



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 17, 2004**  
**(Part A)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 17, 2004

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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•(1000)

[*Translation*]

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe you will find there is unanimous consent that the recorded division on the motion for second reading of Bill C-12 scheduled for Wednesday, February 18, 2004, be taken today at 5:30 p.m.

•(1005)

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

### PETITIONS

#### MARRIAGE

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions from different areas, not quite worded the same, but dealing with marriage. The constituents call on the government to revisit the topic of what actually constitutes marriage. The petitioners are from across western Canada. They are pleading with the government to do what they are asking for in these petitions.

•(1010)

#### CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions. The first one is mostly from members of my riding in the City of Windsor with a couple hundred signatures in support of Bill C-10B, which is the bill providing further protection to animals in our society by way of amendments to the Criminal Code.

#### MARRIAGE

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second one is again from the City of Windsor regarding the definition of marriage.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** The third petition is in regard to the use of sonar, and the disruption and damage it causes to wildlife in the ocean. This petition has come from a good number of signatories in the province of British Columbia.

#### OPERA HOUSE

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the final petition is in regard to the destruction of a forest and the building of an opera house here in Ontario. I am filing this petition on behalf of residents residing in that region of the province.

#### MARRIAGE

**Mr. Janko Peric (Cambridge, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36 it is my privilege to present to the House a petition dealing with marriage and signed by 110 concerned constituents.

The petitioners wish to draw to the attention of the House that the institution of marriage has always been defined as the union of a man and a woman. It was upheld as such by votes in this very House.

The petitioners pray and request that the Parliament of Canada respect and uphold the current understanding of marriage as a union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my petition is one more of millions that have come in from across Canada in regard to marriage.

The petitioners from Manitoba, including Winnipeg and my own riding, point out that marriage is the jurisdiction of Parliament. They ask that Parliament pass legislation recognizing marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions on the subject of marriage. They represent approximately 1,050 signatures.

The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize that social policy should be decided by elected members of Parliament, not by unelected judges, that support of the legal definition of marriage as the voluntary union of a single man and a woman remain, and that Parliament respect the vote in 1999.

*Supply*

## HEALTH

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have another petition with nearly 900 signatures. It is on the subject of private member's bill C-420.

The petitioners are calling on the government to respect the freedom of choice of Canadians in health care products. They suggest that herbs, dietary supplements and other traditional natural health products should be classified as food and not arbitrarily restricted as drugs. They also remind Parliament that the weight of modern scientific evidence confirms the mitigation and prevention of many diseases and disorders through the judicious use of natural health products.

We hope that all members will support that bill.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have petitions from about 600 constituents who are asking Parliament to pass legislation to recognize the institution of marriage in federal law as the lifelong union of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions. The first one asks that Parliament legislate an opposite sex requirement for the institution of marriage and that marriage be restricted to be between one man and one woman.

## JUSTICE

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition asks Parliament not to amend the Human Rights Code, the Canadian Human Rights Act nor the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in any way that would tend to indicate societal approval of same sex relationships, or of homosexuality, including amending the Human Rights Code to include the prohibited grounds of discrimination and the undefined phrase "sexual orientation".

## FREEDOM OF RELIGION

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Finally, Mr. Speaker, the last petition asks Parliament to protect the rights of Canadians to be free to share their religious beliefs without fear of prosecution.

## MARRIAGE

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with in excess of 500 signatures, all from Albertans and mostly from my riding. The petitioners 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.

• (1015)

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Dale Johnston (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from the rural route mail carriers which calls upon the Government of Canada to repeal section 13.5 of the Canada Post Corporation Act, the part that forbids rural route mail carriers from having collective bargaining rights.

## 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 it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## SUPPLY

## ALLOTTED DAY—USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

**Hon. Grant Hill (Macleod, CPC) moved:**

That, in the opinion of this House, the Liberal government has and continues to nurture a culture of corruption through the abuse of its influence and the use of public funds for personal benefit and to benefit friends, family and the Liberal Party of Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be dividing my time today with the member for Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough.

For those who are not familiar with the parliamentary process, this is a day when the official opposition gets to put forward an issue to debate. This is a fairly significant issue.

I want to start by asking, why does the sponsorship scandal matter?

I have received a number of letters over the last week. I want to put some of the statements on the record.

R.G.G. in Victoria, B.C. wrote: "If the Prime Minister were caught in a bank robbery he would claim he was innocent, as he was only driving the getaway car".

S.M. in Toronto wrote: "The fleecing of Canada, I am absolutely disgusted by what appears to be fraud perpetrated on the Canadian people with a view to coating the pockets of loyal allies of the Liberal government, if not the Liberal Party itself".

C.T. wrote: "The consensus of my senior citizens group who meet most mornings for coffee in order to discuss the political highlights of the day in order to solve the problems of the world, a modest goal, strongly believe that an election should not be held, at least until a first interim report is issued in order to be able to vote intelligently. Anything less would be undemocratic".

Someone in my own riding, E. and H.D. in High River wrote: "Private citizens get jail and public restitution. As a heavily taxed Canadian with less write-offs than members of Parliament, I request a cash penalty given to members who are responsible for their poor judgment while entrusted in their portfolios. I'll vote all right. I can hardly wait for the opportunity".

B. and N.C. from Priddis wrote: "Outrage. This is inexcusable and we trust persons will be prosecuted. The average Canadian would be behind bars".

Those just reflect a little bit of what the public is saying to me.

Let me quickly summarize this scandal. The sum of \$250 million was spent on increasing the visibility of the federal government in Quebec. This of course followed the near loss to the separatists on the Quebec referendum. The sum of \$100 million plus of taxpayers' money went to commissions and fees. The companies implicated were Liberal-friendly ad agencies and some big crown corporations, such as VIA Rail and the BDC.

As we pass the BDC I cannot help but mention the fine president of the BDC, François Beaudoin, who has been exonerated publicly for the excoriation that he received at the hands of the Liberal administration. I cannot believe that a man had that fortitude to stand up before that onslaught. François Beaudoin does down in my books as a hero in Canada.

[Translation]

I have been asked if this is their way of doing things in Quebec. The answer is no. This is the way the Liberal Party of Canada does things.

Let us take the example of the possible leadership scandal in British Columbia, where there are allegations concerning the use of narcodollars, or using drug money to buy membership cards. Such is a party's tradition gone adrift.

[English]

Why is the Auditor General so credible on this subject? I looked back on the way the Auditor General reported on the firearms scandal. Suddenly, the public paid great attention to that. Our member for Yorkton—Melville had been saying exactly the same thing for months, years in fact. The Auditor General came out and suddenly the figures were credible.

This is because she is non-partisan. She does not have an axe to grind, as politicians do. She backs up everything she says with irrefutable facts. She is cool, calm and collected in her delivery and quite frankly, the Auditor General of Canada, Sheila Fraser, is in my view another Canadian heroine.

What excuses have been offered for this wilful ignorance? Wilful ignorance is no excuse under the Criminal Code of Canada.

First, this scam was carried out by a small band of rogues in the civil service. It was pointing directly at individuals who, in my view, have never, ever been found guilty. Second, the rogues surely must have had some political direction; however, there was no suggestion where that direction might have come from, just innuendo. Third, political direction could have come from Alfonso Gagliano and other ministers yet unnamed. Finally, it was directed at the ex-Prime Minister himself.

Whenever I hear a litany of excuses and the excuses change day by day, I am inclined to doubt the truth of any of them.

How has this played out in the media? Here are some headlines to consider, some are fairly gentle and some not so gentle: "Liberals scramble to contain the scandal"; "Prime Minister must have known"; "Report blasts Ottawa cronyism in the contract scandal"; "Blatant egregious arrogance"; "Your money, their friends"; "Prime Minister blames rogue staff"; "Prime Minister says Chrétien rivalry kept him in the dark". Here is one that I think is very important: "Eight in 10 Canadians say the Prime Minister knew more".

### Supply

An editorial from the *Ottawa Sun* stated:

An abuse of power, tens of millions of tax dollars diverted to secret bank accounts concealed with forged invoices and laundered through politically-connected businesses. A veil of strict secrecy protects the activities from the eyes of the public.

And when the jig is up and the fraud is exposed everybody claims to know nothing or blames some secret cabal of shadow operatives in the bureaucracy.

That is describing the Government of Canada. What a disgusting thing to have to say.

There is an alternative to the corrupt culture we have just had exposed by the Auditor General: a competent cabinet untouched by scandal; a new generation with fresh ideas; a party that treats taxpayers' money as a sacred trust; a party that puts health care as a top priority, spending dollars for that instead of siphoning off funds for their friends; and a party that would help hepatitis C victims of tainted blood instead of wasting money on worthless projects and scandals.

That alternative is the Conservative Party of Canada.

• (1020)

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the opposition has brought forward this question today because for the first time we will actually have a substantive debate on this issue.

We have time to lay out our positions and look at what our solutions would be.

I listened to the member speak and took some notes. He said people were angry. I agree with him. I am angry. I have no question about that, they should be angry.

He said that this program was designed to increase the visibility of the Liberal Party in Quebec. That is not true. This program was designed to increase the visibility of Canada. The program is not what is at issue. What is at issue is the management of the program and the mismanagement of the program.

He then said that the Auditor General is credible. I agree that the Auditor General is exceptionally credible. I have spent a great deal of time with the Auditor General over the last few years since she was appointed and before that talking about issues of public management. I will have a few quotes from the Auditor General because if she is credible on her concerns then surely she is credible on the other things that she said. He cannot have it both ways.

He then ended by quoting headlines, headlines that were drawn from statements that he and his colleagues have met, but I did not hear in the entire speech a single suggestion on how we improve public management.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Throw the members out.

**Mr. Reg Alcock:** No, this is the time for substantive debate, not sloganeering. I would like to hear a single substantive suggestion.

• (1025)

**Mr. Grant Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I have a single substantive suggestion and that is to throw the rascals out in the next election.

*Supply*

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the leader of the official opposition on his remarks.

He referenced in his speech the case involving François Beaudoin, the former president of the BDC, who was absolutely vilified by the government because he had the audacity to stand up and challenge the Prime Minister's assertion that there was a golf course and hotel in his riding so badly in need of public money. We know that it turned into a complete fiasco of taxpayers' money. He had the personal indignity of being dragged through the courts. He has been completely vindicated according to the hon. member.

I wonder if the member would go further in suggesting, for example, that Michel Vennat, who currently remains the president of the BDC should be suspended from that position? He was absolutely discredited by a Quebec Superior Court judge in his testimony that was given against Mr. Beaudoin and suggesting that he was very complicit in this vilification of the man who he replaced and yet remains on the public purse, remains drawing a salary just as we saw Alfonso Gagliano do when he was fingered by the Auditor General.

Could the public be spared further indignity by paying the salary of a man who was involved in this scandal from the get-go?

**Mr. Grant Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat hesitant to go down the road of tarring individuals in this chamber where I do have immunity. However, I will report, and this comes from court documents, that these individuals who attacked François Beaudoin did it in such a vicious way as to put his very career at risk. This was a fine honest banker, a man who simply said that he did not believe that the loan relating to the former Prime Minister's business dealings was a fair thing for the taxpayers of Canada.

This individual, who my colleague mentioned, wrote two separate letters to RCMP Commissioner Zaccardelli, one asking the federal police to investigate Beaudoin for "misappropriation of bank property during his tenure", and the other accusing him of being the source of the forged Grand-Mère document leaked to the *National Post*.

The court case that has taken years has now completely exonerated this man. The individual who made these allegations was called a liar in court. I am sorry to report that here in the House but the real issue here is, where did the charges come from? Where was the coordination between that individual and the Prime Minister's Office when it came to bringing out the communications strategy? I believe that Canadians will look upon this individual, as I said before, as a hero.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, when I reflect on the Auditor General's report, it is more with sadness than anger that we have this discussion in the House of Commons today.

The motion brought forward by the official opposition is meant to focus attention on what has happened with other people's money.

Is there anything more embarrassing for Canadians than seeing their Prime Minister sitting in penance before the altar of father Rex Murphy, as we saw on the weekend? What a spectacle of shame. What a hair shirt the Prime Minister was wearing. The Itchy and Scratchy show could not be more painful than that performance.

The cross-country cross-examination of our Prime Minister must go down as one of the greatest embarrassments we have ever seen in the country by a prime minister, an actor who was trying to portray himself as blameless in this entire affair. It reminds me of the old Platters' tune, and I know my colleague from St. John's will recall this, the *Great Pretender*.

The Prime Minister expressed feigned indignation and anger at what had happened. "Mad as hell" is our Prime Minister; mad that he got caught.

It is far too soon for the Prime Minister to speak of matters of ultimate destination. The list of Liberal offences is much longer than the confessional we saw occurring before father Murphy.

The Prime Minister forgot to mention that he sat in the cabinet room during the entire Shawinigate raid on the funds of the Business Development Bank.

He sat silently while the cabinet Orders in Council were passed shutting down the Somalia inquiry, which is reason for concern given these current public inquiries.

He sat silently while an Order in Council was passed appointing Alfonso Gagliano to represent Canada in our diplomatic corps, something that the Pope himself was not prepared to bless, yet the Prime Minister seemed to be completely oblivious to what was happening.

He sat silently while the government squandered millions on a politically motivated RCMP witch hunt of a former prime minister, which cost the country millions.

Silently he sat, while the HRDC program unaccountably ran up billions.

He sat silently while an ethics counsellor facilitated a venetian blind trust that let him play peekaboo with his own private corporate interests. He wrote that particular element of the red book, that infamous red-faced document that now still sits on the table as a reminder to Canadians what the promises of this government are worth.

Why did he do not more? The man who owns so many boats appears to be unprepared to rock any boats. Why did he do that? Clearly, self-interest, the lust for the brass ring; his precious, the Liberal leadership. That seems to be the reason that he sat silently while so much happened under his nose.

His advisers have told him he needs to get the story out. They fear he is not being given sufficient time in question period. I know I cannot reference the fact that he sat silently through much of question period last week.

Let me remind the Prime Minister that the floor is open to his ilk in this debate. He can come before the House at any time. He has unlimited time to use in the House of Commons. How on earth could he possibly have missed what was going on in his home province, in his department, in his country, for over a decade? That is impossible to accept.

Before he went to father Murphy's confessional on the Rock, the Prime Minister went into the Liberal caucus meeting last Tuesday to tell them the game plan. Since that meeting, the stream of gutter language that has spewed from the mouths of otherwise temperate Liberal members has been truly remarkable.

The game plan is for the Prime Minister to go out across the country and say that he is mad as hell. That mantra will be repeated from the charlatan in the movie *Network*. The Prime Minister's spin doctors forgot to tell him the full line, and that is that the people of Canada, after 10 years of Liberal government, are also mad as hell and they are not going to take it any more.

What is the anatomy of this Liberal corruption?

We are here today essentially to dissect that anatomy. This is no small task. The Auditor General's report examines the government's sponsorship program, but, as the Auditor General herself has said, her mandate is not to include an in-depth examination of the criminal intent.

Let me be clear, as the Prime Minister himself is so prone to say, what Canadians need to understand is that something went terribly wrong and that the Liberal government is responsible and should now be held to account.

Summing up her report, Sheila Fraser said that we needed to ask two important questions. Who authorized the payments and who benefited? We know who did not benefit: hard-working Canadians who every year, in trust, send their hard-earned taxpayer money to Ottawa for distribution to programs from which they should benefit. We know well connected Liberals assured the funnelling of taxpayer dollars to Liberal-friendly ad firms, and I would say that Canadians know the reason why.

•(1030)

I do not subscribe to the Prime Minister's line that he acted decisively or in a timely fashion. The document was available to the government in October of 2003. It had it in its possession since that time. The Prime Minister had to be aware.

There has been much speculation for months about the content of the Auditor General's report. The government knew that it would be a damning indictment of how these sponsorship programs and grants were being operated by the Department of Public Works and by other elements of the government.

There has been a string of public works ministers, Ralph, Curly and Moe, and they have all bungled the file. I knew that the last Auditor General's report would be stinging and would castigate the government for its activities in the way it was not accountable, in the way it was spending taxpayer money, in the way it kept Parliament in the dark and in the way it "broke every rule in the book", according to her. Yet these transgressions outlined in this report are worse by the ministers in the various departments audited.

Sadly, the recurring theme of the government has been mismanagement, corrupt practices, faulty accounting and missing documentation. This is the way in which the government has been spending money, losing track of that money, trying to cover it up and then saying that it is not to blame.

### *Supply*

The report itself is riddled with numerous examples. Some of the most troubling that I would point to involve the RCMP itself, money that was allotted for the RCMP's various programs for its 125th anniversary that should have been a source of pride for Canadians. One of our longstanding, principled institutions has been sullied and tainted by the Liberal government. That money was spent in an inappropriate way and put in a bank account that was deemed to be highly inappropriate by the Auditor General herself.

What is happening on the Prime Minister's now frequent talk show circuit? It is an attempt to stifle the debate, to take it away from the average Canadian. The opposition's job is to be diligent, to ask questions, to come to this place and to speak for Canadians. We saw it in the House of Commons last week. We saw it on *Cross Country Checkup*.

The Prime Minister said that he did not know what was happening. Imagine, the minister of finance, doubling as the vice-chair of the Treasury Board, the man who wrote the cheques, the man on the frontlines, the gatekeeper, the man who was specifically tasked with safeguarding the money of Canadians did not know how the money was being spent. This is simply not acceptable. He was complicit or complacent about how these programs were operating. He had a responsibility, an obligation and a commitment to the Canadian people, which he is now shirking.

As we saw last week, simply announcing that there will be a commission to look into this, just as there was a public inquiry into the Arar case, will in effect put these issues to one side until after an election. Make no bones about it, the object here is to call an early election, to try to bury this and to try to put it behind him as quickly as possible.

The Canadian people who phoned in to Rex Murphy's show were not impressed. They urged the Prime Minister in the strongest possible terms not to do so. I suspect that the CBC callers' board was lit up like a pinball machine and they could have gone on for another eight hours given the time constraints.

It has been over year. Other references have been made to the ballooning costs of the gun registry. The minister now responsible is a minister who had operational control over that budget for many years as well. To see her sit here in righteous indignation and throw barbs back at the opposition is again a little hard to take. Those who are concerned about this and want to get to the bottom of it should start at the top. Those who are quick to point the finger at bureaucrats, as was pointed out by my colleague, should look in the mirror when they looking for those responsible.

The Auditor General has been tasked with an important role, but so are we. We in the Conservative Party intend to be diligent and we intend to be vigorous in our examination of the government, both at the committee level and here in the House of Commons. More important, we intend to pose to the Canadian people an alternative: a government in waiting, a government that would do things better, cleaner, more effectively and with more responsibility to those who send us to this place.

*Supply*

•(1035)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened very closely to the two previous speakers. I would like to make a comment and ask two questions.

I find bizarre the attitude to this motion attacking all members. I warn the hon. member that I was a member of Parliament in the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney. I know how the machine works. I spent nine years and two months with the Conservatives in this place.

You say that you are a new Conservative Party, but that means nothing. When you attack all members of this House on—

•(1040)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I know we are in the early stages of a very important debate, so I just want to caution members on either side of the House that all interventions have to be made through the Chair.

[*Translation*]

I repeat that remarks must be addressed to the Chair and not directly across the floor of the House. I would simply like everyone to respect the rules.

The hon. member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, you are an excellent referee. We know about your experience in the national hockey league. You are clearly demonstrating your skills today.

My comment is the following. I recall that, under the Progressive Conservatives, I was the only member in the House of Commons to do so. The Progressive Conservative Party, the NDP and all opposition members disagreed with my disclosing all my expenditures as an MP.

If all members' expenditures are published every year in a report entitled, Members' Office and Travel Expenses, it is thanks to me. This way, people have a clear picture. Look at the history of the House of Commons to find out how I went about it.

Coming back to my comment. We have, in the House of Commons, a registry of foreign travel by sponsors, promoters and Canada.

The Conservative member for St. Albert, Alberta, has been on television in recent months, expressing outrage at the spending by all chiefs of staff on this side of the House. Moreover, there is no reporting concerning this spending. Only names are listed.

After investigation, we can see that the member for St. Albert in the new Conservative Party has travelled the world. We are talking about expensive travel, with business class fares at \$6,400. He even travelled to receive a sponsorship. He who got a sponsorship is now denouncing sponsorships. That is one sponsorship from promoters.

I travelled only once in 15 years and 10 months. It was in 1986. I travelled with my wife, and our trip cost the Canadian government all of \$4,302.

My question is the following. Will this new Conservative Party of Canada, as it is called today, produce by the end of the day all the expenditures of their members, from the PC Party and the Alliance, who have travelled with promoters around the world, at a cost of millions of dollars?

Also, could we be presented with comprehensive reports on all sponsorships under the program in question, by electoral district and by member, and on how it was distributed?

I look forward to receiving an answer by this evening.

[*English*]

**Mr. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, without being too derogatory or dismissive, that is probably one of the most inane questions I have ever heard. Of course our expenditures are logged here in the House of Commons, just as those of all members of Parliament are. We are not getting on a \$100 million jet as members of the government are.

The member opposite should be fully aware that we are not talking about expenditures of members of Parliament or even members of the government. We are talking about massive, colossal waste by government departments, mainly public works. The sum is astronomical.

Two hundred and fifty million dollars would have paid the salary for eight years for 556 police officers. It would have bought over 8,000 police cruisers. Two hundred and fifty million dollars would have paid for between 100 and 200 installed MRI machines in the country. It would have paid the salaries of over 196 full time nurses, at a salary of \$50,000 for the next 25 years, according to StatsCan.

There would have been 30,000 full time university students studying at an undergraduate level with that kind of money. It could have gone toward their tuitions. Every university student in the province of Nova Scotia could have been given a bursary toward their education, amounting to over \$8,000, with that kind of money.

Two hundred and fifty million dollars would pay for more than two years of construction, rehabilitation and maintenance for the province of Nova Scotia's highway network. Nova Scotia will pay \$106 million toward construction and rehabilitation just next year alone.

Those are the kinds of priorities that could have benefited from that kind of money, and what has it gone to? It has gone to Liberal-friendly firms for political gain, for partisan perpetration of power, to hold on to that grip with unbelievable ferocity.

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry I did not get a chance to ask the member a question. I noted his use of Itchy, Scratchy, Ralphy, Curly and Moe, but I did not hear any substantive contribution to the solution to the problem.

I did hear him suggest that the Prime Minister was hiding from the Canadian public by going on TV for two hours and taking questions. The Prime Minister has been absolutely forthright in meeting with citizens on this question because he has absolutely nothing to fear from the truth. That is exactly the point that the Prime Minister has been making over and over again, and Canadians are listening.



*Supply*

I do want to talk a bit about what has gone on, how we have arrived at the point we are at and what we will do about it. It is important to put this debate into context.

I just came from an hour with the public accounts committee where I heard questions from all sides. It was a very healthy discussion. Members are seized with the issue and want to do a good job on it.

We have members from all sides of the House, such as the member for Winnipeg Centre who worked very carefully on the whistleblowing legislation and the member from New Westminster, British Columbia who was my vice-chair on the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates, who take this stuff very seriously.

When I met with the committee earlier today one of the central questions concerned the changes to modern comptrollership that lie underneath some of the problems we are facing here.

I want to first characterize the debate in this way. If we want to look to who is responsible for a big part of this problem, we need look no further than the House. We need look no further than the members on all sides of the House. Let me go through this.

We collectively represent all Canadians in the management of a corporation that has roughly 450,000 members who deliver services to 2,600 lines of business. It is an enormously large complex which in this year had about \$183 billion in annual expenditures and about \$170 billion in the days that this took place. It should be pointed out also that the \$250 million is a four year figure, or about \$62 million on average annually.

The Auditor General is worried about \$100 million, not all of which she claims has been misspent. She said she could not figure that out. She has identified very serious improprieties and problems but the actual number may tend to be quite a bit smaller. Let me put that into context. The actual amount is roughly two one-thousands of a per cent of the total operation under management by the government at any point in time. It is a very small program.

We know about the billion dollar boondoggle in HRDC which turned out to be a question about whether there was value for \$65,000. When we got through the heat and it came down to the end of the day we found that \$65,000 was unaccounted for, not \$1 billion.

The member talked about the gun registry and a cost of \$2 billion. In reality, the gun registry has cost a little under \$100 million a year from the time it was put in place. The audited figure is about \$814 million to date. That includes the developmental costs. I have been quite critical of some of the developmental costs because I do think there are problems with governments bringing in large systems and it was evidenced here. I will not run around sharing with members the "I told you so" stories, but I am more than willing to talk about that at any particular point in time.

The reality is that we are getting to the point where we have a service that will cost us \$60 million to \$68 million a year to operate and it will deliver substantive positive protection to Canadians. That is why the national chiefs of police have said that they do not want it

taken out, that they want it managed efficiently and effectively. We want that also and we are delivering on that.

The point in these debates, if we are to do justice to the role that we play here in the House, is to bring these debates down to a substantive base. We have to start paying attention.

● (1045)

It is a former clerk of the House who makes the point that the House is ignoring 50% of its constitutional responsibilities and that is oversight.

I have to say that I have spent time listening to the statements of members opposite and I have not heard a lot of them over the years talk about wanting more time on estimates, that they want to get in there and do estimates or that they must pay attention to this.

No. They want to cruise around in the hot atmosphere of the 30 second debate in question period. However that is not the place to have a debate about the improvement in the public service.

I absolutely reject the assertion that there is a culture of corruption in the public service. It is absolutely untrue. As it happens in any operation and any profession, people do sometimes go wrong. It is a fact. We do need systems to correct that. However to tar the entire public service is simply unacceptable.

How did we get here? I have researched, studied, worked on and spoken about this in the House for years. A transformation is taking place right now in public management and it is taking place all around the world. The new information and communication technologies, which have so transformed our economy, have created huge pressure on public management.

In a world where we have the death of time and distance, we need decisions like this but modern systems cannot act that fast. The House does not act that fast. One of the things that has contributed to the loss of status of the House of Commons has been its failure to figure out how it functions in the world, the world that our citizens function in, that is making decisions at the rate of speed of the snap of a finger. They are not taking months and weeks to respond.

What we did over the years, rather than confront that, was give up the review of estimates in 1969 when we said that they could be deemed. When we brought in time allocation in 1972 it was because we wanted to get things through the House more quickly.

We hand things over the Auditor General. I like the Auditor General. I know her well and I have spent a lot of time with her. I have spent time with the previous auditor general. I am interested in these issues and I have been for years. However there is a question here. The House contains members from all over our nation, members who have been sent here by citizens from all over our nation. The House should be deciding the value questions for Canada. Unfortunately, we give that up to others so that we can deal with Itchy and Scratchy.

### *Supply*

We have to take back that ground. I do not believe there is a lot of ideological difference between that side of the House and this side of the House when it comes to good management. I do not believe there is a strong difference of opinion in how we deliver public services, or that we want it more or less than the others.

I have experienced what I consider to be the very best kind of activity in the House which is when members get out of the glare of the camera and sit down together.

I can tell members that some of the stuff that took place during the investigation of the privacy commissioner's office was absolutely astounding. Members from all parties got together and collaborated on how we would ask questions. They were outraged at the actions of certain professionals who should have known better, et cetera. It was a collective effort, with every single party working together to resolve an important problem in public management. We can do it.

I believe the public accounts committee can get there. I think the democratic deficit will be reduced by the public accounts committee taking this seriously and delivering a quality piece of work back to the House. I have some faith. The chair and I have disagreed at times on style. I think he does make a mistake when he comes into the House and joins in the question period debate when he is trying to manage the more sober debate in that committee, and I have told him that. However, overall I believe the chair and the members of that committee are committed to doing a quality piece of work and I have told them that I will support them every step of the way.

How did we get into this situation? Since the world is moving faster, large organizations have adapted to that by delegating more and more of the service responsibility close to the people who are receiving service. They did that for good reasons and for positive reasons.

Yesterday I said that the actual change began under the Kim Campbell government. I do not say that to absolve responsibility. I believe we would have made the same decision. I do not believe that Kim Campbell knew about it nor understood it. I think it was a management decision within the public service. However it was done because there was a belief that this had to be done to get better quality service. The motivation was a good one.

What they did not do is extend the communication systems the same way. How information is handled and managed in the government is very threatening to governments. This is a problem with which industrialized countries around the world are struggling. I have visited a number of them. I have talked with them. I have done research and I have read this stuff.

• (1050)

On some fronts Canada is actually doing better than most of the world and in others about the same as the rest of the world. A lot of money has been wasted on IT projects all over the world. It is quite freely written about, because there is a problem as we try to reframe the information infrastructure.

Members of the House and Canadians want greater transparency. How we do that in this world is very complex and we, frankly, have avoided it. We delegated responsibility for action and, in doing that, we took out the then comptrollership program.

The comptrollers program was a second line of access to oversee. The problem in only having one line of access is if the person above us is breaking the rules, then we have a problem. Where do we go? We saw that in the interviewing of witnesses from the privacy commissioner's office. Public servants were saying that they knew what went on was wrong, that they told their superior it was wrong but that he told them he was a deputy head, that he had the right to make that decision and that they should go away. They were stuck because they felt there was no place else to go.

Our whistleblowing regime is inadequate. That was identified very clearly in our study. In fact, the subcommittee, chaired by the member for Winnipeg Centre and one of the Liberal members, wrote a report on how we can improve whistleblowing legislation. The report was taken seriously by the previous president of the Treasury Board, the current Minister of Industry, who had some work done on that and it will be coming before the House. We will put that before the Standing Committee on Government Operations after first reading to allow members of the House to craft legislation to provide us with the best legislative base in the world for protecting our public servants when they want to deal with wrongdoing. However we must do more.

Let me talk about what we will do. The day I was sworn in, December 12, I was handed a letter from the Prime Minister, a letter that went to all ministers. It said in part that from the foundations of the government will be enhanced transparency, accountability and financial responsibility.

In my mandate I received a very specific set of instructions from the Prime Minister. In the first part of my mandate he said "You, Mr. President of the Treasury Board, are responsible for ensuring that we have transparency, accountability and financial responsibility and you will put in place a system of modern comptrollership so we have secondary access and oversight in every single government department. We will replace what was taken out in 1993 but we will do it responsibly and we will do it in a way that respects modern public management".

He also created a cabinet committee called the expenditure review committee, which I chair, and which has as its core mandate the modernization of the public service. It will put in place a system of delivering public services that will be the best in the world. Our public servants have the right to hold their heads up high and to feel proud of the work they are doing. We will do everything we can to support that.

He also looked at Treasury Board and said that Treasury Board had become fat and lazy. This has no reference to the president. He said that instead of its oversight roles, it gave up a lot of those and was now operating programs and delivering services. That is not what Treasury Board is supposed to do. Treasury Board is supposed to be the accountability function within government. He stripped all of that out. He gave some of it to PWGSE and some to the Privy Council and said "You, Mr. President of the Treasury Board, will focus on oversight and management improvement". He gave me oversight over all of the spending and over the regulations. I have administrative law and I have the finances. We are working hard to build up the team.

*Supply*

I am a little bit disappointed by some of the comments I have heard coming across the floor about some of the administration over there. The secretary of the Treasury Board was put in place in that organization a couple of years ago to clean up this mess. He has done an absolutely marvellous job of that in a difficult time when he did not have leadership that really wanted to go there.

I have quotes here from the Auditor General. If members want to talk about the credibility of the Auditor General, then they should quote the Auditor General when she talks about the very important work that has been done by the secretary of Treasury Board and by public servants throughout government to correct these problems and to address them. She is quite laudatory, frankly. It is just cheap debate that comes across the floor, the Ralphy, Curly and Moe variety.

● (1055)

It was the current Minister of Finance, when he was in charge of this department, who put in place a series of controls and management methods that the Auditor General specifically references as substantial and needed improvements. It is he who led this improvement. It was the former House leader, when he was in the position of minister, who brought in the auditor in the first place. It was his action that brought the auditor's attention to this file.

So I am sorry, but I just do not accept that kind of cheap, foolish debate on the floor here.

In addition, there was a statement made in the committee that somehow, on December 12, I also had access to this report and knew about it. I want to say that this is absolutely untrue. This report is an embargoed report by the Auditor General. The Auditor General's report was brought to me about three weeks ago; it will now be the fourth week that I have had this report.

I can tell members that when I read this report the anger of some individuals in this country was trivial compared to mine. I believe strongly in public management. I have worked all my life in public service in one form or another and to see people who have so little respect for their responsibilities saddens me beyond belief. That is not what we need from anyone. People like that should be sought out and punished in whatever way it takes. We need to send a clear message that that kind of behaviour is not acceptable.

I had the report for three weeks. I was not allowed, because I had it on a confidential basis, to take action until such time as it was tabled in the House. That would have been contemptuous of Parliament, frankly, to act on information that had not yet been laid before the House, but I was given access to the Auditor General. She and I had several meetings on this. I met with staff and I met with others. I looked at possible solutions. I prepared some advice for the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister at the end of the day had a decision to make. It is an old and new decision, right? Does he want to act like politicians who come into the House and say, "Let's have a political debate and you'll say this and we'll say that"? Then, at the end of the day, everybody is so confused that they say, "A pox on both your houses".

But this Prime Minister said no. There were people who said, "My goodness, don't call a public inquiry. That's going to cause all sorts

of problems. That's going to go all over the place". The Prime Minister said, "Absolutely not. We need to get to the bottom of this, wherever it goes. The Canadian people need to understand what the bottom line is here, what has happened, and we want to understand it".

But it is difficult, and this is one of the differences; the opposition calls for an inquiry a day. The reality is that for most of the administrative practices when there are problems I am sure the House is capable of dealing with them and I certainly know that I am. But in matters such as that of Maher Arar, where issues of secrecy and national security are involved, we want to be a little careful about that. We want to get to the bottom of it, but we have to respect that environment because it is a very complex and difficult one.

In matters where it may touch upon colleagues of ours, colleagues of mine—it may, I do not know for sure, that is for the inquiry to decide—then I do not think I should be the one investigating. I think the Prime Minister's decision was exactly the right one: hand it off to an independent, wide-open process, no holds barred, and let them go wherever they wish to go, because the Prime Minister has absolutely nothing to fear from the truth. Not only that, he wants the truth out.

It was a ridiculous statement that he is hiding from the Canadian public on TV, that he is hiding from the Canadian public by going around to talk shows, listening to people and making himself available to answer these questions. The political pundits are saying, "No, you don't do that. You manage this". Nonsense. What the Prime Minister is doing is saying, "I have nothing to fear. I'm out there".

Let me end with this. There is work that the House has to do. I am launching a review of the Financial Administration Act, which is the backbone of public administration. I am going to come to the House and ask members to be involved in that.

I am announcing a review of crown governance. We have problems in those crown corporations that I will be reporting on shortly, but we are going to review crown governance. I will ask members of the House to get engaged with us, to put their ideas on the table and show us how to improve this. I will show them. I say to them, Mr. Speaker, "I will show you mine and you show me yours".

There is a bigger question—and we are going to put whistleblowing legislation—and it is the question that the auditor poses in chapter 2. It is a question that she and I have debated a lot and it is a question, frankly, that she says is the important question we have to answer. We just do not have an easy answer, because it is not an easy question.

● (1100)

We can put in place all the laws we want. For example, we have laws against stealing cars and people still steal cars. We can put all the laws in place, but what we have to do is deal with this question of ethics and integrity. We have to deal with the relationship between politicians and public servants.

*Supply*

This is a piece of research for which I am going to bring in the best minds in this country. I am going to invite members, our unions, and our employees, and I am going to invite Canadians, and we are going to put down some guidelines, a simple set of rules that talks about what it is to live a life of honour, because that is what our public service can deliver and that is what Canadians need.

• (1105)

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last 30 seconds of that 20 minute speech was interesting because the minister did start to put forward a couple of ideas. It would have been nice to actually hear the details rather than just hearing him say it is a review, because that is all we have heard from these Liberals since they got in hot water.

It is interesting that today the minister blamed the House; the problem is this House. Yesterday it was Kim Campbell, that dang Kim Campbell, boy, she basically has been running things over there for the last 10 years and we just did not notice that the problem was actually of her creation.

I can give us a couple of other ideas that the minister could consider. For example, I do not know why he did not speak up when Gagliano was appointed to the cabinet originally and the RCMP recommended that he not be approved for cabinet. Do we remember that?

**An hon. member:** I remember.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** What happened on the front benches then? They all came together and said, "Guess what, this guy does not meet the smell test".

This is the truth, folks. The RCMP said he should not be in cabinet, they put him in cabinet anyway, the Liberals backed off 100%, and guess what? He is in disgrace today and the Liberals are in disgrace too. What a shame.

It started over there. The smell started there. He could have stopped this probably at that moment, because we create a culture with those kinds of appointments. Then they appointed the former minister, the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, to clean up the mess. It was not long before he was up to his eyeballs in alligators and then he was gone. They then appointed the finance minister of today to come in and clean up the mess. Now they have appointed another minister and they have spokesmen over there to try to deflect this. It is just a sickness that goes through the system.

The minister should not be surprised that we cannot debate with him how to overcome this culture of corruption that is part of the Liberal system. I just do not know how we can debate it other than to say it is just plain wrong and it should be gone.

[*Translation*]

These days in Quebec, the most popular television show is *Les Bougon*. A "bougon" is someone who cheats the system whenever they can.

In yesterday's *Le Journal de Montréal*, the headlines read, "Les vrais Bougon". A couple was sentenced to 18 months in prison and ordered to pay back \$26,000. This is for a small-time "bougon". How much time will the Prime Minister's "bougons" get for millions of dollars?

I wonder if the new Liberal Party slogan is, "We are 'les Bougon'". Quebeckers understand this slogan, because the Liberals are corrupt and they have created a culture of corruption. A change of government is needed. That is the only way to resolve the problem.

[*English*]

**Hon. Reg Alcock:** Mr. Speaker, let me first correct something the member said. I expressly said in my remarks that my comments about what occurred under Kim Campbell would have occurred under us, that it was a policy management trend at the time. I do not hold her accountable. As I said, I suspect that she did not even know what was going on, not because she was not paying attention but because normally politicians do not pay attention to some of these management issues. It was done on the management side. I do not think there is a lot to dispute about that.

I just wonder what value we serve to Canadians when we stand up here over and over again and smear people without putting any facts on the table. If the member has something that he thinks is substantive, that proves his charge of corruption—that is the word he used—then I think he has an obligation to put it on the table. He has the inquiry. He can do it here. He speaks here within privilege, but if he has substantive—

**An hon. member:** Pierre Corbeil.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Pierre Corbeil, how about him?

**Hon. Reg Alcock:** He was not talking about Mr. Corbeil. He was talking about the ambassador to Denmark. He made a very specific allegation. I would ask him to put evidence on the table.

That is the problem with this debate. I have yet to hear from that party a single substantive contribution on this issue, not one.

I can tell those members that there are members in this party who care, such as the member from New Westminster. I hope he speaks today, because I know he is an individual who has studied this and cares deeply about public management. I know he has a contribution to make, as do others.

The right hon. member for Calgary Centre, at a time in his life after he left the leadership of that party and could have gone off and written his memoirs, came and sat as a member of the standing committee on government operations because he cares passionately about our public service and the public services we deliver. He participated every step of the way with that committee because he can make a substantive contribution, as can the member from New Westminster.

The member for Winnipeg Centre spent a long time on this issue of whistleblowing and protecting public servants. Actually, there was a Bloc member on the committee who has since seen the light, but that does not take away from the Bloc's position. I want to say this quite clearly: in Quebec, they have some of the best privacy legislation in the country. They have some of the best election finance legislation. I am a little annoyed at some of the stuff that comes from across the floor here. The election finance legislation that we put in place was modelled on the best regime in the country and that is the one that is in place in Quebec. If people want to talk about problems and want to assign that to a particular region, is Grant Devine from Quebec? Is Glen Clark from Quebec? I am tired of that.

I think that members would do this country a service if they ratcheted down the rhetoric and personal smears and focused on solutions. I know we can solve this problem, and if the members think that they are a government in waiting, a government in waiting has to have ideas because the Canadian people reject this other debate.

•(1110)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think the President of the Treasury Board is trying to cloud the issue. The issue at the heart of the motion of the Conservative Party, and the current debate throughout Quebec and Canada, is truly the culture of waste and scandal within this Liberal government. It used, perhaps for national unity purposes, taxpayers' money. Nonetheless, the government is not fooling anyone. The primary goal was to promote the Liberal Party of Canada, particularly in Quebec.

I would like the President of the Treasury Board to comment on this culture of waste. It is manifest in many ways, such as in the fact that, from 1997 to 2002, when the Prime Minister was the Minister of Finance, federal government operating expenditures increased by 40%, which is twice the increase in operating expenditures of the governments of Quebec and Ontario.

There was also the Human Resources Development Canada scandal; a billion dollars vanished who knows where. There was the Business Development Bank scandal with the loans to the Auberge Grand-Mère and also the firearms registry fiasco. Nearly \$2 billion was wasted in administering this registry. There was also the sponsorship scandal. Is this not too many coincidences to try to appear blameless in the eyes of Canadians and Quebecers?

I would like him to comment on this series of scandals and tell us that the government and the Liberal Party have not had anything to do with all these facts. These are facts.

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. I have addressed some of this and I will come back to it.

On the motion that is before the House, it says:

—the liberal government has and continues to nurture a culture of corruption through the abuse of its influence and the use of public funds for personal benefit—

I think it is a rather substantial charge to say that the government is using public funds for personal benefit. If the member has

### Supply

evidence of that, he should put it on the table. It is fine to engage in the hot debate and let us go to it.

The HRDC billion dollar boondoggle was debated in the House. We still hear about it every day. The billion dollar boondoggle is \$65,000 in spending that was unaccounted for. It was not \$1 billion but \$65,000.

The member says, picking up on a report from some mathematical wizard, that the gun registry has cost us \$2 billion. The gun registry to date has cost us \$814 million, a little less than \$100 million a year and that includes the development cost. The reality is it will end up costing us somewhere around \$65 million to \$68 million to operate.

The Canadian food institute would cost us, using that same calculation, \$500 million a year for 10 years, some \$5 billion to provide absolute protection of our food to keep it safe. Do I hear the member complaining about that?

The fact is in a country of this size, to deliver services to people to protect their safety costs money. The services should be delivered as efficiently and as effectively as they can be. I guarantee that we will do everything we can, with the involvement of other members, to see that that happens. Those members have to live up to their responsibilities also. One of them is not to simply come forward with allegations and smears but to come forward with ideas. I am listening. I am going to read every word that is spoken in the House. I want to hear some ideas.

•(1115)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague for Lotbinière—L'Érable.

In my opinion, we have just had a clear demonstration by the President of the Treasury Board of what is wrong in this House and in the Canadian Parliament.

The President of Treasury Board tells us, with such arrogance, “I am the one with the figures, the only one with the figures. All the opposition members are barking up the wrong tree, and do not have the right figures.” The news media are all being told the same thing when they criticize the scandals: “You don't have your figures right. I am the only one with the right ones.”

The problem with the Liberal Party, now and in recent years is arrogance. And it is losing it

Yesterday I heard the Prime Minister, who pretty well did the rounds of the TV media in Canada. He was trying to explain that what was going on was terrible, that he was terribly upset, disgusted, found it unacceptable, absolutely inadmissible. But he has been reacting this way only lately.

When he was Minister of Finance, he did not react this way. On the contrary, he played at “see no evil, hear no evil”, even “smell no evil”. Yet he was well aware of what was going on.

So we do not buy them telling us now that the Prime Minister knew nothing of it when he was finance minister. He was after all in charge of finance, that is, number 1 in Quebec and number 2 in Treasury Board. It is not true that he knew nothing.

### Supply

After he was on TVA yesterday, a listener poll was carried out and 98% of respondents said “We do not believe the PM”. Only 2% did believe him.

This is pretty logical when we look at the tissue of lies around this whole affair. There is nothing complicated about it. They are all ministers. They are all Liberals. They are all people who have worked with them, people in ad agencies, or vice versa. Even in the Crown corporations, the ones involved were all people with past Liberal connections.

Today they are trying to convince us that no one knew what was going on. It is too much. The Liberal Party of Canada is being undone by its arrogance.

What with Groupaction, Polygone, Coffin, Everest, do you think they were not fed up hearing this and seeing the Canadian flag flapping everywhere, on every street corner in Saint-Jean and everywhere else in Quebec? Every time some event took place, there it was. People were not taken in.

They understood that at a time when it was hard to find funding for public services and education in Quebec, Ottawa was investing money in flags to drive home the message that federalism and the representatives of federalism par excellence, the Liberal Party, were our only defenders.

The money did not go where the people of Quebec wanted it to and they reacted badly. That is why there is such a furor today. “Finally,” they say, “what we sensed at the time, what we thought was not right at the time—it has come out now”.

The Bloc is proud to say that we are the ones who uncovered this scandal. It was not the Liberal MPs from Quebec. They knew what was going on in Quebec, but they did not talk about it. It was the Bloc, once again, who did its work by asking an impressive 441 questions in 4 years.

Now the Prime Minister, who was there for all these questions, would like us to believe that he went back to his office after question period and did not ask any questions and did not say, “There is something odd here. There seem to be a lot of questions about this subject”.

Let no one try to tell us that the Prime Minister went back to his office and all was business as usual. That cannot be. Moreover, he did have some trouble with the letter from the Liberal policy chair, who told him in 2002, “I am sending you a letter because there is a problem. You must look into it”. Now we are told that the letter was lost. Nevertheless, the letter appeared on the front page of the *National Post*, and it was picked up by all the media.

Consequently, there is a major problem. For the crown corporations, it is a terrible scandal. Of course, we know who André Ouellet is. He is a former minister of Foreign Affairs, number 3 person in the government at the time. He is someone important. He was up to his neck in it. Canada Post, of course, was up to its neck. There were many other companies that were up to their necks, too, including VIA Rail. In my opinion, the most amazing is the RCMP. Now the RCMP has had to ask the Sûreté du Québec, “Please do our investigations, because things do not look good”.

●(1120)

It has become almost a political police. We never doubted it at the time. I would rather not remind you of the 1970 crisis, but what we have here is even bigger. These are people whose job it is to investigate individuals suspected of wrongdoing and we discover they too are involved in the business.

There is something really wrong with this government, and people are noticing now. It should not come as a surprise to the Liberal Party, then, if this stirs up such a furor. People have had it. In this place, we hear fine Liberal rhetoric about their being democrats and transparent, but the truth is the opposite. On every issue, the opposition is kept in the dark. A few officials in ministerial circles are making all the decisions. That is what happened in this scandal.

Do not tell me that no one knew anything. We suspect that everyone did. That is the Liberals' defence. They are still as arrogant as ever. Evidence of that is what the President of the Treasury Board just said, accusing the opposition of saying any odd thing and throwing figures around. Well, I am sorry but I think that our figures are accurate. I think that the people are currently siding with those who provided the right figures, instead of those who are continuing to hide behind their arrogance, claiming that nobody else has the right figures, that they have all the information, that they are going to make everything right and that the opposition and the public need only follow them and trust them.

I think the remarks the Prime Minister made to the media were pathetic; he was really eager to exonerate himself. When I saw the polls, I realized I was not alone. In fact, 98% of those polled do not believe the Prime Minister. The PM himself had problems with a number of companies. He wanted to have his own companies listed as well to provide marketing services to the government.

What can we say too about the information made public yesterday on Earncliffe Strategy? There was \$6 million in contracts, most of it granted by the former finance minister and current Prime Minister for verbal reports. This reminds me a bit of Groupaction. What are we to think about the famous report that cost ten ministers \$27,000 each for the exact same report? This seems awfully similar to when the Groupaction scandal was uncovered; that company had provided three photocopies of the same document for \$500,000 per copy.

The corruption goes quite deep. A public inquiry will not save this government. It will likely delay things. That is why we would like to have a preliminary report. I can, however, say one thing: whether there is an election this spring or fall, or in the spring or fall of 2005, the Liberal Party has made a monumental error and people have now had enough.

I am also sick of hearing members opposite and people across Canada say that Quebec politicians are a corrupt group. We are the victims here. We broke the scandal, and today, people want to tell Quebecers that this is how we play politics. As proof, the minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario said some nasty things two days ago in his private journal. Perhaps he thought that we would never find out, but we happen to have some contacts. We received a brown envelope and we found out about it.

*Supply*

I am a little sick of being blamed for this. We are the victims here. About 25% of this money belongs to Quebecers, and it was used to fund an unscrupulous deal to shower Quebec with Canadian flags. People are a bit sick of this.

The Prime Minister retroactively saved \$100 million in taxes thanks to a bill. He said that he obtained \$137,000 in federal government contracts, when he really got \$161 million.

People are sick of it. In Quebec, it is even more obvious. A public inquiry is not going to fix things for the Liberal Party, but the voters are going to. No matter when an election is called, we will be waiting for the Liberals in Quebec. Their actions are unacceptable, and they will pay the political price.

• (1125)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask hon. member for Saint-Jean the same question I asked the President of the Treasury Board.

The President of the Treasury Board argues that we are trying to blame the federal public service for all the problems. To talk of problems in this case is an understatement. The word scandals describes the Liberal reign in the past decade.

In the hon. member's opinion, is the fact that operating expenditures increased by 40% in 5 years while the Prime Minister was finance minister, when spending in Ontario and Quebec increased only half as much part of the culture of waste?

The HRDC scandal—the billion dollars that vanished into thin air—the scandal of the Business Development Bank of Canada loan to the Auberge Grand-Mère; the scandal of the firearms registry—nearly \$2 billion, which everyone knows about except the President of the Treasury Board—and the latest, the sponsorship scandal, are they coincidences or are they evidence of the culture of waste and of the scandal marking this government?

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette, who is an excellent economist. He probably knows the answer to many of his questions. He is giving me the opportunity to say that indeed, the culture of waste is widespread within the Liberal Party. Unfortunately, this occurs at a time when there is fiscal imbalance in the provinces. The provinces have to provide all the services, and the government transfers very little money. And meanwhile does not keep its own house in order.

The gun control issue is truly despicable. The program was supposed to cost \$2 million. I do not want to contradict the President of the Treasury Board, but at last count, the program has cost \$2 billion—1,000 times more.

In Quebec, we have nothing to learn from the Liberal Party when it comes to managing public funds. We manage them and we do not have the means to waste anything because we are not getting enough funding. After stealing from the unemployed and cutting transfer payments, they think they can waste everything.

My colleague from Joliette has done excellent work with a former PQ minister in examining the waste and lack of spending control within the current Liberal government. In the provinces, this seems to be much more controlled and much better managed.

[*English*]

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last night on the national news the Prime Minister said, “the Liberal Party is not corrupt”. That is the exact statement he made. It reminded me of that famous United States president who said, “I am not a crook”.

I think that the public service, as mentioned by the President of the Treasury Board, is not corrupt. We know that. The public servants of this country are great. But someplace there is corruption in this whole mess of the sponsorship program. If it is not the public servants, which the President of the Treasury Board has assured me it is not, and I know that myself as I was in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for 30 years, then where is the corruption?

The corruption then can only rise up to the political level. At the political level there is very little difference between me and the Conservative Party and little difference between the Prime Minister and the Liberal Party.

Seeing that this type of contract shenanigans is happening in all provinces across the country, including Quebec, who does the member think is actually responsible in the end for this mess?

• (1130)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question because it is a question of accountability. I agree with my colleague. Naturally the Prime Minister knew what was going on. It is corruption from top to bottom.

Let us look at how the Prime Minister has reacted since the beginning of this scandal. He started by saying that a handful of officials were to blame. After that, he expanded by saying that it was the former regime and he was not involved. Next he tried to say that political masters were likely involved. Indeed, this could not have gone unnoticed by the political masters.

The Bloc Québécois is saying that the current Prime Minister was one of the political masters. He knew what was going on. Yes, the regime is corrupt from top to bottom and I think the voters know it. They are waiting for an election to settle their score with the Liberal Party.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, our presence here today is the result of a political event that occurred in October 1995, the referendum. Fifteen days before the referendum, the polls clearly showed that the Yes camp was winning.

So, there was panic here in the House of Commons, particularly among the federal Liberals. Quebecers had to be shown that Canada was a beautiful country and an ad campaign was needed to do that. That is why the sponsorship program was created, and that is also where everything started, like the famous love-in held two days prior to the referendum.

### Supply

So, when I am told in the House that the current Prime Minister, all of the current ministers and all of the federal Liberal members did not know what was happening, I must say I have serious doubts because everyone knew that Jean Chrétien's Liberal government had to flex its muscles to save the country. That is what we were told by the person who set up this program when he testified in July 2002 about the sponsorship and Groupaction scandals.

Do you know what Mr. Guité said? "We were at war. Something had to be done. The separatists were going to win". What more proof do we have to give here in the House? The sponsorship scandal is inextricably linked to the future of Quebecers. Now, today, they are trying to tell us that the present PM did not know what was going on.

I remember my days on the public accounts committee when we tried to have some witnesses appear who could cast some light on this. You should have seen the stonewalling that went on, as the federal Liberals systematically prevented the Standing Committee on Public Accounts from doing its job.

Today we hear from the new President of the Treasury Board. It was he who opposed those amendments, before the present Prime Minister came along, when we were debating the importance of the Public Service Act and when the Bloc and the NDP were trying to introduce amendments to protect public servants who might act as whistle blowers about ministerial political interference. The Liberals themselves blocked those amendments to Bill C-25.

This morning, it is quite fantastic what the President of Treasury Board can say when he talks to us about democracy and transparency. I need not remind hon. members that, the night before the Auditor General's first appearance to explain the content of her report, an emissary of the PMO called together the Liberal members of the Public Accounts Committee. I would call that interference and controlling behaviour.

Today they are trying to make us believe that transparency and democracy exist among the Liberals, but I am not buying it. You know what the press is saying today? Today's headlines describe the PM's actions of yesterday as "damage control mode", in other words that he was in a panic. Do hon. members want to know what the PM reminds me of with his protestations of not being aware, that he will clean house, that he is outraged, and so on? He reminds me of someone who claims to have left his past behind, but then keeps on talking about it. After two hours of hearing about it, one is tempted to say "Hey there, you have not left your past behind you at all".

That is what the Prime Minister is doing now. He keeps on saying he knew nothing, keeps on saying his government will change its behaviour, change its mentality, that his government will become the most democratic government anyone has ever seen in this House of Commons.

• (1135)

That is a monumental joke. The people of Quebec are starting to react to what the Prime Minister intends to do, because it knows that the sponsorship scandal is intimately related to our national future.

If current polls are clearly showing that the Bloc Québécois has made significant gains in Quebec, regardless of what happens in coming months, this means that the people of Quebec understand

what took place in October 1995. It means that Quebecers are a good, proud, and different people.

There are phone-in radio show hosts, in Toronto and Vancouver, and even a minister who are currently suggesting that this whole issue is indicative of Quebec's way of doing things. We have certainly never seen anything of the sort.

The current Prime Minister, who proclaims himself a Quebecker, should take more aggressive action to stand up for Quebec when under such attacks. There is more to come. Anytime the Quebec people sets out to achieve sovereignty, these kinds of racist remarks pop up all over the place in English Canada. Forgotten are all the nice things said in Montreal, one day or two before the referendum.

Light will definitely be shed on this issue. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts has set the process in motion. On Thursday, we will have a meeting where the Auditor General and officials from the three departments concerned will try to explain the complex nature of this program. There are so many complexities that it is hard to make out the authors. All this was apparently done without any political interference.

Now we can see one president after another speak up. André Ouellet said he did not know what was going on at Canada Post. Jean Pelletier—and this is worse—is Jean Chrétien's former chief of staff and now heads VIA Rail. He would have us believe that he knew nothing.

I look forward to hearing what Alfonso Gagliano has to say. He made us a promise and I hope he will keep it. He said he did not want to comment on a political situation while posted in Denmark, but would clarify the whole situation upon his return to Canada. I am sure that, listening to Alfonso Gagliano, there are ministers from Quebec, federal Liberal ministers, who are going to blush.

We are talking about a Prime Minister who says he was not in the loop. It is funny that the same day the report was tabled he held a press conference to announce his measures. He preferred to speak to the media rather than to Parliament. The next day he said that it was a small group. When he felt that people were beginning to have increasing difficulty believing him, he went back to the media at 1:30 p.m., to tell the journalists that it was no longer just a small group, but that it was quite a lot bigger than he thought and that there was some political direction involved.

Not only are the polls unanimous, but all of our colleagues were discussing it when they returned to the House. On the weekend, no one was talking about anything else. We heard how revolted the people felt, especially since this Prime Minister had made cuts in transfer payments for health care and education and in employment insurance, so that the government and good friends could make millions and millions of dollars. That is unacceptable. It does not matter whether the election happens on May 4, May 10, in the fall, or in 2005, the people of Quebec are going to say, "Liberals, begone".

• (1140)

[English]

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from the Bloc was on the agriculture committee with me. I would like to talk for a few seconds about the dollars and cents being thrown around about this business.



The Treasury Board minister was talking about a 1/2000th spending of the total federal government involving this corruption, even though that adds up to \$100 million which I believe is what the Auditor General said. Right now there are potato farmers in P.E.I. and farmers and ranchers out west particularly in the cattle business who are suffering to the point of having to use the food banks to feed their families. That is the gospel truth. The average Canadian is sitting out there listening to us discuss hundreds of millions of dollars, especially the Treasury Board minister, as if it was just a mere pittance of no concern. These people are starving to death and financially are going to ruin.

I would ask the member to relate the dollars and cents that are being thrown around here, or perhaps it should be the lack of sense. How do they relate to the average person, in particular the beef farmers who are suffering so badly today?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Speaker, in fact, in the agricultural sector we are getting crumbs once again. This government is the expert in announcing the first phase. The second phase is being studied and perhaps there will be a third phase. The reason they say there is a first phase, a second phase being studied, and perhaps a third phase, is that they claim they have no money.

There is a problem here, because they had the money, but they spent it badly. They spent it so badly that they let some situations get really rotten, such as the mad cow crisis, the softwood lumber crisis and their continued stealing from the unemployed.

The way the money is managed at the moment, or the way it was managed by the former finance minister, the current Prime Minister, and the current Minister of Finance does not change. Why not? Because it can only be described in one way. This Liberal government is dishonest; it penalizes the little guys and fattens the big.

**Hon. André Harvey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure you have noticed that my colleagues from the Bloc have been very happy for the past few days. They have been on life support in Quebec for the past few months. What is interesting is that the current crisis is isolated. There was the sponsorship problem and the Bloc MPs spend their time telling us they are asking questions. Canadians and Quebecers want people to do more than just ask questions, they want people to take action.

I would like to ask my colleague if he thinks the futility of their role is going to catch up with them soon. For 10 years, they have been elected on promises to Quebecers that they would ask questions. Over the past few months, Quebecers have realized they want people who take action, like the Prime Minister has done in this exceptional case, as we have just seen. The tools are in place. There is a standing committee, a public inquiry and an investigation into the RCMP.

I would like to reiterate my question to the hon. member. Does he not believe that the reality of the futility of the Bloc Quebecois, which is a party that only asks questions and does not have power, will catch up with it very soon? They were elected in 1993 and said they would exercise real power. I would like them to show us what real power is.

### *Supply*

They are extremely happy here in this great Parliament, which is called the Parliament of Canada. They are very happy and certainly do not want to lose their jobs. They ask questions, two or three small questions a week, then go off and are content.

The Prime Minister honoured his commitment to bring order to this program. There are thousands of programs within the Canadian government. Clearly we must learn from this experience.

● (1145)

**Mr. Odina Desrochers:** Mr. Speaker, I note that the Jean Lapierre strategy has already been adopted by the Liberals. The only comment Jean Lapierre was capable of making when given the nod as the Liberal candidate for Outremont, was that the Bloc Quebecois had no reason to exist, although he himself was a founding member of that party. I have trouble understanding the Liberals and their inconsistency.

When we are told we are doing nothing but ask questions, let me tell you that our questions are what has made it possible to cast some light on this scandal. There have been more than 450 questions concerning the mess with Groupaction and the boycotting of the public accounts committee. Action was needed. Some heavy guns were required to get to the truth. They did not take kindly to that. So much for transparency and democracy. They are beginning to learn their lesson but it is taking a while.

[*English*]

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg North Centre.

The motion before the House today is very important. I have seen many scandals over the years in the House of Commons and across the country, but this scandal is one that involves more money than I have ever seen before. I think the Liberal Party is implicated in this thing lock, stock and barrel.

I noticed in the paper on the weekend that the Prime Minister of Canada referred to other scandals such as this taking place before. He referred to Grant Devine and the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan. This reminds me a lot of that particular scandal. I am from Saskatchewan. A number of years ago when Grant Devine was the premier, and do not forget that it is the Conservative Party that sits here in opposition, the same party, the same people, decided that they wanted to defraud money from the people of Saskatchewan.

In the end, after an RCMP investigation, 16 people were convicted of criminal offences. Many of them went to jail. Many of the Conservatives went to jail, including the deputy premier, Eric Berntson, and the chairman of the caucus, the minister of labour, Lorne McLaren. That was for stealing tens of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money.

Across the way we are talking of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money. It may be hundreds of millions of dollars. I do not want to prejudge ahead of time how much money is involved, but certainly it is a lot more than the Conservatives stole in the province of Saskatchewan.

### Supply

What we have here is a very serious scandal. We have to clean up government in this country.

We have had these scandals and this corporate corruption from Brian Mulroney's Conservatives right through to the Liberals of today. It is the same old thing, these corporate scandals and corporate sleaze, this lack of accountability. We saw it in spades with Brian Mulroney and the Conservative Party and we are seeing it right now with the Prime Minister. That is why we have to change the system in this country.

It is interesting that the man behind the new Conservative Party, the master puppeteer is Brian Mulroney. We are seeing it in spades in that party across the way.

I want to warn people who are watching today that some of this language is not very good language. I am quoting a gentleman here, not Alfonso Gagliano, but I am quoting a gentleman from July 15, 1984, Brian Mulroney, the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada. This is why the rot is there when there is this kind of an attitude from a prime minister following right on through to today.

The Conservatives are very embarrassed about their master puppeteer. They are very embarrassed about this leader of their party, the guy that they are worshipping and following as they form a new party today. Brian Mulroney said:

Let's face it, there's no whore like an old whore. If I'd been in Bryce's position, I'd have been right in there with my nose in the public trough like the rest of them.

Brian Mulroney, when he was campaigning on July 15, 1984, was talking about Bryce Mackasey's acceptance of a diplomatic post. That is Brian Mulroney, the godfather of the Conservative Party of Canada.

That set the tone for that party's reign in power. We saw scandal after scandal and sleaze and corporate sleaze. Now we are seeing exactly the same thing across the way. Whether it is Brian Mulroney or the present Prime Minister or the former prime minister, their ties to corporate Canada and this corruption and sleaze are all there. It is so hypocritical to see Conservatives getting up here and acting as if they are offended and questioning the very thing that they did for year after year.

Of course in Saskatchewan former premier Grant Devine is running for a Conservative Party nomination. We know exactly what that new party is about. Sixteen members of that government, ministers, received criminal convictions for stealing the public's money. Many of them went to jail. Now there is a similar thing across the way involving not just tens of thousands of dollars, but millions and millions of dollars of taxpayers' money.

• (1150)

The time has come to change the system. When I look at who the Prime Minister of Canada has hired to run his office and to run his campaign, I see the tie between corporate Canada and the tie between the lobbyists and the Prime Minister. I could go on and on. I am going to mention a few names and talk about their current role and their campaign background.

I see from the Earncliffe group, Andre Albinati. I see the principal of the Earncliffe group who was the campaign manager of strategy for the Prime Minister, Elly Alboim. Also from Earncliffe,

there is Charles Bird, campaign manager logistics to the Prime Minister. I see Eric Bornman whose current role for the Prime Minister is vice-president of communications. He came out of Pilot House Public Affairs group. Dennis Dawson was a member of the House at one time. He came from Hill and Knowlton where he lobbied for many years. There is Jamie Deacey from Association House and John Duffy from the Strategy Group.

They are all people who were members of the campaign team of the Prime Minister when he ran for the leadership of the Liberal Party. David Herle is well known. He works for the Earncliffe Strategy Group and is a key strategist for the Prime Minister of Canada. The list goes on and on of the many people who have worked as lobbyists or in the corporate world and are now working for the Prime Minister of Canada.

Francis Fox, for example, was a minister at one time and was the president of strategic affairs for Rogers AT&T and a lobbyist for the Rogers corporation. Brian Guest was with Association House. There are a number of other people who are working with different lobbyists and different parliamentary associations around the country.

We get this tie of greed and then there are the groups involved in the scandalous sponsorship program that gave all kinds of money to the Liberal Party of Canada. At the very least they should be immediately reimbursing the people of this country from the Liberal Party coffers the money that was given to them from groups that received contracts under the sponsorship program.

If the Prime Minister is serious about cleaning this up, that money should be reimbursed by the Liberal Party of Canada. I do not see him doing that.

I also wonder where the Minister of Finance stands. The Minister of Finance was made Minister of Public Works, I believe it was back in May 2002. He had a long time to get to the bottom of this scandal. What did the deputy minister of public works say to him? What did the ADMs, the senior management in public works, say to him? What information did the minister have? Why did it take so long before all this information became public?

This is a serious, serious scandal. No wonder people are cynical about politics. A former prime minister, who is the founder of the new Conservative Party, Brian Mulroney, talked about how he would put his nose in the trough like the rest of them, that there is no whore like an old whore. That is what he said. It continued on through the Jean Chrétien days and it continues on with the present Prime Minister. The Prime Minister was the minister of finance. The Prime Minister was the CFO and for about nine years a senior cabinet minister. This is not good enough.

I walked around and talked to people in my riding in Regina over the weekend. People are disgusted by this. Liberals are disgusted by this. Everybody is disgusted by this. In my province, and I speak personally, it reminds people of the rot of the Conservative Party with its scandals and its sleaze and its corruption, and Brian Mulroney and Grant Devine and Eric Berntson. This is the legacy of the Conservative Party of Canada and the legacy of the Liberal Party of Canada.

• (1155)

Because of that, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to move an amendment adding, instead of the word liberal, the following: 20 years of Conservative Mulroney and Liberal corporate sleaze and corruption.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday I received calls from three different people in my constituency who were condemning those of us in the opposition for spending too much time asking questions about the corruption going on over there. They told me they already knew about it.

These people are asking for some immediate support from the government because they cannot get social services. Under normal terms, their assets would be worth \$200,000 or \$300,000. Their cattle are worth nothing. They have no money. They cannot foresee getting groceries. They are condemning the opposition for what is going on over there. My response to them is that we have no choice.

The \$2 billion that the government took away from these people could have been given back to the Prairies. It could have been put into the industry, and everything would have been alive and well. Instead, we have reached our lowest since the mid-1930s, yet the government sits idly by and lets that huge part of western Canada go down the drain. All three individuals have said that without help within 45 days or thereabouts, they do not know what will happen.

It is fine to argue this issue, but instead of coming up with piecemeal things, the government should give back the \$2 billion it stole from the hunters who registered their guns. The government should give that money back to the people from whom they took it. If it did that, gun owners, ranchers, and people in western Canada would be happy today.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain, my neighbour in Saskatchewan. People are really angry and fed up. The \$200 million could have been used for agriculture, or for health or for education. It could have been used for a number of things in Canada.

Many people do not realize that in the last year farm income in the province of Saskatchewan was a negative \$13 million. I cannot remember the exact statistic, but I believe the national level is a negative of over \$100 million. That is the lowest farm income since statistics started to be kept back in the 1920s. No wonder people are in trouble. No wonder people are angry.

We have to change the system. We need democratic reform, but not just in this place. It means getting rid of the unelected Senate. It means changing the voting system and bringing in some system of proportional representation. It means giving parliamentary committees more power so we can hold the government properly accountable.

### *Supply*

There will be a surplus of \$6 billion or \$7 billion at the end of the fiscal year. This year, why do we not take half of that surplus and transfer it to the provinces for education, for health and for the farm crisis? That would do something real for the people of Canada.

• (1200)

**Mr. Rex Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of respect for the hon. member, but for some reason or another it seems as if he likes to play the games of the past rather than the future. As a result, he sounds more like a Liberal. This is like the devil made me do it sort of thing, and blame it on the past.

It is important for the House to realize that the Conservative Party of Canada is a new breed of politicians who are here to help the people. We are here to ensure that the corruption which has taken place today and which happened in the past is not acceptable to taxpayers of Canada and to the new breed of politicians. We need to move forward with a new vision for Canada. That vision is not putting blame on our predecessors for what has happened.

What has the hon. member's party done to ensure that Canadians are fully aware that this corruption is front and centre? What has the hon. member's party done to ensure that money which was spent could be used for other programs, such as health care and social programs for which Canadians are so proud?

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, my good friend from Newfoundland is one of the few progressives left because when the Progressive Conservative Party joined the Alliance, they left the progressives aside. They are no longer progressives. The opposite of progressive happens to be regressive, and what we see is the shadow of Brian Mulroney behind the whole thing. He is the master puppeteer.

My mother said to me many years ago that if we did not learn from the past, we were bound to repeat the same things in the future. It is important to remember what happened in the past.

I happen to come from Saskatchewan where 16 Conservatives convicted criminally of fraud, and that is fact. Many are in jail. I do not think there is no other place in the world where a deputy premier, Eric Berntson, chairman of the caucus, a Conservative, went to jail.

We have to learn from the past so we do not repeat the same things in the future, and the government now is repeating.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first, let me say that Canadians are sick to death of scandals in their government. Canadians are sick to death of the energy of this place being diverted and redirected to deal with a very egregious, a very heinous situation no doubt, but a situation that clearly diverts attention away from the issues and concerns that Canadians have to deal with on a day to day basis.

They cannot figure out what happened to their elected representatives who chose to come to this place to speak about health care and the crisis in medicare and to speak about the stress that families are facing in trying to juggle work, community and child care responsibilities. They cannot figure out where their elected representatives are on pollution, on environmental degradation or on weaponization of space.

Canadians are sick to death of this situation, this scandal ridden place, and so are we on this end of the House.

### *Supply*

My colleagues in the New Democratic Party have tried very hard to call on the government to deal with this scandal quickly, effectively, with teeth and with clear resolution so we can get back to the main issues of the day. We make that call again. Deal with this horrible chapter in the history of Canadian politics promptly, efficiently, with truth and with resolution so we can get back to the issues that matter.

The real scandals of the day are how the Prime Minister could be underestimating our surplus, lowballing it by \$80 billion over 10 years, or how the government could be breaking every promise it ever made in the red book time and time again.

Yesterday a group of women gathered on the Hill from across Canada. These women came to participate in the NDP women's economic summit. They came to talk about serious issues affecting their day to day lives, such as the stress that women face in trying to cope when the government has done nothing but cut the rug out from under them, when the government has hacked and slashed every program that has meant anything to women and working families.

They wanted us to stand up in the House and say that the only thing the finance minister was consulting on was the debt to GDP ratio. Why is he not consulting on the 50,000 day care spaces the government promised 10 years ago? Why is the government not consulting on the 20,000 units of affordable housing that are needed right now to deal with the critical housing situation, and the very serious situation of homelessness at a time of severe winter climate conditions? Why is the government not talking about creating quality jobs for women so they can provide for their families and still keep their mental health intact? Why have issues of importance dropped off the page by the government? Why are we now dealing with another scandal?

It is imperative that we deal with this scandal here and now so we can get back to the issues at hand.

It is interesting that the Conservatives are getting a little defensive in the House today about the fact that we have been trying to suggest that we are not dealing with simply a little individual problem here and there, but a systemic problem, a problem that goes back throughout the last decade of Liberal rule and beyond that to the previous decade of Brian Mulroney Conservative rule.

How can we not deal here and now with the kind of corruption that existed back then, clearly identified, documented and discussed in Parliament over the last two decades?

The irony of the Conservative motion today is that the Conservatives, in their previous manifestation, established the standards on the benefit of patronage appointments and the pouring of public funds into the pockets of their friends.

● (1205)

Did Canadians not throw them out of office on this as their verdict on the issue years ago? Canadians see worse health care, more expensive tuition, and a more polluted environment today than 10 or 20 years ago. Why? Because for 20 years Brian Mulroney and the present Prime Minister said they cared and were concerned, but they did not act on those concerns. Instead, they listened to their corporate friends and geared their decisions in their favour.

It is interesting that the Liberals got elected because of Tory corruption. Now the Tories want to get elected because of Liberal corruption. We are here today to end this cycle. We must get to the systemic root of the problem. What do we do? We call on the government to deal with this horrific scandal, identified by the Auditor General, in an expeditious fashion.

We want to remind Canadians what the Liberals did over their holiday break. What did they do when they heard from the Auditor General about the depth of this scandal, about a sea of money for nothing contracts? We heard about the Liberal scandal. We are talking about public funds going to back Liberal candidates for a Liberal electoral action plan. What did the Liberals do when they heard about this? They tried to rewrite history.

As I said in the House on a couple of occasions, it is interesting how the Liberals are very clear when they are very caught. How can they stand opposite us in the House with straight faces, face to face with Canadians, and expect Canadians to swallow the idea that this was a surprise? How can they look us straight in the face and blame it on the public servants? How can they look us straight in the face and blame it on someone in the past administration and never take full responsibility for what is at hand?

Is it not interesting that the Liberals want to treat Gagliano like an embarrassing relative, but where was the present Prime Minister, that outspoken moralist, when Liberals were out buying elections in Quebec? Who was signing the federal cheques for Mr. Gagliano? It was not Jean Chrétien, was it?

**An hon. member:** Paul Martin.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:** Yes, it was the current Prime Minister who at the time was the finance minister and who in fact should have known where the money was going and should have been following the money.

A newsletter put out by the President of the Treasury Board who, not too long ago, said to his constituents that every line of every government department is scrutinized stated:

As Treasury Board members, we are responsible to know not only where the money is being spent, but also why it is being spent.

Can the Liberals still look us straight in the face and say that the present Prime Minister, the then finance minister, did not know anything? They are trying to tell us that everything is okay now. They are act tough with all this feigned indignation and say they will get to the bottom of this.

However, the same firms that conspired with the Prime Minister to keep polling information out of public view and were previously in his transition team are still playing a key role in the Prime Minister's Office and even got to vet new ministerial staff appointments.

We are dealing with that systemic problem of these corporate ties and people revolving in and out of the Prime Minister's Office. That is the issue we must get our heads around. That is what we must do.

Let me conclude by reading from a constituent's e-mail to me that reflects the concerns of Canadians about what is going on in this place, what is wrong with both Liberal and Conservative governments, their whole connection with the corporate world, and the kind of games they play to get money back into the pockets of their friends and supporters. The constituent writes:

When a party in power stays too long, the occupants appropriate themselves to be gods—obnoxious gods. They turn arrogant, insensitive and appallingly abusive. Arrogance is a powerful argument why the sitting government must not be granted repeat endorsement by the electorate in the coming election.

• (1210)

The same goes for the Conservatives who were taught a lesson when they went down this path.

Let us now take the time to learn from the errors of the past, whether we are talking about the present Liberals or the past Conservatives, to put an end to a government that is riddled with scandal and get on to true, ethical government for this country.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I watched my hon. colleague across the way wave her arms and I thought she was going to take flight.

Bringing things into perspective, this party is addressing the issue head on. The Prime Minister, in clear words, has called a public inquiry. He said that we will not stop until everything is open.

I am not sure if my colleague across the way opened her ears and listened when the Prime Minister said that. Usually, NDP members, with wax in their ears, do not want to listen.

I am wondering if the hon. member would like to go down the path of Jack Layton and Olivia Chow living in co-op housing? Did we forget that? No. Did we forget Bob Rae? No, but members of that party are going to keep flapping until they take flight. They should not think they will take flight too fast.

• (1215)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, I will not stoop so low as to respond to that kind of insulting comment from the member. I would rather be waving my arms reflecting the disgust and disdain of Canadians than hiding under a bushel as the Liberal member is doing, along with so many of his other colleagues.

The real test of Liberal sincerity is whether or not the government is prepared to direct the Liberal Party to pay back the money it stole from public coffers.

**Mr. Jim Karygiannis:** Jack Layton and co-op housing. Come on, admit it.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** We are talking about—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre has the floor.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, for a government and Liberal members who feel so confident about the direction they are taking on this horrific scandal, we would wonder why they would get that excited and defensive in this chamber.

As I was trying to say, the real test of the government's sincerity is whether or not it will make a commitment to call on the Liberal Party

### Supply

to pay back the money that was identified in the Auditor General's report as money taken from public coffers and put into the Liberal Party.

We are talking about two instances identified by the Auditor General. One is for about \$300,000 from firms like Groupaction. After it received lucrative contracts from the Liberal government, money went back as donations to the Liberal Party. That is one instance.

The other is close to \$300,000 in public money used for Liberal polling. That is also an abuse of public funds and that money should be paid back.

None of us should be casting widespread aspersions on the public service as the government and the President of the Treasury Board has tended to do by suggesting that there is a group of 14 off in the public service somewhere that have done all this.

We should be reminding the President of the Treasury Board that the first thing this government did when it came into office was to freeze all public service promotions, freeze all public service lateral transfers and freeze all public service reclassifications.

The second thing it did was review all public service jobs from the point of view of privatization. The third thing it did was come into the House on this scandal and suggest that public servants out there somewhere are responsible for the mess.

I suggest that the government take responsibility for its actions and come clean with the fact that we are truly talking about a Liberal scandal.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised that the member from the NDP spent so much time attacking the Conservatives. I wonder if it is because the poll that came out this morning showed the NDP going down in the polls and the Conservative Party going up in the polls. Perhaps that is why she is so vexed.

However, before she or that party gives us lectures on propriety, perhaps she would consider that she is sitting over there with one guy who did time in jail for contempt of court and another was convicted of shoplifting. She should be a little careful.

There is only thing worse than stealing from the taxpayers and that is what happened in Bingogate out in British Columbia where the NDP was convicted of stealing from charities.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The Chair finds that the words that have just been used are a bit strong. I do not ask for the member to withdraw the statement, but I caution him to be judicious with his choice of words. The hon. member was walking a very fine line.

On a point of order, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas

• (1220)

**Mr. Svend Robinson:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member would want to ensure that the statements he makes in this House are truthful.

The member stated that the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle was convicted of an offence. That is absolutely false, scurrilous and dishonest.

*Supply*

I would call on the member to do the honourable thing, apologize and tell the truth.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl:** Mr. Speaker, as has been pointed out, in the heat of the moment, I did suggest that someone who was acquitted of shoplifting was convicted. That was not true. That the member for Burnaby—Douglas spent time in jail was true.

However, I stand corrected and I do apologize for that.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** That settles the matter.

I am told that there is one minute left in questions or comments. Was the hon. member going to reply? The hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that the member has apologized for his outrageous statement. I hope this kind of behaviour does not happen in this House again. We are clearly not talking about individuals. We are debating the motion that the Conservatives have brought in about a culture of corruption. We believe that culture has existed, not only in this Liberal administration, but in the past Conservative administration.

I want to say to the member who has challenged us to talk about our support, which he should know is steadily increasing in the polls, that the Conservative candidate in my constituency who ran against me in the last election is so fed up with the Conservatives that he has decided to join the NDP and join my re-election efforts.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise the House that I will be splitting my time today with my friend from Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

It is an unfortunate duty to rise today on this important topic, a topic that has seized the attention of the whole country. The Auditor General's report of last week confirmed something that many of us have long suspected. It proved that the government was engaged in a corrupt practice, possibly criminal in its scope.

I am not the first to be outraged by the most recent scandal and I surely will not be the last.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you listened to the Rex Murphy show on the weekend, but most people across the nation did and, I have to say, with the Prime Minister there to listen as well.

All across this nation the people are very outraged with this government. As a taxpayer, I was shocked to learn that our money was being used to fund these kinds of corrupt activities. As a member of Parliament, I was livid to learn that the government was undertaking these types of activities.

For the past week we have heard a great deal about this scandal, but there are three areas in particular that I want to highlight for the consideration of the House.

First and foremost, I want to address the suggestions made by the Prime Minister that the officials working with Prime Minister Chrétien were aware of this problem and covered it up.

Second, I want to address the fact that the Prime Minister continues to deny that he knew anything about it.

Finally, I would like to discuss the principle of ministerial accountability in general.

In the past week, the Prime Minister has held a number of press conferences, but none as significant as the one held at the national press gallery last Thursday. At that time, the Prime Minister told reporters that one of the reasons why he was kept in the dark about the scandal was his poor relationship with the previous prime minister, Jean Chrétien, and his staff. The clear message was that if he had a better relationship he would have been told about the scandal and what was taking place. For that to be in any way relevant, we must believe that the Chrétien PMO knew about the scandal in advance.

Now, if the Chrétien government knew about it, then why not tell the people, perhaps even the current Prime Minister? They were clearly engaged in a cover-up, yet the Prime Minister insists that Mr. Chrétien now is a man of integrity.

All this raises very important questions about why the Prime Minister did not know about it himself. Why did he have to rely on the information of others? Was he not the minister of finance? Was he not the senior minister from Quebec? Was he not the second most powerful person in cabinet at the time? How can we believe, given the Prime Minister's resumé, that he was totally in the dark about something as important as this? The truth is that either the Prime Minister did know or he should have known.

The evidence is mounting that Liberals in Quebec were aware that this sponsorship program was becoming an issue. It has been reported that the issue was discussed in the meetings of the Liberals' Quebec caucus. It has been reported that the Prime Minister received a letter from a senior Liberal outlining his concern on this issue.

When we consider the number of different opportunities the Prime Minister had to learn about this scandal, one has to wonder how he avoided it. It is almost as though the official policy at the Department of Finance was "hear no evil, see no evil and speak no evil".

The fact is, if the Prime Minister was genuinely unaware of the problem he must have lost control of his department and lost touch with his government. How else can we explain the strange sequence of events that conspired to keep him totally free and clear of trouble?

By his own admission, he did learn of this through the machinery of government, or the civil service.

By his own admission, he did not hear about this in a Quebec caucus meeting, but all the others did.

By his own admission, he does not recall receiving a letter from a senior Liberal Party supporter on the issue, but that person has stated he wrote the letter.

● (1225)

By his own admission, he did not have the type of relationship with those in the Prime Minister's Office that would cause them to bring him into their confidence.

By his own admission, then, he was isolated from the department, his caucus, his party and his leader. That is the story of someone who was totally disconnected from the government of the day.

We can only believe his excuse if we accept that the Prime Minister was ignorant of everything going on around him. Frankly, given his stature in his party and his government, that is simply not credible.

There is a general principle of public law that I want to address at this time. We are all aware of the principle of ministerial accountability. It is a basic pillar of our parliamentary democracy. We have a departmental structure that places the ministers at the top. Ministers are then accountable for their actions in the House of Commons. They are in turn responsible for the actions taken by their departments. It is not necessary that the minister in question was personally involved in the actions of the department. It is not even necessary that ministers are aware of the actions taken by their departments. They are deemed to know.

What is important is the principle that they are responsible for their departments in all aspects of their conduct. As the senior ranking government minister, the Prime Minister is ultimately responsible for the actions of every department in the government.

To his credit, the Prime Minister has acknowledged his responsibility, but as minister of finance at the time when government money was being used for improper and possibly criminal purposes, the Prime Minister had a responsibility for the actions of his department then. He had a duty to know what was being done in his name and on his authority. He had a duty to ensure that the government was not engaging in fiscal mismanagement. He had a duty to know when taxpayers' money was being used for questionable purposes. If he did not, then he failed in his duties.

We know that for the past 14 years the Prime Minister has been fighting to get where he is today. We know that he let nothing and nobody stand between him and the PM's office. He was engaged in a leadership campaign that stretches back to 1990. That kind of campaign takes a lot of time, maybe even too much time. It can be a distraction. We are left to wonder whether the Prime Minister was working so hard to become a prime minister that he did not have time to be the minister of finance.

He cannot have it both ways. The Prime Minister cannot go around the country telling Canadians that he is responsible for bringing down the deficit and keeping the economy strong if in the next breath he tells them that he did not know what was going on in his department.

He cannot have it both ways. He cannot say that it was a small group of people and then launch a full scale public inquiry to find out who did it. Either he knew or he should have known.

Why was the former minister, who is now former Ambassador Gagliano, fired? Does the Prime Minister know he was responsible for all of this? If so, why do we need the inquiry? As I stated, the Prime Minister cannot have it both ways. Either he knew or he should have known.

I have to say that I think now that he is travelling across the country speaking to people and wanting to listen to people, he is finding out how people feel. The people are truly upset.

When I go home to my riding I see the people who are not working anymore and the people who earn \$25,000 a year who try to

### *Supply*

feed, clothe and educate four or five children. Then I think about the \$250 million stolen from the taxpayers of this country. There is something wrong. There is something wrong in this House and we have to correct it. We have to take the stance to correct it and we must never let it happen again.

● (1230)

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first of all I am pleased with the tone of this debate, as was occurring with the hon. member, but it is unfortunate that we are losing sight of what we are trying to accomplish here. I am greatly saddened because 90% of the hon. member's comments were focused around a personal attack on one individual.

Let us be very frank. That one individual, and I quote her, said that "this is the truth". Members can say anything they want in the House but that to me is not the truth and it is unfair to quote.

The member says there is a poor relationship and asks if he will tell the people. The Prime Minister has said, with no ambiguity, "I am going to testify. I want to testify. I want to go to the nation. I want to find out and get to the bottom of this".

I do not have any time left, but let us calm this down and do what the people want. They want all of us to get to the bottom of what happened.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had listened to the people who called Rex Murphy's show, he would know exactly what the people want us to do. I can tell him right now.

I am not pointing fingers at anyone. I am saying that the people in this government either knew what was going on or not, and if they knew what was going on, it should have been corrected. That was a number of years ago. Now they are pointing the finger at one person. They sent him away to be an ambassador and now they are bringing him back and saying it is his fault.

My understanding is that Groupaction in Quebec was given a contract. They were supposed to do a profile of some sort on some action. They submitted it and they got paid substantial funds. Then they copied the identical report three times and got paid thousands and thousands of dollars. Is that what they want? The Prime Minister was the minister of finance and he knew that money was going to Groupaction.

● (1235)

**Hon. R. John Efford (Minister of Natural Resources, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have been in the House now for several days listening to comments from the opposition, most recently the member for Saint John. On both sides of the House, regardless of what party members are from, we have the right to make a comment, we have the right to give a speech, and we have the right to ask a question. That is how democracy works.

But in making those statements or asking those questions, regardless of what one's position is, the information should be accurate. That is what the people across Canada expect.

*Supply*

I would ask the member this question. Is she not aware that the Prime Minister repeated the Auditor General's report when he said that there were 14 people in the bureaucracy involved? This was not the Prime Minister's statement. It was written in the Auditor General's report, and also—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** The hon. member for Saint John.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Mr. Speaker, I want my hon. colleague to know that if the Auditor General found out just by doing a review that in her opinion there were 14 employees who were involved in this, how come the former minister of finance, the member's present Prime Minister, did not know? He should have known if there were 14 people in his department doing the wrong thing.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it deplorable that the hon. member of the Conservative Party of Canada continues to tell Canadians that the former finance minister was responsible for the Department of Public Works and Government Services, when even the Auditor General has explained clearly that the program in question was the responsibility of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services.

Why does the member continue to say it was his department and his program?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Mr. Speaker, I want the hon. member to know that the former minister of finance, who is now our Prime Minister, was in charge of all money.

**An hon. member:** The eye of the needle.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Yes, indeed. He was the eye of the needle. That is absolutely correct.

On this one here, I have to say that for him and the Prime Minister to state that he did not know anything about this, oh, oh—

**An hon. member:** I'm losing respect for you.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** Darling, I am losing respect for you.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Please do not make arguments personal.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam.

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I see the member for the Winnipeg area who first ran for office, I believe, in 1988. I ran for office in 2000. I see a respected member of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador who was elected in a byelection last year. We all ran at different times and we were all elected at different times to this place but none of us expected to have to deal with this kind of scandal.

I think we all, at different times in our lives, joined political parties for different idealistic reasons and different purposes. Perhaps it was to serve an ideology or to serve our constituents and communities but here we are. After a little more than 10 years of a Liberal majority government here we are.

Our motion today describes specifically a culture of corruption within the Liberal Party of Canada because, frankly, that is the way to describe it.

This problem did not start and it certainly does not end with regard to the Auditor General's report that was tabled on Tuesday of last week. This is a systemic problem and has been a systemic problem within the Liberal Party of Canada.

The unfortunate reality is, and political scientists write about this constantly, the nature of the House of Commons which so dysfunctional with regard to party discipline that we do not have free votes in the House of Commons. When I look across the way I see some of my colleagues, for example the member for Yukon, and the member from Scarborough who was deservedly elected vice-chair of the transport committee today and who is an hon. member that I have gotten along with very well.

One of the unfortunate realities of party discipline in our current structure of Parliament is that party discipline leads citizens to look at members of Parliament as being a Conservative member of Parliament, a New Democrat or a Liberal and, by virtue of being Liberal, when this scandal comes out there are these allegations of corruption and hon. members are hit with those kinds of accusations, which is not fair.

One of the consequences of that that should come out of Liberal members of Parliament should be more outrage. There should be more anxiousness in order to get to the bottom and get to the truth and to force the current Prime Minister to do as much as he absolutely can.

The Prime Minister is now campaigning across the country protesting his innocence and the innocence of the Liberal Party to this clear money laundering scheme that happened under his watch when he was finance minister.

What should be happening, and we will be persistently asking these questions in question period day in and day out, is that there is an important dichotomy here. Depending on where Canadians live in Canada, if it is one in three or one in four Canadians, they believe that the current Prime Minister knew. He was, perhaps next to the prime minister, the highest profile member of Parliament in the province of Quebec, in the Montreal area of LaSalle—Émard. He was the finance minister responsible for managing the till. He was of course the presumptive next leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

Of course he knew about this scandal. It was a high profile program that was championed in press conferences, ribbon cutting ceremonies, baby kissing ceremonies, after gun shows and community events. This was a high profile event and everyone in the province of Quebec knew about this. They cannot claim innocence on this.

A seminal question that the current Prime Minister has to answer is precisely as was outlined by the member for Saint John: either on the one hand he knew about it and chose to do nothing, in which case he is complicit in money laundering; or, he did not know about it, in which case how can Canadians trust him to manage their money. We are talking about a quarter of a billion dollars, which is not chump change.



This is a serious scandal. This is not jaywalking. These are hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars taken away from citizens into the general revenue fund of the government, cut away to ad firms and the ad firms donated money to the Liberal Party. This is a money laundering scheme of the highest order. It is utterly corrupt and we should all be outraged about this.

As I said, this is not a traffic ticket or jaywalking. This is corruption at the highest level. The Liberals should be scandalized and outraged.

The Prime Minister says that he is doing everything he can do about it. The question that we have in the House that he has persistently failed to answer is whether he has asked every one of his cabinet ministers whether they knew. He has not asked his own cabinet ministers and I suspect it is because he is afraid of the answer.

The Prime Minister can say that he is getting to the bottom of it by having an independent inquiry. He says that he will get to the bottom of it by saying "Just watch me" and wagging his finger as Pierre Trudeau did outside the West Block 20 years ago. The fact is the Prime Minister has not done the most basic thing, which is to sit down with every one of his cabinet ministers and ask them whether they knew. And if they did know, then to ask them when they knew and why he was not told.

For all those members of Parliament from the province of Quebec where this program was so high profile, why did they not ask questions about where this money came from and what was going on?

We always talk about these grandiose numbers of \$1.2 billion here or \$250 million there. I added it up so everyday Canadians can understand and appreciate the level of scandal that we are talking about here.

• (1240)

We must not forget why Richard Nixon was run out of office. People in Richard Nixon's campaign broke into the Brookings Institution, which had campaign files, because they wanted to get secret campaign information about his opponent in the 1972 presidential election campaign. They wanted to find out where he was campaigning. It was a break and enter and Richard Nixon covered it up.

What we are talking about here are hundreds of millions of dollars. The scale of this is enormous and it cannot be whitewashed by saying that it is just another scandal, that it is just like some other governments did. This is profoundly important. If we do nothing, if we let this roll over and allow the Prime Minister to walk away from this, we will lose credibility as a country.

What we will be saying is that it does not matter. What we will be saying is go ahead and rip off taxpayers and steal stuff. What we will be saying to young Canadians is that it does not matter; we cannot have fixed election dates; we will call an election whenever we want and we will call it when it is to our advantage; we will push off an inquiry until the fall or until sometime next year. He will be a one term Prime Minister, because of the virtue of his age, and get away with it, and if he does get away with it, it does not matter.

### *Supply*

This is profoundly important for the House and for the country. We have to get to the bottom of this. The numbers are huge. The consequences for the country are bigger than some ambassador coming back. Is that not embarrassing? We lost a bit of money but hopefully we will recoup it with a bit of economic kick up in the long term.

How does Canada have credibility when we stand up to the United Nations on the rebuilding of Afghanistan and tell them how to set up an accountable system of governance? How do we have credibility when we want to do that? How do we have credibility when we go into Iraq and tell them how to set up a government with proper lines of fiscal accountability and responsibility?

When the government proposes its first nations governance act, what moral authority does the government have to stand up in the face of aboriginal communities in this country and tell them to be more fiscally responsible? The government has no grounds at all.

The consequence of this is that it cripples the ability of the government to govern, not just because it looks bad in some PR fumble, but because there are profound governing consequences of this scandal. This cannot be whitewashed in a speaking tour by the Prime Minister.

I want to give a snapshot of some of the money so that citizens get a full appreciation of all the scandals we are talking about. This is not just about the one that was announced last Tuesday, but all the scandals and the broader culture of corruption: \$2 billion lost on the gun registry; \$1 billion lost on the HRDC boondoggle; \$1.5 billion fumbled in the home heating rebate scandal where money went to dead people, to prisoners, to just about anyone except those who really needed it; \$250 million in the corporate welfare, in the scandal that I just described; \$161 million in corporate welfare to the Prime Minister and Canada Steamship Lines; \$700 million wasted in the helicopter cancellation; \$100 million in unneeded Challenger jets; \$265 million toward the Pearson Airport privatization. The total amount is \$5.976 billion.

What does that mean? It means that for the 301 ridings that are represented in the House of Commons \$27.9 million were spent with no accountability and no proper accounting by the government.

What does \$28 million get us? In my riding, for example, we could pay the cost of policing for four and a half years. In every riding in the country we could purchase 13 MRI machines, hire 602 nurses, hire 634 firefighters, purchase 931 new police cars and hire 698 new members of the RCMP. We could pay the costs for 4,700 students every year. We could pay the tuition for 9,500 students in every riding.

This is profoundly important. The whitewash we are getting from the Liberal government is not nearly good enough. Canadians want answers but we are not getting them, which is why we put the motion forward. We want and we demand accountability for taxpayers.

*Supply*

• (1245)

**Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam said a lot of things but the one thing that struck me was that he agreed with us when he said that his party and the country wanted to get to the bottom of this issue. That is exactly true. We want to get to the bottom of this. The Prime Minister has said this from the outset of this story.

Let me remind the member from British Columbia that on the day the Prime Minister became Prime Minister he cancelled the program. That was the signal that he was as distressed as anybody about this.

What else has he done? He has ordered a judicial inquiry to get to the bottom of it. He has named a solicitor to retrieve as much of the money as possible. He also got the House to refer the matter to the public accounts committee as soon as possible.

What does that indicate? I think it indicates to most rational Canadians that he, above everybody else, wants to get to the bottom of it.

The hon. member also said that this cannot be whitewashed with a cross country tour. The Prime Minister is visiting parts of the country. He wants to make himself available. He wants to answer questions and he wants to hear people's concerns. Is that not the ultimate responsibility of a prime minister?

• (1250)

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is not helping the Prime Minister's case. He is hurting it. He is further muddying the waters. We want to get to the bottom of this. He brags that the Prime Minister cancelled this contract as soon as he became Prime Minister.

I think he became Prime Minister 63 days ago. The AG report came out on Tuesday of last week. He cancelled it before the Auditor General's report came out which means that he knew the program was bogus, corrupt and money laundering. He knew about it before the Auditor General's report. How is that accountability?

He waited until the avalanche of bad publicity from the Auditor General's report to say that they will hold an inquiry. The very fact that he cancelled the program when he came into office before the Auditor General's report came down says that he knew. Of course he knew and he damned well better have known because he was the chief financial officer of the country. He should have known where \$250 million was being spent in his own province of Quebec. It was his job. Of course he knew about the program.

For the member to say that he is doing everything he can because he got rid of the program, he should have never financed the program. He should have never become involved in a money laundering scheme. He should have known better.

**Mr. Svend Robinson (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as a fellow member of Parliament for British Columbia, the member will appreciate the seriousness of this in the context of British Columbia as well. Not only do we have this cloud of stench and corruption hanging over the Liberal Party nationally, but in our home province of British Columbia we have the Liberal Party of British Columbia which has that same cloud. In fact, its membership has skyrocketed from 4,000 to 40,000 and nobody knows where the

money came from. The former Liberal riding president from Vancouver Quadra said that no one knows where the money came from and there has been no accounting for it.

The Prime Minister's director of communications and director of fundraising have had their homes searched; drug warrants have been issued; organized crime is involved.

Does the member not agree that this is just another nail in the coffin of the federal Liberal Party and that it is no surprise that the Liberal member for Vancouver South—Burnaby said that given what is happening now, the Liberals will be lucky to hold onto what they have in the province of British Columbia?

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with my colleague from Burnaby—Douglas. His understanding of the dynamics in British Columbia with regard to these scandals is bang on. His rifle shot at this one.

When a government is in power for 10 years with 100% of the control in the House because it has a majority; a split opposition; 100% control in cabinet, in the Senate, the executive, in the judiciary and with regard to all the crown corporations; when it has that kind of power for 10 years, power tends to corrupt but absolute power corrupts absolutely. This is precisely what we have seen with regard to this Liberal government. It has had too much power for too long.

It has led to the corruption of riding associations, to nomination fights, to this House, to Quebec ad scandals and to all sorts of things. The problem in the country is not that we need an independent inquiry, it is that before taxpayers become completely fed up, we need a new government because the Liberals are ripping off Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I must inform the Chair that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Scarborough Centre

This is a terrible situation. As I already indicated, I, like the vast majority of Canadians, am enraged, frustrated, disappointed and saddened. There is no way to adequately explain how I feel or how the Prime Minister and Canadians across Canada feel in the wake of these revelations.

It is important for me to take a bit of my time to summarize the facts. Despite all the media coverage, it is impossible for all the facts to be summarized in one minute and thirty seconds on television in a way that tells Canadians exactly what happened and what the undisputed facts are.

Then, I will use my remaining five minutes, the other half of my time, to explore what I think Parliament can do to shed light on this situation and those parties responsible.

[English]

I would like to provide some very brief background information on the sponsorship program and some key dates.

*Supply*

The sponsorship program was originally created in 1997, and it was determined that it would be part of public works operations. In 2000 that sponsorship program was subjected to an internal audit, directed by the then deputy minister, Mr. Ranald Quail.

As everyone knows, since then the sponsorship program has been a focus of extensive concern and criticism, both from within the government and outside the government, especially for the period concerning 1997 to 2000. Even today the overwhelming majority of comments and criticisms relate to the program as it was run during that three year period.

The 2000 internal audit found serious deficiencies in documentation, in contracting, in internal controls and finally, in management practices. An action plan at that time was implemented and corrective measures began to be put into place. That internal audit was posted on the government's website and was public. The action plan as well was posted on the Internet and was made public.

In March 2002 the minister of public works at the time asked the Auditor General to audit three contracts which were awarded between 1996 and 1999 to Groupaction, which is a company located in the province of Quebec. The Auditor General released her report of the audit on the three contracts. In her report she referred the government's handling of these contracts to the RCMP for further investigation.

In May 2002 the former minister of public works was appointed and his first act was to impose an immediate moratorium on future sponsorship initiatives until he was satisfied that the program criteria were sound. In July 2002 that minister lifted the moratorium on the sponsorship program for the balance of the fiscal year, that was until March 31, 2003. It was also confirmed that the interim program would proceed without the use of external communication agencies to deliver it.

At the same time, while that program was being reassessed, a detailed review of past sponsorship files was undertaken. That was undertaken under the authority of the chief financial officer of public works, who assembled a quick-response team, comprising of financial and procurement specialists from within public works and auditors from Consulting and Audit Canada.

• (1255)

That quick-response team, between May and July 2002, did a case by case review of 721 sponsorship files to determine their completeness and to report on any areas of concern. These files were from several agencies with which public works had sponsorship contracts.

That quick-response team conducted a detailed review of 126 files which were deemed to be of primary interest because either they were of a high dollar value, that is, over \$500,000, or had received media coverage and/or had known deficiencies, such as the absence of post-mortem reports. That file review yielded a great deal of useful information and recommendations, which were presented in the final project report tabled in the House of Commons on October 10, 2002.

This file review was in addition to the government-wide audit of advertising sponsorship and public opinion research which was launched by the Auditor General and was part of the report that she

tabled just a week ago to Parliament. As the Auditor General herself stated, publicly and clearly, government and ministerial officials cooperated fully with the work of her office.

We all know the conclusions of the Auditor General's report. I will not repeat them here. I would encourage all Canadians who are interested in really understanding everything that happened to go to the Auditor General's website.

[*Translation*]

I invite Canadians to visit the Auditor General's web site to read her report on the sponsorship program for themselves.

[*English*]

Now I would like to address the issue of what Parliament can do to ensure that what has happened does not happen again.

Canadians are asking a series of questions. They are asking how was it possible for this to happen? Are ministers not responsible for their own departments and for the programs and services which are dispensed by their own departments? When cabinet approves the creation of a new program, who decides in which ministry it will be placed? What happens after that decision is made?

When the Auditor General appeared before the public accounts committee, she clearly stated that under normal circumstances a minister would not be familiar with all details of the day to day operations of his or her department. However, at the same time, the Auditor General clearly pointed out that someone made the decision that this program would operate outside the normal procedures functions and structures of that department, which was public works.

The public accounts committee has a responsibility to look at that issue. In fact the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel to the House of Commons, Mr. Rob Walsh, came before public accounts today. He strongly recommended that our committee look at the issue of ministerial responsibility in the same way the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates did when it found the privacy commissioner had lost the confidence of Parliament. The public accounts committee should look at the ministers who are responsible, the high-level, high-ranking officials, and determine what are their responsibilities and whether they still enjoy the confidence of Parliament, of the House.

That is what the House can do in the interim, while it waits for the judicial inquiry to do its fact finding. The judicial inquiry cannot determine whether Parliament has lost confidence in the ministers and high-ranking officials nor can the criminal investigations. However, through its public accounts, the House can look at the issue in depth and determine whether those individuals still have the confidence of the House.

• (1300)

**Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Calgary East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians are angry, and all I see are Liberals crying crocodile tears about how hurt they are.

*Supply*

I have been in Parliament for seven years. If I had ever questioned the Liberals about the sponsorship program three or four years ago, before the scandal broke out, that member would have called me an anti-Quebecer. I am not against Quebec. I have sat in Parliament and listened to those comments. Today, because the people in Quebec are angry, and she is from Quebec, they are now crying crocodile tears.

The bottom line is this. What happened to taxpayer dollars? What happened to prudent management? Those questions are being asked by Canadians.

I recently campaigned in my riding. I noted seniors were struggling, single mothers were struggling, families were struggling, veterans were struggling and students were struggling. Yet we have a program which spent \$250 million.

How did this program get approved in the first place? What was the value of the program? The responsibility lies with the finance minister to have a program that benefits all Canadians.

• (1305)

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, let me first begin by saying that had that member of Parliament or any member of Parliament come to me at any time, from the time this program was committed, and stated that they believed there was possible fraud or possible criminal action taking place, I certainly would not have closed my eyes. I do not appreciate that being imputed to me or to any other member in the House.

How did this program start, who decided it was to be created and who decided it would operate outside of the regular structures of control and supervision that exist within any government department, is what Canadians want to know, what I want to know and what the Auditor General was unable to determine because it was outside of the scope of her jurisdiction.

However, that is within the scope of the public accounts committee. That is precisely the point I attempted to make when I talked about what the public accounts committee could do in order to answer some of the questions being asked by Canadians and members on both sides of the House, including the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief and ask my colleague about some facts about fraud that have been well known to all of us.

In 1997 a Liberal fundraiser from Quebec, named Pierre Corbeil, was charged with fraud and convicted. He had a list of groups that were receiving government grants. He was shaking them down for cash. He would show up and say that if they did not pony up \$10,000 to the Liberal Party of Canada, they would see their grants cancelled. That is evidence of fraud. He was convicted of fraud.

This has been going on for a long time within the Liberal Party of Canada. There is evidence for the member. What does she have to say about that? What does she have to say about the dual track approval process of grants that came out during the 2000 election? What does she have to say about that? What does she have to say about these phony invoices and the \$100 million that is missing today?

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, the example that has just been given is ideal because it shows that as soon as there were

rumours and allegation of alleged criminal activity, the matter was immediately put into the hands of the police. There was a criminal investigation, a criminal prosecution and the due process of law took place. That was under this government.

The Auditor General herself stated that she had no reason to believe, with the authority and powers her office have, that there was systemic possible criminal activity. Systemic possible fraud was taking place. It was only her comprehensive audit that allowed her to bring out that kind of thing.

**Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I participate in this debate I want to thank my colleague from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine for sharing the time with me.

On this most important issue, what I think is incumbent on us as elected representatives is to speak to the people, and we have the opportunity through this honourable House to do so. Unfortunately, what happens most of the time is that questions are asked and we are asked to stand up and respond to such an important issue in 30 or 35 seconds. What happens is that there is a little vibe and a jab, the media picks up on that, it gets exploited, and the next thing we know, we are not doing what Canadians have asked us to do.

Most recently, in the last year there have been municipal elections and provincial elections and, who knows, a federal election down the road. What Canadians have been saying consistently over and over again to all of us is to get our act together, to stop the squabbling, solve the problem and get to the bottom of it.

I want to get to the issue of the day and pick up where my colleague started off with a bit of history of what happened here. When responsible individuals, officers of Parliament and so on comment, I think their choice of words is very important. I go back to an article of May 9, 2002, when Auditor General Sheila Fraser said, “Senior public servants broke just about every rule in the book”. That is her quote. She did not say the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance or the President of the Treasury Board. That had to do with this quote, “RCMP to probe federal ad deals”, the ones that my colleague previously referred to. To quote the Auditor General again, she said, “This is a completely unacceptable way for government to do business”.

I say to my colleagues and ladies and gentlemen out there, the moment the Auditor General uses those words “unacceptable way for government to do business”, who are people going to blame? They are going to blame their member of Parliament, their minister and the Prime Minister.

On the other hand, the report said that there were firm guidelines that were set in handling these contracts. Who broke the guidelines? Did the finance minister break them? Did the Prime Minister break them? Did the leader of the opposition break them? No. It was the people who were administering the program.

I am not here to pick on anybody. I just want to get to the bottom of it, like everybody else was saying. I know colleagues over there who sit on the public accounts committee and it was their cooperative effort with the Liberals—and I commend them for that—that brought the Radwanski case to light. They got to the bottom of it. It was cooperative.

## Supply

That is what the minister, the Prime Minister and the President of the Treasury Board are saying. They are saying, "Join us and let us get to the bottom of it because there has been a lot of wrong done here". There has been a lot of Canadian taxpayers' money lost, and I agree with my colleague, who said earlier that it should go to better programs.

It does not stop there. Coincidentally, just the other day I was reading an article in *The Toronto Star* that said "\$100,000 in bribes alleged". The Dufferin-Peel Catholic school board asked for an inquiry. Apparently there was an HRDC program, part of the boondoggle that was discussed a couple of years ago, a legitimate program that was funded to counsel young students, young Canadians on vocational training. The article stated, "While funds went into legitimate HRDC programs, police allege false invoices were submitted to take money from the programs".

This was a legitimate program that met every prerequisite with an identified, recognized school board. Yet some members within that group connived at how they were going to manipulate the system. What did they do? They submitted false invoices. Did the Prime Minister know about it? Did the Leader of the Opposition know about it? Did the President of the Treasury Board know about it? I do not think so.

What a coincidence. This was said here just the other day: "Groupaction faked invoices, insider says". A senior vice-president of the advertising firm was not even aware that his name was being used and billed for services rendered. He did not even have a clue. Who was incompetent then? The Prime Minister? Their leader? The Treasury Board president? Obviously, the thief who wants to rob someone's house is not going to call and say, "I want to come over and rob you on Tuesday night. Please leave the house".

• (1310)

We have identified that there have been wrongs done to Canadian taxpayers. A commission of inquiry has commenced its activities. A Quebec justice has been appointed, who wants to get to the bottom of it, just like there was a probe in 2002. As my colleague referred to earlier, there were charges laid.

As my colleague from the new Conservative Party asked earlier, are they going to be charged? We cannot charge and convict a thief unless we actually catch him or her. We are in the process of getting to the bottom of it, as was done in the Radwanski case.

What I am saying to the House in this entire debate is this: let us not prejudge. Let us not say that the Prime Minister knew, the minister knew, or the former prime minister knew. Nobody knows who knew. We are in the process of getting to the bottom of it.

I would like, as I close, to ask all colleagues to refer to page 6 of today's *Quorum*. There is an article from *The Globe and Mail* entitled "Guidelines not followed for sponsorship initiative".

For every article, I will again quote the Auditor General, who said that "senior public servants broke just about every rule in the book". She was not referring to the Prime Minister or members of Parliament. It was a program that was laid out. There were guidelines that were set. If the people who connived chose to abuse and violate those guidelines, let them be caught, let them be punished, and let us hopefully get the money back for Canadians.

• (1315)

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hypocrisy of some of these statements really gets me.

The member opposite said "we have identified", but the fact is, the members opposite did not identify anything. This was identified for them. They got caught. There is a big difference between saying, "We have identified the problem and now we are going to try to find the solution", and "We got caught with our hands in someone else's pocket". There is a big difference between those two.

I would like to ask the member opposite whether he understands the difference between identifying a problem and a solution and getting caught with a problem and everybody else looking for the solution. We cannot leave the solution to this problem with the government because the government, the Liberal Party, and many other people associated with this are the problem in the first place.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Speaking about hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, that holier than thou party, and I do not want to get into specifics because I started—

**An hon. member:** Go for it.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Yes, let me go for it. We remember the law firm that represented their former leader, their previous leader who sits in the House today. Can we recall what happened with them paying money and with the kickbacks going back to when he was a member of the Alberta provincial government? I answer in that way. I chose not to go in that direction, but he moved me in that direction.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Let us try to be respectful of one another.

The hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a general comment and observation. I spent 30 years in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Sixteen of those years were spent on organized crime, white collar crime and organized crime involving narcotics. I looked at the organizations that were set up, where the top guys had layer after layer underneath them and were never touched or where it was very difficult to touch them. The beneficiaries of that were the top guys.

I see this same layering with the sponsorship program, which was not about saving Canada. It was about the Liberal Party being elected in the next election, buying votes and enhancing its own funding.

What I see from the Auditor General's report is that in fact these sponsorship advertising agencies were very Liberal friendly. With the experience I have had in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, I see the same organized effort by the Liberal Party of Canada to bilk the taxpayers.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, I will close with this. I ask the member to read today's *Quorum*, in which a *Globe and Mail* article states:

According to the Auditor-General's report, the executive director of CCSB [the communications branch] decided which sporting and cultural events received sponsorship funding, issued the contracts to the advertising firms that handled the deals on Ottawa's behalf, and signed off on the invoices.

### Supply

Those members keep saying Liberals, Liberals, Liberals. We rolled out the program, and in that layer, which I agree with him exists, there is some gutter, and there is some cancer that needs to be cleaned out. I ask them to work with us because they know very well, as we worked together at the public accounts committee on the privacy commission, we worked together for the betterment of the taxpayer.

• (1320)

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, like my colleague, I had a position of trust: he as a member of the RCMP and I as the CEO to a board. I want to say that if what the hon. member has said is true, I cannot believe why in the world this government even needs a cabinet minister if that minister is not going to control how the money in the various departments is being spent. The people of Canada do not believe that the Prime Minister knew nothing of this event. They will never believe that.

**Mr. John Cannis:** Mr. Speaker, this is exactly what he was saying.

They keep referring to the RCMP, an institution that I greatly respect and have supported all my life, and I will continue to support it, but look at what happened there. Is he telling me that the upper echelons of the RCMP knew what happened with that money? I do not think so, but it happened. That is what happened. That is what we have to get to the bottom of.

**Mr. Randy White (Langley—Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my hon. colleague from Provencher.

I am having difficulty with some of the things that I am hearing from the other side and I will give a couple of examples. The government is now asking all of us to work together. For the first time in a decade since I have been here the Liberals are now asking us to all work together because they are in a pickle. They stole some money, gave it to their buddies and then financed an election, and now they are asking us all to work together and fix it. It is really incredible that we are being asked to work together on that thing.

Another comment made over there was that they did wrong but over here on this side we did wrong, too. If I refer to the speech that was made just before I rose, it was a kind of “we did it, you did it, so we did it”. I just do not relate to the two issues that were put to us.

I am commonly asked in western Canada about the outcome of the 2000 election. The Liberals had a whole bunch of money then. They got money from other funds that were redirected through advertising agencies and other agencies back into the Liberal Party which helped the Liberal Party form a government because of the money. We should be looking at whether or not that very election was a valid one. That is how serious this is.

I want to make a couple of comments on a philosophy that I often hear across the country about the government. I really believe that the government subscribes to the philosophy that a government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul. That kind of fits in with this little philosophy that I think the government has. That is a lot of what this is about. Taxpayers' money is redirected through sources and given back to the Liberals and everybody is happy. That is not the way a proper democracy should work.

Before I get into what this really means to people in my area, I want to mention that I do a lot of work in the prisons and other areas like that in politics. Yesterday an all points police bulletin was issued for Russell Corbin in my riding. He up and walked out of Ferndale prison, unannounced of course. He felt he should go somewhere. Now there is a Canada-wide warrant looking for Russell.

Russell was in prison for the possession of property obtained by crime and theft. He got two years for that and now the government, in its wisdom perhaps, has an all points Canada-wide warrant out looking for Russell and here the Liberals are trying to justify themselves for what, the possession of property obtained by crime and theft. How ironic is it that. There are people in prisons today for having done the very thing that the government has done, not accused of having done but proven by the Auditor General that it has done. It is kind of ironic.

I want to go through some of the numbers and what this means to average Canadians. It is interesting that according to Statistics Canada there were 54,000 full time university students in 1998-99 studying at undergraduate and graduate levels in British Columbia. My children were among that group.

With an average tuition in 2002-03 of \$4,100, every university student in the province could have been given a bursary to fund his or her education if the government had not abused the \$240 million, every single student in British Columbia. Think about that. It is not a very proud comment quite frankly, from a politician in opposition or wherever we are in the House of Commons to think that money was stolen out of the hands of taxpayers which could have gone to our students.

In addition to that, the \$250 million could have paid for eight years of salary for 556 new police officers in the country, but what did those guys do? The Liberals threw it at their buddies and had some of it delivered back to their party.

• (1325)

Here we are today looking for more police. I spend a lot of time on drug issues. We are woefully short of police officers fighting the drug issues in Canada. Yet those guys over there think it is a darn sight more important to fund themselves than to fund police officers.

That \$250 million could have bought 8,333 police cruisers and paid the salary of an additional 250 full time nurses in Canada. Imagine, that is less important in the minds of the government than those things. We could have bought between 100 and 250 MRIs and had them installed in this nation for the same amount of money the government sucked out of the pockets of taxpayers and funnelled, in part, back to its own party.

The 1996 census showed that the average annual income in Canada was \$25,196. Some 9,922 Canadians could have been paid for a year.

*Supply*

I have another little anecdote about attitude around here. Just before question period yesterday I read a statement about an individual who had come to this country nine years ago. He is currently a non-citizen. He has been on welfare for all nine years. He was recently picked up for drug dealing. Although he had no money when he came to this country and has been on welfare for nine years, he owns three houses and all three of them are in my riding.

When I asked the revenue minister how this atrocity could happen, what I got from the revenue minister was laughter, telling me that it was a joke. I just do not get the attitude in this place. The revenue minister thought that it was a joke. While hardworking Canadian citizens are spending their lives paying for mortgages, a guy is given welfare for nine years and is allowed to keep three houses that were obviously obtained illegally.

We have no proceeds of crime legislation to deal with situations like that. There is only laughter from the revenue minister. It is a joke in his mind. That is wrong. Half of what is going on in this country with the government is a bit of a joke.

A lot of communities in many rural areas could have used that money. In fact, there are many communities in my province alone that could have done with the money. Here are some examples of towns in Canada that have paid a total in income tax of about \$250 million: Heart's Delight, Deer Lake and Stephenville in Newfoundland and Labrador; Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia; Sackville, New Brunswick; Montebello, Quebec; Barry's Bay, Cochrane and Sioux Lookout in Ontario; Flin Flon, Manitoba; Churchill, Saskatchewan; Fort Macleod, Alberta; and on it goes.

Incredibly, all of the taxes paid for one year by each of those communities is the same amount of money that was dished away by the government. Each of those communities paid the same amount of money that the government has absconded from the taxpayers and put partially in its own pocket.

I want to close by reiterating the way I have always thought about the government and the Liberal Party. I opened my remarks by saying a government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul. Is that not the philosophy we are dealing with here? It is truly unfortunate. It is truly a sad day for this country. No amount of let us help each other out of this is going to work. That party has stolen money from people in Canada and we intend to have that party pay for it.

• (1330)

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General expressed the point of view that there was not a culture of corruption either in the government or in the civil service. This morning the House of Commons counsel indicated that the higher public interest is not served by bringing down the institutions of government and Parliament. There is the judicial inquiry. There is the public accounts committee which is chaired by a member of the opposition. There are the checks and balances that are inherent in Parliament. Given all of that, why is the member not satisfied? On behalf of serving the higher public interest why can he not let those institutions and those mechanisms work so that the House of Commons can get on with the other important work of the House?

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, one wonders what the other important business of the House is, if it is not about the integrity or lack thereof of the government.

There is nothing wrong with this kind of issue going to a committee of the House of Commons or an inquiry, but there is also nothing wrong with opposition members spending a great deal of time talking to the government about the problems it is having and trying to put into perspective in the House of Commons what the government, its cronies and the Liberal Party have done wrong.

This is not as simple as putting this issue off to the side, studying it for a while and meanwhile having an election and making sure the election goes well. The fact is there was money stolen from the citizens of the country. The fact is that merely putting it off to the side for a public inquiry is not good enough.

Members of the government must understand that they too will be held to account. That is our job in this country. It is not a matter of the government or its cronies looking for fall guys. A big part of the problem is systemic. It is systemic in the Liberal Party. It is systemic in the politicians who exist in the House.

I will repeat once again that a government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul. I believe that is where the Liberal philosophy has been for years.

• (1335)

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we in the opposition party, the media and Canadians generally are not using the words “culture of corruption” lightly. Those are very serious words.

We look back at the history of the Liberal Party and we see the influence peddling that came out of the previous elections. There is the Corbeil case. We see the current investigation with Mr. Basi, one of the main organizers of the Prime Minister's campaign for leadership of the Liberal Party. We see the Virginia Fontaine centre with strong Liberal connections in Provencher, Manitoba. We add these up and sadly that is not all of them. There are many more examples. When we get more than a handful of examples of corruption, what are we to call it but a culture of corruption?

That is what is so sad about the situation today. I would like the member to comment on whether the words “culture of corruption” as they are being applied to the Liberal Party are being misused or whether it is correct.

**Mr. Randy White:** Mr. Speaker, no. My colleague is right. It is a culture of corruption. It has been there from the early days when I came into the House of Commons in 1993. I can recall going to Cape Breton and looking at the ding wall in David Dingwall's riding. I followed issues time and time again in this country where it was just bad spending.

Now it has gone deeper than just bad spending. It has gone to taking taxpayers' money, diverting it through sources and getting it back to the party in general to fight elections.

I think there is nothing more corrupt than what has happened here. The government deserves to be thrown out of office, quite frankly.

*Supply*

**Mr. Vic Toews (Provencher, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add my comments to this debate. Speaking of the culture of corruption, I received a copy of a letter in my office last year written by a chief of a first nations community in my riding. The letter was directed at a Liberal cabinet minister threatening the Liberal cabinet minister with exposure of all kinds of corruption if he did not agree with what the chief wanted for his community. He said he would work with the then Alliance in order to expose this corruption.

I wrote to the chief and said that I had received his correspondence and was certainly interested in what this corruption was all about, but I was not willing to make a deal. I heard nothing in response; however, at the Liberal nomination meeting, who was there supporting the Liberal candidate? The writer of the letter of course.

Obviously, he made a deal and that is the kind of deals that go on inside the Liberal Party, and the kind of deal that I will have nothing to do with.

**An hon. member:** Will you state that outside the House?

**Mr. Vic Toews:** The members asks, will I state it outside the House? It has been distributed. His colleague, the minister, has it, so I will certainly be more than pleased to give him a copy of that letter.

Recently, on the CBC news, *The National*, a pollster, Mr. Allan Gregg, dismissed the idea that the Auditor General's revelations were significant. He stated that the Auditor General was exaggerating and that the sum of money was relatively small in the scheme of government operations.

I found it astounding that an educated man who understands presumably the way Canadians think would state that on air. Of course, that position was immediately denounced by his fellow panellists and by most Canadians. Because much of this money was actually stolen, this is a much more serious state of affairs than even the \$2 billion gun registry boondoggle. The CBC revealed that it is now \$2 billion as a result of its crunching the documents and the numbers.

However, this quarter of a billion dollars that was stolen or otherwise misappropriated is much more significant. This is not just bad policy; this is criminal conduct.

Last week's revelations by the Auditor General revealed how the Liberal government allowed these dollars to be stolen. They were not improperly allocated, not lost, not wasted through incompetence, but stolen. They were stolen from the public purse and handed off to Liberal friends, advertising companies and crown corporations. The Prime Minister and his cabinet colleagues said nothing when he as finance minister signed the cheques that found their way into the back pockets of the friends of the Liberal Party.

One of the—

● (1340)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** Order, please. The hon. member for Mississauga South on a point of order.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I fully appreciate the significance and importance of this debate, but I believe that in this place to attribute a criminal activity to someone or to allege that some

criminal activity has taken place is totally improper under parliamentary rules.

I would ask that the Chair rule that to attribute that there have been either kickbacks or that a member has deliberately allowed someone to steal is unparliamentary.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I understand where the hon. member is coming from; however, the hon. member for Provencher did not attack or accuse another member of Parliament directly. He talked in general terms of the supposed corruption that is going on.

I do not think the member's point of order is valid, but on the other hand I would caution the hon. member for Provencher to be careful. The hon. member for Provencher.

**Mr. Vic Toews:** Mr. Speaker, if it makes the member opposite feel better, I can use a term that the Auditor General used, and that was fraud. That is what the Auditor General said, and in law, as a former prosecutor, I can tell the member that the mental intent between stealing and fraud is no different. So, let us use the word that the Auditor General did because that is what we are discussing.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to have a ruling from the Chair with regard to the aspect that fraud is also a criminal offence. If the member is implying that somehow this is going to be used as a synonym for what he should not be using with regard to a specific member, I would ask that the Chair rule that the member cannot refer to any other member of Parliament as having committed a fraud.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bélair):** I could use the same ruling I had made a while ago in saying that the hon. member for Provencher did not accuse or attack any member directly, but that he was attacking the issue in a very general sense.

As far as the word fraud is concerned, everybody knows that it is a criminal offence, but like the hon. member for Provencher said, the Auditor General used it herself, not in here obviously, but when she had her press conference. It is on the line actually. It is not right, but if she used it, then members can use it. I ask members to be careful.

● (1345)

**Mr. Vic Toews:** That is good advice, Mr. Speaker. The point has been made and obviously the sensitivity on the other side demonstrates that my arrow has hit its mark.

Now that the Auditor General has confirmed what the official opposition has been stating for years, the Prime Minister announced yet another meaningless public inquiry. He has created a flurry of media attention, made public apologies, and has uttered threats against the nameless evildoers to get the Liberals past the next election.

The story changes every day. I assume what is happening is that the story is told then the polling is done. If it does not wash with the people, another story is told. I refer to the first story as the case of the conspiracy of the 12 monkeys. There are 12 people hidden away in the labyrinth of government somewhere gratuitously shelling out money to ad companies with close connections to the Liberals. They then kite these cheques, as the Prime Minister said, and the money goes on to friends and some of it just stays.



*Supply*

What I found objectionable is that the government, or whoever these nameless individuals are, used agencies like the RCMP to accomplish its purposes. These individuals traded on the good name of the RCMP so they could send an ad agency a cheque for \$3 million. The ad agency kept \$1.3 million and \$1.7 million went to the RCMP. What happened to the \$1.3 million? The ad agency and obviously these nameless individuals hiding in the bowels of government were trading on the good name of the RCMP to perpetrate this scheme on the people of Canada using taxpayers' money.

Canadians are entitled to know, why did the Prime Minister say nothing when he was in a position to stop this unprecedented financial abuse? We have heard from Liberal members that, since 1999 in their caucus, these rumours have been circulating. The former Minister of Canadian Heritage said that the now Prime Minister, then finance minister, the vice-president of the Treasury Board, must have known. It was obvious he should have known if he did not know.

Government does not operate by setting up a program for a quarter billion dollars and not have that go through the Treasury Board process and through the senior minister in the province where the money is to be spent. It was convenient. I am saying that as a result of my own public service experience as a member of the attorney general's department, as an elected official and a cabinet minister in Manitoba. What these Liberals are trying to get Canadians to believe about this mysterious organization and funnelling money to their friends is simply ludicrous.

Everyone knows what the process is. If the process was not followed, there is only one individual who is to blame, and that is the person who had his hands on the levers of power when he was finance minister, when he was vice-president of the Treasury Board, and that is the Prime Minister.

Now the Prime Minister is trying to distance himself from the previous 11 years of Liberal government. "I had no idea what was going on", he said. Yet he never hesitated over the last 10 years to tell us how he was an integral part of the government. He knew where every dime was going. Suddenly, he is out of his office. However, he was an MP. He was here every day in the House I assume. Yet he did not hear any of the rumours that we heard.

● (1350)

When we spoke up about this, the Liberal members shut down the committee hearings. When we wanted to ask Alfonso Gagliano a question, the Liberal members shut down the hearing. Why did we not speak? It was because the member over on the other side shut us down.

It is shameful that those Liberals were involved in this cover-up when everyone over there knew what was going on. When the people of Canada were entitled to know what was going on, they shut down the inquiry. They refused to allow us to ask questions. Now they say to us that we are all in this together and that we should resolve it together. It is like somebody being caught breaking into a house and going down to do time asking if anyone wants to share time with him. I say, "No, thank you. You are doing your own time".

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague. I noted some of the

heckling coming from the Liberal benches during his remarks, in particular the comments from the member for Cambridge hollering over at my colleague, "Well, why didn't you speak up? When did you say anything?"

As my colleague said, we spoke up time and time again. It is only too bad that the member for Cambridge had not been listening a little, along with the rest of his Liberal colleagues.

I wonder if my colleague from Provencher might, drawing on his experience as the past attorney general of the great Province of Manitoba, bring some legal sense to this issue and pursue the issue of why the Prime Minister, who was the former finance minister, would try to distance himself from this instead of taking responsibility.

We used to hear talk in the House about ministerial accountability but with this Liberal government there never seems to be any ministerial accountability.

**Mr. Vic Toews:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to my friend from the great province of British Columbia.

The issue here is not as much a legal issue when it comes to dealing with the role of the Prime Minister. In my opinion, this is consistent with what the Prime Minister has been trying to do from the day that he first sought the leadership of the Liberal Party, which is trying to be on both sides of any issue in order to garner the most support that he possibly can.

When he is government and some good things appear to be happening, he takes the credit. When the bad things are happening, he says that he did not know what was going on.

The tragedy of the situation is that this whole scandal was perpetuated by raw politics, trying to get one man into the office of the Prime Minister. He has succeeded now but he is reaping the rewards of the inconsistencies that he made in terms of trying to be everything to everyone without taking a principled stand on anything.

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I suggest that we are getting a different kind of lesson in raw politics from the former attorney general and my colleague.

As a former attorney general and as a lawyer, I take it that he would be aware of the concept of innocence before guilt. Does he not believe that there is a deprivation of natural justice here and that it puts a cloud over Parliament and this whole government to not allow the institutions of Parliament that have been invoked to come to grips with those issues? Does he not think that would be the fair and even-handed way to proceed?

● (1355)

**Mr. Vic Toews:** Mr. Speaker, that is very interesting and again another example of how they are on both sides of this issue.

In their haste to extricate the Prime Minister from this whole mess, what do they say? They say that it is the heads of crown corporations and that those heads will roll. There has not been an inquiry and yet the Prime Minister has obviously found these public servants guilty. The 12 or 14 hidden bureaucrats in the basement who are handing out government money to the Liberal Party are obviously guilty, according to the Prime Minister and according to the Liberals.

*S. O. 31*

The only person who, apparently, is not guilty, even before we get into a public inquiry, is the former prime minister. He stands up and says that the former prime minister is a man of great integrity, and I will not dispute that here. We will find out all about that in the public inquiry. What I am saying is that he is so quick, for political reasons, to exclude any aspersions being cast on some, and only so willing to pass them on to those whom he knows are disposable in this political game.

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's participation in the proposed missile defence system should be turned down because: first, Canada has no enemies and is not threatened by any nation; second, should Canada become part of a missile defence system, the alleged, yet unknown, enemy would have every reason to include Canada among its targets; third, there is ample evidence the U.S. intends to weaponize outer space; and, fourth, once the Government of Canada enters into discussions and negotiations with the U.S. administration, it would be very difficult to extricate itself.

For all those reasons I urge the government to keep Canada out of the missile defence venture and to concentrate its energies instead on peace rather than on belligerent measures called defence systems.

Canada's interests are best served by being at the disarmament rather than at the armament table.

\* \* \*

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the throne speech the Liberal government claimed that farmers would not be left "to bear alone the consequences of circumstances beyond their control", and yet there was no action plan. There was no compensation scheme or remedial ideas to get the border open. Nothing. Zilch.

There was only a conglomeration of empty words, and once again ranchers and farmers in this country have been left holding the bag.

The bright light of our once prosperous cattle industry is all but extinguished, as nothing except financial ruin appears on the horizon for many cattle ranchers.

I implore the government to do everything and anything within its power to get those borders open. Also, it is imperative that there is a concrete plan in place in the event that the borders do not open, a reality that farmers and ranchers may soon face.

Please, for once, make good on a promise. Do not leave cattle ranchers and farmers alone to bear the consequences of this disaster, which is far beyond their control.

[*Translation*]

### CANADIAN GUIDE AND SCOUT WEEK

**Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the week of February 15-22 is Guide and Scout week in Canada.

Throughout the country, guides and scouts are taking part in celebrations brimming with camaraderie and friendship among the members of these two organizations.

The festivities will culminate on February 22, which is the birthday of both the founder of scouting, Lord Robert Baden-Powell, and his wife, Olave, the first World Chief Guide.

Scouts and guides across Canada provide generous help to many Canadians, whether as part of their daily good deed or through specific initiatives. I am thinking in particular of the 70 million trees they have planted nation-wide since 1970. Scouts and guides make a dynamic contribution to the quality of life in Canada.

I invite my colleagues to join me in sending their best wishes and sincere thanks to the scouts and guides of Canada.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

[*English*]

### LITHUANIA

**Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, February 16, the people of Lithuania and Lithuanian Canadians gathered to celebrate the independence of the land of their heritage.

This year they celebrated the 86th anniversary of the independence of Lithuania. February 16 is and always will be a significant and meaningful date for Lithuanians. It is on this day in 1918 that Lithuania declared its independence from czarist Russia and re-declared its sovereignty yet again in 1990.

A small nation achieved freedom in the aftermath of World War I. Proclaiming the Lithuanian Republic, its founders stepped forward on February 16, 1918, to assert their country's independence and commitment to a government based on justice, democracy and the rights of individuals.

For decades, Lithuanians have been commemorating this event, during Lithuanians' oppression and subsequent independence.

I would like to offer my congratulations to President Paksas, the Lithuanian Parliament and to the people of Lithuania on this momentous occasion.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### QUEBEC WINTER CARNIVAL

**Mr. Claude Duplain (Portneuf, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the fiftieth year, Quebec's winter carnival has given Canadians an opportunity to experience happiness and a zest for life during the dreary days of February.

The popularity of this event has not waned: initial estimates set the number of visitors at 450,000 during the carnival's 17 days. Most of these visitors made more than one visit to the site.

Even Mother Nature cooperated this year, with generally mild temperatures during the event.

The carnival's organizers were brilliantly successful in providing a fitting celebration of the event's fiftieth anniversary.

I feel it would be appropriate for this House to send its sincere congratulations to the carnival's chair, Danielle Chamberland, and her entire team, in making this 50th carnival a resounding success.

\* \* \*

[English]

### KAM HIGH

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this summer will mark 100 years since 20 students, the first high school class in Kamloops, gathered above a livery stable.

To commemorate this historic event and reunite old classmates, the Kam High Centennial Homecoming will be held from July 16-18. So far, 1,600 former students and educators have registered to attend.

Kam High graduates are coming home from as far away as China, Japan, Mexico and all points of the world. Organizers have so far located 5,500 Kam High graduates, but there are another 10,000 we have not yet found.

If persons or someone they know attended Kam High and would like to attend the centennial reunion, please visit the events website at [www.kamhigh.com](http://www.kamhigh.com) for information.

I look forward to welcoming home several generations of Kam High graduates this summer.

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### HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to inform the House that the General Assembly of the United Nations has declared 2004 the international year to commemorate the struggle against slavery and its abolition.

[Translation]

Mr. Speaker, 2004 marks the 170th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Canada. It was in Canada, over 200 years ago, that the first anti-slavery legislation in the British empire.

We can be proud of the fact that slavery is now prohibited. Unfortunately, more than 25 million people around the world are still suffering today because of illegal slavery. As we commemorate today the formal abolition of slavery in the 19th century, let us not forget those still victims of it.

S. O. 31

### CHARLEVOIX LAMB

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, widely recognized by epicureans, Charlevoix lamb long ago acquired nobility status in Quebec. Considered a high-end product, Charlevoix lamb is different from other meats available on the market because of its original taste and distinctive flesh.

I recently learned that some 10 producers from Charlevoix have been selected to take part in a pilot project in Quebec to establish the first reserved designation of the type "protected geographical indication" for Charlevoix lamb.

I sincerely hope that the pilot project will open new doors for recognized Quebec producers. Like Charlevoix lamb, local products from Île d'Orléans are refined and sought after. Promoting reserved designation products will no doubt benefit both producers and consumers.

I therefore call on the federal government to take the necessary steps to harmonize its positions with that of Quebec, as recommended by the working group on reserved designations and local products. This would promote greater access to international markets for these products.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

[English]

### CANADIAN URBAN TRANSIT ASSOCIATION

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to welcome the executive of the Canadian Urban Transit Association to Parliament Hill.

Today CUTA released a study announcing that transit systems across Canada need \$21 billion over the next four years to renew and expand infrastructure to meet the needs of our growing cities.

Without making these critical investments in transit, tackling transit traffic congestion, improving air quality and meeting Canada's Kyoto commitments will be impossible.

A reliable and sustainable infrastructure program that recognizes the benefits to be gained from improving transit is the logical next step. The government's new deal for cities is providing a down payment to transit systems and shows the government's commitment to transit as an overall investment in the lives of Canadians.

The government is to be congratulated for following CUTA's lead in recognizing the overall role that healthy cities play in Canada's economic and social success.

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### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the moment we have all been waiting for, we have in our hands this year's nominees for our very own "Parliamentary Academy Awards".

*S. O. 31*

Nominated in the category of the white knuckle, podium clenching press conferences: the Prime Minister of Canada for his ongoing starring role as “The Pirate of the Caribbean”, a swashbuckling political adventure that starts in the Barbados and ends up in the office of the Auditor General.

Nominated for his supporting role in the horror film, “The Day the Liberals Imploded”: Alfonso Gagliano. While not yet rated, taxpayers with blood pressure problems are warned not to watch this film without medical supervision.

Nominated for the best theme: the Liberal Party of Canada for its long running money laundering soap operetta, “Mister, Can You Find It in Your Heart to give Me a Dollar”, or in this case \$100 million.

Nominated for the full-length flick: “Cheaper by the Dozen”, the RCMP for the number of files they have opened on the federal Liberals.

And, the winner is, and there are no surprises here, the Liberal Party of Canada for its recent screenplay: “If Life is a Bowl of Cherries, What am I Doing in the Pits?”

The losers are Canadian voters who unfortunately have to put up with these bad Liberal actors for another general election.

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**IDENTITY THEFT**

**Mr. Julian Reed (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we approach tax season, Halton regional police have issued a warning to the residents of Halton riding, particularly those in rural areas, which should be a concern to all members.

With a large number of sensitive documents being mailed out from employers, financial institutions and government agencies, citizens are at risk for identity theft. Criminals target the mail because it contains valuable personal and financial information.

Common sense measures are helpful. People should always use a locking mailbox, approved as secure by Canada Post. Mail should be removed from the box promptly, or if people are out of town, they should have the post office hold their mail. Police should be notified if someone is seen tampering with a mailbox.

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**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as many know, February is Black History Month, a month in which we officially acknowledge the important contributions black Canadians have made and continue to make to the national mosaic.

Recently, I had the opportunity to attend the 2004 Black Community Leadership Award banquet in Windsor. This year, the award, sponsored by the Windsor and District Black Coalition, honoured the contributions to the community of Dr. Charles Quist-Adade, a former professor at the University of Windsor.

In Windsor and across the country Canadians of black heritage have made significant contributions in the fields of academics, law, medicine and government. My predecessor and fellow New

Democrat, Howard McCurdy, was one of the first black members of Parliament.

Indeed, in all walks of life, the black community has helped to make our communities and our country better places to live.

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**MIDDLE EAST**

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I recognize that Israel is within its rights to construct a security barrier on its own territory. However, the Sharon government is constructing the provocative security wall on territories occupied by Israel in direct and deliberate contravention of international law.

Again today, I join my voice to that chorus of voices, including many Israeli citizens and security experts, who are demanding that the Sharon government stop its unilateral and counter-productive action.

This wall denies basic human rights to the Palestinian people and further reduces the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the status of concentration camps. The deplorable impact on the daily lives of Palestinians is unconscionable. The Government of Canada must not just speak against this atrocity, it must take concrete action to impress on the Sharon government our grave concerns.

It is neither anti-Israel nor anti-Semitic to criticize the inflammatory actions of the Sharon government. Like most Canadians, my hope is that Israel and its Arab neighbours will agree to coexist peacefully and build bridges of justice, not walls of desperation.

\* \* \*

●(1410)

[Translation]

**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, between May 23, 2002, and January 23, 2004, the softwood lumber crisis has affected more than 10,000 jobs in Quebec alone. In the week of January 23 alone, more than 1,676 jobs were affected. Regions that rely on the forestry industry are running out of steam and the current attitude of the federal government fuels this sense of despair.

Jobs are lost by the thousands and Quebec sawmills cannot see the light at the end of the tunnel, yet there is no news from the federal government about implementing a real plan for supporting the industry in the affected regions.

The case is not closed. Forestry, industrial, regions and the workers in the lead feel like they have been sent to the front line without being given the means to cope with a prolonged crisis. The federal government has to announce the budget soon for its strategy so that, once free trade resumes, the forestry industry in Quebec will not be death's door.

What we need is loan guarantees for companies, aid for the affected workers, and renewal of the economic diversification program for the affected regions.

[English]

### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, governing in general by the federal Liberal government is finally being exposed as the disaster we have always known it to be. Now the Governor General herself, who personally fulfills her duties honourably, is being tainted with the Liberal broad brush of overspending and lack of focus.

The questionable direction given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs has cast a pall over her office. If the Minister of Foreign Affairs had been transparent last year at the launch of the 59-person circumpolar trot, the \$5 million dollar travelogue would probably have been stopped in its tracks before the public got railroaded. However, as usual, we had to discover the true cost of this Liberal overrun after the fact.

While Canadian ranchers and grain farmers face extinction because of failed foreign trade negotiations with the United States and Japan and when our foreign policy on national defence underfunding raises questions among our NATO partners, it is not the time to waste money and credibility on questionable super sized foreign junkets.

It is time we had a government that got the country back on track with sound policy and respect for taxpayers dollars.

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### SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

**Mr. Larry Spencer (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, there are big scandals and then there are big, big scandals. A big scandal was the Enron disaster that was about cooked books and altered assets. Millions of dollars disappeared and people went to jail. This sponsorship scandal is a big, big scandal. It is hurting Canadians.

The Prime Minister says that he is madder than hell. I can tell him that Canadians are madder than he can imagine. After all, they are not putting their heads down on a silk pillow at 24 Sussex. They are going to bed at night wondering where they will be getting the next month's mortgage payment.

While the Prime Minister was minister of finance, he authored CPP increases for the largest tax increase Canadians have ever experienced. He slashed billions of dollars from the health care budget. He took money out of the pockets of Canadians and out of their hospitals. He overcharged workers by billions of dollars in EI funds, and all the while he kept writing cheques for bogus sponsorship deals.

Canadians are mad and they will let the Prime Minister know just how mad they are when he decides to call the next election. I say, bring it on.

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### RAY LEWIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

**Ms. Beth Phinney (Hamilton Mountain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the trustees of Hamilton—Wentworth District School Board recently named Hamilton Mountain's newest elementary school Ray Lewis Elementary School.

### Oral Questions

Ray Lewis passed away last year at the age of 93, but his legacy will last a lifetime. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Vivienne Lewis. Raised in Hamilton, Ray attended Hamilton Central Collegiate, and went on to become the first Canadian-born black athlete to win an Olympic medal. As a member of the 4x400 relay team, he brought home a bronze medal for Canada.

Ray spent considerable time talking to school-aged children about racial prejudice and overcoming adversity. Ray has been immortalized on the Hamilton Wall of Fame, and received the Order of Canada in 2001.

I am proud to announce that 700 students will be entering this new school in September, with Ray Lewis as a constant reminder and example of how all challenges can be overcome.

\* \* \*

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to share a nightmare being lived out daily by farmers and ranchers across our country. While the government tries to cover up its scandals, these people are struggling just to get through each day.

Mr. Brian Patron, a young cattle producer from my riding, is on the verge of losing everything he owns. He needs financial help to keep his cattle but is being told no by lending institutions. If he were to sell his cattle today, he would lose \$600 per calf. On a herd of just 75 animals, that is a loss of \$45,000.

The bank advised him to just give up and look for work on the Alberta oil fields. Without support from the government, that will be his only option. He, like countless other farmers, will be forced to leave his home, his family and his livelihood.

The food providers of this country are desperate for financial aid now. When will the Prime Minister get serious about governing this country?

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## ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

● (1415)

[English]

### SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been in his job now for 67 days. He has had time for a big media blitz and a cross-Canada tour to try and do damage control, but apparently he has not found time yet to pick up the phone and ask his cabinet ministers what they knew and when they knew it about the sponsorship scandal.

Why has he not done that?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, what this government is committed to doing and what this Prime Minister is committed to doing is getting to the bottom of this situation and making sure Canadians have the opportunity to know what happened.

That is why we are having a public inquiry. That is why the public accounts committee, chaired by the hon. member for St. Albert, is hard at work. That is why we are introducing whistleblower legislation. That is why we are conducting a review of the FAA. That is why we are conducting a review of the relationship between crown agencies and the government.

We are committed—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the polling numbers are any indication, they will get to the bottom pretty soon indeed.

The Prime Minister has said that he wants to get to the bottom of the scandal and to leave no stone unturned. Cleaning this up could start right here. Why has the Prime Minister not simply let his fingers do the walking and his cabinet do the talking on the issue of the sponsorship scandal?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have made it absolutely plain on this side of the House that we have nothing to hide.

No one on this side of the House has anything to hide, which is why we have made it plain that the judge conducting the public inquiry has the full powers under that act to call anyone he wishes. That is why the public accounts committee is hard at work. That is why we asked our opposition colleagues to agree to establishing the public accounts committee early.

So in fact, on this side of the House we have nothing to hide.

**Mr. Grant Hill (Leader of the Opposition, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, still no answer to the question of why the Prime Minister has not asked his individual cabinet ministers what they knew and when they knew it.

Here is another thing the Prime Minister has done. He said that some Quebec ministers knew about this scandal. By saying that, he paints every single one of them with the same brush. Which Quebec ministers knew about this scandal?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is very plain to me that on this side of the House, and let me say it again, we have nothing to hide. We will cooperate with the public inquiry. We will cooperate with the public accounts committee. On this side of the House, we want to get to the bottom of this matter on behalf of all Canadians.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister found the time for 33 meetings and telephone calls with his company officials when he was finance minister, yet he cannot find five minutes to call his ministers to find out what they knew and when they knew about the sponsorship program.

Why are personal financial affairs more important to him than finding out what his ministers knew?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has taken action on this file from the very moment he was sworn in as Prime Minister. One of his first acts was the cancellation of the sponsorship program. Within minutes of the release of the Auditor General's report last Tuesday, a week today, he announced a comprehensive package of steps to make sure that everyone, all Canadians, knew what happened and how it happened. Nobody should be under any illusions in this House: this is a Prime Minister—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint John.

• (1420)

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne (Saint John, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe he must be hiding somewhere because he is not here today.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint John is thoroughly conversant with the rules and she knows that it is improper to refer to the absence of a member in comments in the House. I am sure she regrets this blunder and will want to now put a proper question to the House.

**Mrs. Elsie Wayne:** I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, yes indeed.

There is a hidden cost to this scandal. The \$250 million lost in this scandal is the total annual tax of 30,000 Canadians. Thirty thousand Canadians had their pockets picked by the government. Their hard-earned tax dollars disappeared because of the culture of corruption in the Liberal Party.

If the Prime Minister is sincere in getting to the bottom of this issue, why has he waited 67 days to ask his ministers—

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

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this Prime Minister has not waited 67 days. As I indicated, he in fact cancelled this program within minutes of becoming Prime Minister.

Last Tuesday, within minutes of the release of the Auditor General's report, he announced a public inquiry, in which we will all cooperate, including the Prime Minister himself. He announced a public accounts committee process in which we will all participate and cooperate, including himself. We have announced reform of whistleblower legislation and a review of the Financial Administration Act. We in fact have—

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

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in one interview after another, the Prime Minister is claiming he knew nothing about the sponsorship scandal, at least not prior to May 2002. Yet his own Minister of Public Works and Government Services contradicted him yesterday by telling the House that, as early as the end of 2001, it was clear to everyone that the problems with the sponsorship program were far more serious than just some little administrative hitches.

How can the Prime Minister state without turning a hair that he knew nothing at all, when his own minister says that the fraudulent nature of the sponsorship scandal was common knowledge as far back as 2001?

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the internal audit that was conducted in 2000 by the Department of Public Works was made public in September 2000. It was also made public with an action plan that was sent to Treasury Board in early 2001. That identified a number of managerial and administrative problems.

The chair of the public accounts committee in June 2002 held hearings and called before it the two deputy ministers over this period. They both said there was no political interference in their minds, only managerial problems. That is—

[Translation]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, he is like the Prime Minister, he changes his version from one day to the next.

What he told us yesterday was that it was clear as early as 2001 that there were problems. He went on to say that it was so obvious that Alfonso Gagliano had lost his job because of it. Everyone knows that. There is not a soul in Quebec or in Canada who is not aware that Alfonso Gagliano lost his job because of the scandals. He knew that. Everybody knew that.

How can anyone claim the Prime Minister did not know, when Gagliano had done the rounds of the TV studios, as the PM did yesterday, to spread his falsehoods?

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the hon. member was not able to follow my line of reasoning, but let me make it a little clearer for him.

By the end of 2001, and he is quite right, it was widely assumed that there had been political interference. What I am talking about is the public accounts committee in 2002 in June looking backwards with prior deputy ministers to ask them when they knew. In 2000 and in early 2001, they were of the opinion that there was no illegal activity, no breach of the Financial Administration Act, and they both said to the public accounts committee that there was no political interference.

• (1425)

[Translation]

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a letter dated February 7, 2002, was addressed to the Prime Minister calling upon him to take action in the sponsorship scandal, given the events that had occurred. The letter was quite clear, and the Prime Minister even acknowledged receipt of this letter.

Does the Prime Minister not realize that his version of the facts regarding the sponsorship scandal, claiming he was in the dark until May 2002, is not credible, and that his version is improbable and aims only to cover his inaction, because that is what happened: he knew but he did nothing?

### Oral Questions

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, far from lack of action, in early 2002 when this letter that the hon. member mentions was received, the Minister of Public Works was changed. The reference was made to the Auditor General of the Groupaction files. She reported.

Public accounts committee hearings were held, when a number of people, including the public servants involved, were called as witnesses. The Auditor General then referred cases to the RCMP, three of them. Subsequently, the department had a full quick response team review of 200 files and sent 10 more cases to the RCMP.

Starting in early 2000, many things were happening.

[Translation]

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be extremely clear. In January 2002, a cabinet minister was dismissed because of the sponsorships. One month later, a senior Liberal Party official writes to the former finance minister about it, and former finance minister sweeps everything under the rug.

Given Gagliano's dismissal from cabinet, how can the Prime Minister and his minister continue to maintain that these were nothing but rumours?

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, references of cases that were suspect to the Auditor General, referrals to the RCMP, a total internal audit involving external forensic auditors, further references to the RCMP, and a change of minister. This is hardly inaction.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would refer to the Prime Minister's unwillingness to be here to face the music, but I do not want to be as unparliamentary as the member for Saint John, so I will not.

I do have a question for the Deputy Prime Minister. The government seems anxious to redeem itself and to show us that it is dealing in good faith with this issue, so I say to the Deputy Prime Minister, one of the things that could be done is that the government could take steps to make sure that the money that was given to the Liberal Party by the ad agencies in question is given back to the Canadian public for the work that was done on behalf of the Liberal Party.

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has taken a number of steps, dare I say comprehensive steps, to deal with this situation.

One of the things the government has done is appoint special counsel to review the files in this matter and to begin civil recovery proceedings wherever they may be appropriate.

**Mr. Bill Blaikie (Winnipeg—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is starting to look like another Bre-X story of Canadian politics and even today some Liberal MPs are beginning to jump from the helicopters. There will probably be more of them.

*Oral Questions*

I want to ask the Deputy Prime Minister this. We know what they have already done. We want to know why they will not pay the money back, the money that the Liberal Party got in donations from the ad agencies in question. They should pay it back.

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I—

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

**The Speaker:** I am sure the President of the Treasury Board appreciates all the assistance, but he has the floor and we want to hear his answer, not all the help.

**Hon. Reg Alcock:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the member for Winnipeg—Transcona and I were not separated at birth, as is commonly believed in the House.

In response to his question, if he has a scintilla of evidence to put on the table to support his claim, then he should do it. If he can demonstrate that anything was done improperly or illegally, he should bring it forward and the process will deal with it.

• (1430)

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will not ask which one was the evil twin.

It is ludicrous for the government to suggest that it knew nothing of what was going on. In the weekend confession before Father Rex Murphy, the Prime Minister said he was going to resign if it was proven that he knew about this before the Auditor General.

However, to get to the bottom of this, we are going to have to see what happened inside the Chrétien government. My question is to the Deputy Prime Minister. Given that these documents are sealed, how will the committee get access to these documents? Has the former Prime Minister been approached to authorize the unsealing of the documents so Canadians can find out who knew, when they knew and why they chose to do nothing about it?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, everyone on this side is committed to finding out what happened here: why it happened, how it happened and who was involved.

I do believe the Prime Minister has made it plain that wherever that inquiry goes, so be it. We want to get to the bottom of this. That is why we have a public inquiry. That is why we have a public accounts committee.

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**FIREARMS PROGRAM**

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Deputy Prime Minister and the government really want to get to the bottom of it, they should start at the top. The Deputy Prime Minister has the audacity to stand in this House and defend her boss's action when she herself is implicated in an even bigger fraud on the taxpayers and I am talking about the gun registry.

When will the Deputy Prime Minister and minister of public security start demonstrating some respect for public security of taxpayers' money?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, because we are both respectful of Canadians' values, they are committed to gun control and we are committed to ensuring the wise expenditure of their tax dollars, we are reviewing the present gun control program. We know Canadians are committed to gun control but we also know they are committed to having an effective and efficient program. That is what we are committed to on this side of the House. That is what we will deliver.

\* \* \*

**SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, too bad they were not committed to using that money to put cops on the beat.

The Prime Minister worked for years to take over the Liberal Party. His operatives took control of almost every riding in the country. They crushed all of their opposition. He controlled 90% of the ridings in Quebec. Does he really expect us to believe that he did not know anything about the criminal activity in the Liberal Party?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as we have said before and let me say it again, we have nothing to hide over here. Our Prime Minister has made that plain. I have made it plain. Every one of my colleagues have made it plain. We have nothing to hide. We will cooperate fully with the public inquiry. We will cooperate fully with the public accounts committee.

**Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we could find him we would ask him if he had anything to hide. The Prime Minister wants us to believe that whenever he heard Liberal hacks talking about Everest and Lafleur and Groupaction that they were talking about a mountain, a hockey player and a Montreal swingers club, but that is not at all what we are talking about here.

The truth is the Prime Minister has controlled the Liberal Party for years. He had one of those ad firms do work for him. He was notified in a letter of possible criminal activity but he failed to call in the police.

Why did he betray the public trust?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister did not betray the public trust. In fact, through his actions beginning on December 12, I think he has indicated to all Canadians how important that trust is to him. That is why he has made it plain he has nothing to hide. No one on this side of the House has anything to hide, which is why we will cooperate fully with the public inquiry and the public accounts committee.



*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in his great show of indignation over the sponsorships, the Prime Minister has stated on several occasions that those who knew something and did nothing must resign.

He was present when his colleague Mr. Gagliano left; received a letter warning him of the sponsorship scandal; certainly heard the many questions raised in the House; and what exactly did he do to stop the scandal? Can he name one little thing he did at that time?

• (1435)

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the administrative problems had been known for some time. The Auditor General has brought to light some misappropriations of which no government ministers were aware.

We have reiterated our intention to cooperate fully with the inquiries now going on. I am speaking not only of the ministers in this government, but of all members on this side of the House and in the corner over there. We are ready to appear when it is time to appear. The rest is nothing but politics. That is not what Canadians are looking for.

**Mr. Odina Desrochers (Lotbinière—L'Érable, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the current Prime Minister who says he is utterly outraged could have, very easily at the time, warned the Prime Minister or his office, warned his Quebec colleagues, discussed it in caucus, or taken many other steps that were available to him to put a stop to this situation.

How can he justify not having done anything?

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a strange question since we know that as soon as the government took office, the sponsorship program was cancelled, that as a result of the Auditor General's report an independent commission of inquiry was named, that an independent legal counsel was appointed to recover the funds and that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Public Accounts was set up very quickly.

There is a difference between rhetoric and fact. I think the facts speak very clearly in favour of the integrity of our Prime Minister.

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#### GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General reports that 10 ministers spent \$27,000 each for the same study.

We want the Prime Minister to identify these 10 ministers, who have caught the Groupaction disease and think it is normal to pay \$27,000 10 times for a copy of one report.

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Groupaction files were referred by the minister of public works and government services in March 2002 to the Auditor General. When she reported in May, the current Minister of Finance, then the new minister of public works,

immediately froze \$4 million worth of money that would have otherwise been paid. He froze the program until it could be fully reviewed and introduced a follow-up file review and forensic review asking the Auditor General to do the same and referring more cases to the RCMP. This is—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Berthier—Montcalm.

[Translation]

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Berthier—Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, everyone agrees that spending \$270,000 for 10 copies of the same report is excessive. The government said yesterday that it would accept criticism.

We want more. We want the names of those ministers.

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if they are serious about wanting to get at the truth in all of this, why not give a reasonable chance to the process the Prime Minister has put in place precisely to get at the truth?

How can they assume the findings of the commission of inquiry which was implemented in fact to get at the truth?

There is a contradiction here that baffles me.

[English]

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Prime Minister is doing a lot of talking but not a lot of answering.

The former deputy prime minister, the member for Hamilton East, had a few things to say and I want the present Deputy Prime Minister's opinion. She stated about the current Prime Minister:

I don't think you can, on one hand, take credit for the financial state of the country and, on the other hand, say that you have nothing to do with the spending of that money. I don't think that's credible.

She is right and the Deputy Prime Minister is wrong. I want to know how she can actually defend and say that what the Prime Minister is saying about the spending of this money is credible.

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has committed himself and the government to getting to the bottom of this matter on behalf of Canadians. He and the government want to know what happened, how it happened and who was involved. That is why, in fact, we have put in place a public inquiry. That is why we have asked the public accounts committee to take this matter up. That is why everybody on this side of the House has said that we will fully cooperate.

• (1440)

**Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Coquitlam—Port Coquitlam, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, part of the problem in getting to the bottom of this scandal is that the Prime Minister is having more elaborate dialogue with Flat Mark than he is with the House of Commons.

*Oral Questions*

I specifically want a straight and simple yes or no answer from the Deputy Prime Minister. Has the Prime Minister asked his cabinet ministers whether or not they knew about this scandal when it was going on? Has he asked them, yes or no? It is a simple question. It is step one to getting to the bottom of it. Has he asked them?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that no one on this side of the House has anything to hide.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth is no one on that side of the House has anywhere to hide because they have been caught red-handed. Does the minister not understand that the Liberal Party is coming open only because it has been caught red-handed in this massive rip-off of Canadian taxpayers?

The Prime Minister claims he knew nothing. He knew nothing about the conviction of a Liberal operative in Quebec for influence peddling. He knew nothing about the 2001 Auditor General report that talked about a web of political operatives in Quebec controlling grants to that province. Did the Prime Minister ever pick up the phone after one of these incidents and raise them with the prime minister—

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

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, I just cannot be clearer. We have nothing to hide on this side of the House. We are willing to cooperate with every investigation and inquiry.

In fact the Prime Minister has specifically asked if there is anyone on this side of the House who has information in relation to this matter to come forward.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for 10 years this kind of corruption has been going on through various programs. Through all of those 10 years the Prime Minister was the most powerful minister in cabinet, the most senior minister from Quebec, the controller of the public purse, the vice-chair of the Treasury Board who controlled effectively every riding association and office of the Liberal Party in Quebec. How can she expect us to believe that the rumours he heard were merely those and why did he not act on those rumours at cabinet or at Treasury Board?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, again, just let me say this very clearly. The Prime Minister has nothing to hide. No one on this side of the House has anything to hide. That is why we are committed to getting to the bottom of this matter. That is why the Prime Minister has asked anyone on this side of the House who has any knowledge in relation to this matter to come forward.

We are as concerned as the Canadian public in terms of getting to the bottom of this matter.

[*Translation*]

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Christian Jobin (Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, following on the ruling in Oakville v. Canadian National and the complaints from a number of citizens concerning the noise from railway operations, the Canadian government had decided to amend the Transportation Act, but since then the process has been halted.

I would like the Minister of Transport to tell me when he intends to include the necessary deadlines for arbitration in the Transportation Act, in order to put a prompt end to the disputes between the rail giants and the citizens' groups of individuals subject to the din of marshalling yards at all hours?

**Hon. Tony Valeri (Minister of Transport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

[*English*]

Certainly noise pollution in our communities is an issue that concerns all of us. Through previously introduced legislation, we have heard from numerous stakeholders, including members of Parliament, to look to address this issue.

The government has made it very clear that it intends to give the Canadian Transportation Agency the necessary authority and jurisdiction that it requires to deal with this issue that the hon. member brought up.

I want to assure the hon. member along with the House that I, along with my parliamentary secretary, will deal with this issue.

\* \* \*

**ELECTORAL REFORM**

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for some 20 years we had Brian Mulroney, the Conservative, and the current Prime Minister make health care, education, the environment and the farm crisis worse. For 20 years we have had Mulroney and the current Prime Minister's corporate policies, their corporate scandals and their corporate buddies and Canadians are now fed up with it.

I ask the Deputy Prime Minister, let us send the backroom boys and girls back, the corporate cronies back, and put the power back in the hands of the people. Will the government hold a national referendum on proportional representation to put the power of the people—

● (1445)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** No, Mr. Speaker. Throughout the country many authorities are wondering how to improve our democracy. The Prime Minister has already given one speech on the matter.

I have tabled an action plan to begin to address these issues. I intend to consult the people of Canada, for instance I know that the people of British Columbia are asking questions, as are the people of Quebec. I have an open mind. We are prepared to listen to what people have to say about the matter.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

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

U.S. congressmen and military personnel with whom Jack Layton and I met in Washington last week condemn the lunacy of missile defence that depends on missiles—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Halifax has the floor. I think she was fine with her question. We will all want to be able to hear it without all the assistance.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Speaker, U.S. congressmen and military personnel with whom we met in Washington last week condemn the lunacy of missile defence that depends on missiles capable of hitting other missiles, a system described yesterday by our defence minister as designed “to look out, not up”.

Canada used to stand for arms control and disarmament. In the words of Nobel laureate John Polanyi, why are we now—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of National Defence.

**Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us go back to the basics on this. Canada has been involved jointly with the United States in terms of the defence of North America for 60 or more years. We accept our responsibilities as far as protecting Canadians.

The discussions in which we are involved with the United States right now are intended to obtain more information from the U.S. with respect to what precisely is contemplated in terms of this system. Once we get that information, we will make a decision consistent with Canadian values and Canadian interests.

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**SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it gets harder every day to believe the Prime Minister and the Liberals. Pretending to be totally shocked, at first the Prime Minister said that if anyone knows about this scandal they should come forward right away; however, he turns around and tells his Quebec ministers to keep their lips zipped.

Yesterday the President of the Queen's Privy Council did not even dare to answer an easy question like, has he talked to the Prime Minister about his role in the sponsorship program? One would think someone put Crazy Glue on the minister's chair. Why the gag order on Quebec ministers?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, this is crazy. There is absolutely no gag order on anyone on this side of the House.

In fact, that is why the government announced, minutes after the Auditor General's report, a comprehensive package including a public inquiry, the public accounts committee, new legislation involving whistleblowers, and a review of the relationship between crown corporations and the Government of Canada.

On this side of the House, we want to get to the bottom of this matter.

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, well then, maybe the Deputy Prime Minister can explain why the minister hid from a basic question like, has he talked to the Prime Minister about his role in the sponsorship program? What are Canadians to think when he cannot say a simple yes or no?

The minister is well known for his heavy hand in doling out Liberal favours and rewards in his Quebec turf. He has been at it for 20 years. It is natural to wonder how deep his sticky little fingers got in the sponsorship honey pot. Is he silent because he is afraid to answer and that his answer will incriminate him?

**The Speaker:** I would caution the hon. member for Calgary—Nose Hill on her choice of words in this question. She is well aware that in the House the practice is that any minister may rise to answer a question that has been put to any minister. There is no requirement that the minister to whom a question is directed must answer the question. That has been the practice in the House since question period began and we are not going to change the practice now.

The hon. the Deputy Prime Minister is rising to answer the question that has been put.

● (1450)

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier this afternoon, no one on this side of the House has anything to hide.

In fact, our Prime Minister made it very plain that if there is anyone on this side of the House who has information in relation to this matter, they should come forward with that information.

We have also indicated, every one of us, that we will cooperate fully with the public inquiry and the public accounts committee. I can do no better than to say that no one on this side of the House has anything to hide.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps they have nothing to hide because they have already shredded all the evidence.

The Prime Minister belatedly acknowledged that Canadians were mad as hell about this latest Liberal waste of taxpayers' dollars. The Prime Minister now admits that he too is mad as hell. Why was the Prime Minister not mad as hell two years ago when he first found out about it?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, along with all of us and all Canadians, is obviously concerned about what happened here. That is why we all want to get to the bottom of this. Nobody is hiding anything.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what average Canadian gets mad as hell two years after finding out about something being wrong?

*Oral Questions*

Why is it that a mere 11% of Canadians believe the Prime Minister's claim that he was unaware of what was happening? I will tell you why, Mr. Speaker. It is because it goes completely against human nature to react the way the Prime Minister is reacting. That is why Canadians do not believe him.

I am going to ask again, why the hell did he not react two years ago?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me make this plain. We have absolutely nothing to hide. The Prime Minister has nothing to hide, none of us have anything to hide.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member says he could have answered the question himself. Then one might ask, why was the question asked? But it was. We have an answer forthcoming from the Deputy Prime Minister and we have to be able to hear it.

The Deputy Prime Minister has the floor.

**Hon. Anne McLellan:** Mr. Speaker, we have a public accounts committee and a public inquiry. The Prime Minister and everybody on this side of the House have made it plain that we will cooperate. We will appear and we will answer questions. We have no problem with that because we have nothing to hide.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister of Canada toured Quebec telling everyone, in every television station, how angry he was about the sponsorship scandal and how he would be doing everything in his power to reveal the truth. The Deputy Prime Minister has repeated about ten times now that they have nothing to hide. I have a test for them. All I am asking for is one little piece of information.

Who are the ten ministers in your gang who paid \$270,000 for a \$27,000 study? That should be easy to answer.

[English]

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General, in her review of public opinion research, has identified a small number of cases where the government rules with respect to this were not followed. We have accepted that criticism. Changes have been made and that will not happen again.

However, it is not a matter of hiding something. It is a matter of a small number of cases in a program which the Auditor General has said has been generally managed very well, but the criticisms are accepted and changes have been changed.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, these are absolutely pitiful answers we are getting.

First, the Prime Minister said, "I will do everything in my power to ensure that Quebecers know the truth about the sponsorship scandal". Yet, we cannot get an answer from the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, who is saying any old thing. No

answer is forthcoming from the Deputy Prime Minister. And none either from the government House leader, who is hiding behind the public inquiry.

My question is the following. Will the public inquiry not be exactly what we feared it would be, that is, an excuse for the government not to say anything before the election, to keep the information well hidden, even that which is most readily available?

• (1455)

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in recent months, the Bloc Québécois has called for public inquiries for everything. Now that one has been launched, they are trapped. They cannot figure how to get out of this one, because the inquiry will get at the truth. They do not know how to cope with that. So, they just keep asking questions and assuming answers.

We would rather let the process get at the truth.

\* \* \*

[English]

**SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Deputy Prime Minister repeatedly blew off answering questions in the House and instead kept referring to the inquiry.

What she failed to mention, however, was exactly what the timelines were on this public inquiry. Canadians deserve to know the timelines. They deserve to know that the inquiry will be held in a timely manner. Canadians deserve answers and they deserve the truth.

My question is for the Deputy Prime Minister. What are the exact dates for the start and completion of the public inquiry into the sponsorship scandal?

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member may know, the terms of reference and the exact mandate for the inquiry are being discussed now with Mr. Justice Gomery and will be released very soon, dare I say within a day or two.

However, let me reassure the hon. member, but even more importantly all Canadians, that this inquiry will be timely. This judge will do a thorough job. This judge is independent and I know that he will take this task seriously. He will act expeditiously, but he will take the time—

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

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is notorious for pulling the plug on public inquiries or ignoring the findings or recommendations. There was Krever, Somalia, APEC, Airbus, and the list goes on.

In light of these examples, what assurance do Canadians have that this latest inquiry will in fact be completed in a timely manner and the truth not buried until after an election?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Anne McLellan (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this independent inquiry will be conducted in a timely and thorough fashion. This inquiry is about the Prime Minister's commitment to ensure that we know all the facts in a timely fashion.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

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

The avian flu has become a major concern in many areas that are involved in the poultry industry. My area of Brampton Centre is the home of one of Ontario's largest poultry processing plants.

Considering the fact that the flu has now been detected in the U.S., could the minister inform the House what measures are being taken by the government to assure that the health of Canadians is not at risk from the avian flu?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the bird influenza strain in the United States is different from the strain that has infected human populations in Asia.

United States officials have indicated that there is no threat to human health and that measures have been taken to stop the spread in the poultry population.

I can assure the House that Health Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency are continuing to monitor the situation closely.

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**ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY**

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week the Atlantic premiers expressed concern over the pork-barrelling taking place at ACOA. Liberal MPs have expressed the same concern, sort of like infighting at the trough.

Has the minister ordered the Auditor General to investigate the questionable projects approved by the former minister?

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Minister of Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, ACOA examines all projects very thoroughly. It does due diligence on every project and every project must follow all the criteria that are laid out.

**Mr. Greg Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is utter nonsense.

The former minister of ACOA pork-barrelled the agency. His own members complained about it because some 50% of the funding was taken by one riding.

The former minister in fact spun out the story that this was being investigated by the Auditor General. Speaking to the Auditor General's office today, it was confirmed that it was just a story spun out by the minister himself. There is no audit.

Will the minister conduct an audit, yes or no?

• (1500)

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Minister of Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the program that was put in place to alleviate the hurt on the closure of the cod fishery was based on need. Approximately 50% of the need happened to occur in the former minister's riding and 50% of the need was addressed in that way.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Richard Marceau (Charlesbourg—Jacques-Cartier, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers and francophones are tired of hearing excuses from those who enjoy insulting them. Excuses, now that the harm is done, are too easy. Now, a minister of this government has joined those making insults.

Does the Prime Minister, who said yesterday that his minister's words were unacceptable, intend to set an example by demanding the minister's resignation?

[English]

**Hon. Joe Comuzzi (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after hearing of this early this morning, I issued a statement apologizing for the comments I made last week immediately following the Auditor General's report.

I want to thank my friend on the other side of the House for allowing me again, in the House, to speak to my colleagues on this side, my friends on the other side, and my colleagues in the Bloc Québécois, with whom we have had a marvellous relationship.

I am sincerely sorry for having made those comments last week.

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**WESTERN ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION**

**Ms. Sophia Leung (Vancouver Kingsway, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Okanagan University College recently received \$1 million in funding from Western Economic Diversification for its applied trace analysis facility and nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer.

Could the minister explain how these two projects will advance the economy of the region?

**Hon. Rey Pagtakhan (Minister of Western Economic Diversification, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the wine industry is vital to the economic prosperity of the interior and in fact the whole of British Columbia.

The advanced instrumentation and the research facility being funded at the Okanagan University College by my department, as announced by my colleague, the Minister of the Environment, will enable advanced research and innovation and thereby lead to increased production of grapes and the production of the highest quality of wine and thereby make the wine industry in the region very competitive in the world market.

It is about building a 21st century economy.

*Supply*

[Translation]

**AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT**

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel (Chambly, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, in May 2003, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts had asked the President of the Treasury Board to have all foundations scrutinized by the Auditor General and made subject to the Access to Information Act.

In October of the same year, the current Minister of Industry refused this request.

In the light of what we know now, and given the Prime Minister's conversion to the theological virtues of truth and honesty, can the President of the Treasury Board now—

**The Speaker:** The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

[English]

**Hon. Reg Alcock (President of the Treasury Board and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I think the member raises an important point.

If I understood his question, it is relative to the applicability of some of the oversight mechanisms of the private foundations. Some concerns have been raised about that, concerns that I raised as the chair of the Standing Committee on Government Operations.

I can tell the member that we have a process in place to examine governance in the largest scope possible of looking at these alternative service delivery mechanisms.

I invite the member to join us and work with us because we think it is time to review these mechanisms.

\* \* \*

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Alvin Curling, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

● (1505)

[Translation]

**SUPPLY**

## ALLOTTED DAY—USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have carefully read the Conservative Party motion to be voted on. If we speak of the Conservative Party, we mean from 1984 until today. This motion accuses the Liberal Party of using public funds for personal benefit and to benefit friends, family and the Liberal Party of Canada.

Last night and this morning I made a number of telephone calls to my riding, which, I might mention, is the largest riding in the 10 provinces. I talked to some 30 people, who said I ought to speak. As a Liberal member of Parliament I am here to help the people of this

vast riding. Back home, the name on my office and on our documents is “Bureau du citoyen” or citizens' office. It is like that no matter which party occupies the office.

Reading this motion, I see that the opposition is engaging in very partisan politics. Nevertheless, we hear a lot of talk about the report of the Auditor General of Canada. I am very pleased with this report. I understand very well. I was elected in 1984. I spent nine years and two months with the Conservative Party. Since 1997 I have been with the Liberal Party of Canada. I came back to my old political party. We see by this report that the Liberal government believes that the Auditor General fulfills an essential function. She carries out the audits and independent studies of government activities.

We know that this talk of sponsorships has been going on for several months. I made a statement in the House yesterday afternoon in which I said that I had asked a question in June 2003 to try to find out what was happening. In the vast area of Abitibi-Témiscamingue—some 800,000 square kilometres and 2,000 kilometres from end to end, as the crow flies—I have 63 municipalities to work with. I have to tell them about the programs that exist. I particularly wanted to know how they were organized and what applications were accepted.

According to the report I have obtained—which I was waiting to make public, and finally did yesterday—in my riding, all in all, we have received approximately \$65,000. When we look at the sponsorship situation in the riding of Laurier—Sainte-Marie, in Quebec, the riding of the leader of the Bloc Québécois, we see that they received in excess of \$5 million. In contrast with a big riding like ours, I do not find it funny at all.

What all the members of this House and the public want is a comprehensive report. It is very hard to get. I cannot understand why the Conservative Party of Canada, Brian Mulroney's party, cannot ask today that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts draw up a list of all sponsorship projects from 1998 to now, by electoral district and political party, with the names of members and projects, the amounts allocated to the projects, the commission paid to the coordinating agency and communication agencies, as well as a complete list of refusals for each riding.

That is what is important to know. We know some of it. The Standing Committee on Public Accounts and the government should make this report public today, riding by riding, so that all members can see where the money went. It will be surprising to see where contacts are made.

What is hardest for us is to uncover a ring of thieves. When thieves want to rob government, a city or a company, it takes time to flush them out. The Auditor General got hold of the file. The Prime Minister of Canada stood firm. This is the first time I have seen a Prime Minister of Canada intervene so regularly. Even the opposition, even the Bloc Québécois are not too pleased to see our Prime Minister on television standing firm. This Prime Minister will be doing his homework, he will clean house, regardless of whose name comes out.

There is something odd in all of this. We look at the Conservative Party across the way; it is not a new party, it has been around since 1984. I want to tell the members of the Conservative Party that I am the one who ensured that individual members' expenditures are made public. Every year, a report entitled, "Members' Office and Travel Expenses", is produced. This report is tabled annually.

• (1510)

In the days of the Conservatives, this was not done. It took me months and months to obtain this report on the members' expenditures. Even today, this information is confidential. The Bloc Québécois members are not doing this on the provincial level.

When the Parti Québécois was in power, there was no authorization to divulge the details of expenditures by members of the Quebec National Assembly, meaning costs for travel, lodging, party dues—frankly, there is no party in Quebec anymore. The Parti Québécois went to the Superior Court to prevent their expenditures from being disclosed. Today, there is a new government in power.

We in the federal government do disclose such expenditures. They are made public in a report tabled with the Speaker of the House. The report is referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts, which notes the travel expenses. Given the size of my riding, people must be made aware of these expenditures.

This morning something odd occurred. I asked a question concerning travel paid for by sponsors, travel all over the world by one influential Conservative Party member. This is no secret, yet the person answering called it a stupid question.

However, Standing Order 22 stipulates that there must be a public registry of foreign travel by MPs. It provides details of travel by members, particularly those in the Conservative Party and the Bloc Québécois.

This morning I was again looking at the details of trips by, among others, those of the member for St. Albert, Alberta, whom we often see on television and who is calling for the production of expense reports for Liberal MPs, the government, and executive assistants.

I find it odd that this member has neglected to mention that he has travelled all over. In the past ten years he has been away a total of 3 months and 23 days. He has been to Russia, India, Bangladesh, Belgium, the Ukraine, and several other countries, at a total cost of more than \$500,000, that is half a million dollars. This is all very bizarre.

We have Standing Order 22, but the official opposition is not calling for expenditures to be made public. All spending by all members can be found in a report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. The opposition is not talking about Standing Order 22. We can see that the member for St. Albert spent in excess of half a million dollars on accommodation, entertainment and plane tickets. We know that a flight costs between \$7,000 and \$8,000. I have the list.

The oddest thing about all of this is in a report I have before me. When we comment on others, we must speak of ourselves as well. I have made but the one foreign trip, and I will tell this to the public today. I kept notes on it because I knew one day I would have to talk about it.

### Supply

In 1986, my wife and I were invited by the government of Belgium. That trip cost \$1,941 for me and \$1,948 for my wife and I received a \$420 per diem for travelling from May 11 to 17, 1986. That is what the Speaker of the House of Commons at the time, Mr. John Fraser, wrote to me in a letter dated December 30, 1991.

I can now state my travel expenses for all the trips I have made in the world since 1986 at the taxpayer's expense, just think about that. I hear members from the Conservative Party of Canada saying this is bizarre. I find it very bizarre when they receive sponsorships almost on the sly from large global agencies to travel the world.

If they know of such travels, they have until the end of the day to disclose all the expenses. I can stand here and say that in 1986, my trip for two people cost nearly \$4,000. However, I know what the Conservative Party of Canada opposite is talking about when it refers to sponsorships. They receive sponsorships to travel to Haiti, Hawaii and Russia.

• (1515)

When they are not present in the House, no need to ask questions. The same is true for the Bloc Québécois. They travel all over the world. The NDP less so. They travel less, it is true. I also do not travel much; once in 15 years is not excessive.

The Conservative Party of Canada should ask for the tabling in the House of Commons of the complete list of all the trips made by Conservative, Liberal, Bloc Québécois and NDP members who have travelled outside of Canada between 1984 and the present as well as the cost of these travels including flights, meals, and accommodation paid by the taxpayer and especially by the sponsors.

Major sponsors are involved in this. People would be interested in knowing. And yet, looking at things overall, we wonder why they are not declaring that now. They are prepared to corner the government during question period. That is their job.

It is the same thing with the Bloc Québécois member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, who recently published a book that may have been funded by taxpayers in Quebec and Canada. The book criticizes the Prime Minister of Canada and his sons, their companies and the Barbados.

There is one thing to know about the companies that do business around Barbados. Of the 1,900 companies in Canada, there are about 700 in Quebec that do business in foreign countries.

Today, as it happens, I was looking at another book entitled, *Ces riches qui ne paient pas d'impôts*. This member of the Bloc Québécois, who is a former Progressive Conservative by the way, and who travelled all over the world about twice a month, should get out his list and calculate his spending. But if one looks closely at what is written on page 166 of this book, one finds something bizarre.

This Bloc MP, who dumped on the family of our Prime Minister in his book, should have a look at his family, because it is written here, about his brother:

Nevertheless, it is interesting to look at the Irish "exile" of Luc Plamondon.

That is, the brother of the hon. Bloc Québécois member.

### Supply

Ireland is a very popular jurisdiction with artists, writers, composers and sculptors because they can take advantage of a tax exemption. By settling in Ireland, they do not have to pay tax on the income derived from their art.

It is important to point this out. The book has just been released, and I look forward to seeing the hon. member rise—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, on a point of order.

• (1520)

**Mr. Louis Plamondon:** Mr. Speaker, that man just insulted one of the world's greatest francophone creators, my brother. Everything he says is a web of untruths.

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, there is a saying where I come from that the truth hurts. We have just seen proof. We just witnessed it.

I have here a book written by Brigitte Alepin, CA, tax expert, entitled, *Ces riches qui ne paient pas d'impôts*. It is about business people, politicians, actors, officials of crown corporations and even church officials.

This book was published a few days ago. It is still a hot potato. When I read page 166, I was confused, because there is an attack on the Liberal Party.

A woman wrote this. By launching insults as he just did in the House of Commons, he is insulting the good woman who wrote this book. This book tells about all the people in Canada, all the rich people, who are not paying taxes. I find her competent, because she has appeared on television shows and been interviewed on the radio. She appears on shows and I have a great deal of respect for her.

I respect the book that the hon. member has written in terms of the knowledge it contains. However, if he can talk about the family of the Prime Minister of Canada, his sons and all his companies, we too can talk. I see that he intervened rather quickly. I think he ran. He was out of breath, because he was unable to speak for more than 30 seconds. We will come back to this book during the election campaign.

But, today, the important thing is to speak out. Consider sponsorships by major international corporations and countries. They are known as endorsements, but I still call them sponsorships.

A first class ticket costs about \$7,000 or \$8,000. We have the list today. We have studied it. It is quite simple. It is public information in Parliament. The strangest thing in all this is that there is no figure corresponding to each trip made by all the members of the House.

I indicated how much this trip cost me, about \$4,000. I am not afraid to say so, because I have kept the records since 1986. I can say so today.

The book I mentioned earlier, published by Méridien and written by Brigitte Alepin costs about \$19. We need to know what is happening.

Coming back to the sponsorships, both opposition and Liberal members are right to speak up. However, the motion before us is very partisan. Our family, my wife, my grandson, my friends are under attack. I had telephone conversations about that last night.

There is nothing wrong with the opposition attacking the system, but it should be careful not to implicate everybody. Strangely enough, it is not rising in the House to accuse every member one after the other on this issue.

As regards the ring of thieves, a friend of mine in Val-d'Or just found one in his company. It took him four year to find it. He was disappointed, because one of his best employees was involved. There are many examples like this one.

What happened to the taxpayers' money? I am mad. I made statements on FM 102.7, in our region, with Félix Séguin. The public noted what I said. I said some pretty harsh things. I used words that I cannot repeat in this House for fear of being interrupted and told that it is way off base. Hon. members know me. When I have something to say, I say it. And many people get angry when you tell the truth.

Today, I am taking part in the debate on this motion. I am disappointed with what this motion says, but we are going to fight. The Prime Minister will continue to hold the reins of government and take action against those who misused the taxpayers' money. It makes no sense.

[English]

**Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what a rant. I find it just totally unacceptable for the member opposite to say the things he has.

He talks about the wealthy paying no taxes. Whose fault is that? Who has been running the tax system for the last decade? It is these Liberals over there. Then he has the nerve to complain about his own tax system. Hello?

He says members of Parliament took trips. It might interest the member to know that no Conservatives took the most expensive trip of all, which was with the Governor General. The Governor General took a trip that cost over \$5 million. Who went on the trip? No Conservatives did. Were there Liberal members on the trip? Yes, there were. I did not hear the member mention that, for some reason.

Then he has the nerve to criticize an artist for moving to Ireland. People move out of Canada and back into Canada every day of the week, but he singled out somebody for having the nerve to move somewhere. Is this person opposite in touch with reality?

I would like to ask this member what he has to say about a Prime Minister who was a finance minister and who owns a huge shipping company, a finance minister who was in charge of the tax system that obviously this member finds somehow deficient. This former finance minister, now Prime Minister, registers his shipping company in a loophole that he himself created and allowed to stay so that he can avoid paying Canadian taxes. Now he wants to be the leader of our country.

What does the member have to say about a former finance minister who will not pay Canadian taxes, will not fly the Canadian flag, sets up a system that shelters his own company, and then asks to be Prime Minister? Why is he not outraged about that?



•(1525)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, I know that people do not like to hear the truth. The hon. member has referred to travel by the Governor General of Canada. We know that this, being travel, will be recorded in the public accounts.

I have already referred to the registry in Standing Order 22. She claims Conservative MPs could not travel. If we look at this—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh.

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** We see the Bloc Québécois is trying to intervene. The member ought to sit down and shut up. The member of the Bloc Québécois may have nice white teeth, but his mouth could do with a bit of cleaning up.

Now for the matter of the question from the hon. member, the matter of the Alliance members' trip to Morocco at the taxpayers' expense. That is what we were addressing. We were saying that the government is seeking solutions. The Prime Minister will find solutions to ensure that those who have defrauded the taxpayers will be dismissed.

This is clear, with the figures to back it up. The registry is public. It is available here in the House of Commons. The only thing missing, which the member does not mention, is the cost. We see what all the other members spent. We all agree on public accounts such as travel by the Governor General.

We can also see what they have been doing. Between 1985 and 1990, I raised the issue of making expenditures of MPs public. I am the instigator. I was in the Conservative Party at the time. We have the list from 1984 to the present time. It can be consulted and their spending identified. I can understand their annoyance. This is the first time they have heard about it.

They are hearing how much it costs these major world bodies, these major sponsors. For sponsorships they are. A whole system of sponsorships, but only for those travelling to Russia, Taiwan, Washington, China, Israel, California, Yemen, Washington again, and to the United States. I have the whole list. A person could take hours talking about it.

But what is important is for the taxpayers to know what is going on. If they know what the sponsorship situation is, they also need to know about the sponsorships by major organizations, which for the sake of the Conservatives I will repeat in English: sponsors.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the member. If I recall correctly, the member switched horses. He was a Progressive Conservative under the Brian Mulroney government and now he is a member of the Liberal Party.

Does he remember former members Richard Grisé, Diane St-Jacques, Gabriel Fontaine, Michel Côté? They were Conservative MPs who had a lot of problems. Brian Mulroney also had a lot of problems.

[English]

I want to ask him whether or not he remembers these people and all the sleaze, all the scandals and all the corruption in that Conservative government. I wonder if he can make some

### Supply

comparisons between the two governments and tell us something. With all the sleaze, scandals and theft that happened under the Conservative government, let alone in my own province of Saskatchewan where there were 16 criminal convictions and the Conservative deputy premier went to jail, why would all that happen? Why would the Liberal government across the way not learn from history and not repeat the same kinds of mistakes made by the Mulroney Conservatives?

What we have in the House today is a case of the kettle calling the pot black. The Conservatives are talking about the very thing they used to do year after year across this country and in a province like Saskatchewan. I wonder if he can give us a commentary and compare the two.

•(1530)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Madam Speaker, that is a very good question. I really appreciate the question from the member of the NDP. He asked this question and he is right to a certain extent. Today we are dealing with a network.

Before answering his question, I would like to point out that he made an error. He mentioned the name of the member for Shefford. He made an error. I would like him to make a correction. He mentioned the name of the member for Shefford, who is here today and who is an honest, upstanding woman. She was not part of that group. Would he please stand up and correct his error.

[English]

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Madam Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I want to make the record clear. I was referring to Carole Jacques, not to my good friend across the way.

**Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the member opposite must be having some kind of out of body experience. He is in here railing about how bad it was in the prior government but he has joined a government that is embodying a scandal 10 times worse. What has gone on in the Liberal government makes Watergate look like a shoplifting charge.

He stands up now and tries this sleight of hand to suggest that somehow there is something that the opposition is doing in terms of their travel budgets. He makes this bizarre analogy that members out west are abusing their budget.

Guess what, Mr. Speaker? They have to travel to get back to their constituencies. I have been to the member's riding. It is a big, beautiful riding. They have the same problems in his riding that we are experiencing in the large riding I represent in Nova Scotia.

[Translation]

My question for the member is the following. Is the principle of this scandal now the priority of the government with respect to the inquiry? Are the people in his riding satisfied with the priorities of this government? Will priorities for health, security and education be overshadowed by this scandal involving the unspeakable waste of public funds? Do the people in his riding have a big problem with unemployment, for instance?

Why is the member disagreeing with the opposition? He needs to take a look at the government he is supporting right now.

*Supply**[English]*

He should turn that finger around and point it directly at himself. If he has a problem with how the government has been operating, why does he not say something to the front bench of his own party?

I know he likes to jump back and forth, and he has done so in the past, but he now has an opportunity as a member of the governing party to do something. Trying to go back 10 years and distract members' attention away from what is going on in the Liberal ranks right now will not work.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Guy St-Julien:** Mr. Speaker, I could throw the ball back in his court. I knew his father, the hon. Mr. Elmer MacKay, very well. He was a member of the Progressive Conservative Party with us. Today, his son is on the other side, history will not be rewritten.

I liked the end of his speech. He read the Speech from the Throne twice.

*[English]*

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Madam Speaker, we are embroiled in quite a debate today. It is a bittersweet week for Canadians. Taxpayers get a look at where their dollars are going and where they would like them not to go.

The whole principle of what we are talking about here is not necessarily the program or what went wrong. We are talking about the concept that the Liberals felt that this public pot of money was theirs to do with as they saw fit. The icing on the cake in this corruption is the kickback scheme. Those guys felt that it was okay to tithe their hand-picked companies to get 10% or 15% back into the Liberal Party of Canada. They saw nothing wrong with that.

This was all pointed out years ago. The Auditor General looked at this before and brought in a scathing report. We have heard lines like "Who's minding the store"? How can the bureaucrats go this far off track and their political masters not realize it?

Therefore, when the members on the front bench stand up day after day in question period and say that they did not know, that they had no clue, we have questions to ask. If this is not a legalistic problem of commission then it certainly must be one of omission. Their line of defence is that they are not corrupt, just ignorant. They are saying that they do not know what they are doing, and that is after 10 years of governing our country.

We have known about this since 1999. Again and again we have had public works ministers come and go in this place because they know where the bodies are. They are shipped off to the witness protection program in Denmark. Now the Liberals are at risk because by bringing the guy back they have ticked him off and he may say a few things. That is good. Canadian taxpayers deserve that.

The whole problem we are getting into here is the government's idea of how to run the public service. It has companies of record that it uses on untendered contracts. It takes a MERX program that has all these tenders out there but no one is allowed to bid because the government has already picked the winner. It just notifies companies to let them know that the bidding it is over and that they should not bother applying. That is how this thing is run. It has gone off the rails, and I wonder why.

We do not need more rules and regulations. The Treasury Board, the last time around, and the finance minister now, who was the public works minister, came out with a whole new set of rules. The rules do not mean a damn thing if nobody follows them. More rules just mean they will bend some more things and still look the other way.

We had heard that this program was frozen, that it was cancelled and that it was cancelled again. How many times do we have to cut the head off this snake? It just goes on and on.

Canadians are finally getting an eyeful of the frustration we feel here and in committee as to how these guys steamroll through their own ideology and then backstop it, hide it and say that is the way things are done, that those are the rules and they are following them. Who made the rules? Who is assessing the rules and who is applying them? It is the government's own folks. It is an internal situation and it is just horrendous.

The former minister of intergovernmental affairs from Quebec said that the whole sponsorship program was not working and that it was not needed in Quebec but the Liberals pressed on with it. Not every program was bad. It was the way they kicked back into their own pockets that was the problem, which is why the public is so upset over this.

The Prime Minister is out there on his "I am not a crook" tour. He is going door to door and program to program professing his innocence and the Liberals are dropping in the polls. The more he says "It's not me, I didn't know", the more people are saying that he was there, that he was the guy in charge of the money, the vice-chair of the Treasury Board, the referee in all of this, how could he not know. They are saying that if he did not know, then he was not doing his job and therefore he was incompetent, so why would we want him as Prime Minister.

The public is finally getting an eyeful of that, which is good. The honeymoon is finally over after 10 years due to this. It will only get worse. It is the kickback portion of the sponsorship that really put it over the top.

When people have been in Parliament for their second term they become very cynical of what is going on here. When I started looking at how I would address this today I did not know how to get it out to the people. I take calls from folks who are so upset. The BSE situation, the livestock industry and agriculture in the country is my portfolio, but it has been usurped. It has been pushed to the background because of this horrendous program and the callous attitude of these Liberals to use public money. We start to see why they cannot address agriculture in the proper way. It is because they want to funnel the money in their own way.

*Supply*

• (1535)

The Liberals do not give a darn about the agriculture guy, the guy at the farm gate. We have seen that for 10 years. They have ignored an industry to death; death by a thousand cuts. This is where their money is going. Their priority is on what is good for the Liberal Party of Canada, not on what is good for the taxpayers and, of course, the farmers.

I receive many letters. I received one from a lady named Rose Graw of Battleford. I want to read a couple of lines from the letter because it really encapsulates the calls that I have been receiving and how I am feeling. She writes "I watched the Prime Minister yesterday and while it is all fine and dandy, some of the things he says, it is nothing more than political rhetoric. I have absolutely no faith that true justice will be done in the most recent theft of public money. The Prime Minister's inquiries will cost us millions as other inquiries, commissions, et cetera, over the years have cost us. They will only gather dust on some politician's desk".

She is a cynic as well. She tops the letter off by saying "To say I am angry, disgusted and ashamed of the political rhetoric is an understatement. I would like to withhold my taxes but the government would probably send me to jail".

That is the feeling out there. I know a lot of my colleagues are getting those same types of e-mails, letters and phone calls.

This tars all of us with the same brush; that we do not understand what the public purse is all about.

We have seen spending under the Liberal government notch up 9% and 11% a year to buy what? Has everybody got a better quality of life in this country? My constituents are not calling in and saying that they are doing so much better under this finance minister and his fiscal prudence that he talked about. It is not happening.

Canadians do not want to see something like this sponsorship fiasco and the culture of corruption. Whether they are taxing junior hockey teams for no reason at all and then stopping it in a Liberal riding, people start to step back and say that everything the Liberals do is about politics. It is not about practical solutions to anything. It is about politics. It is about furthering the Liberal agenda. It has nothing to do with getting Canada back on track and becoming the economic tiger we can be.

After 10 years in government they are now talking about an ethics package. That was in the first 1993 red book. The Prime Minister, who was the finance minister at that time, was the author of that book. Why does it take 10 years, until they get their fingers caught in the cookie jar right up to the elbow, for them to finally start talking about ethics and start to expedite things like whistleblower legislation?

We have introduced many private member's bills from this side that have been rejected again and again. Now the Liberals are starting to say that those bills might be a good thing.

The new President of the Treasury Board, who used to be the chair of the government ops committee, was at public accounts today. He said that it was great. He said that under the whistleblower legislation people would be able to come forward and say their piece.

I just cannot understand why they will not allow that to happen. Of course, there is an election in the offing.

Madam Speaker, I am splitting my time with my colleague from Strathcona so I will wind it up there because I know he has a lot of good things to say.

• (1540)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I want to commend my colleague for his comments and point out the fact that perhaps we need some whistleblower protection for cabinet ministers from Quebec to come clean on the information they have. Their lips were glued shut during question period today on that matter.

I want to ask my friend about something that happened back in 1997 when he and I first arrived in this place. There was a story about a Liberal fundraiser whose name was Pierre Corbeil. He was brought up on charges of fraud and was convicted of those charges. He had a list of companies that were receiving grants from the federal government in Quebec and he was shaking them down for cash. He would go to those companies and say "You will kick back \$10,000 to the Liberal Party of Quebec or your grant from the federal government will be cancelled". That was unbelievable. Surely the government must have noticed that but that did not seem to put an end to the kind of thing we see happening today.

I wonder if my friend might comment on that and this culture of corruption that has continued under the Liberal government.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** Madam Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. We came here as rookie MPs. I know we worked together on committees and so on.

People get their eyes opened in a big hurry when they get here. This is the big leagues, and there are big mistakes made too, no doubt about it. However, it is not even so much that is allowed to go on, it is the cover-up that goes along with it. Somehow the Liberals seem to think that this is okay, that they can do this type of thing and get away with it. It is just \$10,000.

When the former prime minister was first called on the carpet over this sponsorship fiasco, he said "A few million dollars went missing, so what?". Somebody worked their heart and soul out to send those tax dollars in, to have them literally blown off by the Prime Minister and his front bench.

We sit here in question period day after day going after these guys looking for answers. They want to be open and transparent, but there are no answers. We look at all those Quebec folks who have had their lips zipped shut. They are glued to their chairs. They are not allowed to stand up and speak. They sit there like kids who have not done their homework, with their heads down hoping they will not be asked. It is a serious error of omission in not coming forward.

We have seen letters from folks in Quebec who were members of the Liberal Party, who pointed this out and said to the finance minister, who controlled all the ridings in there, that he had to do something and that they would be killed on this issue. Turns out they are right.

*Supply*

• (1545)

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Madam Speaker, my colleague talked about the culture of corruption that has spread. He talked about Groupe Everest, Groupaction and some of the firms that gave kickbacks to the Liberal Party. I think Canadians are outraged by this, and rightly so. A half a million dollars was spent on a report that was not done or was the same as the one done previously, with no words changed.

The saddest thing about the corruption is that it spreads from the top down. This latest one involves other respected crown corporations like VIA Rail, Canada Post and even the RCMP. This is just tragic for the confidence of Canadians in all of the government, in all our crown corporations, and the cost is tremendous.

Then we had the privacy commissioner with his extravaganza and his reign of terror. Worse yet, we have the situation in Virginia Lafontaine Centre. Officials again were spinning off cheques. They went on a cruise and bought jewellery in the Caribbean, paid for by Health Canada dollars.

Would the member comment on the infiltration of this culture of corruption.

**Mr. Gerry Ritz:** Madam Speaker, it certainly permeates the whole government and the civil servants that it controls. The Deputy Prime Minister kept saying today that the Liberals wanted to get to the bottom of this. I think when they do, they will find that it is their reflection looking back at them. When the benchmark is set that low, it will not take that long to get to the bottom. We see the polls dropping already.

The PM's favourite consultants, Earncliffe, received over \$6 million in contracts since 1993, including \$800,000 during his leadership run. Again with those, as in Gagliano's MO, there were no written reports. Therefore, the government cannot just point to the former minister of public works and say that he did not like to write things down. These guys do not request things written down.

There is a quote from Thomas Sowell that I noticed. He states, "Politics is the art of making your selfish desires seem like the national interest". The Liberals are masters at that and it is about to come crashing down.

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have always taken so much pride in representing the riding of Edmonton—Strathcona, and I have always taken so much pride in being able to stand up in this place to represent Canadians, to talk about pertinent issues and to do the best I possibly can as a member of Parliament to advance great goals for Canadians. Yet here we are on a day like today dealing with the culture of corruption that has existed in the government since it has taken power. The exact same things those members said they would try to eradicate while they were in opposition seem to have become ten times worse than any previous government.

I stand up today with a saddened heart to discuss these issues because we should be discussing issues pertaining to BSE, softwood lumber and our place in the world. How can we deal with these issues and the integrity of the country when we have a government that seems to be corrupt to the bone? We just cannot do it. Canadians

are finally coming to the end with this government and what it represents.

This is not something new. It is a trend that has continuously been building since the government took office. I want to take a moment to read today's motion into the record. It states:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Liberal government has and continues to nurture a culture of corruption through the abuse of its influence and the use of public funds for personal benefit and to benefit friends, family and the Liberal Party of Canada.

Just recently the Auditor General's report was tabled in the House. According to that report, the sponsorship program has cost at least \$250 million. We hope, through the process of a public inquiry, that we can get to the bottom of this and find out if there has been even more abuse. It seems \$100 million of these fees went to commissions for Liberal-friendly advertising companies that did little or no work.

It is bad enough that this sort of abuse has taken place, but the person who is in charge, the top dog, the Prime Minister of the country, is claiming that he had no knowledge of any of this happening. Let us look and see.

Since this report was tabled, he has given on separate occasions a number of different excuses. A number of my colleagues have highlighted them. I would not mind going over them because I was floored when I heard some of the excuses, particularly after hearing that the new Prime Minister would do things in a new way and that he would bring a new level of government. It seems like he has brought a new level of ignorance and corruption to the government.

First, he claimed that he did not know anything about the scandal. The next day he blamed a rogue group of public servants. When people were not buying that story, he admitted that he had heard about a number of administrative problems, when it came to the actual sponsorship program. He said that he really was not aware of it until the final Auditor General's report was tabled in the House.

It is hard for us on this side of the House to believe that the Prime Minister, who was one of the most prominent ministers in the government over the last 10 years and who was one of the chief members of Parliament at cabinet, would know nothing about the scandal and the abuse of taxpayer dollars. Now that the government has been caught, we are starting to find out more about the truth. Hopefully, before the election is called, Canadians will know the full truth about this matter and how much the Prime Minister and many of his ministers knew about the whole scandal evolving on that side of the House.

The truth of the matter is I think there has always been this sort of abuse, neglect and disrespect of taxpayer dollars. Only when they get caught do they make an effort to change any of the things that have happened on that side of the House. We have a number of examples to show even before this Auditor General's report.

I can speak from my own experience. When I worked on the revenue file, I dealt with the GST fraud issue. Some members may remember that issue. We did not know the figures involved. One of my colleagues has said \$100 million. We thought it could have been up to \$1 billion that was lost by the government because of its lack of control in the department of revenue to ensure that people who made false GST claims did not get the moneys. There were no checks or balances in the Department of Finance when it came to cheques being mailed out for false claims. It is incredible that this would happen. It took an inconsistency where someone actually received a cheque and was shocked because that person had put a false claim in. This story came to the media.

● (1550)

We started to investigate it and found that millions of dollars had been abused because of the lack of respect on that side of the House for taxpayer dollars. It is outrageous. Only when the government got caught did it say that it had a whole department that was focused on GST fraud and that it changed the accounting practices. We actually had to grill the previous minister in committee. Finally she decided to change the reporting process so Canadians could find out how much was lost throughout the years of the government being in office, especially on the GST fraud.

Because the government kept lumping the amount of money that was lost into general revenues for the department, in accounts receivable which it was still in the process of trying to track down, the number could have been in excess of a billion dollars. That is another billion dollar boondoggle of which we never got to the bottom.

I do not have to remind Canadians about the ones that were more topical and that gained a lot of interest from the media. The HRDC boondoggle was the same sort of abuse on that side of the House. It was a disrespect for taxpayer dollars. A continuous flow of money went to people who should not have received it. Ultimately, there is still no accountability.

We have the gun registry about which we have heard more and more. Again, only after the work on this side of the House by one of our diligent members, the member for Yorkton—Melville, who kept hammering the government saying that the numbers were not adding up and it was not coming clean with Canadians, did we start to find out the abuse of taxpayer dollars in that department. Now the costs are upwards of \$1 billion. This is unacceptable. That program was supposed to be no more than \$2 million. Now some estimates are that it will reach almost \$2 billion. This is outrageous and is another example of abuse by the government.

Even when it comes to the Prime Minister's own backyard, how can we trust what numbers the government puts out? I think that is the crux of the problem. Canadians have lost confidence in the government. When initially questioned about how much the Prime Minister's companies, Canadian Steamship Lines, had received in grant money, the government put out a number of some \$137,000. We would like to take the government at its word, but obviously through the diligent work of one of our colleagues, the member for Edmonton Southwest, who put a question on the Order Paper to find out how much that money was, we found it was \$161 million.

### *Supply*

How can the government stand in this place and ask Canadians in almost a repentant style to forgive it and trust it when it comes to bringing openness and transparency into this place? How can the government even imagine that Canadians can trust it to do so?

When these numbers come out in such flagrant ways, there is no accountability. The government does not seem to know what is happening in its own departments. The Prime Minister himself is not aware of how much money, even during the portion of the time when he was finance minister, that his companies were able to obtain. This is outrageous.

We finally are seeing the straw that has broken the camel's back. The member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot has come out and said that he cannot remain with a government that seems to be void of ideas, full of corruption and obviously is heading in a completely opposite direction of where he as a member of Parliament is heading. Many of us came to this place to try to strive for Canadians, to put Canadians first, to give them the best government possible. He cannot remain in that government. I would like to echo the end of his press conference when he said that maybe it was time for change.

I hope Canadians will remember that if the government has the audacity to go to the polls in the next couple of months.

● (1555)

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a part of this discussion is about truth and transparency. They are both concepts which I think are extremely important for the House. I know my colleague likely did not mean it, but I really thought he said that the gun registry had cost \$1 billion. I know he would not want to leave that in the minds of people watching this.

Is it not true that the billion dollars to which he has referred, and to which the Auditor General has referred, is the amount of money that will be spent by 2005, which is in the first 10 years of the gun control program. Roughly one-third of it is to be spent for screening. Roughly one-third of it is being spent for licensing, training and things of that type. Roughly one-third of it is being spent on the registry which he mentioned?

Like him, I deplore the money that was wasted on new software and things like that for the registry. However, before he goes into the rant about the waste, which I do accept in that program, would he not agree with me that is the billion dollars to which he was referring, yes or no?

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, I think the point this hon. member is missing is the fact that the government put out numbers for the gun registration program; and it is not gun control as he referred to, because quite frankly I think we could have looked for a much more effective means of gun control than this registration would ever have accomplished. How could it go from \$2 million to administer this program, which is what the government said it would cost, to now over \$1 billion and rising? We still do not even know what the final amounts are.

### Supply

Every day on this side of the House when we stood to ask the government how much it would cost to maintain this registry and how much would it cost to complete it, we never got an answer. The government does not know the answer and that is why this number continues to grow.

Quite frankly, the money that was spent on this registry would have gone to a much better use for control if we had looked at policing our streets more, beefing up our border security when it comes to the flow of illegal guns, and all these different angles that should have been explored rather than this registry, which has just been a boondoggle.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I know the member has a lot of concern for the many Albertans and the many Canadians who are suffering because of BSE, but I would like to draw attention to another issue.

In my own riding I have a family about to lose a farm of prize goats, which are not affected by the mad cow disease and which the family used to export to the United States. This family has been shut down totally. Animals that they used to sell for \$9,000 have had to be sold for \$200 or \$300 to slaughter them for meat to feed their other animals. They are in danger of losing their entire farm because of this. There is no compensation for affected non-bovine farms.

How do we explain to them that there is no compensation, no money to help them out in their hour of need, when we have the Governor General going off around the world, spending \$5.3 million globe-trotting with some of her friends when it was supposed to cost maybe \$1 million? What value do Canadians get from that?

• (1600)

**Mr. Rahim Jaffer:** Madam Speaker, there is no doubt about it. Many of the agricultural producers in this country, especially those dealing with many forms of livestock, are facing some incredible challenges, still because of this particular government's lack of influence when it comes to dealing with border problems with the U.S. and because it is not stepping up to the plate when it comes to trying to compensate many of these families. It is a terrible situation.

I know that from my own experience in Alberta. Even though I am not in a rural area, I hear from a number of my colleagues who are doing their best to try to help many of these families, but still the government has not stepped up to the plate and I think it is becoming a very serious problem for many of these families.

On the flip side, as hon. colleagues say, we see, as I constantly referred to in my speech, a blatant disregard for taxpayers' dollars. There are some people who cannot put food on the table, yet we have a Governor General who goes five times over budget from the original cost to take many of her friends on a cultural promotion trip. Although some of this can be very important, there should be a limit as to how much some of these public servants spend, and the Governor General is no exception to that rule. To go five times over budget, especially when farm families are starving, is completely unacceptable.

**Hon. Stephen Owen (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the Minister of Health.

I think all members of the House are here for honourable reasons. We come here to try to improve the public good, and I think Canadians generally do not appreciate the long hours and the dedication to the public interest that members of Parliament on all sides of the House bring to this difficult task.

We have heard aspersions cast upon the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister of this country, our Prime Minister, is involved in perhaps the most courageous act of political leadership in a generation as he goes before the Canadian people to say openly and honestly, "I want to hear your concerns. I share your anger. We are going to get to the bottom of this and we will do it in a very disciplined way that gets to the truth".

It is not going to be just wild accusations. It is going to be in disciplined processes before the public accounts committee, before the public inquiry, and through RCMP investigations that are underway. If and where evidence indicates, we would hope that more will be initiated.

Let us go back, because it keeps arising, to the question about when the Prime Minister or other ministers in the government knew about the scandal. And of course that is what it is. I can tell members that the constituents in Vancouver Quadra are angry, as we all are, and want to get to the bottom of it.

This first came to public attention and to government attention in terms of ministers in 2000, with an audit that was started internally in the Department of Public Works and Government Services. That was, by letter of the minister of the day, given to Treasury Board in early 2001. In the fall of 2000, it was on the public works website, including with the audit an action plan to fix some of the managerial and administrative problems that were found.

Let us go forward a year and a half to June 2002, when the public accounts committee, chaired by a member of the opposition in the House, held hearings into the sponsorship scandal, as it was then known. Let us remember that in May 2000 it came forward in the Auditor General's report on Groupaction that there were severe problems with this issue.

The two deputy ministers, one up until 2000 and one after that, gave evidence before the public accounts committee that in their review of both the audit and the action plan there was no breach of statutes, no illegality. What there were, were administrative and managerial problems. There was no breaking of the Financial Administration Act, but there was a breaking of Treasury Board guidelines for contracting.

What they said as well, both of them, before the House committee, was that they as deputy ministers over a four year period had had no political influence on them. That may not turn out to be the truth, but that is what they said and that is the knowledge we had.

Because of the referral from the new Minister of Public Works in March 2002, the Auditor General was invited to look at Groupaction. She reported in May that she found illegality and she referred three cases around Groupaction to the RCMP.

We froze the program. Four million dollars of payments to those companies were frozen; it was anything that was outstanding. The new Minister of Public Works of the day, now the Minister of Finance, revised that program completely and referred 10 more cases to the RCMP in fall 2002.

So to suggest that ministers knew about it and did not act is simply not true. We knew about certain things, the people in government at the time, and we acted on them. When more information came out, the people in government acted further.

Let me just go ahead to December 13, 2003, the day after the current government was sworn in. The Prime Minister cancelled the sponsorship program, even as it had been improved, because of the horrible reputation it had because of the misdeeds that had occurred. He said he would get to the bottom of it.

Then came the Auditor General's report. Showing respect to her and the House, we waited until the Auditor General tabled the report in the House, because of course all hon. members know we cannot refer directly to a report of a parliamentary officer until it is tabled. Otherwise we would be disrespectful and in contempt of Parliament.

● (1605)

Within minutes of that report being tabled, the Prime Minister described and put into action the widest, most comprehensive list of processes to deal with what actually happened in this program: to root out those who are responsible, to chase money, and to have criminal sanctions where appropriate.

He called a public inquiry. We will hear probably tomorrow the exact terms of reference of this wide-ranging, judicial independent public inquiry.

There is the public accounts committee. Last week, the Prime Minister asked in the House that the public accounts committee sit that very afternoon, February 10. It did, and it continues, and people are coming forward. That is what should happen.

The Prime Minister has said he will appear before the public inquiry and the public accounts committee to say exactly what he knew when. To suggest, as it has been suggested, that somehow last week the Prime Minister tried to blame this all on 14 public servants is frankly simply not what happened.

The Prime Minister rose in the House in answer to a question to repeat what the Auditor General had said in public that very morning. The point was that there were 14 public servants, as distinguished from 14,000 public servants in my department, that had been involved on the administrative side of this program. It was not said to in any way excuse or suggest that ministers, that people involved in the political side of government were not involved, and, frankly, quite the opposite. The Prime Minister was inviting everyone who knew anything about this scandal, because that is what it is, to come forward to these processes.

We have now appointed a special counsel for financial recovery. That will be a rigorous pursuit, a further rigorous pursuit, because we have about \$3.5 million now seized. It is a pursuit of public funds that have been misappropriated and the criminal investigations continue.

### *Supply*

Let me tell you, Madam Speaker, and let me say on behalf of the government what we have heard the Prime Minister say from one end of this country to the other. We will get to the bottom of it. We will find the facts. We will determine who is responsible. We will chase the public money that was misappropriated. We will ensure that it will never happen again.

In conclusion, let me mention some of the tools beyond the inquiry, the public accounts committee, the special counsel and the RCMP legislation. As of January 1 of this year we have, to my mind, the strictest political financing rules in the democratic world to ensure that corporations and unions cannot influence or even give the slightest appearance of influencing public decisions.

We have an independent ethics commissioner being appointed through legislation which is now before the House. We have whistleblower legislation that will be introduced in the House before the end of March. We are reviewing the Financial Administration Act to extend its reach to post-employment politicians, as well as public servants, so that if they are responsible for misdeeds when in office they can be chased after their employment, and also to strengthen the Financial Administration Act to bring the crown corporations properly under the control of the Treasury Board and ensure that their governance and audit committees are strengthened.

This is an extraordinary range of processes and legislative actions. This is why I am in the House and this is why I have been in public life for some time: to ensure that where breach of the public trust occurs we get to the bottom of it, that people are held accountable and that we learn from the experience to put in further rules to protect against it in the future.

● (1610)

**Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, CPC):** Madam Speaker, the sad part of this whole scandal is that a member such as the minister, who came to the House with a good reputation and was respected in his former role, is tainted by this entire scandal, as are other members of the government side even though it may be a few who engaged in corrupt activity. It could lead to more people being involved. We do not know where the inquiry will go.

I do want to ask the minister about the missing \$100 million. That, of course, is of great concern. I also want to refer him to the incident in 1997 where a Liberal fundraiser, Pierre Corbeil, from Quebec, was charged and convicted of influence peddling and of fraud, I believe. He had a list of grants being given to companies in Quebec and he was basically shaking them down for cash, saying that if they did not contribute \$10,000 to the Liberal Party they would lose their grant.

I know that the Minister of Health has referred to this. The minister might want to refer to it in his comments as well.

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew:** I am the one who called the police.

**Mr. Grant McNally:** The minister is saying he is the one who called the police. That is good. Certainly there should have been a heads-up for cabinet and for the government that this was something that was going on back as far as 1997. They should have had their radar up that this could possibly spring up again. As we have found, it has sprung up.

I would like the minister to comment on that.

*Supply*

**Hon. Stephen Owen:** Madam Speaker, regrettably, and frankly it is the challenge to all of us in the House and in the legislatures across the country, there are incidents of corruption. It is not restricted to this party or this government, or the federal government. We have problems across the country.

Certainly there were cases of corruption as well during the previous Conservative government which are well known and which led to convictions. We have had problems in the province of the hon. member and in my province of British Columbia. We have had difficulties with inappropriate behaviour by a former Social Credit, allegations against the NDP, and allegations against current Liberal governments. Sadly this is not restricted to this place and this party, but it is our responsibility, all of us working together, to get to the bottom of this and to learn from it.

In the specific case that the member mentioned, it is extremely important that it did lead to a criminal investigation, reported by the current Minister of Health, it led to a police investigation, charges and conviction. This is what we must ensure happens in this case. The Prime Minister has invited anyone on both sides of the House to come forward to our inquiries, to our public accounts committee, to give evidence to the RCMP. Let us get to the bottom of it and make sure that no party and no government in any jurisdiction in our country can get away with this type of misappropriation and breach of public trust in the future.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, this is the first time I have had an opportunity to speak while you were in the chair. I congratulate the member from Kamloops on sitting in the chair. You are doing a very good job.

The member from British Columbia is talking about how the Prime Minister is going to take charge and is going to fix this whole thing up. I would like to ask the member, what has he done to take charge of the issue out in British Columbia? The RCMP search warrants were sealed up during an organized crime investigation of the very Liberal Party members who put the Prime Minister into the Prime Minister's chair through their activities of buying memberships and getting him elected. There is a scandal that involves crime and corruption. What is the Prime Minister doing about that?

• (1615)

**Hon. Stephen Owen:** Madam Speaker, first of all I am not aware of any charges having been laid against anybody in British Columbia. What I am aware of is that the federal government has retained counsel to attempt to get those search warrants opened so that we can have a better idea of exactly what is behind them.

Is there any inappropriate action involving anyone involved with the federal Liberal Party of Canada? Let us remember that the raid was on the British Columbia legislature, on offices of aides of senior ministers of the provincial government. I have heard no suggestion whatsoever that there is a connection to the federal government. Let us see where we are going—

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Hinton):** Order. Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of Health and Intergovernmental Affairs.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew (Minister of Health, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister responsible for Official Languages, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, I too wish to congratulate you

on your new position as Chair of our House. This is an important position, which obviously commands great respect.

I want to thank you for allowing me to rise today to speak on this motion, whose wording is certainly excessive, but which gives us an opportunity to take a good look at how a Liberal government handles public funds.

I listened to the presentation of the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona earlier. He said our government had no respect for public funds, for the taxpayers' hard-earned money.

My constituents, in Papineau—Saint-Denis, are fully aware of the fact that no other government in the history of this country has done more to look to the future in terms of public spending, instead of allowing the absolutely staggering debt load to continue to grow, which is what used to happen.

I am very happy that the member for Edmonton—Strathcona said that we have disrespect for taxpayers' dollars. It will get the public thinking, and it will remember that our government is the one that eliminated the \$42 billion deficit inherited from the Conservative government. Note that the Alliance Party is now the Conservative Party, therefore inheriting the Conservatives' legacy.

This legacy was a \$42 billion deficit. In those days, governments kept on borrowing, knowing full well that the day would come when it would have to be paid back using the taxes paid by Canadians.

We have eliminated this \$42 billion deficit, out of respect for the taxes paid by Canadians.

The Prime Minister, who was finance minister at the time, did a tremendous job, in respecting public funds. We have carried out very painful program reviews, in which program upon program was reviewed to ensure that we were respecting the taxpayers' money.

Is this program still relevant to the Canadian economy or society? Would that one better meet our needs? Very painful program reviews were conducted out of respect for taxpayers' money.

Therefore, we are the only country in the world, the only country in the G-7, one of the rare countries in the OECD now, that has a budget surplus, and is no longer in a deficit situation. We are the only country in the G-7 to have a surplus and not a deficit because of our government's prudent management of public funds.

It was our Liberal government that modernized employment insurance benefits. We were the ones who got the employment insurance fund out of its deficit position, where it had been year after year, with the government putting in the taxpayers' money. We were the ones who turned this deficit into a surplus, and now we are taken to task for having an EI fund surplus because they say it is excessive.

In any case, at least, the taxpayers' money is no longer going to prop up the employment insurance fund that was running at a deficit. It is precisely because we respect the taxpayers' contributions that the EI fund has finally done this.



In all the world, our country has become a model for its respect for the taxpayers' money. It is clear now that there were some mistakes made in the sponsorship file. Some very disturbing facts have been brought to our attention by the Auditor General.

Furthermore, I would like to point out one thing. The word "corruption" does not appear in the Auditor General's report. She pointed out some worrisome facts to us—serious facts we have been considering for several years. We are being asked, "Where was the Prime Minister all those years?"

We are the ones who called for an internal audit in the Department of Public Works and Government Services when the allegations were first heard. The Deputy Minister, Mr. Quail, came and told us, in mid-2002, that, despite the fact that the three Groupaction reports were not included in the internal audit, there was no evidence of corruption or dishonesty at that time. That is what the internal audit report said.

Unfortunately, later on, some facts came to light that were sufficiently serious to be brought to the attention of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The RCMP is now carrying out criminal investigations based on the facts that the Auditor General's activities had uncovered over a two-year period. It cannot be said that we have done nothing.

The new government led by the current Prime Minister shut down the program the day after the new government was formed, that is, December 13, 2003.

•(1620)

As a government, we have made some extremely radical decisions. We have created a commission to carry out an independent, public judicial inquiry. Now the opposition is asking us to tell that inquiry to produce its report quickly, and to impose upon it a deadline and other restrictions on this and that. We will not set a time limit. We trust it will work expeditiously, but also that it will go into the matter thoroughly, so that we will have recommendations to prevent this kind of thing from ever happening again.

We set up the Standing Committee on Public Accounts very quickly. It is the only House committee already in place. Its chair is an opposition member. We made sure it would be the first parliamentary committee prepared to start work, and we have already assured it of this government's full cooperation.

We have given a special mandate to a legal counsel specialized in the recovery of funds, in order to trace any funds that may have been misdirected. This specialist, who is not involved in criminal cases, will also be able to recover these funds in civil proceedings.

We have undertaken management reforms. Legislation protecting whistleblowers will ensure that public servants who get wind of certain crooked dealings are protected by a statute under which they can report these facts to the appropriate authority. We are enforcing the Financial Administration Act.

This government has acted, will act and intends to do everything in its power to prevent any future repetition of troubling events such as those now being brought to light.

### *Supply*

I want to take the few minutes I have remaining to defend Quebec's reputation, which has taken quite a beating throughout the country. It is unfortunate that people want to associate all of Quebec with certain crooked dealings by a limited number of individuals who will have to answer for their actions.

However, I must say one thing. There have been difficult political situations in provinces other than Quebec, such as British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. They have happened everywhere and under other governments too.

Quebec is even the first society to get its fiscal house and political party financing in order. The Lesage government, a Liberal government in the early 1960s, initiated this initiative to clean up political campaign funds to free political parties from the sometimes, but not always, unhealthy influence of money.

This reform, begun under the Lesage government, was continued by René Lévesque and the Parti Québécois, in Quebec City, to the extent that this society influenced the Liberal government to adopt Bill C-24, last year, to improve political party financing.

This was an in-depth reform, which the Alliance and the Progressive Conservatives opposed. They were against reforming contributions to campaign funds, preferring to leave things in the dark.

Now, I want to come back to what we said about Quebec.

•(1625)

[*English*]

Now I would like to say it in English, if no one minds, so that my English speaking friends around the country know that there have been political difficulties and political corruption in all Canadian provinces and societies. I find it extremely sad when I hear anything close to the Quebec bashing that I have been hearing in the last few days.

I would like to say how much Quebec in the last 40 years has been a society that has contributed to the progress of cleaner electoral and managerial health in our public finances. It is the first society that has brought forward legislation to free up political parties with respect to election funds.

The progress that has been made in Quebec in the last few years is very important. I am very proud that it is the Quebec society that has influenced the Liberal government to free up political parties from any influence from big business by making sure that party funds will now be public. I think it is great progress for democracy.

**Mr. Chuck Strahl (Fraser Valley, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his comments, but I am not sure where he is hearing the negative comments about Quebec. He is certainly not hearing it from this side of the House, not from us anyway. The question is not whether Quebec society wants to clean up the corruption. The question is, is the Liberal Party prepared to clean up the corruption?

The problem has been and the reason that the Auditor General has been front and centre is because this scandal involves the Liberal Party and their supporters. She did not say anything about Quebec. We are not saying anything about Quebec, but it is saying a lot about the Liberal Party of Canada.

*Supply*

That is why the member today left the Liberal Party. He said that he has been convinced over the last three or four years that it has not improved. In fact, he says it is going downhill within the Liberal Party itself. He says the problem is getting worse over there, not better. It is not a matter of public financing of political parties. It is a culture that is created when wrongdoing is winked at and accepted.

I would like the minister to answer a specific question which we asked in the House before. In this scandal, as the minister says, there have been aspersions cast upon the ministers from Quebec and it is up to them to stand up and clear the air.

The Prime Minister, for example, received a letter from the president of the Liberal Party of Canada weeks before the Auditor General started her investigation. The question we have been asking is, when did this minister and other ministers hear about the problems that the Auditor General's report details?

When did he hear about it? Did he hear about it before the AG started her investigation or was he surprised a week ago when the report came down? What appears evident again is that there is a culture that has made this acceptable in the Liberal Party. The Liberal Party may want to ferret it out now, but it is certainly there. We need to know, when did the minister know and what did he do about it once he found out?

**Hon. Pierre Pettigrew:** Madam Speaker, I find it incredible that we are now saying that the Liberal Party is corrupt and so on. The word corruption does not even appear in the report of the Auditor General of Canada. She brings to our attention a certain number of facts that are troubling. The government is determined to get to the bottom of that.

I can tell members that the word corruption does not appear in her report. She says that she does not have the facts that would allow her to know where the money went. This is the sort of thing that we will see.

I understand that the police have been working for two years on a certain number of cases that have been brought to their attention by the first Auditor General's report. I understand that they have 10 or 12 files. It certainly means that there has been work done in this area.

From the Auditor General's report, there was an internal audit at one stage. In May 2002, Ran Quail, the deputy minister said that the first internal audit revealed mismanagement; however, he did not reveal that there had been any fraud. At that stage the three files on Groupaction were not part of his internal audit; however, he said that at that moment there had been mismanagement and that there were difficulties in identifying how things were going. He said there was no evidence of any fraud.

The opposition says we should have known. In June 2002 the deputy minister went on record based on the internal audit. The opposition apparently knows things that even the Auditor General does not know in her own report at this time.

Let the public inquiry do its work and let the police continue their investigation. Let the public accounts committee do its work. That is the way that we will get to the bottom of this.

• (1630)

**Mrs. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your appointment.

Never in my lifetime did I ever think that I would rise in the House of Commons and discuss government corruption. We all knew the Liberals wasted plenty of money, but corruption in the tens of millions of dollars is mind-boggling, even after having a week to think about it.

Today I read that Jack Layton and the NDP want to jump into bed with these Liberals. Jack Layton wants to fly his own flag of convenience and form a minority government with the Liberals. I cannot believe the NDP will try to sell its new party look in Canada, especially in my riding of Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar. My constituents do not support the idea of an NDP-Liberal government. They will not support the waste and they will not support the corruption.

Madam Speaker, I will be dividing my time with my colleague from Surrey Central.

The Conservative Party of Canada stands alone in the House of Commons in calling for real reform of government. We stand alone in demanding that answers come before an election call. We stand alone in defending the responsible spending of taxpayers' dollars. We stand alone as the NDP and Liberals crowd around the trough.

My constituents have had enough. They want justice, they want answers, and they want them now. The reckless disregard for hard earned tax dollars by the NDP and Liberals has my constituents tarring us all with the same brush. One voter said "With all the corruption we see in the government hierarchy its hard to believe or trust any politicians".

Richard P. of Saskatoon wrote:

For the first time in my life, I won't be voting in this spring's federal election. I have given up on the political system in this country. Enough is enough. Have a nice day. This is a waste of taxpayers' dollars.

Lynn B. of Saskatoon wrote:

I don't believe we have an MP from any party who is openly and aggressively looking to the interests of the citizens of this province or any other.

Albert G. of Saskatoon wrote:

It blows my mind how some of these bigwigs can blow so much money and not be responsible.

Finally, Eron M. in her comments wrote:

Sorry, but politicians have difficulty with honesty and morality. They may believe they are honest, but they are only as honest as the other politicians. That is less than half as honest as the average working stiff.

These comments made me angry. The Prime Minister and the Liberals with their unethical and corrupt behaviour are giving us all a bad name. I work hard for my constituents. I work hard for their respect. I just wish the Liberals would too.

The amount of money that has been wasted is disgusting. It could have gone a long way if it had been spent responsibly.

It could have bought 100 MRI machines across Canada and eliminated every waiting list. It could have hired 2,500 nurses to care for our sick and frail citizens as well as nurses to deliver babies and treat our children.

For those people who cannot afford a car, they must be furious when they think of the 12,500 economy cars that could have been bought with this money.

How about buying the weekly groceries for 2.5 million families? They could have eaten for one week on what this corrupt government wasted on this scandal alone. Imagine the cost of all the scandals together.

For those people who were hoping to see gas taxes going to their cities, they would be interested in knowing that almost 8.5 million tanks of gas could have been bought for the money laundered by the Liberals.

The money wasted by the Liberal scandal alone is equivalent to the taxes paid by almost 12,000 hardworking Canadians. That is the most disgusting example. Taxes from 12,000 average working Canadians were taken and squandered.

• (1635)

That is almost half of my riding population. Given that not all of them are employed or are of working age, I feel confident in saying that the government wasted every single tax dollar it collected, or as one constituent said, stole, from the residents of my riding. Some 12,000 hard-working Canadians have been stiffed by this corrupt government. I bet they cannot wait to let the Liberals know what they think of them in the next election. My constituents are demanding overall accountability and an end to government waste. I will do what I can to ensure that.

Henry M. of Milden wrote:

Get rid of government waste.

Andy Z. of Saskatoon wrote:

The National Gun Registry should be scrapped. The money from the registry should go to health care.

Brent K. of Warman wrote:

Get rid of the gun registry. We need a female Prime Minister.

I thought that was a good letter. Carol M. of Perdue wrote:

I do hope you scrap the gun registry. I would also like to see the Governor General replaced, with one that would be more careful with our tax dollars.

Margaret N. of Saskatoon wrote:

This is a waste of taxpayers' money which could be used on social programs. Especially when it comes to health care.

My constituents have had enough. The Prime Minister should bring back his pan-Canadian damage control tour to a quick end, return to his job in Ottawa, and provide us with answers. I bet he will end up spending more on damage control tours than the original waste cost.

Lorne S. of Saskatoon simply wrote that government is wasting too much money and mentioned the Governor General. Maybe the Prime Minister should take the hint. Canadians do not like publicly funded self-important tours.

### *Supply*

Along the way, Jack Layton and the NDP will be cheering him on. Like two peas in a pod, they will cross their fingers and hope that Canadians blindly vote for them and their shared flag of convenience.

Canadians do not want the big ship boy and the big city boy to handle their precious tax dollars anymore. They want an accountable, trustworthy government that respects the sweat and tears put into paying their taxes. They want a party that puts them first. They want a government that works for the people, not one that steals from the people. They want a world-class democracy, not a country sliding into the depths of corruption.

I received a call from Donna from Saskatoon last week. She is a taxpayer. She works very hard for the money she makes. She said that she was sick. She wanted to move out of Canada because she was living in a banana republic. She said that we are worse than the banana republics that we hear about everyday on the news. She told me about her son who is in the air force who waited six months to get his boots. It took six months for a young man serving in our military to get proper boots. She was disgusted. She called Canada a banana republic, and that makes me angry. It is the people across the aisle who have labelled us that.

I look forward to being a constructive part of reform in a new Conservative Government of Canada.

• (1640)

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Madam Speaker, I was listening to the member from Saskatchewan. She was talking about the Liberal Party and the NDP, but I think she forgot to speak about the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan under Grant Devine. He was a former premier of Saskatchewan.

Sixteen members of that party were charged with criminal offences with convictions. Now, this same person is running for the federal Conservative Party. Is she mad about that? Will she tell her leader of the Conservative Party that she does not want Grant Devine in her party because he will hurt the Conservative Party, or is it that her party is just perfect today?

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** Madam Speaker, I would like my hon. colleague to check his facts.

**Mr. Roy Bailey (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to inform the House, with regard to the statements made, that those people in that particular government who committed criminal offences went to jail. There was no amnesty. I am not too sure whether that will happen here.

In dealing with the former premier, it is my understanding that he will not be running for the Conservative Party in Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Howard Hilstrom (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I would like to speak for a minute to this corruption and the granting of moneys by the Liberal government.

Speaking of the gun registry, which we know is a big waste of money, we are like everyone else. We are for one gun control. Even the Americans are for gun control. However none of us are for the excessive waste of time of registering rifles and shotguns.

### Supply

The Liberals often mention that the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police is supportive of their legislation. I would like to point out to the Canadian public and to members that the Association of Chiefs of Police receives money from the Liberal government for its association.

I know that one year \$100,000 went to a program that the chiefs of police used. That is very clear. This kind of thing shows that the Liberal government has sympathizers in many organizations throughout the country and it buys that support.

The president of the Canada Beef Export Federation, Ted Haney, is now running for the Liberals.

I would also point out that Bob Friesen, who is the head of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, just lost the riding of Brandon—Souris to Murray Downing who will be running for the Liberals.

It is amazing how all these organizations have Liberal sympathizers which is also part of this overall level of the insidious nature that Liberals get into with Canadians to buy the next election.

• (1645)

**Mr. Sarkis Assadourian (Brampton Centre, Lib.):** Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new position.

The hon. member mentioned earlier that we had paid money to the police associations to support us. Is he saying that we bribe the police and that the police receive bribes from us? Could he clarify that point?

**Mrs. Carol Skelton:** I am assuming, Madam Speaker, that the question was directed to me. I know the member was referring to what the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake said but I would like to add to what the hon. member for Selkirk—Interlake said.

My son-in-law, who is a class police officer, does not believe in the gun registry. I do not agree with what the member is saying.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, CPC):** Madam Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the supply day motion debate, as well as to congratulate you formally on your appointment as Deputy Speaker of the chamber. I wish you good luck and I am quite confident that with your personality and abilities you will do a wonderful job in the House.

Canadians are disgusted with the ethically bankrupt Liberal government and its miserable record of corruption, frauds and scandals. For years we have been witness to one boondoggle after another. Hundreds of millions of dollars, even billions of dollars, have been misspent in one manner or another, often on questionable grants to Liberal held ridings.

This grates on the nerves of all taxpayers, especially when those accountable dismiss the losses. “So what if a few million dollars were stolen”, said the former prime minister, Mr. Jean Chrétien. A few million may look small when contrasted with a \$180 billion federal budget and the huge amount that has been pocketed by the Liberal Party out of that money.

When we start talking about a quarter of a billion dollars in the sponsorship scandal, much of which appears to have ended up in the

hands of Liberal cronies and eventually in the pocket of the Liberal Party, it becomes a nightmare for all Canadians.

It appears from the Auditor General's report that the government has been funneling tens of millions of dollars through the public works department and five crown corporations to a number of Quebec advertising agencies, all with ties to the federal Liberal Party of Canada.

In some cases all the advertising agencies were doing was transferring money from one government department to a government agency and charging a hefty commission. For example, for one transaction, the transferring of a cheque for \$900 million to one of the crown corporations, an advertising agency charged \$112,000 as a commission for picking up and delivering the cheque.

As the Auditor General pointed out, there was no need for a middleman in those transactions. It certainly was not a service worth thousands or millions of dollars.

It has been suggested in the media that the money was paid for services performed for the Liberal Party during the 1997 and 2000 elections. There seems little other explanation for why the Liberals would be rewarding these firms with millions of dollars.

The Prime Minister claims that he did not know what was going on. This program began in 1997 when the Prime Minister was finance minister, the custodian of the public purse and vice-chair of the Treasury Board committee. How could a finance minister, vice-chair of the Treasury Board committee and senior Quebec minister not know what was going on? Does the Prime Minister want Canadians to believe that he is incompetent? That will be reassuring to Canadian voters come election time.

According to the Prime Minister's latest spin on the scandal, it is no longer the work of a few rogue bureaucrats but rather a political operation. While at first claiming complete ignorance to what was going on, as further information has come to light he now admits to having been aware of rumours surrounding the sponsorship program, but thinking it merely a matter of some administrative failures until the Auditor General's report confirmed how corrupt it really was.

This is the same Prime Minister who for the past 13 years has been busy back-stabbing and manipulating to take over the Liberal Party's leadership.

• (1650)

His hold over the party was so complete that by 2002 that he was able to force Mr. Jean Chrétien into retirement. When he submitted his nomination papers for the contest to become Liberal leader, he had the support of 259 out of 301 riding presidents. Can members imagine that?

However the Prime Minister now wants us to believe that despite all his ground work securing the support of the party, he had no idea what was going on inside the party. Frankly I find that to be unbelievable. I do not care how strained the relationship was between the Prime Minister and his successor, the current leader of the Liberal Party could not have been oblivious to the political corruption that was taking place right under his nose.

He was aware of the scandals surrounding Shawinigan, the HRDC boondoggles, the transitional jobs fund, the \$2 billion gun registry and the long history of mismanagement in the regional development agencies. It should have been more surprising to him if the sponsorship program had not been corrupt.

The Prime Minister, in just the last year, has proven that he has a bad memory. He seems to forget important details until reminded by the official opposition or by the media. Let us take, for instance, the Prime Minister's multi-million dollar family business, Canada Steamship Lines.

All the while he was finance minister, CSL was supposedly held in a blind trust. According to the Prime Minister, he was held completely in the dark, but, alas, that was not completely true. The blind trust actually had at least a dozen holes in it.

The Prime Minister has finally admitted that he did have briefings on at least a dozen occasions by company executives on important issues affecting CSL. However the ethics counsellor was always present so that everything was okay, so much so that the ethics councillor charged the government purse for lunch expenses for his meetings with the Prime Minister and his staff.

His family business received contracts worth \$161 million from the government instead of the original figure indicated of \$137,000.

Last fall it was revealed that five Liberal cabinet ministers had received free flights or vacations from Canada's corporate elite. The former finance minister, however, remained quiet at that time. It was only later, after his objective of being elected Liberal leader was accomplished, did he come clean and admit that he too had benefited from the generosity of corporate Canada.

When asked about the rule that ministers have to publicly declare gifts valued at more than \$200, the soon to be Prime Minister replied that everyone else was breaking the rules too. He was hiding behind everyone else. On that day the Prime Minister proved that while he may be a political leader, he certainly was not a moral leader.

While other parties receive significant donations from everyday Canadians, the Liberals have always relied upon the generous support of the corporate elite, usually the same corporations that receive lucrative government contracts.

Let me give one example. Over the course of four years, Geratec Inc., which later became Tecscult Inc., received \$136 million worth of contracts from CIDA. However, in return, it gave \$137,000 to the Liberal government.

I would like to say to the Prime Minister that whether it is \$12 million of funds raised for his campaign from the same business elite who might at one time be looking forward to getting some benefit from the Prime Minister, or whether it is the tax havens where the Prime Minister's family's company has registered the ships, it raises difficult questions.

•(1655)

Since coming to power in 1993, the Liberals have been actively eroding the confidence Canadians have in their government. Noted Canadian historian, the author of *Right Honourable Men: The Descent of Canadian Politics from Macdonald to Mulroney*, Michael

### Supply

Bliss, refers to the latest sponsorship scandal as the mother of all Canadian political scandals.

Michael Bliss goes on to write that it is without precedent in our country's history and that the previous scandals pale by comparison.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Madam Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's comments with regard to this scandal. We have to ask ourselves why Canadians are having such a difficult time with this?

It drives right to the character of an individual when we review some of the things that have come to light in the last couple of weeks. There is the \$137,000 compared to \$160 million. That was not a loan guarantee for the shipping company of the Prime Minister. This was an actual grant.

This was knowledge long before it came to light here two weeks ago. We have to ask ourselves why the character of an individual, who has tried to say he is Mr. Clean to a nation, would not have come forward a year ago? We have to ask ourselves if this drive to the character of an individual. When he took the reins as the Prime Minister of the country and knew about the scandal long before, why did he not come clean with it on December 12 or 13. All he did was cancel the program. He did not go after heads. He did not go after the money that was lost, if he was aware of the scandal.

Driving to the character of the individual, how Canadians can look at him as being believable, when he goes from coast to coast this week and says that he is Mr. Clean and that knew nothing about the scandal?

Canadians have to also question what the Prime Minister said with regard to health care and education. He has said that these are his number one and number two priorities. However, when we look at his history, he is the individual who took \$25 billion from health care in the last decade, leaving it wanting and weightless. We now have a shortage of over a million doctors and nurses at a critical time. When he says that health is the number one priority and when we look at the history of the individual, is he believable? Health care is Canada's number one treasure.

Could my colleague comment on whether this gives us a pattern of a character flaw?

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal:** Madam Speaker, I appreciate the question from my hon. colleague. He always asks very intelligent questions.

### Supply

In this situation, with the former finance minister, now the current Prime Minister, we see a pattern. Look at how Canadians have valued the finance minister. Some people used to say that he balanced the budget and gave him credit for that.

However, let us see how he balanced the budget. He stole \$45 million from the EI fund, which did not belong to him or his government, and put it into the government revenues. This money belonged to the employers and employees.

If we look at a different example, the Prime Minister once promised to eliminate all tax havens. When he acted on that promise, he conveniently forgot to include Barbados, which permitted CSL to register its ships there and save, by one estimate, about \$103 million in Canadian taxes. Convenient indeed. Meanwhile, the Prime Minister's companies received millions of dollars from the government in contracts.

There are many examples that can be related to the pattern that has developed where the former finance minister, now the Prime Minister, has demonstrated that his character, his personality, his thinking, his actions and his talk do not match the ethical leader to which Canadians were looking forward.

I am sure Canadians will be careful not to vote for a corrupt, weak and arrogant Liberal government and its leader.

● (1700)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have two things. First, we talk about this balancing of the budget. Actually, we are \$32 billion deeper in debt than we were in 1993 when we first came here.

Second, what does the member think about public hearings. Look at the record of Somalia, and a private going to jail. Look at the Krever report, and the Red Cross being condemned. APEC sort of disappeared into the wilderness. What are the chances of this present scandal ever nailing anyone who is responsible? It seems to me that there will be just a bunch of whited out pages, and all ministers simply will not testify.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal:** Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes it is the government's intent to fool Canadians by diverting their attention into something which will not produce anything, or trying to shove everything under the carpet for the time being, under an excuse, so it can hide and not answer the tough questions that the opposition and media are going to ask it.

I agree with the member that the previous record of the Liberal government on the Krever, Somalia, APEC and many other inquiries indicates that the government is not serious about it.

If the Prime Minister were serious about it, he would have done something right away and would have taken some serious action.

\* \* \*

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Hon. Roger Gallaway (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to report that there have been consultations among the parties and I think you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That the Standing Orders and any relevant items on the Order Paper be amended by changing all references to the "Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights" to "Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness" and references to the "Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities" to "Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities".

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have the consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**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)

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### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister (Cities), Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I shall be sharing my time with the member for Lévis-et-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière.

I rise today to speak as somebody who firmly believes that all Canadians have the right to respect and expect that their public office-holders will act in accordance with the highest ethical standards. Last week's Auditor General report outlined unacceptable behaviour within the public sector. We will fix this mess, no matter what.

The government is accountable. We accept collective responsibility, not for criminal wrongdoing but for correcting what went wrong. Nobody is shirking his or her responsibility or his or her duty.

Our plan is simple and it is what Canadians expect. We will hold those responsible to account. We will try to recover lost funds. We will overhaul management and administrative practices, and we are calling an inquiry to answer all remaining questions.

These necessary actions reflect our vision of values and ethics as presented in the government Speech from the Throne. They are rooted in the steps our Prime Minister has already taken to ensure we function in the most ethical and transparent manner possible.

As Canadians, we are fortunate to be served by a public sector that is overwhelmingly honest and professional. I believe that the troubling reports we have seen in the media, following the Auditor General's latest report, in no way reflect behaviour of the wider public service. I believe that when confronted with ethical dilemmas, the overwhelming majority of public servants unflinchingly take the right road.

In short, I believe in the public service of Canada and I believe we do a disservice to the public service as a whole if we allow the actions of a few individuals to discredit the loyalty and hard work of many.

The reality is that the vast majority of public servants in Canada serve Canadians with honour, integrity and excellence. Recently even the Auditor General has expressed concern that only the negative portions of her reports get coverage, noting she does not wish to damage the morale of the public service.

On December 9, 2003, she defended the integrity of the vast majority of public servants when she said:

I think Canada is very fortunate in the calibre of men and women who make up its public service—the vast majority of whom uphold high ethical standards and take very seriously the need to carefully manage public money to meet the needs of Canadians.

As recently as February 10, 2004, Ms. Fraser reaffirmed that these incidents of wrongdoing were isolated cases and it would be very unfortunate and unfair if the vast majority of public servants who came in every day with great integrity and great dedication to their fellow citizens were tarred by this and that people thought that they all worked like this.

Nevertheless, research conducted in countries of the OECD over the past 30 years has revealed a decline in citizens' regard for and deference toward their governments. Canada has been no exception. A study released by Ekos last summer showed that over 60% of Canadians had only a moderate or low level of trust in their government.

It is not enough for those of us in government to say to Canadians that our intentions are good and that they should trust us. We need to demonstrate that trust is justified day after day. We need to operate in a manner that holds up to the most intense scrutiny. Our actions at every level of the organization, from the minister and deputy minister to the frontline worker must be consistent with our words.

At a broader level, a loss in confidence in government institutions weakens the foundation of our democracy, as citizens become more and more disillusioned and less and less interested in participating in the governing process. I thought the member for Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar spoke powerfully on this point. We have too often seen evidence of this in many jurisdictions through low voter turnout in elections, the most fundamental exercise of democratic rights.

• (1705)

Canadians' trust in their government must be restored. We have already moved on a number of early initiatives to reassure the public that our new government will act with the utmost integrity.

The Prime Minister has already distributed to his cabinet ministers a revised guide for ministers and ministers of state which provides his personal directions to the government on democratic reform and integrity.

The guide includes a new policy on mandatory publication of the travel and hospitality expenses of ministers, ministers of state, ministers' offices and parliamentary secretaries on a quarterly basis. This policy is even being extended to deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers and their equivalents.

The Prime Minister has also issued a new conflict of interest and post-employment code for public office holders, ministers, ministers

### *Supply*

of state, parliamentary secretaries, members of ministerial staff and governor in council appointees.

The government is also reinstating legislation to establish the office of an independent ethics commissioner and a Senate ethics officer.

We will also be acting soon to respond to the recommendation of an independent panel that we create legislation to protect whistleblowers from possible reprisal. We need to encourage people who are aware of wrongdoing to come forward. We need to protect them when they do so, and we will.

As organizational leaders our first question has been how we catch people and punish them. However, we need to look further in order to determine how we stop unethical behaviour before it happens and how we help people make the right choice. It comes back to providing guidance and doing so in a positive, affirmative fashion. That is an approach that we have already taken in introducing another code of conduct.

The government's new "Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service" came into effect last September and was made available to each public service employee across Canada. Our code of values and ethics tells the world what the public service does, where it fits into democratic government and what it stands for. It was not imposed from above. It is the product of many years of discussion and consultation at every level.

The code provides a strong foundation for public service behaviour. It sets out four interwoven and balanced baskets of values by which public servants should be guided in their work and professional conduct.

First, there are democratic values, helping ministers under the law to serve the public interest in a spirit of non-partisanship. Second, we have professional values, serving with competence, excellence, efficiency and objectivity. Third, there are ethical values; the public service commits itself to acting at all times in such a way as to uphold the public trust, not just following the letter of the law, but the spirit as well. Finally, there are human values, the values that we all strive to reflect in our daily lives and interactions with others, values such as compassion, fairness and courtesy.

The code is an important step forward in providing a moral compass for the public service, but it cannot simply be a statement of principles. It cannot merely be rhetoric. It must be a living document that can be operational in the workplace. That is why we have given it some teeth.

The code is now a condition of employment in the federal public service. Breaches of its provisions can involve disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal.

In addition, public servants who feel that they are being asked to act in a way that is inconsistent with the code or who wish to report a breach of the code can do so in confidence to the senior officer in their organization or to the public service integrity officer. This is a key element for rebuilding public confidence in government.

### Supply

Values and ethics are not things that should be compartmentalized into a single office. They cannot be allocated to a single box on an organizational chart. Values and ethics must permeate the organization. Everyone sitting around the management table should in their own way be a values and ethics specialist and should view their work through a values based lens.

Integrity begins at the top. The Prime Minister has taken this challenge head on. He has been open. He has created a public commission of inquiry. He has involved the public accounts committee. He has appointed a special counsel for financial recovery. He has talked directly to Canadians, unfiltered, for two hours on *Cross Country Checkup*.

In short, as he did with his attack on the deficit, the Prime Minister has courageously laid his reputation on the line in fixing the problem. For his honesty, for his directness, he deserves our utmost respect and support.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1710)

[English]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Deputy Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe if you were to seek it, you would find consent for the following motion:

I move:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs concerning membership on committees be deemed tabled and concurred in.

[Translation]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the hon. deputy government House leader have the consent of the House to table this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**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)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### SUPPLY

#### ALLOTTED DAY—USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m. it is my duty to interrupt these proceedings and put forth every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the nays have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

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

• (1745)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 8)

### YEAS

#### Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Cardin	Casey
Casson	Comartin
Crête	Cummins
Davies	Day
Desrochers	Doyle
Duncan	Elley
Forsyth	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grewal	Grey
Guay	Guimond
Hearn	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Jaffer
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Lebel	Lill
Loubier	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Marceau
Masse	Mayfield
McDonough	McNally
Ménard	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Nystrom	Obhrai
Paquette	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Proctor	Rajotte
Ritz	Robinson
Roy	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	St-Hilaire
Stoffer	Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Toews
Tremblay	Wasylcia-Leis
Wayne	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich— 88



## NAYS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Augustine
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Barrette
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brison
Brown	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Coderre
Collenette	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Discepolo
Dromisky	Duplain
Easter	Efford
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Harvard
Harvey	Herron
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jobin	Jordan
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan	Lancôt
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Longfield	MacAulay
Macklin	Manley
Marcil	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Matthews
McCallum	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Minna	Mitchell
Myers	Neville
Normand	O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pratt
Price	Proulx
Provenzano	Redman
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Saada
Savoy	Scherrer
Scott	Serré
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	Speller
St-Jacques	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tonks
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Volpe	Wappel
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood— 143	

## PAIRED

## Members

Asselin	Copps
Dalphondu-Guiral	Dion
Duceppe	Fournier

## Supply

Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)	Gagnon (Québec)
Girard-Bujold	Grose
Guarnieri	Knutson
Lalonde	Lincoln
Maloney	Peterson
Rocheleau	Tirabassi— 18

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

[English]

## RADIOCOMMUNICATION ACT

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of the motion

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Friday, February 13, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the referral to committee before second reading of Bill C-2.

[Translation]

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I think you will find unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as voting on the motion now before the House, with Liberals members voting yes, except those who would have voted otherwise.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative members present here today will vote no to this motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP will vote against this motion.

[English]

**Mr. Larry Spencer:** Mr. Speaker, I will be recorded as voting no.

**Mr. Charles Hubbard:** Mr. Speaker, I will vote against that bill going to committee.

[Translation]

**Mr. Ghislain Lebel:** Mr. Speaker, I vote against this motion.

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

(Division No. 9)

## YEAS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Augustine
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bagnell
Bakopanos	Barnes (London West)
Barrette	Bélanger
Bellemare	Bennett
Bergeron	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Bigras
Binet	Blondin-Andrew

*The Address*

Bonin	Bonwick
Boudria	Bourgeois
Bradshaw	Brison
Brown	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Cardin
Carroll	Castonguay
Catterall	Cauchon
Chamberlain	Charbonneau
Coderre	Collenette
Cotler	Crête
Cullen	Cuzner
Desrochers	DeVillers
Discepolo	Dromisky
Duplain	Easter
Efford	Eggleton
Eyking	Farrah
Finlay	Folco
Fontana	Frulla
Gagnon (Champlain)	Galloway
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Guay
Guimond	Harvard
Harvey	Herron
Ianno	Jackson
Jennings	Jobin
Jordan	Karygiannis
Keys	Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)	Kraft Sloan
Laframboise	Lancôt
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Longfield	Loubier
MacAulay	Macklin
Manley	Marceau
Marcil	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Matthews
McCallum	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Ménard	Minna
Mitchell	Myers
Neville	Normand
O'Brien (Labrador)	O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)
O'Reilly	Owen
Pacetti	Pagtakhan
Paquette	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Perron	Pettigrew
Phinney	Picard (Drummond)
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Plamondon
Pratt	Price
Proulx	Provenzano
Redman	Reed (Halton)
Regan	Robillard
Roy	Saada
Sauvageau	Savoy
Scherrer	Scott
Serré	Sgro
Shepherd	Simard
Speller	St-Hilaire
St-Jacques	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tonks
Torsney	Tremblay
Ur	Valeri
Vanclief	Volpe
Wappel	Whelan
Wilfert	Wood— 166

**NAYS**

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Bailey	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Blaikie	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Casey	Casson
Comartin	Cummins

Davies	Day
Doyle	Duncan
Elley	Forseth
Gallant	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grewal	Grey
Hearn	Hill (Macleod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Hubbard
Jaffer	Johnston
Keddy (South Shore)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Lebel	Lill
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)	MacKay (Picou—Antigonish—Guysborough)
Masse	Mayfield
McDonough	McNally
Merrifield	Mills (Red Deer)
Moore	Nystrom
Obhrai	Proctor
Rajotte	Ritz
Robinson	Schmidt
Skelton	Solberg
Sorenson	Spencer
Stoffer	Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Toews
Wasylcia-Leis	Wayne
White (North Vancouver)	Williams
Yelich— 65	

**PAIRED**

## Members

Asselin	Copps
Dalphon-DuGiral	Dion
Duceppe	Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Girard-Bujold	Grose
Guarnieri	Knutson
Lalonde	Lincoln
Maloney	Peterson
Rocheleau	Tirabassi— 18

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

(Motion agreed to and bill referred to a committee)

**SPEECH FROM THE THRONE**

[*English*]

**RESUMPTION OF DEBATE ON ADDRESS IN REPLY**

The House resumed from February 12 consideration of the motion for an address to Her Excellency the Governor General in reply to her speech at the opening of the session.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made on Thursday, February 12, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, if the House would agree, I propose that you seek unanimous consent that members who voted on the previous motion be recorded as having voted on the motion now before the House, with Liberal members voting in favour.

**The Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Dale Johnston:** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative caucus will vote no on this motion.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote against this motion.

*[English]*

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP is voting no to this motion.

• (1750)

**Mr. Larry Spencer:** Mr. Speaker, I vote no.

**Mr. John Herron:** Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this motion.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Ghislain Label:** Mr. Speaker, I vote against this motion.

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

*(Division No. 10)*

## YEAS

## Members

Adams	Alcock
Allard	Anderson (Victoria)
Assadourian	Augustine
Bagnell	Bakopanos
Barnes (London West)	Barrette
Bélanger	Bellemare
Bennett	Bertrand
Bevilacqua	Binet
Blondin-Andrew	Bonin
Bonwick	Boudria
Bradshaw	Brisson
Brown	Bulte
Byrne	Caccia
Calder	Cannis
Caplan	Carroll
Castonguay	Catterall
Cauchon	Chamberlain
Charbonneau	Coderre
Collenette	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
DeVillers	Discepola
Dromosky	Duplain
Easter	Efford
Eggleton	Eyking
Farrar	Finlay
Folco	Fontana
Frulla	Galloway
Godfrey	Goodale
Graham	Harvard
Harvey	Herron
Hubbard	Ianno
Jackson	Jennings
Jobin	Jordan
Karygiannis	Keyes
Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh)	Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)
Kraft Sloan	Lancôt
Lastewka	LeBlanc
Lee	Leung
Longfield	MacAulay
Macklin	Manley
Marcel	Marleau
Martin (LaSalle—Émard)	Matthews
McCallum	McCormick
McGuire	McKay (Scarborough East)
McLellan	McTeague
Minna	Mitchell
Myers	Neville
Normand	O'Brien (Labrador)
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)	O'Reilly
Owen	Pacetti
Pagtakhan	Paradis
Patry	Peric
Pettigrew	Phinney
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)	Pratt
Price	Proulx

Provenzano	Redman
Reed (Halton)	Regan
Robillard	Saada
Savoy	Scherrer
Scott	Serré
Sgro	Shepherd
Simard	Speller
St-Jacques	St-Julien
St. Denis	Steckle
Stewart	Szabo
Telegdi	Thibault (West Nova)
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)	Tonks
Torsney	Ur
Valeri	Vanclief
Volpe	Wappel
Whelan	Wilfert
Wood— 143	

*The Address*

## NAYS

## Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Bachand (Saint-Jean)	Bailey
Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)	Bergeron
Bigras	Blaikie
Bourgeois	Breitkreuz
Burton	Cadman
Cardin	Casey
Casson	Comartin
Crête	Cummins
Davies	Day
Desrochers	Doyle
Duncan	Elley
Forseth	Gagnon (Champlain)
Gallant	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godin
Goldring	Gouk
Grewal	Grey
Guay	Guimond
Hearn	Hill (MacLeod)
Hill (Prince George—Peace River)	Hilstrom
Hinton	Jaffier
Johnston	Keddy (South Shore)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Laframboise
Label	Lill
Loubier	Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)	Marceau
Masse	Mayfield
McDonough	McNally
Ménard	Merrifield
Mills (Red Deer)	Moore
Nystrom	Obhrai
Paquette	Perron
Picard (Drummond)	Plamondon
Proctor	Rajotte
Ritz	Robinson
Roy	Sauvageau
Schmidt	Skelton
Solberg	Sorenson
Spencer	St-Hilaire
Stoffler	Strahl
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)	Toews
Tremblay	Wasylycia-Leis
Wayne	White (North Vancouver)
Williams	Yelich— 88

## PAIRED

## Members

Asselin	Copps
Dalphond-Guiral	Dion
Duceppe	Fournier
Gagnon (Québec)	Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)
Girard-Bujold	Grose
Guarnieri	Knutson
Lalonde	Lincoln
Maloney	Peterson
Rocheleau	Tirabassi— 18

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

*Private Members' Business*

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.)** moved:

That the Address be engrossed and presented to Her Excellency the Governor General by the Speaker.

[English]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

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

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

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

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

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

**An hon. member:** On division.

(Motion agreed to)

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### FINAL OFFER ARBITRATION IN RESPECT OF WEST COAST PORTS OPERATIONS ACT

The House resumed from February 16 consideration of the motion that Bill C-312, An Act to provide for the settlement of labour disputes affecting west coast ports by final offer arbitration, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to order made earlier today, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-312.

• (1800)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 11)

#### YEAS

##### Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Bailey	Barnes (Gander—Grand Falls)
Breitkreuz	Burton
Cadman	Casey
Casson	Day
Duncan	Elley
Gallant	Goldring
Gouk	Grewal
Grey	Hearn
Herron	Hill (Prince George—Peace River)
Hill (Macleod)	Hilstrom
Jaffer	Johnston

Keddy (South Shore)  
Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni)  
Mayfield  
Merrifield  
Moore  
Peric  
Ritz  
Skelton  
Sorenson  
Strahl  
Toews  
White (North Vancouver)  
Yelich— 49

Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough)  
McNally  
Mills (Red Deer)  
Obhrai  
Rajotte  
Schmidt  
Solberg  
Spencer  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Wayne  
Williams

#### NAYS

##### Members

Adams  
Allard  
Assadourian  
Bachand (Saint-Jean)  
Bakopanos  
Barrette  
Bellemare  
Bergeron  
Bevilacqua  
Binet  
Blondin-Andrew  
Bonwick  
Bourgeois  
Brisson  
Bulte  
Caccia  
Cannis  
Cardin  
Castonguay  
Cauchon  
Charbonneau  
Collenette  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Davies  
DeVillers  
Dromisky  
Easter  
Eggleton  
Farrah  
Folco  
Frulla  
Galloway  
Gauthier  
Godin  
Graham  
Guimond  
Harvey  
Ianno  
Jennings  
Jordan  
Keyes  
Kraft Sloan  
Lanctôt  
Lebel  
Lee  
Lill  
Loubier  
Macklin  
Marceau  
Marleau  
Matthews  
McCormick  
McGuire  
McLellan  
Minna  
Myers  
Normand  
O'Brien (Labrador)  
O'Reilly  
Pacetti  
Paquette  
Patry  
Pettigrew  
Picard (Drummond)  
Plamondon

Alcock  
Anderson (Victoria)  
Augustine  
Bagnell  
Barnes (London West)  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bertrand  
Bigras  
Blaikie  
Bonin  
Boudria  
Bradshaw  
Brown  
Byrne  
Calder  
Caplan  
Carroll  
Catterall  
Chamberlain  
Coderre  
Comartin  
Crête  
Cuzner  
Desrochers  
Discepola  
Duplain  
Efford  
Eyking  
Finlay  
Fontana  
Gagnon (Champlain)  
Gaudet  
Godfrey  
Goodale  
Guay  
Harvard  
Hubbard  
Jackson  
Jobin  
Karygiannis  
Kilgour (Edmonton Southeast)  
Laframboise  
Lastewka  
LeBlanc  
Leung  
Longfield  
MacAulay  
Manley  
Marcil  
Masse  
McCallum  
McDonough  
McKay (Scarborough East)  
Ménard  
Mitchell  
Neville  
Nystrom  
O'Brien (London—Fanshawe)  
Owen  
Pagtakhan  
Paradis  
Perron  
Pickeney  
Pickard (Chatham—Kent Essex)  
Pratt

Price  
Proulx  
Regan  
Robinson  
Saada  
Savoy  
Scott  
Sgro  
Simard  
St-Hilaire  
St-Julien  
Steckle  
Stoffer  
Telegdi  
Thibeault (Saint-Lambert)  
Torsney  
Ur  
Vanclief  
Wappel  
Whelan  
Wood— 173

Proctor  
Reed (Halton)  
Robillard  
Roy  
Sauvageau  
Scherrer  
Serré  
Shepherd  
Speller  
St-Jacques  
St. Denis  
Stewart  
Szabo  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Tonks  
Tremblay  
Valeri  
Volpe  
Wasylcia-Leis  
Wilfert

### PAIRED

#### Members

Asselin  
Dalphond-Guiral  
Duceppe  
Gagnon (Québec)  
Girard-Bujold  
Guarnieri  
Lalonde  
Maloney  
Rocheleau

Copps  
Dion  
Fournier  
Gagnon (Lac-Saint-Jean—Saguenay)  
Grose  
Knutson  
Lincoln  
Peterson  
Tirabassi— 18

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

\* \* \*

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Bellechasse—Etchemins—Montmagny—L'Islet informed me in writing that he would be unable to introduce his motion during the hour provided for private members' business on Wednesday, February 18, 2004. Since it was not possible to arrange an exchange of positions in the order of precedence, I am directing the clerk to drop that item of business to the bottom of the order of precedence.

Private members' hour will thus be cancelled and the House will continue with the business before it.

[English]

It being 6:04 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's Order Paper.

\* \* \*

### ELECTORAL SYSTEM

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.)** moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada should develop materials to facilitate youth voting initiatives and make these available to community groups and schools in order to enable young people to learn more about the Canadian electoral system, and to cast their votes at special boxes in polling stations during electoral events and to make public the vote totals, and that the Chief Electoral Officer provide a report on the activities in this regard annually to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Motion No. 398 on youth voting and I am pleased that it is seconded by the member for Northumberland.

### Private Members' Business

The motion would direct Elections Canada to further develop its efforts to promote the participation of young Canadians in our electoral process and that Elections Canada work proactively with groups like Kids Voting Canada, scouts and guides, teachers, service clubs and the like to do this.

I believe that a friendly amendment to my motion will be presented by a colleague later in the debate. I am very open to this because I look forward to all-party support for the motion.

I would also seek unanimous consent to table a list of references, websites, books and so on, on this topic of youth voting. The list has been presented to colleagues in all the other parties who are participating. They have agreed to it and have already added some items.

Mr. Speaker, my request is that the table would take this list of references so that the record of the debate would be more useful to young people and they could find websites dealing with this topic.

• (1805)

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, there has been a decline in participation in elections in Canada and in all developed nations. Almost all of that decline can be explained by a very low turnout of under 30-year-old voters.

The book, *Anatomy of a liberal victory* by André Blais, which is listed in the reference list that we have just tabled and which was published by Broadview Press in Peterborough in 2002, analyses this decline in participation for Canada.

Young people are not avoiding the polls because they are more cynical about politics. In fact, they are less cynical than other age groups, so we would expect this, given the optimism of youth. They are not shunning the political party system. In fact, they appear to be no more dissatisfied with the party system than their elders. They are not shunning the party system in favour of extra parliamentary political activism, such as anti-globalization or environmental group activism. Most of them are simply not engaged at all.

The author of this book points out that the two most important factors influencing young voter turnout are level of political knowledge and level of political interest. In both cases the level is very low among young Canadians. To persuade more of them to go out to the polls at election time, we must find ways to engage them in the political process. Lack of knowledge leads to lack of interest, which leads to disengagement. Conversely, increased knowledge should increase interest and in turn lead to increased participation.

Political knowledge includes knowledge of the civics process and structure, and an understanding of how that process affects issues of concern to the young voters. We need to demonstrate the mechanics and relevance of government. Young voters need to know how government affects their lives.

*Private Members' Business*

The bedrock of democracy is the educational level of its citizens, including in this case the educational level with respect to the democratic process itself. Many schools work hard at this and I urge all provincial and territorial ministries of education to strengthen and make mandatory civics education at both the elementary and secondary levels. Ideally, the secondary components would be for 16 to 18 year olds in the pre-voting years.

I urge the federal government to support these efforts in every appropriate way. It could work through the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada to do this, but there are other avenues which would be equally effective. There are already federal materials available to assist in the process. Heritage Canada, Elections Canada and the Library of Parliament all do good work in this area. I urge the federal government to produce and circulate more electoral educational materials. I urge my fellow MPs to visit schools and youth groups to discuss their work and our fine system of government.

My motion suggests more immediate practical action which is within the federal jurisdiction. Under the Canada Elections Act the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada are mandated to develop and circulate educational materials on our electoral system and to actively promote our democracy in various ways. They are already doing some of these things, as a visit to the Elections Canada website will show. The website is listed on the list of references we just tabled.

I urge Canadians to contact Elections Canada for information on such things as the symposium on electoral participation in Canada, which was held at Carleton University last March or the National Forum on Youth Voting, which was held in Calgary last October. Again, these are referenced in the list. Reports from these events and other activities are available on the Elections Canada website.

These meetings brought together young people and representatives of business and non-governmental agencies, aboriginal groups, labour organizations as well as academics, researchers and the media. This is fine work, but it needs to be promoted and expanded. While civics education in all its forms is a very valuable and stimulating interest in the political process, I believe that well organized formal simulations of voting for young people below voting age with published results would greatly heighten awareness and interest in participation in elections.

The idea is that around election time, and this could apply to municipal, provincial and first nations as well as federal elections, voting could be conducted in schools and other locations using formal Elections Canada procedures and materials, for example, official looking ballots and ballot boxes.

● (1810)

At the end of election day, ballots from such simulations would be counted using official procedures. The results would be published by Elections Canada so that the young pre-voters' choices would be widely known.

There are already organizations and individuals in Canada doing this sort of thing. For example, I commend Joel Parkes and teachers in Peterborough, notably Gary Fenn, guide and scout leaders in Peterborough and others in my riding for their work on these matters.

I also commend Taylor Gunn, the chief electoral officer of Kids Voting Canada for the great success of Student Vote 2003 during last year's Ontario election. In that simulation for the Ontario provincial election, 335,000 students took part and voted. I would point out that the number of students who voted was more than the total populations of the territories and our smaller provinces combined.

I commend the scout and guide leaders in my riding and across Canada for their fine work in connection with the civics badge, and elementary and high school teachers for their fine work.

I commend the 20,000 Project which is particularly geared to encourage young women to vote.

I commend Rush the Vote, a Canadian expression of Rock the Vote in the United States.

I commend the Kawartha Rotary Club and the Peterborough Rotary Club for their work on citizenship.

These are only examples of work that is already underway to improve the participation of young people in public life, especially in the electoral process.

My motion suggests, in fact it directs, that Elections Canada work actively and creatively with such groups and people. Elections Canada should provide federal polling instructions for mock elections and federal polling station materials to give a sense of authenticity to the efforts of these people. It should also provide instructions and examples for teachers, scout leaders, service club leaders and others who might become involved in this important work.

Above all, Elections Canada should publish the results of such mock elections so that the voices of pre-voters will be clearly heard.

I see this as a motion that will engage the House of Commons and all political parties here in addressing the problem of low voter turnout. I do not see this as a partisan matter, but something that all MPs are concerned about. That is why in my motion Elections Canada is directed to report regularly on these matters to Parliament through the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs on which senior party officials represent all parties here.

I urge all members to support this motion so that Elections Canada will be encouraged to be even more responsive in these matters as the next federal election draws near.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the member as he talked about commending one group after another. I commend the member for bringing forward such a motion which we solidly support. I think it is a tremendous idea.

*Private Members' Business*

I believe that in the last election only 25% of our population under 30 voted. Some of that is disinterest in politics generally; however, I believe a lot of it is many of our young people really do not understand the system. It is not something that is taught, unfortunately, in many schools.

That is basically my question for the member. How can we at this level draw attention to the deficit that is out there? How can we get young people involved? They are the people who really should be interested because it is their future that we deal with in this great establishment.

Besides creating the awareness here and hopefully, with cooperation, at the provincial level also, we must create the mechanism to get people involved. Perhaps if federal and provincial elections were to coincide, good habits would be formed. It is crucial that good habits be formed.

Sometimes during the elections, mini elections are held but they are usually held in kindergarten classes and the lower grades. The kids get caught up in it.

If we gave students in the whole system the chance to vote when issues were being discussed, we might not only get students interested, but we might get the teachers more interested. Students would come out of our schools understanding our parliamentary system, which many of them do not understand now.

Does the member think we should push it at this end to encourage the educational system to concentrate more on teaching our young people about the importance of democracy and the importance of the great parliamentary system we have? Then they could participate in making the decisions which will affect their future.

• (1815)

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague from St. John's West understands the sense of the amended motion. It is understanding that is lacking. It is a lack of appreciation for how it would directly affect the lives of those young people and their families.

I imagined a family going to vote and the children would vote at the polling place. It would be a mock vote. That experience would stick in their memories. When those young people became of voting age they would have those memories. My understanding is that legally it would be very difficult to have a mock vote in a polling station environment. That is why I am looking forward to the changed amendment put forward by my colleague's party.

My colleague is absolutely right with regard to elementary schools. At the moment in Ontario there is a terrific civics course in grade 5. The kids get very excited. They get involved in mock elections and so on. As I said in my remarks, it is critical that the experience be repeated fairly high in the secondary system so it will stick with young people. We all know that one of the reasons they do not vote is not because of a lack of interest, but because they are away from home and they are adjusting to a new environment at the time of an election.

I stress that the federal government must show leadership by doing things which it is legally entitled to do and which Elections Canada is supposed to do. We, as members of Parliament, through our standing committee can monitor what Elections Canada is doing

and also provide materials which could be of use in a municipal election. At least there could be a model for that kind of thing.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member is talking about establishing or supporting a parallel voting opportunity. I wonder if he would expand on what he means by a parallel voting opportunity. Is he talking about looking at Internet voting for example, or does he have something else in mind?

**Mr. Peter Adams:** Mr. Speaker, parallel voting is an opportunity for people who are not yet of age to vote to express their opinion during an election. Although that opinion would not count in the election, that opinion would be expressed, for example, the following day and would be published by Elections Canada. That is the parallel opportunity.

A number of groups are already doing this. The idea is that the federal government would aid those groups in making these experiences even more realistic than they are at the present time.

**Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on behalf of the constituents of Surrey Central to participate in the debate on Motion No. 398. This motion, brought forward by the member for Peterborough, calls upon the House to direct the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada to further their efforts to facilitate youth voting initiatives. Mr. Speaker, we had consultations and I will be moving a friendly amendment at the end of my speech.

Let me address some of the issues. Recent election results explain why we are so concerned about engaging youth in politics. In the 2000 federal election, voter turnout declined to its lowest level in over 40 years when 61% of eligible voters cast their ballots. That is significantly lower than the norm of 70% to 75% turnout.

This is a direct result of the Liberal style of pork barrel politics. In 1988 the federal election voter turnout was 75%. A quick look at some of the world's other major democracies make the situation look no better, but we are far behind countries like France, Germany and Sweden that all have turnouts in the 80% range. In some countries, voting is a must. People do not have a second choice.

When we look at our Canadian numbers more closely, the situation becomes even more troubling. While voter turnout has declined for all age groups, the most significant drop has been among the young people, particularly those 18 to 24 years of age. In fact more than 75% of young people who had the right to vote in 2000 did not do so.

This trend is not unique to Canada but is common to many advanced democracies. A 1999 study by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance found youth voter turnout in 15 western European countries was 10% lower than the overall turnout.

An Elections Canada study in 2000 found that 78% of people 18 to 20 years old failed to vote; 73% of people 21 to 24 years old did not vote; and 62% of people 25 to 29 years old did not vote. On the other hand, 83% of those 68 years of age and over voted; 80% of people 58 to 67 years of age voted; and 76% of people 48 to 57 years of age voted.

*Private Members' Business*

Obviously if we want to increase the number of Canadians who vote in the federal election or any other election for that matter, we have to look at younger Canadians and consider why they are not participating in the electoral process.

Studies show that younger Canadians are not as interested as older citizens in politics. While 40% of all Canadians are under age 30, only 5% of the membership of political parties is drawn from this group which is 40% of the population in Canada. This is despite the fact that political parties open membership to people as young as 14 years of age.

A study by the Institute for Research on Public Policy found only 13% of those 18 to 29 years of age could name the prime minister, the finance minister or the leader of the opposition. In a similar 1990 survey, 20% of youth respondents were able to name all three politicians. This lack of knowledge often deters young voters from casting a ballot. They feel they would rather not vote than make an uninformed choice.

Young Canadians are less likely than their older compatriots to follow public affairs. Only 41% of respondents between 18 to 24 years of age follow political issues very closely or somewhat closely.

Teens and people in their early twenties use less social services than older people and they do not pay as many taxes. They are in good health and do not pay much attention to health issues other than going to the gym. The Canada pension plan is the furthest thing from their minds.

● (1820)

Simply put, people who have more of a stake in the community and have homes in the community pay more attention to the activities of the government.

What can we do? Should we just give up on young voters by concluding that they will become involved when they are ready? I do not think so. It is their future that is at stake.

By increasing the involvement of younger Canadians in the political process, we can hope they will become less cynical, develop a civic consciousness, feel closer to their neighbourhoods and take pride in their communities.

From my experience, visiting schools and meeting with teens and students, when they have the opportunity to discuss political issues, I found out that they have strong opinions. They are equally interested. When young people are informed, they want to vote. We should therefore seek to involve people in political activity at younger ages. I encourage students during their summer breaks to volunteer in my member of Parliament office. Many students come and are very happy at the end of their volunteer experience. They learn a lot and I benefit from their new ideas as well.

I was eight years old when I had the opportunity to meet the vice-president of the U.S.A. That meeting left a mark on my whole life. That is probably one of the reasons I am in this chamber today. The meeting with the vice-president of the United States in India means something. The VIPs are treated differently in Asia, as we know. In fact the vice-president invited me to visit the vice-president's gallery in the United States senate chamber. I did not know what that invitation meant. When I was old enough, I went to the United States

embassy and asked officials there what the invitation was good for and they explained it to me.

One of our youngest MPs in the House, the hon. member for Calgary West, told me that when he was young his dad would ask him to watch the news before he was allowed to go to bed. He did that for quite some time. That is probably one of the reasons he is here in this chamber.

I will give another example. Mr. Speaker, I know you have met my younger son Livjot. When I was first elected I brought him to the House after a month or two. I knew he was a very curious kid. I told him to please wait in my office while I went to the House and that when I came back I would show him around. This kid could not wait in the office. He took the directory of the members of Parliament from my staff. I asked Dee where my son was and was told that he was okay, that he was just going around and that he would be back.

At 3:15, after question period, I went to my office to take my son to lunch and was surprised to find that he was not there. I had a phone call from the Prime Minister's Office. He went to the Prime Minister's Office and the offices of many other members of Parliament to talk with them. He became interested in the issues after that.

When I am abroad on parliamentary business, I now get all my updates from my younger son. He keeps all the important newspaper clippings for me and I have never had to throw any out or search for any in the waste basket.

What I have been saying is that if we get our kids involved and keep them in the political and electoral circles, it builds some interest in them.

Coming back to the point, when youth are involved in mock elections or a mock parliament, it is a good opportunity for them to experience firsthand what politics is about and it makes them interested in voting.

I applaud the work already being done by Elections Canada. I would encourage the Chief Electoral Officer to consider other ways to expand his efforts in this area.

At one time, it was very worthwhile for people to get involved in politics. People use to show up at any community event but they are now losing interest. We in this House should try too restore the integrity in and credibility of politics.

● (1825)

Mr. Speaker, I have had discussions with the hon. member for Peterborough and I hope there will be unanimous consent for the following amendment. I move:



*Private Members' Business*

That the House direct the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada to expand its initiatives to promote the participation of young Canadians in the electoral process, and that these initiatives include making available educational material to schools and other organizations, and supporting parallel voting opportunities for prospective electors during federal elections, including making available polling materials and the publication of results of such parallel voting, and that Elections Canada work creatively with such groups as Kids Voting Canada, Scouts Canada, Guides Canada, teachers and others, and provide regular reports on these matters to the House of Commons through the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, you find unanimous consent among all party members to accept this amendment for the sake of the future of our youth in the country.

• (1830)

**The Deputy Speaker:** I seek the guidance of the hon. member for Surrey Central and, of course, to my right on the other side, the member for Peterborough.

It would appear to the Chair that what we have in essence, under the title of an amendment, is, for all intents and purposes, a new motion.

I see a disagreement from the member for Peterborough. Then the Chair is in a bit of a quandary. Without delaying the business of the House, I will take the matter under advisement and I will resume debate with the hon. member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that you want to take the matter under advisement, but you understand that I cannot deliver quite the same speech. I would not want this to encroach on the time allotted to me, especially since I see that you gave the member for Surrey Central more than 10 minutes. You warned him that he had only one minute left before he started reading his amendment. I do not wish to start a debate on this, but it would be essential to know your decision immediately because it is not the same speech.

I want you to know that I do not agree with the original motion that was put forward. However, I am in favour of the motion as amended, if you accept the amendment. You understand that I would not be able to deliver the same speech. A speech on a motion I disagree with is different than a speech on an amended motion that I do agree with. I would like to have your advice on this, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Under the circumstances, I will take the matter under advisement. Allow me to consult a little longer and I will do my best to come back to this matter in a few moments.

[*English*]

I have consulted a little more on this matter before the House and on some of the discussions that have taken place. I will propose to the House that what we have at this moment is a new motion presented by the hon. member for Surrey Central, seconded by the member for Northumberland, the effect being that the motion would replace the original motion presented to the House by the hon. member for Peterborough.

[*Translation*]

I hope this is clear enough.

Is there consent of this House to debate this new motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

• (1835)

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I must say to begin with that I acknowledge the work done originally by my colleague, the member for Peterborough, who is also the chair of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

We have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to hear from the Chief Electoral Officer. He organized one particular session on the youth vote. I have listened with interest to what my colleague, the member for Peterborough, has had to say.

I have no intention of rereading the text of the new motion presented by the hon. member for Surrey Central. No one could not be in favour of it. Who could be against virtue? We all want to go to heaven, even if we do not always act like saints here on earth. Basically, no one could be against it.

I do not want to go so far as to say this is just wishful thinking, but it is an expression of good intentions. I would point out to my colleagues from Surrey Central and Peterborough that there are already certain things in place, such as material for schools, like ballot boxes to elect class presidents and the like. I have already been involved with the secondary schools on this. A school principal called me to ask for some voting booths and cardboard ballot boxes precisely to introduce our young people to the voting process.

So, basically, this is already in place. The motion merely reinforces it, so one could not be opposed.

One of the problems, however, that I have with the motion of my colleague, the hon. member for Peterborough that is, was that when real elections, either by-elections or general elections, were held there were to be different coloured ballot boxes for young voters. That is what I was referring to just now. If the speeches were on the original motion by my colleague from Peterborough, I would have had to make some unfavourable remarks.

I want to clarify something for his benefit and our audience, who heard his remarks on the first motion. I was a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and I can say, on my behalf and that of my party, that I have serious concerns about having ballot boxes of a different colour for young voters.

One could wonder how secret the ballot would be. This motion also referred to a separate count. The Chief Electoral Officer would be required to publish voting results. I think that would be counterproductive. Ballot secrecy is important. In Quebec and Canada, anyone 18 years old or older has the right to cast his or her vote. This is true for my 96-year-old mother-in-law, who has been voting for decades, and also for the young person who just turned 18 and is discovering firsthand what the democratic process by which we elect representatives to speak for us is all about.

The right to vote applies to anyone 18 years old or older. I can therefore not agree with having ballot boxes of a different colour; this would mean telling young people to get in the line at the left because there is a parallel polling division for them.

*Private Members' Business*

My colleague, the hon. member for Peterborough, has repeated at least five or six times—he may want to check in *Hansard*—that this kind of measure is designed not only to promote voting but also to make the young less cynical about politics. This was also reiterated by my colleague from Surrey Centre.

● (1840)

I see that my hon. friend from Peterborough is nodding in agreement that this is the desired objective. I would like to tell the hon. member for Peterborough that, if we want young people not to be cynical about politics, perhaps we should ensure that politics deserves their confidence.

Mr. Speaker, do you think that with all the scandals in the air right now over the sponsorship business, that this will encourage young people to be interested in politics? Do you think this will encourage young people to trust politicians?

I have a son, 24 years old, who is watching right now. You probably know, Mr. Speaker—because I know your children are young adults—that these are young people who, without being as mad for politics as we are, watch television, listen to the radio, and read newspapers. What have they been seeing all over the media for the past two or three weeks, especially since we came back to the House on February 2? Scandals to the right and scandals to the left.

Events like this do not encourage young people to exercise their right to vote. When we meet young people they tell us that we all look the same to them, “You are all a gang of bandits. You only want to stuff your own pockets” they say. I am not dreaming this. This is what young people think about politics today.

Young people will not be encouraged to vote with day-glo coloured ballot boxes, mauve ones or ones with lights, or boxes with a joystick on them like a Playstation or Xbox.

There must be trust, and that trust must be earned. You do not go out and buy it by the kilo. A person does not go to the store to buy a kilo or a metre of trust. “Well, now, I have just bought myself 1.5 metres of trust”. Trust has to be earned.

We politicians have to walk the walk, not just talk the talk. We need to be a regular presence in our communities. I do not wish to pass myself off as someone special, but I can say that I have some 8 to 10 political activities every weekend. When it comes time for an election, I do not hear anyone say “Oh, there you are, Mr. Guimond, now that the election has been called.”

Why do people have a tendency to think that politicians become visible only when it is election time? Because there are some politicians who get themselves elected on fancy promises, pie in the sky promises: Vote for me and you will see. I will solve all your problems. Vote for me and money will drop from the sky by the bucketful.

Fortunately, the public is becoming increasingly aware. Our young people are becoming increasingly aware. They no longer let themselves be swayed by fine promises. They want to see concrete actions and achievements. Félix Leclerc lived on Île d'Orléans, which is in my riding. In one of his songs about politicians, he said:

On the eve of an election, he'd call you son.  
The day after, of course, he had no clue what your name was.

Félix Leclerc wrote that in the 1960s because this was how politicians typically behaved. In 1960, there were fewer female politicians, but the behaviour was typical and that is what Félix Leclerc thought of politicians.

Consequently, if we want to encourage young people to vote, we have to show them that politicians are not all alike, that there are some who are less than honest, but we must avoid generalizations.

We, the members, the 301 elected representatives of this House, are one of the most important components, independent of political partisanship. We must earn society's trust and we must do what we say we will.

The current sponsorship scandal will not help young people have more trust in politics and politicians.

● (1845)

[English]

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to say a few words in this debate in the House in support of the motion put forward by the member for Peterborough. I certainly support the motion he has presented to us.

In the last election campaign, the turnout for young people between the ages of 18 and 24 was around 25%. That is very low.

When I was elected here in 1968, I had barely turned 22 years old. In fact, I had turned 22 during the campaign. That was during the Trudeaumania era, the Kennedy era, the time of all the student revolutions in Europe and so on. There was a great deal of interest among young people in those days.

From the 1940s through the 1950s and 1960s to the 1970s, it was typical to have a turnout of about 75% or 80% in a campaign. After that, right across the board, we started to see a gradual drop in the participation rate at the polls.

Throughout the years, though, with the possible exception of the 1960s and the whole youth revolution, young people have turned out in very low numbers. Even then, it was lower than the average numbers for the general population of Canada.

It has always been a challenge to have young people participate in the political process, so I am glad we have this motion before the House today. I wish the member for Peterborough had not temporarily left the Chamber, because I wanted to ask him a couple of questions.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I know there was no malice intended, but I want to give the member the assurance that the member for Peterborough is assisting the House in this matter. I am sure that he will maintain the same keen interest he has had, of course, being the original mover of the motion that has led to this debate.

**Hon. Lorne Nystrom:** Mr. Speaker, I should have made it explicit that he was assisting the Chair and the desk on the motion. Indeed, I do spot him now. I do want to ask a couple of questions of the member. I know he cannot answer because he has already spoken, but he can ponder them.

In the meantime I wanted to say I do agree that there should be more educational material made available to schools and young people's organizations. I think that is very important.

I also believe that Elections Canada should be directed to work with different organizations and groups such as Kids Voting Canada and Scouts Canada, and through the schools, the high schools, with teachers, and in junior colleges and universities. I believe that is very important.

The one thing I would like the member to think about is not just the possibility of having young people between the ages of 16 and 18 voting in so-called mock elections in a parallel voting process, because I can remember participating in those when I was a high school and university student as well: I would like the member to consider the possibility of lowering the voting age to 16.

I think we should take a really good look at lowering the voting age to 16 so that people between the ages of 16 and 18 have an actual vote. They can help determine the members of this Parliament and the Government of Canada.

I remember when I was first elected back in 1968 when I was 22. I was one of several members of Parliament who moved a private member's bill in the House to lower the voting age from 21 to 18. That was considered fairly radical in the years before 1968.

Now I think the time has come that we should look seriously at lowering the voting age to 16. In our country a person can drive a car and get a driver's licence at age 16. There are many other things a person is legally allowed to do at the age of 16.

We want to engage young people. We want to get them interested in our process, interested in being a part of the public policy decision making body. I would say to the member for Peterborough: give some thought to lowering the voting age to 16. This might be a way of getting young people really engaged. I think it is a motion that we should be putting before the House very shortly.

I also want to make another point in terms of the participation rate or the turnout among young people and that is the whole idea of reinstating enumeration. We have had all kinds of complaints from people across the country about being left off the voters list.

If we reinstate enumeration, where enumerators go from house to house, it would be a very good thing for young people in particular because younger people tend to move from place to place. Not only are university students away during the university year or back home depending on when the election is, but young people move out on their own. They are getting an apartment, a job, seeing different parts of the country, and travelling a bit. If we had door to door enumeration and put them on the voters list, it would act as a reminder that there is a general election campaign. This is something I would like the member across the way to think of as well: reinstating enumeration.

The third point I wish to mention to the member for Peterborough, who is an independent free spirit and a progressive member, is the whole idea of a fixed election date. I introduced a motion in the House just last week to bring in a fixed election date in this country, except of course where a government loses confidence and has to go

### *Private Members' Business*

to the polls. I recommend a fixed election date. We would have an election every four years.

This has nothing to do with the sponsorship scandal whatsoever. I have believed for a long time that we should have a fixed election date. It should be in either the spring or the fall, in either June or October, the two best months in this country in which to have a general election campaign.

If we do have a fixed date, it takes away the power of the Prime Minister and the premiers to manipulate the date for their own benefits and for their own party's benefit. There is not a party in this country, including my own in Saskatchewan, or the party in B.C. or Ontario, where we have formed provincial governments, that has not manipulated the election date in order to suit their own political interests. It is a natural thing, because the Prime Minister and premiers can call elections when they see fit.

● (1850)

I remember talking with Tommy Douglas a few years before he passed away. He had been the premier of Saskatchewan and was elected in 1944. He had elections every four years in June: in 1948, in 1952, in 1956, and in 1960, all in June. He said that one regret he had was he did not make it a statutory requirement to have elections held every four years. I think that would also encourage young people to vote because they would not suspect or see the political leadership manipulating the date for its own benefit and for its own opportunistic reasons.

British Columbia is the only province that now has a fixed election day set by the Liberal government of Premier Campbell. When he became premier of that province a couple of years ago, the date was set for four years hence. Therefore, a level playing field and a sense of fairness that young people are so concerned about have been created.

The last point I want to make, which I suppose this is the most important point, is the whole idea of changing our voting system, and I am not sure where the member for Peterborough stands on the idea.

The United States, India and Canada are the only three countries with more than 10 million people that use the pure first past the post system. Even Britain has a partial system of proportional representation in Scotland and Wales, and they elect all their MPs to the European Parliament through PR.

I would like the member for Peterborough to do some thinking about reforming the voting system. I am just talking about the principle of proportional representation. Under PR, every vote counts, no vote is wasted and a party that gets around 20% of the votes gets around 20% of the seats. Therefore, we have equality of people from one coast to the other. Young people then could see their vote count in the make up of Parliament and the government of the day.

*Private Members' Business*

We should strike an all-party committee to look at the idea of voting reform. We could have public hearings, come up with a couple of different models, bring them back to Parliament and then put the most attractive new model, along with the first past the post system, on a ballot for a national referendum, like was done in New Zealand and elsewhere, and let the people of this country choose between the status quo and a system of proportional representation.

These are just some ideas I wanted to suggest in terms of debate. I support the motion, but let us look at reinstating the enumeration, lowering the voting age to 16, bringing in a fixed election day and reforming the voting system to bring in a system of proportional representation that would be much more inclusive and empowering to return the governance of this place to the people of Canada.

• (1855)

**The Deputy Speaker:** As no one is seeking the floor, there is the possibility of a five minute right of reply. The motion that was originally introduced by the member for Peterborough has since been replaced by a motion sponsored by the member for Surrey Central.

I understand there have been discussions between the members for Peterborough and Surrey Central and the agreement is that the member for Peterborough, who originally tabled the motion before the House, will be given the opportunity of right of reply.

**Mr. Peter Adams (Peterborough, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Surrey Central and all my colleagues for their patience in making this motion much more effective.

As I said at the beginning, it is a motion which directs Elections Canada, in the federal domain, to work effectively and proactively with groups and individuals who are already encouraging young people to vote. It gives some specific direction on how they do that, but in particular it states that Elections Canada will report those election results and publish them following election. It also will

report to this House, the House of Commons, through our standing committee.

I thank the member for Surrey Central, the member for Northumberland. I thank the member for Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, the member for Regina—Qu'Appelle and the member for St. John's West. We have support from all members.

I would remind those watching that some of the groups involved are listed on the reference list, which is part of the record of these proceedings today. They will also be listed on [www.peteradams.org](http://www.peteradams.org).

I thank all members. I urge all members of the House to vote in favour of this very important motion to encourage our young people to participate in elections.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is the House ready for the question?

**Some hon. members:** Question.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.  
(Motion agreed to)

[*English*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to order made Thursday, February 12, the House shall now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Government Business No. 3. I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

[*Editor's Note: For continuation of proceedings see Volume B*]





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CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, February 17, 2004  
(Part B)**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, February 17, 2004

[Editor's Note: Continuation of proceedings from Volume A]

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

### BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 3, Mr. Kilger in the chair)

**Hon. Jacques Saada (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister responsible for Democratic Reform, Lib.)** moved:

That this Committee take note of ballistic missile defence.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we are here tonight to discuss a topic of great importance, the security of Canadians. It is a topic of deep importance, one which will enhance our security, one in which we seek to determine what is the best way to assure the defence of our people in our territory. It is also a subject about which there has been a great deal of misunderstanding and even misinformation, hence the importance of this debate.

What we are trying to do, and what we are presently engaged in with our discussions with the United States, is to determine how we can best assure the security of our country in the North American continent. In so doing, we will ensure that the best interests of Canada and Canadians will be protected. If we determine that the results of the discussions we are entering into are not in those interests, there is no need to sign any agreement with our American colleagues. However, we owe it to each other and to those we represent to engage in these discussions, and we owe it to ourselves to be accurate about what is at stake.

We have a long, outstanding cooperation with the United States in matters of defence. Any suggestion that entering into discussions with the United States about a defensive measure of this nature represents a shift in Canadian foreign policy, I would suggest to the House is completely misleading. On the contrary, it represents a continuation of a policy that has served us well for over 60 years.

In 1940 the Ogdensburg declaration, which President Roosevelt came here to enter into with Prime Minister Mackenzie King, committed our two countries to join together in the defence of North America. They established the Permanent Joint Board on Defence. Out of that came the agreement founding Norad, the North American Aerospace Defence Command.

Norad has been the foundation of defence cooperation between our two countries since that time. Since 1958, Canadians and Americans have been working side by side in ensuring aerospace defence of North America, the command decisions shared at every level by citizens of both our countries.

When I visited Norad, I was extremely proud to see our serving servicemen there working beside their American colleagues with no distinction as to who was American and who was Canadian, doing their jobs and working together for the security of North America. That, I would suggest to the House, is the model that we want to achieve as we go forward in our relations with the United States, but also as we consider what is the best way to guarantee our security.

Since 9/11, we have been active with the United States in looking at other ways to determine our security. We have established a binational planning group which looks to ways in which we can collaborate on many issues of joint security matters. We have established the joint smart border plan, which looks to the ways in which we manage our border in our relations with our American colleagues, guaranteeing both ease of access to the United States and ensuring security at the same time. We have even established integrated border enforcement teams. That is what I believe is the tradition we are building on as we now consider working with our American colleagues and discussing this issue.

Colleagues, this is not a question about a loss of sovereignty, as some have proposed. Canadians want closer cooperation with the United States in matters of security, but they also want our continued sovereignty, and that is what this discussion is about. That is why we are going into this discussion, the Minister of National Defence and myself on behalf of the government, with an assurance that we will enhance the security of our people, and we will only enter into it after we have learned all about it and have determined that it is in the best interests of Canadians.

We need to be perfectly clear what this is all about and what it is not about. It is not, contrary to the suggestions largely from the NDP, about star wars. Star wars was a strategic defence initiative proposed by President Reagan back in the 1980s. The star wars plan did contain plans for a huge number of space-based missile interceptors. It was designed to counter the threat of a massive attack from the entire nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union as it was then.

*Government Orders*

Since then, both the nature of the defence system and its wider context are different. The international climate is different. Agreement has been entered into with Russia in which mutual assurances have been given, and there is no suggestion that this plan has anything to do with measures against Russia, or destined against Russia, China or other states of that nature.

It has been suggested that this is about Canada eventually getting involved in putting weapons into space. There is a suggestion out there that there is an inevitability of this leading to the weaponization of space.

We have to be straightforward. The idea of weapons in space has been discussed by certain voices in the United States, but is this policy for U.S. missile defence? No, it is not. There is no inevitability to this trend. In fact the trend is in the other direction.

As recently reported, the Missile Defense Agency has requested a relatively small amount of funds to research a space based test bed. It is not being advanced. It has been pushed back from 2008, in the minds of their planners, to 2012 and there is far from any guarantee that it will be approved by congress at any time. As put by a disappointed U.S. observer, "a program without adequate funding is not a vision, it's an hallucination". Therefore, let us not be hallucinating over star wars when it does not exist.

I suggest that the weaponization of space is as controversial within the United States as it is within Canada. The cost and technological challenges of it are immense. Therefore, what matters for this debate and our decision is that our participation in the weaponization of space is not something that Canada will be a part of nor that the Minister of National Defence or myself envisage being involved in.

The missile defence program the U.S. is launching involves only land and sea-based interceptors. That is what it is and that is what we are discussing with the Americans.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

Moreover, we do not envisage enormous costs for Canada. No financial contribution has been asked of us and we shall not commit to this program unless we can afford the cost.

Also, it will not lead to an arms race. Today we see a growing proliferation of ballistic missiles and that is a real threat for Canadians. This system, which is exclusively a defensive system, has no offensive capability. The interceptors must prevent the arrival of hostile missiles. How can that contribute to the arms race?

Furthermore, the scope of our security initiatives has not changed. We have no thought nor intention of abandoning our policies of protection against terrorism and in favour of human security. In all these areas, action must continue. We have no intention of substituting this particular defence for any others.

[*English*]

In closing, I want to assure the House that non-proliferation arms control and disarmament remain pillars of our foreign policy. Canada remains as a signatory and proponent of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the missile technology control regime, the Hague code of conduct on ballistic missiles, the biological and toxin weapons

convention, the chemical weapons convention, the G-8 global partnership against the spread of weapons and materials of mass destruction, and we continue to work with other states to make these measures more effective.

We recently joined the proliferation security initiative which seeks to deny and restrict the flow of weapons of mass destruction around the world.

When we hear from members of the opposition to this measure, all I ask of them is to stick to the facts. The facts are these. The missile defence program we are discussing with the United States is not about star wars. It is not about the weaponization of space. It does not represent an abandonment of Canadian commitment to peace-keeping and disarmament and multilateral arms control measures. It does not represent a shift in government spending priorities on security as a whole or in our overall priorities.

The United States is committed to developing this program. There are those who say in this House that if we join the Americans, we will be contributing to the decision to make this happen. There is no fact in that. It is going to happen whether we participate or not.

What we need to do is discuss it with our American partners and ascertain whether there is a way in which we can participate that increases the security of Canadians and is consistent with our commitment to disarmament and the containment of weapons of mass destruction. That is what the Minister of National Defence and myself propose to do.

We and the United States are closely linked together in many ways: in geography, through families, through trade and the environment. However, in matters of the defence of North America, we are particularly linked. It has been said we are like Siamese twins.

We therefore are called upon to search in every way we can to guarantee the safety of our citizens. We owe it to our American colleagues with whom we share this North American space to discuss such measures. That is what the government is doing in this case. It will discuss, analyze and determine if this is in the best interest of Canada and Canadians. There is nothing more at stake here and nothing less.

● (1910)

**The Chair:** There are 10 minutes of questions to the minister, so I seek the cooperation of members to allow as many members as possible to ask those questions.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will therefore keep my remarks and questions short.

I find myself in complete agreement with everything that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has stated in his remarks tonight. The only question I have for the minister is, what took so long?

*Government Orders*

In his summation he said that the mandate he and the Minister of National Defence have is to discuss this issue. I would suggest that they have had eight years to discuss this issue, he and his predecessors and the Minister of National Defence and his predecessors. Surely to goodness in eight years we could follow the lead of a lot of countries, which I could name if I had more time, and actually support our allies in this effort.

I would say the time for discussing is over. Yes, we need to have this debate in the House of Commons because it is the first of its type. I welcome this debate. As he said, and I agree, let us stick to the facts. Let us not resort to fearmongering as the NDP has been doing on this issue for quite some time, especially its absentee leader, Jack Layton.

Having said that, I think it is incumbent upon the government to get on with things, take a stand on this issue, communicate that to Canadians and let the Canadian voters know what that stand is and what they are voting on before the next election.

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I was somewhat concerned when my hon. friend started out by saying he was in agreement with what I said, but he quickly allayed my concerns by moving to the attack so I feel more comfortable now.

I want to share with the hon. member and with other members of the House the fact that I do not believe we have been dragging our feet on this at all. This is a matter which we have been considering carefully. This is a matter which, as the hon. member knows, is technologically a long way from being demonstrated yet as to whether it would be accurate. There have been serious considerations about whether or not this matter would go ahead.

We looked at it wisely and said we will consider it when it is appropriate. The time has come now that it is appropriate. As I said in my remarks, we believe very strongly that this, if housed in NORAD, will have the way in which it can protect Canadians best. It will continue to preserve NORAD, which we believe is an extremely important institution for the defence of North America.

We believe there are very concrete potential benefits to our participating in negotiations at this time, which did not exist earlier. Those potential benefits are there and we need to explore them, but we need to have our reserves about weaponization of space and we need to make sure that this is not taking us in directions we do not want to go.

We will approach it from that point of view. I think that is the way that Canadians want us to approach this: in an honest interest, to have a good agreement with the United States, but at the same time recognize that Canada has its priorities in defence and we want to respect those as well.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chair, from the beginning the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been trying to keep things calm. He seems to be saying we will wait and see, we will look at what they propose and then we will decide. However, his colleague from National Defence is much more aggressive in his approach.

I would like to know what the Minister of Foreign Affairs thinks about this because the Minister of National Defence is saying we

have to amend the Norad agreement. I imagine he cannot amend this agreement without going through the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Does the latter agree with amending the Norad agreement to take into account Norad's contribution to the missile defence mission? In other words, add to its current mission, which consists only in surveillance, something much more specific such as missile defence. That is what the Minister of National Defence wants.

He also says we intend to negotiate a framework memorandum of understanding with the United States. This is much more specific than the minister, who says we are only going there to hear what they have to say.

The Minister of National Defence is looking at the feasibility of defining the possibilities and mechanisms for such consultations with respect to Canada's contributions.

Contributions also mean money. I would like to remind him that the Minister of National Defence just awarded interim contracts to the tune of \$700,000. I did not say \$700 million yesterday. I said \$700,000.

This is a slippery slope. We have started getting involved with the United States, but the decision has already been made. I would like the minister to respond to my concerns and perhaps deny what I just said.

•(1915)

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I am not surprised that the hon. member is finding the dialogue between myself and the Minister of National Defence somewhat different. After all, the defence minister is dealing with war, while we at foreign affairs deal with love. We make love and they make war. Naturally, there is a difference between us.

There is a difference, but also convergence in areas where it is in the interest of Canadians to preserve the well-being of Canada and Canadians. There lies our ground for convergence. I do not think the Minister of Defence is more aggressive than I am when it comes to protecting the interests of Canada and Canadians.

On the contrary, we both want to make sure this measure is good, in concrete terms, for Canada and does not represent a threat to our own disarmament policy. We are ensuring that we are not headed for the weaponization of space and similar scenarios. That is why we are stating very clearly that we have requirements as part of our discussions.

I can assure the hon. member that, as far as I am concerned, the preservation of Norad is a key issue in our discussions. I think the hon. member will agree that this would be the best. Housing this system in Norad would be the best way for Canada to maintain a certain control over it.

Let us not forget that the Americans are determined to proceed with or without us. Without us, they will be free to do exactly as they please, without any consideration for what we want. With us, this will mean we will have the opportunity and right to voice our opinion, assert our values and participate. By participating, we have a better chance of controlling this measure than if we leave everything in the hands of the Americans.



*Government Orders*

[English]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I noted that the foreign affairs minister stated quite strongly that it is important for Canada to state and restate our opposition to the weaponization of space.

In view of the fact that Canada's commitment to enter into negotiations to participate in Bush's national missile defence program totally and utterly failed to make a single reference to Canada's opposition to the weaponization of space, I am wondering how Canadians can take any comfort in the statement that the minister has made here tonight.

This was the letter from our defence minister to Donald Rumsfeld to basically say sign us up, we are signing on, we are going to negotiate our participation. Not a single word in that letter made reference to the weaponization of space, let alone Canada's opposition to the weaponization of space. Yet the press release that the Minister of National Defence sent out to Canadians to report on having sent this letter to the U.S. administration referred in what we would have to say is a footnote, like an afterthought, to saying "but of course Canada retains its opposition to weaponization of space".

How does the foreign affairs minister explain that kind of duplicitous, hypocritical action of saying one thing to the U.S. administration and another thing to Canadians?

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I am sure the Minister of National Defence will have an opportunity to address the letter, but let us not exaggerate. The hon. member said that we have signed up, we are on board and we are already there. She sees us somehow riding around out in outer space in a capsule together. We are a long way from there. We are into discussions, so please do not exaggerate. Let us not exaggerate the position and let us not exaggerate the dangers of where we are going.

Members of the House know that the Canadian policy about weaponization of space has been clear in our votes in the United Nations and in our speeches in Geneva. In every conceivable forum, Canada has said that we do not believe it is in the interests of the United States or any country to weaponize space, that this would be a disastrous mistake. I have said it. My predecessors have said it. We have said it at the United Nations.

In international negotiations, not everything goes into one document. The United States, contrary to the perception of the hon. member and others, and the United States Secretary of Defense and Secretary of State are perfectly capable of knowing what Canada's position is. We have stated it 100 times. We do not need to state it over again in a letter that was about another issue.

This is an issue that Canada is committed on. I assure the House that this is a red line issue for us. It is a red line issue for the government. We are committed to it and the United States knows it and has always known it. There was no need to put it in the letter. It is so clear that everybody has it. When I have talked to my colleague Colin Powell about it, he makes it very clear he understands that it is our position.

There is no need for us to have to reiterate everything in a letter. It is there. It is Canadian government policy. It always has been and it will remain so.

● (1920)

**Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I want to ask a question, but first I want to say to the minister that I am glad to hear he is careful and deliberate about this. One can be on either side of the issue and have a lot of serious concerns and questions.

My question really has to do with this. When it comes to missile defence, where is it as a priority in the whole range of priorities? I would think that there are other arrows in our quiver where we as Canadians can provide some enhancement to world security, maybe through diplomacy, maybe through disarmament. Perhaps there are even better ways. Missile defence is perhaps one, but I am wondering, from the minister's point of view, what other track the government is following to enhance security around the planet?

**The Chair:** The Chair will ask the hon. minister for a brief response, please.

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. member for his question because it is a very good question. Clearly, missile defence, as I believe I tried to say in my speech, is a very small proportion of what we are trying to achieve in terms of the security of Canada. We have other measures of security. We have taken innumerable anti-terrorism measures and others.

In addition to that, we recognize that Canada has an important role to play out there to argue in favour of non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament. In my speech I pointed out our participation in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, the missile technology control program, and the Hague code of conduct. The list is long, Mr. Chair, and I can see you looking at me to say that you will not allow me to read the list so I will not.

I want to assure the hon. member that entering into this agreement in no way will impair either our ability or our determination to press for multilateral means of controls of weapons of mass destruction, be they chemical, biological or nuclear.

That is the core of Canada's foreign policy, Mr. Chair and hon. members, and we will continue it. It is an equally important part—if not a more important part—as this one measure we are talking about tonight.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, before I begin my prepared remarks, I want to address the issue that the member for Halifax raised in her intervention a moment ago. She said it was incumbent upon us and our government to state and restate our opposition to the weaponization of space.

It is not just the New Democratic Party that is opposed to the weaponization of space. That party throws these terms around, like star wars and son of star wars, to win some support out there among the general public and to fearmonger on this important issue. I want to state for the record that I think all political parties, to my knowledge, are opposed to the weaponization of space. All Canadians are opposed to it. The New Democratic Party has tried to seize on this issue and spread misinformation.

*Government Orders*

I am pleased to debate the merits of the ballistic missile defence program. In fact, I have been very eager, as I said earlier in my intervention, for the opportunity to discuss this issue with my colleagues in the House of Commons. Many Canadians carry justified and legitimate concerns about Canada's involvement in developing a missile defence shield for North America, and why would they not be concerned? When it comes to matters of personal, national and international security, Canadians want to know the facts and they want to know where their government and elected representatives stand.

Missile defence is an especially critical decision to debate because it has both a short term and a long term impact upon national security and our foreign affairs policies. In other words, the decisions and commitments made by the government today about missile defence this year, and even this month, will resonate throughout the next several decades, even as governments come and go.

I am concerned, however, that although the government has set the stage for this debate tonight, I question its motives. By conducting a take note debate, I suspect the government is attempting to thwart attempts by the New Democratic Party to bring the subject of missile defence to a recorded vote in the House of Commons. Having a vote is certainly an initiative I support, yet the government does not seem equally as keen to have each of its members stand in their places and vote yea or nay for missile defence on the record.

This is an issue that should be decided by Parliament after a thorough debate and a free vote by all members. It was with some concern that I read in yesterday's news reports that the Department of National Defence has already issued tentative contracts to test Canadian radar technology in U.S.-run trials of the missile shield this summer.

I would like to make it clear that I am personally very supportive of Canada's participation of the North American missile defence initiative for reasons that I will outline in a moment. However, as supportive as I am, I find it troubling that a government department appears to be pushing full steam ahead on the same project for which the Prime Minister and his government claim to be weighing the options and seeking further public input. These claims do not seem credible if at the same time a federal department has been given the go-ahead to proceed on missile defence.

I also felt it important that this issue be brought to the floor of the House of Commons because I fear that Canadians have been inadequately informed and even misinformed about many aspects of the missile defence program.

I was pleased when the Minister of Foreign Affairs said exactly the same thing a few moments ago. In fact, it has been apparent that the New Democratic Party leader, Jack Layton, has chosen this particular issue to gain considerable political mileage. Unfortunately, he has done so by engaging in fearmongering and sensationalism.

Therefore, I welcome the opportunity today to refute the myths and misleading comments he has personally advanced. We must always be conscious of our obligation to inform Canadians as factually and as responsibly as possible, and that is what I would like to do this evening.

I believe the missile defence program is the most peaceful option available to counter the threat of ballistic missile attacks. Given the campaign of misinformation currently being operated by opponents of the program, I realize that some Canadians might find peace a bizarre justification in support of Canada's participation in the program, yet let us take a closer, realistic look at the two options available.

• (1925)

Mr. Layton has lamented the demise of the anti-ballistic missile treaty. There is little to mourn since the principal foundation of this arms treaty was to maintain the effectiveness of ballistic missiles by ensuring that no nations were able to defend themselves against an attack.

During the cold war era, it was only the threat of mutual annihilation or blowing each other off the face of the earth that kept ballistic missiles in their silos. Obviously, this concept is far more adversarial than a system designed to defend against a successful attack in the first place. The threat of massive retaliation inflicting more death and revenge remains the primary defence against missile attacks from world nations or terrorist organizations.

As the minister has stated, times have changed. This is not the cold war era. It is the post-September 11, 2001, era where unprecedented terrorist acts are no longer a potential scenario, but a reality. In this era of suicide attacks, the threat of retaliation is no longer an effective deterrent.

For those that refuse to accept the possibility that a ballistic missile could be launched at any time to anywhere in the world, I would remind them that just over two years ago it would have seemed incomprehensible that large passenger jetliners would be used to inflict death upon thousands on North American soil.

The whereabouts of some weapons that belong to the former Soviet Union is unknown. The access and control over these missiles are also unknown. We do know for certain, however, that an increasing number of nations, North Korea and Libya, for example, have either well established or emerging ballistic missile capabilities.

What exactly is the plan to defend against such threats? Canadians deserve to know the facts. It is counterproductive, misleading and irresponsible to use such sensational misnomers like star wars and son of star wars to describe the missile defence shield. Far from it, the ballistic missile defence program currently being developed by our allies will include 20 ground based interceptors, none of them on Canadian soil, and eventually up to 20 sea based interceptors.

Let me describe the exact nature of the interceptors that will be used for the missile defence shield. As their name implies, these interceptors would intercept and hit to kill incoming ballistic missiles within minutes of launch. The interceptors contain no warhead, meaning no explosive contents. Upon physically hitting the inbound missile, the high speed impact would vaporize all material involved, eliminating threats to any people or buildings.

*Government Orders*

Opponents of the missile defence program have also claimed it is not worth pursuing because it has not yet been proven to work. With an attitude like that, man would never have made it to the moon and many of the other scientific and technological advances made throughout the past century would never have succeeded.

I would like to address a major point of contention and concern for many Canadians and that is the possible use of space based interceptors. Let me point out that space based interceptors are at this point a concept still very much on the drawing board. The United States floated the funding to study the design of this potential component of the missile defence program only last week. Space based interceptors are a long way off. Until then, the only space aspect of missile defence is the radar and satellite technology used for tracking incoming missiles.

I agree that we cannot simply ignore the potential for space based interceptors. Canadians have a right to have their concerns heard. However, the government is denying Canadians that right by failing to ensure that Canada takes its place as a full partner in the missile defence program.

Only by being at the table can our nation and our people realistically expect to have influence over the future of this initiative. Should Canada opt out in protest because of the potential for future use of space based interceptors, we will have absolutely no voice in the decision to forge ahead with their development. That is what our allies are asking us to do.

Canada is being asked to become a cooperative and collaborative partner in this defensive security initiative. Australia, Japan, Britain, South Korea, India, Israel, Russia and other NATO European nations have already indicated their support for the U.S. led missile defence initiative. Where has the government been for the past eight years? It did not even bother to enter into formal discussions until just recently. It is time to get off the fence and for the Prime Minister and his government to take a stand.

● (1930)

Canada is not even being asked to commit funding to missile defence. Our input and cooperation is being sought as part of our existing role in protecting North American airspace through Norad. That is the mandate of Norad and its very existence. Current operations and relevance are at risk should Canada refuse to participate in missile defence.

I have heard from many Canadians by phone, mail and e-mail who believe the stakes are very high in any decisions made about missile defence, and they are right. The Canadian government has an obligation to actively involve itself in that decision. Yet the Prime Minister and the NDP are more concerned about fighting over potential voters on the left than about the future security of this nation and our role in international security.

It is time for the government to fulfill its obligation to actively involve Canada in this crucial matter. The Prime Minister should unequivocally state his convictions and intentions on missile defence to Canadians and to the world before he calls an election.

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I wish to thank the hon. member for his thoughtful remarks and observations. I would take it from what you said that the position of your party would be similar to the

position which I laid out. The government's position is that if, in fact, this measure is going toward weaponization of space, then it is not something which should be entered into on behalf of Canada and Canadians. This is a bedrock policy that is supported.

I take it from your comments, and from those of all parties in the House, that there is certainly strong support from other parties as well.

● (1935)

**The Chair:** I wish to remind colleagues participating in the debate this evening that, although we are in a more informal setting in committee of the whole, interventions must still be made through the Chair. The hon. member for Prince George—Peace River.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Mr. Chair, I note that Canada was a signatory to the 1967 outer space treaty which established a basic legal framework for general space exploration and utilization. It condemned at that time the possible future weaponization of space. I think that we still stand by that treaty.

To my knowledge, all parties in the House of Commons, and probably all 301 MPs and even the independent MPs, would support the fact that we rigorously oppose the weaponization of space.

That is certainly the position that we will be taking. Having said that, as I indicated earlier in my questioning of the minister, the only fault that I find with the position that he laid out here tonight is the timeline.

It is incumbent upon the government to get on with it. I have said that in the past ever since becoming the national defence critic for the official opposition. I have said, since last summer, we should get on with this. I said it to the predecessor to the current Minister of National Defence and he is here tonight to participate in the debate and so I say it again. Unlike some of my colleagues from the Bloc and the NDP that seem to be hesitant about this, I do not know how much more we need to study it.

I think that we need to debate it. All of us have to put forward our concerns in representing our constituents who are concerned about this issue. Ultimately it is incumbent upon the government to make a decision. Let us get on with it and let us be vigilant as we move forward.

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Chair, one of the biggest concerns I hear from Canadians is the duplicity of the government's message saying one thing and doing another. A good example that can be applied to this situation is the fact that Canada has signed a comprehensive agreement to stop the production of landmines in the world.

However, at the same time the government is allowing our Canada pension plans to fund the production of those landmines that are killing children, soldiers, and people across the world. We do not know where they are and where they are going because they are doing it indirectly with companies that produce these materials and weapons. We wonder about the skepticism of Canadians when they do not have these things in print because it is a bad practice.

*Government Orders*

My questions are quite simple. How can the Conservative Party come to the table and say to the Americans that we are going to participate with them, but we are not putting any resources and we are there with nothing. What type of partnership and message is that saying? Is that really being honest with Canadians to say that we are going to be a partner in this, we are going to be involved, and we want to be at the table, but we have nothing to offer?

What I want to know specifically is how much financial resources is the Conservative Party willing to contribute to this program? Or is it willing to go to the table with the United States and say we have nothing to provide other than our thoughts?

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Mr. Chair, I would say to my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party that is very sad and I think that is indicative of the problem we have with members of the NDP on this particular issue. They let emotion and their desire for a sound bite or to be on television dictate what they say on this issue.

•(1940)

**Mr. Brian Masse:** Answer the question, how much money?

**Mr. Jay Hill:** The member is hollering now, Mr. Chair. He is hollering, how much money.

The fact of the matter is, and I know that the Minister of National Defence will confirm this, the Americans have not asked us to contribute financially to this.

He says that we are going to go cap in hand and we are going to be empty handed when we go. That is nonsense. Look what we have contributed in the past technologically as a nation. We have pulled our weight, way beyond our weight technologically.

What is it that we see every time they put something together in space? The Canadarm. Is there any recognition of that from that party? One would think that they were still involved back in the cold war with their statements about this. It is absolute nonsense.

We do not have to be contributing money. I have had the opportunity to be at Cheyenne Mountain. I have seen our Canadian Forces participate there in an equal partnership with the Americans in Norad. That is the way they are asking us to participate. They are asking us to support this initiative that will protect Canadians as well as Americans. I think that makes eminent sense.

That is why seven out of ten Canadians polled say that they support this initiative. Why is that? They see through the nonsense that that party is spreading about this. Canadians recognize that our sovereignty is more in jeopardy if we do not participate than if we do.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have listened to my colleague's presentation most attentively. What I am trying to do in particular is to grasp the justification for Canada's getting involved in a defence shield.

The reason given is the fear of rogue states, the only reason. Unless my colleague can convince me that a missile defence shield could have stopped the three planes that hit the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, I think this is wrong. His identification of where the threats lie is incorrect.

There is in fact a far greater threat of a commercial aircraft hitting a tower. There is a far greater threat of a Cruise missile being launched from a ship 200 km off the coast of the U.S. There is a far greater threat of a weapon of mass destruction being brought into the port of Vancouver or Montreal and then detonated.

When they bring out the rogue state argument, it does not hold water. Many countries are unable to deliver an intercontinental ballistic missile, and those who are capable would see their country destroyed as a result. Do hon. members think North Korea is going to launch one on Washington? If it did, it would be wiped off the map afterward, totally eradicated from the planet.

This is, in my opinion, nothing but wild imaginings. Or a matter of swallowing all the arguments proposed to us by the military-industrial complex. They are the ones who stand to gain most from the missile defence shield, no one else.

[*English*]

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Mr. Chair, I hope they do have an advantage so that they can prevent any future inbound missile from ever striking North America. I hope they do have an advantage. That is why I support our getting involved in this.

I had kind of hoped for better from my Bloc colleague than that type of rationale. If I understood him correctly, he was saying that because there are other threats out there, like a dirty bomb being smuggled in on a cargo ship or a cruise missile taking off from a deck of some ship just offshore, that because those are very real threats, which he is right about, that means we should not participate. Where is the logic in that? That is like saying there is a list of threats and fairly far down the list of threats is a rogue missile inbound to North America. It is still a threat.

As I said in my remarks, if anybody would have said that jet liners were going to slam into the World Trade Center before it happened, people would have said that it would be absolutely ridiculous and nobody would ever be able to orchestrate a terrorist attack like that, but it happened.

Therefore I do not think that is a valid argument against our supporting our allies in this effort.

The final point I would make, and again I agree with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is that the Americans are on their way to doing this anyway. If we want to have a voice, if we want to protect Canadian sovereignty, if we want to reinforce our opposition to weaponization of space, then let us be at the table and make sure that our voice carries some weight there. We are not going to do that if we opt out.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to take part in this evening's debate. First, I want to tell my colleagues that I have seen the statistics. I know that, as a general rule, 70% of Canadians, seemingly agree. However, I also want to tell my colleagues that I come from a part of the country that is quite different. I am from Quebec. That is where there were the biggest protests against the war in Iraq. I think that it is also where there will be the most opposition to the anti-missile defence program.

*Government Orders*

Quebeckers are extreme pacifists. I am not saying that they are angels and that they think that the military and all guns should be eliminated. I am saying only that Quebeckers are very critical when it comes to armed interventions and the purchase of weapons. Quebeckers will be with us on this.

If, in Canada, 70% of Canadians support partnering with the Americans on the anti-missile defence program, I would not be wrong in saying that the numbers are reversed in Quebec. About 30% of Quebeckers are prepared to partner with the Americans on this venture.

Since the Minister of Foreign Affairs has forced me in part to do so, I would also like to explain that, when we enter into a treaty with the Americans, we do so as part of an overall plan. The overall plan of the Americans is clear. It is not just to install a few interceptors in Fort Greely, Alaska. It is much more than that. It represents the installation of about 30 land and sea missiles, including in Fort Greely, in 2004; the deployment of 20 additional missiles in 2005; the installation at sea of giant detection radar; the installation of a fleet of detection satellites—we are already going into space—; space-based interceptors in 2012; and the famous laser-equipped Airborne aircraft. That is the American plan. We cannot say that Canada is going along with the American plan but that, when the time comes to go into space, we will pull out. It will be too late. That is the problem.

What is the missile defence shield based on? I gave an initial argument to my Conservative Party colleague. It is first a poor threat assessment. It is not true that North Korea will launch a missile on Washington or New York. If that were true, than that country would be wiped off the face of the earth. This doctrine of mutually assured destruction continues. With regard to a massive strike, it is not complicated. The Americans themselves say that they will not be able to block a massive strike from Russia.

They are talking about something that is absolutely not part of reality. There is no country that would risk launching an ICBM against New York or Washington, knowing it would be wiped off the map. I repeat: there is a much greater risk that a commercial airliner would strike a tower, or that a Cruise missile would be launched from a ship 200 kilometres off the American coast, or that a container could come into a port carrying a weapon of mass destruction.

It is poor prioritization to invest between \$60 billion and \$1,200 billion in this project. We will talk about the figures later. These things are much riskier than an interballistic missile. It seems that some effort is being put into it, but not enough. The missile defence shield will have to come much later, perhaps in 2050 or so.

The threats have been poorly identified. Scientific feasibility has not come into the debate at all. Just think: they made nine attempts with a missile that leaves point X and another missile that waits for the first and then rises to intercept it. This test was successful five times out of nine; therefore they failed four times. Do you think that if someone were sending a missile, they would call the White House in advance to say that they had just sent off a missile from North Korea aimed at New York? That is not how things will work.

The scientific feasibility of this—even the scientists agree—is nearly impossible. So why are we clutching at this idea? It is simple; the military-industrial complex wants this. They will make money from it. At whose expense will Raytheon and General Dynamics make money? At the expense of the public who will foot the bill, as always.

•(1945)

Too bad for the poor Americans. If they put one-tenth of what they want to put into the missile defence shield into other things, the problems of the planet would likely be solved. No more malnutrition, probably no more problems in the world relating to health or education. But no.

The federal government's proposal is the new foreign affairs doctrine: total domination. Domination by air, by land by sea, and by space.

We can see how the Americans are developing their whole strategy at this time. There used to be talk of lunar conquest,<sup>1</sup> but now the American president dreams of planting the Stars and Stripes on Mars, which will then belong to him, as Earth is at risk of doing as well. That is the problem. Canada is in the process of jumping on the American bandwagon.

The U.S. government will perhaps not ask for a lot of money, but it will say—as it is already starting to—that the Canadians were on their side. That is what they are interested in.

The costs are astronomical, as I have said. The Americans are taking it slow, announcing that it will cost some \$60 million to \$100 billion. Nobel Economics laureate Kenneth Arrow says this is not so; the price will be between \$800 billion and \$1,200 billion. That is a lot of money.

This is a sovereignist talking. There is not just a monetary cost, but a cost to Quebec's sovereignty. The big risk for Canada is that it is getting hooked into U.S. foreign policy. Every time the U.S. will say it wants to do something, I can already hear the Conservatives and the Liberals to whom it is very clear. To them, the way to get closer to the United States is through the army. Moreover, to save our economy, we have to follow the U.S. foreign policy. That is what is happening to Canada in the missile defence case.

Personally, I think Canada is making a colossal mistake. The Bloc Québécois is here to say so and will oppose to the end. We are handing out postcards. We started with 20,000 cards stating our objection to this. The Minister of National Defence and the people on his side of the House are probably going to be receiving some postcards. People in Quebec are opposed to this for the reasons I have just mentioned.

In our view, this is a fundamental error since the government will be obligated to follow through. They have started down a slippery slope. There is already a sum of \$700,000 for interim contracts for radars. What will be next? Perhaps the Canadian government will be asked to install missiles on its territory.

*Government Orders*

We are told we are being dramatic. Of course the members opposite and the members of the Conservative Party of Canada think we are being hysterical and that we are trying to instil fear in people. Let me remind them that the role of the opposition is to tell the government that it might not be doing the right thing. Perhaps we should think about this, have a national debate, consult people, adopt a national defence policy and a foreign affairs policy. Perhaps we should ask the taxpayers whether they agree with spending money on this.

Do Canadians agree to having to follow the U.S. lead from now on? At the interceptor phase of the space shield, we will be asked by the Americans if they can base one in our country. How shall we answer? "No, were are out. We do not want it anymore". What will we do with respect to the space component of the program? Will we say we no longer want anything more to do with it? We made a commitment and will have to follow their lead. That is the fundamental danger.

This plan is not Canada. Canada is a peace loving country. We have had Nobel Prize winners in Canada, and I do not think they would be pleased with the current turn of events, with Canadian hawks joining American hawks

I am not sure either that the Americans are all that thrilled. If the Americans were the ones taking the money and giving it to poorer countries to eradicate poverty and terrorism, I think that the substantive question would be resolved. It would probably cost us significantly less than what it is going to cost us now.

I am from a country, Quebec, which is opposed to the weaponization of space, the space shield, and the kind of action that was taken in Iraq. We are being proven right.

● (1950)

I think that, in the end, the people of Quebec will follow the Bloc's lead and oppose the missile defence shield.

I urge the government not to rush. It is going much too fast. It should tell the U.S. that it will not be participating for the time being and will consider it in the future. But as far as we are concerned, weaponizing space is out of the question.

[English]

**Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to ask my good friend and colleague from the Bloc Quebecois a few questions on this issue.

He made the point that he wanted to distinguish himself as a sovereigntist. I must say that being a sovereigntist, as far as I am aware, does not allow someone to violate the laws of logic or to be inconsistent from one day to the next.

The issue that the member raised yesterday in the House during question period was one that was of great interest to me. He asked me a question in relation to a contract for \$700,000 that the Department of National Defence was sponsoring in connection with the high frequency surface wave radar that is produced by one of Canada's defence companies.

This radar is able to see over the horizon and extends to a range of about 320 kilometres. It is normally used for the purpose of tracking ships and low flying planes, as well as ice floes and icebergs and that

sort of thing, but it could potentially be used for detecting cruise missiles.

The member opposite was very categorical in asking why we were potentially participating in these missile detection trials. By the way, we have not made a decision to participate in these missile detection trials, formally in any event.

However he was very critical of the testing of radar systems for cruise missiles and yet tonight we hear him say that he has more concerns about cruise missiles launched from cargo vessels than he does about ballistic missiles.

I would suggest to the hon. member, and maybe he could respond to this, that he be a bit more consistent in terms of his arguments. He cannot say on one day that he is not concerned about cruise missiles and on the next day suggest that they present more of a threat than ballistic missiles.

● (1955)

[Translation]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Chair, obviously I am much more worried about a cruise missile attack on the United States or on Canada than an attack by an intercontinental missile; I admit it.

Yesterday I wanted to say that even the Raytheon corporation that is developing this radar was surprised to hear that it might be given another mission.

The story of the \$700,000 is not clear. I will take the minister's word for it. In return, why does he not let us know what he asked of Raytheon, including plans and estimates? Why would he not allow us to go and look at these on site?

I am the national defence critic. I want to go and see the radar installations and I want someone to explain to me what the purpose of the \$700,000 is.

The minister also knows that the Americans will be carrying out tests this summer with missiles, as they begin to test the system. We think that it is obvious what it is for.

It is the first step on the slippery slope. This is the first money the Canadian government has spent on this. It is also, probably, a loss of sovereignty. Our radar will also serve American purposes. I am not saying that this should not be done. Norad is the classic example.

Nevertheless, the moment when we move into another phase to try to go into the field of ballistic missiles, in my opinion, that is one step too far, and that is what will lead us into full negotiations with the Americans and complete surrender by Canada to the Americans.

[English]

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I do not know where to begin with my Bloc colleague.

If a person were to look at *Hansard* and review his remarks of a few minutes ago I think they would think he was in the U.S. congress. His remarks were more appropriate to being in opposition to what the Americans are doing and to President Bush and the Bush administration than they were in opposition to anything in the Canadian Parliament.

*Government Orders*

If I heard him correctly, he also said that he did not understand where the Conservative Party was coming from on this issue because the role of opposition was just to oppose. That is not the role of this party and it never has been. We weigh each issue on its own merit and make a decision as to whether we are going to support the government in its initiative. Obviously, there are times when we would do things differently.

If the member were to check the voting records, as I have, he would see that I, as a Reform Party member of Parliament, and then an Canadian Alliance Party member and now a Conservative Party of Canada member, have voted with the government about half of the time in my 10 year history as a member of Parliament. The reason for that is that we weigh each issue individually.

The reality is that we do not oppose for the sake of opposition. The reality is that we should be debating the merits of or the opposition to this particular issue. I respect the member for raising concerns about it.

The member also talked about the testing—

**Mr. Jerry Pickard:** The pot calling the kettle black.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Mr. Chair, the member will have a chance to speak a little later. The great thing about this type of debate is that everyone has a chance to get involved and jump up. There are lots of questions and comments. Members do not have to holler.

My colleague referred to the testing of this. The technology for this has actually been called hitting a bullet with a bullet. It is very finite technology and very difficult to do. He referred to the test and said that it was only successful five out of nine times. If there were nine incoming ballistic missiles, I would far sooner have five of them shot down than none of them.

My colleague from the Bloc Quebecois is opposed to this but what is his alternative? Is it to maintain the present huge nuclear missile deterrent? As I said in my remarks, the only other option is to maintain the mutual annihilation. What is he proposing as an alternative?

• (2000)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Claude Bachand:** Mr. Chair, I will answer my colleague as though I were in the U.S. Congress tonight; I will say the same thing.

I will give this speech in Canada while Quebec is still a part of Canada because the government wants to copy exactly what the U.S. wants to do. That is what the Canadian government wants to do. It wants to adopt the same attitude that the U.S. government has because it thinks it will get closer to the United States with this type of issue, but that is absolutely not true.

Does Canada currently wield a lot of control within Norad? No, the U.S. controls 90% of Norad leaving a measly 10% to show the international community that they have left something for the Canadians.

The truth is, everyone knows that the U.S. controls Norad. It is unlikely that if a Canadian general were to say at Norad that we do things differently that the U.S. would listen.

It is the same thing with the space shield. The U.S. will decide because they know they are powerful. Moreover, Canada's contribution will be no different than that of the U.S. If we could have stepped back and said things are going too fast, we will wait, this would have been more consistent with Canadian policy. That could have provided much greater dividends for Canada internationally than saying that from now on we will follow the U.S. on military matters.

In my view, that is the fundamental issue and they are going to miss the boat.

[*English*]

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to have the opportunity to enter into the debate this evening, a debate that is long overdue.

This of course is just a superficial scratching of the surface compared to what we have an obligation to undertake as members of Parliament, which is a thorough review of this whole question in the context of the foreign policy and defence review that the government claims to be committed to, and at the parliamentary committee level where it is absolutely imperative that the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade follow through on a commitment made a year ago that we would do a full exploration and debate of this whole question of national missile defence before any decision is made by the government to commit to the course of action that I think at the moment we have reason to be afraid the government will embark upon come hell or high water.

I note that both on the government side and on the official opposition side we have again the attempt to demonize the New Democratic Party, to accuse our leader, Jack Layton, and others of fearmongering, exaggerating and generally just whipping Canadians into a storm about this for no good reason.

I want to say for the record that I am very proud of the work my leader, Jack Layton, has been doing on this issue. I think a great many Canadians are extremely grateful for the fact that they have a voice in this Parliament at least with one political party, namely the New Democratic Party, to voice their opposition to any further engagement by the government in the complete sheer lunacy of the Bush national missile defence program.

We need not depend on just New Democrats sitting in the House for informed views on this question. We need go no further than the clear, principled, informed statement made in the House today by the member for Davenport. It is no wonder the member for Davenport does not want anything more to do with the Liberal Party of Canada or this Liberal government. He gives a number of reasons but I will briefly cite two reasons as the basis for his absolute opposition to any Canadian participation in the proposed missile defence system.

He points out that there is ample evidence that the U.S. intends to weaponize outer space and furthermore, that once the Government of Canada enters into discussions and negotiations with the U.S. administration, it would be very difficult to extricate itself.

*Government Orders*

I commend to all Canadians that they read the statement made by one of the few remaining real Liberal members of the Liberal government when he concludes by saying “I urge the government to keep Canada out of the missile defence venture and to concentrate its energies instead on peace rather than on belligerent measures called defence systems. Canada's interests are best served by being at the disarmament rather than at the armament table”.

It is a shame that members on the Liberal benches have turned such a deaf ear to the message from the member for Davenport that he clearly no longer feels that he really belongs in that political corner of the House.

I think a gross insult has been hurled at Canadians when members on the government side and in the official opposition, who, we might point out, are indistinguishable from one another on the issue of missile defence, when it is clear that they are insulting Canadians when they talk about the NDP somehow preying on Canadians' ignorance about this issue by putting forth information that is not factually based.

I assume that members in the other parties in the House have been receiving the same kind of thoughtful, thorough submissions from a whole variety of Canadians, NGOs, think tanks, academic groups, all of whom have been diligently doing their homework on this issue and, no thanks to the government, have come to their own conclusions having done their own studies.

• (2005)

Let me quickly refer to a couple. Again it is obvious that the government either has not even bothered to familiarize itself with the important work that has been done by Canadians and for Canadians, or else it has familiarized itself and has completely rejected the kinds of conclusions reached.

Let me refer quickly to a couple. The Canadian Pugwash Group is a very fine group of Canadian thinkers, researchers and analysts who have made a detailed study of this question and have come clearly to the position that the Government of Canada should:

...desist from any participation in this endeavour. Participation in any aspect of NMD will undermine Canada's sovereignty and lock us into huge expenses hindering our ability to fulfill our other political and military commitments, in particular maintenance of properly equipped peacekeeping or intervention forces. Canada should, instead, be pursuing its priorities within the UN framework.

That certainly does not describe what it is the government is committing us to in terms of participation with the United States.

The Group of 78 is a group of some of the most distinguished former ambassadors, including two former ambassadors for disarmament representing the people of Canada, and a whole range of experts in the field of foreign policy, peace, defence and disarmament. The Group of 78 states categorically, “Canada should not participate in the U.S. ballistic missile defence program”. It goes on to make the point that there has to be a full engagement with Canadians around this issue before any further steps are taken by the government to implicate us in the missile defence program. And this is even before it gets to the question of the weaponization of space.

I urge the government to begin to pay attention to the careful work that has been done by these organizations. The Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament Studies at UBC has a paper that has been

authored by Ernie Regehr, the distinguished director of Project Ploughshares, but endorsed by the director of the Liu Institute for Global Issues, under whose watch the Simons Centre operates.

The former foreign affairs minister of the country for this government, Lloyd Axworthy, clearly stated his opposition to missile defence involvement by the government, as well as Gerry Barr, the president and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation. Again, there are the two former ambassadors for disarmament in this country, the hon. Senator Doug Roche and Peggy Mason. Professor John Polanyi, a Nobel laureate, has been very clear on this. The list grows and grows.

Let me refer briefly to a forthcoming book that sadly is not available in its entirety yet so it could be referenced in this debate tonight. It is by Mel Hurtig and is entitled *Rushing to Armageddon: Paul Martin and George W. Bush's Star Wars*. He makes the point that the government is hiding behind bogus public opinion polls that say that something like 67% of Canadians favour participation by our country in the U.S. star wars program. They are bogus polls. Those who are using those polls know that they are bogus polls and I am sorry to say that it is not only government members who are doing that, but there are some members of the media who are prepared to use such bogus polls too.

This is not a distinguished chapter in Canada's foreign policy history. Let me just say in conclusion, as we will have time for further debate, that Jack Layton, my leader, and I spent a day and a half in Washington last week. We met with many members of Congress, NGOs and former military personnel, every last one of whom said that they consider there is no possibility whatsoever that the Bush NMD program will lead to anything but the weaponization of space.

• (2010)

They are desperate to see Canada not participate in this madness and in fact take a strong principled stand. I am not sure of the exact number, but 130 to 140 members of the American Congress have voted against the budgetary measures and have voted against the participation in star wars.

This is not just about 14 members of this House sitting in this corner in the form of the New Democratic Party caucus. There are very large numbers of Canadians who are looking for leadership on the issue and they want to see it from their government.

Let there be no mistake about this. If that leadership will not come from the government, and it is already clear that it is not, and it absolutely is not going to come from the Conservative caucus, then let this government understand that there is going to be the same kind of mobilization against the missile defence madness that is going to lead to the weaponization of space as there was a mobilization against any participation by Canada in the war on Iraq.

In the final analysis, I think that it is that voice—

**The Chair:** Regrettably, I ask the hon. member to now take questions because I have let the time go well beyond.



*Government Orders*

• (2015)

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will keep it short because I see that my colleague from across the way would also like to pose a question.

I take exception to the member for Halifax stating that her leader, Jack Layton, is contributing factual information to the debate. The simple truth of the matter is that he has been fearmongering. He has been raising the legitimate concerns of Canadians to a higher level through the use of terminology like star wars, son of star wars, weaponization of space and all this type of nonsense.

I would draw her attention to a guest editorial that was written by Jack Layton. It appeared in a number of newspapers across the land, I believe, including the *The Globe and Mail*. This example is from the *Ottawa Citizen*, in which he states:

The cost of a fully operational Star Wars exceeds \$1 trillion U.S. Were Canada told to contribute only one per cent of the cost—and it's unfathomable given Bush's fiscal situation we'd be told to pay nothing—we would have to pay \$10 billion U.S.

That is the type of nonsense that her leader she is bragging about is putting out there in national newspapers in Canada. There is no foundation in fact for that type of information.

I would ask the member to defend the number he states: that Canada would be forced to contribute \$10 billion U.S. to this. We have not been asked to contribute a dollar to it.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Chair, I have to say that I am extremely pleased that this question has been raised, because among the numerous concerns so eloquently expressed to us by Canadians from all over the country, one is the highly suspicious and deeply worrisome notion that has been perpetrated by the government, that is, the U.S. actually does not want any money for this. It is not going to cost us anything. We are just being asked to kind of sign on.

I have to say that person after person and organization after organization who have approached us, written to us and made submissions to us are asking, "Who is the government kidding?" The notion is that Canada would be invited to participate in something that is so fundamentally important, supposedly, to our future security—what a notion of security—that it is not going to cost us anything.

Let me say that there have been numerous attempts, and it is not easy to do, to calculate what the full cost may be of this program that is mapped out, the twenty-twenty vision for the next 20 years by the American government. Numerous attempts have been made to calculate what the potential cost is and \$1 trillion is the figure that is put forth again and again by American defence experts, analysts and academics. The figure that is cited, if Canada were just asked to pay 1% of that trillion dollars, leads to a \$10 billion figure.

I cannot state strongly enough how irresponsible it is, given the constant citing of scarce dollars by the government, to commit us to \$10 billion for something that is not going to work, is going to escalate the arms race in this country and for certain will lead to the weaponization of space.

**Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I think what we have in the corner here is what my friends in the military would describe as a target rich environment from the standpoint of arguments.

I am just flabbergasted by what the hon. member said in terms of this \$1 trillion figure. I do not know where the mathematicians are in the NDP, but the current spending of the U.S. Missile Defense Agency is approximately \$9 billion per year. At that rate of spending, it would take over a century to spend \$1 trillion.

The hon. member should know as well, and should appreciate the fact, that if the NDP wants to take the high moral ground on this issue, if that is what the NDP members are seeking to do, then they owe the people of Canada the truth on this issue in terms of giving them the straight facts without trying to embellish this, without trying to gild the lily as far as the arguments go.

On the basis of the facts, so many of the arguments that the NDP members have just do not stand up.

I would like the hon. member to respond to that issue, but I would also like to have her respond on the issue of the threat that exists, because implicit in the NDP's position is the fact that there is no threat. But the facts are—and we know what the facts are—that there are countries out there like North Korea. They pay absolutely no regard to human rights. They have starved their own people for the sake of a weapons program. The North Koreans actually lowered the height requirement for soldiers in their army because they are so undernourished. The people of Korea are so undernourished that they just have not grown.

We have been prepared to launch missiles across the Sea of Japan; that was five or six years ago. Is the NDP saying that there is absolutely no threat out there, that we need not concern ourselves with the fact that there are countries that are ready, willing and potentially able to launch ballistic missiles directed at free democratic countries like Canada and the United States or even South Korea and Japan?

• (2020)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** Mr. Chair, I am not sure I am going to have enough time to answer all those questions.

Let me quickly address the first on cost. Let me quote directly the spokesperson from the coalition for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

By the way, I should say it continues to be a source of great frustration to that coalition that it has not been able to get a hearing with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade. I hope that is going to change since everybody agrees that this is a very critical issue for us to be addressing.

On that issue, the president of the Canadian Network to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Bev Delong, said the following:

What will be the cost to the public purse of our participation in missile defence? Will we pay 10% as with NORAD or 40% as with the construction of the North Warning System? If there is no cost, what will we 'owe' to the U.S. in upcoming trade discussions? Must we kowtow for ever? Will that political debt ever be paid?

Let me go on to the second question that was raised. It was about whether we do not recognize that there are some threats, that there is some basis for people feeling insecure in our world.

This is an e-mail that I received today from a representative of the Voice of Women for Peace, one of the finest peace building, peace educating groups in this country, with a very distinguished record. Eight answers are offered to that question. Let me very briefly cite three of them.

BMD will not protect North Americans from terrorism. Terrorist acts such as the attack on the World Trade towers tragically demonstrate that Cold War defence strategies will not work in the 21st century and instead will provoke rather than deter attacks.

Second, human security is dependent upon respect of internationally recognized human rights and an equitable distribution of the world's resources. Defence policies must recognize that peace will come from justice, not from military might.

Finally, human security would be greatly assisted by diverting monies from ill-conceived weapons to social programs, environmental solutions, international human rights protection, disaster assistance and development aid.

**The Chair:** The hon. member for Halifax's time has elapsed.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of National Defence.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. David Pratt (Minister of National Defence, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I am very proud to take part in a debate on such an important national issue.

[*English*]

I would also like to offer my congratulations to my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for his excellent contribution to this debate.

As the House is aware, I have exchanged letters of intent with the U.S. Secretary of Defense confirming that it is in the interests of both of our nations to discuss cooperation in the ballistic missile defence of North America. I want to be very clear that while we have taken the decision to discuss this issue, we have not taken a final decision on Canadian participation. This will only be done once discussions are complete and Parliament has been consulted. When the time comes, we will take a principled decision based on our national interest and based on our values.

We recognize that this is an important issue for Canada and Canadians. That is why we have gone to great lengths to encourage informed discussion on missile defence. For example, the government responded in an open and frank manner during the two debates that took place on missile defence in the House last May, as well as when we announced the beginning of discussions with the United States on May 29, 2003.

The government has also heard from parliamentary committees that have examined various questions surrounding missile defence. The government has engaged security and defence experts, non-governmental organizations and individual Canadians interested in this issue. Internationally we have been engaged with our allies in seeking to address the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile technology.

### *Government Orders*

As you can see, Mr. Chair, the government has not only welcomed the diverse views it has received on this issue, it has actively sought them out.

I want to be clear about what is at stake and why the government has taken such a measured and methodical approach. First and foremost, this is an issue concerning the safety and security of Canadians, the most important responsibility of any government, and it is one that we take very seriously.

As we made clear in the recent Speech from the Throne, "there is no role more fundamental for government than the protection of its citizens". Canada remains committed to a comprehensive approach to protecting Canadians with emphasis on multilateral non-proliferation, arms control and disarmament processes, as well as effective diplomatic engagement. A responsible government, however, must be prepared to look at any measure, any system that could protect the lives of its citizens today, tomorrow and in the future. Certainly a responsible government must be prepared to look at a system designed to prevent a potential nuclear explosion delivered by a ballistic missile and the unimaginable human tragedy that would result from such an attack.

The second reason Canada is proceeding with negotiations on ballistic missile defence for North America is to safeguard our sovereignty. To many this may seem like an abstract concept, but it is not. The United States has announced that it will have an initial missile defence system in place no later than the fall of this year, and we know that the Americans are moving ahead and working hard to make this a reality.

Canada's participation in ballistic missile defence would involve Canada in decisions concerning the missile defence of our continent. The alternative would be to allow the United States to make these important decisions on its own with all the implications this would have for our sovereignty. This would not be prudent, nor would it be responsible. Indeed responsible nations want and demand a seat at the table when matters affecting their security and defence are being considered.

Some would have Canadians believe that we have proceeded with discussions on missile defence in an attempt to mend fences with the United States. This is patently false. After careful analysis and thought, and after taking into account the diversity of views on this issue, we have proceeded with discussions with the goal of protecting the safety and security of Canadians, and with the goal of protecting Canada's sovereign interests.

Some have attempted to confuse Canadians by referring to missile defence as star wars. This is a false characterization and it only takes away from informed and honest debate. Star wars was prohibitively expensive, technologically unworkable and in the end, strategically unnecessary. The missile defence system that is now being put in place by the U.S. is not star wars. It is a much different system than the one envisioned by the United States 20 years ago. It will employ land and sea based missile interceptors. It does not involve in any way weapons in space.

● (2025)

Canada continues to oppose the weaponization of space. We have made this point very clear to the United States.

*Government Orders*

Some have said that the missile defence system will not work. This is certainly not our preliminary assessment, nor is it the assessment of the United States. Again, we are looking at the facts, not myths, not speculation and not, as we have heard from the NDP tonight, third and fourth hand information.

Some have said that the missile defence system would encourage other countries to build more and better missiles, thus sparking an international arms race. There has been absolutely no evidence of this to date. In fact, the evidence seems to discount this argument entirely.

Finally, some have argued that it would be un-Canadian to support missile defence. I would like to know why it is un-Canadian to look at ways to enhance the safety and security of our citizens. I would like to know why it is un-Canadian to look to protect our sovereign ability to take decisions on the defence of our own territory.

● (2030)

[Translation]

The current government recognizes that there is no unanimity on this issue.

[English]

It is important, however, that we at least discuss and debate the facts surrounding missile defence. We must not allow falsehoods and fearmongering to cloud the issue. Missile defence involves the safety and security of Canadians and it involves the exercise of Canadian sovereignty.

We certainly believe that it deserves passionate debate, but we also believe that it deserves reasoned and factual debate.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Chair, since the debate began this evening, both the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence have been trying to make us believe that the American anti-missile defence plan does not constitute the weaponization of space.

But, when we look at current anti-missile defence development plans, about 30 land and sea interceptors are to be installed by fall 2004, with about 20 additional missiles to be deployed in 2005, as well as giant sea-based detection radar to be installed. No problem so far. However, a fleet of up to 24 detection satellites and space-based interceptors are being considered for 2012 and are included in the development plan.

Does the Minister of National Defence not agree that, given the development plan provided, which we have here, contrary to what he would have us believe, this does in fact constitute the weaponization of space?

This is in the development plan. Can the minister state that what I have said this evening is false? Does the development plan include a fleet of up to 24 detection satellites and orbiting interceptors as of 2012?

[English]

**Hon. David Pratt:** Mr. Chair, the hon. member is simply wrong. I cannot emphasize that enough. I cannot say it loud and long enough that he is wrong in terms of what he is suggesting.

There are sensors in space. There have been sensors in space since the early days of Norad. We have used them. They have been part of the system of missile warning and attack assessment. That is part of the existing system. That is what has been referred to as the militarization of space, not the weaponization of space. These are two very separate issues.

The other argument I would address is the issue of weaponization of space from the standpoint of what has been spent on this issue. There is some research being done.

Out of a \$9 billion budget in the United States, approximately \$14 million has been spent on space related research. That is .15% of the overall missile agency defence budget. That is a minuscule amount. Those who think that at that rate of spending the Americans will be able to put space based weapons into place any time soon are deluding themselves completely.

This is not about the weaponization of space. The existing system is based on a land and sea based interceptor system. As other hon. members have said, it will be based in Fort Greeley, Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. It has no space based weapons in the system. As far as we know, there may and likely never will be any space based weapons. That would certainly be my guess, but who knows what the future holds in that respect. We cannot predict out 50 years, 100 years. That is impossible. That is absurd. We should not even be engaged in that sort of speculation when we are talking about the system that is under consideration right now.

● (2035)

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Chair, since we have been invited by the minister to engage in facts, could we have some from him as to what his defence department has done. Has it issued these contracts worth about \$700,000, and I am quoting now from the *Ottawa Citizen*, “to try out Canadian radar technology in U.S.-run trials of the missile shield this summer”? Have we in fact committed \$700,000 to that? Who is in control of those tests? If we have committed, then I have a supplementary question.

The radar system is one that was developed by Raytheon here in Canada. I think it was mentioned earlier by my colleague from the Bloc that Mr. Jim Graaskamp is quoted as saying, “We have no idea what this is about, whether it can carry out this task”. Then he went on to say, “The specific product designed for Canada is not designed for missile detection. There is no demonstrated capability that this technology can be used for ballistic missile defence”.

If we have committed to it, how does the minister justify it when in fact the producer of this product is saying it has no capability to do what is proposed to be done?

**Hon. David Pratt:** Mr. Chair, I tried to explain this earlier to another hon. member, but I will take another whack at it and hopefully, we will be able to get some information out there for the hon. member.

*Government Orders*

Raytheon produces what is known as a high frequency service wave radar. It is intended to detect things like ice floes in the north Atlantic. It is intended to detect low-flying airplanes. It is intended to detect ships. It is an over the horizon type of radar. That is what the spokesperson for Raytheon was talking about. It is not intended for ballistic missile defence, but potentially it could be used in a cruise missile type detection scenario. That is what the defence department is interested in exploring with companies like Raytheon. For that matter, the defence department has not decided whether we even want to participate in these trials.

The nature of the radar system that is produced by Raytheon would lend itself to cruise missile defence, not ballistic missile defence, which I think explains what the hon. member is trying to get at.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to cite further from one of the e-mails that I received in my office today in anticipation of tonight's debate. It goes as follows:

While Minister Pratt has dismissed the issue of the weaponization of space... President Bush has presented a budget to the U.S. Congress that specifically funds the space-based portion of BMD. The Pentagon's Fiscal Year 2004 budget request contains substantial funding in three space-based mission areas: Force projection and space control... Space-based elements of the Ballistic Missile Defense System... and Space-based command, control, and intelligence... Taken together, the budget request seeks almost \$3 billion in 2004 for strategic war fighting from space, and more than \$30 billion over the [next five-year] timeframe.

I wonder if the minister could explain the contradiction between his insistence that the NMD is not about the weaponization of space yet we see that there are three space based components that are without a doubt tied in with the 20-20 vision already set out by the Bush administration to move to the weaponization of space.

**Hon. David Pratt:** Mr. Chair, I think the one thing that the NDP has been hanging its hat on in this entire debate is documents that typically are background papers. They are certainly not policy documents.

One has to look at where the money is actually being spent, where the money is being spent within the United States, within the missile defence agency. As I just mentioned a few moments ago, the fact is that the U.S. is spending about \$14 million out of a \$9 billion budget. It is a minuscule amount.

Look at the amounts that are being spent, not the amounts that are proposed by various groups. I think that is an important consideration and it is something that the NDP seems to completely ignore.

● (2040)

**Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would not want the viewing public to think that only the NDP is opposed to this. There are many Liberal members who are equally firm against this concept. I would like to thank the members of the NDP for some of the excellent research they have done on this issue.

The minister has repeated over and over again that he has the facts, but repeating does not make his opinions facts. Evidence can be found on the American defense department website and the website of the National Space Agency suggesting that his white coating of the intention of the Americans in this realm is not true.

It is true that suggestions around weaponization of space might be deferred until maybe 2012. However, the fact that this is the

intention does not erase the need for us to question it, when it will have such a negative effect on the stability of the world and the possibility for world peace.

I do not know why, and I would like to ask the minister—

**The Chair:** I am sorry to interrupt the member but time has run out. I will ask the Minister of National Defence to respond to the comments already made.

**Hon. David Pratt:** Mr. Chair, we have to separate what has been requested by the President in past budgets and what has been approved by congress. The figure of about \$14 million being approved in this year for missile defence is based on a \$47 million request by the President. Congress ended up approving \$14 million, which is .15% of the overall missile defence budget.

What the administration asks for and what it gets from congress are two different things. Let us deal with the facts rather than speculation. That is all I am saying.

**Mr. Stockwell Day (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC):** Mr. Chair, first it is somewhat comforting to know that, as we address this issue this evening, we have the significant support of Canadians. Polling as recent as November on this issue shows that seven out of ten Canadians want Canada involved in some kind of North American or even larger missile defence system, so it is good to know that we are speaking on behalf of the majority of Canadians.

It is also good to know that we are not alone as a country in following the lead of the government. We are not alone as a country in wanting to be involved and seeing the efficacy of being involved in missile defence. Australia has indicated its involvement and its pursuit of this form of defence as well as Japan, Britain, South Korea, India, Israel, Russia and other NATO countries. Not only are we speaking for a majority of Canadians on this issue in terms of ballistic missile defence, we are also considerably engaged with our allies around the globe.

The focus here is a defensive focus. This is somewhat unique in terms of conflict and of the preparation for possible attack as we look through time. Really, the only other times we could see an emphasis on defence was the actual building of castle walls to keep oneself and one's citizenry protected from the catapults, arrows and other things with which belligerent forces were threatening.

We are talking about a defensive system of 20 ground based interceptors, eventually leading to 20 sea based interceptors that would in effect form a protective wall against the possibility of nuclear attack, of nuclear capability, nuclear weapons obviously carried upon ballistic missiles that came toward our nation and the nations of our friends.

A government's number one responsibility to its citizens has to be safety and security. It would be negligent and I would suggest it would be delinquent of the government if it were not to do everything it could do within reason to pursue the defence of its own citizens.

*Government Orders*

No dollar amount is being asked for from the Canadian side. Our input is being requested. We have the marvellous precedent of being involved in Norad with our U.S. allies. In fact we have significant command and control positions in Norad itself in terms of this North American defence system. We are already plugged in. It has been relatively successful, and Canada has had a significant impact in terms of the involvement and how the principles of Norad and North American defence are applied.

To say that we would not be involved in these discussions, that we would not use the expertise we have, and the concern we have for peace and for proper defence, and shut ourselves out of that makes no sense, no common sense, no strategic sense and no foreign policy sense. This is the most peaceful option available to deter the threat of states that have declared they want to eliminate other states, other jurisdictions.

We hear the argument all the time that this will not stop somebody carrying a dirty bomb in their knapsack and that this will not stop the release of a chemical attack in the ventilation system of a skyscraper or the water system of a city. Of course it will not, but it will significantly deter and possibly shut down one avenue of attack.

It would be naive of us to say that belligerent nations would ever even think of using some kind of air based attack on other nations. We do not have to think too far back to realize that is exactly what happened with 9/11. Jet airlines became ballistic missiles filled with explosive fuel and hostages. I cannot believe the member for Halifax laughed at that suggestion, at that tragedy. It was a case of airplanes being turned into ballistic missiles.

● (2045)

When Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, we saw very clearly his missiles, which were flying through the air, being knocked down by a U.S. based interceptor system called Patriot missiles. I wonder if the NDP would say that it would have been better not to have had that missile defence system in place, just let those Scud missiles go in and let innocent, peace loving citizens of Kuwait be decimated by the tens and hundreds of thousands.

We are talking about a missile based defensive system to deter the possibility of nuclear capability armed on ballistic missiles being launched, especially against peace loving nations. It would be naive to suggest that North Korea, one of the most vicious regimes on the earth today with its ballistic capability, would not use its weapons. What are those people who are opposed to this thinking? Do they think that if we just sat back, North Korea and its vicious and demented leader would put their weapons away because peace loving nations did not have missile defence systems? What would mainland communist China's view be? Why would it not be involved in this system? They have 400 missiles aimed across the straits of a democratic Taiwan.

We are in need of a missile based defence system. We also have to look at the other areas of protection such as chemical warfare and the small so-called dirty bombs that could be brought into our cities in vehicles. However, do opponents prefer the old method of mutually assured destruction, where we develop the capabilities to destroy the world, who knows how many times over? Many time it hung on the brink? The Cuban missile crisis was one those times of brinkman-

ship. Would they really prefer that type of system? That is a deterrent which mutually assures destruction.

A ballistic missile defence system mutually assures protection. We have opponents of this system saying that we should not be involved and that we should piggyback on a defence system that would be there for us. However, ostensibly, we should be left outside of the system.

I am sensitive to the cry of the heart of some of the MPs who say that we and our allies should not put any money into this. That money should all go into food for people. We need good health care around the world. We need it in Canada. We need to see the poor fed. However, it would be naive beyond description to abandon our responsibility to provide for the safety and security of our citizens by staying outside of the system.

By having a proper defence system, we can then allow the other areas of our economy to move ahead and provide the health care, provide the food and provide the education and the programs that democratic, freedom loving nations have. They take a stand against belligerent nations, like North Korea, that are starving their people literally by the millions. The estimation over the last few years is two million people in North Korea have starved, while their country puts so much of its effort into offensive attack style missile systems.

There are not many times we get to congratulate the government on a positive initiative. We should be involved in the discussion of the protection of our citizens in a responsible defence based way. We should be developing a system which we would share with all other nations in terms of defence. That would be the ultimate deterrent. Why would belligerent nations then spend the money to develop ballistic missile capabilities when they would know they would face an array of defence systems that would easily knock them down?

The system is not perfect. Obviously it has to be developed. What we have proven, and with our involvement in Norad, is Canada needs to be there. We know what global peace is all about. We understand what makes democracy work and what makes a nation strong. We need to be there. It would be delinquent for us not to be. I do congratulate the government for taking this positive initiative.

● (2050)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Chair, the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla has stated quite specifically that 7 out of 10 Canadians favour Canada's participation in national missile defence.

First, could the member enlighten the House on what specific question was put to Canadians on the basis of which he bases this report? Second, who conducted the opinion research that led to that conclusion? And third, where is that research actually reported so that Canadians who are interested in analyzing the findings of that poll could actually study and familiarize themselves with it?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Chair, that is a fair question. I cited a Michael Marzolini Pollara survey done as recently as November. The question that was put to Canadians asked whether they supported the notion of Canada being involved and participating in some type of missile defence system. That was the question that was put and 7 out of 10 Canadians said yes.

**Mr. Loyola Hearn (St. John's West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, my colleague spoke in detail about how important it is for us to become part of the plans for the future of defending North America. Over the last  $x$  number of years we have seen the steady decline of government support for our armed forces which has weakening the forces. How often have we heard it said across the country "Thank God the Americans are there to protect us"?

I ask him, how long should we go on expecting others to defend us? I congratulate the government on the initiative of looking at being part of this suggested procedure because is it not time that we played our part in ensuring that our country is well defended? If not, somewhere along the line we will pay a very heavy price for our negligence.

• (2055)

**Mr. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Chair, that is a fair observation. Clearly, the perception is out there that Canada is not carrying its weight on this issue.

Not just under the Liberals for the last 10 years, but under the Conservatives earlier, there began to be a decline in the funding of our national defence. Incumbent with that was a loss of influence around the NATO table for Canada. As a matter of fact, Canada was significant not only in the development of NATO, but also the United Nations.

Why was that? What earned us the right in the mid-forties, post-World War II, then moving into the fifties, to be there at the table in such a significant way? It was the fact of our involvement in the first world war in terms of national defence. The total population of the country was 8 million at the time and we saw 625,000 men going into combat. We were in that war three years ahead of the Americans.

People like to say the Americans tend to be belligerent. We were there three years before they were. We were in the second world war before the Americans were in a very significant way. It was because of our commitment to national defence and our armaments that we earned a place of influence at the table of peace when they were talking about the League of Nations, the United Nations and peacekeeping moving into Israel in the fifties.

We earned that and we need to earn it back. We cannot continue to piggyback along and not have any commitment. We need to be there on these issues.

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Mr. Chair, I was interested to hear the hon. member's observations about our historical participation. However, he will surely agree with me, because I listened intently earlier this evening to the member for Peace River about why his party is supporting our approach to this issue, that it is a very calibrated approach.

It is an approach which recognizes that Canada has had an independent voice in foreign affairs. It has had a way in which we

have contributed to peace, a way in which we want to contribute to North American defence but bring a Canadian perspective.

I know that the hon. member will want to reiterate what his colleague said when he said that his party is not in favour of weaponization of space. He approves of the government going into these discussions in a way that represents and focuses on Canada's interests in a North American defence with our American allies, which we have been doing since the Ogdensburg agreement, since he is so interested in history. However, it would be in a way that would also preserve a Canadian perspective.

The hon. member and the members of his party have been critical of us for not rushing into this more quickly. I want to ask the hon. member, does he not think that we want to ensure that when we go into these arenas, when we enter into these arrangements with our American colleagues, that we do so in a way that is consistent with Canadian traditions, and that we bring our own perspective on peace in the world?

**Mr. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Chair, the Minister of Foreign Affairs asked why we are supporting the government's approach to this. Actually, we are congratulating the government for supporting our approach in this area of security and defence.

The government has been dragging its feet for eight years on this and finally it has done the polling on our approach, which is to be involved in North American security with a good perimeter. Also, I am somewhat cynical talking about its polling practices, but the government sincerely believes it is the right thing to do and I want to give it the credit for that.

This has everything to do with Canadian sovereignty. The sovereignty that we established over the decades is there because we recognized the importance of being properly armed as a nation so that we could protect our own and should the occasion arise in the global village—when the global bullies, as they always will, try to move in on weaker nations—Canada can indeed be there.

That has been something that we have always supported. I appreciate the minister raising that. It is a calibrated approach, of course. We say that this should be done step by step by watching where we go, and as we go, being involved and committed to North American defence and the development of a scientific and technological system which can be shared with—

• (2100)

**The Chair:** Order, please. The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Mr. Chair, reference is being made to the poll. The Conservative Party, formerly the Alliance Party, was prepared to go into Iraq when the country was clearly 75% opposed to it. That party was opposed to Kyoto when the country was in the same percentage in favour of it.

Has the member from Okanagan actually seen the alleged question that Pollara asked and if he has, could he table it in the House tonight?

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Stockwell Day:** Mr. Chair, I do not have it with me tonight. I will do my best to get it by tomorrow and get it tabled in response to the member from the NDP, formerly the CCF Party.

It is interesting that the NDP talks about going with the people and the D in the acronym NDP is supposed to stand for democratic. However, when the people want something that the NDP does not want then of course it rejects the poll and finds it hard to accept it.

I will do what I can. I do not have the exact poll with me. It is available on the Internet and I will do my best to have it tabled and send a copy to the member.

**Mr. Pat O'Brien (London—Fanshawe, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to join the debate this evening on this important topic of ballistic missile defence.

Listening tonight, one would think that certain members think that this is somehow an off-the-wall idea that has come out of left field, that has come out of nowhere. In fact, this debate and the idea of continuing to participate in the defence of North America is a continuation of the defence policy of this country for the past 60 years.

It seems that some members are completely ignorant of history and the fact that during the second world war, Canada and the United States became defence partners in the defence of North America. We formalized that defence partnership in 1957 with the Norad treaty, which continues in force to this day.

In my view, it is in our national self-interest to participate in these negotiations with the United States to ascertain as fully as possible the facts about what the United States proposes in this missile defence system and what part Canada possibly might want to play if it takes a decision to participate.

I am glad that the Conservative member opposite who just spoke is still in the House. I want to recall for him that in 1999 and 2000 the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, which I was pleased to chair at that time, held an extensive set of hearings on the issue of national missile defence. The facts will show that the Alliance Party of the day was calling for Canadian participation in this system before the hearings were even held, or before the Americans even asked. So let me set the record straight on exactly what the positions of our two parties have been over the past two years.

I would like to address certain statements that I have heard tonight and relate back to those hearings of the SCNDVA in 1999. In fact, the current Minister of Foreign Affairs will recall that we held one or two joint sessions with the foreign affairs committee, which he chaired at that time.

The member for Halifax has earlier cited that there were certain witnesses who wanted to come before the foreign affairs committee and present evidence. I can tell the House that we had dozens of witnesses appear before the SCNDVA in 1999 and 2000, and none were turned away. No input was turned away. There was every opportunity for any interested group or Canadians to give evidence and express their views on this important issue.

I was a bit dismayed to hear the member for Halifax cite former foreign affairs minister Axworthy as someone who is now a critic of

the system. I can tell the House that I was pretty dismayed at that time, as the chair of the national defence committee, to have the then minister of foreign affairs try to discourage us from even holding the hearings at all. Now he is calling for full and open debate and discussion.

Well, that is fine, but that opinion is some three and a half years late because at the time we held these hearings, we had discouragement from the then minister of foreign affairs. With the support of the then defence minister, my colleague from Toronto, the defence committee went ahead and rendered a good service in holding those hearings.

The issue of cost has arisen this evening a number of times. Different numbers have been bandied about. What was very clear in the hearings that we held was that Canada would not be asked for a significant financial contribution. In fact, according to the Canadian and American military personnel, the most likely contribution Canada would make is what would be called an asymmetrical contribution at Cheyenne Mountain. We would contribute more people and more effort in the other responsibilities and duties of Norad, thus freeing up American personnel to proceed with the lion's share of the work in the national missile defence system.

•(2105)

The issue of this not being star wars has been raised and the Minister of National Defence has addressed it. Let me briefly reiterate that because I am concerned. I accept that there is a valid debate but I do not accept a blatant distortion by anyone, a member of the House or any other Canadian, who insists that this is a Reagan style star wars, when in fact it is not.

The Prime Minister of Canada, the current Prime Minister and the current Minister of National Defence have been definitive in saying that Canada remains opposed to the weaponization of space.

If we were to agree to participate in a ballistic missile defence system and if, at a future date, that took a turn toward the weaponization of space, Canada could simply refuse to participate, just as we can opt out of Norad on a regular basis right now, as we have had the right to do for a number of years.

It has been stressed that this was an initiative of the Bush Republican administration. That is simply not true. At the time that we were holding these hearings I would recall for members of Parliament and other Canadians that the president of the United States was Bill Clinton, a Democrat. Therefore to think that this is somehow a right wing idea from one party in the United States is factually incorrect. It does no good to perpetuate that falsehood.

The United States is clearly determined to proceed on this course of a ballistic missile defence system. Witness after witness at our committee, from ploughshares right through to American and Canadian generals, were asked: Given a choice of unilateral American action to proceed on a national missile defence system or having that system headquartered at Norad with Canadian participation, what would be your preferred option even if you were totally opposed to the idea?

*Government Orders*

Not a single witness expressed that it was preferable to have unilateral American action. In other words, as the Minister of National Defence has said and as the Prime Minister has reiterated repeatedly, it serves the national self-interest of Canada and Canadians to be a part of these negotiations, to know what is going on, to have a full and vigorous debate in the country and in Parliament and then to make a decision whether it would be in the best interests of Canada to participate in this national missile defence system or BMD.

The idea has been propounded that such a missile system will not protect North America, that somehow a suitcase bomb is a more likely threat. That may well be. There is a plethora of threats out there. That is the point. It would be irresponsible for Canadian parliamentarians or American politicians not to at least consider actions that could be taken which might possibly deal with one of a number of potential threats, one of those certainly being ballistic missiles. One has only to consider the actions of North Korea to know that is seriously a potential threat.

We had the argument at committee that this will start an arm's race and that it will create a much more dangerous world. I think all of us were very concerned about that possibility and we listened intently to the expert advice.

Quite frankly, there is a preponderance of evidence that shows that in fact this will not result in an arm's race, that one could very seriously argue that this defensive missile system will in fact create a safer world.

One of the objectors at that time was Russia. It had major objections. Predictions by Russian experts at that committee were to the effect that the Russian objections would disappear over time. Guess what? The Russian objections have disappeared over time. Most of the expert advice that we heard three and a half years ago has come to pass today.

The argument has been made that we are going into this defence system or we are considering going into this defence system simply to mend fences with the United States. That is just silly. I do not know what other way to put it.

This country and any government serving this country will operate as independently as possible, given that we are in a defence partnership with the United States and Norad. It will make the decisions that it views best for the Canadian people and in the interest of world peace.

• (2110)

One need only recall our decision not to go into Iraq to understand that we do not necessarily follow the United States in every decision it makes in a military sense or in any other sense.

We had the argument presented at committee that the system could never possibly work, that it was just crazy, that it was goofy. Experts told us that given time and an investment of dollars, the system would be made to work. The latest information I have is that more and more of the tests of the system are proving successful. I think it would be incredibly naive not to understand, given the world of technology we live in now, that there is every possibility that the system can be made to work.

The fact is—

**The Assistant Deputy Chair (Mrs. Betty Hinton):** Order, please. I am sorry but time has run out.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Madam Chair, I understand the committee issued a report, which I think was a unanimous report, indicating that we should not proceed with participation in this without further discussion and further reasons for participating.

If I am right about that, and I think I am, what has changed? I cannot say that we have had much further consultation since those committee meetings, but what has changed?

**Mr. Pat O'Brien:** Madam Chair, I guess one of the regrets I have is that very few members of the House, on either side quite frankly, have taken the opportunity to look at the report the committee submitted in June 2000 and which I had the honour to table in the House.

The committee was not unanimous because the Alliance Party, as I said, even before the hearings were held and even before the Americans were asking anything of us, said that we should just salute and definitely join this missile system.

To answer my colleague, the report was, what I would term, a summative report. It was a report to cabinet and to the Parliament of Canada. It summarized all the evidence that we had, both pro and con, but did not recommend that we participate or not participate. I just wanted to clarify that for my colleague. The report did say that further discussion was warranted by the Government of Canada. That is the track we are on tonight.

What the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Defence are saying is that further negotiations and discussions on such an important system are required. Surely that is warranted between Canada and our bilateral defence partner, the United States of America.

• (2115)

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to perhaps set the record straight. The hon. member for London—Fanshawe attacked my colleague who spoke earlier to the issue, the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, saying that he had somehow misrepresented the situation during his remarks earlier this evening when he congratulated the government on finally catching up to our position.

The member for London—Fanshawe said that was not the case and then turned around and basically said that it was by stating that we have been on the record for quite some time now saying that we should be involved in this.

We looked at this issue back in 1999 and 2000 and came to the conclusion that Canada should be rightfully involved in this through Norad as our allies had requested as they moved down this road to try and get this missile defence shield in place to protect not only the United States of America, but Canada as well. Yet he is critical of that. I do not understand where he is coming from because he was critical of that and yet he has readily admitted that the government is finally, although belatedly, moving in that direction.



*Government Orders*

He says that the government wants to have more discussion on this but the fact is that we have been discussing it and government, supposedly, has been discussing this with our ally, the United States, for some eight years now. How long will it go on discussing this before making a bloody decision?

**Mr. Pat O'Brien:** Madam Chair, I am not interested in being terribly partisan on this issue and I did not intend to attack anybody. However I did take umbrage and I will repeat the umbrage. When that member, the one the member mentioned, spoke earlier this evening he said that we had somehow come on board with the former Alliance position. That is patently wrong.

With all due respect, neither the member who just spoke nor the Conservative member who gave the speech were part of the SCNDVA hearings that I referenced earlier in 1999 and 2000. At that time the Alliance Party was clearly on record as saying that we should announce our full participation with the United States in BMD. That is not even yet the position of the government. The Prime Minister has not said that nor have any of the relevant ministers.

What we have said is that we want to continue to move further into negotiations with the United States to look at what our possible participation might be and to see if it is in the national self-interest of Canadians.

With all due respect to my colleague, that is quite different than saying we must definitely go ahead and participate in this missile defence system.

We have not come on board to the member's position. In fact, the Alliance Party's position, with all due respect, in my view, was premature. I understood where they were coming from but it was premature.

To this point the Government of Canada is not yet up to that position. We may well move in that direction and I may well feel that we should move in that direction but that is the purpose of the negotiations: to see if that is the decision the government will take in the self-interest of Canadians.

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Madam Chair, I am trying to get to the bottom of this.

The hon. member is stating that the Liberals are not following our position but that is exactly what they are doing. It is almost like we have to drag them kicking and screaming toward the position of supporting our allies on this important issue.

Because he has, as he has said, been involved in the discussions, how long does he think these negotiations will go on? Is eight years long enough to make a decision that this particular defence agreement between two nations for the continental defence of North America is in the national best interest of Canada?

**Mr. Pat O'Brien:** Madam Chair, let me reiterate for my colleague that in June of 2000, as everyone will recall, we were moving to a rather important event called a federal election. The Alliance Party at that time was categorical that we should have already announced, definitively, our full participation with the United States in this ballistic missile defence system. That was the position of his party at that time. That was not the position of my party or the Government of Canada at that time.

The position of the Liberal Party was that this was something that was very important, that we ought to engage in negotiations with the United States and that we ought to see what the pros and cons of potential Canadian participation would be. The two positions were quite different.

We have not adopted the position of the former Alliance Party because if we had done that, we would have announced it three or four years ago. The fact is that we are in intensive negotiations to weigh the pros and cons of whether Canada will make a decision to participate.

I do not know where my colleague comes up with the eight year figure. This system was announced by President Clinton. It was in its infancy in 1998 or 1999. This is not a series of negotiations that has been going on for eight years. Maybe he and I could talk later and I could find out where he gets this misconception.

As one individual Canadian and one individual member of Parliament I believe that we ought to move toward participation in this missile defence system with the United States. After all, we are a full partner in Norad.

Where he and I differ is that I want all the facts in front of me. I want to have, as the Prime Minister has said, a fulsome debate in the House and in the country. I want to involve Canadians before I simply salute and tell the Americans that we will come on board. We need a national debate and the debate tonight is part of that national debate. That is a major point of difference between his party and mine, with all due respect.

● (2120)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Madam Chair, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to take part in today's take note debate on the missile defence shield. Although this is an evening debate, it is nonetheless giving parliamentarians a chance to express their views on an important issue.

The position I will express today on this is based on two fundamental principles, two values which are fundamental to Quebec society. The first of these is that the Quebec people is a peace loving people. Hon. members will recall how Quebecers manifested their firm opposition to the conflict in Iraq, with demonstrations in the streets of Montreal.

Second in importance for Quebecers are democratic values.

My position is, therefore, based on two values: pacifism and democracy.

First of all, what is the missile defence shield? It is a system of radar to detect enemy missiles, and of interceptors to destroy those missiles.

We must look at what the development plan presented to us today by the U.S. government represents, a plan on which Canadian MPs and the Canadian government would be required to take a position.

*Government Orders*

First of all, the present plan comprises some thirty interceptor missiles that will be in place on sea or land by the fall of 2004. There would be another twenty or so by 2005; seagoing detection radar will be installed; a fleet of missile-detection satellites—as many as 24—and then orbital interceptors in 2012. Lastly, an Airborne laser-equipped aircraft.

Since this debate began this evening, the government, both the Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of National Defence, have been trying to convince us that the project as presented at this time is not about the militarization of space.

How do they explain, then, that the development plan includes a fleet of detection satellites, up to 24 of them? How can they say this is not the militarization of space, when there will be orbiting interceptors as early as 2012?

It is written in the development plan. If the Minister of National Defence is honest with this House he will admit one thing. He even admitted it this evening, when he said, “We cannot predict what will happen in 20, 30 or 50 years”. He admitted it this evening, when he said that we do not know what the future holds.

Except that we have before us a plan that, in effect, opens the door to the militarization of space. When we look at the schedule presented here today, there is something for this House to worry about. There is something for Quebecers to worry about.

For example, the plan assumes that the Pentagon has planned to develop and deploy 10 missiles in Alaska, in California and at sea in 2004. By 2005, 16 land-based interceptor missiles will be installed at Alaskan bases and 4 more in California.

Not only is this plan very clear, but so is the schedule. Therefore, there is something to worry about because the costs of this project are astronomical. As my colleagues have already pointed out, the United States Missile Defence Agency, as the lead agency, has worked out budget plans for 2004 to 2009.

In early January, the Minister of National Defence of Canada wrote to his American counterpart to announce that Canada would participate in the project, and that there were only details to be worked out. There is something to worry about here, because the costs are estimated at upwards of \$60 billion.

The conclusion we can draw today is that, in the end, the missile defence shield is useless because, as we must admit, it could never prevent the terrible events of September 11, 2001.

Moreover, this missile defence shield involves weak technology. In nine tests where the targets were very well known, only five succeeded. Four tests failed. That is inadequate technology that should be studied much more closely, in our opinion.

• (2125)

Finally, the costs are astronomical. If we apply the funding formula under Norad, Canada should spend at least \$3 billion U.S., or 5% of the \$60 billion currently forecast. A per capita funding formula would mean that \$7 billion Canadian would be required over the next five years alone. It is therefore clear that the costs of this project are astronomical.

It also means ignoring the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade which, in June 2000, concluded that the government should not take any measures concerning the missile defence systems being developed in the United States, because the technology has not yet been approved or tested and details concerning their deployment are not known.

Parliamentarians must insist, at the very least, on a free vote on this issue. Each member of this House, particularly members from Quebec, must consider the distinct character of Quebec when voting. Quebecers have voiced their views on numerous occasions during the Iraq conflict. If seven out of ten Canadians are in favour of the missile defence program, I am utterly convinced that seven out of ten Quebecers are opposed.

In our opinion, the voice of pacifism and democracy must take precedence, not the voice of the American administration which withdrew from the ABM treaty and clearly indicated, a few weeks later, that it supported and approved of an missile defence program.

If the government wants to respect democracy, it will allow a free vote on this issue. I was happy to hear today that various Liberal members are opposed to the missile defence program. However, if the renewal and freedom of expression that this government and the Prime Minister have called for during the past few weeks are to mean anything, parliamentarians must be allowed to freely express themselves and vote freely on this issue, in order to reflect the values they hold dear.

• (2130)

[English]

**Hon. Art Eggleton (York Centre, Lib.):** Madam Chair, in the period since the end of the Cold War we have seen a proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems. We have seen a diffusion of technology going throughout the world that has been used in those cases to develop chemical, biological and perhaps even nuclear weapons.

We have heard just in the last few days about nuclear secrets coming out of Pakistan. Just in the last year or two, we have seen the development of two-stage missile systems, medium to long range missile systems out of North Korea, not necessarily for their own use but perhaps for sales to others.

If this trend continues, then it is quite conceivable that somewhere in future years we could see a launching of an intercontinental ballistic missile against a city in North America with a nuclear or some other kind of warhead on it.

I would think that if that kind of circumstance were to occur, I would not see that anybody would object if we could send up a missile to destroy that incoming missile before it hit its target.

That is all we are talking about. We are talking about a defensive missile system. It has no warhead on it, but it goes up into space and at a very high speed hits the incoming missile and destroys that missile before it can hit its target and kill literally thousands upon thousands of people.

*Government Orders*

I do not see why anybody would be against having that kind of system. That kind of system is not star wars. It does not lead to an arms race. It is a completely defensive system. It does not lead us down the path to weaponization of outer space.

I do not believe that we are going to see the Americans go that route any time soon, but even if ultimately they did, there is no reason that we have to be there with them. In fact, we should not be there with them. We oppose the weaponization of outer space.

There are those who say "but if we get into this path of ballistic missile defence it is a slippery slope". No, it is not. We quite clearly indicated in the war on terrorism that we would go to Afghanistan with our American allies, but we did not go to Iraq. We made a decision that we felt was in our national interest. We went to one and we did not go to the other.

We can make those kinds of distinctions and those kinds of decisions on any other matter, including this whole question of how far to go on these defensive weapons. Weaponization of outer space is something that this country opposes and should continue to oppose.

Nor do we have to go with any substantial capital costs. The Americans have already provided for the capital costs for this system. Quite frankly, we could not afford it in any event. There could be some costs with respect to administration, with respect to operational issues of having additional personnel at Norad, for example, but we would not be participating in any substantial capital costs.

If this sounds like the system is a fait accompli, that is because it is. It is not something that has been invented by the Bush administration. In fact, it is the subject of a piece of legislation that passed through the United States Congress in 1999: the national missile defence act. It was signed into existence by the former president, Bill Clinton. The current president has said that they will deploy missiles starting this fall.

Starting this fall: so I think there is a need to get on with this in discussion with our American allies, because if they are going to make decisions that affect the safety and the security of the people of North America, then I think it is in our national interest to be at the table.

Being at the table involves, to my mind, Norad. Norad is the agency between Canada and the United States that we have had for over 50 years and that has successfully monitored anything coming into the airspace of North America. It detects missiles coming in. It can detect any object from outer space. It detects aircraft. Originally it was designed to detect strategic bombers coming in over the Pole from the Soviet Union as it existed in those days, but today it plays a very important role in detecting anything happening in our airspace.

● (2135)

It was very vital on September 11, 2001. Norad quickly moved to deal with the issues involved and to have planes come into Canada at that particular point in time, as many of them did. They controlled the airspace. There was a Canadian in the command position at the time of the disaster of 9/11, so Canada played a very key role in that.

Norad can detect anything coming in and it can send jet fighters up to deal with anything, except that it does not have missiles. Missiles are the one missing part of a defensive system. If we do have an incoming offensive missile, Norad is the logical entity to be dealing with sending up a defensive missile to destroy it.

I think we need to work that out in the Norad context. If we do not, then the Americans will be making these decisions on their own and we will be left outside the door. It will marginalize Norad. We cannot afford to have that happen. We need to be there. We need to be part of the decision making process. That is certainly in the interests of the people of our country. I hope that is the decision we will ultimately make: to be a partner. That is in our interest.

**Hon. John Harvard (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is nice to hear the remarks from my good friend from Toronto. I know that he has been a long-time supporter of our participation in missile defence, particularly in getting into discussions and negotiations leading to something which he believes will be of benefit to Canada. I suppose all of us would like to think that whatever the participation is on the part of Canada, it will benefit and enhance the security of our country.

I think that my friend from Toronto knows as well as I do that the real concern about missile defence is, where does it take us? As proposed, the current proposal is just the first round of technology. There could be a second round of technology. We all know there is deep concern that what it will lead to is weaponization.

That is one of my questions. Does he feel confident? We are opposed to weaponization; that is our policy. Is the member confident that if this project, this technology, whether it is in its first phase, its current phase or some other phase, gets too close, too uncomfortable for us with respect to weaponization, Canada can withdraw?

The second question I have has to do with what I would call the imprimatur of legitimacy. I think what the Americans want from us more than anything is our stamp of approval. They want to say, "Hey, look at those good Canucks, those good, innocent, freedom loving, peace loving Canadians. If they can support missile defence, it cannot be all bad, can it?"

Those are my two questions. I am sure that my good friend, who is quite sanguine on the issue, will give us some good answers.

● (2140)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** I would first like to recognize that I made an error when I called on the member for Charleswood St. James—Assiniboia. He has received an earned position as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade. I apologize.

I would now like to call on the hon. member for York Centre.

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** Madam Chair, we will only go as far as we feel it is in our national interest to go. We do not want to go in the direction of the weaponization of outer space. Even if the Americans eventually go there, we do not have to go there, just as we did not go to Iraq.

*Government Orders*

We make the decisions that are in our national interest. I believe this is in our national interest, but to go to the weaponization of space is not. I have every confidence that Canadians know where to draw the line, where it is in our interest and where it is not in our interest.

In terms of trying to please the Americans, they are our closest neighbour, our closest friend and ally, and our major trading partner. We certainly want to work with them in terms of defence and security of North America, just as we work together in all those other areas. We have to look at what our interests and our values are. We have to determine whether we can go in this direction with them. Sometimes we will be able to go with them and sometimes we will not.

We will make those kinds of distinctions. I have every confidence that the government and the people of this country will do what is in our own national interest.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Madam Chair, I would just like to pick up on the member's assurances that at any point, if it is not considered in our national interest and it becomes clear that the Americans are headed for the weaponization of space, Canada would just draw the line and pull back.

This is why I raise the question. As I mentioned earlier, my leader Jack Layton and I were in Washington for a day and a half last week. Without exception, the military personnel with whom we met, the U.S. Congress members with whom we met, and the representatives of a number of different, reputable, respected NGOs with whom we met, all said that NMD is simply a way station on the way to the weaponization of space, and that in fact most informed Americans know that NMD cannot work and will not work, that it is an impossibility, that it will never work.

It is like the emperor has no clothes. We talk about NMD. We are going to get through this phase but actually what we are moving to is the weaponization of space because we think that is what we need and that is what we are committed to.

Does the member think that there is really any such thing as Canada signing on to NMD and not finding itself drawn into the weaponization of space, which is, very clearly, from all the documentation available from all sources, precisely where the Bush administration intends to go with this?

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** Madam Chair, not everybody believes that is where it is ultimately going to end, but even given that a lot of people say that—and the member has quoted a number of people—we do not have to be there with them, just as we were not there with them in Iraq. We took a stand. We said no. We did not agree with what they were doing there. We did not agree with them operating outside the multilateral process. We were not going to go that way. People said that we were going to pay a price for that, but we said, “No, we believe that is the right thing to do”.

We will do what we believe is in our interests and what is in the interests of the worldwide community. Weaponization of space is not in the interests of the worldwide community.

If the United States ultimately decides to go there, we will just say no. We are with them in terms of missile defence. It is a discrete system. It is a system that can work.

● (2145)

**Ms. Alexa McDonough:** There is no evidence that it can work.

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** Oh yes, the Americans have had a number of tests that have worked. In fact, for any country that can put a man on the moon and can put the kind of equipment that they have on Mars, it certainly will not take long before they master this technology. They will.

It is a discrete system. It is one that we can sign on to and say, “Yes, that is in the defence of North America. That is a completely defensive system”. As we have said to them quite clearly, “If you go to weaponization of space, we are not going to be there with you”.

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Madam Chair, I want to make reference to the latest comment by the member for Halifax. She keeps saying that it is obvious from all of the documentation she has seen that the Bush administration is going to weaponize space, that this is where the Americans are going. The reality is that George Bush might not even be president past November.

Does the hon. member think for a moment that we are going to have weapons in space between now and November? As I said in my speech, if we are faced with that scenario, it is going to be years down the road. The NDP is always holding up this threat of the possible weaponization of space as some reason not to sign on to a land and sea based missile defence shield for North America; it talks about the potential, possible future weaponization of space.

The reality is that if it does happen, it will not happen for a long time and there will be many opportunities for Canadians to voice their concerns about that and to ensure that down the road, if that is the direction they take, we do not participate in that facet of the agreement.

**Hon. Art Eggleton:** Madam Chair, the member is quite correct. Even if George Bush were to be re-elected, there is no way that this system, any kind of weaponization of space, could possibly be deployed in his time as president and certainly Canada would not be there. Canada would not be supporting that.

**Hon. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it is certainly relevant that the member for Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Aldershot, who resigned from the Liberal Party today, said that one of the reasons he left the party was he felt that the opportunities to express different points of view were no longer as welcome as they had been in the past.

If there is an issue upon which there are certainly diverse points of view in this Liberal Party, it is indeed this issue. I am heartened by the fact that with this take note debate we will be able to hear the points of view of many different Canadians, including many Liberals, who have serious concerns about the course that is being charted by the government.

As I was reviewing some material in advance of this evening, I came across a letter, and I have had dozens of letters cross my desk on this issue. I thought this letter summarized better than any letter why the son of star wars should not be a choice for Canada. It is a letter addressed to the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs. It states:

### Government Orders

Although joining Star Wars has some practical benefits for Canada, it represents such a fundamental deleterious shift in Canadian policy that we should reject it.

The practical benefits include not having to say “no” to the United States, military cooperation benefits, and possible investment opportunities. I understand that these are attractive.

Star Wars participation should be rejected on three grounds: First, it starts our participation in nuclear war fighting. Second, it involves us in a dubious legality vis-à-vis the ABM treaty. Third and most important, it promotes the military empire building strategy that is behind Star Wars. In addition, once we join Star Wars it will be impossible to back out.

The letter was actually written by a family doctor in Coquitlam, British Columbia. He went on to state:

**The Shield:** In nuclear war strategy early warning is like the “eyes”, nuclear weapons are like the “sword”, and missile defence is like the “shield”. Careful military analysis sees the “eyes” as stabilizing because a country can be confident that it is not being attacked. On the other hand, with nuclear weapons, the “shield” has always been seen as destabilizing. A country looking at its enemy's nuclear weapons will be very nervous if it sees its own retaliatory force being rendered useless. Each of that country's several possible responses make the earth a far more dangerous place.

Canada has rightly been part of the “eyes”. To become part of the “shield” starts us on a new dangerous path. We become part of nuclear war fighting. We will for the first time participate in a project that makes the earth and Canada less safe.

**The Law:** Breaking international agreements may not matter to everyone, but I think it should matter to Canadians. Reading Article 15 of the ABM treaty reveals that the treaty was meant to be of unlimited duration....

Russia has done nothing to warrant termination of this treaty. To join with Star Wars would condone the renegeing of the ABM treaty.

**The Monster Plan:** I would invite you to look at the website of the Project for the New American Century. Their statement of principles is signed by Dick Cheney, Jeb Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, among others. They talk about total American military supremacy and Star Wars as its centrepiece. They plan military domination of space and from there unchallenged domination of the earth. This is a monster plan. Furthermore, the American Department of Defense's missile defence website includes this total Star Wars plan.

● (2150)

No getting out: If Canada joins Star Wars it is joining the whole plan and for all time. Can you imagine a future Canadian Prime Minister trying to back out of Star Wars and the American President saying: “But it was you who asked to join. It was clear that we intended from the beginning to eventually put weapons in space. It was even on our website. Our militaries are now integrated in this project. Canada cannot back out now.” If Canada joins Star Wars, we are effectively locked in.

In conclusion: The decision of whether to join Star Wars is one of the most momentous in Canadian history. Are we to choose to be part of a nuclear war fighting machine? I hope not.

I believe we can best help our American friends by diligence at our border, by peacekeeping missions, and by development of international law. This has been our course to date. We should not abandon it.

Sincerely, Earl B. Morris, M.D.

There are far wiser persons than I, and some even wiser than Dr. Morris, who have set the reasons for us. Above all, the strength of Canada has always been based on our capacity to build bridges with the world. Building a wall around North America by joining this plan will reduce our opportunities to build bridges with the world.

I see our country, and I see our party, as one that builds bridges. There are no shields strong enough to fight hate. What fights hate is the capacity to walk in the other shoes.

[Translation]

What can really counteract war and hatred is the ability to know oneself and one another, and to see oneself reflected in the diversities of the other; If we decided to reject everything and come out in favour of this warlike American mission, this would forever be

harmful to Canada's opportunity to give hope to all the world's cultures about the possibility of co-existence.

This is why this undertaking of the Americans must stay with the Americans. Canada must have a sovereign voice, a voice that speaks out against President Bush's bellicose policy.

● (2155)

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Beauport—Montmorency—Côte-de-Beaupré—Île-d'Orléans, BQ):** Madam Chair, I simply want to congratulate the hon. member for Hamilton East and wish her good luck during her nomination meeting, which will be held on March 7. I hope that, with 10,000 members, it will be held in Copps Coliseum. I will not call the member by name, but the Hamilton arena bears her name. Unless they try to hold it in the Valeri Arena, but there is no such arena in Hamilton. It is the Copps Coliseum there.

I want to thank the hon. member for Hamilton East for her comments. I know that she is very sensitive to Quebec culture. I have had the opportunity to discuss this with her. She knows my riding, which includes Île-d'Orléans, well. I think she has family and friends in Île-d'Orléans. She is quite sensitive to Quebec's views.

I want to tell her that I think her view shares a great deal with the position of the Bloc Québécois. This is consistent with a statement she made in *Le Soleil* on May 11, 2003. She simply asked the following question, and I want her to expand on this. She said:

How can recommendations on the weaponization of a country be made without first consulting the public?

She also said the following day, May 12, 2003, in *Le Devoir*:

There must be a public debate before we move on the issue of star wars. The cabinet acting alone cannot reverse the direction this country has taken for the past 20 years.

I could quote other statements. This new government—or should I say this new Prime Minister?—that was sworn in on December 12, promises us that it will work very hard to overcome the democratic deficit. I would like the hon. member for Hamilton East to tell us if the direction the government is taking at present is part of a movement or if, once again, the Minister of Defence's views are dominating. We know his views and his position on the missile defence shield. Does the hon. member for Hamilton East agree that the people should be consulted on such an important subject?

I thought it was interesting that she launched her campaign at a Tim Horton's. She really wanted to demonstrate that she was a leadership candidate who was close to the people, close to ordinary folks. I would like her to tell us whether Canada has the means to spend billions of dollars for the weaponization of space, when the needs we have here are so glaring, while 1.5 million children are living in poverty and often do not have enough money to eat before they go to school.

*Government Orders*

**Hon. Sheila Copps:** Madam Chair, of course what is being proposed will cost billions of dollars. Although we are being told it will not cost Canada anything for now, we can be sure that as soon as we sign on with the United States, money will be required.

Take Iraq for example. How much has this cost in lives and massive destruction? In the past year, 250,000 people in the world have been killed in such wars. If there is something we can be proud of in the past year with respect to the former government's mandate, it is the fact that we were able to make an independent choice regarding the war in Iraq.

I do not think that if we had joined the U.S. we would have had this freedom of choice with respect to the war in Iraq. It is impossible to claim to want both an integrated military force and freedom of choice. My colleague, the member for Toronto Centre—Rosedale, said earlier that if we decide to withdraw at any given time, it will be our choice.

Look at what happened when 10 or 20 soldiers participated in a pilot project shortly before the war in Iraq. There were barely 20 soldiers, but we could not pull them out because once the plan was implemented, once the system was in motion, it was too late.

That is why I am confident—I know the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I know he is very sensitive about international issues—that the debate that is beginning today will generate discussions, not only within Canada, but also within the Liberal Party, and we will find out what hon. members and the public really think about this critical decision for the country. I am certain this debate is a first step toward such discussions.

• (2200)

[*English*]

**Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Madam Chair, I welcome the member back to the House. I hope her nomination battle in Hamilton is going well. I assume it must be, otherwise she probably would not be here. Since she is, we appreciate that and her remarks.

During my intervention earlier this evening, I referred to the fact that I was a bit disappointed the government decided to opt for this framework for a debate, a take note debate, rather than have a debate that culminated in a vote. I remarked that I supported having discussion and debate here and across the land about this important issue. I did refer to the fact, however, that I believed it should culminate in a true free vote on an issue like this.

Given her comments about her former colleague and the decision that he came to today and given her opposition to the position of her government on this issue and others, would she support having a free vote in the chamber on Canada's participation in the ballistic missile defence?

**Hon. Sheila Copps:** Madam Chair, not being the government House leader, I cannot speculate as to what the government would suggest, but as an ordinary member, of course I would welcome a free vote.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Madam Chair, the member, whose intervention is extremely welcome here this evening, has made the point, one that is very important to Canadians, that Canada is known in the world and Canadians take some pride in

our being a nation that is involved in bridge-building and a nation absolutely committed to multilateralism.

In contrast to that, I received, as we all did, various reminders from people about their concerns with respect to the approach of the United States to multilateralism in recent times, particularly as it relates to star wars. As one person wrote, "the U.S. is firing on all cylinders to get star wars in place" and pointed out that in December of 2002, the U.S. abrogated the international treaty on anti-ballistic missiles testing.

In December 2003 the U.S. cast the only dissenting vote on the UN resolution for a comprehensive test banning treaty. In December 2003 it voted against the total elimination of nuclear weapons. In December 2003 it also voted against a nuclear-free world. It voted against the obligation for nuclear disarmament, again in December 2003, and abstained on a vote at the UN to prevent the weaponization of space. In fact, when the UN general assembly voted on a resolution, specifically the prevention of an arms race in outer space, on which well over 160 countries voted in favour, the U.S. opted to abstain.

Could the member elaborate further on where she thinks this puts Canada in terms of our relationship with the other peace-loving, peace-building nations in the world that are concerned about the weaponization of space?

• (2205)

**Hon. Sheila Copps:** Madam Chair, one of the most potentially dangerous aspects of this discussion is the potential on the part of Canada that this is our *mea culpa* for Iraq, that somehow because as a country we chose to exercise our sovereign decision on Iraq, a decision that I think was widely supported around the world but a decision that was not very popular south of the border, that we are limiting our choices for the future.

I believe that one of the reasons the Department of National Defence has been very anxiously pursuing this agenda is because it sees it as a way back into the hearts of their American allies. I do not think that is the basis for which a sound decision should be made. That is why I totally support the position stated earlier by a member of the opposition that there should be a full debate and a vote on this issue by all members. I do not think it should be part of the horse trading that goes on because somebody wants a contract in Iraq.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—St. Clair, NDP):** Madam Chair, let me start this evening, as one of the last speakers, to try to do a summary of what I have heard. The debate has centred itself—

**Mr. Jay Hill:** Madam Chair, I rise on a point of order. I think there might have been an inadvertent error. It was the Conservative Party's opportunity to speak in the rotation this evening, and my colleague is present and did rise in his place. I just wonder if, with the indulgence of the member, we could correct that error.

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** For the edification of the member for Prince George—Peace River, the member for Calgary Southwest came to the Chair and asked to speak last.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Madam Chair, it seems to me that the debate this evening has centred around a number of points. The first one and perhaps the one that is most telling and compelling to my party is the issue of the weaponization of space.

I listened to the Minister of National Defence, to a lesser degree the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the official opposition collectively suggest that we are being naive in our opposition. I want to throw that accusation back at them.

We are faced with a government that has made it very clear that it intends to weaponize space exclusively on its behalf. I am going to quote from a statement made by Donald Rumsfeld in January 2001:

—the US Government should vigorously pursue the capabilities called for in the National Space Policy to ensure that the President will have the option to deploy weapons in space to deter threats to and, if necessary, defend against attack on US interests.

As we know Donald Rumsfeld is now the Secretary of Defense.

I will quote from Keith Hall, the assistant secretary of the Air Force for Space, in a 1997 speech to the National Space Club. I understand he was instrumental in developing the national space policy referred to by Mr. Rumsfeld. He said:

With regard to space dominance, we have it, we like it, and we're going to keep it. Space is in the nation's economic interest.

That is the government we are proposing to go hand-in-hand with into this so-called missile defence shield.

I want to go back and repeat what we heard in the last few minutes from the member for Halifax.

We are also dealing with a government that in the last two years has abrogated the international treaty on anti-ballistic missile testing. That was done in December 2002. It cast the only dissenting vote on the UN resolution for the comprehensive test ban treaty in December of last year. It voted against the total elimination of nuclear weapons in December 2003. It voted against a nuclear free world in December 2003. It voted against the obligation for nuclear disarmament in December 2003. It abstained on a vote to prevent the weaponization of space in December 2003.

These are all very current actions taken on the part of U.S. government, and I believe our government and the official opposition are proposing we join hand-in-hand with it. They Liberals have told us this evening and they have told the country repeatedly that this is not about the weaponization of space. That is simply not the reality with which we are confronted.

We have to go back to 1967 when we discussed and entered into the outer space treaty. I want to quote from that treaty. It states:

The exploration and use of outer space, including the moon and other celestial bodies, shall be carried out for the benefit and in the interest of all countries. "Space" is not subject to national appropriation by claim of sovereignty.

That is a complete contradiction to what we are hearing right now from the leaders in the United States. They very much intend to grab it, if they can do it.

● (2210)

The Americans are looking to this country because of our history of being opposed to war unless absolutely necessary, and our history

of fighting for reducing weapons in the world, not increasing them. They are looking for our stamp of approval.

James Carroll wrote recently in the *Boston Globe* about the weaponization of space. He wrote about the general population in the United States and its leadership. He asked:

And where is the defense of the idea, once sacred to Americans, that outer space marks a threshold across which human beings must not drag the ancient perversion of war?

What we have heard from most of the government members, fortunately not all, certainly from the official opposition, is that they are prepared to go into this missile defence shield. They are prepared to do that with blinkers on. They are prepared to give the Americans a blank cheque.

The Minister of National Defence quoted some figures about how much money was going to be allocated simply for space, not ground based or water based weaponry. When he had figures thrown back at him, it was clear he had not heard them before. He had no way of responding. That level of lack of knowledge is extremely scary to me and I think to Canadians.

When I asked the Minister of National Defence about whether the government was entering into contracts, in other words, already starting down the road joining up with the Americans in some testing of a radar system this summer, he did not answer me. He did not answer the member from the Bloc and he did not answer the question yesterday when it was put to him in the House. He was waffling on that and that is scary.

About a week ago I was at an event with a number of veterans, active military personnel and reserves. What became clear in our discussion, that was off the record obviously given some of the participants, was the fear by the existing military forces of wasting money on this system that is not going to go to the military personnel that we have in place now and all of the needs that we all know they have. If we move forward on this as a government, we betray them. We also betray all Canadians.

● (2215)

**Hon. David Pratt:** Madam Chair, since my name was raised in the context of the debate, I feel compelled to respond. It is not uncommon for the NDP to use all sorts of figures in terms of this debate. The \$1 trillion figure is one that it uses with abandon, in terms of how often it is used and how little credibility that particular number has. We know that.

From that standpoint, the NDP members are always throwing out different figures and if I have not heard them, chances are most Canadians have not either because they pick them out of their back pocket and just throw them out in terms of trying to scare people about the sort of system we are contemplating and are about to engage in discussions with the Americans.

That is obviously a concern, but the other issue that the hon. member raised was the issue of the \$700,000 contract of the Department of National Defence. For the third time tonight I will try to explain this to the hon. member.

*Government Orders*

This involves high frequency surface wave radar. From our perspective, it is based on the capability of the radar to look over the horizon. It would be particularly well suited for cruise missile defence. We have not made a decision within the Department of National Defence as to whether or not we will go ahead with these missile detection trials.

However, to go back to the figures that the hon. member talked about, we have to concentrate on what the Americans have spent. They have spent \$14 million in the last year on space based research out of a budget of \$9 billion. That \$14 million is the equivalent of about four armoured personnel carriers. It is not enough to get us to space, it is not even close.

The position of the government has been made clear by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The position has been made clear by many speakers in the House as one of opposition to the weaponization of space. The NDP should know that. It refuses to believe it for some reason. The same applies to the Bloc. I would urge the NDP to be honest with Canadians. All of this talk of star wars is not true. Canadians by now should know that it is not true. Why is the NDP scaring people with this talk of star wars? It is not a fact.

The Americans talked about a star wars system in the 1980s. I mentioned this in my speech. It did not go forward because it was extremely expensive. It was technologically impossible and it became strategically unnecessary. It is my personal view that this is likely going to happen with the space based research that is going on right now. It will probably be proven to be technologically impossible, financially very crippling for the United States, and strategically unnecessary.

What we are contemplating is a land and sea based missile system to protect Canadians and North Americans. Why is that so controversial? I do not understand. Why is it so difficult for the NDP to understand that we are trying to protect Canadians and North Americans, and that we are not doing this alone if the discussions with the Americans are successful. The Japanese and the Australians are involved, the South Koreans are involved, and so are the British. These are not war happy people that we are talking about. These are our allies and our friends.

If the NDP would at least be honest with Canadians, we could raise the level of this debate. We would end up with a much more satisfactory result in terms of the understanding that Canadians would have as to what this system is all about.

• (2220)

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** The hon. member for Windsor—St. Clair. There are three other members who wish to speak this evening, so if we keep our questions short and brief, perhaps we can fit all three in.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Madam Chair, I assume that admonition was more for the Minister of National Defence than for me, because I will be brief.

In this morning's *Ottawa Citizen* one of the minister's staff said that tentative contracts were issued this week for the \$700,000. This evening we are hearing that, no, we have not done that yet. That is where that information comes from, and that is factual—

**Hon. David Pratt:** That is not what I said. We may not go ahead with the test.

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Madam Chair, the problem we are having is that the government, and in particular I am going to point the finger at the Minister of National Defence, is trying to slide us into this missile defence system. That is what he is trying to do.

He does not really want a debate in this country. He knows that if we go to the facts the government will lose. If Canadians hear what is really going on with this so-called defence system, they will hear the minister saying that he does not know. He has not heard that \$3 billion will be spent this year on space based equipment. He does not know that, and he does not want the country to know that either.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Madam Chair, the chicken littles from the socialist party—the same people who were in favour of unilateral disarmament during the cold war—claim that the adoption by democratic allies of ballistic missile defence technology will lead to a new arms race.

My question is very simple. Is my friend not aware that when President Putin, on behalf of Russia, acceded to the American abrogation of the anti-ballistic missile treaty two years ago, after the summit in Washington, the two countries also signed a nuclear arms control agreement where both countries agreed to reduce their nuclear warheads by up to a third of the nuclear arsenal of both the United States and Russia?

Is he not aware that the advent of this defensive technology laid the ground for a one-third reduction of the nuclear arsenals of the two major nuclear powers of the world, with a promise for further and future reduction of nuclear warheads?

How can he argue that this will lead to a new arms race when, if anything, it has resulted in the opposite, which is a reduction of nuclear warheads?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Madam Chair, I am aware of the arrangement between Russia and the United States. I am also aware, and I will repeat for the third time this evening, that the U.S. abrogated the international treaty on anti-ballistic missile testing.

It cast the only dissenting vote on the UN resolution for a comprehensive test ban treaty. It voted against the total elimination of nuclear weapons. It voted against a nuclear free world. It voted against nuclear disarmament. It abstained on a vote to prevent weaponization of space.

That makes the country safer? Not by one bit.

• (2225)

**Hon. Bill Graham:** Madam Chair, I totally agree that we must have a serious debate about this issue; however, I would ask the hon. member if we cannot at least get the basic facts straight.

When we talk about a missile defence shield, as if this were going back to the time of trying to defend against the Russians, the Chinese, and everything else, surely the hon. member and his party will recognize that is not what this is about. This is a limited land and sea based system which is designed to deal with rogue states and would deal with a very limited form of attack.



*Government Orders*

All these strategic theories that were put forward which would be destabilizing in fact persuaded me some years ago that we should be engaged in this type of thing. The world has moved on and 9/11 has occurred. Things have occurred and we have moved on. There is a different strategic atmosphere today.

Is the NDP willing to talk about that new strategic atmosphere in which we operate, in which Russia has said that it does not have a problem with this. China is looking at it with a totally different attitude. We are trying to deal with the possibility, it may be narrow and difficult to foresee, it may be in fact something that a lot of people have trouble conceiving, but it is a possibility, and our American friends are willing to do it and we are looking at whether or not we should discuss with them the possibility of looking after North America in this remote possibility?

Should we not at least be willing to be engaged in that discussion? Or does the hon. member think we should just turn our back on this possibility and say that we do not want to be there because there is some sort of religious principle that would oppose it?

**Mr. Joe Comartin:** Madam Chair, we have not invoked any religious principles so far this evening.

Let me throw this back to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Would we not be better as a country to go to table and say to the Americans that they are wrong on this because it will cost way too much money; that they are wrong because it does have the potential to escalate the arm's race; and that they are wrong because, based on their own statements, it will probably lead to the weaponization of space?

Why are we saying that we will look at negotiating our participation in this? Why is the Minister of Foreign Affairs not going to them and saying that this is wrong? What we should be negotiating is a reduction in the amount of arms that we have in this world, not the potential for an increase.

**Mr. Alex Shepherd (Durham, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I am happy to enter into this important debate. Once again I would like to state my unequivocal opposition to Canada proceeding with a ballistic missile defence.

We have heard here a number of times, whether in fact the American administration is spending \$14 million or \$3 billion on future projections or historical projections, and no one has disputed the fact, that the Americans are actually spending money on research for weapons in space.

Where I come from, if the road sign says "weapons in space", we do not want to go down there because the likelihood is that when we get to the end of the road that is where they will be.

We have not talked much about the stability that this system will entail. It is clear that the system is inaccurate. At best we have heard some of the testing results have not been perfected. It is not a perfect system.

All the so-called rogue states, which we are supposed to be protecting ourselves from, have to do is have more ballistic missiles and they will hit their target. Clearly, it is an escalation of the arm's race.

This reminds me of when I went to the Kurchatov Institute, the Russian institute that started its nuclear program. People from the

institute told me that they only got involved in the program because the United States started it. That was when the whole nuclear race started. We are just entering into another phase of this.

Let us talk about the technology of the program. I have some quotes here from the American Physical Society. These are the physicists who actually designed and built these missile defence systems. This is what they had to say last July. According to the analysis, the basic science and technology needed to intercept a solid fuel missile would require unrealistically large and powerful interceptor missiles. To get enough coverage would mean putting over 1,000 interceptors into orbit at a cost to the U.S. taxpayer of \$40 billion just to launch.

This is a lunacy program. It cannot be justified from a defence point of view nor from an economic point of view.

The other argument is that we are protecting Canadians. How many viewers out there seriously believe that Toronto, Vancouver, St. John's or any other capital in our country is under threat of nuclear attack today? Very few of us would actually believe that to be true.

The American perception is that it is true of them. What is the key to this element? Canada is a huge territory. Clearly, if people are going to attack the United States they must traverse over Canadian airspace.

Once again, this same American Physical Society says that in the unlikely event that either ABMs or lasers could be made to hit a missile, they would not destroy the hardened warhead. It goes on to say that a successful intercept of a missile launched from either North Korea or Iran runs the risk of dropping the missile warhead and its cargo of nuclear, biological or chemical weapons on either Russia or Canada.

We start off with a basic premise that we are protecting our citizens but would we not in fact be putting them in more danger if we were to actually bring these nuclear weapons and have them land on our territory?

The other argument in this whole debate is that it is a free ride; that the Americans are so interested in us rubber stamping their program that they are willing to give us a free ride.

I want to ask the viewers out there whether they really believe that the Americans are going to give us a free ride. Those are the same people with whom we have disputes over softwood lumber and the selling of our grain into the United States. With those events on our plate do we really believe the Americans will give us a free ride? It may well be that they are not asking for money but surely they are asking for something.

● (2230)

It occurs to me that the Americans cannot implement this system properly without some degree of Canadian consent because, clearly, we have this great territorial land mass. They talk about land based systems and sea based system but the logical next step of course is air based systems, and they must transcend Canadian air space to be effective.

*Government Orders*

It is clear to me that this so-called partnership is really not a partnership at all. We talk about the ability of Canada to sit at the table. The American military attaché in the embassy came here one day and made it very clear that they were not going to run this through NATO or Norad, that it would be run through the northern command. It will be entirely under U.S. command. We therefore do not really have a seat at the table at all. We will be told what to do.

This is not my idea of a partnership. This is the hypothesis of the argument that we have to be involved with them because it will give us a say. I do not think we have a say at all. What we will have to give up and what the cost will be to Canada will be our independent voice in international affairs, something that is respected around the world.

If we are serious about deterring the proliferation of nuclear weapons, why can we not spend just one-third of the money that the Americans are willing to spend on this program in the area of aid? After all, one of the basic things North Korea, a rogue regime, is asking for is economic aid. Why can we not spend money in these areas and try to stabilize these areas of the world?

The United States spends very little time in support of the United Nations. One of its treaties says that its administration is allowed to take unilateral action against anybody in the world that it does not like. Is that really a country that we want to get into a partnership with? Could we not do a lot better in the world and for our nation if we stood up with an independent voice and said that we do not agree with that, that we want to go somewhere else, to a peaceful world?

• (2235)

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Calgary Southeast, CPC):** Madam Chair, first, I know one cannot comment on the absence of members or ministers from the House, but on the contrary I would like to commend the Minister of National Defence and the Minister of Foreign Affairs who have been present in the House for all of this debate until the bitter end. I think that is worthy of commendation, given their obvious concern and interest for the views of members.

Fifty years ago my father was a jet fighter pilot in the Royal Canadian Air Force, based mainly out of Comox Air Force Base on the west coast. During that time he flew many dozens of sorties with his other Canadian aircrew as part of our then new joint command with the United States in Norad.

Their job at the time was to intercept Soviet bombers that were coming in over the polar ice cap which at any given time could be carrying nuclear armaments. That is precisely why we created Norad. That is precisely why men like my father and thousands of other Canadian servicemen were the first chain of defence, if you will, against the ongoing threat of Soviet nuclear bombers over the polar ice cap in the 1950s. That was the principle upon which Norad was based.

Our forces authorized those sorties out of a joint command structure based at Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado where, since the founding of Norad, a Canadian general and an American four star general would survey the skies over North America's airspace to determine when there was a potential threat and order the interception of that threat.

Today the proposal that we are discussing for a ballistic missile defence system is simply an extension of the Norad principle in which this country has participated for 50 years to take into account new technology and new threats. The fact is that the principal threat no longer is in Soviet bombers, prop planes coming over the polar ice cap. The principal intercontinental ballistic missile threat is just that, intercontinental ballistic missiles with nuclear warheads, or tipped with other potential weapons of mass destruction, not coming from the Soviet Union, but coming from states that may not be rational actors. This is precisely the concern that has motivated the United States, now supported by most of its traditional allies, to explore a land and sea based integrated detection and interception system using ballistic missile technology that could at least diminish the chances of North America and North American civilian populations from being held hostage by states with this kind of offensive missile technology.

I personally do not understand, as somebody who I think has a relatively good grasp of the strategic history of the defence of North America, why there is so much angst and anxiety about taking a 1950s tried and true defence principle where Canada works cooperatively with our allies in the United States and elsewhere to defend the skies over this continent and to defend our people and those of our allies. That is simply the principle of the agreement in which we are being asked to participate.

One thing is absolutely clear, and the defence minister has made this point. Whether or not Canada participates in missile defence and to what extent we participate will make not one whit of difference in terms of whether the United States proceeds with missile defence in its own right.

• (2240)

The only question is whether or not Canada as a sovereign country will willingly participate to ensure that a defence technology which will be employed around our continent will have some involvement from the Canadian government. The question is not whether or not there will be ballistic missile defence. The question is whether or not Canada will have some say in the development and application of this technology, particularly in its use over our airspace.

I believe that just as it was the right thing for us to engage in the Norad agreement 50 years ago, it would be the right thing for us today to say that we are not very keen on the American military releasing ballistic missiles off the Pacific coast, or in the north Pacific off Alaska, or in the north Atlantic, potentially intercepting incoming intercontinental ballistic missiles, potentially in or near Canadian airspace, without our say-so.

I had the benefit of visiting the Norad joint command in Colorado 18 months ago, to talk with the senior-most Canadian general staff there and the American general staff, including the four star general in charge of Norad. We had a chance, with parliamentarians from all parties, to visit the joint command centre.

*Government Orders*

I learned some very interesting things there, including the fact that Canadian officers who help protect this country were very concerned that if our government does not quickly indicate its willingness to cooperate in the ballistic missile field, the rest of the Norad joint command would become increasingly irrelevant. It really is structured on a 50 or 40 year old threat.

The Canadian senior officers with whom I spoke said that the usefulness and the relevance of Norad to the United States will really be imperilled if we refuse to allow missile defence to come under that joint command, and the Americans go off and put it under a separate command, a strategic command, space command, or some other command structure. If that happens, then essentially Norad will become a cold war relic and the only real integrated joint command we have over continental defence will become largely irrelevant.

That is an outrageous abdication of sovereignty. I accuse my friends in the NDP that their position, not deliberately, would have the unintended consequence of diminishing Canadian sovereignty in the defence of North America and Canadian airspace.

Further, I would like to point out what I said in my intervention to the speech of my friend from Windsor, that far from leading to another arms race, I believe that the effective development and deployment of this defensive technology would diminish and put the cold war arms race in reverse. It already began to do that two years ago when Russia essentially agreed to the American abrogation of the ABM treaty. Concurrent with that was an agreement to reduce each country's warhead arsenal by one-third. That is the largest single achievement in terms of nuclear arms reduction since the beginning of the cold war. Instead of applauding that, instead of looking at that with open and objective minds, the NDP said that this is going to result in an increase in the nuclear threat when in fact it is doing just the opposite.

The critics of this say that even if this technology reaches its greatest possible level of effectiveness, it cannot present a 100% defence shield. That may well be true, but the strategic point of missile defence is this. If there is a madman in a rogue state, let us just say the dear leader in North Korea, the son of the head of state who is now six years deceased although he is still officially head of state in North Korea, who now clearly has intercontinental ballistic missile capacity and potentially nuclear weapons capacity, and he decides that he wants to hold the United States or any other country within his missile reach hostage, he can do that. He can do that and the only defensive strategy left to the United States or its allies is that vile principle of mutually assured destruction, "if you hit us, we'll hit you back and we'll hit you harder".

● (2245)

I would simply say in closing that if our concern as Canadians is maintaining international order and peace and preventing another arms race and preventing a potential nuclear capacity, then we ought to agree to intelligent defensive systems. We ought to agree to systems like this which replace the offensive strategic logic of mutually assured destruction with a limited but effective land and sea based defence system, which helps defend Canadian and American citizens and which allows us to maintain our sovereignty in these matters.

**Hon. Charles Caccia (Davenport, Lib.):** Madam Chair, it seems at this point when the debate is coming to a conclusion that it might be desirable to get to some basic questions.

The one I would like to ask is since the collapse of the Soviet Union, who is the enemy? Who is threatening North America and particularly, who is threatening Canada?

Since the disappearance of the Soviet Union and also in listening to the argument put forward by the member for Calgary Southeast, it is extremely difficult to visualize where the threat is coming from.

Does Canada have an enemy to be concerned about and if so, who is the enemy? We know there are potential threats posed to the U.S. administration but certainly those threats are not posed to Canada. Therefore it would seem to be desirable that in this debate one should draw a line between the position of Canada and the position of the U.S. administration. These are two completely different situations and each of them, if this premise is accepted, would require a different treatment.

If Canada were to join a defence missile system, then the possibility would become very strong that Canada would attract this potential enemy to include our territory as a target. There is very little doubt that we would be seen as part, as other members have indicated, of a continental approach that would therefore make Canada part of an initiative that emanates from the U.S. administration. I see actually in Canada's interest an initiative that would decouple Canada from any defence system for North America for the very simple reason that Canada does not have any enemy to be worried about. Therefore Canada does not need to set up a system of defensive missiles that one day could become offensive.

This leads me to the third point which is the issue of weaponization of space. Here, on a number of occasions, United States officials have made it quite clear that in the long run the defence missile system will lead to the weaponization of space. This is something that the Government of Canada opposes today. If it opposes this today yet engages in discussions about the setting up of a system, it would find it very difficult to withdraw from those discussions in 10 years or 20 years from now when the weaponization of space would be coming within reach.

That leads to the next point that is linked with this, and that is whether we have as a government an exit policy in these negotiations. This point has been made repeatedly by some of my colleagues.

● (2250)

Apparently we do not seem to have an exit strategy, so to speak, one that would allow us at a certain point in the negotiations to say that we are not prepared to go ahead and that we will refrain from joining the defence system.

*Government Orders*

Once the negotiations have started and once we have established our technological interests, as has already been outlined by the Minister of National Defence and also by the member from Calgary, once we are engaged in that kind of technologically strategic interests and common development, it will be virtually impossible to withdraw and say we are not going to be part of this system if we have been part of the negotiations and the development of the system itself. For the life of me, I cannot see how this could be arranged.

Much has been said in the course of this debate, by those who favour the negotiations, about how this is a defence system. This is what it is called, there is no doubt about that, but whether in the end this will remain a defence system is very doubtful. And we have no guarantee to that effect. It could be turned into an offensive system, if so desired, by those who planned it.

In this context, it is important to make a reference to this data that I find rather troublesome, namely, that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, since the end of the Cold War, the spending on the part of the U.S. administration on weapons of mass destruction, be they nuclear, chemical or biological, has amounted to some \$596 billion. Therefore, there is a little publicized but massive injection of funds behind an effort on the part of the most powerful nation in the world in building weapons of mass destruction. The concept behind it, of course, is one that would have to be debated on another occasion.

The fact is that we have here an initiative which is certainly not one that leads to the stabilization of the relationship of powers in the global community. Canada's interests are not along this line. Canada's interests, it seems to me, would be better served by being part of initiatives at a disarmament table rather than being at a table where there are discussions on the issue of missile defence systems.

The whole notion of conjuring up the threat that might be coming from some unknown source that would one day decide to attack North America—as the member for Calgary Southeast indicated, perhaps North Korea—is simply absurd. It is simply beyond comprehension.

In addition to that, to see this initiative of discussing the missile defence system as one that would only imply a technological participation on the part of Canada is also one that is very difficult to accept as being grounded in logic and realism.

It seems to me, in conclusion, that we would be wise to ask ourselves some basic questions. Where is the enemy? Who is the enemy?

Are we able to identify the enemy of Canada? I cannot think of anyone considering the high reputation Canada has in the world community, considering the work that it does in the developing world and considering its reputation at the United Nations in its support for multilateralism—you name it, Madam Chair, it is a long list—so considering all these factors, Canada has no enemy and

therefore it has no need to participate in this type of so-called missile defence system.

• (2255)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.):** Madam Chair, I did not get any specific calls about this debate tonight, but I would like to go on the record to say that Yukoners are, as they are on a lot of issues, split on this issue. There are a number of Yukoners who think that Canada should not participate, but we are the closest riding to the system. We are a few seconds away from the missiles at Fort Greely. Therefore, a number of Yukoners feel that, without spending any money, we should be at the table so we know what is happening.

It is an honour to end this debate at 11 p.m., speaking after the member who has such a distinguished career in the House of Commons.

With the Chinese or Korean technology, which the technical experts say will be able to hit North America within the next decade, does the member believe that if they were to send a missile to Seattle or Buffalo, the technology would be refined enough that it would not hit Vancouver or Toronto by accident?

**Hon. Charles Caccia:** Madam Chair, from a technological point of view I am not qualified to comment. However, I would be quite firm in the conviction that the North Korean and the Chinese governments and their population have better things to do than to scheme an attack on North America, no matter what kind of weapons they may wish to choose.

Therefore, to start planning by imagining these unimaginable conditions, does not lead to the stabilization of relations between continents and between larger countries. China has every interest in maintaining peace in the world, and so does North Korea, despite the statements that have been made in Washington. The issue of North Korea is an energy issue. The manner in which the North Korean government has handled the matter, I think has been one to attract attention to other matters.

Therefore, to imagine that North Korea would attack Canada, and even if it were so, I would say that the attack would be more likely if we were part of a defence system organized under the auspices of the U.S. than of a defence system of which Canada is not part.

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** It being 11 p.m., pursuant to order made Thursday, February 12, 2004, the committee will rise and I will leave the chair.

• (2300)

**The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Hinton):** The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11 p.m.)



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