, in regions like mine, there are farms, forests, mines and the fisheries sector. People forget that Abitibi-

Témiscamingue is a mining and forestry region. Nunavik has shrimp fishing. We must find ways to help the Inuit.

Often, when we say we are going to help the Inuit, people think we are going to give them lots of money. The Inuit of Nunavik pay taxes like everyone else here tonight. They pay GST, and municipal and school taxes. Many people in Canada do not know this.

With regard to the question about the advantages of the 21st century economy, we cannot talk solely about the fisheries. We have to talk about rural communities where modern technologies are helping to bring people closer. It is not all in the throne speech. Industry Canada implemented initiatives several weeks, even months, ago with regard to broadband technology.

When we talk about broadband technology, we are talking about high-speed Internet for isolated regions like Abitibi-Témiscamingue, the municipality of James Bay and the Chapais-Chibougamau area that are working in collaboration with the James Bay Cree and particularly Nunavik, which is also important. Nunavik could operate with satellites. We must find new ways to help people in these regions.

People in such regions so isolated from the major urban centres buy everything they need from the south. Everything: food, bread, etc. Every day, there are flights to the north to help those living in these regions.

We need to do far more in order to guarantee that our investments in knowledge translate into business income. Often we hear our local small business people telling us that they lack funding. The Speech from the Throne states as follows:

Our small, innovative firms face two key obstacles—access to adequate early-stage financing; and the capacity to conduct the research and development needed to commercialize their ideas and really grow their business.

They need help, therefore, particularly in the resource regions, for secondary and tertiary processing.

We know that the throne speech does not contain everything. The budget will be brought down soon. The government can also table in the House, at any time, an order-in-council to create a new program.

The government will also be helping these small businesses to overcome obstacles through such means as the Canada Development Bank risk capital capabilities.

One other really important point is that the government will make available the whole range of expertise and services provided by the National Research Council. People are saying that this will be not apply in the large outlying regions. I do know that in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue sector, a public servant has been appointed to service the entire region. Jean-Yves Simard really helps small businesses with start-up shortfalls by providing them with the research capacity and expertise they cannot attain on their own.

What is really important, however, in yesterday's Speech from the Throne is regional and rural development. It is of great importance.



I remember a speech made on February 14, 2002 in Acadie by the present Prime Minister of Canada, the Right Honourable Liberal member for LaSalle—Émard, then the Minister of Finance. He said that the next budget would truly reflect the major resource regions and the urban centres.

It is important for the people of the north to find solutions, always in conjunction with the government. We must not lose sight of the fact that the great outlying regions must be developed, either with Canada-Quebec agreements or with the assistance of agencies in the resource regions. This is really important.

• (1720)

In closing, we must not forget the other areas of concerns, particularly social housing for the Cree and Inuit. At the present time, I know of families with 16 to 18 members wintering in basic two-bedroom houses. We must work together to find solutions and budgets for those solutions.

Thank you for this opportunity to explain briefly what is going on in the vast region of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik.

• (1725)

[English]

**Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened as carefully as I could to the speech just given and was, of course, very grateful again to our wonderful interpreters who allow me to hear a language that I cannot understand when it comes to me directly from the other person to my ears.

I would like to talk about the part of the hon. member's speech where he mentioned the inclusion of the municipalities, municipal governments, the cities, in terms of being able to now share the Ottawa wealth. I say that in quotation marks because I believe Ottawa takes way too much money away from Canadian citizens.

I, as I am sure are some of the Bloc members, am very concerned with respect to the jurisdictional question of the federal government becoming involved directly with municipal governments, whereas that, by our constitutional setup, is one that municipalities deal with the provincial governments.

I personally would like to see a much more strengthened equalization system right across the country so that part of our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Constitution Act of 1982, is vigorously enforced. I believe in that, but there is a jurisdictional problem. I wonder whether the government might not be better off to simply vacate some tax room. For example, it collects billions of dollars in gasoline tax. If it were to remove itself from that tax and make the tax room available for the provinces, they could then distribute it to the municipalities based on needs, population and so on. It would be a very simple thing. It would have a zero cost of administration. I think it would wind up really meeting the needs of municipalities almost instantly in a very effective way. That would be much better than the plan that these Liberals have in mind now, although we do not yet really know for certain what it is.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, I took note of the comments of the opposition member.

### *Private Members' Business*

The Prime Minister of Canada effectively said that he will meet with representatives from the provinces to discuss and find reliable solutions. Indeed, we know what mayors in municipalities are saying, in my region as well as in a number of municipalities across Canada. Even in your region, they are very happy with the Speech from the Throne.

There is also the gas tax. We know how this tax works. It is sent directly through cheques, and so on. It costs almost nothing to the federal government to collect gas taxes. We know what is happening.

However, I want to tell you that we must always keep cooperating with the provinces, particularly in their jurisdictions. We must not quarrel too much and we must move forward. This is the mandate that was given to the Prime Minister of Canada. He wants to move forward without any quarrel, to make taxpayers very happy.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5.30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

---

## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE PROGRAM

**Mr. Gérard Asselin (Charlevoix, BQ)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should modify the Employment Insurance (EI) program to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

He said: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the Speech from the Throne as prepared by the new Prime Minister. It was a speech highly anticipated by all Canadians, but especially by Quebecers.

Today is our first day of debate in the House of Commons. I would like to take this opportunity to wish you, Mr. Speaker, and all of my colleagues in the House, a happy new year and a 2004 full of health and politics.

In my first speech of 2004, since this is our first day of debate in the House, I would like to wish all of my constituents in Charlevoix a happy and prosperous year.

I would also like to extend my best wishes to the people of my future riding of Manicouagan, whom I will have the honour of representing in the next election.

When I offered my wishes for health, happiness and prosperity to my constituents during the holidays, workers in my riding, who are mainly seasonal workers, were awfully worried. They offered their usual wishes for health and happiness, but they also asked that their MP continue to defend the interests of Quebec and of Charlevoix and of course, the interests of the seasonal workers in the riding.

*Private Members' Business*

To confirm my commitment and fulfil the wishes expressed by my constituents during the holidays, today, the first day back in this House, I am moving a motion in which I have the honour to raise this concern. The motion reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should modify the Employment Insurance (EI) program to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

Whether they live in Charlevoix, Manicouagan, on the North Shore, the Gaspé Peninsula, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean or in the Lower Saint Lawrence, throughout Quebec there are seasonal workers. This is because employability is seasonal and workers depend on very seasonal employment in an economic region such as ours.

Tourism is the main industry in Charlevoix. People take their holidays at certain given times during the year. At the end of the school year, they come visit us in Charlevoix, the most beautiful riding in Quebec.

Of course, from Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day to Thanksgiving, the unemployment rate is quite low in Charlevoix. Seasonal workers find work in the tourism industry, whether it is in the accommodations, the restaurant or the travellers' aid sectors. The diversity of some of our tourist attractions provides jobs for our workers.

The problem is that our tourism season is not long enough. It is hard for workers to qualify for EI benefits. Those who do unfortunately do not have enough insurable work weeks to carry them through the long winter to spring.

We have the same situation in Manicouagan, the riding next to mine, which I will have the honour to represent after the next election. Let us take, for instance, Baie-Trinité. As of February 1, 2004, 90 eligible workers in Baie-Trinité have run out of EI benefits.

These people work in fisheries, some in the forest industries, others at the Bowater sawmill. They started getting their EI benefits around July and are now no long eligible for these benefits as of February 1.

These people will only get back into the workforce in April. For two and a half or three months, they will have to get by without any income. Some of these people have ended up on welfare, while others have no income and might not even be eligible for welfare.

Once again, with an annual surplus of \$6 billion and a \$45 billion surplus in the EI account, the federal government is withholding EI benefits from those who have paid their contributions, thus again compelling the Quebec government to provide assistance to these workers, meaning welfare, through the department responsible for income security.

• (1730)

We find this situation everywhere along the North Shore in the fisheries and softwood lumber sectors.

Let us consider fisheries specifically. The Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, who has responsibility for employment insurance, tells us that he is going to take steps to extend seasonal work. The House ought to know that it is very difficult to fish for crab in the middle of February when there is ice. I am sure the hon. members will agree with me. They will also agree

that it is not possible to fish for ground fish in winter, when there is ice, either.

And so, if no ground fish and no crabs are being caught, they cannot be processed in the plant. Therefore, the plant is closed during the winter and activity will resume in the spring, but only if the market is good. Everything always depends on the market.

This brings me to the issue of softwood lumber and international trade, because there are many forestry workers in my riding. Right now, there is a sawmill closing down, for some reason. I am referring to the Kruger sawmill at Longue-Rive, and there is also the Bowater mill at Baie-Trinité.

The market for softwood lumber is very poor, since Canada is having difficulty settling its trade disputes with the United States. During this period, the people who work in the mills and the forests, and even those who work in transportation, are the ones who are not eligible for employment insurance, since they do not have enough hours accumulated.

And there too, if there is a problem of industry profitability, we know that when an industry is suffering losses, it often tends to cut its staff and operations, sometimes permanently, sometimes even going out of business. Then it is the seasonal workers—and even the permanent ones—who suffer.

In the Gaspé, the Gaspésia mill is being completely rebuilt, in order to provide work for the people in that region. This week, we learned that construction and modernization work on the Gaspésia mill has had to stop.

Thus, the 500 workers who worked there will be forced onto employment insurance—at least those who have enough hours. Nothing is ever guaranteed; a person who does not have the number of hours needed, or who has been on EI for some time during the year, may not be able to cover the whole period known as the spring gap.

It is the same in Lac-Saint-Jean. We have learned that in Jonquière and Arvida, the Alcan plant is not as profitable because its technology is obsolete. Therefore, because of the Söderberg technology, the company decided to close the old potrooms. Once again workers will be out of work for an indeterminate period.

This is problematic since these workers have no alternative and the only way they can put bread and butter on their table is to wait for the employment insurance cheque which will come four to six weeks after they apply at the EI office.

Today's Speech from the Throne is not reassuring. We thought the new Prime Minister, the former finance minister, had a card up his sleeve and that, once in place, he would do things differently from his predecessor, Jean Chrétien.

This reminds us that, in 1994, when the Axworthy reform was implemented and cuts were made in the employment insurance plan, the present Prime Minister was the finance minister and was holding the bag while the then Prime Minister made cuts, to the tune of \$6 billion a year. Therefore, it was this Prime Minister who held the bag while Jean Chrétien grabbed the money and stuffed it in.

Now they are telling us that they want to do something about poverty? They will start with the poorest among the poor, those who cannot work on a permanent basis, so that their region, their family will have an acceptable earning capacity.

Nobody wants to work six months out of the year. People in Charlevoix and on the North Shore do not want to work six months a year. They all want a well-paid, permanent job with all the fringe benefits.

Once again, this is very disappointing.

• (1735)

These people thought that, with the new throne speech, with a new forthcoming budget, with a possible election in the spring, the government would change course and say it was wrong. It is not true that people on the North Shore, in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, in the Lower St. Lawrence and in the Gaspé Peninsula are “beer drinkers and hot dog eaters”. They are courageous people, who have guts, who want to work and who contribute to employment insurance, even though they know the government is stealing their contributions and they will not receive benefits.

Thirty per cent of women who contribute to employment insurance are entitled to benefits, hence three women out of ten who pay for employment insurance receive benefits. For men, it is four out of ten. This is ridiculous. The government is getting rid of its deficit on the backs of the poorest. It is getting rid of it through a hidden tax, an employment tax. Indeed, these workers pay a tax to receive benefits and they do not receive them.

There is something else. The government does not put one cent into the employment insurance fund. It is the employee and the employer who contribute to the fund. It is seasonal workers on the North Shore or in Charlevoix who contribute to it. In this category, I have temporary workers who, unfortunately, cannot get a permanent job in their company. I have casual workers who are substitutes or on stand by.

I also have workers in Charlevoix and on the North Shore who are independent workers. They started their small businesses in the tourism or services sector. Their businesses are very seasonal. Unfortunately, as independent workers, they are not allowed to contribute and to have access to the employment insurance fund. There are seasonal workers in the tourism, fisheries, forestry, blackberry and wild fruit harvesting, and construction sectors.

This year, the government has agreed to extend the transitional measures. Let us face it, we are in an election year and the government did not want to implement the employment insurance reform. For people in Charlevoix and on the North Shore, this year, it would have been 525 hours of work for 24 weeks of benefits. The government is asking for more and is giving less.

With this motion, we are asking the government to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the economic region in which they live. Such a measure would prevent disputes between regions. Seasonal workers of the Gaspé Peninsula, the North Shore, the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean region or the Bas-Saint-Laurent region are just as deserving, if not more so, as those of Montreal, Quebec City and even Ottawa.

### *Private Members' Business*

We are asking for a reduction of qualifying factors from 420 to 380 hours for all workers. Let us eliminate the 920 hours required for new workers. First, 30% of women are insured, as well as 40% of men; the rest are not. For new workers who pay employment insurance premiums, we are setting the number of hours at 380 instead of 420 and we are extending employment insurance protection to a minimum of 38 weeks.

We are going even further by taking into account that these are people who work up to 10 or 12 weeks per year. We are asking the government to abolish the two week waiting period. Why is there a two week waiting period that is penalizing seasonal workers when we know that, year after year, they have access to the employment insurance fund?

After a two week waiting period, claimants have to wait another two weeks before getting their cheque. When they do get their cheque after one month, or a month and a half, household bills such as the rent, the telephone, the hydro have also been received. When they get their cheque, claimants owe more than the amount of the cheque. Consequently, we are asking for the abolition of the two week waiting period, a reduction in the number of hours, that is 380 for an insurable minimum of 38 to 40 weeks.

I am asking the government and all the members of the House, when they vote, to remove the hidden tax imposed on workers. The government has the means to do this. According to the Auditor General's report, there is \$6 billion in the government coffers, and we have an accumulated surplus of \$43 billion.

• (1740)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have one question for my colleague. In his motion, he proposes to modify the Employment Insurance Act to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

I actually have three questions.

First, what does the member mean by specific status? Could he define that for the House?

Second, how does he define seasonal workers? In other words, is it by the amount of time worked or is it in a particular industry? What would we consider to be seasonal workers when we are deciding whether to support his motion or not?

Third, when he talks about “regardless of the EI economic region in which the seasonal workers live”, is the member's motion motivated by a concern that there are variable entrance requirements for Atlantic Canada lower than those for the rest of the country, including Quebec? Am I clear on that? Is he concerned that the entrance requirements for Atlantic Canadian provinces are lower than for Quebec?

If he could answer those three questions that would help me a great deal in analyzing his motion.

*Private Members' Business*

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gérard Asselin:** Mr. Speaker, my answer will be very short, so that other members have the opportunity to ask questions.

A seasonal worker works in some industry or other during a certain period in the year. For example, I talked earlier about the tourist industry in Charlevoix. It is busy between June 24 and Thanksgiving Day or early October.

During that period, there are lots of visitors and the local people work, but at other times of the year, everything is closed. I would love to go skiing at Grand-Fonds or the Petite-Rivière-Saint-François massif until July 1. But there is no more snow, and the hon. member for West Nova should know that. It is the same in his riding.

We also say that the government knows how to recognize the status of seasonal workers every year. How are seasonal workers recognized? Every year, in their industry, they have to fall back on some program when they lose their job. Because of this status as seasonal workers, they seek employment insurance benefits every year. The government knows them very well, since it has targeted them to reduce their benefits by 1% each year for five years. With its statistics, the government knows with whom it is dealing. It knows how much it will cost. It has already cut their benefits

We say that the differences between regions are immaterial. Of course, I gave examples from industries and ridings in Quebec, but there are also seasonal workers in Alberta, in B.C., in Newfoundland and throughout Canada.

When we vote on this motion, I am sure the government will take into account the status of seasonal workers by tightening eligibility requirements and increasing the number of insurable weeks. Obviously, we would not pass legislation for Quebec only. All seasonal workers throughout Canada would be covered.

**Mr. Sébastien Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Charlevoix for this very important motion, particularly for the Quebec regions.

In Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, two important sectors could be affected by such a motion, the softwood lumber and the tourist industries. The present system does not take particular situations into account. I will give an example to illustrate what my colleague has said. The blueberry industry is very important in our area, but unfortunately, blueberries do not grow at minus 25 degrees Celsius.

Considering the important prerogative that forces us to send \$560 millions in taxes to Ottawa, the government could decompartmentalize its program and that could have important consequences for the area. The government would have to adapt to the regional contexts.

Could my colleague give us examples supporting this motion for the importance of the Quebec regions?

**Mr. Gérard Asselin:** Mr. Speaker, in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, as in my area of Charlevoix, the regional economy loses \$4 million per year because of the cuts in the employment insurance fund. This is money that will not be spent in our corner stores, our groceries and our gas stations, and that is true of all regions. The situation is the same in my colleague's riding. For each dollar lost, jobs are lost.

When the seasonal workers' status is recognized, it will be beneficial for the employee, but also for the industry, because if I cannot count on employment insurance benefits year after year, I might well try and find a job somewhere else. The company has to keep on training people to be able to count on highly skilled and qualified employees who will provide service as hospitable as that of the people of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, very well represented in the House by their member of Parliament.

• (1750)

**Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (Social Economy), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take part in the debate on the motion tabled by the hon. member for Charlevoix, proposing to grant specific status to seasonal workers under the employment insurance legislation.

As hon. members know, today's debate is of particular importance, since it deals with a program that has been very helpful to workers who cannot continue to work because they were laid off, because they are suffering from a serious illness, or because they must care for a young child. The employment insurance program is more comprehensive than it was when we came to office 10 years ago.

Recently, in January, we also implemented—as most members in this House know—a new compassionate benefit for Canadians who work and who must take a leave of absence to look after a member of their family who is seriously ill. A quick look at the 2002 monitoring and assessment report on employment insurance shows just how effective this program is.

During the period in question, over 1.9 million people submitted new claims and in excess of \$11.5 billion was paid in benefits.

The numbers on access to employment insurance were very positive since 88% of those who contributed to the program would have qualified for benefits if they had lost their job.

Active re-employment measures helped workers improve their employability. Indeed, the \$2.1 billion invested under these initiatives allowed us to help 570,000 claimants.

Making the rules to qualify for special benefits more flexible and increasing parental and maternity benefits have allowed many claimants to cope with serious illnesses and to better fulfill their family responsibilities.

[*English*]

However, while EI's overall performance is good, there are some workers who face special challenges, to which the hon. member has referred, due to the nature of their work and the industries in which they are employed.

Seasonal workers are one such group whose work is key to a number of industries and regions, as the hon. member mentioned in his speech.

*Private Members' Business*

Recognizing this, EI contains many features that benefit them. For example, its hours-based eligibility system is well suited to the special characteristics of seasonal work, which often involves a large number of hours per week. This means clients can use every hour worked in calculating their eligibility and benefits. Every hour counts, which is contrary to what there was before 1996. In the past a worker had to work a minimum number of weeks, which excluded some workers.

We have also established, as a government, economic regions to make it easier for EI to respond to the higher unemployment rate seen in some parts of the country. Simply put, as the unemployment rate increases, the number of hours a person needs to work to access EI goes down. This takes into consideration the difficulty experienced by some workers in finding jobs when unemployment is high in their region.

We also extended the transition period for the regions of Bas-Saint-Laurent/Côte-Nord and Madawaska-Charlotte which will allow many seasonal workers to qualify with fewer hours and receive benefits longer.

Then there is the EI's family supplement, which tops up the benefits of many low income seasonal workers who have children.

The small weeks provision also provides seasonal workers in all regions with higher benefits and helps them keep their skills up to date.

[Translation]

Active re-employment measures help seasonal workers improve their employability and increase their chances of finding year-long jobs. Consequently, those who claim benefits frequently on a regular basis, 80% of whom were submitting claims according to a "seasonal" pattern, received nearly \$3 billion in regular benefits between April 2001 and March 2002.

Workers with a seasonal pattern of EI claims received an average of \$329 a week, 7% more than recipients in general receiving regular benefits and fishing benefits.

However, no system is cast in stone. As we said, several changes have already been made in our system. Some recent changes have been to the benefit of seasonal workers. Among other things, the intensity rule was abolished, the revenue threshold for short weeks was raised and so was the level of refund for people receiving benefits frequently or for long periods.

Even if the employment insurance plan can help, it is only part of the solution. We must also find a way to strengthen the communities and stimulate local economies in order to promote the creation of full-time and year-long employment.

• (1755)

[English]

That is exactly what the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development and other federal departments are doing, in partnership with regional development agencies, employers, community groups and trade unions.

We want to consider what the overall impact might be on EI, other clients and our labour markets generally.

The hon. member has in fact raised a valid point. We are seeking input from all our partners and basing our decisions on the best data available to show us where we are going and what changes may be needed along the way. It is for this reason, since this is an ongoing consultation, that I will be voting against the motion and would encourage other members to do likewise.

[Translation]

Still, I want to congratulate the member for caring about seasonal workers. The government shares his concern for their situation.

I encourage the member for Charlevoix and all the other members, since a number of them have raised this issue over the last few years, at least since I have been a member of this House, to help the government in its search for comprehensive solutions to the problems of all workers, including seasonal workers.

It is only through a joint effort that we will find sustainable solutions to the social and labour force problems faced by a great number of Canadians.

[English]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion today. I congratulate my colleague from the Bloc for bringing it forward. I know it is motivated by concern for Canadians who sometimes are in difficult circumstances because of seasonal work.

The motion would modify the employment insurance program to establish some kind of specific status for seasonal workers regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

The EI program, as the member from the government just mentioned, has been broadened considerably in the last 10 years under the Liberals.

The first question I think Canadians will want to ask is: What is the purpose of the EI program? If the purpose of the EI program is to serve many masters, retraining, compassionate leave, parental leave, seasonal workers, a lot of different purposes, then we are on the right track. Why not add one more? We have already added a, b, c, d, and e, so what is the rationale for not adding three or four more in the program?

Another way to look at this program is the way the Forget commission looked at it when there was a comprehensive review of EI, called UI at that time, by a very distinguished commission. The commission said that unemployment insurance should be insurance. People pay a premium and if they have an unexpected and unforeseen job loss they have the means to pay their mortgage and feed their kids. The purpose of an insurance program is to insure people against an unforeseen loss.

*Private Members' Business*

Under the Liberals, the program has been broadened to cover all kinds of things, but it is not insurance. It is not insurance at all. If someone is involved in regional work or if someone decides to become a parent, then that is not an unforeseen circumstance. Yes, there should be programs to cover those circumstances, but do they properly belong under unemployment or employment insurance? That is a question that we sometimes forget when we are talking about this program. It is a valid question. What is the purpose of the program?

If the purpose of the program is insurance against unexpected job loss, which certainly happens all too often in our changing economy, then that is a program that we can define in that way. However what it has become is a slush fund for the government.

The member from the government just said that 88% of people who pay premiums into the insurance program are entitled to insurance. That means that more than one in ten people paying premiums into the program have no entitlement to any benefits, to any insurance. The member herself admitted that. What kind of an insurance program is that, where I have to pay premiums with no hope of receiving any benefits?

My colleague from the Bloc pointed this out. Why should regional workers have to pay premiums under a program that does not benefit them? That does not make a lot of sense does it?

Another thing the government is doing, which it knows full well, is taking far more in premiums into the program than is being paid out under the program. In fact the chief actuary of the program, a special actuary who designs the program to make sure it is properly run and that the money is being put in so that people who need benefits can be sure of getting them, said that the government was charging far too much in premiums than it needed to pay out the benefits.

What has the program become for the Liberal government? It has become an enormous cash cow. In fact, since the government took office it has taken into the program \$45 billion more than it needs to run the program.

• (1800)

Can anyone imagine what Canadian workers and employers struggling under the tax load of the government could have done with \$45 billion in their pockets? There are \$45 billion in this last 10 years that workers and businesses could have had to work with, but no, it went into the pockets of the government, which is now crying poverty when it comes to important programs like health care.

This motion says we should add one more thing to the EI program. Should we do that? We do not know because this program has been expanded in so many ways that it is hard to know what the rules are. Is it an insurance program? We do not know. It certainly is not operating like an insurance program. Is it a program where certain defined premiums are paid out for defined benefits? The answer is no. The member himself admitted that there are people paying into the program that are not entitled to benefits. There are some fundamental questions here.

There is another fundamental question. What is a seasonal worker? Is a seasonal worker someone, as my colleague said, working in the ski industry? Is that person entitled to have an income

once the ski season is over? Is someone who is building roads for oil companies in the north entitled to income when the road building season is over because of the spring thaw? What constitutes a seasonal worker? I asked my colleague that question and he gave some examples, but how does one define that? If a person decides to work in a seasonal occupation, under what circumstances is there an entitlement to income when not working?

My colleague from the Bloc says that there are some industries where this is necessary because there is no other work to be had once that particular product or activity is over for the season. How is that defined? We need to decide that before we move forward.

It seems to me that if we are going to start tinkering with the EI system piecemeal, it is not going to be a very sensible way to approach a very important program for Canadians. Canadians do not want to wake up in the morning to find out that their jobs have been terminated for whatever reason and they are bereft of the resources to look after their families. It is a good program to ensure oneself against that, but is it a program where a lot of these other things should be added on?

I remember some years ago when this program was funding a thing called TAGS, which was to retrain people in the fisheries who were no longer able to fish because the Liberals had mismanaged the fish so badly that there were none left. This TAGS program paid out billions of dollars and had a pathetic record of actually helping displaced fishers find a new occupation that could support themselves and their families. Is this the proper use of an insurance program? Those are valid questions.

I would invite my colleague to answer these questions before we adopt a program that has a very important function for Canadians and start loading it up with other uses and abuses—particularly by the government which abuses it—and put extra, unnecessary and, by the way, unlawful money into the federal coffers. The law governing this program says we should only have premiums that will allow us to ensure a certain level of benefits, but the government has violated that consistently year after year.

There are some good questions raised by this good motion. It is a motion that has compassion for people. It is a motion that wants to do the right thing with a program. However, unless some fundamental questions are answered about the purpose of this program, about the definition of who is going to be encompassed in changes to the program and questions about what the government is doing using this program as a slush fund at the expense of workers and employers, I do not think we should go any further.

• (1805)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the motion of the member for Charlevoix. This is a very important motion that is being introduced here in the House of Commons.

It is important to read this motion once again:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should modify the Employment Insurance (EI) Program to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

This is indeed an important motion. It also goes to the heart of the problems we have here in Canada. I know that the member for Charlevoix spoke about Quebec, but this is not only about Quebec, this is also about Canada. He recognizes that this is a problem everywhere in the country.

This employment insurance program was introduced by the federal government in 1940. It was aimed at taking care of workers who had lost their jobs.

I would like to digress for a moment, because the Quebec Appeal Court now says that the federal government is interfering with Quebec's jurisdictions through the federal compassionate care program or the parental leave program.

However, let us remember that, in 1940, there were perhaps only 5% of women who were in the workforce in Canada. This program did not apply to women who were in the workforce. Now, we must take into account today's workforce and be able to have respect for it.

That said, if I have understood correctly, the member for Charlevoix has just said that some \$4 million annually was being lost in employment insurance benefits in his region.

I have said before that it is nice to be Number 1. Yes, being chosen as Number 1 is a source of pride. But I can tell you that I am not proud of the fact that my riding is Number 1, because it is tops in Canada as far as its rate of unemployment goes.

That is not what the people in my riding want. They want to work. In my area, the losses are not \$4 million in benefits, but \$81 million annually. The annual figure for New Brunswick is \$274 million. That is why I find the motion by the hon. member for Charlevoix appropriate and feel it is a good motion.

The parliamentary secretary says that we should work together to find solutions. I accept his invitation. The reality, however, is that the Liberal government has used employment insurance for political gain.

I have sat on the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities with parliamentarians from all political parties. Even the Liberal members, along with all the members from other parties, recommended changes to employment insurance. The Liberals even voted on the suggested changes to EI.

For example, the problem in southeastern New Brunswick. The federal government sent out investigators to see whether people were cheating on their hours. These people have been waiting for a year for the federal government's decision. The Liberal member for Beauséjour—Petitcodiac has even said that, since the arrival of the new Prime Minister, there has been more satisfaction than during the last ten years, under the reign of the previous PM. This is unbelievable. But these people still have had no response, so I do not know what kind of satisfaction we are talking about.

These people are in a panic. They do not know if they are going to end up owing the federal government \$10,000, \$15,000, or \$20,000. Imagine the panic among the families in the Cap-Pelé area. Imagine the panic in Bouctouche.

### *Private Members' Business*

● (1810)

I can empathize. Every day I receive between 50 and 100 calls at my office from people who are being punished by the employment insurance system.

Today, I must say, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development was not hypocritical. He told the truth. There is no more money in the EI fund. Yet, on paper, there is a \$45 billion surplus. Today the minister stood up and told the truth. There is not one red cent because the government boasts a zero deficit. They balanced the budget on the backs of these poor workers who lost their jobs. They created a surplus on the backs of this country's seasonal workers.

Whether you come from New Brunswick, Charlevoix, Rimouski, Timmins, Ontario, Prince George, British Columbia, the Yukon, Edmonton, Alberta, when you have a seasonal job you are a worker. This is not a social program. It is a program that Canadians created for workers. It is Canadians and companies that contribute to it. It is not there for the government to spend the money on other things, to pat itself on the back for having a zero deficit and a balanced budget. The only way they balance the budget is on the backs of the poor.

It is unacceptable to see that only 33% of women qualify for employment insurance in Canada.

[*English*]

It is a shame when the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development says that there is not a penny left in the employment insurance fund because the government balanced its budget. It has created a zero deficit on the backs of those women who lost their jobs.

It is a shame that 800,000 people in our country do not qualify for EI but pay into it. It is a shame that 1.4 million children are hungry in our country because their parents do not qualify for EI. It is a shame that in my riding I get calls from people who want to take their lives because they cannot afford to feed their families due to the lack of employment insurance.

How could the government be proud of itself when we will not see anything for EI in the budget and we did not see anything about employment insurance in the throne speech.

● (1815)

[*Translation*]

The federal government gets \$7 billion annually in profits from this program, and it is not even mentioned in the throne speech.

Yes, the government says that a new vision is needed and that we must be able to create jobs. How can it say that it can create jobs when it did not create them during its past decade in power? We now have a Prime Minister who was Minister of Finance and who rejoiced when he took money from the workers.

Whether these people are from the mines in Cape Breton, Halifax, Yarmouth or Chéticamp, they needed that employment insurance. The government took it. Today, it admitted in the House of Commons that there is not one red cent left except—but only on paper—that \$45 billion belongs to Canadians. It taxed the workers. It taxed those who lost their jobs.

*Private Members' Business*

That is why each time I talk about this I am very passionate about it. The reason is simple: I see that the Liberal Party has hurt families and caused divorces but most of all, it has created child poverty.

I challenge the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and the parliamentary secretary. If what the minister says is true, then the committee just created by the Liberals to approve everything in Canada, should be dismantled and replaced by a multi-party committee.

The Prime Minister says that there is a democratic deficit in Canada. If he wants to set an example and cooperate, he should strike a committee so we can study the real problem. We will be able to find solutions.

This employment insurance fund belongs to the workers. It is not a social program. For mothers taking maternity leave or fathers taking parental leave in order to care for their children, it is not a social program. They no longer have any income, and this program belongs to the workers and those who contributed to the fund.

**Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am truly pleased to be able to speak today about this motion, M-475. This motion asks for a change in the Employment Insurance Act to create a specific status for seasonal workers. Like my colleague, I wish to read the motion again, because it is very important that the people listening know exactly what we are discussing. The motion by the hon. member for Charlevoix reads as follows:

That, in the opinion of this House, the government should modify the Employment Insurance (EI) program to establish specific status for seasonal workers, regardless of the EI economic region in which they live.

Some hon. members from other parties have already spoken to this motion, including the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill, the hon. member for Ahuntsic, who is also a parliamentary secretary, and the hon. member from Acadie—Bathurst, who is his party's employment insurance critic and who, ever since he first entered this Chamber, has always defended this issue with passion.

We seem to be reaching unanimous agreement on the fact that EI needs real reform when it comes to seasonal workers.

Even the parliamentary secretary congratulated my hon. friend from Charlevoix. Still, she seems to be telling us that her party will not be moving ahead on this motion and will not support it, even though she congratulates the hon. member, even though she recognizes the work we have done in favour of this motion and in favour of the EI program, since we began sitting in this House in 1993.

What is surprising is that the Liberal Party campaigned in the elections of 1993, 1997 and 2000 on the promise that it would reform employment insurance. The new Prime Minister, when he dropped in at Baie-Saint-Paul last year, promised once more that as soon as he became Prime Minister he would reform EI. He would really reform it.

Every time, there is a minister who comes into the ridings where the people are suffering the most from EI and tells the people to stop demonstrating, to be quiet, that everything will get fixed up as soon as they take power, that they will do it as soon as the election is over.

Many times over the past decade they have fooled the Canadian people. I hope that in the next election the people will remember once and for all that the Liberal Party of Canada can no longer be trusted when it comes to employment insurance.

Since the past is an indication of what the future holds, we cannot expect anything more from this party. They changed the Prime Minister, they changed the leader, but the situation is still the same, if not worse. As my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst indicated, there was not a single word about employment insurance in the Speech from the Throne, not a word about the softwood lumber problem, about the forests or about the difficulties of seasonal workers.

When will the government understand that it is not the seasonal workers themselves who are seasonal? Their situation is due to the structure of some industries in certain regions.

When one lives in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Vancouver or Victoria and is a hotel employee, one can expect to work 12 months a year because there are tourists all year round in those cities, plus there are business people who travel and attend conventions for example.

However, in Sainte-Luce-sur-Mer, let me tell you that, at this time of the year, a stay at the hotel would come cheap because the hotel is closed; it is a summer resort. People there start working towards the end of May and finish at the end of August.

● (1820)

That is the nature of seasonal work. Even if we tried to give work to hotel workers 12 months a year, we would have to send them to Montreal or Quebec City after the season in Sainte-Luce. There is no hotel open year round in Sainte-Luce.

In the Gaspé Peninsula, maybe there is a hotel in Sainte-Anne-des-Monts, one in Baie-Comeau, one in Sept-Îles and one in Godbout. In Rimouski, there are one or two, maybe three, but we cannot give work to all those who want to work in the tourism industry and only in hotels. It does not work that way.

In my region, fishermen do not work all year. Forestry workers do not work 12 months a year. It is the same thing on farms. Will someone in this government finally understand that, that it is the industry itself that is seasonal?

It is not the people who do not want to work. My colleague from Charlevoix said: "If there were jobs 12 months a year, our people would work. They are not crazy". Who likes, these days, to live on \$300 or \$400 a week in employment insurance benefits? Who likes that? Nobody.

The cost of living is high for everybody, in case you did not know. And it is often higher in remote areas than it is in big cities. They are further from everything. That is why we should help people. We will have to finally understand that this is a real problem.

The Minister of Social Development said. "When Canadians ask for something, it means we can do something". I hope someone tells her I quoted her. For 10 years, Canadians have been asking the government to stop fooling around with the EI plan. Canadians throughout Canada have been asking that. The situation is the same everywhere.



But this government needed a surplus. It has deceived the Canadian public by saying, "Give me money and I will put it aside in a fund and help you out when you lose your job".

If an insurance company had done the same thing the government did, it would have gone bankrupt long ago. It just does not make any sense. We cannot go on ignoring the problem of seasonal workers. This cannot be done in Canada anymore, unless we are completely stupid.

We have to understand what is going on, we have to face reality and we have to find a solution. We will sit down. We will talk. There are many solutions. One solution is clear though; we could ask what could be done to help those people.

Committees have met. One committee sat and found solutions in my riding, in the Lower St. Lawrence. The committee proposed solutions, but nobody is listening. With arrogance, 38% of the vote and a majority of seats, this government brought us to where we are today.

I think that next time it deserves to be in the opposition. This is where the government is now. It has to go to the opposition benches because it does not deserve to keep on governing the country. It does not understand anything. In fact, it did not understand anything about the employment problems. It has to go to the opposition benches for a while to better evaluate all the problems that it created for the public.

● (1825)

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to congratulate the hon. member for Charlevoix for having raised a very real and significant issue that is affecting every region in Canada.

I am not sure however that he has come up with the ideal solution to this problem. I think the debate we are having is important and that we need to find a solution.

It is unfortunate that the expression "EI fund", is so widely used. Benefits are paid out of the consolidated revenue fund of the Government of Canada. If people meet all of the criteria, they get benefits. These criteria need to be reviewed. We have to examine how we meet the needs of seasonal workers, whether they work in the farming industry, the forest industry, in fish processing plants, in the tourism sector or elsewhere.

It is unfortunate that we seem to want to make comparisons between Quebec and Atlantic Canada or Western Canada or Ontario. People are facing the same problems everywhere in Canada.

The problems we are now facing come from the changes that we needed to make. In my riding of West Nova, there was a time when our young people chose EI benefits as a source of income. Their career goal was to get EI benefits. It was quite sad. The abilities and

### *Private Members' Business*

capacities of these people were lost, and it is not something we want to go through ever again.

However, with the solutions that were applied, there are still people who find themselves in a black hole. It is often women and single parents who do not have the opportunity to develop other skills, to go back to school, to retrain, to reorganize themselves, to move, or to take advantage of the whole socio-economic system.

These people find themselves in a black hole. They work alongside people who come from other Atlantic regions in the processing plants that are in operation in my area. In their geographic regions these people need fewer hours of work to qualify for employment insurance benefits. They go back to their province, their region. Women in my riding collect employment insurance benefits because the riding is doing rather well from an economic point of view. It is also associated with urban centres such as Halifax. These people do not meet the criteria.

It is very difficult for these people. It is very difficult when we see the people from the Beauséjour—Petitcodiac region being confronted with the problems generated by the fish processing plants that must comply with the rules.

I congratulate the hon. member for raising this issue. We must continue to work with the task forces, to make recommendations while working within the boundaries of the existing legislation to meet the needs of seasonal workers.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

### HOUSE OF COMMONS

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before we conclude the day, I want to make mention of a little historical note.

The mace that is on the table today is not the usual mace. It is a replica of the mace and it adorns our chamber once a year, on the anniversary of a sad day in our history, February 3, 1916, the day of the great fire. This replica was the one that was handcrafted while a more permanent one was prepared for the chamber. The wooden mace adorns our chamber one day a year, February 3, the anniversary of the great fire.

● (1830)

[*Translation*]

The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the Order Paper.

It being 6:30 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:30 p.m.)



# CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 3, 2004

<b>Canadian Human Rights Commission</b>		Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	29
The Speaker.....	21	Mr. Duceppe.....	35
<b>Board of Internal Economy</b>		Motion.....	37
The Speaker.....	21	Mr. Epp.....	37
<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>		Mr. Blaikie.....	39
<b>Government Response to Petitions</b>		Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	41
Mr. Gallaway.....	21	Mr. Strahl.....	42
<b>Petitions</b>		Mr. Bonwick.....	43
<b>Stem Cell Research</b>		Mr. Easter.....	43
Mr. Adams.....	21	Mrs. Wayne.....	44
<b>Kidney Disease</b>		Mr. Godin.....	45
Mr. Adams.....	21	Mr. Shepherd.....	45
<b>Ovarian Cancer</b>		Mr. Bailey.....	47
Mrs. Skelton.....	21	Mr. Masse.....	47
<b>Marriage</b>		Mr. MacKay.....	47
Mrs. Skelton.....	21	Mr. Comuzzi.....	51
<b>Steven Truscott</b>		Mr. Martin (Winnipeg Centre).....	51
Mrs. Ur.....	21		
<b>Marriage</b>		<b>STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS</b>	
Mrs. Ur.....	22	<b>Agriculture</b>	
Mr. Bailey.....	22	Mr. Adams.....	52
<b>Natural Health Products</b>		<b>Government of Canada</b>	
Mr. Bailey.....	22	Mrs. Gallant.....	52
<b>Marriage</b>		<b>Canadian Council of the Blind</b>	
Mr. Jackson.....	22	Ms. Minna.....	52
<b>Divorce Act</b>		<b>Mining Industry</b>	
Mr. Reynolds.....	22	Mr. St-Julien.....	52
<b>Freedom of Religion</b>		<b>Boreal Forest</b>	
Mr. Reynolds.....	22	Mr. Caccia.....	53
<b>Marriage</b>		<b>Agriculture</b>	
Mr. Reynolds.....	22	Mr. Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands).....	53
<b>Sex Offender Registry</b>		<b>Fisheries</b>	
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford).....	22	Mr. Easter.....	53
<b>Marriage</b>		<b>Parental Leave</b>	
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford).....	22	Ms. Guay.....	53
<b>Age of Consent</b>		<b>Jamie Murphy</b>	
Mr. White (Langley—Abbotsford).....	22	Mr. O'Brien (Labrador).....	54
<b>Salmon Farming</b>		<b>Curling</b>	
Mr. Burton.....	22	Mr. Borotsik.....	54
<b>Questions on the Order Paper</b>		<b>Georgian Express Flight 126</b>	
Mr. Gallaway.....	22	Ms. Whelan (Essex).....	54
<b>Request for Emergency Debate</b>		<b>Speech from the Throne</b>	
<b>Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy</b>		Mr. Masse.....	54
Mr. Steckle.....	22	<b>Speech from the Throne</b>	
Mr. Saada.....	22	Mr. Guimond.....	54
<b>SPEECH FROM THE THRONE</b>		<b>Liberal Government</b>	
<b>Resumption of debate on Address in Reply</b>		Mr. Barrette.....	55
Mr. Hill (Macleod).....	23		
Amendment.....	29		

<b>National Defence</b>			
Mrs. Wayne.....	55	Mr. Saada.....	59
<b>Dr. Burton C. Matthews</b>		<b>Canadian Wheat Board</b>	
Mr. Telegdi.....	55	Mr. Solberg.....	59
<b>Ethics Commissioner</b>		Mr. Saada.....	60
Mr. Epp.....	55	<b>Municipalities</b>	
		Mr. Moore.....	60
		Mr. Goodale.....	60
		Mr. Moore.....	60
		Mr. Goodale.....	60
		<b>The Environment</b>	
		Mr. Cuzner.....	60
		Mr. Anderson (Victoria).....	60
		<b>Health</b>	
		Mr. Robinson.....	60
		Mr. Pettigrew.....	61
		Mr. Robinson.....	61
		Mr. Pettigrew.....	61
		<b>Aboriginal Affairs</b>	
		Mr. Pallister.....	61
		Mr. Pettigrew.....	61
		Mr. Pallister.....	61
		Mr. Pettigrew.....	61
		<b>Agriculture</b>	
		Mr. Ritz.....	61
		Mr. Speller.....	61
		Mr. Ritz.....	61
		Mr. Speller.....	62
		<b>Speech from the Throne</b>	
		Mr. Gauthier.....	62
		Mr. Volpe.....	62
		Mr. Gauthier.....	62
		Mr. Goodale.....	62
		<b>Fisheries and Oceans</b>	
		Mr. Hearn.....	62
		Mr. Regan.....	62
		Mr. Hearn.....	62
		Mr. Regan.....	62
		<b>Regulations</b>	
		Mr. Boudria.....	63
		Mr. Alcock.....	63
		<b>Canada Steamship Lines</b>	
		Mr. MacKay.....	63
		Mr. Saada.....	63
		Mr. MacKay.....	63
		Mr. Saada.....	63
		<b>Alcan Plant</b>	
		Mr. Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay).....	63
		Ms. Robillard.....	63
		<b>Georgian Express Flight 126</b>	
		Ms. Whelan (Essex).....	63
		Mr. Regan.....	64
		<b>Public Service of Canada</b>	
		Mr. Pankiw.....	64
<b>Canada Steamship Lines</b>			
Mr. Hill (Macleod).....	55		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	56		
Mr. Hill (Macleod).....	56		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	56		
Mr. Hill (Macleod).....	56		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	56		
<b>Maher Arar Inquiry</b>			
Mr. MacKay.....	56		
Ms. McLellan.....	56		
Mr. MacKay.....	56		
Ms. McLellan.....	56		
<b>Health</b>			
Mr. Duceppe.....	56		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	57		
Mr. Duceppe.....	57		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	57		
Mr. Ménard.....	57		
Mr. Pettigrew.....	57		
Mr. Ménard.....	57		
Mr. Pettigrew.....	57		
Mr. Blaikie.....	57		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	57		
Mr. Blaikie.....	57		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	58		
<b>Canada Steamship Lines</b>			
Mr. Rajotte.....	58		
Mr. Saada.....	58		
Mr. Rajotte.....	58		
Mr. Saada.....	58		
Mr. Solberg.....	58		
Mr. Martin (LaSalle—Émard).....	58		
Mr. Solberg.....	58		
Mr. Saada.....	58		
<b>Social Programs</b>			
Mrs. Tremblay.....	58		
Mr. Pettigrew.....	59		
Mrs. Tremblay.....	59		
Mr. Pettigrew.....	59		
<b>National Defence</b>			
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean).....	59		
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	59		
Mr. Bachand (Saint-Jean).....	59		
Mr. Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale).....	59		
<b>Canada Steamship Lines</b>			
Mr. Solberg.....	59		

Mr. Coderre .....	64
<b>Point of Order</b>	
<b>Oral Question Period</b>	
Mr. Saada .....	64
<b>Private Member's Business</b>	
<b>Persons with disabilities</b>	
Motion No. 386. On the Order: Private Members' Business .....	64
Mr. Hearn .....	64
(Order discharged and motion withdrawn) .....	64
<b>Privilege</b>	
<b>Firearms Program</b>	
Mr. Breitkreuz .....	64
Mr. Gallaway .....	66

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

<b>Resumption of debate on Address in Reply</b>	
Mr. Anderson (Victoria) .....	66
Mr. Bailey .....	68
Mr. Comartin .....	68
Ms. Bulte .....	69
Mr. Adams .....	70
Mr. Bailey .....	70
<b>Business of the House</b>	
Mr. Saada .....	71
Motion .....	71
(Motion agreed to) .....	71

### SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

<b>Resumption of Debate on Address in Reply</b>	
Ms. Lalonde .....	71
Mr. Roy .....	73
Mrs. Kraft Sloan .....	73
Mr. Mills (Toronto—Danforth) .....	75
Mr. Robinson .....	76
Mr. Burton .....	76
Mrs. Kraft Sloan .....	77
Mr. Solberg .....	77
Mr. Cullen .....	80
Mrs. Desjarlais .....	80
Mr. Strahl .....	81
Mr. St-Julien .....	81
Mr. Epp .....	83

### PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

<b>Employment Insurance Program</b>	
Mr. Asselin .....	83
Motion .....	83
Mrs. Ablonczy .....	85
Mr. Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay) .....	86
Ms. Bakopanos .....	86
Mrs. Ablonczy .....	87
Mr. Godin .....	88
Mrs. Tremblay .....	90
Mr. Thibault .....	91
<b>House of Commons</b>	
The Deputy Speaker .....	91

**MAIL  POSTE**

Canada Post Corporation / Société canadienne des postes

Postage paid

Port payé

**Lettermail**

**Poste-lettre**

**1782711  
Ottawa**

*If undelivered, return COVER ONLY to:*

Communication Canada - Publishing  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9

*En cas de non-livraison,*

*retourner cette COUVERTURE SEULEMENT à :*

Communication Canada - Édition  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9

**Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons**

**Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes**

**Also available on the Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire at the following address:**

**Aussi disponible sur le réseau électronique « Parliamentary Internet Parlementaire » à l'adresse suivante :**

**<http://www.parl.gc.ca>**

---

**The Speaker of the House hereby grants permission to reproduce this document, in whole or in part, for use in schools and for other purposes such as private study, research, criticism, review or newspaper summary. Any commercial or other use or reproduction of this publication requires the express prior written authorization of the Speaker of the House of Commons.**

**Additional copies may be obtained from Communication Canada - Canadian Government Publishing, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0S9**

**Le Président de la Chambre des communes accorde, par la présente, l'autorisation de reproduire la totalité ou une partie de ce document à des fins éducatives et à des fins d'étude privée, de recherche, de critique, de compte rendu ou en vue d'en préparer un résumé de journal. Toute reproduction de ce document à des fins commerciales ou autres nécessite l'obtention au préalable d'une autorisation écrite du Président.**

**On peut obtenir des copies supplémentaires en écrivant à : Communication Canada - Édition, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9**

**On peut obtenir la version française de cette publication en écrivant à : Communication Canada - Édition  
Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0S9**