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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

HALTON HILLS

Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the riding I am privileged to represent is becoming more and more urban.

As the town of Halton Hills continues to develop with new subdivisions, making sure that trees are planted to sustain the urban forest is important. Today I would like to congratulate Halton Hills on being recognized as a Green Streets Canada Community for 2004.

Halton Hills has recognized the importance that urban forests play in the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community and will plant trees around the town. It will incorporate trees into its Earth Day events and work with the Georgetown Agricultural Society.

I look forward to enjoying all of the new green streetscapes in Halton Hills.

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• (1405)

PEDOPHILES

Mr. Art Hanger (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today in the progressive western town of Okotoks, Alberta, a group of parents and concerned citizens will do something that the government refuses to do: their part to protect children from pedophiles.

Late last year Okotoks residents were stunned that two pedophiles were being released into their community. They know what we know, that pedophiles are always dangerous and cannot be treated.

In Switzerland a law has just been passed mandating life sentences for pedophiles because that is the only way to truly protect children. But this is not Switzerland, it is Canada, where a Liberal government has put protecting children permanently on a back burner, where true democracy remains unfulfilled.

Okotoks residents will be collecting children's shoes to send to Ottawa in the hope that they can wake up a government that thinks the rights of pedophiles trump the rights of children.

I applaud this group. I call on all Canadians from coast to coast to join this movement and to force the government to act.

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[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Robert Lanctôt (Châteauguay, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Heart and Stroke Foundation published its Annual Report Card on Canadians' Health. The findings of this report are very disturbing and the public should be made aware of them immediately. The foundation tells us that obesity rates are rising in our country and, together with the incidence of diabetes, obesity is becoming a major risk factor for heart disease in Canada.

Moreover, adults are not the only ones at risk, since obesity affects a high percentage of our young people. The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada confirms that excess weight is now one of the largest public health problems we have ever faced.

I am happy to see that our government has already begun to attack this new threat, for instance, by creating a major campaign to promote a more active lifestyle among all Canadians.

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[English]

ORDER OF CANADA

Mrs. Karen Kraft Sloan (York North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my most heartfelt congratulations to three scientists recently appointed to the Order of Canada.

Harry Lumsden provides a strong example of how, by working together, we can make a lasting contribution to conservation. A retired biologist and research scientist, Harry is an international authority in his field.

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A past president of The Royal Society of Canada and Canada's foremost expert on risk communication and management, William Leiss has promoted a deeper understanding of technologically generated risk.

David Schindler, a personal buddy of mine, has worked to impress upon Canadians the importance of a healthy ecosystem. Author of over 200 scientific publications, Dr. Schindler's work has been widely used in formulating ecological management policy in Canada, the U.S. and in Europe.

As parliamentarians we should be both proud and pleased to see the accomplishments of these three men recognized with Canada's highest honour for lifetime achievement.

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EID UL-ADHA

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Ajax—Uxbridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Eid ul-Adha is one of the major festivals in the Islamic faith during the lunar month of Zul-Hijja. Muslims from all over the world travel to Mecca to fulfill the requirement of the pilgrimage referred to as the hajj.

Aside from being one of the five pillars of Islam, the hajj represents a significant opportunity for social and cultural dialogue by enabling Muslims from many countries to interact and better develop by understanding each other's heritage.

This year's Eid ul-Adha award by the Progressive Association of Muslims will honour the late prime minister, the Right Hon. Pierre Elliott Trudeau, for his lifetime devotion in the pursuit of justice and for creating opportunities for people from all around the world to come to Canada, the model today for a truly multicultural society. Mr. Justin Trudeau will be in attendance to accept the award on behalf of his father.

I wish to extend an invitation to you, Mr. Speaker, and all colleagues in the House as well as in the other place to attend the ninth annual Eid ul-Adha ceremony tonight on Parliament Hill in Room 200, West Block from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Once again, the event promises to be an evening of celebration of the Islamic faith.

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AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report, as scathing and damning as it is, is not the only alarming report issued lately that condemns this corrupt Liberal government.

Another alarming report points out Canada's agriculture industry collectively lost money last year. That is right; one of the industries whose back this nation was built on is in a sea of Liberal created red ink. This is a glaring condemnation of the Liberal government's failed policies and highlights the Liberals' inability to negotiate effective change on the world stage.

Our producers and businesses on and off the farm do not have the ability to run up a flag of convenience to protect them from the government's mismanagement. They can only watch as their hard-

earned tax dollars are ripped out of their hands and used and abused by this Liberal culture of corruption.

Municipal governments have shown leadership. Provincial governments have stepped to the plate. However, it has become obvious that the Liberal government is incapable of dealing with the issues facing rural Canada. It has driven the entire agriculture industry into the red.

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● (1410)

[Translation]

LAVAL WOMEN'S GROUP

Ms. Raymonde Folco (Laval West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to tell the House about the work of a group of women in Laval who have come together to help their community. The Laval Women's Group, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, brings together anglophone Quebec women of all origins who meet to share ideas and support.

The group is chaired by Ms. Pearl Biron and provides assistance to those who need it most, through a community organization known as Agape.

This is an excellent example of women who use their time and energy, their experience and resources, to help the most needy people in our society.

I want to commend the excellent work accomplished by these women and wish the Laval Women's Group many more years of success.

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GUY PROVOST

Ms. Christiane Gagnon (Québec, BQ): Mr. Speaker, another famous Quebec actor has left us. Guy Provost died yesterday, and one of his roles has left a deep imprint on my generation. I am of course referring to Alexis in *Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut*.

His passion for the beautiful Donalda, who would become the wife of Séraphin, was the topic of many conversations in our homes, and the charming and handsome Alexis was a real heartthrob for many romantic women.

In addition to having played alongside Maria Casarès, Philippe Noiret and Gérard Philippe, in France, Guy Provost was, for over 60 years, a major figure on Quebec's theatrical scene. Among others, he played the role of Antoine Jacquemin in *Terre humaine*, Léon Tanguay in *Sous un ciel variable*, and Father Alexandre in *La Famille Plouffe*.

The Bloc Québécois extends its most sincere condolences to his wife, his three children and the entire theatre community, which has lost one of its great Quebec ambassadors.

GUY PROVOST

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today, Canada is mourning one of its great actors. Guy Provost, who was well known for playing the character of Alexis Labranche in the televised series *Les Belles Histoires des pays d'en haut*, succumbed to his illness.

I invite my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to this talented actor. Mr. Provost began with the Compagnons de Saint-Laurent, almost 60 years ago, and then moved to France to work under, among others, Jean Vilar, at the Théâtre national populaire.

After coming back home, he became part of the collective imagination of our country. Whether it was in the theatre, where he was as comfortable playing John Steinbeck's as Michel Tremblay's plays, or on television, where he played in many series, Mr. Provost's passion for what he did never wavered.

Let us pay tribute to Guy Provost.

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[English]

JANUSZ ZURAKOWSKI

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Janusz Zurakowski who passed away yesterday after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

On March 25, 1958 this slight, unassuming man climbed aboard Avro Arrow RL-201 and became an icon in Canadian history as the first test pilot to fly the Avro Arrow. Jan was already a legend and a hero having defended his native Poland as a fighter pilot when the Nazis attacked in September 1939. He went on to distinguish himself by flying Spitfires during the Battle of Britain.

On July 26, 2003 in the village of Barry's Bay, a park and museum were dedicated to this gentleman. They serve as a fitting tribute to an extraordinary aviator whose courage and skill have contributed to the advancement of aviation in Canada. On that day I had the privilege of presenting a Queen's Jubilee medal to Mr. Zurakowski.

Jan, safe journey on your final flight to touch the face of God.

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[Translation]

CLAUDE RYAN

Hon. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, a number of us will be attending the funeral of a great man of ideas, Claude Ryan. I had the privilege of being an organizer and employee of the Quebec Liberal Party in 1979 and 1980 when Mr. Ryan was party leader.

[English]

I was a neophyte in politics and I was very lucky to have had as a leader and mentor Mr. Claude Ryan. Whenever one went into his office, or his confessional as we used to call it, one had better have been well prepared because he did not suffer fools lightly.

His work ethic, his exemplary hard work, intelligence, honesty and public service—as he used to say, longstanding tested

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principles—are a testament to all of us and principles we should all live up to.

• (1415)

[Translation]

I was fortunate enough to see him on occasion after I was elected, and he often told me that he watched the House of Commons proceedings and commended us all for truly serving the public.

[English]

Long live his memory.

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PORTIA WHITE

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today and acknowledge a remarkable Nova Scotian, Portia White. She was a black woman who defied the stereotypes of the time to become an internationally renowned soloist and music teacher in the 1940s. Her interpretations of black spirituals were audience favourites wherever she performed.

A singer in her father's church since she was six, Portia White trained at the Halifax Conservatory in her twenties. There she met Ernesto Vinci, who would help Portia develop the amazing voice that took her to stages in Toronto and New York.

Dartmouth's Eastern Front Theatre, in honour of Black History Month, will premiere a new musical play, *Portia White—First You Dream*, by playwright Lance Woolaver. The title comes from a story about the singer.

When asked by an American reporter how does a young woman from Nova Scotia become so famous, Portia replied, "First, you dream". Her dream ended too soon, especially for us, since there are no recordings of her wonderful voice, but her example of hard work and determination continues to inspire us all.

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[Translation]

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Ms. Monique Guay (Laurentides, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General confirmed the Bloc Quebecois' worst fears. The former prime minister, in complicity with the former finance minister, shamelessly misused public funds.

After having applied a code of secrecy to an incorrect response by his government, according to which his companies had obtained only \$137,000 in government contracts, when he knew the contracts were worth in excess of \$161 million, and having hidden a few lines in more than 400 pages of legislation to exempt his shipping company from paying more than \$100 million in taxes, the Prime Minister would now have us believe that he did not know, when everyone else knew for years, that his government managed the sponsorship program in violation of all the rules.

In feigning ignorance, the Prime Minister is condoning corruption. The Bloc Quebecois will be there during the next election campaign to make sure that the public inquiry is not used as a smoke screen for the former finance minister's irresponsibility.

Oral Questions

[English]

FRED KENT

Mr. Janko Perić (Cambridge, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to pay tribute Fred Kent who recently retired after 12 successful elections and 30 years of dedicated and distinguished public service.

Known as "Uncle Kent", he first won a seat on the new Cambridge council in 1973 and two years later was elected to regional council. Known for his great determination, he had an easy going style and ability to connect with people.

He provided a steady hand and a sensible voice on behalf of Cambridge at the municipal level. During his 18 years on the region's engineering committee, many important projects were undertaken for Cambridge and the region.

I wish Fred all the best in his future endeavours.

* * *

DRINKING WATER

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to invite members of Parliament and senators to join me this evening to witness a demonstration of an amazing Canadian innovation, the BioSand water filter, sponsored by Samaritan's Purse Canada.

Nearly one in three people in the developing world do not have access to clean drinking water, but thanks to financial assistance from CIDA and aid groups like Samaritan's Purse that is beginning to change. Samaritan's Purse provides humanitarian and development assistance in over 100 countries.

Recently, with the generous support of CIDA, it used the BioSand water filter to bring clean drinking water to over 77,000 people in Cambodia for only \$600,000. That is cost efficiency. CIDA and Samaritan's Purse have also partnered to bring the same technology to Nicaragua and Ethiopia.

We are all busy, but we should never be too busy to see how cooperation and Canadian innovation are saving lives around the world. I invite members to see the BioSand water filter turn river water into drinking water tonight from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. in Room 112N, Centre Block.

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1420)

[English]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal culture of corruption is alive and well. Taxpayers' funds poured through Liberal friendly firms in Quebec. This was a money laundering scheme hatched by the Liberal Party for the Liberal Party.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Will the public inquiry be allowed to look right into the heart of the problem, the Liberal Party of Canada?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear yesterday that there will be no limits in terms of

the investigation that the commissioner will be able to engage in. He will be given every instrument required to do his job. The fact is that the government wants to get to the bottom of it and the government will.

Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the trouble with that is that the Liberal Party is at the bottom of this problem.

The Auditor General said that this goes much higher than she could investigate. She was restricted to going after bureaucrats. She could not go after the Liberal bagmen and backroom boys who are the problem here.

I have a second question for the Prime Minister. Will the public inquiry be able to go right into the Liberal Party and look at those individuals, those bandits, who stole from Canadian taxpayers?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General said that she could only go so far. At that point, the government had to take a look at ways in which the investigation could be completed.

One way was the public accounts committee. We wanted to ensure that there was no stone unturned, and that is why we asked for a commission of inquiry.

Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this scam was set up to put money in the hands of Liberal friendly firms. Money was handed over to those firms for a reason.

How much of that money was given in kickbacks to the Liberal Party of Canada?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no need for the Leader of the Opposition to make allegations of a nature which are vicious in the extreme.

If the Leader of the Opposition would like to make those allegations to the inquiry he may do so. We have made it very clear that the government will ensure that every single piece of information and every fact on this matter are made public as quickly as possible.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is curious that the Prime Minister is worried about the verbal abuse that he seems to be suffering. Canadians are worried about the fiscal abuse perpetrated by his government on their tax dollars.

Challenger jets, RCMP ponies, shady ad contracts, and five crown corporations are implicated in this huge scam.

Canadians deserve to know why the Prime Minister, who was minister of finance and the man in the best position to protect taxpayers' money, failed them? Why did the Prime Minister fail Canadians?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General stated that these acts were perpetrated by a very small group of people among the 14,000 people who work for public works. She stated that they operated without surveillance. She also stated that they broke laws.

Oral Questions

When they broke those laws and rules, they did not come to cabinet and ask to break those rules. What they did was engage in a very sophisticated way of camouflaging what they were doing. As a result of that, the government did not know.

There were rumours and those rumours eventually came out. That is when there was an internal inquiry—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not talking about blind trust today, we are talking about a blind eye turned by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister likes to pride himself on his business acumen. If he ran CSL the way he ran his department, CSL would be a bankrupt company. Now we are talking about a morally bankrupt government.

Why did the Prime Minister not stand up and say something? Was that stoney silence a result of the fact that he was so anxious to be the Prime Minister that he turned a blind eye to all the corruption that the government was involved in?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there was a very sophisticated cover-up that was taken on by this small group who did this. Those people were not going to come to the government and say that they were breaking every rule in the book. What they did do was, for a couple of years, basically put this by; however, as soon as the rumours began there was an internal study done.

When that internal study was done, it was turned over to the Auditor General who then completed her report. The former minister of public works acted. We acted on December 12 and we have now brought down the most comprehensive response that any government—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was Jean Chrétien's finance minister when the sponsorship program was created in the aftermath of the referendum. The Prime Minister was the keeper of the public purse when the worst spending excesses were taking place in the name of Canadian unity and to benefit the Liberal Party and its cronies.

How can the Prime Minister say today that he knew nothing of the sponsorship scandal, when he was the number two man in the Chrétien government?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has made it very clear that it was a small group of people within Public Works who broke the law and got around the rules.

That said, they did not ask our permission to do so. They did what they did under cover, but eventually there were some rumours. There was an internal investigation; once its findings were provided to the Auditor General, she carried out her investigation, and the government took action. We took action as soon as the Auditor General produced her report.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was just on a radio show with the Auditor General. She said on the air that she had some doubts about no one in government being aware of this. She went on to say that she could not understand how that could be the case. She wondered how certain people in government—the Prime Minister, for instance—could not have known. She had doubts about that. This is what she said, and the minister heard her as well as I did.

The Prime Minister is buddy-buddy with the Liberal family, which includes his friends in charge of crown corporations, of groups such as—

The Speaker: The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first of all, she did not say “ministers”. The Leader of the Opposition could at least tell the truth in the House.

Second, clearly the little group involved hid what it was doing. Eventually, there were rumours. When these became known, there was an internal audit; after that, the matter was handed over to the Auditor General, who took action. We also took action, first on December 12 and then with the plan announced yesterday.

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in this House in May 2000, my colleague, the hon. member for Rimouski-Neigette-et-la Mitis, raised the first instance of the use of front men in the federal government's communications contracts. The Bloc Québécois did so again in June 2000, at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

We asked questions in the House on May 7, 2001, May 9, 2001, and in March 2002. In all, the Bloc Québécois has asked 441 questions about the sponsorship scandal.

How dare the Prime Minister claim that he did not know?

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am glad to know that members of the opposition consulted the public works website where in the fall of 2000 the internal audit was posted and raised some of these questions. Following that, the internal small branch involving about 14 people was closed down.

Internal audits were completed. Referrals were made to the Auditor General and the RCMP. My predecessor made significant changes to the whole sponsorship program, and on December 12 of last year the program was shut down on the first day of business of this government.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in addition to the 441 questions asked by the Bloc Québécois, on May 9, 2001 the *Globe and Mail* had a full article on the scandals that were beginning to surface. The Prime Minister does read the *Globe and Mail*, I assume. After that, all the newspapers—*La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, *Le Journal de Montréal*—were talking about it. I hope the Prime Minister reads one of them. They reported that there was a scandal in the government.

Oral Questions

How does the Prime Minister dare to tell the world, without blushing, that he did not know?

• (1430)

[English]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government of the day was paying attention to those questions and to the insinuations that were raised, which is why the contracting provisions were changed to cut out commissions and only pay services on an hourly rate; that is why the procurement process was segregated from the contract management process; that is why the competitive processes and rules of government were strictly followed from then on; and that is why eventually the program was shut down altogether.

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

I thought I had seen it all during the Mulroney Conservative years but I want to assure the Liberals that they have regained the title when it comes to scandals.

The Prime Minister says that he wants to get to the bottom of it. We agree.

Will the Prime Minister announce a retroactive amnesty for all civil servants who may have something to say about Liberal troughing, yes or no?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me see if I am understanding this correctly. Is he talking about retroactive amnesty for actions that have not yet been undertaken? I am not certain what the member is talking about. I cannot tell him.

As a member of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, we worked hard on this issue. The member for Winnipeg Centre, along with members from the then Alliance and in fact a member of the Bloc, who has since then seen the light, worked hard on recommendations that we put before the House in a report on this very issue.

Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, everybody else knows what I mean, including the member for Winnipeg Centre.

We have drug investigations in B.C. The Quebec wing of the Liberal Party may have been operating on the proceeds of crime. At this rate Flat Mark will be up for investigation before we know it.

My question is for the Prime Minister. It is not just what is happening in the Liberal Party, it is that coziness with the corporate elite in this country. Will the Prime Minister do the right thing and fire every corporate lobbyist in the PMO right now before he sells out the country to them?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than spending time with issues such as Flat Mark, we might want to spend a little time on whistleblowing.

The member for Winnipeg Centre was a leader on this issue in the committee last year. We are working on translating that into legislation which will be put before the House very soon.

I would encourage the member to engage with this and let us produce the finest whistleblowing legislation in the world.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

Is it not interesting that yesterday the Prime Minister knew nothing about this whole affair and today he seems to know all about it, including who this little group is that is responsible for this?

Would the Prime Minister tell us who this little group is and name some names?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would simply suggest to the hon. member that he read the Auditor General's report. She is the one who talked about the little group.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Lakeland, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister seems to have indicated that the probe would be allowed to extend to the Liberal Party. Will this probe be allowed to extend to the cabinet? Will the minister in fact allow this probe to get into this public inquiry, get right in to cabinet to find out who might be responsible and involved in this affair when it comes to cabinet ministers?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is well-known that the Inquiries Act gives powers to the commissioner to follow the evidence wherever it might lead. That is the intention of the government in commissioning a distinguished judge of the Superior Court of Quebec to look into these matters, to follow the evidence and go to wherever it may lead.

We have nothing to hide. We want the evidence to come out. We want the facts to come out. We will follow this wherever it goes. These hon. members will be very welcome to appear before that commission of inquiry and give any evidence they may have.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it turns out that the Liberal Party, the Liberal culture of corruption, goes everywhere. It even turns out that the RCMP were used by the Liberals to take taxpayers on what amounts to a big musical ride.

How can the RCMP investigate the Liberal scandal when the RCMP have been compromised by the Liberal Party?

• (1435)

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): In fact, Mr. Speaker, as the Auditor General herself has noted, the RCMP unit assigned to investigate the sponsorship issues is a different unit from that which applied for and received funding for the 125th anniversary.

However the RCMP took additional steps to ensure that its conduct was appropriate. It sought an outside opinion by an eminent former judge to look at the very question of whether its conduct in the matter was appropriate.

In addition to that, it has informed the Quebec attorney general of its involvement in the—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Medicine Hat.

Oral Questions

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a different unit amounts to a distinction without a difference.

The problem is that the Liberals know absolutely no shame. It is incredible that they would sully the name and the reputation of the RCMP simply so they could reward their Liberal friends.

How in the world can the RCMP investigate this mess now that the Liberals have dragged the RCMP right into the middle of it?

Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP unit that was responsible for the 125th anniversary celebrations applied to this program for funding to help it carry out events across the country in relation to this celebration. In fact, it received that money. Based on the evidence, the Auditor General was able to determine that it held hundreds of celebratory events across the country with the funding it received.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Groupaction contributed \$112,162 to the Liberal Party of Canada's coffers, Groupe Everest \$77,033 and Lafleur Communications \$56,834. The fundraising list shows that the sponsorship program was profitable for the Liberal Party of Canada.

The Prime Minister states that he knew nothing about it. As someone who was unaware, does he realize that the sponsorship program was profitable for the Liberal Party of Canada?

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the contributions to political parties are matters of public record. It is true that some of these advertising companies did contribute to the Liberal Party of Canada.

However there is no evidence that moneys from this sponsorship program went to the Liberal Party. If the police investigations or the public inquiry indicate such, then there will be consequences to flow from that. However the very point is that we find out the facts.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Exactly, Mr. Speaker, the special counsel for financial recovery is mandated to recover the \$100 million pocketed by the Liberals' buddies.

Does the government intend to broaden that mandate so that the special counsel can also recover the contributions given to the Liberal Party by the companies who benefited from the sponsorship program?

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the special counsel for financial recovery will be working very closely with the commissioner of the judicial inquiry. That information will be made available and will be made use of to follow those funds wherever they may have gone inappropriately and recover them for the taxpayers of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when Alfonso Gagliano was appointed ambassador, the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs acted, on March 19, 2002, on my suggestion that he be questioned. Yet that same Liberal majority on

the committee were the ones who refused to allow questions on his integrity, when his name was already being linked with the sponsorship scandal.

Does this behaviour from the Liberal members not indicate that they were very much aware of the sponsorship scandal and that their main concern was to make sure we knew as little as possible?

Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member herself has been on that committee for years. She knows very well that the committee determines its own procedure. It is up to the committee to decide. It is, in my opinion, unacceptable for her to insinuate today before this House that all the members of her committee had been corrupted in this way. This is totally unacceptable.

• (1440)

Ms. Francine Lalonde (Mercier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the truth is that a large number of those who defended Gagliano have been rewarded. The truth is that they did not want the truth to get out.

Now that the government has been caught red handed, will it admit that they were doing their best to cover up for Gagliano, appointed him to Denmark to get him out of the limelight, and are now trying to pin it all on him because they got caught?

Is this not the reality of the situation?

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the former ambassador to Denmark has been removed from his job because he lost the confidence of the Prime Minister, which is the requirement for someone serving at pleasure in such an important diplomatic post.

The reason he lost the confidence of the Prime Minister was because of the Auditor General's report which indicated numerous occasions when that former minister's office was involved in the sponsorship program and in making decisions around it. It was entirely appropriate that he be removed from that post.

[*Translation*]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this scandal constitutes a theft of taxpayers' money. The money went from their pockets to the government, and from there on to the Liberal communications firms, and eventually to the coffers of the Liberal Party.

Can the Prime Minister tell us today whether he himself received any money from this scandal for his leadership campaign?

The Speaker: This question is out of order. It does not concern government business. Would the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam perhaps have another question to ask?

[*English*]

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Prime Minister. We know where this scandal began. It began on tax day when Canadian taxpayers are persistently ripped off by the government. What we want to know is where this scandal ends.

Oral Questions

Has the Prime Minister asked every one of his cabinet ministers, yes or no, whether they received any of this dirty money from this disgusting scandal?

The Speaker: The hon. member knows that the question of political donations is one thing. The hon. member knows that there is a public list of that available, as has been indicated in answers to questions before.

This question in my view is one dealing strictly with political donations and therefore is out of order.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister claims that this quarter billion dollar scandal happened without any of his knowledge, even though it involved the Liberal Party in Quebec, but the Prime Minister is a creature of the Liberal Party in Quebec. He has spent his whole adult life in the Liberal Party in Quebec and, for the past 10 years, has effectively controlled the Liberal Party in Quebec.

How can the Prime Minister claim that he heard nothing, saw nothing and knew nothing about the massive fraud happening in his own political backyard?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has made it perfectly clear in her report that the sponsorship program was run by a small unit within the ministry and that it broke the rules.

Certainly, as the Prime Minister has already mentioned, this small group breaking the rules, whoever was involved with it, would not be taking that to cabinet or Treasury Board to ask permission to do so. Obviously that needed to be discovered through internal audits, through Auditor General audits, through RCMP investigations and now through public inquiries.

We will follow the facts wherever they are to be found.

Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous to have Liberal ministers blaming a small unit of bureaucrats for Liberal sleaze. It sounds awfully reminiscent of Richard Nixon blaming a small unit in the White House for something he allegedly knew nothing about.

I want to know how many Canadian tax dollars were stolen by these sleazy Liberal ad firms and ended up in the slush funds and the \$12 million leadership campaign of the Prime Minister?

The Speaker: I am not convinced that the question is in order in the circumstances. It started off that way but ended up not being in order.

The hon. member for Ottawa West—Nepean has a question.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Marlene Catterall (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the most precious right of citizenship in a democracy is the right to vote. With the federal election likely to be held this spring, what measures is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration taking to speed up citizenship approvals so that as many new Canadians as possible can vote in the coming election?

• (1445)

Hon. Judy Sgro (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell the House that over 149,000 people became new citizens last year. We process all applications as swiftly as possible all the time.

* * *

[*Translation*]

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister.

I am sure he would not want to run, in Quebec, an election campaign that was possibly funded by illegal means, so I have a very simple question for him.

On the list of those from whom he will try to recoup the money obtained in this disgraceful affair, has he included the Liberal Party?

[*English*]

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me deal with the question of the inquiry in this way: the answer is yes. The inquiry will go wherever it chooses to go. The government will not direct it.

However I do want to add some information. This morning the Auditor General said "I think we have to keep things in perspective. We are talking about a group within the Department of Public Works, a branch that had 12 to 15 employees, whereas the whole department has some 14,000 employees".

The Prime Minister has obviously taken this very seriously.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, this Prime Minister is only very, very clear when he is very, very caught. Now he is like Imelda Marcos, hoarding the shoes while crying crocodile tears about the fact that they were bought in the first place.

So I would like to offer the Prime Minister a chance to finally get his feet out of his mouth on this Liberal scandal. Since public polling was used for political purposes, will the Prime Minister pick up the phone to the Liberal Party and ask for our money back?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it does not matter whether the question rhymes or how much alliteration there is in it, it simply does not change the facts. The reality is that this Prime Minister has ordered the broadest, most open, most complete public inquiry instrument that one can, and it will go wherever it chooses to go to get to the bottom of this, because we want to fix it.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think even Flat Mark would believe that.

Yesterday the Prime Minister told the House that "normal cabinet processes" were not followed when his government purchased two new luxury jets for his cabinet in 2002. The Prime Minister now admits that he knew the usual rules were broken. Yet even after he was kicked out of Jean Chrétien's cabinet, he remained silent about this abuse of tax dollars.

Why?

Oral Questions

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General has made it clear that she felt that while the purchase may have been within the rules, it was outside the normal process. The Prime Minister yesterday said that it was outside of the normal cabinet process.

The Auditor General has indicated that because it was at the end of the fiscal year it was an inappropriate process. Frankly, the government agrees with that assessment. It is a valuable one, and that will be followed in the future whenever procurements of this type are considered.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it would appear that not all of the government agrees with that. The Privy Council Office told the Auditor General that it used sound professional judgment in its decision to purchase these two new luxury jets.

The current finance minister, who was public works minister during the audit, also defended the sole sourcing contract to Bombardier. However, the Auditor General, as the minister points out, says that the sole sourcing of this contract could not be supported.

So who does the Prime Minister believe? His finance minister or the Auditor General?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, procurement practices require judgment in different circumstances. There are issues of compatibility with previous equipment. There are issues of sole sourcing where only one type of equipment or supplier is available in the country. There are issues of analysis and taking the proper time to answer those questions properly.

The Auditor General has commented in a critical way that not enough time was taken for proper analysis, in her opinion. We are willing at this point as a government to accept that opinion and apply that standard in future.

• (1450)

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General once again exposed how the Liberals have broken trust and plundered the public treasury.

The Prime Minister was forced to admit that his government broke the rules when it blew a hundred million dollars, money taxed from struggling Canadian taxpayers, so top Liberals could ride around in luxury jets. Fairness to the public was trumped by Liberal greed.

The Prime Minister was vice-chair of the key cabinet committee that approved this shopping spree. Why did he betray Canadians so badly?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General makes it clear that the normal process was not followed in this case because it was toward the end of the fiscal year and there was not time for proper analysis. It did not go through the normal processes even though it was strictly within the rules.

This government accepts that it should go through the normal processes. Whether it is within the rules or outside the rules or not,

adequate time needs to be taken for proper analysis. That will be the process that we will follow in the future.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): It is not only the Prime Minister who failed in his duty to protect Canadians' money from abuse. Another minister also hid what was going on. Just five months ago, he told the House "all of the rules were properly followed in this transaction to acquire the aircraft".

The Prime Minister has admitted that was not true, yet he appointed the very man who made this misleading statement as the nation's finance minister.

Why are Liberal ministers who have betrayed Parliament and betrayed the public trust holding high office in our country?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is confusing rules and process. This was within the rules, but the process was inadequate because it did not leave time for adequate analysis, in the Auditor General's opinion.

On reflection, and the Prime Minister has said, this did not go through the proper process and did not come to his attention in his position in cabinet, but we are satisfied with these recommendations. And in the future, such a process will not be followed, whether it is inside the rules or not.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is all well and good for the government to have announced a commission of inquiry yesterday, but there is no guarantee we will learn anything before the next election.

Will the government commit today to have the commission of inquiry issue a preliminary progress report before the next election is called?

[*English*]

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the inquiry commissioner is dealing with the government to set the exact terms of reference, but within the Inquiries Act an inquiry commissioner sets his or her own rules of process, which could include an interim report if the commissioner feels that will be helpful in giving information along the way or in a way that might be helpful to cause correction at the earliest possible date.

Those questions will be in the hands of commissioner. Hon. members opposite will have an opportunity, if they so wish, to make representations to the commissioner for an interim report or any other—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ): Mr. Speaker, if the government was capable of limiting the commission's term to one year, why could it not at the same time require the commission to produce a preliminary report before the next election is called?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): As we have said, Mr. Speaker, the government is not putting any limits on the commissioner in setting his own process, which includes reporting, calling evidence, and starting at an early date, in whatever order he wishes. If there might be an election called while the commission is sitting, it continues. It can call witnesses in any order that it wishes and pursue any line of questioning.

This government is not putting on any restrictions or time limits with respect to an election or anything else, other than the request that this be done urgently so that the public can learn the facts as soon as possible.

•(1455)

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these are sad days for Canadian democracy. The revelations made by the Auditor General strike at the very heart of the problem of the democratic deficit in this country. They strike at the reason why Canadians so distrust their public servants.

The most sickening part of the Prime Minister's response is the hypocritical and shallow attempt to deflect personal responsibility by pleading ignorance. My question to the Prime Minister is, how does he propose to address the democratic deficit when he is the democratic deficit?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member in the preamble to his question makes a point, and that is that one way to address these failures is to get the House more engaged in the oversight of estimates. It is 50% of its constitutional responsibility. The auditor has written about that over and over and over again.

I would ask the member who asked this question, how much time did he spend in committee on estimates last year? I think I can answer that: less than 5%.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report reads like a dime store novel. It is about con men. It is about fraud artists playing by their own rules: Liberal rules. If you are a Liberal you can belly up to the trough, you can be paid for work that you do not do, you can get everything you want and it is okay because you are a Liberal. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink, oink, oink: "You are okay, you are a Liberal".

This kind of cronyism is what got the Prime Minister into power. The Prime Minister knew what was going on. Why did he look the other way?

Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as entertaining as the barnyard noises of the member are, I think it is probably worth repeating what the Auditor General has said. The Auditor General this morning on national television said the Prime Minister has obviously taken this very seriously by calling a public inquiry.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last December, the Ontario Minister of the Environment announced that heavy-duty diesel standards will be tightened on April 1 of this year, making Ontario's emissions standards the strictest in North America.

Since the movement of vehicles crosses provincial borders, could the Minister of the Environment indicate when similar standards will be set for the rest of the country?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, certainly we congratulate the Province of Ontario on this forward step. We will be working with the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment to extend that across Canada, and also with the Commission on Environmental Cooperation to extend it north-south through the United States and Mexico.

I should add that for new heavy-duty trucks, we brought in new regulations on January 1 of this year. This will require new emissions control technologies, which will reduce nitrous oxide and particulate matter by respectively 90% and 95% for the new heavy-duty vehicles.

* * *

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a sad day when the Prime Minister defends a government currently under investigation by the RCMP, a Liberal government the Auditor General has tarred as one of the most corrupt in the history of our nation.

The sponsorship program was a money laundering scheme, taking money from taxpayers and giving it to Liberal friends, and then having the Liberal Party of Canada reap the rewards.

Canadians deserve an answer. Why did the Prime Minister allow this to happen under his watch as finance minister?

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what happened—I said this yesterday—was unacceptable. It was intolerable. There is absolutely no excuse. There is no excuse for what happened. Those people who took that money should be punished.

Let us understand that the end never justifies the means. National unity in this country is going to be protected by thousands of Canadians who stand up for their country. It will not be protected by people who violate the laws of this land. This government will find out what happened and it will be made public to the Canadian people.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is truly deplorable is that this Prime Minister still says he knew nothing about it all during the time he was the finance minister and the lead minister in Quebec.

BDC, VIA Rail, Canada Post and the Port of Montreal: all these crown corporations are run by the Prime Minister's Liberal cronies. Crown corporations are not subject to access to information. Will they be subject under this inquiry?

Routine Proceedings

● (1500)

Right Hon. Paul Martin (Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday I announced that a complete review of the governance of crown corporations will be undertaken by the President of the Treasury Board. I have also asked him to, on an accelerated basis, meet with the crown corporations in question, to talk to their boards, to talk to their executives, to determine exactly what the facts are. I have then asked him to recommend to me, on an accelerated basis, the course of action the government should follow.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Suzanne Tremblay (Rimouski—Neigette-et-la Mitis, BQ): Mr. Speaker, once again the Auditor General deplored the way the employment insurance program was managed. She denounced the fact that, year after year, the government takes in more money than it needs to properly run the program, and suggested that the \$44 billion surplus is a real tax grab, a hidden tax.

Given that the unemployed have been treated very unfairly over the past few years, does the government intend to repair the harm it has caused by correcting the shortcomings of the system, since there is money available to do so?

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already mentioned in the House, the purpose of the employment insurance program is obviously to provide benefits to the unemployed, those who are out of work, and to help them find employment in temporary tough times.

All the funds from employment insurance went—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Churchill River.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Rick Laliberte (Churchill River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, farmers and the agricultural industry remain hopeful that we will regain our foreign markets soon, but a recent newspaper article stated that the borders could be closed for years and not months to Canadian beef.

Could the Minister of Agriculture tell the House what information this was based on and is this indeed correct?

Hon. Bob Speller (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, first and foremost I want all hon. members to know that this document was a document speculating not on the opening of the U.S. border, but on Canada's support at the OIE to get it to recognize specifically our North American situation. It was obviously over pessimistic.

In fact since that time, borders have opened. For instance, the United States has opened its border to Canadian beef under the age of 30 months. We have heard today that Macao, another island country, will be opening up its borders shortly to Canadian beef.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC): Mr. Speaker, back in 1995, when the finance minister set a program review allegedly to root out government waste, at the very same time he was finding funds to set up the sponsorship program. At a time when we were all supposed to tighten our belts, he turned a blind eye to what amounted to criminal activity in that department.

How can he justify his negligence while he was on the job? Whatever happened to ministerial responsibility?

Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ministerial responsibility was demonstrated in terms of post-ministerial conduct when the Ambassador to Denmark was recalled yesterday. He was showing having to take responsibility for activities disclosed by the Auditor General in her report where he, in his ministerial role, in his ministerial office, was involved in overseeing the sponsorship program. That is responsibility, following it wherever it may lead.

* * *

● (1505)

POINTS OF ORDER

REINSTATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BILLS

Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the motion we passed last night gave the government the right to reinstate legislation in the same form in which it was originally presented. I know you will be very vigilant about this, but can you assure us that the legislation that comes back to the House will be in the exact form, not tampered with, as it was presented here originally?

The Speaker: That is certainly the intention of the Chair. We will be going through introduction of bills shortly. The ministers will indicate if they are submitting the bill on the basis that it is in the same form, and are therefore asking that it be reinstated on the Order Paper.

Before I give that assurance, I will have ascertained that my staff has reviewed the provisions of the bill to compare the new one with the previous bill that was dealt with by the House to ensure that it is in the same form, and I will so indicate. First reading will then proceed.

If members have difficulties later on their review of the bill, I am sure they will raise the matter in a point of order, but we will be doing everything in our power to ensure that those are in exactly the same form they were when dealt with by the House previously.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA ACT

Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-4, An act to amend the Parliament of Canada Act (Ethics Commissioner and Senate Ethics Officer) and other Acts in consequence.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made previously, I would like to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-34 was in the previous session at the time of prorogation.

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-34 was at the time of prorogation of the 2nd session, 37th Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed approved at all stages and passed by the House.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES READJUSTMENT ACT

Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-5, an act respecting the effective date of the representation order of 2003.

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made previously, I would like to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-49 was in the previous session at the time of prorogation.

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

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-49 was at the time of prorogation of the 2nd session, 37th Parliament.

[*English*]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed adopted at all stages and passed by the House.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

• (1510)

[*Translation*]

ASSISTED HUMAN REPRODUCTION ACT

Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.) moved to introduce Bill C-6, an act respecting assisted human reproduction and related research.

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made earlier, I would like to inform you that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-13 was at the time of prorogation of the previous session.

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

[*English*]

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-13 was at the time of prorogation of the 2nd session, 37th Parliament. Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday,

February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed adopted at all stages and passed by the House.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY ACT, 2002

Hon. Tony Valeri (Minister of Transport, Lib.): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-7, an act to amend certain acts of Canada, and to enact measures for implementing the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, in order to enhance public safety.

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made earlier, I wish to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-17 at the time of prorogation.

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

[*Translation*]

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-17 was at the time of prorogation of the 2nd session, 37th Parliament.

[*English*]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed adopted at all stages and passed by the House.

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

[*Translation*]

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES OF CANADA ACT

Hon. Hélène Scherrer (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.) moved to introduce Bill C-8, an act to establish the Library and Archives of Canada, to amend the Copyright Act and to amend certain acts in consequence.

She said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the special order made earlier, I would like to inform you that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-36 was at the time of prorogation.

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

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-36 was at the time of prorogation of the 2nd session, 37th Parliament.

[*English*]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made Tuesday, February 10, 2004, the bill is deemed adopted at all stages and passed by the House.

Routine Proceedings

(Bill read the second time, considered in committee, reported, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

* * *

2010 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Hon. Stan Keyes (Minister of National Revenue and Minister of State (Sport), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I consider it a great privilege to stand in the House today for the first time as a minister of the Crown, and I am here to express the Government of Canada's best wishes to the people of Vancouver and Whistler as they prepare to celebrate the six year countdown tomorrow toward the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

I would also like to use this opportunity to reaffirm the federal government's collaborative approach and commitment to sport and physical activity in Canada.

Before I go any further, I would like to take a moment to recognize the hard-working and professional public servants who make up the Department of Canadian Heritage. I am fortunate to have such a committed group of dedicated people who ensure that the government's role in sport and physical activity in Canada is focused, efficient and delivers results.

[*Translation*]

Only with their continued support will the government be able to deliver on its commitments to sport and physical activity.

[*English*]

I would like to draw to the attention of all my hon. colleagues that in only a few short years from now Canada will have a chance to showcase our commitment to excellence when we host the world at the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver and Whistler.

As the throne speech said, the 2010 Winter Games are “an opportunity to reinforce participation in sport by Canadians, at the highest level and in our communities”.

Sport is about teamwork and only through teamwork can we ensure that Canada wins gold in 2010.

The federal government is not alone in this. Canada's sports system is based on partnerships and its sustainability relies upon the full support of governments at all levels, sport organizations, the private sector, communities and volunteers.

Hosting the 2010 winter games will bring tangible benefit for Canada's developing and high performance athletes and to the country as a whole.

Our commitment to creating a lasting legacy will mean more than facilities. It will be the expertise that is developed among officials and volunteers. It will be the pride Canadians will feel in themselves, their communities and their country. There will be the stories we will share as a nation for generations to come.

The games will also give Canada an opportunity to showcase the world, not only our sport excellence, but also our innovation, culture and values. Values like inclusion.

The cultural component of these games, which will include a strong emphasis on the culture of our first nations, is already shaping up to be nothing short of spectacular.

Over the next six years, the 2010 winter games undoubtedly will heighten the interest of Canadians in sport and physical activity.

This brings me to my overriding goal as Minister of State for Sport. I want to get more Canadians participating in sport and physical activity. I want to ensure that the barriers to participation are reduced.

That means creating opportunities in sport for more new Canadians, young people, economically disadvantaged people, persons with a disability, aboriginal people and especially aboriginal children and youth.

As the father of two soccer playing daughters, I can see firsthand the effect of sport on young people. It improves their health and fitness, teaches them important life lessons, bolsters their confidence and self-esteem, and builds friendships and social skills.

As member of Parliament for Hamilton West I have seen how sport can improve the lives of people whose circumstances have put them on the margins of society.

● (1515)

[*Translation*]

I intend to work hard to remove the barriers to participation faced by specific groups, such as persons with disabilities, youth at risk, and young and teenage women.

[*English*]

I am operating from the deep belief that sport has the ability to transform lives. I know this belief is shared by many of my colleagues in this place. It is my duty to ensure it is understood by all Canadians.

This point was hit home to me just a couple of weeks ago when I was travelling in western Canada. While in Edmonton, I met with members of the aboriginal community there. As members may know, Canada hosted the 2002 North American Indigenous Games.

I was told that in the months leading up to and following that event, when many aboriginal young people were in training, there was a notable decline in the number of young aboriginals who take their lives. That is the power of sport.

This ties in directly with our government's priorities as announced recently in the Speech from the Throne, strengthening Canada's social foundations. Sport has a unique and important role to play.

All our communities come to life on their soccer and baseball fields, in their hockey rinks and on their tennis courts, and in their sailing and rowing clubs. People of all ages and all walks of life come together in activities that help them lead more healthier and productive lives.

Routine Proceedings

The more Canadians involve themselves in sport, encourage the volunteerism encompassed in sport, ensure we have an ethically based sport system, and give our top athletes the support they need, we make Canada a leading sport nation. In doing all this, we reap the benefits of a healthier population, stronger communities and a broader base of participants for future excellence in sport.

We can do all these things by building on the commitments already laid out in the historic *Canadian Sport Policy*, the blueprint of the future of sport in Canada.

The Government of Canada invests \$90 million a year toward initiatives both to get Canadians involved in sport and to support our high performance athletes. This investment is leveraged by our partnerships throughout the provinces and in communities.

Canadians understand the value of sport and physical activity in our society. The Government of Canada, along with our partners, will work hard to ensure that more Canadians, regardless of circumstance, can realize the benefits.

As we look ahead to Athens this summer and further down the road to Vancouver and Whistler in 2010, we should remember to cheer on our athletes who make us so proud as they serve as our ambassadors to the world. Their path to excellence has been made with great personal sacrifices in time and in money.

Finally, we need to acknowledge the importance of coaches to the success of Canadian athletes and how they enjoy their sport, and ensure that we have world class coaching to back up our world class athletes.

All of this work is going toward making Canada a leading sport nation. I am appealing to all of my colleagues in the House and to all of my fellow Canadians to help me spread the message to get active and by doing so build better communities through sport.

• (1520)

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer my sincere congratulations to the minister on his appointment to cabinet. I look forward to working with the minister in this important area.

I want to thank the hon. minister for taking time to address the House this afternoon. However, at this particular time, I think we are hearing from the wrong minister. Sport is a very important portfolio, to be sure. I played a lot of sports in my day and I still feel if it was slow pitch, I could get back to it again. I do not run the bases quite as fast as I used to, but it has been great. I have always been a team player.

Considering recent events transpiring outside the House, we should be hearing from a minister in response to the serious problems raised in the Auditor General's report that was tabled yesterday.

I have no doubt the people of Vancouver and Whistler appreciate the kind words and best wishes as offered by the minister. In fact, I too, on behalf of the people of Perth—Middlesex and the Conservative Party of Canada, want to let all Canadians know how proud we are of the folks out in Vancouver and Whistler.

I have every confidence that the 2010 Paralympic and Olympic Winter Games will be some of the most successful ever and will serve to showcase Canada in all its magnificent splendour. I somehow think, however, that the good folks in the Vancouver-Whistler area would appreciate if the government would be accountable, not misappropriate funds, and spend responsibly. One of the keys in sport is to play by the rules. The government should set a good example and play by the rules.

It is also nice to recognize the great work done by the vast majority of the country's civil servants. Sadly, because of the actions on the part of the government, many hard-working professional civil servants will see the reputation of their professions tarnished. I bet they would rather see the government conduct itself in a proper fashion and would gladly forgo the occasional pat on the back.

Sport is about teamwork. The minister is right about that, though one could make the same observation about government.

Why does the government not want to work with all the hon. members? From BSE to softwood lumber, from the state of Canada's underfunded military to the awful treatment of our veterans, why will the government not take this attitude concerning the importance of teamwork to these areas?

I want to help and the people of Perth—Middlesex want to help. I can assure the House that my colleagues in the Conservative Party of Canada want to help. When will the government start acting as partners in the House so that we can help and work toward policies that will benefit Canadians?

I hope the minister's stated desire to involve more aboriginals, new Canadians, young people, economically disadvantaged people and persons with disabilities is a sentiment that he is serious about. These are excellent objectives indeed. I will be most pleased if we can achieve success on these fronts.

What I do not understand is how huge payments, false receipts, false invoices and untendered contracts handed out to friends of the Liberal Party of Canada with Canadians receiving little or no value possibly moves Canada any closer to achieving these noble goals? We are mired in a culture of corruption. As more evidence comes to light regarding this matter, it is becoming evident this type of irresponsible and scandalous behaviour is rampant throughout the day to day operations of the government.

Experts are reporting this to be arguably the greatest scandal in Canadian history. I must admit that in reading through the Auditor General's report last night I found cause for great concern. When Canadians are bombarded with one scandal after another, with mismanagement—

• (1525)

The Speaker: Order, please. I know the hon. member is responding to a statement by a minister concerning amateur sport. It sounds to me as though he has gone far from the mark on amateur sport. I know he will want to get back to the subject in the limited time remaining for his remarks. The purpose of the response is to deal with the subject of the matter raised.

Mr. Gary Schellenberger: Mr. Speaker, I will talk to the coaches. I have been a coach. I have been a volunteer and I have great support for all those people.

Routine Proceedings

I support 100% the minister's remarks. I will gladly work with the minister to help achieve these goals, but to achieve these goals we will have to be willing to show real commitment, to put our heart and soul into this. In the absence of this, I will hold the government's feet to the fire. It is wrong to give people false hope. Let us make things happen.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak about the countdown to the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2010 to be held in Vancouver and Whistler.

On behalf of all my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would like to extend my best wishes to all those who will, directly or indirectly, work very hard, with force and determination, to make this sports event hugely successful and show that success rests not merely on individual athletes, but on a large team in which each individual contribution is specific and significant.

As the Minister of State for Sport said previously, sport is a team effort. I agree entirely with that premise. Let me take this opportunity to salute some members of that team who ultimately will reach the podium of excellence, those who will give us huge emotions: the athletes themselves.

As a member of Parliament, but also as the Bloc Québécois critic for amateur sports, I often meet athletes and speak with them about their training, the humongous sacrifices they have to make and the strong spirit they must have to become elite athletes.

We have no idea of the daily discipline required by athletes who hope one day to stand on the winners' podium. Every time I meet them, I am profoundly impressed by their determination and their desire to keep improving. Every time, however, the same issue crops up: the crying need for funding for top level athletes.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time I have spoken about this situation. Many athletes and organizations have spoken out many times. Just recently, the Canadian Freestyle Ski Association has been criticized on many fronts. A number of athletes have reported that they received only tiny amounts, if anything at all, from their association to help defray their expenses for training and travel, even though the association receives over \$2 million in funding from Sport Canada.

How did this situation come about? Is it a problem with this association's management of public funds? Or is there simply not enough money to meet the athletes' needs? The situation is totally unacceptable.

I have written to the new Minister of State for Sport about this situation, asking him to intervene with the management of the Canadian Freestyle Skiing Association to have them open their books and be accountable. I am still waiting for the minister's reply.

Still, given the urgency of the situation and the fact that freestyle skiing will be a very important discipline at the 2010 Olympic Winter Games, now is the time to invest and give our athletes the financial and material resources they need, in order to help them as best we can.

We must not wait for 2010 to realize that we should have done something. It will be too late. It is very important that our athletes be able to train in adequate conditions and that they do not have to bear the entire financial burden of training, or travel, which, after all, is necessary to participate in competitions.

When we see scandals like the sponsorship affair come to light and be confirmed by an Auditor General's report, we realize that millions of dollars are wasted shamefully, and the whole community suffers.

I am sure that the athletes of Quebec and Canada would have loved to receive that wasted \$100 million. It is simply scandalous. Imagine: \$100 million for the friends of the party in power, while our athletes live below the poverty line. It is unacceptable.

Can we picture what \$100 million represents? It is almost the total amount the government spends on sport. It is exactly twice the amount requested annually by the athletes and sports organizations.

The new Minister of State for Sport said that athletes should be provided with the high level of support they need to succeed in order for Canada to become a world leader in sports.

When will he put his money where his mouth is? The government better not try to tell us there is no money. What with surpluses estimated at more than \$4 billion, amateur sport has every right to ask for a substantial budget increase, and the minister must act now.

On the eve of the next budget, I call on the Minister of State for Sport to get assurances from the Minister of Finance that the money will be available for this year's competitions, so that our athletes are ready for the 2010 Olympic Games.

● (1530)

I would like to conclude by telling the very sad story of Karine Sergerie. This young woman could have gone to the top of the podium at the next Olympic Games in Athens, but her dream was shattered because of technicalities.

This young Quebecker was denied a place on the Canadian team by Taekwondo Canada despite the fact that she is ranked second in the world. It is hard to imagine that one of the world's top Taekwondo athletes will not be going to the Olympics.

Words cannot describe my indignation. Yet, the Minister of State for Sport was just talking about the federal government's commitment to creating more opportunities for athletes. He also talked about inclusion. I wonder what those words mean to the minister and his government.

The best I can hope for is that this sad incident will never happen again and that all those who aspire to go to the 2010 Winter Games will be able to train in dignity and with all the respect we owe our athletes, who bring us pride and honour.

[*English*]

Mr. Dick Proctor (Palliser, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too wish to begin by congratulating the minister on his portfolio. It is something that those of us who have been here for a little while know he has been interested in for many years.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

At the same time, I wish to acknowledge his predecessors, the member for Bourassa, now President of the Treasury Board, and the member for Simcoe North, both of whom have also worked hard to develop sports in Canada.

[English]

The debate about priorities for sports funding always seems to me a debate about more money to develop the elite athletes and the coaches who train them, or more money to build facilities for the masses. Therefore I want to congratulate the minister for stating his overriding goal in his statement earlier this afternoon to have more Canadians participating in sport and physical activity and to ensure that the barriers to participation are reduced, although we in this caucus note no reference at all to seniors in this discussion. There is lots of reference to young people, and we recognize the importance of the association of youth and sports, but we recognize that we also have to get our seniors more engaged in physical activity.

We see this debate about priorities even today. The minister is using the countdown six years from now to the 2010 Olympic Games in Vancouver-Whistler to inform Canadians that his overriding goal is indeed mass participation. On this point he talked about the marginal and the disadvantaged. I would encourage the minister to look carefully at private member's Bill C-210 by the member for Sackville—Musquodoboit Valley—Eastern Shore which would offer tax relief for people who help offset rising costs of participating in sports for young people by giving them a tax deduction similar to what Canadians currently are allowed for charitable donations.

I am reminded of Grantland Rice, the great American sportswriter who said, "When the one great scorer comes to write against your name, he will ask not if you won or lost but how you played the game". Too many of our younger people, and the minister to his credit referenced it, are not participating because they do not have the wherewithal to participate. They do not have the facilities. They do not have the equipment. We need to recognize that and do something about it.

In the minister's opening remarks on this topic, he said that he was fortunate to have such an amazing group of dedicated people at Sports Canada. In agreeing fully with that assessment, I want to pay tribute to an important individual who no longer is with us but who made a significant contribution to sport in Canada. That is the late Jim Thompson who was the chief executive officer and secretary general of the Canadian Olympic Association.

As the House may recall, Jim died very suddenly and unexpectedly in Vancouver 18 months ago. He was there to help the Vancouver-Whistler committee prepare what turned out to be an eventually successful bid.

Many years earlier I had the good fortune to work with Jim Thompson when he was a young production assistant and later on a very young producer at CBC network sports. He went on to become eventually the president of The Sports Network before taking early retirement. He was persuaded to come out of retirement and assume responsibility for the Canadian Olympic Association and the Vancouver-Whistler bid.

Although our paths had crossed very infrequently over the years, I happened to meet with him at the Toronto airport as he was leaving to go to Vancouver in August 2002, less than two days before his untimely death. We talked about the chances of the Vancouver bid and his views on where Sports Canada emphasis should be in the debate about funding elite athletes versus the general funding for participation.

Jim Thompson was an integral part of sports development in Canada over several decades. He certainly deserves to be recognized on this occasion because it is not just the athletes and the coaches who make immense sacrifices. In this instance Jim Thompson made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of his country, Sports Canada and the Canadian Olympic Association. To his wife and children we thank them for allowing Jim Thompson to work for something he truly believed in.

We in this caucus congratulate the Vancouver-Whistler committee for its successful Olympic bid. We look forward to a well run Olympic Winter Games six years from now.

We look forward to more Canadians availing themselves of the opportunity to join in the fun of participating in sports and the health benefits they will derive from such activity. In wishing our elite athletes every success in their international competitions, we in the NDP caucus also recognize that involving millions more Canadians in sports, physical activity and reviving the Participation program will also be worthy of a gold medal for this country.

● (1535)

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have here the report establishing the committees, which has been signed by all five whips. Discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning the membership and associate membership of committees be deemed tabled and concurred in without debate.

● (1540)

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Does the House give its consent to the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-475, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (tuition credit and education credit).

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a honour for me to rise today to introduce my bill after a lot of consultations across Canada and to give first reading to my private member's bill which seeks to amend the Income Tax Act by extending the tuition credit and education credit to individuals who follow a formal course of instruction provided by a qualified music instructor.

At the present time, music instructors who do not teach in a recognized institution of higher learning are ineligible to provide their students with this benefit, despite the fact that their training could be the same or more advanced than an instructor in an institution. Certainly the great benefit to the student is no less, whether or not they are enrolled in a recognized institution.

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

* * *

PETITIONS

CONSTITUTION ACT

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from people in rural communities who feel abandoned under the government by the government enforcing gun control, animal control, unnecessary pollution and waste control, and farmland, bush and forest control, a debt for which we are not responsible.

They are asking Parliament to correct Trudeau's mistake of 1982 and amend the Constitution Act of 1867 to include the right to own, use and earn a living from private property.

MARRIAGE

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions signed by hundreds of people in my riding and in surrounding ridings.

The petitioners are calling upon the government to look at the moral values of our society. They believe that the defence of traditional marriage as the bond between one man and one woman is a serious moral good. They also believe that marriage, as a lasting union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of others, cannot and should not be modified by a legislative act or a court of law.

They request that Parliament take whatever action is required to maintain the current definition of marriage in law in perpetuity and to prevent any court from overturning or amending that definition.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Paul Steckle (Huron—Bruce, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from petitioners who draw to the attention of the House and all Canadians that the Auditor General's report submitted to Parliament on December 3, 2002, determined that the cost of the federal firearms registry for long guns at that time was perceived to have exceeded \$1 billion; and a recent administrative review verified that the gun registry would cost another \$541 million before it was fully implemented; and the fact that eight provinces, three territories, police associations, police chiefs and police officers across Canada have withdrawn their support of the firearms registry for long guns; and that recent public opinion polls have demonstrated that a majority of Canadian taxpayers support the abolition of the firearms registry.

They therefore call upon Parliament to abolish the national firearms registry for long guns and to redirect those taxes to programs in support of health care and law enforcement.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table several petitions, the first two pertaining to the concerns Canadians have about the future of our health care system.

They are very concerned that the Government of Canada has not adopted any of the recommendations in the report by the Romanow commission. They are concerned that the government has not adhered to the fundamental principle of maintaining a not for profit health care system.

They call upon the government to act as quickly as possible to apply the recommendations of the Romanow report and to ensure that the federal-provincial wrangling over health care is put to rest as soon as possible.

● (1545)

LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from Canadians who join thousands of others across the country to express their concern about the failure of Parliament to enact or to have the government enact the motion for alcohol warning labels dealing with FAS or fetal alcohol syndrome.

The petitioners indicate that the awareness of the hazards of consuming alcohol while pregnant has been shown to reduce alcohol consumption during pregnancy and they believe that legislative and regulatory changes to prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages in Canada, unless the warning label is affixed on the bottle, is absolutely required to prevent the serious and growing incidence of fetal alcohol syndrome in our society today.

MARRIAGE

Mr. John Cummins (Delta—South Richmond, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me today to present this petition. The signatures were collected by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the petition addresses the issue of marriage.

The petitioners note that the best foundation for families and the raising of children is the institution of marriage and that it being the union of a man and woman. They call on Parliament to uphold the commitment it made in June 1999 to ensure that marriage be recognized as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jeannot Castonguay (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table in the House a petition signed by 92 people in my constituency, who call upon Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage as the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

*The Address**[English]*

Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting two petitions. The first petition is one which was initiated by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and has been signed by a number of residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas on the subject of marriage.

The petitioners suggest that marriage is the best foundation for families and the raising of children. They note that the institution of marriage as being between a man and a woman is being challenged. They make reference to a motion that was passed in this House in June 1999 and state that marriage is the exclusive jurisdiction of Parliament.

They call upon 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.

I have a second petition signed by hundreds of residents of my constituency of Burnaby—Douglas and people from across Canada on the same subject.

The petitioners note that same sex couples form loving and committed relationships but are denied the equal ability to celebrate those relationships through marriage. They suggest that the protection of true family values requires that all families be respected equally and that denying same sex couples the equal right to marry reinforces attitudes of intolerance and discrimination.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to enact legislation providing same sex couples with the equal right to marry.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 I have the privilege to present to the House a petition signed by concerned constituents from my riding of Crowfoot, more specifically, individuals from the areas of Camrose, Ohaton, Bawlf, Meeting Creek, Rosalind, Alberta.

The petitioners call upon the government to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as being the union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

I take a great deal of privilege and pleasure in introducing this petition.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition signed by 265 Canadians. Whereas a recent court decision has redefined marriage as the union of one man and one woman, whereas we regard it as a dangerous precedent for democracy in Canada when appointed judges rather than elected members of Parliament create law for our land, they ask Parliament to reaffirm now, as it did in 1999, its commitment to preserve marriage as specifically the union of one man and one woman only.

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition signed by several hundred people in my riding in the city of Calgary.

They point out that the gun registry has cost \$1 billion, that it is not supported by the provinces and that it has not reduced gun crimes. Therefore they call upon Parliament to repeal the gun registry.

I think it makes perfect sense. They have obviously well documented their case.

MARRIAGE

Mr. David Chatters (Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to present three petitions, all on the same subject.

The petitioners from across my riding, from one end to the other, urge the government to move to protect and preserve the definition of marriage as that between one man and one woman.

* * *

● (1550)

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 Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement, government orders will be extended by 25 minutes.

* * *

[Translation]

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY

The House resumed from February 5 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session, and of the amendment.

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today on the occasion of the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

With yesterday's disclosure by the Auditor General of the sponsorship scandal, we can see that there is a huge contradiction between the PM's desire to spend tax dollars wisely and reality.

The purpose of my speech therefore is to focus on these contradictions, in order to show the public in Quebec and in Canada that the present government is nothing more than a carbon copy of the Chrétien government.

On page 5 of the printed Speech from the Throne, we read the following statement:

To this end, the Government is launching an ongoing process of expenditure review, overseen by a new Committee of Cabinet. This will ensure that spending reflects priorities and that every tax dollar is invested with care to achieve results for Canadians.

The Address

Allow me to tell you that, as a longstanding member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I find this statement by the Prime Minister particularly offensive. The specific purpose of that committee is to scrutinize government spending in order to ensure that the taxpayers' dollars are properly invested, within a democratic process in which all official parties of this House are represented.

Moreover, the committee works in close cooperation with the Office of the Auditor General of Canada to, once again, ensure that the government does not get away with wasting taxpayers' money, as was the case, among others, in the infamous sponsorship scandal.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. He will, of course, support the numerous points that I am raising regarding this throne speech.

The Prime Minister wants to eliminate the democratic deficit in this House and give more powers to MPs. Yet, he intends to set up a very partisan cabinet committee, without any opposition members sitting on it. This is some contradiction. Where is the democracy in this process? Where is the transparency in this new committee?

We have yet to see whether the new Liberal cross-bencher, the member for Châteauguay, who made some interesting discoveries in the government's extravagant spending, particularly in the sponsorship scandal, will expose other financial scandals. I doubt it.

It is interesting to read in the throne speech that Canadians expect the government to use their taxes wisely and want to have the assurance that public funds, which means their money, will be used properly.

If the past is any indication of the future, Quebeckers and Canadians are justified in not trusting the new Prime Minister to make proper use of their taxes. Let me explain why.

First, as regards the sponsorship scandal, which is probably one of the worst cases of corruption and waste in the history of Canadian politics, the new Prime Minister has the nerve to tell us that he did not know anything about it. Let me point out some facts.

The new Prime Minister was the Minister of Finance and Vice-President of the Treasury Board for most of the time that the sponsorship program was in existence. He is the one who signed the cheques that were used to increase the federal government's visibility all across Quebec.

Yet, he never condemned this abuse of public funds for the sake of Canadian unity and for the benefit of the Liberal Party of Canada and its friends.

The Prime Minister now has the nerve to tell the public that he did not know about it, particularly now that these same Liberals are taking cover behind a public inquiry to try to save face before the upcoming election.

If the current Prime Minister had really wanted to act quickly, he would have arranged for the Auditor General's report to be tabled in November, as scheduled, and not during the February session.

Without waiting for the report of the Auditor General, he could have called a public inquiry two months ago, right after he took office. But no, he preferred to buy time.

The fact that he is calling a public inquiry at the last minute is evidence that he is putting the election first, and transparency second.

● (1555)

It has been the trademark of the federal Liberals ever since I was elected here, in 1997. The rest of my colleagues have witnessed what has happened since 1993.

Quebeckers will probably be voting in three months time without realizing the scope of the scam created by the government. They have the fortitude to tell us that each tax dollar will be carefully reinvested, when the Prime Minister and some of his ministers are neck deep in financial scandals like the sponsorship program. It is absolute hypocrisy. Where the Prime Minister is concerned, what we have seen is what we will get.

Let me give you another good example of bad faith that can be found in the throne speech. My political party, the Bloc Québécois, set up a special committee, the Léonard Committee, to examine federal programs. The committee has decided to review the expenditures of federal departments since 1997-1998, a reference year for the last two mandates of the former finance minister, now Prime Minister.

What we have found out is that the government has completely lost control over government expenditures for the entire period ending in 2002-2003. Over a five-year period, expenditures have gone up by 39%, compared to 9.6% for the inflation rate.

Is that what you would call making good use of taxpayers' money? In comparison, spending in Quebec and Ontario increased by 20% and 19.7% respectively. While the provinces were tightening their belts, the federal government was living it up in Ottawa.

A closer look at federal spending reveals multiple cases of excessive spending on the part of the government during the time when the administration of our country's finances was the responsibility of the current Prime Minister. For example, the government payroll increased by 41%; that of legal services by 141%; that of the federal Department of Health, which does not deliver any services to the public, by 78%; and that of CIDA by 132%.

As finance minister, the new Prime Minister acted deliberately in favouring federal administrative spending over services to the public. And he is the one who just told us, in the Speech from the Throne, that the money of Quebec and Canadian taxpayers must be put to good use.

And yet, had Ottawa increased its spending at the same rate as Quebec and Ontario did, the federal government would have extra fiscal manoeuvrability that would total, and listen carefully to this figure, \$5.7 billion a year.

The Address

It is a fiscal effort that the Prime Minister refused to make when he was finance minister, preferring to spend freely while making drastic cuts in transfer payments to Quebec and the provinces, particularly in the areas of health and education. Now he wants to call the shots in these two areas that are strictly under provincial jurisdiction by giving out money while controlling its use through national standards.

If the current Prime Minister was not competent as finance minister, believe me, the past will be an indication of what the future holds.

However, the Bloc Québécois committee is not the only one that has discovered this explosion in government spending. During the same period, the Office of the Auditor General gave repeated warnings about the fact that spending was getting out of control. As member of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, I have seen numerous examples of expenditures that were both unjustified and unjustifiable to the public. Our friends opposite can hardly accuse the Bloc Québécois of producing a partisan document when the Auditor General has come to practically the same conclusions as we have.

I come back to this famous committee. What will this new cabinet committee on government spending be all about? Just like the foundations, it will escape all parliamentary control. This committee will not give a real picture of government spending.

• (1600)

Instead of trusting democratic institutions like the Standing Committee on Public Accounts or the office of the Auditor General, which reports to Parliament, the Prime Minister would rather trust a partisan committee to make sure every tax dollar is wisely spent. Is this a way to erase the democratic deficit? I have my doubts.

Now a word on the throne speech. Besides broad philosophical statements, there is hardly anything concrete, and certainly nothing on rural and regional development. Not a word either on the two big crises affecting the regions: softwood lumber and mad cow disease.

I still have much more to say, but my time is running out. To conclude, let me say that tomorrow, I am going back to work on the public accounts standing committee. Together with my colleagues in the opposition, I will do everything I can to demonstrate beyond any doubt that the Liberal Party of Canada, the Prime Minister included, is responsible for the sponsorship scandal.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*Translation*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD AND OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe that you will find consent for the following motion:

That notwithstanding Standing Order 106(1), the Standing Committees on Agriculture and Agri-Food as well as Official Languages be permitted to meet on Thursday, February 12, 2004 at 11:00 a.m. for the purposes of Standing Order 106(2).

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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, and of the amendment.

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Bloc member's speech. It was very interesting to see that, according to his statements, the Bloc Québécois is even in a position of perhaps becoming the Auditor General's substitute. I find it interesting that, as a consequence of their talks in committee, the Bloc members have come to the same conclusion as the Auditor General.

The question I would like to ask the member is simply this. Does he not believe in the system that exists here to find out what happened?

Instead of trying to find partisan motives to perhaps score some political points, would he not come to the conclusion that, even if there are issues raised by the Auditor General, he will have the opportunity, as early as tomorrow, without any delay, to contribute to finding the answers that are very necessary, not only for Quebecers, but also for all Canadians?

Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ): Mr. Speaker, of course I will be asking the Auditor General some questions. She will certainly provide answers.

However, I will remind the member opposite that we, on this side, have asked 441 questions on the sponsorship scam. We did not get any answer. All we saw was a cover-up. Ministers have been passing the buck back and forth. We saw their faces turn red—which is the right colour for a Liberal, I guess—as they learned about the whole sponsorship issue.

Of course, we will do everything we can in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. We will be the first ones to welcome the Auditor General. We will be authorized to identify witnesses who will be able to confirm what we already suspect, which will help us carry out our duties.

I would just point out to my hon. colleague opposite that I remember the sad scenario that was the Groupaction inquiry, where the Liberals decided that our sittings would be in camera. We heard from Chuck Guité and Pierre Tremblay. I respected the secrecy surrounding those in camera sittings, others did not. Without getting into what was said, I can tell you that the answers they provided matched exactly what the Auditor General said yesterday.

The Address

As for the Auditor General, when I asked her if it was the worst report or the worst situation she has seen since she has been appointed Auditor General, do you know what she told me? She said, "I do not dare say it is the worst because each time I do an audit, each time I examine similar issues, I am always surprised." In her mind, this is not over.

You can therefore imagine all the work that awaits the Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the famous public inquiry. I do hope that the Liberals opposite, who are asking us to cooperate, will also cooperate by postponing the election so that the truth can come out and Canadians can get to the bottom of this scandal.

● (1605)

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague, the member for Lotbinière—L'Érable, for his excellent speech.

In my opinion, as far as the management of public funds is concerned, the capacity of the Prime Minister and former finance minister has been overestimated. I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the skills of the Prime Minister, especially his past as finance minister, particularly as concerns the scandal at HRDC where a billion dollars disappeared into thin air. Another billion was wasted on gun control. Now, it is the cronies who received \$250 million.

Would my colleague say the Prime Minister and former finance minister is a good manager of public affairs?

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Lotbinière—L'Érable has very little time to answer.

Mr. Odina Desrochers: Mr. Speaker, in such a short time, I will give a clear answer. I think it is a sure sign of incompetence not to have been able to keep track of all these matters and various departments.

I hope he will be more efficient as a Prime Minister than he was as a finance minister.

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today in the debate on the address in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

My first reaction, as I listened to the throne speech, was to wonder what kind of a bubble we are living in here in Ottawa. The speech was completely unreal. We came back from the parliamentary break having worked hard in our constituencies, where people told us about their real problems, such as the softwood lumber crisis, for example.

Thousands of jobs in Quebec, British Columbia and Ontario have disappeared. Both the workers and the industry representatives were expecting that there would be new measures announced in the Speech from the Throne that would give them the means to get through the crisis and hang on until the final judgment. We won one case yesterday, but it will probably be 6 to 9 months before we are done.

There was no mention of all this in the throne speech, no offer to extend the transitional measures to deal with the softwood lumber crisis, for example. These measures expire on March 31 and it is

impossible to extend the deadline for the cases that are under consideration but could not be finally settled. We need a second phase. There is nothing in the throne speech about that.

Another real-life problem people back home have been talking about is the mad cow crisis. Milk producers used to sell their cull cows—cows that no longer produce milk—for their meat. Later, they found themselves in a strange situation, where, because one sick cow was found in western Canada and another in the United States, the market was completely paralyzed. On this matter the federal government has remained completely inflexible and has offered clearly inadequate programs.

The crisis is not over, and today producers are saddled with heavy debt. They have been urged on numerous occasions to invest in their businesses, told that attractive market opportunities would be created. Then, when the mad cow crisis struck, the federal government was unable to implement a tracking system in time to avoid a Canada-wide crisis.

Instead of allowing the former Minister of Agriculture and Agri-food to say that he was going to treat all animals in Canada the same, there could have been a tracking system in place in order to know whether the problem was in Alberta or Saskatchewan. As a result, exports from there could have been banned. During the European mad cow crisis, the entire European market was not closed. Only those actually involved were affected, and their geographical area targeted.

We were expecting some measures for the producers to be included in the throne speech. This is a concrete problem in all of our ridings. But no, the same great desire for maintaining a high profile, for visibility achieved through interference in areas of provincial jurisdiction, was evident. Reference was made, for instance, to day care, an area in which Quebec is in the lead role. The federal government wants to interfere in this, as well as in the community sector, which is not its place.

Why do we have a throne speech that is so far divorced from reality? Because we have a federal system in which the federal government is after a degree of visibility that its areas of jurisdiction do not lend to it, yet it does not shoulder its responsibilities. It puts visibility before responsibility.

That is far from funny, when we are hearing that the Canadian army is under-equipped, that our military personnel do not have what they need. That is a federal jurisdiction. Still, they are announcing piecemeal funding yet again. Today we hear there is another \$5 billion surplus this year.

The bafflegab that propels this government also fuelled the Speech from the Throne. Last fall, we were told there no longer was surpluses, that it would take great pains to provide the provinces with the \$2 billion for health and that it would be impossible to provide more. Today, the papers reported that \$5 billion is being put on the table. Is this supposed to go unnoticed and unexplained amidst the sponsorship scandal? People are not blind. The reality is very clear to see.

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With respect to the Speech from the Throne, I feel like bursting the bubble, so that the people who make decisions in government and write these speeches know what is really going on and see the real problems that need to be resolved.

Seniors are another group that has been making representations to us on a regular basis. They are going through a difficult situation. For the past few years, their old age pension has been only partially indexed. That means that over a three-year period, they were denied a quarter, a half, or a full per cent. Now these people who receive small incomes have lost their purchasing power.

● (1610)

Imagine what would happen if we, in this House, did not receive indexation. Or imagine this happening in an entirely different sector. We would rise to say this is unacceptable. Senior citizens have not been given a voice. There should have been something in the throne speech about fully indexing pensions and providing retroactive indexation to those who have lost their purchasing power.

The price of drugs has increased in the past few years. Seniors have such specific needs that their shopping carts are quite different from the average citizen's. The price increase for some products has exceeded inflation. There should be something about that in the throne speech.

Why not have said there was going to be retroactive indexing of the guaranteed income supplement? Some 270,000 Canadians have been left in the cold for many years by not being paid what they are owed. All hon. members must have heard of such cases in their ridings in recent months because the Bloc Québécois kicked up such a fuss that the department responded. I can give more examples of these situations.

For example, three weeks ago I learned that someone had sent the form three months ago, but had not yet heard anything. We checked and got this person registered. However, the payments are not retroactive.

This is strange, because companies that have their head offices in Barbados got a tax break, as we discussed recently. The ships, the companies that belong to the Prime Minister, to his family, were able to benefit from a retroactive measure to save taxes. It is strange to see that such benefit is provided to the current Prime Minister, to his family, to an industry through tax havens, but not to the elderly who would really need a break.

We are not talking about surplus or excess money. We are talking about money that people absolutely need. Why is the throne speech silent on this issue? Why does the federal government only propose measures that have no real impact, that do not reflect the daily concerns of people, that have nothing to do with the challenges that the public expects the government to meet?

All this, not to mention what we are finding out about the sponsorship scandal these days, generates cynicism in our society. The Bloc Québécois has asked 441 questions on this issue. We are not talking about one, two, ten or a hundred questions, but about 441 questions to finally get the government to say that, in light of the Auditor General's report, something will have to be done.

Why is it that no minister, no Liberal member has stood up in this House or in public and said, "We must thoroughly examine these files. We must clean things up. We must put things back in order".

The government even delayed the tabling of the Auditor General's report, which was scheduled for November. The government postponed it to early February 2004 to make sure that the election will be so close that things will quickly move on; also, the announcement of a public inquiry will obviate the need to provide explanations. It is fine to have an independent public inquiry, but we must ensure that it is truly independent. We must also ensure that the inquiry can be conducted quickly.

In the end, there will be a political price to pay. The public simply cannot still feel that this government can continue to lead Canada. The public will have to pass a very harsh judgment. There are often cases where concrete involvement is not obvious, but here it is very clear.

I did a radio interview a little while ago with people from my riding. The host and I were saying that the \$100 million that flowed to the buddies with the advertising agencies, for sponsorships, would have made a heck of a big investment in route 185, a highway in my riding that has killed 100 people in 10 years.

The government could have been proud to make an investment like that. Instead, the money was deliberately poured out. The inquiry will have to make things very clear, because those people did not do that for nothing.

There was a Minister of Public Works who was also responsible for political organizing. There were at least five federal agencies involved in this operation and there were many people, members of Parliament, ministers in this very government, who are still deeply involved.

In conclusion, this is a throne speech that has nothing to do with the type of reality we would like to see in a throne speech. The general public is seriously fed up and thinks the politicians are not serious at all. We need to tell them that within the broad class known as politicians, there is the Liberal government that has done these deeds and there are members who rose in this House, including the Bloc Québécois, 441 times, to ask for a public inquiry, and to ask for details about this affair.

And we hope that the government has received the message because, if it has not, I predict that the public will be sending the message very directly in the next election.

● (1615)

Hon. Dan McTeague (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make some comments on the statements made by the member for Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques. Of course, we worked together on the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. Consequently, I have a lot of respect for him. I know that he is dedicated and thoughtful, particularly in the area of competition. I also invite him to continue the great battle started a few months ago.

I am interested in his comments concerning a lack of response to the elderly and to pensioners. He even used the word “drug”. I find this interesting because, in the same context, he also used the word “cynicism”. He said that the government's program is cynical.

I find this interesting because he linked the throne speech to the sponsorship issue, with the intention of really showing his constituents and people who are listening that there is a \$100 million problem.

However, he knows quite well that, when it comes to drug patents, the position of the Bloc Québécois would cost \$428 million a year, because there is a flaw in the drug system that was created by the previous Conservative government.

I tried to change the situation to save \$428 million a year for a pill and the member simply said, “No. We will leave this flaw with regard to automatic injunctions”. How can he focus on \$100 million that were lost, and when it comes to the poor and the elderly in his riding, in Quebec or in Canada, he forgets the billions of dollars that are wasted because of a flaw in the bill on drug patents. I find this cynical.

● (1620)

Mr. Paul Crête: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his comments. This reminded me that there is something which should have been included in the throne speech, namely the recommendation that the hon. member himself supported to set up a petroleum monitoring agency.

The government talks about parliamentary reform. We are told that the opinion of a larger number of MPs will be taken into consideration. However, a majority of committee members, including government members, made a recommendation, but the throne speech makes no mention of it. Yet, every day, people can see the yo-yo effect, in the economy, caused by the sudden increases and decreases in the price of gas. Why does the throne speech not address a concrete issue such as this one?

As for pharmaceutical products, it is obviously a very complex issue. We must look at the overall impact of the decisions. It goes without saying that this issue needs to be thoroughly reviewed. That was done by the committee. But there is nothing on this subject in the throne speech. The hon. member's own government did not deem necessary to deal with this issue.

There is a bill on pharmaceuticals to provide, as soon as possible, third world countries with the proper drugs to deal with some diseases like AIDS. I think we do indeed need to find ways to deal with the problem. The same thing goes for drugs.

We need to strike a balance and come up with proposals to ensure that we have efficient research programs to develop new products and that we also have the capacity to manufacture generic products to keep the price down.

No one has been able yet to convince me that eliminating the middlemen would solve the problem. To pretend that such a well-thought position could lead to the unavailability of some pharmaceuticals is somewhat demagogic. Our position is thoughtful. We want reasonable costs for the elderly and for the rest of the people. Let us put this issue to rest. Let us give the committee a

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strong mandate and the authority to make recommendations to the government.

Lastly, like my hon. colleague, I think it is unfortunate that the throne speech is silent on this issue. It just goes to show that the throne speech was drafted in a bubble, here in Ottawa, by people totally disconnected from what is really going in our country and from the problems our constituents are facing.

[English]

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate in this debate on the Speech from the Throne. I will focus on the theme of regional and rural development. To emphasize the theme, may I quote from the speech as read by Her Excellency the Governor General, the Right Hon. Adrienne Clarkson:

The 21st century economy promises opportunity for all parts of Canada. The objective of the Government is 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.

The Government therefore remains committed to supporting economic development through the regional agencies where the focus must be on strengthening the sinews of an economy for the 21st century, building on indigenous strength.

As Minister of Western Economic Diversification, as the member of Parliament for Winnipeg North—St. Paul, and as a Canadian, I am proud to be part of an agenda that respects and responds to the concerns of western Canadians.

The Speech from the Throne demonstrates the government's commitment to a new way of working, built as it is on partnership, opportunity, achievement, and the engagement of all Canadians at the local level.

The directions and priorities outlined in the speech are good news for the west and for all of Canada. Our Prime Minister has pledged to open the doors in Ottawa to the voice of all of our regions and to adopt new ways of working together on behalf of all Canadians.

I intend to help make that happen. At Western Economic Diversification Canada—or WD for brevity—we have the networks and the programs to find local solutions for local problems.

We have it in the recently renewed economic partnership agreements that WD signed with each of the western provinces, agreements that will invest \$200 million in strategic economic and community development projects based on regionally identified needs and priorities. Previous agreements leveraged an additional \$458 million from the private sector and we expect this positive collaboration to continue.

The Speech from the Throne also correctly targets the health of communities as key to our social goals, to our economic competitiveness, and to our environmental concerns.

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The commitment of the west to these goals comes through loud and clear with initiatives such as the Vancouver agreement and the Winnipeg urban development agreement, which is in the final stages of negotiation.

These innovative agreements bring together all three levels of government, with the private sector, the voluntary sector and community partners, to address social, economic and environmental challenges unique to each city. These agreements demonstrate the importance of the Speech from the Throne's clear commitment to municipalities.

Health care, homelessness, new infrastructure, security and the full participation of aboriginal people and new immigrants in our new economy are issues that figure strongly as national concerns. We must remember that these issues are lived out and best understood at the local level. Hence, municipalities, both rural and urban, as well as other local actors, must have the resources to be effective partners in designing and implementing solutions.

In many Canadian cities, aboriginal people experience far worse conditions than their non-aboriginal counterparts. About 70% of Canada's aboriginal people live in the west, a growing number of whom live in urban areas.

WD therefore plays a strong role in Canada's urban aboriginal strategy, a partnership that brings all levels of government together with aboriginal groups, community organizations and the private sector. Our approach is one of coordinated effort to provide better access to a variety of targeted programs and services. The expansion of this program will improve conditions for many of our disadvantaged citizens. Clearly this is the right thing to do, not only for aboriginal people but for our nation as a whole.

• (1625)

In the west alone, it is estimated that over 200,000 jobs are needed within the next 15 years. By addressing the underlying barriers to full economic participation of disadvantaged communities and citizens, we will foster talent, creativity and determination, which will combine to form a tremendous new force to meet the challenges ahead. Indeed, our success as a nation depends on the contributions made by individual Canadians working together in their communities.

Here, too, the west shows its commitment through entrepreneurship, which has created a region with 40% more small businesses than elsewhere in Canada. The WD's business service network provides over 100 points of service to assist new and existing small businesses and to foster community capacity building. I am particularly pleased that the Speech from the Throne reinforces the importance of these initiatives, which do so much to enhance the vitality and quality of life in our communities.

I am one of the millions of immigrants who have come to this country and have chosen Canada to be our home. Myself, I emigrated from the Philippines 36 years ago as a young medical doctor. I am gratified, therefore, at the reference to ensuring the successful integration of new Canadians into our economy and our communities. One way is to have in Canada an orderly process for the accreditation of foreign obtained credentials in the fields of trades and the professions.

I am grateful that the Prime Minister has made this issue one key message in the Speech from the Throne, and he recently raised this issue with the premiers. I look forward to being part of the effort to ensure that others have the kind of access and the chance to fulfill their full potential and make a contribution to this great nation that were so generously extended to me.

When foreign obtained credentials of new Canadians and immigrants are not recognized, their dreams remain unfulfilled. More sad is that the dreams of Canada remain unfulfilled, for a nation always wants the best for all her citizens. By ensuring that all Canadians can fully participate in and contribute to this country's productivity and prosperity, we are ensuring a 21st century economy that is open to the world, a nation with the strong social foundations that are the envy of the international community.

Perhaps nowhere is that potential more evident than in the area of environmental technologies. Indeed, we in the west are transforming what we have learned from our resource based history and applying it to innovative new ventures that will help build a sustainable future for the generations to come.

British Columbia has become a global hot spot for the development and commercialization of fuel cells. Forecast to be a \$145 billion worldwide market by 2020 and to create 15,000 jobs for every billion in demand, fuel cells have the potential to be a huge driver of our social, environmental and economic progress.

Alberta is implementing, through Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada, an eco-efficient and greenhouse technologies program that will support the efforts of the hydrocarbon energy industry.

Saskatchewan's canola biodiesel is being explored as an alternative renewable fuel for diesel engines.

In Manitoba, WD is supporting innovative enterprises at the University of Manitoba's engineering labs to help create key industry clusters such as biotechnology and information technology.

On a pan-western note, I am pleased to say that WD, following extensive consultations, recently has funded the Canada West Health Innovation Council to champion the significant contribution health research and innovation can make to future economic growth and quality health care.

• (1630)

By acting now, Canada can get ahead of the curve and create a sustainable competitive advantage for the future, an advantage that will bring economic and social benefits to all Canadians.

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Finally, in renewing in the Speech from the Throne its commitment to regional development, the Government of Canada is recognizing Canada's dynamic diversity: geographic, linguistic and cultural, as well as the unique experience, knowledge and skills that exist in each region.

Indeed, regarding regional agencies, Donald Savoie of the University of Moncton recently said, "If they did not exist, the federal government would need to create them".

May I say that having visited my departmental staff in all four western provinces, I have been impressed with their hard work, dedication and understanding of the needs of the west. They are truly making a difference in the life of western Canada and, therefore, in the life of our entire nation.

The fact that WD is now a full department underscores how essential a uniquely western approach to regional development is for the future of the west.

I am proud to say that in building a stronger west, we are building a stronger Canada, a Canada committed to strengthening our social foundation, a Canada committed to building a truly innovative modern economy in the 21st century and a Canada that ensures it will play a significant role in the world, a Canada, if I quote the Prime Minister, "that speaks on the world stage".

It has been my pleasure to participate in this debate.

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his presentation. I noted in his speech that he quoted five different departments and stated that he would be working with those departments through Western Economic Development.

I would like to ask the minister about his commitment to the synchrotron at the University of Saskatchewan and also to our agricultural college and the development of bio-diesel. I have heard from people throughout Saskatchewan, basically in western Canada, that sometimes Western Economic Development does not help the research projects as much as they need helping.

• (1635)

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, certainly we are committed to ensuring that the fullest potential that will come from the Canada light synchrotron facility in Saskatchewan will be fully tapped by the country. Of course the big operation of this facility is in need of great funding, and certainly it is a big ticket item.

I assure the member that I will be bringing this need, this concern and interest to my fellow ministers in cabinet.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to focus briefly on two aspects of the minister's speech. I would indicate to him that I appreciated his remarks with respect to the Winnipeg community.

I want to focus on his statement about strength from diversity and the celebration of our ethnocultural heritage, something that obviously we have in common in our Winnipeg constituencies.

Based on that, my first question is, is the minister prepared to give support to Bill C-436, which is before the House now and which has been sponsored by my colleague, the member for Vancouver East. It is about allowing every Canadian a chance once in a lifetime to

sponsor a relative who now would not be eligible under the family class category? That is my first question.

My second question has to do with the need for urban renewal and for a new deal for a city like Winnipeg. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the north end of Winnipeg, where we have had a recreation facility sitting empty for over a decade and for which the community has actively sought federal funding.

I have written the minister myself on a couple of occasions and have yet to receive a response. I would like to know and the people of north Winnipeg like to know if once and for all the wellness centre in the north end of Winnipeg, which has a large aboriginal population and is a high needs area, will receive funding through western diversification?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, in answer to the first question with reference to a bill on immigration, we should make it easier for families, for Canadians, who are here to nominate and sponsor members of their family who want to come to Canada.

Immigration to Canada is based on criteria acceptable to all Canadians. If a potential immigrant is not eligible, it could be based on many reasons. Unless we know the reasons for the disapproval or for non-ability of a particular potential immigrant to come to the country, it would be very difficult. I think it would be unwise to make a blanket bill that would allow, once for a lifetime, a non-eligible immigrant to come to Canada because the reasons for non-eligibility could be based on many reasons, and I have no time to debate that at this time.

However, Manitoba has a Canada—Manitoba provincial nominee program. If it is deemed by Manitobans and by the provincial government that it could facilitate the entry of immigrants to Manitoba, then all the provincial government would have to do is indicate its intention, and I am sure it would be given due consideration by my colleague, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

On the second point about the facility that needs help. I again would like the member to see the full proposal for this facility. I assure her that the Department of Western Economic Diversification will give it due diligence and prompt attention.

• (1640)

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I understand this is a new portfolio and a new department. I would like to know a little about it. The minister will have four prairie provinces for which he will have a budget. How will he decide these budgets and who will make the decisions on what gets money from the budget? Is it divided evenly among the provinces?

I just want to ask the member a bit about the guidelines of his new portfolio.

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Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, this is certainly a very valid question. It was the first question I asked of my department in the debriefing I received from it.

Included in this portfolio will be Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia. They are provinces of different population size and population size is one criterion for the disbursement of funds to be fair and equitable to all the provinces. Of course the rate of unemployment varies from province to province. This is an additional criterion. Again, because we would like to develop the fullest potential of any of the four provinces, this too is a valid criterion. On these three criteria, we will try to distribute the funds equitably.

As to who makes the decisions, the department will make the decisions. The officials will study all submitted projects and due diligence will be made as long as the projects fulfill our strategic thrust and themes of innovation, entrepreneurship and sustainable communities. They will be assessed on those bases.

Mrs. Bev Desjarlais (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I recognize it is a new portfolio for my colleague from Manitoba, but I am curious. In light of the revelations in regard to the sponsorship program with Public Works Canada, is there any kind of a booking fee that happens to work within western diversification in, say, its community futures projects? If dollars flow from western diversification to anyone of the numerous community futures offices, does money go directly through or is there a funneling agent for the cheques or the money to flow?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, the department is very conscious that every single taxpayer dollar disbursed by the department is done with the greatest prudence and with the greatest of integrity. When we deal with the community futures groups, agreements are made between the department and the community futures groups, and that ensures that no single penny is wasted.

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the minister will be familiar with this because he was the secretary of state for science and technology. As he knows, Western Economic Diversification partly funds the synchrotron at the University of Saskatchewan, something my two colleagues have supported very strongly. It is a very good project. It is \$174 million. It is about to come on stream. It has an \$18 million operating budget.

First, how does the Government of Canada intend to support the operating budget?

Second, I posed this question to him before. Does he agree with the Auditor General and many scientists, including at the University of Saskatchewan, who say that the Government of Canada must change the way it funds big science projects, that it needs to fund it through one funnel, in a much simpler fashion, rather than funding it through the NRC, through Western Economic Diversification and through Industry Canada?

Does he agree that it is about time for the Government of Canada to show some leadership and fund these big science projects through one funnel rather than make these scientists go to five or six government departments to get their funding?

Hon. Rey Pagtakhan: Mr. Speaker, certainly the question is very timely and critical. It is timely because we have a new administration, and in fact a science adviser has been engaged by the Prime

Minister. Therefore, science is a very important policy issue to which the government is attending.

In terms of funding the big ticket items, the budget for big science facilities, through one agency of course it is under consideration. I am sure that in due time when the government has a definitive answer it will be given as well. However, it is important to maintain the regional agencies because if one would like to kick-start a project, one could do it through the regional development agencies. However, no doubt I agree with the member.

I recently visited the facility and talked with the officials, and when thinking of the big support, I am convinced we need to have support from Ottawa.

• (1645)

Mr. Gary Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar.

It is an honour to rise in reply to the Speech from the Throne and represent the constituents from Saanich—Gulf Islands. I read the Speech from the Throne and I am going to comment on a few specific areas.

The Speech from the Throne is full of nice warm fuzzy statements but it is completely diametrically at odds with the actions of the government. I will give specific details. It states:

The path to achievement begins with making sure that Canadians believe their government, so that they can believe in government.

There are titles “Restoring trust and accountability”.

Let us look at the facts. Anyone who has read the Auditor General's report will know that the government is off to a pretty bad start on this promise. We have seen a quarter billion dollar vote buying scheme. One hundred million dollars went straight to Liberal communication firms. It is absolutely outrageous. Some that money found its way back to the Liberal Party of Canada as donations.

This is a money laundering scheme that is worthy of a sophisticated Mafia style attempt to take money. People who ran the program reported directly to the deputy minister. This is not, as the government or the Prime Minister proclaims, a problem in the department and those people are being dealt with. This is at the very top echelon of government.

The Auditor General's report states that there is no paperwork, no contracts and fictitious invoices. The current Prime Minister, at the time all this was happening, was the CFO of the country. He was the caretaker of the public purse. He was entrusted to look after taxpayers' dollars.

What did he do? I just outlined it. If he was a CFO of a public company, he not only would be fired instantly on the spot, I submit that he would put in jail.

During that time, the Prime Minister chose to remain silent. Silence is consent. He consented to these activities through his silence. He never questioned; he had to know what was going on. This is not something that happened for one week. This went on for years and years. It was talked about at the cabinet table. It is not acceptable.

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The path that the Prime Minister chose was a path of scandal. The path of the yellow brick road was paved in gold by none other than the taxpayer. Like every single other Canadian we are absolutely disgusted and horrified. None of those words can do justice to this. We are in absolute disbelief.

We hear members on the opposite side saying that we are hurting Parliament's reputation. It is the government that is destroying the reputation of elected people across the country. It is our duty to stand up against the theft of this tax money. Someone has to come clean. What does the government want to do? It wants to bury it in another report.

These are the facts. The Prime Minister stood up and all Canadians can see this. It is the government's duty to take responsibility and show leadership. No. We are going to get a public inquiry and the government plans to bury this until after the next election. The Speech from the Throne states:

We must re-engage citizens in Canada's political life. And this has to begin in the place where it should mean the most—in Parliament—by making Parliament work better. That means reconnecting citizens with their Members of Parliament... This will include significantly more free votes, so that Members can represent the views of their constituents as they see fit.

That is word for word from the Speech from the Throne. That is only going to happen if we get a chip embedded in our brain to become a member of the Liberal Party that the government can control.

• (1650)

Let us look at the actions of the Prime Minister and his team of people. Let us look at what he is doing to his own members who sit beside him—forget about everybody else, including the taxpayers.

For example, the member for Davenport, the dean of this House, is one of the most honourable members I know. I will say that because I have worked with him many times. We may have different politics, but he is a very honourable member. He told me yesterday that he is not seeking the Liberal nomination, but running as an independent. Why? Because the Prime Minister's henchmen are trying to oust him from his seat.

The Liberal Party says that its members can have free votes if they get here, but first of all they will have to submit to surgery. They will have to have a computer chip implanted in their brain so the Liberal Party can control them. It will not allow them here unless they sign their life away outright.

Why is the member for Davenport not seeking the Liberal nomination? Because he does not want to sign a pledge that he cannot run as an independent if he loses. He knows the Liberal Party is out to get him. It is not just the member for Davenport, it is the member for Parkdale—High Park. I have personally spoken to her. Those members will not speak in public for fear of what would happen to them. It is the member for Hamilton East who is receiving the press.

The Prime Minister is going after his own. How can we possibly expect him to treat Parliament with any kind of respect? How can we expect him to treat taxpayers' money after what we have seen over the last five years?

The Prime Minister's words are meaningless. He has only been in office a few months and look at his actions. They are deplorable, shameful and disgraceful. Then he comes out with this nice warm fuzzy throne speech.

Would hon. members like some more quotes? I wish I had unlimited time. I could stay here until about next week some time. The Speech from the Throne states:

This will include an enhanced role for Members to shape laws.

What have we seen? I have not seen any new laws, have hon. members? I have seen a lot of Mr. Chrétien's bills, the former Prime Minister's bills, tabled word for word.

The Prime Minister cannot have it both ways. He is trying to portray this as a new government. That is ridiculous. Half the cabinet faces are the same. The minister who was charged in the advertising scandal is now the Minister of Finance. Imagine that. The guy who is out there looking after the public purse or looking after these contracts is now the caretaker of taxpayers' dollars. The minister responsible for the Treasury Board got a standing ovation in Parliament.

The actions of the Liberals are absolutely inconsistent and diametrically 180 degrees opposite to the words of the throne speech. I ask every single Canadian to look at this scandal. This is not a few thousand dollars. This is hundreds of millions of dollars.

Imagine having somebody buy a Rolex watch because the Liberals needed some for the department. First they sent a contract out and they skimmed \$15,000 or \$20,000 off the top. That was not good enough. The person who got the contract then sends his son, who gets another \$15,000. The Auditor General's report is full of this. Imagine transferring money from one department to another department and paying half a million dollars in commissions. It is outrageous.

The Prime Minister, who was the CFO of the public purse and entrusted to look after those dollars, remained silent. Silence is consent. He did not speak up; he did not question. He did not look at the concerns out there. We were raising questions. The Liberals absolutely blew them off and now they are asking us to trust them. I do not think so.

Let us go to some more points here. This is an amazing one:

Canadians want the Government of Canada to do better in meeting ethical standards.

Imagine that. The ethics commissioner's bill is still not independent as once promised. He does not report to Parliament and is not answerable to Parliament as a whole.

This is being fraudulent. It is defrauding the people of Canada. It is defrauding Parliament when the Liberals say they want to bring in a new ethics commissioner. He is the same guy who is in charge of all of this. He is telling the Prime Minister that it is okay because he is in a blind trust, that he could have briefings on Canada Steamship Lines, and that it is okay that he received hundreds of millions in government contracts.

The Address

● (1655)

The pictures becomes pretty clear when we start putting all the pieces together. The Prime Minister has been in power a few months. We have been in Parliament a few weeks. We have to appoint a new independent inquiry. We are getting a new inquiry almost once a week. What does that say?

This is not a new administration. This is the same old administration. We are seeing the same old standards and Canadians deserve better.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member, has he read the Speech from the Throne, and has he followed the deliberations in the House and the activities of the government and the Prime Minister?

He refers to the question of restoring trust. When we look at the Auditor General's report, we must look at the actions of the government and the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said the activities were unacceptable. He did not hide behind any definitions. He cancelled the sponsorship program on the day that he was sworn in. He has called for a judicial inquiry as recommended by the Auditor General. He has referred the matter to the public accounts committee, appointed an independent counsellor and recalled the ambassador.

I do not know that one could say that he has been hiding. Everything he has done is to ensure integrity. I believe, as does the rest of the House, that the Minister of Finance, like the member for Davenport, are members with impeccable integrity.

I ask the member, what other actions would he have asked for? How can he define that as hiding and not as restoring trust?

Mr. Gary Lunn: Mr. Speaker, I will start with the last question first. We talk about integrity and specifically about the member for Davenport who is the dean of this House. The Prime Minister has his henchmen out after him. That is a known fact. That member is not even seeking the Liberal nomination because he does not have a chance against the Prime Minister's machine and is running as an independent. Those are the facts. Those are the actions. How is that showing any kind of ethics?

Yes, the government cancelled the sponsorship program after it had its hands in the cookie jar—it might as well have crawled right inside the cookie jar. It is great after it had been caught and exposed; however, the Prime Minister had this report for months.

I want to emphasize that this scandal did not happen yesterday. It did not happen six months ago. This has been going on for five years while the Prime Minister was the CFO of the government. Did he do anything then?

One cannot just blow off millions of dollars and not notice it. Where is the accountability? If he did not know, then we must ask the question, is he competent? It is a fair question. Who is doing the checks and balances? Are cheques written out willy-nilly? There is not even a paper trail quite often, but it is okay to just send out the cheques. Those are the facts.

Yes, he has called for an inquiry. We seem to be getting a new inquiry every single week. When are we going to get an inquiry for

the recent scandals in British Columbia? Oh, I forgot. That is on the other side of the Rocky Mountains so it does not matter. We can forget about British Columbia because we do not really care about those people out there. When that scandal broke, the Prime Minister responded that it had nothing to do with him. The police had not asked him any questions about it and he did not feel that he needed to respond.

There are a number of top lieutenants in British Columbia who are legislative assistants in the legislature earning \$60,000 a year and flew to the Prime Minister's coronation in Toronto on private jets at a cost of \$65,000 paid for by the Liberal Party of Canada. Where is the inquiry into that?

How about the tens of thousands of memberships that David Basi, one of the Prime Minister's top henchmen, signed up? CTV cameramen went door to door asking if people in my riding belonged to the Liberal Party of Canada. People were shocked to find out they were on the list. A few had been called but had not paid for memberships. These are the indisputable facts.

He can talk about what is in print but what is in print is diametrically 180 degrees opposite to the actions of the government. Liberals do not deserve one seat in the House of Commons. I remind them to look back at what happened in the last British Columbia election when we saw a government which spent half a billion dollars on fast ferries. They had no respect for taxpayers' dollars. They were reduced to two seats because they did not deserve to represent the people.

Neither does this government. It is time that Canadians look up. I look forward to the election when Canadians will have an opportunity to express their thoughts of this government on the ballot.

● (1700)

Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to rise in the House on behalf of the citizens of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar to respond to the Speech from the Throne.

As I sat down to prepare my speech for today, I was full of different title ideas. It got to be kind of a joke in the office because we looked at the Prime Minister and we thought about the titles he could have used on the front of his throne speech. He could have used, "We have made these promises before. You believed we would do it and voted for us, now we will try it again". Or it could have been something like, "I was a senior cabinet minister for nine years but I do not want to talk about that", or "I know I was Chrétien's right-hand man and in charge of the public purse, but let us pretend I was not". Or should I call it what it was, "Promises, promises, promises, all guaranteed to be broken again".

The Address

The Liberal Party is expecting the general public to ignore its culture of corruption and to re-elect the Liberals again. There is a limit to how many times Canadians will fall for the same old dirty tricks. A quick review of the nation's media shows the wheels are starting to fall off the tired, corrupt Liberal government. Canadians were hoping for a new Prime Minister who would bring in a throne speech with new ideas but were sorely disappointed to hear the same old Liberal promises, almost down to the word.

In the 1994 throne speech, the former prime minister said:

The government has made a number of commitments to the people of Canada. They will be implemented.

Already the lies began, just four paragraphs into the throne speech. The only reason the current Prime Minister can make the same promises the Liberals made a decade ago is that they broke almost all of them.

Then the former prime minister poured on the deception even more when he said:

In order to achieve this agenda, integrity and public trust in the institutions of government are essential.

My Ministers will insist upon integrity, honesty and openness on the part of those who exercise power on behalf of Canadians.

Lies and more lies.

The Auditor General has exposed the culture of corruption and deceit within the Liberal Party; the theft of public money by Liberals for Liberals. There were promises of an independent ethics counsellor. We are still waiting. There were promises to reduce the regulatory and paper burden on small business and streamline the delivery of programs, promises to eliminate the GST, promises to fix the health care system, promises to implement aboriginal self-government, promises to resolve aboriginal land claims, promises to be active and influential in the global arena. All of these have proven to be corrupt lies.

Now the latest throne speech promises to do the same. I am sure members can understand our skepticism in the Liberals' sincerity. We have heard this all before. They will not deceive the Canadian voter again.

For almost a decade the current Prime Minister willingly and eagerly defended this abysmal record. Why? Because he was an integral part of making it happen. The Prime Minister slashed health funding, slashed education funding, increased taxes, lowered our standard of living, slashed our military and peacekeeping budgets, kept the GST, failed our aboriginal people, watched homeless shelters overflow and child poverty rates increase. Why he would want to campaign on that record is beyond me.

Perhaps the part of the throne speech that disappointed me most was the lack of attention to farm families. The entire agriculture sector, farm families, BSE affected farmers, drought affected grain farmers, all of them received just two measly sentences of attention. There were just two sentences for farm families. Even Flat Mark got more attention.

The Prime Minister promised to address the concerns of western Canadians. Little did we expect that the promise would be broken before he even started. The Prime Minister promised a new standard

of integrity and honesty, just like Jean Chrétien's promise. That promise went out the window too.

● (1705)

The Prime Minister wants us to trust him with our precious tax dollars but he cannot be honest about how much will end up in the pockets of his family and the Liberal Party. This corruption has to stop.

Perhaps it would not have looked that favourably on the Liberals had the truth come out during the leadership campaign. The Prime Minister and his sons received \$161 million. The entire health care system received a mere \$2 billion. Just think, \$161 million for mom, dad and their three boys and \$2 billion for 31 million other Canadians. Our vision of a responsible, accountable government is obviously not the same as the Prime Minister's.

What did I want to see in the throne speech?

I wanted to see our farm families made a priority. How much more do they have to suffer to get three sentences in the Prime Minister's next speech?

I wanted to see our rural communities given the tools they need to thrive. Rural folks from coast to coast have a history of survival but the government has put them to the test.

I wanted to see our health system functioning under sustainable, predictable federal funding. I wanted to end the travelling federal-provincial funding circus.

I wanted to see our inner city neighbourhoods and their low income residents rise from under the burden of overtaxation.

I wanted to see our environment protected through real action plans, not just rhetoric delivered through idling ministerial limousines.

I wanted to see pride and effectiveness returned to our military. I want to see our men and women wearing the right colour of clothing and having the right equipment for the job.

I wanted to see Canada push forward to take its rightful place on the world stage. I have had enough of playing second fiddle to our allies.

I wanted to see our aboriginal people removed from the cycle of dependence the Liberals have put them in. They are a proud people and unshackled they will succeed, especially our aboriginal women.

I wanted to see our children made a priority. I want a government that promotes education and community, not the use of marijuana. We need a young offenders act that protects children, not one that makes it easier for the bullies to rule the schoolyard.

I wanted to see a national sex offender registry. How many more victims do we need before the Liberal government pays attention?

I wanted to see a clear family policy that makes raising our next generation easier for struggling young parents.

The Address

I wanted to see all our emergency personnel get the tools and funding they need to protect us. They put their lives on the line for us every day and the least we can do is equip and fund them properly.

I wanted to see an end to corporate welfare, a marketplace where the firms with the best products and people stand a chance against Liberal donors.

I wanted to see victims' rights made a priority. Canada too often sees its victims forced to go public calling for justice. That is unacceptable.

I wanted to see tough penalties for parole violations and tough penalties for the use of firearms in the commission of an offence. We have tried the Liberal method of gun control and it has failed. We just need to ask the citizens of Toronto.

I wanted to see fixed election dates. Fixed dates would end the uncertainty and paralyzing of government that occurs every one out of four years in a glaring display of partisan political manipulation.

I wanted to see a commitment to defend the supremacy of Parliament. If the Liberal-appointed courts continue to make the laws of this land, we will ensure the irrelevancy of the House.

There was so much I was hoping to see with a change in the Prime Minister's office. Unfortunately, it appears that the only thing that has changed is the name on the door.

Canadians will likely get an opportunity to register their opinions in one of those politically timed elections this spring. I am not sure that current polls truly reflect the growing fatigue Canadians have of the Liberal Party. Canadians from coast to coast have become the victims of the Liberal government's failure to govern.

So bad have these problems become that one need only refer to them in a few words. They are softwood lumber, the BSE crisis, Sydney tar ponds, gun crime, victims' rights, Shawinigate, Quebec advertising, provincial jurisdiction, health care funding, waiting lists, education funding, military funding, homelessness, urban decay, self-government, political financing, the GST, gas taxes, airline taxes. The list goes on and on but unfortunately, time dictates that I cannot.

• (1710)

It has been a pleasure to voice the concerns of the millions of Canadians who were ignored by the throne speech. It has been a pleasure to provide Canadians with a real alternative to the tired, old, corrupt government.

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about the lack of mention of the agriculture industry in the throne speech. Does she think the government realizes how important that industry is to Canada? Also does she think the government understands the seriousness of what is happening out there to the industry?

In our ridings, provinces and regions the BSE problem and border shutdown are serious. It is coast to coast. It goes much beyond just saving the family farm. This is about an industry that is going down and we are very concerned.

I watched the take note debate and heard the stories of members from the Liberal ridings as well as throughout the Ontario and

Quebec ridings. All parties have been affected, as have their constituents. I am wondering, do they realize they are the people who are to make decisions? I would like her comments.

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, it was very interesting the other day when our senior agriculture critic asked a question about the agricultural problems and BSE. A member from the opposite side said that agriculture does not have problems, that it has lots of money. I asked him across the aisle during our mini debate that was going on how he knew. He said that he did farmers' books. I asked if they were from rural Saskatchewan and he said no, but that the weekend before a report had come out about prairie agriculture.

The last time income dropped was in 1929 in the Great Depression. It is lower. Our farm families are on the verge of complete collapse. People in Canada must realize that the free food policy that all members have in the cities will be gone.

There is a huge problem out there. We are losing farm families. There were six farm families lined up for social welfare in Saskatchewan. They are so desperate that they are going for welfare because there is no funding.

The Minister of Agriculture talks about opening borders, travelling and talking to people. I want to say through you, Mr. Speaker, to the Liberal caucus today that does not help farm families. Farm families do not have access to any money. This is right across Canada. We need help for agriculture. If we want to have a livestock industry in this country, the Liberal government must step forward immediately to help these people and try to solve this problem. Platitudes will not save agriculture in Canada.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member raised the issue of BSE which is a scourge across the country. It is hurting all areas, whether people are ranchers or dairy farmers.

Would she not agree with the work that has been done by the minister and the previous minister to make sure that we take the science based approach and that we work with our partners? The results we have had so far have been pretty good. We are the country to have its border reopened the quickest, although it is only partially opened and we want to see it go further.

Would she not agree that the answer to it is the trade question? It is a question of making sure the border is opened. Would she not agree that all communities are thankful for the amount of funding that has come forward for farm families? It does not make up for closed borders, but it assists those families.

• (1715)

Mrs. Carol Skelton: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member raised an excellent question. We see it right across the whole livestock industry. The cervid industry, the sheep industry and the bison industry have been brought into it, not because they have no disease but because the borders are closed to livestock.

The Address

Because western Canada does not have a lot of meat packing plants, we cannot move our livestock cross-border. We cannot go anywhere. Animals from western Canada cannot travel to eastern Canada to be slaughtered. I heard of a bison farmer who gave away 100 cows because there was nothing he could do about it. There is no place to take them and no one will take them because we do not have slaughter plants.

Hon. Hedy Fry (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to give notice that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for West Nova.

I stand here proudly to support the Speech from the Throne. It is a speech that has given a clear vision and a commitment to put in place the building blocks that will in fact bring this country into the 21st century.

There is something unique about this Speech from the Throne that no one has noticed. They have said that it is more of the same. This Speech from the Throne does something very important. It has joined the linkages between economic development and social development. It has created that circle that most of us who like to be policy wonks have understood.

We know that if we do not have a stable economy we cannot build social development. If we do not have good social development where people are healthy, where they have skills, where they have training where they work and where those who have been left out we remove the barriers so they can get in, then we will not have increased productivity, increased economic development or competitiveness. Therefore we will not have that circle being formed. It goes around.

When we bring those linkages together we would be looking at policy in a completely different way. It means that the government will look at the same old problems and find different processes by which to deal with them.

The government will be looking at short and long term strategies; looking at how we work horizontally with other departments within the federal government; looking at how we work and form partnerships with communities and other levels of government, such as provincial governments and municipalities; looking at how we build partnerships with the private sector; and looking at unique new ways of doing things together.

The government has decided that we cannot just throw money at problems. In 20 years from now we do not want to be sitting around asking what we will do about the same old problems. We have to change the way we deal with those problems now. That is what makes me very excited about this particular Speech from the Throne.

The throne speech has drawn the linkages between the fact that we need to invest in people. However to do that we need a stable economy. If we have money and we invest in people, then those people will continue to produce and continue to increase the economic status and competitiveness of the country.

Having said that, members will see that there was also a door open to ensure that those people who have been left out, who have not been able to fully participate in the economic and social life of the country, will now have an opportunity to do so in a real and

meaningful way that will make change happen. We are back to process again.

Look at the aboriginal peoples, new Canadians and immigrants who have not been able to participate and work. They have been underemployed and unemployed. We are looking at persons with disabilities. We are talking about the cities that are facing insurmountable problems at the moment.

How do we work together to make those changes occur? That is what the Speech from the Throne is about.

While I would love to speak for two hours on all the things that excite me about the Speech from the Throne, I want to focus on one for which I have been given special responsibility by the Prime Minister: to look at the issue of foreign credentials.

We need to look at some very interesting statistics. Currently Canada has a falling birth rate and an increasing aging population. Within 10 years we will have an increase of 50% of people who are between the ages of 55 and 65. That is very important for us. We do not have a birth rate that will replace those people. Baby boomers will reach that age in 20 years.

This country has always depended on immigration for its labour force and its population growth. Currently 50% of our growth in population is dependent on immigration. In another 10 years we will be dependent on immigration for 100% of our population growth.

Currently we depend on immigration for 70% of our labour force growth. In another eight years we will be depending on immigrants for 100% of our labour force growth. Because of the aging population and the drop in birth rate we do not have the people.

We are not alone in any of this. We are seeing that most of the developed countries in Europe and in other parts of the world are facing the same problems: low birth rate, aging population. Who will do the work? Those countries are out there competing with us for a new labour force, for people to come in and work.

Canada has to do a couple of things. This is why this has become a priority for the Prime Minister.

● (1720)

The Prime Minister recognizes that currently about 540,000 people in Canada do not have work or are underemployed with regard to their own training. The House should know that about 70% of new immigrants to Canada have degrees and diplomas and 45% of our new immigrants have a university degree, and yet they are underemployed. This is a loss of about \$5.5 billion currently to our GDP.

This is a social integration issue, not allowing everyone to participate fully in Canada, but it is also a productivity issue as we can see from our labour force needs. It is also an economic issue in terms of our GDP. It is a competitive issue because other countries are in the same boat and are looking for the same pool within which to get their labour force.

This is an urgent issue but in the new way we are doing things we want to deal immediately with the problems. We are facing critical shortages, for instance, of doctors, nurses, health technicians and pharmacists. We have to do work on that immediately.

The Address

Then there is the long term prospect, not only of persons who we will need over the next 10 year period for our labour force, but how, as we bring new people into the country, we integrate them as speedily as possible. Recognition of foreign credentials, training and skills is one of the first steps.

However those are not the only barriers. We need to look at language proficiency. Many people, even if we recognize their degree as a physician, they will not be able to work with people if they do not have a proficiency for practising medicine in English and French.

We need to look at Canadian experience. Most employers are asking for Canadian experience. How do we go about getting our new immigrants and our citizens the kind of experience that they need in order to work effectively in the labour market?

Even though credentials are provincial, we need to set up joint strategies. We have begun to work on this. We need to provide in the resources, which we have already begun to do in the 2003 Speech from the Throne. We have started to work with doctors, and with provinces that are our partners, to develop a new labour force of doctors to meet the critical needs.

Working horizontally with six departments in the federal government and building on those partnerships is what is in our long term strategic plan. I look forward to the government making sure that comes to pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): I wish to inform the hon. member that she still has one minute left in her speech as well as five minutes questions and comments when we resume debate tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

It being 5.25 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the amendment now before the House.

[*English*]

The question is on the amendment. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the amendment?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): In my opinion the nays have it.

And more than five members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): Call in the members.

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negatived on the following division:)

(Division No. 6)

YEAS

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Anders	Bachand (Saint-Jean)
Bergeron	Bigras
Blaikie	Borotsik
Breitkreuz	Burton
Cadman	Cardin
Casey	Casson
Chatters	Comartin
Cummins	Dalphond-Guiral
Davies	Day
Desjarlais	Desrochers
Doyle	Duceppe
Duncan	Elley
Fitzpatrick	Forsyth
Gagnon (Québec)	Gallant
Gauthier	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Guay	Guimond
Hanger	Hearn
Hill (Macleod)	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Jaffer	Johnston
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lalonde	Lill
Lunn (Saanich—Gulf Islands)	MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Marceau	Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
Masse	Mayfield
Ménard	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Nystrom
Paquette	Penson
Perron	Picard (Drummond)
Plamondon	Proctor
Rajotte	Robinson
Roy	Schellenberger
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
St-Hilaire	Stoffer
Strahl	Toews
Tremblay	Wasylycia-Leis
Wayne	Williams
Yelich— 79	

NAYS

Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Augustine
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Barrette
Bélair	Bélangier
Bellemare	Bennett
Bertrand	Bevilacqua
Binet	Blondin-Andrew
Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bradshaw
Brisson	Brown
Bulte	Caccia
Calder	Caplan
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Coderre
Comuzzi	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Discepola
Duplain	Easter
Efford	Eggleton
Eyking	Farrah
Fontana	Frulla
Fry	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Guarnieri
Harvard	Harvey
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jobin	Jordan
Karetak-Lindell	Karygiannis
Keyes	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)

Private Members' Business

Knutson
Laliberte
Lastewka
Lee
Lincoln
MacAulay
Malhi
Marleau
Matthews
McCormick
McLellan
Minna
Murphy
Neville
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
Owen
Pagtakhan
Patry
Peterson
Phinney
Price
Provenzano
Reed (Halton)
Robillard
Savoy
Scott
Sgro
Simard
St-Jacques
Steckle
Telegdi
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)
Torsney
Valeri
Volpe
Whelan

Kraft Sloan
Lancôt
LeBlanc
Leung
Longfield
Macklin
Marcil
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
McCallum
McGuire
McTeague
Mitchell
Myers
Normand
O'Reilly
Pacetti
Paradis
Peric
Pettigrew
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)
Proulx
Redman
Regan
Saada
Scherrer
Serré
Shepherd
Speller
St-Julien
Stewart
Thibault (West Nova)
Tonks
Ur
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Wappel
Wilfert— 138

PAIRED

Members

Assad
Bourgeois
Copps
Fournier
Gaudet
Grose
Mahoney
Pratt
St. Denis

Asselin
Collenette
Crête
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Girard-Bujold
Loubier
Parrish
Rocheleau
Szabo— 18

• (1755)

The Speaker: I declare the amendment lost.

It being 5:55 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*]

THE ACADIANS

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ) moved:

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that, following the steps already taken by the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, she will intercede with Her Majesty to cause the British Crown to recognize officially the wrongs done to the Acadian people in its name between 1755 and 1763.

He said: As a result of procedural circumstances, I am once again in a position where I have to initiate debate on Motion No. 382.

Following the unexpected events of last December, when Her Excellency signed a royal proclamation creating a National Acadian

Day commemorating the deportation of Acadians, I pondered for a long what should become of this motion.

I talked about the issue with several individuals and I must say that not everyone was of the same opinion about this. However, I have to recognize that the fate of this motion does not rest with me alone, but with all the members of this House.

That is why I have launched a series of consultations with colleagues to settle the issue, because clearly, the problem is now quite different from what it was when we first wrote the motion.

These consultations are continuing and will, I am absolutely certain, enable us to reach consensus before the motion is put to a vote. Perhaps we will be able to finally write an ending to this troubling chapter of our collective history.

As you probably aware, right before the holiday period, December 9 of last year to be precise, the previous government unexpectedly made public a royal proclamation. It established July 28 each year as "A Day of Commemoration of the Great Upheaval".

The proclamation is to take effect on September 6, 2004, and the day will be commemorated for the first time on July 28, 2005. I was totally amazed to learn that the former heritage minister and the former intergovernmental affairs minister had taken this initiative with their colleagues in order to achieve this reversal. It was as unexpected as it was spectacular.

It is regrettable that so much time and energy was required to get my Liberal colleagues to finally take the necessary steps to achieve formal acknowledgment of these tragic events. These are the same people who, not so long ago, were fighting tooth and nail to defend their categorical refusal to do such a thing. They spared no sarcasm in their remarks to me, claiming that looking back into the past was futile and the Acadians would gain nothing from it.

I must admit that I have always known, deep down in my heart, that the time would come when truth and justice would prevail. This action by my Liberal colleagues was all the more remarkable and praiseworthy. Although the date of July 28 is not unanimously accepted by the community of historians and specialists in Acadian history, I am still extremely pleased that the federal government has finally decided to have a day to commemorate the deportation of the Acadians. In this way, the Governor General, on behalf of the Crown of Canada, henceforth recognizes the suffering inflicted upon the Acadians by the Great Upheaval.

There is no doubt whatsoever that such a gesture of major historical significance has a symbolic value that cannot be denied or downplayed. From now on, the Great Upheaval can no longer be considered a non-event or a myth, believed by some never to have occurred.

For the first time in the history of Canada, we have official acknowledgment that the Acadians were the victims of a great tragedy which changed the face of Acadia and Canada forever.

The deportation is now acknowledged to be an undeniable historical fact, as stated in the Royal Proclamation, which reads:

We (the Governor General) acknowledge these historical facts and the trials and suffering experienced by the Acadian people during the Great Upheaval.

Private Members' Business

As Mr. Euclide Chiasson, President of the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, said on December 10 in a speech in Ottawa:

What we are celebrating today is not a rewriting of history nor a revision of history. What we are celebrating is the validation of a chapter in our history. The royal proclamation, ratified by the cabinet on December 2, simply attests to the universally recognized historical facts.

I would be remiss in not mentioning the enormous amount of work done by the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, which took on this cause and unflaggingly sought recognition by the British Crown of the wrongs done to the Acadian people during the Great Upheaval.

Having said that, I must admit that I was pleasantly surprised by the clear, frank, direct and uncompromising wording of the proclamation's preamble. When I first heard vague rumours that such a proclamation was being secretly prepared in the back rooms of government, I suspected trickery, bad faith and machinations.

● (1800)

Considering the acrimonious tenor of the debate to that point, I feared that they would try to cloud the issue by resorting to the convenient euphemism of the Great Upheaval, and limit themselves to sickeningly inoffensive generalities.

But that is not the case, indeed it is quite the opposite. The text of the proclamation spells out the story of the deportation and the considerable suffering caused to the Acadian people. The proclamation even goes so far as to recognize that the decision to deport the Acadians was not made by the colonial authorities in Nova Scotia, Massachusetts and Maine alone, as some have claimed even in this House, but in fact by the Crown itself.

Even for that reason alone, we must recognize that this is an unprecedented gesture. Still, the reasons for rejoicing and satisfaction end there. While it is undoubtedly a significant step forward, the proclamation does not deal with the root of the problem, which remains untouched, because this is the Crown of Canada recognizing the facts of the deportation. The British Crown, which ought at least to assume moral responsibility for these tragic events, has not yet officially recognized them.

It may seem like a subtle distinction, but it is not. The fact that the Crown of Canada, like that of Australia or even New Zealand, followed suit and did what the legislative assemblies in Louisiana and Maine have done, is certainly very comforting and nice, but nothing can replace recognition directly from the British Crown.

The Crown of Canada should not have to recognize wrongs for which it bears no responsibility, and should certainly not have to do instead of an entity that still exists, namely the British Crown.

It is very clear to me, and I believe I have demonstrated this many times in this House, that the Crown was not only well aware of what was afoot in Acadia, but was at the heart of the operation that had been brewing for a number of years to allow British and American settlers to occupy fertile Acadian lands.

Until then, Acadians were allowed to stay on their land so that they would not pack up their belongings and livestock and increase the ranks of the French settled on Ile Royale, further strengthening the influence of the Fortress of Louisbourg in the region. That is why Acadian neutrality suited the British so well. But then again, they

took exception to it many times and in the end they used it as an excuse to justify the Deportation.

However, in 1720, the Governor-in-chief of Nova Scotia, Colonel Philipps, taking into consideration these military and economic imperatives, expressed a wish in a letter to London:

—a plan needs to be made in the motherland to populate this land with people from Great Britain... Until then, the inhabitants will not even think about leaving, ...until I have received your new instructions.

At the end of that year, Philipps received a response from the Bureau des colonies:

—The French in Nova Scotia will never become good subjects of His Majesty... That is why they should be expelled as soon as the forces we plan to send you arrive in Nova Scotia...Do not yourself undertake such an expulsion without a specific order from His Majesty to that effect.

A few years later, in 1747 to be more precise, the governor of Massachusetts, William Shirley, assured Acadians that they could remain peacefully on their own land, while he was negotiating with London to have them deported. In response to a proposal from him to that effect, the Secretary of State said:

Although the removal of these inhabitants from the province is desirable, His Majesty has decided that it would be better to postpone this project. However, His Majesty requests that you examine how such a project could be carried out at a suitable time.

Then, in 1753, Charles Lawrence was appointed governor of Nova Scotia. A year later, he would send a letter to London about Acadians, in which he said:

Their land holdings are the largest and the richest in the province. As long as that situation remains, no settlement would be successful—

Soon after Vice-Admiral Boscawen arrived from England, on July 8, 1755, with "secret instructions signed by His Majesty", the decision was finally made, and on the 28th of the same month, the removal of Acadians was carried out.

● (1805)

Since there is no longer any doubt in my mind about the direct involvement of the British Crown in this upheaval, there is a questionable and quite surprising substitution in the proclamation issued in December. To follow up on a point the Liberals have used recently to criticize my initiative, the proclamation stipulates that Canada is a sovereign state and that, with regard to Canada, the Crown in right of Canada and of the provinces succeeded to the powers and prerogatives of the Crown in right of the United Kingdom.

Need I remind the House that the Crown in right of Canada and Canada itself, as we know it today, did not exist in 1775.

Moreover, as Université de Moncton professor Kamel Khiari pointed out, in crimes such as this great upheaval that could be compared to the ethnic cleansing occurring these days, responsibility cannot be transferred to the successor state but remains in perpetuity with the predecessor state. If the predecessor state still exists, it is responsible for those crimes.

Also, the Canadian royal proclamation only affects, so to speak, Acadians in Canada. Although it is not trivial, this action has officially no effect on Acadians in Louisiana or in Belle-Île-en-Mer, for example. Indeed, it is not the federal government, or the Société nationale de l'Acadie, or even this Bloc member that started this whole saga to seek official recognition of the wrongs done to the Acadian people during the deportation, but a lawyer from Louisiana, Warren Perrin, to whom I want to pay tribute today.

I suggest that the argument that it was incumbent upon the Canadian government, and not the British Crown, to take formal action to recognize the facts surrounding the deportation was only a legal and constitutional manoeuvre to set the process in motion for what appears to several people as a rather surprising flip flop by a faction that was heretofore vehemently opposed to such an action.

I recognize that, under the circumstances, this was a fair political manoeuvre and the government now had to oppose the very mechanism provided in the wording of the motion. In this regard, I want to say that the motion was initially written with the cooperation of the clerk of the House and his staff, following thorough research on relevant precedents.

The Canadian government understood well the limits of the action that it took, since it announced at the same time that an “unofficial” invitation had been extended to Her Majesty so that she could personally read this proclamation in Grand-Pré, a highly symbolic place for the Acadian people.

It would be very sad to try to lead the Acadian people to believe that, by this proclamation, the page has definitely been turned and this saga is finally over. I sincerely believe that this royal proclamation would only be truly meaningful if Her Majesty herself would read it. The Canadian government even provided for this possibility in the proclamation.

This historic event could take place next September 5, during the celebrations surrounding the 400th anniversary of the foundation of Acadia, or on July 28, 2005, which will be the first Day of the Commemoration of the Great Upheaval. The reading of the proclamation by Her Majesty would have the effect, to paraphrase the president of the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, of “crowning” the representations made to seek official recognition of the wrongs done to the Acadian people during the deportation.

This action by Her Majesty, who embodies the authority of the two Crowns, could then be interpreted as a de facto recognition, by the British Crown, of the terms of the proclamation signed by the Canadian Crown.

So, the House of Commons must support the December 9 royal proclamation and formally invite Her Majesty to come and read this proclamation in Canada, preferably in Acadia, in a place and at a time to be determined by Buckingham Palace, the Canadian government and the Société Nationale de l'Acadie. We could then put closure on the parliamentary aspect of this saga, which has already had a very positive impact.

It is my hope that, this time, we will leave partisanship aside and think about the best interests of the Acadian people, and that all of us will gather here in this House to salute and applaud the action taken by the government in December, and will join our voices to that of

the government to formally invite Her Majesty to come to read the proclamation.

● (1810)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Motion M-382.

First, I want to say that the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes takes to heart this issue that he is raising in the House of Commons for the third time. He never gave up.

For a while, the Liberal government was saying that this was partisanship, that he was doing this because of his party. However, on several occasions, I had the opportunity to say that it was not the case.

Indeed, at the beginning of the Acadians' history, the Bergerons were from the Rivière-Saint-Jean. Mrs. Bergeron, who had met Jean-Baptiste Godin and had married him, had moved to Caraquet. This is why, when the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes and I meet, we say we are distant cousins.

This has nothing to do with the NDP and the Bloc Québécois. This has to do with a long history. He has shown this and hopefully people here in the House of Commons and outside the House have come to understand that this history goes back to his roots and this is why this motion is so dear to his heart.

Today, I am proud to see that the government has made some progress. It has, in fact, recognized the deportation. It did not want to use the words “wrongs done to Acadians”. It did not want to speak of the “apology” that should be made, but it has recognized that there was a deportation. Nevertheless, everything the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes has asked for has been diluted, from beginning to end.

There is something else I find interesting in all this. In the House of Commons, the Liberals voted against an apology by the British Crown. They also voted against recognition of the harm done to Acadians. But, when it came time to recognize the deportation, they were all in place for the family portrait. I was at home watching television. I tuned in to RDI and saw the hon. member for Hamilton East making the declaration here in Ottawa, with the representatives of the SANB. You could see the family portrait of the Liberals who wanted to take the credit for all of this.

I just had to mention that. I thought it was amusing. They are not able to vote in favour of a motion but when it is time to recognize the deportation and look for the credit, they are right there in the family photo.

Today I would like to go back to the history of the Acadians.

The deportation of the Acadians took place between 1755 and 1763. The Acadians speak of the Great Upheaval. I think that is a greatly understated way to describe the tragedy the Acadian people experienced and that, in itself, is something that shows their great strength of spirit. Longfellow's epic poem, *Évangéline*, describes the painful historic reality of the Acadians and paints a picture of a brutal and cruel deportation. And that is pretty much what happened.

Private Members' Business

Before the British army arrived, Acadia was a region that included today's New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. It consisted of a long string of rural and seafaring communities living by trade, fishing, farming and forestry. The families of Acadia were the first European families to settle in Canada, 400 years ago. These communities lived in perfect harmony with the indigenous peoples.

When the British army came to Acadia, it acted like an army of occupation and tried to force the Acadians to swear allegiance to the Queen, without exception and without any respect for their cultural or religious differences.

When the Acadians refused, the British army reacted with brutality, burning down homes, taking control of fertile lands, and splitting up families by making men, women and children board different ships to be deported to Louisiana—these are today's Cajuns—and all over the coast of what is now the eastern United States. Others ended up in jails in England or were forced to go back to France.

• (1815)

As we can imagine, the hardships and injustice continued long after the journey ended. The hardships and intolerance are akin to what was experienced by the first nations, the Métis and all our aboriginal peoples, something that, in many instances, they continue to live with the consequences of.

Still today, we can see human rights being trampled in many countries. Around the world, religious, linguistic or cultural minorities are being persecuted and see their rights trampled, often very violently.

Canada itself is far from perfect. It seems to be hard for us, in Canada, to make amends for denying the rights of native Canadians, who are still living in deplorable conditions. We often have trouble maintaining a democratic, open and egalitarian society. Nothing can be taken for granted.

However, the good news is that modern Canada, born from this terrible tragedy, was built on a solid foundation of linguistic duality, tolerance and openness to differences. The key to modern Canada, as found in section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, relies on the principle of equal rights and on our refusal to impose our will on a minority, where human rights are concerned. It is on such a positive attitude that modern Canada was built. Refusing to let the might makes right principle prevail has made Canada a showplace of unity with diversity.

This is why today we are free to debate this motion which reflects the will not only of the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes but of the Acadian people that still bears deep scars as a result of this cruel attempt to eradicate them and trample over their dignity.

• (1820)

[*English*]

Acadian Canadians are proud to have survived the challenge of le Grand Dérangement. Today they are strong and proud members of the Canadian family.

As an Acadian, I support this motion. The exclusion of Acadians was a senseless act. For those who think that this is the way they used to do business in those days, may I remind them of a more

recent event: the 1923 Chinese exclusion act, which also separated families by making it impossible for a wife to join her husband. Parliament rescinded the outrageous Chinese exclusion act and issued a formal apology to the Chinese Canadian community.

[*Translation*]

Last December 9, the royal proclamation had a serious impact on the initiatives seeking official recognition of the wrongs done to the Acadian people during the great upheaval.

Although a little watered down, the December royal proclamation was a step in the right direction. The Acadian people is now officially recognized and its turbulent past is no longer just a legend, it is a recognized historical fact.

However, for the proclamation to have a real impact on Acadian people, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II should do what the Acadian people expect of her and read the royal proclamation in Acadie, and more specifically in Grand-Pré, where the great upheaval occurred. Such a symbolic gesture would, in my mind, be the best way to recognize the wrongs done to the Acadian people.

Lastly, let me point out that Her Majesty the Queen has ample opportunities to come to Acadia and read the proclamation. She could do it this year, when Acadia is celebrating its 400th anniversary, or even in 2005, which will be the 250th anniversary of the great upheaval.

Even the hon. member for Hamilton-East says that it is only a matter of extending an invitation to Her Majesty, who would be more than pleased to come and read the proclamation.

So I would urge all members to consider the motion and ask Parliament to invite Her Majesty to Acadia to recognize the important role played by the Acadian people, who helped build our great country. And she could also take the opportunity to celebrate with us.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to respond to the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes and Motion No. 382.

It is not the first time that the member brings this issue to the attention of the House of Commons. On many occasions, he chose to share his concerns on this subject. I commend him for that.

Motion No. 382 states:

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that, following the steps already taken by the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, she will intercede with Her Majesty to cause the British Crown to recognize officially the wrongs done to the Acadian people in its name between 1755 and 1763.

[*English*]

I do not think there is one member of Parliament in the House, or in fact one Canadian, who is not touched by these historical facts. The Acadian deportation is sad and unsavoury. What our Acadian ancestors withstood cannot and must not be forgotten.

Private Members' Business

Our collective memory is full of stories and explanations about why it happened, about the reasons behind such actions. Historians try to understand the thinking of our forefathers, of those from another time and era who behaved differently, thought differently, and reacted differently than we would today. It cannot be understood. It cannot be explained. In my mind, it was ethnic cleansing.

[*Translation*]

It is impossible to change history. The deportation of the Acadians, no matter how we look at it, is unacceptable.

I think that today's Acadians understand this. Far from being simply a folklore element that only our elderly are dwelling upon, their history is now and forever a tragic episode in a reality that cannot be changed. Our children and our grandchildren will remember this. We may go back in times and wish that some incidents never happened or would have been dealt with differently, attempts to change the past will only be wishful thinking.

But let us come back to Motion No. 382. Why are we still debating this motion? It seems to me that, in December, when the Government of Canada announced the signing of a royal proclamation designating July 28 of each year as A Day of Commemoration of the Great Upheaval, the issue had a happy ending. I say happy since at that time the Acadians themselves, through the president of the Société nationale de l'Acadie, said they were "very happy with the positive outcome of this issue".

The president also said that the proclamation "will also serve as official recognition of the historical facts surrounding the deportation that occurred between 1755 and 1763". That seems fine to me. If Acadians themselves are satisfied with the results, on what grounds can the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes say that it is not enough?

Today's values are rooted in the lessons taught by history and in our common past. During the installation ceremony of Governor General Roméo LeBlanc, on February 8, 1995, the Right Honourable Prime Minister Jean Chrétien said:

You are the first Acadian and the first Atlantic Canadian to serve in this important position.

Two hundred years ago, your ancestors were struggling to keep alive a small Acadian community after many years of war and terrible economic hardships. They were pawns in the battles between European empires. Most of them were deported. Many of them died from hunger and disease. Several ships full of exiles sank in the ocean.

But a determined few managed to escape and return, despite the efforts of colonial authorities to disperse them.

In the end, not only did they survive those terrible trials, but their descendants developed and flourished in this land they made their home.

With exceptional courage, they preserved their culture. And they resolved to put aside old grudges and live in peace and harmony with their fellow Canadians, concentrating on what they had in common with them rather than what might divide them. As we all know, it is because of them that Atlantic Canada has a remarkably rich and dynamic Acadian culture.

[*English*]

These lessons shape what Canadians are today: respected and respectful, open-minded and tolerant, dynamic and vibrant.

[*Translation*]

But let us put aside the past for a moment. Today we are faced with a number of priorities that have been clearly defined by official language minority communities in Canada, the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada, of which I was a member, the Société Nationale de l'Acadie, of which I was a member, and the Fédération acadienne de la Nouvelle-Écosse, of which I was president.

Some of the priorities in question include job creation, health services in French, legal services in French and early childhood development. I think we should focus on issues that will advance official language minority communities in Canada.

Canadians would probably all agree that this is where the federal government should invest its energy and resources.

On March 12, 2003, the Right Honourable Jean Chrétien announced to Canadians new initiatives that would provide \$750 million over five years to the action plan for official languages: "Thirty years after the adoption of the Official Languages Act, I am pleased to announce that the Government is giving new momentum to our country's linguistic duality, as called for by Canadians", the Prime Minister stated.

The plan, praised by official language minority communities, addresses the urgent problems facing French Canadian communities outside Quebec, including Acadians.

It includes a framework for accountability and coordination, and three primary objectives: education, community development and federal public services.

• (1825)

This is what Acadians and francophones want. They want us to invest in their communities to encourage them, help them prosper and grow.

They will be consulted throughout the implementation of the action plan, over a period of five years. We want to hear their comments and wishes. We urge them to get involved and take ownership of this plan.

The first of these official ministerial consultations took place in Ottawa on October 6, 2003. Seven federal ministers who are involved in the action plan took note of the comments of the communities on the steps we have taken and explained the progress made.

But that will not be all. Serious consultations will go on throughout this process.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Acadians are tenacious and the spirit of Acadian entrepreneurs is reflected in the strength of their institutions, commercial enterprises and teaching establishments. They are part of what makes Canada successful.

Private Members' Business

The Government of Canada recognizes this dynamism and vital contribution to Canadian society. They are among the seven million people in Canada who speak, sing, write, work and live in French. These francophones are proof of the vitality and extraordinary determination to grow and expand on a continent with an anglophone majority.

The government's responsibility is to support the growth of the Acadians, to recognize their value as Canadians and their contribution to Canada. Let us face the facts. My colleagues and I are looking to the future as are all Acadians and Canadians. We are the future of Canada and we intend to make the best of it.

Francophones, anglophones, aboriginals, Acadians and people from over 200 ethnic origins live together and respect each other. This is what Canada is all about, living in harmony, peace and prosperity.

[*Translation*]

As I said earlier, I cannot understand why the Bloc Quebecois continues to believe that the issue did not have a happy ending. Let us turn to the future. We should focus our energy on the challenges of the future, on the history we are living today.

[*English*]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Blackstrap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Lanark—Carleton could not be present today, so he has asked me to deliver the speech that he has researched and written. On behalf of the member for Lanark—Carleton, I begin.

Mr. Speaker, it is with regret that I will be voting against Motion No. 382. My reasons for doing so are twofold. First, I feel that this motion is based on a faulty premise, that being that guilt can be collective and can be passed on from one generation to the next.

Second, despite the good intentions of those who drafted it, the motion seems to attribute alternate responsibilities for the expulsion of the Acadians to the crown which is not an accurate reading of the events of 1755. A more historically accurate reading would lay blame with the colonial governors of New England and the pioneers they represented.

I will begin with the historical argument and come back later to the philosophical one. Many of the facts surrounding the deportation of the Acadians are unchallenged. In 1755 the colonial authorities began a process of uprooting and deporting the part of the Acadian population which had settled on British lands beginning with the centre of the Acadian colony along the east shore of the Bay of Fundy.

Nova Scotia's Governor Lawrence and Governor Shirley, commander in chief of the British forces in New England, began by seizing colonists' firearms to prevent them from using force to resist. Then they took a large number of adult males hostage in order to guarantee the docility of their families at the time of deportation.

In the years which followed, approximately three-quarters of the total Acadian population, or 13,000 people, were deported. Some of these people were sent to England, others to Louisiana and still others were returned to France. Although we know with certainty the degree of suffering caused by the deportations between the years

1755 and 1763, it is much more difficult to pin down historic responsibility for them.

One thing is certain and that is the governors Lawrence and Shirley were at the heart of the decision making and must bear ultimate responsibility. But nothing proves that they acted with the approval of the Parliament of Westminster. According to the most commonly accepted version of events, Lawrence acted with the authorization of the local council in Nova Scotia and parliament and King George did not take part in the planning of the deportations.

As I will discuss momentarily, I emphasize that I will not support the notion of a collective or hereditary guilt, but even if I did support it, I think that the first collective excuses that should be conveyed to the Acadian people should come from the government of Maine.

Nonetheless, the Queen recently chose to address this issue, deferring a decision on any apology to the Canadian cabinet. As we are all aware, cabinet recently dealt with this issue and this past December, the Governor General signed a royal proclamation regarding this issue. Excerpts from the proclamation read as follows:

Whereas on July 28, 1755, the Crown, in the course of administering the affairs of the British colony of Nova Scotia, made the decision to deport the Acadians;

Whereas the deportation of the Acadian people, commonly known as the Great Upheaval, continued until 1763 and had tragic consequences, including the deaths of many thousands of Acadians;

Whereas the Crown acknowledges these historical facts and the trials and suffering experienced by the Acadian people during the Great Upheaval;

Therefore, Her Excellency the Governor General in Council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, directs that a Proclamation do issue designating July 28 of every year as "A Day of Commemoration of the Great Upheaval".

I commend the decision of the government to issue this proclamation, one which seems entirely appropriate to me.

● (1835)

I believe there is a legitimate expectation that all participants in the public life of a civilized society should adopt a moral attitude toward the past. A moral attitude involves recognizing and embracing those past actions which are regarded as good and just and rejecting those which are regarded as unjust or monstrous.

The acknowledgement of the trials and suffering experienced by the Acadian people and the designation of an annual day to commemorate this unfortunate chapter in our history is an appropriate way to address this unfortunate episode.

In contrast to the proclamation issued by the Crown, however, the motion before the House explicitly requests an apology for this historical wrong. This is quite a different concept. It rests on the idea that actual guilt for past injustice can be passed on institutionally and collectively in precisely the same way that the residual effects of that wrong continue to have some impact on the descendants of those who suffered the initial wrong. This is simply untrue.

I do not accept the notion that an institution can maintain a heritage or a collective guilt that is imposed upon successive generations of those who become members of that institution or who fall under its protection.

Private Members' Business

An attitude of collective guilt or responsibility, or worse yet, of expecting others to accept a mantle of guilt, or responsibility for acts in which they themselves did not take part strikes me as being of no utility at all.

A debate similar to the one taking place today took place in the House 20 years ago on Pierre Trudeau's last day as prime minister. He was asked by Brian Mulroney in question period to issue an apology for the war time internment of Canadians of Japanese descent. Trudeau's response reveals a subtle grasp to the distinction that I am attempting to draw here today. He said:

I do not see how I can apologize for some historic event to which we... were not a party. We can regret that it happened. But why...say that an apology is much better than an expression or regret?

I do not think that it is the purpose of a Government to right the past. It cannot re-write history. It is our purpose to be just in our time...

I agree with the reasoning of this statement. In the case of the great upheaval, the wronged parties are long dead. Those who committed the wrong are long dead. The British Empire, by whose power the wrongs were perpetrated, no longer exists and the principle of mercantilism on which it was founded has been firmly and absolutely rejected by the present British Crown and state.

Most important of all, perhaps, the British colonies of New England, in whose interest the wrongs were committed, ceased to exist as political entities over two centuries ago, with the coming of American independence.

No individual is left, nor even any corporate entity, which can truthfully and honestly accept guilt in its own name, or serve as the justified target of the indignation of others.

This does not excuse us from a responsibility to adopt a moral attitude of condemnation toward this great wrong any more than we can adopt an attitude of moral neutrality toward the monstrous evils of more recent times.

As moral actors, we need to recognize the existence of these past wrongs, to identify them to our fellow citizens and to do all we can to ensure that no modern version of this wrong can occur.

As such, I would like to applaud the sincere efforts of the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes to ensure that this episode in our history is not forgotten.

Nonetheless, I believe that the recent proclamation, which acknowledges this issue without extending an official apology, is sufficient to express our sorrow for this past wrong. It allows us, without condemning others, to indicate our determination that no such future wrong will ever be tolerated on Canadian soil.

Hence, I disagree on both historical and philosophical grounds with the fundamental assumption on which Motion No. 382 rests, that the Crown bears a further responsibility.

• (1840)

First, I take issue with the historical claim that the British Crown, past or present, bears the ultimate responsibility for the great upheaval.

Second, I disagree with the philosophical claim that we can inherit a collective guilt which places on us a responsibility to apologize for events which took place over two centuries ago.

Therefore, I must vote against this motion and encourage others to do so as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga—Maisonneuve, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is with an attitude of solemnity and respect for history that I take part in this debate initiated by our colleague, the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes. I realize this is the fourth time this matter is brought before the House, but I am convinced that the hon. member introduced this motion because he wanted us to remember the important contribution of Acadians to the French reality in North America. He has no vengeful intention of any kind, nor does he have a negative or even pessimistic purpose.

I know for a fact that the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes has spoken with Acadians many times and that he has seen first hand how dynamic a community they form and how much faith in the future that nation has.

However, that potential for optimism must not keep us from understanding the considerable importance of the deportation, the Great Upheaval, the historical event which took place from 1755 to 1763.

Of course, I do not know as well as the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes the events that lead to the deportation, but I have found part of the edict, order or proclamation by which individual citizens and entire communities were deported from what used to be known as Acadia in the 18th century, that is, the whole region of Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

I would like to get into that to provide a clear understanding of what those experiencing this event must have gone through.

John Winslow read the deportation order in the little church in the village of Grand-Pré.

In those days, churches played a key role in rallying the community, a tradition that remained for some time.

So, here we are in September 1755. The Acadian community receives a message. These are francophones, people with roots, with a history, with a love for the area. They have announced to them by John Winslow, on behalf of George II, the following words on that September 5, 1755:

I have received from His Excellency, Governor Lawrence, the instructions of the King. It is by these orders that you are assembled in order to hear the final resolution of His Majesty concerning the French inhabitants of this province of Nova Scotia... It is ordered that your lands and tenements, cattle of all kinds and livestock of all sorts, be forfeited to the British Crown, along with all other effects, saving your money and household goods and you, yourselves, be removed from this Province... The peremptory orders of His Majesty are that all the inhabitants of this district be deported—

Imagine an entire community, a founding community moreover, at this midpoint in the 18th century, being uprooted and having to rebuild their lives. That community was to be scattered to all four corners of the empire, and not always in the most kindly of ways, often even with the potential of violence and suffering, to say the least. This was to be recounted in the many writings and historical accounts of this phenomenon.

Private Members' Business

The hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes has been wise, in my opinion, to call upon parliamentarians to remember this event, out of respect for history and for the sake of the future of this community.

In recent years, there has been a movement afoot to rehabilitate historical memory. Was it not here, in this very House, that former Prime Minister Mulroney presented an apology, on behalf of his government and the people of Canada, to the Japanese Canadian community. They had, as we know, been unjustly imprisoned in concentration camps during World War II?

● (1845)

And did His Holiness Pope John Paul II not also present an apology on behalf of the church and the state, out of respect for history? We know that, under the Lateran treaties, the Vatican is a state, just as Canada is, just like any of the 200 states around the world. His Holiness apologized to the Jewish people for the cruel treatment they had suffered throughout history, especially in the 20th century.

Closer to home, former Premier Bouchard presented, on behalf of his government and of the people of Quebec, an apology to the Duplessis orphans who were mistreated in the orphanages of Quebec in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

And so, the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes was extremely wise to want to restore the memory of history. I understand that one reason behind his motion is to say how much the French fact—the presence of the Acadians in this part of North America that is now New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island—is something that deserves to be commemorated. He wants to invite us to understand that.

Just imagine what it means for their survival that they are still present among us, with energy, with confidence, with entrepreneurship and, indeed, having made a truly extraordinary contribution to building the Francophonie and helping it expand its influence.

The member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes had two objectives. History sometimes casts a cruel light on the past, which nonetheless is important for understanding the future. As we know, in our constitutional history, two Crowns have ruled over Canada. There was the French Crown, New France, from the discovery of the Americas to the proclamation of 1760, and the British Crown, of course, through to the Statute of Westminster. We now know that the British Crown schemed, gave orders and committed acts in order to make deportation possible.

A Jesuit once said that a text taken out of context becomes a pretext. Our colleague from the Conservative Party of Canada was right to remind the House that history cannot be rewritten. It is certainly not the purpose of the motion from the member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes to rewrite, reinterpret or change history.

The motion calls on us to recognize the troubled past of the Acadian community that resulted from British Crown policies,

because we are grateful to be part of this French reality in North America. I could quote John Kennedy, who said about Canada and the United States, “Geography made us neighbours, history made us friends”. Tonight, I think the people of Quebec could say to Acadians that geography made us neighbours, and history made us friends.

The member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes is attached, as are we, to the French fact in North America, its past and its future, and that is why he has introduced this motion before us this evening on four different occasions.

I understand that the purpose of his motion is not to demand an apology in a spirit of revenge and negativity. I believe his actions echo the feelings of a number of his, and our, Acadian compatriots, who will be marking two major events in coming months and weeks. I am, of course, thinking of the 400th anniversary of the founding of Acadia and the 250th anniversary of the deportation of the Acadians, in September 2005, if I remember correctly.

The hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes would like to receive Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on this occasion. I think it would be impossible for her not to understand the point of this motion, since she must surely have a sense of history, as a member of the House of Windsor, a family that has made a great contribution to history.

● (1850)

The hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes wants Her Majesty, who should be coming to Canada for one of these events, to read the royal proclamation as a symbolic and positive gesture. The Crown of Canada recognizes the ill treatment and upheavals inflicted on the Acadian people. Unfortunately, our work will not be completely done until we truly understand what happened.

If, in a genuine gesture of reconciliation, which has involved various government leaders at various times, Her Majesty would agree to read the proclamation, we would come to realize that she shares the suffering inflicted upon the Acadian people, a forward looking and highly vibrant community in whose future we truly believe.

This is what the motion put forward by the hon. member for Verchères—Les-Patriotes is all about. To conclude, I think all members of Parliament should commend him for his interest in history, his sense of fairness and his incredible support for French-speaking communities throughout North America.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair): 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 6:55 p.m., the House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow, pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:55 p.m.)

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