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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 3, 2006
(Part A)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

[English]

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1405)

[English]

SEXUAL ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, May is sexual abuse prevention month in Canada. Each year, governments and NGOs, such as Dufferin—Caledon's own Family Transition Place, join together to educate Canadians on sexual abuse.

On Friday, May 12, Family Transition Place and the Caledon Chamber of Commerce will be hosting the "Stop Right There!" and prevent sexual harassment in the workplace proclamation at the office of the Caledon Chamber of Commerce in Bolton at 11 a.m.

I am very pleased to be participating in the event and to be doing my part in recognizing the importance of this month and taking positive action. I will be joined by other government representatives and business and community leaders, including Family Transition Place and the Caledon Chamber of Commerce, in signing the proclamation, which supports the creation of respectful workplaces that are free from sexual harassment.

I encourage everyone to follow this lead and to raise awareness of this very serious and important issue.

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POWELL RIVER REGALS

Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Tod English, general manager and coach of the Powell River Regals. I would like to congratulate Tod and his

team on their recent victory at the 2006 Allan Cup championship, hosted in my home riding of Powell River, British Columbia. The dedication, determination and hard work exhibited by the athletes, coaches and volunteers should serve as an inspiration to all Canadians.

Hockey is truly Canada's national sport. Unfortunately, yesterday's Conservative budget has let British Columbians down. The Conservatives have failed to recognize one of the most important events in Canadian sporting history, the upcoming Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Funding sport in Canada is essential. It will ensure that athletes at all levels succeed and it will contribute to building a healthier, more active Canada. Yesterday the Conservative budget did nothing to provide the critical resources British Columbia and VANOC, the Vancouver Organizing Committee, require to provide the infrastructure the Olympics need before 2010. This is yet another example of the Conservatives turning their backs and selling out British Columbia.

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[Translation]

BROMONT NATIONAL CYCLING CENTRE

Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ): Mr. Speaker, there is a non-profit competitive cycling training centre in Bromont, in my riding of Brome—Missisquoi.

Only two training centres for Canadian and Quebec athletes are recognized in Canada. The other one is in Victoria. More importantly, the Bromont centre is the only place in North America with all the facilities that meet the standards of international competition in the four Olympic cycling disciplines.

Their primary aim is to help elite Quebec and Canadian athletes improve in their respective disciplines. They also initiate and develop young Quebec talent, who could go on to become tomorrow's international athletes. It is therefore important to support the Bromont centre to enable it to help develop the new generation of cyclists and excellence in cycling.

Statements by Members

[English]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if we want to see which way a country is headed, we must look at the country's budget and how it allocates resources for women. I read through the budget documents that were tabled in the House yesterday and I could only find the word "women" mentioned once.

Women make up 52% of the population of this country and, after years of empty promises, were looking at this budget for a commitment to ensure equality. There was a missed opportunity, with billions in surplus, for the government to commit funding to organizations that advocate for women.

I am particularly concerned about the lack of investment in programs that advance women's rights. Organizations such as Status of Women Canada fear they will be included in the Conservatives' billion dollars in cuts because of the abysmal lack of priority given to women in this budget.

I call on this government to make real commitments to ensure equality and to protect the rights of women in Canada.

* * *

MYRON HUMENIUK

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to bring attention to the work of Mr. Myron Humeniuk, a resident of mine in the Township of Penetanguishene, who recently returned from a volunteer assignment in Fuxin, China.

Mr. Humeniuk was there at the request of the forestry department of the Fuxin mining industry where he recommended solutions to halt pollution of the surrounding environment caused by decades of open-pit mining.

His work included assessment of the area, soil testing, plant growth and area management, and finished with recommendations based on mine reclamation efforts common to western Canada. He also trained 20 members of the forestry department in land preservation techniques, so they could continue to use these best practices.

Mr. Humeniuk was volunteering his time as part of the Canadian Executive Service Organization based in Toronto, one of their over 3,000 dedicated Canadians who offer their professional expertise to help others at home and abroad.

I ask all members to join me in congratulating Mr. Humeniuk.

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●(1410)

[Translation]

ANJOU

Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to speak about the 50th anniversary of Anjou.

Fifty years ago, on February 23, 1956, what today is known as the jewel of Montreal east came into being. The population of Anjou in 1956 was about 1,000 and has grown to nearly 40,000 today.

The history of Anjou is the history of men and women with the vision, courage and determination to build an extraordinary living environment, defined as much by the vitality of its business park as by the strength and solidarity of the agencies working for the wellbeing of all its people.

The celebrations for this 50th anniversary give everyone an opportunity to express their pride in Anjou. It is an opportunity to celebrate past achievements and look to the future with confidence.

I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the president of the Anjou 50th anniversary corporation, Mr. Denis Risler. Through his own work and that of his team, we can be sure that the celebrations will be as successful as Anjou itself.

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[English]

STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on August 16, 1812, Canada won the Battle of Detroit with a small army of regulars, militia and native allies, after several shots were fired.

On May 1, 2006, Canada again won the Battle of Detroit with a small army of Edmonton Oilers, after 66 shots were fired.

In the spirit of sport and healthy competition, we, at least the Edmonton Conservative caucus, want to congratulate the Edmonton Oilers on their hard-earned and upset victory over the Detroit Red Wings in round one of the Oilers' run to the Stanley Cup.

Although we cannot officially cheer for our southern friends and rivals, the Calgary Flames, in their game seven tonight, we do relish the prospect of getting on with one of the greatest rivalries in professional sports, where many more shots will be fired, in what we call the "Battle of Alberta".

* * *

[Translation]

SWIFT GALEY TEXTILE FACTORY

Ms. Pauline Picard (Drummond, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a page in the industrial history of Drummondville was turned on April 6 when one of our textile flagships, the Swift Galey factory, closed its doors for good. Our region lost 155 jobs because of this closure.

These people need help now, but the Conservative government's budget did not include any help for the manufacturing sector, nor did it make any firm commitments toward older workers who lose their jobs.

The Bloc Québécois' subamendment to the Speech from the Throne stressed the government's duty to implement a strategy to assist older workers who have difficulty finding new jobs. By supporting the subamendment, the government pledged to help them quickly.

This government has an obligation to produce results. By June, it must implement a real income support program for older workers who fall victim to mass layoffs.

* * *

[English]

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 13 long years Canadian farmers waited for the Liberal governments of the past to provide real support for the agriculture industry. During these dark years, farmers were abandoned by the Liberals and left alone to face the BSE crisis, floods, frosts and droughts, skyrocketing input costs, and plummeting markets.

Today, I would like to congratulate our finance minister and the Conservative government for finally giving agriculture the attention and funding it so richly deserves. Yesterday's budget included \$1.5 billion more in new funding for Canadian farming communities this year. In addition, this Conservative government will replace CAIS with effective income stabilization and disaster relief programs.

Finally, agriculture producers who are barely holding on have hope. Finally, farmers devastated by frost, drought and flooding will be helped. Finally, the farmers in the RM of Porcupine, who received 40 inches of rail last year, will have relief.

It took 13 years and a change of government, but Canadian farmers have finally been heard.

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ISRAEL

Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today we celebrate Israel's Independence Day and this is a joyous occasion. However, 58 years later, shockingly, world regimes are still calling for its annihilation. In fact, the President of Iran has repeatedly called for Israel to be wiped off the map. Only yesterday, the government said its first target would be Israel if it is attacked.

As free and democratic nations, we cannot afford to make the same mistakes the world made during the Holocaust. Collectively, we must condemn these egregious threats and isolate any leader that fans the flames of hate and stands for the annihilation of another state.

* * *

• (1415)

THE BUDGET

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the guidance of our finance minister, this Conservative government delivered its first budget and it delivered for all Canadians.

There is immediate tax relief for all families through the GST reduction and child care allowance. There is relief for students, apprentices and seniors, and significant investment in public security and health care.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Urban Transit Association have applauded this budget for its major investment in infrastructure, and it has been endorsed by the

Statements by Members

Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Canadian Cancer Society, Canada Council, and the Association of Canadian Community Colleges.

In my riding of Chatham-Kent—Essex, the \$1.5 billion investment in agriculture will give farmers the help that they so desperately need.

The previous government overtaxed and hoarded our money for 13 years. Canadians deserve a focused government that invests in them and addresses their needs and the budget of 2006 did just that.

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FOOD LABELLING

Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Codex Alimentarius, the United Nations food standards body, is meeting here in Ottawa this week.

One issue being discussed is a proposal for an international guideline on labelling food products containing GMOs or genetically modified organisms.

People have the right to know what they are eating. Without an international guideline, countries that enact mandatory labelling run the risk of a legal challenge at the WTO by large GMO producing countries. The Canadian government has previously opposed an international guideline.

Today, we call upon the government to do the right thing and join the majority of national delegations in supporting the proposed UN guideline on GMO labelling.

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FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise in the House to recognize Canada's forest products industry, which has been an integral part of our country's economy for more than 300 years. The sector is the lifeblood of more than 300 rural and remote communities, accounting for more than 300,000 jobs in every region of the country.

The wealth that these workers generate sustains a further 600,000 jobs through the purchase of goods and services in Canada. The industry remains one of our leading manufacturing sectors, accounting for 3% of Canada's annual GDP, and is one of Canada's largest exporters shipping \$45 billion of goods to markets around the world.

I rise today to salute this sector as it faces some of the most challenging economic conditions in its history. The rising dollar, stagnant world prices for paper goods, increased energy prices, and new competition from lower cost producers has cost the sector more than 11,000 jobs since 2003.

I call upon all parliamentarians to support this vital sector of our economy, and wish the industry my best in its efforts to overcome these present challenges and become the globe's leading forest products manufacturer.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the speech on the budget demonstrated, once again, the Bloc Québécois' effectiveness in ensuring, always respectfully, that Quebec's voice is heard. Although not all of our expectations were met, several of our requests were heard.

The federal government's formal recognition of the fiscal imbalance and its commitment to deal with it represent a major step forward for Quebec.

The increased assistance for post-secondary education, agriculture and social housing, the non-taxation of scholarships, bursaries and fellowships, and the tax credit for public transit users are all end results of various struggles waged by the Bloc Québécois.

We will continue our hard work, particularly to demand improvements to the employment insurance system, to demand measures to help older workers who are victims of mass layoffs and manufacturing sectors that are at risk due to globalization, and to petition for arts and culture.

Lastly, we will continue to oppose this government's pulling out of the Kyoto protocol and we will never hesitate to express Quebec's distinctiveness.

* * *

[English]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the shame of this year's federal budget is the opportunity provided by a record breaking economy that is squandered in a sea of undefined and underwhelming tax schemes, mostly targeted to those who need them least.

A real national child care program finally within reach will be gone, and investments in post-secondary education for students and institutions slashed. Personal tax rates will go up and a GST cut replaces it, proudly shown in a brochure for the benefit it gives to a \$350,000 new home owner.

In our changing world we should be investing in education for all Canadians throughout their life. The economic update in November did exactly that, putting billions into direct assistance for students, especially those who need it most, billions for research, and more money for skills training. This budget fails to address the importance and the necessity of investing directly in our students and continuing to invest in research and innovation.

We all want to pay less tax, even MPs, but it has to be real tax relief and it should go first to those who need it most.

* * *

● (1420)

THE BUDGET

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on top of the cut to the GST, tax cuts for small business, new millions for border security and policing, millions more for infrastructure, tax credits for amateur sports and transit

passes, tax relief for seniors, money for students, and all the great news in the budget, this budget delivers for British Columbia like few others in Canadian history.

There is \$591 million for the Pacific Gateway, \$400 million over two years to fight the pine beetle, \$171 million for public transit in B.C., an unexpected equalization cash windfall of \$200 million, and the restoration of regular army presence in B.C. The Liberal finance minister in B.C., Carole Taylor, said the budget, "addressed virtually every B.C. priority".

In the last election campaign, Conservatives promised to stand up for British Columbia. In this budget, the government has delivered for British Columbia.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

THE BUDGET

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, all the congratulatory S. O. 31s from the members opposite cannot hide the fact that yesterday the country saw its first neo-conservative budget, a budget that puts right-wing philosophy ahead of the good of the country and puts wealthy Canadians ahead of poor Canadians. It is a budget that attacks the future of our children, abandons our responsibility for the environment, and is designed to make sure that aboriginal Canadians come last. On top of that, the budget raises income taxes on those who earn the least and benefits those who earn the most.

Why did the Prime Minister not tell the country in his campaign that one of his five priorities would be to raise income tax for the poorest of Canadians?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a rather sad spectacle to see a party which so disappointed Canadians for 13 years now criticizing the best news budget that this country has ever seen.

Taxes will go down for every single income class, for every single region, for every single group of Canadians. Every group of Canadians will benefit. In one year the Minister of Finance managed to do what the Liberal Party never did: produce a budget that matches the election platform we ran on.

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): He should tell that to the aboriginal people of our country, Mr. Speaker.

It took 18 months for the Liberal government to pull together the provinces and native communities for a historic agreement. It took the Conservatives 18 words in the budget to rip it up. The Conservative premier of Alberta has condemned what they have done. He said he preferred the Liberal plan, that the Liberal plan was better.

Why has the Prime Minister given up on the aboriginal people, the first nations of our country?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a few short weeks and a few short months the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Minister of Finance have managed to deliver a residential schools agreement that the Liberal government could not.

The budget puts new money into the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. This budget puts more money into aboriginal housing off reserve and more money into aboriginal housing on reserve. The Minister of Indian Affairs has come forward with a program to improve water treatment on reserves, which was never done by the Liberal government. There will be more money for aboriginal housing in the territories. That is why the chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples said, "We are very pleased with this budget".

[*Translation*]

Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that ignores a number of issues. Aboriginal peoples have been ignored by the government. Access to day care has been ignored by the government. Innovation and productivity have been ignored by the government. And environmental measures have definitely been ignored by the government.

The Minister of the Environment has clearly thrown in the towel. How can she explain her inability to find the funds needed to protect Canada's environment?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is wrong about the environment and everything else.

However, I will add that for the first time, we have a budget that recognizes the fiscal imbalance in this country and does something to address it. This is important, because the former government failed to do this.

[*English*]

I say only this to the Leader of the Opposition. If he and his party are so opposed to this budget, they can grandstand here but we will see what position they take over in the Senate where they have a majority. This budget should be passed for the good of all Canadians.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's comments were dead wrong because he was basing his comments on the faulty assumption that his government cut income tax when every Canadian knows he raised income tax. The Prime Minister knows that himself. If he had been honest in his comments, he would have acknowledged that lower income Canadians are indeed paying higher taxes than before.

Will the Minister of Finance come clean and tell us what every Canadian knows, that yesterday he raised the income taxes of Canadians?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question, as wrong as he is. I looked at the numbers again because I heard what he was saying yesterday and I thought that he had not had a chance to read the budget. Now he has apparently had a chance.

The personal tax cuts in the budget are \$5.3 billion. In the fall update, which I think is what he was talking about, the figure was a little over \$4 billion. Last time I looked, five is more than four, and I welcome the hon. member to have a look at that.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this pattern continues: partisan rhetoric rather than debate, spin rather than answers, ducks and dodges rather than openness. So much for their sanctimonious talk about accountability and transparency when the fact of the matter is that on the tax form filled out by every Canadian, the rate is rising from 15% to 15.5%. It says so in his budget.

Is the minister saying his budget is wrong?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Finance has the floor to answer the question. I am sure he appreciates all the assistance he is getting but we want to be able to hear the minister. The minister did get asked a question and there must be, of course, an answer. The Minister of Finance has the floor.

Hon. Jim Flaherty: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact, as we are on this side of the aisle, that this budget reduces income taxes, reduces the GST, reduces small business taxes, and reduces corporate taxes. Ninety per cent of the reductions go to individuals and families in Canada, almost \$20 billion over two years. Compare that to what the Liberals were proposing. They never passed it, but what they proposed was something less than \$9 billion. I say again, 20 is more than 9, even to an economist.

* * *

[*Translation*]

OLDER WORKERS

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, through its amendment, the Bloc Québécois succeeded in including in the Speech from the Throne the need to provide income support measures for older workers. In the budget speech, the government mentioned the importance of helping older workers, but did not say anything about creating a specific aid program or allocating money.

Can the Prime Minister tell us when he intends to implement an income support program for older workers? They are major victims of the massive layoffs occurring in the current context of globalization.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, many hon. members in this House have asked for a program to help older workers who have lost their jobs. The Government of Quebec has also made this request. The Minister of Finance, in his wisdom, added funding for such a program. I am anxious to get input from the Bloc Québécois or any other party on this matter.

Oral Questions

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities has already looked at this issue and the procedures for implementing an income support program for older workers. Proposals have been made and assessed. There is no need to start from scratch.

Will the Prime Minister promise to table an implementation report for an older worker's assistance program by the end of the parliamentary session? Time is of the essence and the workers are waiting.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Human Resources has already explained that there is a pilot project. It will wrap up shortly. We are evaluating this program before proposing a more permanent one.

As I said, I welcome ideas from the Bloc Québécois not only on a program for older workers, but on the fiscal imbalance. I invite the Bloc to submit their ideas to me. I am pleased to have the Bloc Québécois' support in our efforts to improve the Canadian federation.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government is proposing a timeframe for attacking the fiscal imbalance, but not for the pilot project for workers in seasonal industries enabling them to make it through the springtime employment gap. If nothing is done, these workers will find themselves without resources on June 4.

Does the Minister of Finance agree that with one month to go in pilot project no. 6, it is urgent that he provide a timeframe so that workers know what to expect after this date?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I explained to the hon. member both in this House and in my office, we want to make sure before we make a decision that we are making the right decision based on facts, not fear. We want to evaluate this pilot program and see if it is doing the job it was intended to do, and see if it is doing it effectively and efficiently. That is why I have invited the member to consult with me in the analysis to make sure we are actually doing the right thing, not just doing something for the sake of doing anything.

[Translation]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the uncertainties experienced by workers are not fears, they are facts. Yesterday, the Prime Minister stated that he shared the Bloc philosophy with regard to the employment insurance fund, which should be used to help people when they are in need. These workers find themselves in a precarious position. What we are asking for does not affect the budget and could even be financed from the employment insurance surplus.

Therefore, does the government intend to extend the pilot project past June 4?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is important that as we go forward, we go forward with programs that respect the use of taxpayers' money as well as their needs. We want to make sure that the proper balance is there. We want programs that work, that we can afford, and that do the job properly. That is why it is so important that we evaluate the effectiveness of what we are doing before we decide whether or not to continue with it.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government should have presented a long term plan for child care, education, training, and the environment. Instead, what we got was a long term plan—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth has the floor. We will have a little order, please. Some members say that they do not want to hear him, but he has the floor. The Chair has recognized him, so tough luck. The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

● (1435)

Hon. Jack Layton: Mr. Speaker, the government is proposing to do exactly what the Liberals have done for years and that is to subsidize the big oil and gas companies instead of investing where it belongs.

Can the Prime Minister explain to us and to Canadians why the most profitable and polluting industry should get public investment, but children, workers, and the environment do not get any?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the House and the member will know there are no specific subsidies or specific incentives for the oil business in this budget.

There is a long term plan to fund parents to help them raise their children. There is a long term plan to fund transit users, to fund the development of public infrastructure, to help the environment. There is a long term plan for sports funding and for the health of children. There is a long term plan and more programs to help aboriginal people. There are incentives for businesses of all levels to hire employees. There are breaks for ordinary people, for seniors, to allow them to enjoy more prosperity.

The NDP should support that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth.

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in this budget there is \$1.5 billion of subsidies to the biggest oil and gas companies like Exxon. Let the Prime Minister stand up and deny it.

He is certainly rather unabashed in taking credit for the \$4 billion from the NDP budget last year. Let us run down the list: post-secondary education funding; transit; foreign aid; affordable and aboriginal housing; northern housing.

Oral Questions

My question for the Prime Minister is simply this: Why did he choose the Liberal plan for multi-year corporate tax cuts instead of the NDP plan for multi-year investments in working families?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP will have to decide whether this is a bad budget or whether it is his budget.

I will say this. Canadians are going to wonder, in watching the NDP, why the NDP on such a positive day is so angry, why the NDP is so full of gloom and doom. Canadians know good news when they hear it.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, with its massive surplus, the government—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[English]

The Speaker: Order, please. Again, I know the member is being greeted with much enthusiasm, but he has the floor and we have to hear the question.

The hon. member for Kings—Hants.

[Translation]

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is not easy being popular.

With its massive surplus, the government could have invested more money in the environment, but it chose instead to cut \$2 billion from environmental programs.

Why is the government making Canada the only country in the world that is slashing its investments in the environment?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member opposite might like to know that, under the Liberal Kyoto plan, Canadian families could have seen up to \$600 per Canadian family shipped overseas to be spent on international credits. Under our made in Canada plan, Canadian taxpayer dollars will stay right here in Canada to be spent on our environment right here at home.

Our made in Canada plan will invest in Canadian solutions, Canadian technology and Canadian communities. I would like to ensure that the hon. member knows that in our plan, Canadians come first.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what is notable is that in their plan, the environment comes last.

This is what the Sierra Club has said about this budget, “The most tangible action on the environment by government has been to cut climate change programs”.

Why is the environment minister not ashamed that by slashing \$2 billion from environmental programs, Canada has joined the international organization of one: the only country in the world to cut environmental programs?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to address the hon. member's concerns. I would like to let him know that during the election, when we announced our transit pass tax policy, the Sierra Club said, “I think it's a very good move on the Conservatives' part”.

The other thing I would like to remind the hon. member of, as he stands in his place as the Liberal Party of Canada environment critic, is he is on record as saying that the Kyoto agreement was basically written on the back of an airplane napkin on the way to Kyoto, and on December 10, he voted against Kyoto.

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● (1440)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians agree that the economic and social conditions of our aboriginal citizens is desperate. For months, the Liberal Party, the aboriginal leadership and all the premiers have called for the full implementation of the Kelowna accord. Had the NDP not sold out, they too might have done the same.

My question is for the Prime Minister. With a 90% reduction in the Kelowna commitments, does he realize that he has cast aside the greatest opportunity to create social peace and prosperity for aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us ensure that the facts are clear. Aboriginal Canadians are real winners under this budget. We have provided the following: \$300 million for northern housing; \$300 million for off reserve housing; \$150 million additional funds in the budget; and a \$325 million budgetary increase for this department in the estimates last week. That is a total of \$1.1 billion of new money. In addition, there is the \$500 million socio-economic fund. In addition to that, there is \$2.2 billion for the residential schools agreement.

This is a fair and reasonable budget for aboriginal Canadians that also requires—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Winnipeg South Centre.

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is not a good news budget for aboriginal peoples. Let me tell members what people are saying.

Chief Stewart Phillip, Union of B.C. Chiefs, said, “aboriginal people across Canada learned that Prime Minister has a wooden heart to match his wooden smile”. Grand Chief Phil Fontaine agrees.

As we heard earlier, Ralph Klein said, “I don't like it...I liked the commitment that was given by the Liberal government to the First Nations and the Métis people”.

How can the Prime Minister and the minister even pretend that what was announced was good—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the budget puts forward \$1.1 billion of new money for aboriginal Canadians. It balances the competing objectives of being fair and reasonable to aboriginal Canadians, and ensuring accountability and results.

Here is what Patrick Brazeau, the national chief of the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, had to say:

—it's the first time that a federal government has fully acknowledged our constituency being the off-reserve, Métis, non-status and status Indians... But secondly, you know, we see a government that's fulfilling its commitments.

* * *

[Translation]

TAXATION

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has acknowledged the fiscal imbalance and pledged to correct it. Fine. Correcting the fiscal imbalance for the long term will require the redistribution of tax fields and fundamental reforms to equalization.

Does the Minister of Finance agree that we must immediately dismiss the idea of solving the fiscal imbalance by a one-time increase in federal cash transfers? Unlike tax fields and equalization, a federal cash transfer will do nothing to ensure the autonomy and financial stability of Quebec and the provinces.

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to announce yesterday the increased payments with respect to equalization for this year for a number of the provinces. I was also pleased to set out the principles upon which we will move forward in the debate about the fiscal balance, including equalization, and the steps that we will follow in order to arrive at a solution to these challenging issues this year.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the government stated over and over that the \$807 million Quebec lost when the daycare agreement was scrapped will be taken into account as part of resolving the fiscal imbalance.

Can the Minister of Finance confirm that the \$807 million will be part of such a resolution?

• (1445)

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would not presume to set out an agenda for all the discussions. There are a number of issues that ought to be discussed, including post-secondary education.

We made a recommendation or a suggestion, at least, in the fiscal balance paper yesterday about how unanticipated federal surplus could be handled with respect to the QPP and the CPP. Those ideas are there.

We will follow a process, awaiting the O'Brien report, the federal report on equalization, which should be released in the middle of May, followed by a meeting of finance ministers, followed by other

meetings by other ministers and eventually a meeting of first ministers in the fall.

* * *

[Translation]

SECURITIES

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in its budget, the government picks up an idea put forward by the Liberals, namely, the creation of a single securities commission for the entire country. However, the Prime Minister keeps saying that he intends to honour Quebec's fields of jurisdiction.

How can the Prime Minister say he will respect the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces when by promoting a pan-Canadian securities commission he jumps with both feet into Quebec's exclusive jurisdiction?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is general concern in the business community about attracting more capital to Canada, more equity capital, more investment in our businesses. One of the concerns that the community expresses repeatedly across Canada is the fact that we have multiple regulators in our security system.

That is an issue in the interests of the Economic Union that we should have on the table for discussion, not necessarily that the federal government would get involved, but that we work toward a common regulator in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in both the budget and the minister's response, the government makes a commitment to work with Quebec and the provinces to put a common securities regulator in place.

How can the Prime Minister make such a commitment in his budget, when he knows full well that Quebec has always rejected this approach?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the provinces that have been engaged in this discussion, working toward a common regulator and simplifying the red tape involved in persons and corporations wanting to invest in Canada.

I commend the member for the question, because that is where we want to go. We want to move toward common regulations, and allow fewer barriers to investment in Canada.

* * *

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the finance minister created false hope on Monday when he pretended his budget would help thousands of students pay tuition each fall. However, all he offered was an \$80 tax break on text books and the ability to go deeper in debt.

Oral Questions

Did he keep his promise to create as dedicated transfer? No. Did he help aboriginal students? No. Did he offer students any hope at all? No.

How does that minister have the gall to stand in this place and offer students a pittance?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member obviously missed a large part of the budget speech yesterday. There are students not just at university. There are students in colleges. There are students who are apprentices. For them, we have the apprentice job creation tax credit and the apprentice incentive grant to help them get jobs. We have a \$500 deduction for their tools. We have the tax exemption on all scholarships and bursaries. It is above and beyond what we promised, and we increased eligibility for Canada student loans. That is a lot for students.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that is another arrogant answer from a bush league government.

[Translation]

Our students have to go through all sorts of contortions to cover their registration fees and meet their needs.

On Monday, the minister promised to respond to the concerns of our students and, on Tuesday, she reneged on her promise.

Clearly the NDP abandoned our students in return for 10 seats.

Why has the minister abandoned our students to their miserable fate?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just listed a lot of brand new programs that will directly help students. What I did not mention was a billion dollars was added for infrastructure for post-secondary education as well as the \$16 billion for education that is included in the Canada social transfer.

This is a lot of money that will help a lot of kids get the education they need.

* * *

THE BUDGET

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance speaks a great deal about competitiveness, but let us check the record. Last November the Liberal government committed \$2.5 billion for university research.

When we looked at the budget papers yesterday, the Minister of Finance scaled it back to 10¢ on the dollar. If the minister has been giving math lessons, he would understand that 10¢ is less than 1¢ and \$1 is more than 10¢.

When will the Minister of Finance get serious about future prosperity for the country?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, as with his colleagues, are fond of talking about moneys promised but never delivered.

I know this budget is different. I know it is hard for the party opposite to accept that a party could run for office, make definite commitments to Canadians and, lo and behold, bring in a budget that keeps the commitments to Canadians.

[Translation]

Hon. Maurizio Bevilacqua (Vaughan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this budget misses an opportunity to prepare Canada to meet the challenge of competing internationally.

How does the government hope to compete with emerging economies, such as those of China, India and Brazil, without a plan to make Canada more competitive and productive in order to maintain our standard of living?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will do it by tax cuts; by reducing the disincentives to work in Canada; by building massive new infrastructure in Canada; by investing in our universities and colleges; by investing in infrastructure in our universities and colleges; by reducing the tax burden on individual Canadians; and, by reducing taxes overall by almost \$20 billion over two years.

These are not promises. These are commitments that we made to the people of Canada, which we are keeping in the budget. I hope the Liberal side of the House will support it.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, aboriginal Canadians really are a priority for the government. The finance minister included many funding announcements for aboriginals in yesterday's budget.

Could the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs please reaffirm, for my constituents of Kelowna—Lake Country and for all Canadians, what the government is doing for aboriginal Canadians?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the budget involves \$1.1 billion of new money for aboriginal Canadians, and it has received positive acclaim from aboriginal leaders.

Jose Kusugak, the President of ITK, representing Canada's Inuit, for example, said, "This is the most we've gotten in a federal budget". There is more for his people in our budget than he had seen in recent years. "As tax paying Canadians Inuit will benefit as all Canadians will to the tax relief measures announced in the budget".

Also, Grand Council Chief Beaucage said, "I am excited to see the government honour the agreement to compensate residential school survivors". This is what is out there today.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE BUDGET

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget offered nothing to unemployed workers and nothing to protect pensions. It proposed only a study of older workers. They do not need a study; they need action.

We knew that the Liberals did not want to help unemployed workers, but can the Conservative minister tell us why there is nothing in the budget to help unemployed workers?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has one of the broadest, most generous employment programs of any country in the world. Part 1 of our EI program provides insurance. We have all our programs, work skills development and placement and those sorts of things. It is a very rich and very generous program.

We are looking at developing of a feasibility study to help older workers. Because this is a very complex issue, we take it seriously, which is why we are not going to go off and just throw some program willy-nilly together. We are going to get it right.

● (1455)

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister can go and ask the workers who have lost their jobs. We will see the difference.

It is not surprising that neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives are willing to help unemployed workers. However, what is surprising is that the Bloc Québécois has now decided to abandon our workers. Last year, it voted against the NDP budget and now sees this as a reason to vote in favour of this disappointing budget.

What did the government do to buy the Bloc's silence?

[English]

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess that is the difference between the opposition parties. Some of them recognize a really good budget when they see it, while some have not learned that lesson yet.

This is a good news budget for all Canadians, whether they are seniors, the disabled, aboriginals or families working or staying at home. There is something in this budget to help every single Canadian, including tax reduction, and I am darned proud of it.

* * *

CHILD CARE

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday's budget confirmed what many Canadian families were afraid of. The NDP sold out to a government that has no plan to create new child care spaces. Out of nothing more than spite, the minister has cancelled agreements that were already creating new spaces and programs across this country. In its place is a minuscule dollar figure with no workable plan attached.

Why will the minister not tell us in detail how her government will create new early learning and child care spaces, or is it that she still does not know?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hear a lot of indignation from the member opposite about our proposal to give people money. If there is cause for indignation it is because of what that member said on national television yesterday. She insulted every single Canadian who chooses to raise families at home. She insulted every one of us who was raised at home by implying that parents who want to raise their children at home will be bringing up future criminals. That is what she—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We have heard enough. The hon. member for St. Paul's now has the floor. We are going to hear her next question.

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows perfectly well that the research shows that if we do not invest in early learning and childhood, for every dollar we spend in that we will save \$7 later in special education, corrections and all those things, and you know that. Your answer was a short—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for St. Paul's has to address the Chair. The minister heard the question. She may want to respond but the questions do have to be addressed through the Chair.

The hon. minister of Human Resources and Social Development.

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again the Liberal Party's true agenda on child care is being exposed which is that it believes that parents are unfit to raise their own children.

The Conservative Party believes in parents. We believe that parents will make the right decisions for their children and for their very unique family circumstances.

* * *

AGRICULTURE

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the budget was deceptive on assistance for farmers. In reality, the budget has less money for farmers than the previous government's commitment. This budget has no cash for farmers for spring planting. The income crisis is now and the minister knows it.

Will the minister restructure this money so that it gets into the hands of farmers for spring planting? They need the money now.

Oral Questions

● (1500)

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am obviously pretty happy with this budget announcement on agriculture. For instance, there is \$200 million to help chicken farmers fight and prevent the avian influenza, but there is much more. There is the \$500 million we committed during the campaign and yesterday we delivered, but there is much more. There is billions of dollars in infrastructure for highways and port facilities to help farmers get their product delivered on time and make a profit.

There is an additional billion dollars that no one ever saw that will go to farmers, for a total of \$5.6 billion, money that the previous government not only never even promised but never delivered during its entire tenure in office.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that the government's budgetary commitments do not come up to what this government had committed last year.

Let me quote from the Library of Parliament document dated today:

Even if the \$1.5B additional funding announced yesterday was added, the total cost does not reach the amount mentioned by the Minister.

It is one thing for the minister to have his numbers wrong, but it is another for the minister not to put cash out to farmers. They need it now.

Will he tell us now that there will—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course there is going to be money for the short term, medium and the long term, money that the government opposite never offered during its 13 years.

I am particularly interested to know whether the member stands behind the statement he made in something called "Empowering Canadian Farmers in the Marketplace", where he said:

[We want to] assure that child-care is extended to parents who choose to stay on the farm while raising their young children.

Yesterday, we let farm families make that choice to raise their families.

* * *

[Translation]

KYOTO PROTOCOL

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the budget speech, the government states that it is maintaining the funding earmarked for the environment in the 2005 budget and reallocating \$2 billion to a plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which it intends to announce this fall.

Can the Minister of the Environment guarantee that the Conservative plan she introduces this fall will be in keeping with the objectives of the Kyoto protocol and take a territorial approach?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, our government made a clear commitment to invest in the Canadian environment right here at home. Our Prime Minister has shown the courage and the leadership to address this pressing issue with a strong commitment to a made in Canada plan to clean up Canada's environment.

We will continue to work with industry, the provinces, environmental groups and Canadians in the development of our plan to ensure that we can show real action on Canada's environment.

[Translation]

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment is abandoning the Liberal plan because under the Liberals, Canada increased its greenhouse gas emissions by 24% between 1990 and 2003 instead of decreasing emissions. She prefers the model of the United States, which increased its emissions by 13%. Yet the European Union reduced its emissions by 1.4% in the same period.

If the minister is serious about reducing emissions in Canada, why does she not model her plan on the European Union, which is at least adhering to the Kyoto protocol objectives and taking steps to attain them?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only model I am interested in is one that benefits Canadians first. Under our made in Canada plan, Canadian taxpayer dollars will stay right here in Canada and will be spent on our own environment here at home. Our made in Canada plan will invest in Canadian solutions, Canadian technology and Canadian communities.

In our plan, Canadians come first. I would just like to tell the hon. member that my Canada also includes Quebec.

* * *

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in yesterday's budget the Conservative government completely neglected the official language communities. There was no mention of any increase despite the obvious needs.

Furthermore, the government intends to reduce its spending by \$1 billion this year, and another billion next year.

Since the President of the Treasury Board is getting ready to slash budgets, can the Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages assure us that funding through 2008 for the official languages action plan will not be drastically reduced?

● (1505)

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of International Cooperation and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thousands look to Canada every year as their new home, a place to pursue their dreams. Financial burdens should not stop them from coming to Canada.

Could the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell us what he has done to make it easier for immigrants to come to Canada?

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for her tireless work on behalf of newcomers. I want to point out that a low moment the old government imposed a \$970 tax on immigrants to Canada. We have cut that in half in the budget. We will eliminate it as finances permit.

However, it goes beyond that. We are providing \$307 million to the provinces for settlement. We are providing money for recognizing credentials.

We have done more in 13 weeks than that old government did in 13 years.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government is spending three times as much subsidizing the oil patch in Alberta than it is spending on cleaning up the environment. This is not a made in Canada solution. This is a made in the oil patch solution.

After 13 years of incompetent Liberal governments, when it comes to climate change that took us from leaders in the environment internationally to laggards, why does the government continue the practice, after more than a year in the House that it claimed to have a climate change plan, where is the plan? Will the minister table it today?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we made a positive investment in Canadians by encouraging Canadians to get out of their cars and into public transit and investing in new greener public transportation systems. We are giving Canadians the tools to clean up their own environment.

I would like to share what the mayor of Toronto said about our public transit passes, which is that it would be a very good thing as part of the transit strategy and it also includes funding.

We are happy today to tell the mayor of Toronto that yesterday we did a very good thing and introduced our transit pass and made a real investment in green transportation.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BUREAUCRATS AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the question of privilege raised on Thursday, April 6, 2006 by the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest, alleging that public servants refused to communicate with him during the recent election campaign.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for raising this matter, as well as the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River, the hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot and the hon. member for Halifax for their interventions. I also want to thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Government House Leader and Minister for Democratic Reform for his intervention on April 7, 2006.

[English]

In presenting his case, the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest stated that departmental officials refused to meet with him during the recent general election to discuss the Anti-terrorism Act. In the last Parliament, the hon. member had been a member of the Subcommittee on Public Safety and National Security of the Standing Committee on Justice, Human Rights, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. The subcommittee had been reviewing the operations of the Anti-terrorism Act, but before it had the opportunity to finalize its report, the 38th Parliament was dissolved on November 29, 2005.

● (1510)

After dissolution, the hon. member attempted unsuccessfully to contact departmental officials from various departments to discuss some of his proposed recommendations. He was advised on two separate occasions that a policy directive had been issued prohibiting public servants from communicating with members of Parliament during the campaign period.

The member alleged that this directive impeded his ability to discharge his duties as a member of Parliament. In support of his position, the hon. member argued that, after dissolution, members of Parliament remain in office until election day, and thereafter if re-elected, and during this period are still considered by their constituents to be members.

In his intervention, the hon. parliamentary secretary indicated that the Privy Council Office did not have a policy prohibiting public servants from communicating with members during a dissolution period. That being said, he went on to argue that a member of Parliament is a member only for such period as the Parliament exists, referring in particular to the Parliament of Canada Act, which deems that members continue in office for purposes of allowances payable only. He posited that the dissolution of Parliament terminates all parliamentary business, including committee work, and concluded that the member's parliamentary privileges were not breached.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest has raised two important issues, namely, the status of a member during a general election period and the issue of the relationship between members of Parliament and public servants. Let me deal first with the matter of whether or not a member remains a member during a dissolution period.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

As the hon. Parliamentary Secretary noted, this gives rise to certain questions. At dissolution, Parliament, comprised of the Crown, the Senate and the House of Commons, no longer exercises its powers; however, the government continues to exist and Ministers remain in office until they are replaced. Members are discharged from their parliamentary duties, in other words, from the requirement to attend sittings of the House and its committees.

[English]

One could argue, as did the hon. parliamentary secretary, that the wording of the Parliament of Canada Act implies that once Parliament is dissolved, members are only members for purposes of allowances payable. Section 69 of the Parliament of Canada Act states that for purposes of allowances payable under sections 55.1 and 63, anyone who was a member as of dissolution “shall be deemed to continue to be a member of the House until the date of the next following election”.

Nonetheless, as all returning members and their staff are aware, constituents do not stop requiring assistance just because Parliament is dissolved. To this end, bylaw 305 of the Board of Internal Economy permits members to continue to use their offices to serve their constituents.

It might be argued, therefore, that during the election period, a member's role in assisting constituents continues, and this might include contacting government departments on behalf of their constituents.

This brings us to the second matter: the relationship between members and government departments. Specifically, if Parliament had not been dissolved, would the difficulties experienced by the member in meeting with public service officials constitute a prima facie breach of privilege or contempt of the House?

For the sake of new members in the House, I believe it would be useful if I briefly described what is meant by parliamentary privilege. The classic definition of parliamentary privilege is found in Erskine May's *Treatise on the Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usages of Parliament*:

Parliamentary privilege is the sum of the peculiar rights enjoyed by each House collectively...and by Members of each House individually, without which they could not discharge their functions, and which exceed those possessed by other bodies or individuals.

Obstructing members in the discharge of their responsibilities to the House or in their participation in its proceedings is considered a contempt of the House. My predecessors have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference. However, before the protection of parliamentary privilege can be invoked, the member's activity must be linked to a proceeding in Parliament.

The 22nd edition of Erskine May, on page 121, puts the matter succinctly:

Correspondence with constituents or official bodies, for example, and the provision of information, sought by Members on matters of public concern will very often, depending on the circumstances of the case, fall outside the scope of 'proceedings in Parliament'...against which a claim...of privilege will be measured.

As I have already indicated, members have risen on numerous occasions over the years on questions of privilege, alleging that they have been obstructed by government officials in fulfilling their responsibilities. For example, on May 15, 1985, two members, Mr. Frith, Sudbury, and Mr. Malépart, Montréal—Sainte-Marie, rose in the House to claim that their privileges had been breached, alleging that the Department of Employment and Immigration had directed its officials not to release information on certain projects, thus infringing their ability to serve their constituents. Speaker Bosley ruled that a complaint about the action or inaction of government departments could not constitute a question of parliamentary privilege as it did not infringe on members' freedom of speech or prevent members from fulfilling their duties. This ruling can be found at page 4768 of the *Debates* for May 15, 1985.

On another occasion, in ruling on a question of privilege raised by hon. member for Wild Rose concerning information allegedly denied to him by an official of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Speaker Parent found that the situation had not precluded the member from participating in a parliamentary proceeding. The Speaker ruled, therefore, that a contempt of Parliament had not occurred. This ruling is found at pages 687 to 689 of the *Debates* for October 9, 1997.

These precedents, where no prima facie case of privilege was found, arise in cases where the House was actually in session, whereas in the case before us not only was the House not in session, Parliament was actually dissolved. Accordingly, while I will concede that the hon. member may very well have a grievance, I have to conclude that the hon. member has not been obstructed in the performance of his parliamentary duties. I cannot, therefore, find a prima facie case of privilege.

I thank the hon. member for Scarborough Southwest for bringing this matter to the attention of the House as well as those members who contributed to the discussion.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1515)

[Translation]

CANADIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The Speaker: I have the honour to table the 2005 Annual Report of the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(e), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

ALS MONTH ACT

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-244, An Act to designate the month of June as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (also known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease) Month.

Routine Proceedings

He said: Mr. Speaker, the purpose of this bill is to recognize the month of June as ALS month across Canada. Hopefully this bill and the debates that will take place on it will help bring Canadians' attention to this devastating disease.

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

* * *

CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-245, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (trafficking in a controlled substance within five hundred metres of an elementary school or a high school).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to reintroduce in this Parliament a piece of private member's legislation that met with great success in the previous Parliament. This bill would impose mandatory prison sentences of one year for a first offence and two years for a further offence for a person convicted of trafficking in a narcotic within 500 metres of an elementary school or a high school.

School is a place where children must be allowed to build their futures free from the tyranny of drug pushers. We must send a forceful message that selling drugs to our children, especially near their schools, will not be tolerated by our society and will result in mandatory imprisonment, not a slap on the wrist.

Before the dissolution of the last Parliament, my colleagues from all sides of this House voted to send this legislation to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights for further study. I am hopeful that my colleagues in this new Parliament will be equally supportive.

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

* * *

• (1520)

INCOME TAX ACT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-246, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (vitamins).

She said: Mr. Speaker, this bill, an act to amend the Income Tax Act (vitamins), is important to all Canadians who use vitamins and other supplements to maintain their health. The purpose of this enactment is to expand the list of allowable medical expense deductions in the Income Tax Act to include expenses incurred for vitamin supplements, mineral supplements, dietary vitamin supplements or dietary mineral supplements.

I urge all members to support this bill. We all know that Canadians need to stay healthy and this bill encourages that through a tax break.

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

* * *

INCOME TAX ACT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-247, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction for volunteer emergency service).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I rise for first reading of my private member's bill, entitled an act to amend the Income Tax Act (deduction for volunteer emergency service). This enactment would amend the Income Tax Act to allow volunteer emergency workers to deduct \$3,000 from their taxable income from any source. As we are all aware, volunteer firefighters and emergency workers provide over 75% of all emergency services in Canada.

As a country, we need to encourage people to enter volunteer emergency services. I encourage all members of the House to support this bill.

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

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-248, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (sex crimes and violent crimes).

She said: Mr. Speaker, one of the key commitments of our government is to strengthen our criminal justice system. This bill, entitled an act to amend the Criminal Code (sex crimes and violent crimes), would do exactly that by amending the Criminal Code to preclude persons who commit sex offences and offences involving violence from receiving conditional sentences under that code.

It is imperative that this bill pass. I encourage all members of the House to support it.

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

* * *

DNA IDENTIFICATION ACT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-249, An Act to amend the DNA Identification Act (establishment of indexes).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing this bill entitled an act to amend the DNA Identification Act concerning the establishment of indexes because I believe that our law enforcement agencies should be able to assess every tool necessary in order to help them do their jobs.

The enactment would amend the DNA Identification Act to provide for the establishment of a human remains index and a missing persons index to help law enforcement agencies search for and identify persons reported missing. I urge all members to support this bill.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

CANADIAN SAFE DRINKING WATER ACT

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-250, An Act to ensure safe drinking water throughout Canada.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is always surprising that although Canada has the largest freshwater supplies in the world, we are very concerned that hundreds of our communities have to boil their water to have safe drinking water on a regular basis.

I honestly believe that from coast to coast to coast and inland, everybody in Canada should have the right to safe accessible water. Nobody should have to boil their water. Nobody should have to spend hundreds of millions of dollars worrying about those concerns.

We all know what happened in Walkerton and Kashechewan. That should not happen to any Canadian. That is why I am proud, along with my colleague from Victoria, to introduce this bill to ensure safe drinking water for every Canadian.

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

* * *

• (1525)

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-251, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (warning labels regarding the consumption of alcohol).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a bill which I first introduced into this House over 11 years ago and which, each time it has been introduced, has received very significant support in this House.

Maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy is the leading known cause of mental retardation in Canada. According to the latest report from the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse, binge drinking is the most dangerous form of drinking which leads to problems such as fetal alcohol syndrome.

I am pleased to present this bill regarding health warning labels on the containers of alcoholic beverages to caution expectant mothers, and others, of the risks associated with misuse of alcohol.

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding the special order adopted on Tuesday, May 2, 2006, regarding the special debate on NORAD, when no member rises to speak during that debate, or after five hours of debate, whichever is earlier, the question be deemed put and the recorded division be deemed requested and deferred to Monday, May 8, 2006, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to table a portion of a petition on behalf of 9,000 concerned Nova Scotians. This petition, signed by parents from Yarmouth to Cape North, calls upon the Prime Minister to honour the May 16, 2005, child care agreement between the Government of Canada and Nova Scotia.

I know members from two other parties will receive the remainder of this petition and I look forward to seeing them table it here in the coming days.

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to rise again with a petition from the Shearwater Military Family Resource Centre.

The petitioners are parents who are concerned about the government's plan to kill child care, which was done yesterday. They indicate that adding a taxable \$100 a month allowance to a child benefit will not establish new child care spaces.

Child care is an every day necessity. There is an urgent need and they call upon the Prime Minister to honour the early learning and child care agreement in principle, and to commit the funding for five years.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of a number of Nova Scotians who could not have their names added to the petition presented by the member for Halifax West. Over 9,000 Nova Scotians ask the government to maintain and honour its agreement with the Province of Nova Scotia for the development of early childhood education.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Tom Wappel (Scarborough Southwest, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of people in the Toronto area, primarily from my riding, who are Falun Gong practitioners and are concerned about what they perceive is the treatment of Falun Gong practitioners in the People's Republic of China.

They are calling on the Prime Minister and the Canadian government to condemn the Chinese government's crimes, which they have alleged in their preamble, against the Falun Gong practitioners, and have asked that Canada speak out at the United Nations. I am tabling this petition on their behalf.

The Budget

CHILD CARE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of my constituents regarding child care cuts by the government and the fact that they will not receive the child care they want.

The Conservative government proposed a taxable \$1,200 allowance as an income measure, which does not support child care. Even as an income measure, it will discriminate against families with employed mothers by giving them less financial assistance after tax than families in which one parent stays at home. I submit this on behalf of my constituents.

* * *

● (1530)

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

INTERIM SUPPLY

The Speaker: Pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 2, 2006, the House will consider and dispose of later today the motion relating to interim supply and the passage at all stages of the supply bill.

In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bill be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

POINTS OF ORDER

[English]

ALLEGED UNPARLIAMENTARY LANGUAGE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Before moving on to the next item of the day, I would like to return to the point of order raised by the hon. member for Scarborough Centre on April 27, 2006 during debate on Bill C-2.

The hon. member for Scarborough Centre requested an apology from the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board for questioning his honesty and integrity.

It is the duty of the Chair to ensure that our debates are conducted with a high degree of civility and mutual respect in keeping with established practices in the House. As is stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 522:

Remarks directed specifically at another Member which question that Member's integrity, honesty or character are not in order.

In a ruling given December 11, 1991, Speaker Fraser reminded members that:

The Chair wishes to emphasize that a major element of this civilized conduct consists in refraining from personal attack. There is good reason for this. First of all, in a general sense, respect for the person is the building block upon which our society is structured. Second, few things can more embitter the mood of the House than a series of personal attacks, for in their wake they leave a residue of animosity and unease.

With that in mind, I would like to invite the hon. parliamentary secretary to respond to the point of order raised on April 27.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I believe we can put this matter to rest very promptly by simply saying that my remarks were directed generally at the past Liberal administration and not particularly at any one member.

I do not know this particular member personally, but I am sure he is a man of great integrity and my remarks were certainly not directed at him, his person or the office that he personally holds.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to putting this issue promptly to rest.

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said then, I say now, to put it to rest. I clearly heard that it was directed at me, personally. I ask that the response be to me, personally, not to the party as a whole. The member is just simply fooling himself by responding the way he did. His amateurish response is unethical and unacceptable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I did take the time to review *Hansard*. There was nothing on the record. During the exchange there was some heckling going back and forth from both sides. The member has clarified his gestures. He has indicated that he did not mean to question the member for Scarborough Centre and the Chair is satisfied with that clarification.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from May 2 consideration of the motion that this House approves in general the budget policy of the government.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there are three problems with this budget. They are broadly defined problems and each of the three has its own components.

The Budget

It is a budget that provides short term gain for some and long term pain for all Canadians. It is a budget that will provide long term pain because it follows the long Conservative tradition of fiscal imprudence and incompetence. It is also a budget that has no vision. At best, it is all over the map with no coherence. At worst, it reflects the incredible smallness and small-mindedness of the top five priorities.

What Canadians expect, especially from a new government in great fiscal shape, is not smallness and small-mindedness, but a bold vision and a blueprint for sustainable growth for the future.

Nothing is more important for Canadians, for our children and grandchildren, than to lay the foundations for our country's future success and prosperity, and to tell Canadians how we can continue to thrive and prosper in a world of emerging Goliaths like India and China. This budget is nowhere on this fundamental issue. It is small. It is petty. It is without vision.

• (1535)

[Translation]

The budget also follows a second long Conservative tradition: taking money out of the pockets of poor Canadians and giving it to the wealthy.

My third and final topic will be the connection between honesty and politics in Canada.

[English]

Fiscal competence and debt reduction are core national assets. Slowly but surely, these assets have been built up over the past 13 years to the point where Canada's fiscal record and reputation are second to none in the world.

When Conservatives ask what we Liberals did over the past 13 years, I am proud to answer that one thing we did was to clean up their \$42 billion deficit mess. With much sacrifice by Canadians, we balanced the books in four years and then the nation began to reap the benefits of these sacrifices. Since balancing the budget, Canada has enjoyed the strongest job growth of all G-7 countries, the biggest debt pay down, and the strongest growth in living standards. That is what we did over the past 13 years and I for one am very proud to have been a part of it.

[Translation]

As a result, the Conservative government inherited the best fiscal situation since Confederation.

Are Canadians not entitled to expect a good deal more from the first budget of a government that had the amazing luck to inherit a \$10 billion surplus? I think they are.

The least that Canadians can expect from this new government is that it will not waste or squander the public funds it has inherited. This money is a vital asset that the government spent years building up and that could be wasted over time or destroyed in a nanosecond. This certainly has not happened yet, because the government inherited the soundest fiscal situation since Confederation.

But there are disturbing signs that the Prime Minister takes the nation's finances lightly. There are signs that the Prime Minister does not care about debt reduction and is preparing to join the ranks of the

many Conservative leaders known for their financial incompetence, from Mr. Diefenbaker to Mr. Mulroney to Mr. Harris in Ontario.

[English]

When John Diefenbaker came to power, after a string of Liberal surpluses, the government ran seven consecutive deficits. The Mulroney-Campbell government bequeathed to the Liberals a \$42 billion deficit and it took several years and a great deal of pain to clean this up.

Maybe the most fiscally incompetent government in all of Canadian history was the government of the Mike Harris common sense revolution, or more appropriately, the Mike Harris stick it to the common man revolution.

An hon. member: Didn't Flaherty have something to do with that?

Hon. John McCallum: I am coming to that. That was a government in which the two most important economic ministers of the current federal government, the Minister of Finance and the President of the Treasury Board, were both key players.

The Harris government laid off 10,000 public servants, closed more than 30 hospitals and fired 8,000 nurses. But better than that, of even greater incompetence, the Conservatives found they had made a mistake and they had to hire back many of those nurses.

So zealous were they to cut taxes before the money was in the bank and so blatantly did they fix the books that what happened after they lost power? The auditors came in and instead of finding the promised balanced budget, what did they find? They found a deficit, and it was not a small deficit. It was a deficit of \$5.6 billion.

Now two of the prime architects of that financially disastrous regime are sitting across the aisle holding the two economic portfolios of the federal government. That fact alone should make Canadians quite worried about Conservative fiscal incompetence, but there are other reasons.

In the election campaign, when the Conservatives released their economic platform, they got the numbers wrong, so they re-released it. Then they got the numbers wrong again, so they re-re-released their election platform. Now that is incompetent.

• (1540)

[Translation]

Just yesterday, the Minister of Finance said that he was cutting income tax, when in fact he raised it. The nicest interpretation is that the minister is demonstrating crass incompetence. The most likely explanation probably cannot be said in the House.

The Conservative plan consisting of increasing income tax to reduce the GST is a poor financial measure and, once again, it is incompetent.

The Budget

As Herbert Grubel, a former Reform finance critic, told me, reducing the GST may be a good political move, but it is a disastrous economic one. In other words, it makes sense only for a Prime Minister who puts political opportunism before the good of Canada.

[English]

The Conservative Party's refusal to identify its cuts on budget day is also fiscally irresponsible, but it is not a surprise. The Harris duo across the aisle know this trick well: cut the taxes today with vague promises of spending cuts some time tomorrow. This is a recipe for deficits if ever there was one. They certainly delivered a big one, \$5.6 billion.

Our government disclosed over 100 line items of detailed expenditure reductions on our budget day last year. If the Conservatives had any degree of fiscal competence and fiscal responsibility, they would have done the same thing yesterday, but they did not.

Yesterday the budget eliminated what is called economic prudence, a technical term which is essentially money set aside to provide further assurance against running into deficit if something negative hits the economy, and something that is negative always might hit the economy. We have seen SARS. We have seen hurricanes from time to time. We have seen recessions. One hopes it will not happen, but even a terrorist attack could happen. Many things could happen. If we are skating close to the edge, if we have gotten rid of the prudence, there is nothing there to protect us should some unforeseen negative occurrence happen. Then the Conservative government would be much closer to deficit than our government under the Liberal leadership would ever have been. This is fiscally irresponsible, fiscally incompetent. It is playing fast and loose with the nation's finances.

The Prime Minister speaks disparagingly of surpluses and the associated debt paydown as excess taxation. When the Prime Minister or finance minister travels internationally to G-8 meetings I know they get lavish praise for balancing the books. I have heard it: "How did you get rid of your deficits? What magic formula does Canada have to get rid of deficits when other countries have failed to do so?"

Does the Prime Minister answer that question? The Prime Minister I assume, since he does not like fixed surpluses, would say, "No, George, this is not a success; we have a terrible problem in Canada. Our surpluses are much too big". Or he could say:

• (1545)

[Translation]

"No, Jacques, we have a crisis in Canada. Our surpluses are much too big". This attitude of the Prime Minister's is ridiculous.

[English]

If he actually did say that to George Bush or Jacques Chirac, he would certainly be a laughingstock.

The Prime Minister fails to understand that surpluses and debt paydown are not excess taxation for today's generation. They are lower taxes or better government services for future generations. It is dangerous when the Prime Minister of Canada disparages debt

paydown and when he does not care about future generations, especially when we live in a world of an aging population.

Maybe it is not surprising. The Prime Minister seems to care about only one thing: votes in the next election. Future generations will not be voting in the next election. That is sufficient reason for him not to want to pay down debt for the benefit of future generations, because they will not be voting come the next election.

[Translation]

All this is very worrying for Canada's economic future. The country's finances are so healthy now that the risk of deficit is not imminent. However, the government's financial mentality and incompetence are such that I am worried about what the Conservatives will do with our vital asset, that is, our financial competence.

We who have built up this asset have to be extremely vigilant so that it is not destroyed by the government. Canadians cannot afford to return to the long-term problems that are engendered by the Conservatives' usual deficits and their financial incompetence.

The other long-term problem posed by the budget is the absence of a grand design for the country. The budget does not ask the sole question that any responsible minister of finance would ask in 2006.

The question is as follows: how can a small country with some 30 million inhabitants continue to prosper in a world in which superpowers such as China and India are beginning to elbow their way in and former superpowers such as Europe and the U.S. are taking dynamic measures to advance their own economic interests?

[English]

The government seems to think that the world owes Canada a living. It does not.

In terms of any sensible plan that would answer this question, the government is either going in precisely the wrong direction on tax policy, or it is totally missing in action on everything else.

If the object is to enhance Canada's saving and investment, promote productivity and prosperity, then a hike in income tax to pay for lower GST is the worst policy in the world. This is not a controversial statement among economists and policy experts. The government is proposing to fritter away some \$10 billion per year, an enormous sum of money, in a tax cut that does nothing at all for Canada's future prosperity or competitiveness. This is another triumph of political expediency over what is best for Canada. It is a disgrace.

I truly believe that the Prime Minister, himself an economist, should know better than to fritter away all the taxpayers' money in a way that does absolutely nothing for the long term economic health of Canada.

An hon. member: Did he graduate?

Hon. John McCallum: I am not sure if he has a degree.

The Budget

By lowering income tax instead of the GST, he could have put the same amount of money, or more, into the pockets of Canadians. He could have done it more fairly, and in so doing, he would have given a boost to Canada's medium term prosperity. Clearly again this is a case of long term pain for all Canadians in the name of short term political expediency for the Conservative Party.

One does not need to have a Ph.D. in economics to understand that Canada will not compete with India and China on the basis of low wages. We do not even want to try. The only way we can compete is through our people, brain power, ideas, research, commercialization, entrepreneurship, higher learning, training.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives' measures in this area are tokens at best and, at worst, a complete shame. We Liberals had reserved \$2.5 billion for research and development, particularly university research, marketing, the Canada Foundation for Innovation and new research centres. One of these centres is located in my own riding. Unfortunately, all that was cancelled in the budget. In exchange, the Conservatives are offering only \$200 million, instead of \$2.5 billion. This is quite pathetic.

As far as higher education is concerned, the Liberals had set aside funds to be paid to every college and university student. They could receive up to \$6,000 in tuition fees for a four-year program. Once again, the Conservatives thought they should cancel this measure. What do they offer in exchange? A tax deduction for textbooks worth about \$80 a year.

[*English*]

This is not just a token. This is an insult to hard-working students and to their parents who are hit with rising tuition fees, whereas we on this side of the House recognized this problem and offered to pay half of the fees in year one and year four up to a total of \$6,000. The Conservatives are giving students an \$80 tax write-off on textbooks.

Not only that but perhaps even worse, in the fiscal update we also had plans that were booked to provide even more generous assistance to disadvantaged Canadians, aboriginal people, people with disabilities and low income Canadians, who wished to go to university. In those cases the amounts were more generous.

All of that was cancelled by the Conservatives. Their pathetic \$80 tax deduction for buying books is an insult compared with the substantial measures that we put in place in order to promote a learning economy that would be competitive in the world and also provide access to Canadians to post-secondary education.

While other countries work to create a tax system that fosters innovation, what does the Prime Minister do? He hikes income tax to cut the GST. While other countries pour billions into research, innovation and higher learning, what does the Prime Minister do? He withdraws from the race, offering tokens so small as to be insulting.

This is dangerous stuff. It is absolutely and totally irresponsible. It is a recipe for long term pain. Canada simply cannot afford to sit on the sidelines or to take a time out as other countries pass us by.

I come now to that second great Conservative tradition, to take from the most vulnerable Canadians and reward the better off.

With respect to tax policy, let me begin by correcting the budget numbers for the rather obvious error that every Canadian understands except, it seems, the finance minister and the Prime Minister. What we heard yesterday was an income tax increase and not an income tax cut, and that is a fact. They have offset this tax increase with a GST cut and the employment credit. On the basis of correct numbers, we find the budget takes money out of the pockets of Canadians earning around \$30,000 and puts that money into the pockets of wealthier Canadians. It is absolutely false when the Prime Minister and the finance minister say that every Canadian received a tax break in this budget. That is only true if we make the wrong assumption that income taxes went down when in fact income taxes went up. That is not a very difficult assumption to correct and once we do that it becomes abundantly clear that lower income Canadians suffered a tax hike.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: It was never there. What are you talking about? That is a total falsehood.

Hon. John McCallum: Perhaps I should repeat the point since the member opposite seems to fail to comprehend.

Up means that direction and down means that direction. When we go from an income tax rate of 15% to 15.5% that is up, and that is what the budget did as confirmed in the document.

Mr. Gerald Keddy: It was never 15%. That is misleading the public.

An hon. member: It is 15%. Last year it was 15%.

Hon. John McCallum: Fifteen is a lower number than fifteen and a half.

An hon. member: Tell the member to check his tax form.

Hon. John McCallum: If the member checks his own tax form he will see this point verified.

An hon. member: Tell him what page it is on.

Hon. John McCallum: It is revised schedule 1. If the member has the real copy, as opposed to the Xerox one, the 15% is in nice Liberal red. It stands out so people can see it.

Let us not debate facts anymore. Let us just acknowledge the point which does imply that this reverse Robin Hood syndrome is still alive and well in this budget.

• (1555)

Let us talk about other disadvantaged or challenged groups in this country. Let us take Canada's farmers who are in a state of crisis and the government does not care. There is not a penny of emergency funding for spring planting. There is nothing for producers in dire need of immediate funding if they are to have any chance at all of surviving.

The Budget

The member for Malpeque, in question period, questioned the Minister of Agriculture and got a non-answer. His asked why there was no emergency funding for spring planting and why there was nothing right now for producers threatened with going under if they did not get money right away, and he received a non-answer from the minister.

Until the government comes forward and explains clearly why my colleague is wrong, we have to conclude that it does not care. There is not a penny for Canada's farmers now at their moment of crisis.

Mr. Ed Fast: Thirteen years.

Hon. John McCallum: Thirteen years is right. Thirteen years is the time it took to get rid of that Conservative deficit of \$42 billion and to create the conditions for a booming Canadian economy. I am proud to have been a part of those 13 years.

Our only concern is that on the other side, they are going to mess it all up with this attitude of not wanting to pay down debt, going too close to the edge and going back to a deficit. That is the problem.

Let us go on again about Canadians or regions that are not necessarily the richest. What I would say, having travelled extensively in Atlantic Canada and northern Ontario, that I have a keen appreciation of the central role of regional development agencies in creating jobs and stemming the outflow of people to the more populated parts of the country.

Why was there no mention of regional development agencies in the budget? Do they no longer fit into Conservative Ottawa, which wants to solve everything with a tax break? Or, is it the case, as with aboriginal people and farmers, that the government just does not care?

Why is it cutting funding to forestry, which is so critical to those regions of the country? Why, in a typical case of indifference to the plight of the less privileged, is it totally ignoring the fishing industry in which older workers are in a state of transition?

The answer, as usual, is that it is a government and a political party that does not care. It has no compassion for Canadians in need.

Another relatively underprivileged part of the country is the north. We see another broken promise with no mention of the northern development plan. Why the decimation of aboriginal funding, which will be especially damaging to the north?

That gives a pretty clear idea of the general attitude of the government, which is callous toward the least privileged members of our society

Let me now spend a little more time on three particular areas of concern, beginning with the environment.

Mr. Myron Thompson: Please don't. Give us a break.

Hon. John McCallum: I would like to address a particularly major shortfall of this shortsighted budget. The member opposite should pay attention because this is a very important area.

An hon. member: All the while, roses are dying.

Hon. John McCallum: On this side of the House, we know that the fight to save our planet is one we cannot afford to lose. As my

colleague suggests, we have to preserve those wild roses for future generations.

This is a war that claims as its casualties our air, our water and our wildlife. It is affecting our children and it will damage generations yet to come. It is a battle that needs all nations to unite and fight as one, but if what is in this budget is any indication, the Conservative government seems intent on denying this reality.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

The Conservatives are not taking into account the very real risk of climate change, besides being determined to nullify the efforts made by the previous Liberal government to halt this destructive process. Thus they have discreetly axed environmental programs, and they have been silent, contradictory, indeed sometimes incoherent about their plans for our environment.

[*English*]

Through denial and inaction, the government is cutting short our country's future and jeopardizing worldwide efforts to reverse the damage that has already been done. The Conservative government plans to kill programs that would help Canada to meet its Kyoto commitments. It intends to use the savings to fund a \$2 billion transit tax credit. This tax credit will cost over \$2,000 per tonne of greenhouse gas reduced. This is incredibly inefficient. For a government that prides itself on efficiency, here is a number that is between 10 and 100 times more ineffective than the Liberal plan. Ninety-five per cent of the money going to the transit pass will go to people who use the system anyway. What is the point?

What the government refuses to acknowledge is that a tax credit is not an environmental program. It will not do anything to address the urgency of climate change.

Meanwhile, I used to be minister for NRCan and, in response to high energy prices, we established a super program through EnerGuide that provided funding to low income Canadians and to other Canadians to help them improve the energy efficiency of their heating, and it worked. EnerGuide has been a proven success over many years.

Energy efficiency improvements are good for the environment because there is less pollution, and they are good for the pocketbook because it costs us less to heat our houses. It was a great program but the government simply cut it. It does not make sense when it says that it was ineffective because having been there I know it was highly effective.

Since 1997, the Liberals funded programs that have helped us better understand the challenges and risks of climate change, promote green technologies and innovations, develop policy options that allow us to address the climate change crisis and take every action possible to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We have worked to move Canada toward a clean energy future and increase the efficiency, sustainability and international competitiveness of the Canadian economy.

The Budget

I am particularly proud, as a Canadian, of Canada's global leadership role played at the Kyoto conference in Montreal in December 2005 by our former minister of the environment. He really led the world to develop the next stage.

Also, as a Canadian I must say that I am particularly dismayed by the role of our new environment minister who, as president of this same conference, will check in and then check out pretty fast. What an abdication of responsibility and what a loss of a great opportunity to show leadership on this global project that is so important to Canada and to the world.

[Translation]

Canada must continue to play an influential role. We cannot relent in our determination or in the efforts we should make to reduce greenhouse gas emissions both in Canada and in the rest of the world.

I urge the Conservative government to rise above petty politics and adopt specific measures for the environment.

● (1605)

[English]

I turn now to Canada's aboriginal people, to what is in the budget for them, or more accurately, what is not. The Conservative government jettisoned the Liberal government's Kelowna accord, an agreement by both levels of government committing \$5 billion to improve aboriginal housing, health and economic development.

While the commitments the Conservatives have made, including national water standards for first nation reserves and native-run school boards, will no doubt be beneficial to our country's first nations, Inuit and Métis people, they are little more than a distraction from the larger issue at hand.

The programs outlined in this budget were laid out in the Kelowna accord. What the budget lacks is any new funding at all for aboriginal Canadians.

Kelowna was the result of first nations, Métis and Inuit leaders joining with premiers, territorial leaders and the federal government, for the first time in history, to forge a comprehensive plan, with measurable targets to ensure accountability, that will address the urgent problems facing aboriginal communities.

On this side of the House, we believe the commitments made in Kelowna are essential in order to bridge the gap in living standards between aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. However, with this new budget, it is clearer than ever that what we achieved in Kelowna is in danger. The Conservative government has abandoned the plans laid out in the accord for the sake of ideology.

The Conservatives' lack of commitment to what was achieved in Kelowna is no secret. During the last election, the former Conservative finance critic, now the immigration minister, publicly stated:

[The] Kelowna agreement is something that [they] crafted at the last moment on the back of a napkin on the eve of an election. We're not going to honour that. We will have our own plan that will help natives a lot more than the Liberals'.

It is disappointing but not surprising, I would say, to see this lack of commitment reflected in the Conservative budget. Where is the

plan that was promised by the former finance critic? Is this budget a signal of what is to come? Is it the first step in the Conservatives' plan to abandon the Government of Canada's commitment to aboriginal people? Is this their strategy to gradually undermine the Kelowna accord?

[Translation]

Kelowna is the product of more than two years of hard work by native leaders and the federal and provincial governments. Together we managed to reach a historic agreement to overcome the economic divide that will still exist in 10 years between aboriginals and their fellow citizens in the areas of education, health, housing and economic opportunities.

I cannot see how a government of any kind could withdraw in all conscience from such an agreement. Aboriginal Canadians deserve at least that. They deserve all the funds they were promised at the first ministers' meeting in Kelowna, and not just crumbs. Only a detailed plan will enable us to make real changes to the quality of life of aboriginals and help them move from poverty to prosperity.

[English]

It is simply unacceptable to cherry-pick from the Kelowna accord without even having the decency of consulting the aboriginal leaders. In the Liberal Party, we are committed to working together with first nations, Métis and Inuit leaders. Despite the poor showing in this budget, we will continue to strongly encourage the Prime Minister to do the same. It is not enough to just pay lip service. Canada's aboriginal peoples deserve a government that can achieve real progress.

Throughout the past few months, the Conservatives have been trying to create a phony war between their government and the opposition on the subject of child care. The Prime Minister and his ministers have tried to frame the child care debate as a matter of choice. In a way, they are right, but it is not a choice between the Liberal child care program and the Conservative child care program. It is a choice between an existing national public system of early learning and child care—

Mr. Gerald Keddy: There is no existing system. What are you talking about?

Mr. Merv Tweed: It's a figment of your imagination.

Hon. John McCallum: —and no federally funded national child care system at all.

An hon. member: There are agreements signed with every province in this country.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, \$1,200 is not bad to put in people's pockets. It is like the baby bonus. But it is not child care and it is not early learning. I think that is one of the main confusions over there.

What the Conservatives do not seem to understand, including those members I hear from over there, is that the vast majority of Canadian parents need to work. The simple fact is that child care is not a matter of choice for most Canadians. It is a necessity.

The Budget

Let me make one thing clear. Again, I have to go slowly for the benefit of the members opposite. The Liberal Party has always believed in income support for Canadian families. In fact, we pioneered the concept. Our party established both the national child benefit and the Canada child tax benefit, which just last month alone provided \$800 million to 2.9 million Canadian families.

We are pleased to see more income support for families included in the budget. I said that at the beginning: we do not object to the \$1,200. We are pleased to see more income support, but a cash payout to parents is not a child care plan. It does not address the child care space deficit across the country.

The provinces, parents' groups, women's groups and advocacy groups representing the poor have all opposed this government's plan to dismantle the national child care agreement signed by the provinces. Nevertheless, the government ignored that opposition and forged ahead with its plan to kill the national child care system in favour of its taxable \$1,200 a year child care plan.

Parents need viable, affordable solutions to the child care dilemma, not a small payout that is subject to taxes and clawbacks. The problem with the Conservative child care allowance is that it will not make child care more affordable. It will not create any new spaces. It will not increase accessibility for children with special needs. In short, it will leave parents to fend for themselves.

Furthermore, in order to pay for this plan, which will provide lower income parents with a paltry \$20 a week for child care, the government will cut the young child supplement under the Canada child tax benefit. This monthly tax-free income supplement is targeted to those who need it most. Under the Conservative plan it will be killed, yet another example of the reverse Robin Hood behaviour so typical on that side of the House.

This supplement currently pays \$20.25 a month to parents who do not claim child care expenses for their preschool age children. Now we learn that it will be eliminated at the same time the child care payout takes effect. The benefit was due to increase in July to \$249 annually.

•(1610)

[Translation]

Families with modest or average incomes will benefit the least, after taxes, from the child care allowance. By eliminating this supplement, the Conservatives are making things worse because they are going to widen the gulf between poor families and rich families. There is every reason to think that the Conservatives' child care allowance will ultimately be nothing but a mirage. They cannot help parents in need by taking with one hand what they give with the other.

Our party enabled the Conservative government to inherit the best financial situation of any country in the G-7. There is nothing to prevent the Prime Minister from honouring the day care agreements we concluded with the provinces and, at the same time, financing his child care allowance.

[English]

With this budget, the Conservatives are showing once again that they are completely out of touch with, or simply do not care about,

the needs of the majority of Canadian families. With this budget, the Conservatives are proving once again that their priorities lie with protecting the wealthy and neglecting the underprivileged.

I would like to remind the Prime Minister that standing up for Canada means standing up for all Canadians, not just those in the highest income bracket.

•(1615)

[Translation]

That is why the conduct of the Bloc Québécois is so shameful. By forming an unnatural alliance with the most right-wing government in the country's history, the Bloc members are betraying the values and convictions of the vast majority of Quebecers.

Quebeckers want a healthful environment. Quebeckers want to help the most disadvantaged in society and not just pass them by. Quebeckers want a good preschool education and day care system. Quebeckers also believe that the fiscal imbalance must be resolved.

For purely partisan reasons, though, the Bloc Québécois has allied itself with the Conservatives, this party of extreme neo-conservatism, even though the budget does not provide one cent to resolve the fiscal imbalance.

[English]

As for the NDP, that is a party that sacrificed child care. It is a party that sacrificed the Kelowna Accord and the environment for the sake of 10 additional seats in the House of Commons. That party is an accomplice in this budget. NDP members have reaped what they have sown and their cynical opportunism has left the Liberal Party as the only legitimate voice for progressive voters.

We had 13 years of cleaning up their mess, 13 years of fantastic economic growth. The only fear we have is they will mess it up.

Several times I have stressed the triumph of the Prime Minister's political expediency over what is good for the nation in his disdain for debt paydown, his decision to cut GST rather than the income tax, his opting for a transit pass that does nothing for the environment and even his preference for small, targeted tax credit over broader tax relief.

Why are young hockey players more deserving of taxpayer support than young violinists? Is this a paternalistic government, a "government knows best" government that wants to socially engineer Canadians in the direction of its own recreational and educational preferences? Social engineers over there encourage the hockey players but not the violinists. I do not know why. Why does one deserve help and the other does not?

However, my basic point is that the Prime Minister's political expediency will not work. At the end of the day, his cynical riding-by-riding calculations of where to put the tax credits to get the most votes will fall flat. On this side of the House, we have greater faith in Canadians. We believe Canadians will see through these rather crude vote buying schemes. Canadians will vote against a government that desecrates the environment. They will vote against a government and its accomplice over there that cancels child care, a government that shafts aboriginal people and applies its reverse Robin Hood mentality to take from the vulnerable to accommodate the well-to-do.

Canadians care about a strong economy founded on balanced books and prudent fiscal management. They do not appreciate governments like that one, which is in the process of playing fast and loose with the nation's finances. Canadians understand that if our country is to thrive and prosper in a highly competitive world, we need to take big steps to go to the next level, not the small and cynical steps proposed by the Prime Minister and his followers. Ultimately and before too long, the Prime Minister's expediency will fail. Let us hope it is not so long that his short-sighted policies have time to bear their poisoned fruit and impose lasting pain on Canadians and the Canadian economy.

I end with a few words about politics and honesty, and then I have to present the amendment.

Yesterday I was amazed to discover that a blatant error contained in the budget provoked so little comment or reaction from the public. Yes, it is true. The media corrected this error and referred to an income tax increase, not a decrease. The fact is, such an obviously self-serving error appearing on page 1 of the budget speech in and of itself provoked little comment.

• (1620)

On reflection, maybe this is because Canadians have come to believe that it is normal for politicians to behave in a way that in most other occupations would be seen as flagrantly dishonest. If so, maybe that is why we, as a group of politicians, all of us in this room, fair so poorly in public esteem. To me this is most unfortunate not only at the personal level as a politician myself, but also because the distrust of politicians by the citizens of Canada can hardly auger well for a strong democratic process.

Therefore, I would end with a simple and serious request of the Minister of Finance. For the sake of the public esteem of politicians, for all of us in this chamber, for the sake of our reputation for honesty and for democracy in Canada will he simply come clean and tell the truth to Canadians so we can honestly debate the merits of his budget?

[*Translation*]

I move, seconded by the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country:

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "That" and substituting the following:

"this House condemns the government for a budget which
abandons any federal leadership role in the development of social policy;
ignores the Kyoto Protocol and the battle against climate change;
destroys federal-provincial agreements which were creating high quality,
universal, affordable and developmental child care spaces;

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walks away from the Kelowna Accord with Canada's aboriginal people and all provinces and territories;

fails to deal with student access to post secondary education, including the high cost of tuition, or to provide adequate support for science and technology;

raises the income tax rate for all Canadian taxpayers; and

eliminates the policies of fiscal responsibility which have fostered Canada's robust economy for over a decade."

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The House has heard the amendment and the Chair will take it under advisement and determine whether the amendment is in order and get back to the House very shortly.

In the meantime, questions and comments, the hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

• (1625)

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the Liberals in the House now for a number of days. I listened to their visceral attacks on the NDP, on other opposition parties, questioning their motives in defeating the recent Liberal government. The previous government members might want to look in the mirror. They did not proffer for their government, they defeated their government, following the largest corruption scandal in Canadian political history, the sponsorship scandal. They were not supporting anyone else.

I understand the Liberals are beside themselves and have not come to accept that they are in opposition and that they are deeply troubled. They are having a very difficult time sitting in opposition and they are showing this by attacking all other parties. However, they might want to reflect upon why they are sitting in opposition today.

With respect to the budget, what we saw for the first time in a long time in the House was the government's campaign commitments and the delivery on those very specifics it promised to Canadians. Based on the mandate that Canadians gave the government, it delivered. It turned that into a budget in the House, something of which we are very proud, and Canadians are responding to very favourably.

However, the Liberal members may want to look in the mirror to see exactly why they are sitting where they are.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, I thought there might be a somewhat more elevated level of debate. I think I had some substantive points on the budget. I thought I might hear something about the minister's department. I used to be the minister there. I know a bit about it too.

I would have thought he might have explained why he gave such a totally wrong and incompetent answer in question period the other day. My colleague asked him why he had abolished the EnerGuide program, which subsidizes Canadians to improve the energy efficiency of their home heating. It was a wonderful question. I know, from having been there and seeing the studies, this is a hugely effective program. The minister gave a stock answer that programs do not work. I know that program does work. It saves people money and it is good for the environment, yet he goes and cancels it.

The Budget

He totally misunderstood the question. He thought we were talking about the cheques that go to older people and parents of families. Those cheques have gone out, so he does not seem to understand the first principles of running his own department.

Before he starts talking about our competence, maybe he should go back, get a few briefings and learn a little about the Department of Natural Resources.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am quite aware that the person who has just spoken is very fond of wordplay. I will therefore start with a play on words, by saying that his comments are far from exhilarating. That is to say, his words partake more of complacency. These people seem to forget where they come from.

When my colleague alludes to the fact the members of the government have access to a certain fortune, he fails to mention at whose expense that fortune—or the surplus—was accumulated. It was accumulated at the expense of regions such as mine, and of the unemployed. As we very well know, nearly \$50 billion has been taken from the pockets of the unemployed and people in the regions. Thus bled dry, they were subsequently forgotten and ignored.

My colleague's speech may seem interesting from certain points of view, but it is far from exhilarating. The Liberals seem to totally forget what they failed to do and what they did do when there was some relative improvement in the financial situation. It was relative because it was accomplished to the detriment of certain regions or certain individuals.

It is in that sense that I would like to correct my colleague. I would like him to stand back a little and look at what he is saying. The regions and employment insurance should be among his priorities, but that has not been the case in recent years.

• (1630)

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, clearly that was one of our priorities. This partnership between the Bloc and the Conservative Party is not very logical in terms of the priorities of the regions. As I was just saying in my speech, the budget provides nothing for the regional development agencies. As my colleague just said, neither does it provide anything for the fisheries. Yet these are important in the riding of the hon. member, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Now here he is associating himself with this government which has provided nothing for fisheries and nothing for the regions. We Liberals were much more generous to the regions. We believed in the importance of these regional development agencies. The hon. members opposite think they are a waste of money.

It is not only with respect to the regions that the interests of the Bloc differ from those of the Conservatives. Yet despite everything, for purely political reasons, the members of the Bloc have decided to ally with them. Otherwise the Bloc would lose a lot of ridings in Quebec if an election were to be called in the near future. In addition to regional development, Quebecers are concerned about protecting the environment and helping the disadvantaged, unlike this government.

It is the Bloc that is in an impossible and contradictory position, not us.

[*English*]

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the Liberal finance critic as he went through his criticisms of the new budget that we are all dealing with in this House. I agree that there are many missed opportunities in this budget to provide commitments to Canadians on issues that we in this party certainly care about around child care, education and the environment. Certainly the Conservatives are squandering an opportunity when they have a large surplus at this time to provide the services that Canadians need.

Members will recall that in the 1993 election campaign that member's party produced what was called the red book. The Liberals highly flaunted it to the Canadian people. They made huge commitments at that time, 13 years ago, for a national child care program that would be affordable and accessible to all Canadians.

In my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam in British Columbia, the waiting lists for child care spaces can be very long. There can be 100 families on the list for one child care space. It is a real crisis. Yet his government, in 13 years of constantly promising, did not deliver even one child care space in this country, not one. I am amazed to see the Liberal critic stand there and not even blush. He did not even go red in the face when he said it was the fault of the New Democratic Party that there was no child care program in this country. It is shocking to hear that kind of rhetoric.

I want to ask the Liberal critic how he can say such blatant nonsense in this House and expect to have any kind of credibility with the Canadian people when we know that his government had such a long time to provide these kind of services that are needed by Canadian people and did not do it.

Hon. John McCallum: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must know that the reason for the lack of day care lies at the feet of the NDP. The NDP had an opportunity and the NDP blew it. The NDP sacrificed day care for 10 more seats. The NDP sacrificed the Kelowna accord for 10 more seats. The NDP sacrificed the environment for 10 more seats. The NDP had the opportunity and the NDP blew it.

That is why I said in my remarks that the cynical opportunism displayed by that party and that member has left only one voice remaining, and that is a Liberal voice, to represent the progressive voters in this country.

The NDP members had their chance and they blew it; that's it.

• (1635)

The Deputy Speaker: Before resuming debate, the Chair had an opportunity to review the amendment and finds it in order.

[*Translation*]

Resuming debate.

The hon. member for Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot.

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Before getting to the heart of the matter, I would like to address a remark to my Liberal colleague who spoke before me.

The Budget

I think that the Liberal Party members as a group should look to their reputation. They are not credible when they talk about the common good or when they talk about using public funds properly, particularly with the sponsorship scandal in the background. They are not credible when they talk about the welfare of the regions, because they devastated the regions, particularly with the employment insurance cuts, the theft of the surplus in the employment insurance fund. They left the fishers out in the cold, just as they did the farmers.

So it seems to me that they should be a little less arrogant, and a little less cynical too, and hold their peace for quite some time. I think that this would be a good thing for everyone.

An hon. member: Modesty.

Mr. Yvan Loubier: That being said, my message is now addressed to the Conservatives.

During question period, I heard the Prime Minister say: "I am pleased to have the Bloc Québécois' support in our efforts to improve the Canadian federation". The thought came to me that I hoped that the Conservatives would not become as arrogant as the Liberals were after 13 years in power, particularly not after only a few months in government.

The Conservatives must know that we would have rejected this budget had it not been for their formal commitment to solving the fiscal imbalance, with a specific timetable for a meeting of first ministers to discuss it and find solutions, and a specific timetable for the solution, that is, the next budget, in the spring of 2007.

We would have voted against it, with all the consequences that might have involved, but we would have voted against it.

Were it not for there being a solution to the fiscal imbalance, this budget, with a few exceptions, to which I will come back at the end, is unbelievably flawed in terms of the decisions the Conservatives should have made regarding the problems we have been working on for years. Decisions should have been made that could have had an even more positive effect on the welfare of the citizens of Quebec and the rest of Canada. Those decisions were not made, and I will take the next few minutes of my time to talk about them.

I suggest that the Conservatives put that in their pipe and not start being arrogant with us, because they will find us on their heels on every issue I am going to name. We will be in their face whenever they present bills dealing with matters that are fundamental for the citizens of Quebec. We will work relentlessly to achieve progress on these issues, and to win.

If they think they have found allies, they should know that we are temporary allies and that we are giving them the benefit of the doubt on the fiscal imbalance, one of the most important issues of concern to Quebec and one of the top priorities. They have been warned.

For the rest, and until then, we will be watching them closely. We will be on their heels. We will oppose their decisions when they do not reflect Quebec's difference and our deeply held convictions.

I assure you that they will find us everywhere they go, and in particular to make sure that they reform employment insurance, the big thing left out of this budget. Have we not been talking about this

for long enough? The Liberals sabotaged the employment insurance scheme.

We have at times worked with the Conservatives, who seemed to agree with some of our proposals for reform. Now that they are in power, they have nothing to say and they are not talking about employment insurance any more. Today, 60% of unemployed men and women are still excluded from the employment insurance scheme.

If we look to the budget tabled yesterday, the theft of the employment insurance surplus is still being perpetuated. This has got to stop.

The Conservatives are no longer talking about an independent employment insurance fund. And yet they made a commitment to create such a fund. The Bloc Québécois will continue to fight for justice for unemployed workers, so that the 60% who are excluded are covered properly and with dignity by the employment insurance plan and the systematic looting of the EI fund surplus stops.

As for the POWA, the Program for Older Worker Adjustment, it is not difficult to understand. I have an invitation from the Prime Minister. I met with the Minister of Finance several times to explain the priorities of the Bloc Québécois: employment insurance, followed by the POWA. An assistance program for older workers is not difficult to understand: there are older workers who have been victims of mass layoffs, especially in single-industry regions.

● (1640)

We are talking about regions where there is one dominant industry.

As soon as things go wrong on the international scene, for example, because the Canadian dollar is too strong and we have to reduce our exports to the United States or elsewhere, there are mass layoffs and even plant and company closures.

For older workers, retraining and job re-entry programs do not work. Ninety-five percent of workers over 55 years of age are not eligible for retraining and job re-entry measures. Why? Because when you work in a single-industry region, if the company closes, workers cannot be hired by another employer because there are no other employers.

As well, some employers will not hire workers who are going to work for only another five or six years before they retire. They will invest in younger workers, who will stay with the company for 25, 30 or 35 years, as the older workers who were dismissed en masse did before them.

In the regions, often couples have worked for the same company for 30 or 35 years. They have little education and have accumulated some assets over the years, such as a house and an RRSP.

Ten years or less from retirement, having run out of employment insurance benefits, these people are required to liquidate everything—house, RRSPs, etc. They end up going on welfare before they are entitled to their pension. What a terrible and tragic end. It is not hard to understand. I explained all this three times to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Transport and the Deputy Prime Minister. I think it is easy to understand.

The Budget

The human resources development committee worked very hard on this in order to develop a new aid program for older workers. This program existed until 1997 when it was abolished by the unfeeling Liberal government.

Since then, there has been nothing and we have been fighting to reinstate an aid program for older workers. This program is highly important, especially in a context of globalization. There is no mention of it except in the minister's speech when he says a feasibility study will be done. The word "feasibility" suggests looking at what it will cost to implement such a program. This is encouraging. At least the government recognizes the need to implement such a program and is looking into the cost.

We have had enough of feasibility studies. This program costs roughly \$100 million a year. When it was abolished in 1997 it cost \$17 million a year for all of Canada. It cannot cost \$2 billion today. There is nothing on this in the budget. We wanted to have this immediately.

In terms of the allowance of \$1,200 per child under six—my colleague from Trois-Rivières will say more about this—why could this amount not have been a refundable tax credit? This would have the same effect except that it would target low and middle income families. They would not have to pay a dime in taxes on this \$1,200.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance proudly announced that they would protect the national child benefit, that it would not be touched, even with the \$1,200 per child under six. Yes, but what about federal tax? Federal tax will still be charged on that amount.

Our advice to parents receiving this \$1,200, or \$2,400 if they have two children under six, is to put the money aside to pay their taxes at the end of the year to avoid any surprises. This government did not agree to convert this \$1,200 annual cash payment into a refundable tax credit, which would have avoided all these problems.

With regard to the Kyoto protocol, it seems to me that for quite a long time, while the Conservatives were in opposition, they criticized the establishment by the Liberal minister of the program for achieving the Kyoto targets. They said there was another alternative. They could have immediately put that alternative on the table, instead of driving everyone wild by shelving the \$2 billion provided for in the previous plan, with no indication as to how it will be used.

The Conservatives will find themselves obliged to deal with the issue of Kyoto. If there is one issue apart from employment insurance and the POWA that deserves all of our energy, it is surely Kyoto, because we are in favour of protecting the environment. The Bloc Québécois, including my colleague from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, would even like to go beyond Kyoto. If the Conservatives think it will be easy, if they think they have bought us because of a commitment on the fiscal imbalance in the budget, they are mistaken. They have not bought us. They will have to deal with us as they move ahead. What is more, we are not for sale.

As for the manufacturing sector, we know that the Conservative philosophy dates back to the end of the last century, even the 19th century.

●(1645)

At that time, it was said that the market could solve everything, the market could regulate everything, nothing was necessary. It was said that we had to achieve balance between supply and demand, and then the labour market would organize itself.

That is not how it works these days. Draconian measures are necessary in the sectors threatened by globalization and by the emerging nations, sectors such as textiles, furniture and apparel. Now there is agri-food as well, for Brazil and Chile are entering the traditional markets, especially with the Canadian dollar above 90 cents.

We have to help these sectors survive. We were successful at this in the mid-1980s thanks to the free trade agreement with the United States. There were restructuring measures. In so-called soft sectors, such as furniture for example, certain companies did very well. They modernized their equipment and boosted their productivity. They are able to pull through. But it is not the market that is going to do it.

We cannot compete with countries on an uneven playing field, such as China for example, which does not have a market economy. It has a controlled economy where you can play with prices as you wish, and so push down the competition. Once the competitors are down and out, you take their market. That is not fair competition. The government has to assume its responsibilities in this area.

There is also the whole arts and culture sector. The cultural community had high hopes. My colleague, the critic on heritage issues, will address this more specifically later. Those hopes have been dashed. Instead of the \$150 million increase for the Canada Council, this budget is content to invest an additional \$50 million over two years in the Canada Council.

To my mind, an effort could have been made. I cannot believe that there is not one Conservative who has not gone to the theatre, who has not seen shows, who does not visit art galleries and who does not encourage artists. I cannot imagine that Conservatives are all calculators. They must consider culture to be important. It is one aspect of peoples' vitality, the peoples of Quebec and Canada, naturally. I cannot understand that greater priority was not given to the arts and culture.

Let us talk now about the Canadian securities commission. What a crazy and detestable idea. Since I have been here, since 1993, they have been trying to pull the wool over our eyes. They say a supranational body is needed to ensure the requirements for securities commissions are standardized and to encourage investors. Really. For 10 years, the securities commissions, including Quebec's Autorité des marchés financiers, have harmonized their practices. And they continue to do so. There is no need for a big league player to oversee everyone.

The fact of the matter is that a Canadian securities commission would totally ignore the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec in this matter and support Bay Street. Its head office would be in Toronto. Toronto would be on the investors' circuit. Everything would go through Toronto. Instead of individual traits reflecting the particularities of each of the provinces and Quebec, there would be one standard. They want the rules to be the same everywhere, just so it can all be centralized in Toronto.

The Budget

We will fight, as we have since 1993, to prevent the creation of this Canadian securities commission. They cannot say, as the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance are saying, that they will respect the jurisdictions of the provinces, and dare at the same time to propose a securities commission like that in opposition to Quebec. It will not fly.

This is why we asked the Prime Minister the question. If Quebec were the only one to oppose it, would the government still establish a Canadian securities commission? The government has given us evasive responses. Nevertheless, we know that if this were this case, nothing would change. Everything would happen in Toronto. Eventually, the Autorité des marchés financiers would gradually lose its power in an area of provincial jurisdiction.

I have said it before and I will say it again: if it were not for the Conservatives' pledge to correct the fiscal imbalance, we would have voted against them. We will be keeping an eye on the government and every move it makes between now and the first ministers' conference this fall. We will be keeping an eye on it as it puts together its next budget. Given all the negative effects of this budget, we are not their allies.

• (1650)

That said, in terms of that commitment, this side of the House, the Bloc Québécois, cannot demand—and employment insurance will be our first target—that the government move forward, make commitments, find solutions to this problem, develop a process and a set a deadline, and then say that we will bring them down anyway. That would be ridiculous. We are not electioneering.

Some members of this House are electioneering: the Liberals and the NDP. What did they do when they found out there was something on the fiscal imbalance? From the start, the Liberals were against correcting the fiscal imbalance, so they opposed the budget. The NDP, which is closer to the centre than any other party in the House, also opposes our suggestions for correcting the fiscal imbalance, which is by transferring tax fields and reforming equalization. The New Democrats' attitude toward the Conservatives' budget is natural, opportunistic, and entirely to be expected.

The budget sets out other positive measures that the Bloc Québécois has supported for years. We are pleased that the Conservatives have paid attention. It does not make up for all of the gaps and problems I mentioned, but it is a band-aid solution until the next budget. We think of it as a transition budget.

The budget provides \$1 billion for post-secondary education. We had asked the government to take immediate, concrete action in this area, given that this sector was suffering from the drastic cuts made by the previous government, the so-called government of the common good. The budget now provides \$1 billion for post-secondary education. We can applaud this measure.

The budget also allocates \$1.5 billion to help farmers. This is also good news. These investments must be continued, however, for years to come. Until subsidies are restored, as long as the Americans and Europeans offer their farmers higher subsidies, we will not be able to compete with them on equal terms. This cannot be a band-aid solution; we need to maintain assistance until the question of

agricultural subsidies on an international scale is resolved. This is, however, a good starting point.

The budget also provides \$800 million for social housing. We called for a first step, an initial investment, which we see here.

As for public transit, on three separate occasions, the Bloc Québécois tabled a bill aimed at creating a tax credit to promote the use of public transit. My colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher tabled another one last week. We are pleased that the government understood the message being sent concerning public transit. This represents another battle led by the Bloc.

Action has also been taken in the budget on longstanding demands such as exempting scholarships. It was not right, in fact it was completely ridiculous that a student who received a scholarship from the Government of Quebec or Ontario would pay federal tax on it. It was absolutely ridiculous. These scholarships are no longer taxed. We fought for this for seven years.

With regard to microbreweries and the excise tax, we have also won after battling for five and one half years. Our microbreweries create hundreds of jobs in the regions. They can now compete favourably with their American and European competitors.

I repeat, no measures are planned for the following: employment insurance, POWA, changing the \$1,200 allowance to a tax credit, the Kyoto protocol, arts and culture, the weakened manufacturing sector and the Canadian securities commission. I can assure the House that the Bloc Québécois will fight with all the energy for which it is known. The Bloc will oppose the government if it goes against the interests of Quebec in these matters. We will propose solutions for each one of them. We will convince the other opposition parties and the government. The Bloc Québécois' action and zeal will not stop at this budget. We will be on the heels of the Conservatives until the next budget.

• (1655)

[English]

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have very great respect for the hon. member from the Bloc Québécois who just spoke. He is one of the more eloquent speakers in the House of Commons. However, in some of his debate, he was factually incorrect.

He said that he applauded the Conservative government for putting \$1 billion into post-secondary education but he knows, as a long-serving member of this House, that it was his party that voted against Bill C-48 in the last Parliament. Bill C-48 contained \$1.5 billion of additional money for post-secondary education to help students. What the Conservatives have done is they have taken the \$1 billion out of the \$1.5 billion and put it into university infrastructure. This is why we have so many students, not only in Quebec but across the country, extremely disappointed.

He should know that at the end of this year student debt will rise. Poverty in this country and international poverty will rise. Pollution will rise.

The Budget

There is no question that the budget does contain some good things, every budget has its good and bad, but I am questioning how someone, who stood in this House in the last Parliament and voted against the budget that helped students, is now applauding a Conservative government that said very clearly that this is helping students.

I would be honoured to have his comments.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, I too have very great respect for my colleague. However, he is also advancing an opinion based on false premises.

First, Bill C-48 had some unbelievable weaknesses. It did not even oblige the government to move on its promises.

Even if we had voted in favour of this bill and even if it had passed and received royal assent, it would still be true that the NDPers were conned like amateurs. There was a line in all these commitments—to international assistance, to social housing and to post-secondary education—saying that the expected surpluses over the course of the year would have to exceed \$2 billion. It is easy to fiddle with the expected surpluses to circumvent a fiscal year and avoid having to fulfill one's promises.

In addition, under Bill C-48, the scheduled amounts were only invested if the government did not have any other priority. The NDP was conned, therefore, like a school kid. I have a lot of respect for schoolchildren, of course. But that does not change the fact that the NDP was had.

In the budget today, on the other hand, we find approximately the same amounts as in Bill C-48, except that this time they are invested. Does the NDP really want to abandon post-secondary students now and abandon the colleges and universities that are applauding this billion dollars? The NDP would be bringing down the government because it no longer believes its own positions from last year.

Are we also to understand that the NDP is opposed to the most disadvantaged people because it voted against the \$800 million invested in social housing? All the stakeholder groups are happy to have at least this \$800 million, while waiting for the \$2 billion that is supposed to be invested annually.

Are we to understand today that the NDP no longer believes in international assistance? Just a second. Last year the NDP abandoned the unemployed and this year it is abandoning students and poor people. I ask my dear colleague at least to be consistent.

[*English*]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Bloc finance critic, he has his facts all wrong.

We do not need to vote twice on a bill. Bill C-48 was passed last year. It is the law of the land. The Liberals failed to implement Bill C-48. We have many concerns with the Conservative government but, despite all its faults, it at least agreed to move on the implementation of Bill C-48. The money that the member is referring to in terms of education, social housing, urban transit, the environment and aboriginal people is all money that is there because

of Bill C-48 that came out of last year's surplus which was well able to accommodate this amount.

If the member noticed, the government had the audacity to send, not just \$3 billion against the debt, but \$8 billion because it had that much more flexibility and it chose to squander it.

Does the member now understand that the money that he is referring to is money out of last year's surplus and is not really part of this budget? If he would like to give us his support for that initiative and say how important it is we would welcome that.

• (1700)

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: I will just finish my question. Does the member now understand that the money that he is referring to is money out of last year's surplus. It is not really part of this budget. If he would like to give us his support for that initiative and say how important it is, we would welcome that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Mr. Speaker, we are getting caught up in details here.

In reality, there are two reasons why the Liberals and the NDP are opposed to this budget.

First, there is political opportunism. They know that since the Bloc supported the first measure, that is to say the fiscal imbalance—and nothing else, Mr. Speaker—they can strut around and say that they oppose this budget.

Second, neither of these parties believes in a proper, lasting resolution of the fiscal imbalance. The Liberal Party members have never even been able to say the word without breaking out in hives and they turned green whenever they heard it.

Insofar as the NDP is concerned, it is very centralizing. When I chaired the select committee on the fiscal imbalance last year, I proposed some measures that would have transferred tax points to the governments of Quebec and the provinces, just as Mr. Pearson did for Quebec in the 1960s with Mr. Lesage. He offered them as well to all the provinces. The NDP was totally opposed to this idea and insisted on keeping the firm fist of a strong central government, with financial transfers used to bribe the governments of Quebec and the provinces with Canada-wide standards and all sorts of conditions. That is what he finds frustrating.

Moreover, one of the candidates for the leadership of the Liberal Party did not hesitate to say yesterday that we were destroying Canada by trying to find a solution to the fiscal imbalance. What ridiculous nonsense, when people are waiting in hospitals for operations, the college and university education system is crumbling everywhere, particularly in Quebec, and disadvantaged people are being left in the street! What sort of conception of the country do they have?

Because of this symbol, a strong central government, they are prepared to let people die in the street. For heaven's sake! Let them use their heads a little. I no longer understand the reasoning of the ultra-federalists. Something is not working right somewhere.

The Budget

On thing is for sure, and we said it earlier: the Bloc has never given up on the unemployed. Last year, the NDP abandoned the unemployed with Bill C-48. They were no longer one of their concerns. But the Bloc has always gone on caring. The Bloc has never given up on older workers who are victims of massive layoffs. We have always been consistent. We have never given up the battle against the fiscal imbalance, in order to provide proper services with a transfer of tax fields and equalization. We have always been consistent. Unfortunately, we cannot say as much of the other two opposition parties.

[English]

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to participate in this debate on the very first budget of the Conservatives and to indicate why we are so adamantly opposed to it.

I want to begin by making a further comment on the difficulties I have with the position taken by the Bloc. The Bloc critic is wrong when he suggests that the NDP is opposing the budget because of either opposition to the fiscal imbalance or because of political opportunism. He will know he is wrong in both instances when it comes to the NDP.

He will know that throughout the time we have spent together on the finance committee, the NDP has been in the forefront of discussions around addressing the fiscal imbalance, calling on the Liberals to recognize it. Although it might be hard in the middle of debate, given their position to support the Conservatives, which comes as a surprise to all of us and for which we cannot determine solid reasons, he will at least understand that the very issues he raises as reasons for the Bloc supporting the Conservatives are all those items which are part of Bill C-48, the NDP's better balanced budget, for which the Bloc was in complete opposition.

When the Bloc stands up and congratulates the government on \$1 billion for education money and for enhancing the infrastructure at our post-secondary educational institutional level, he and his colleagues obviously forget that the money is there only because the NDP negotiated it in the last minority Parliament, having convinced the Liberals that it was better to invest in those areas that mattered to Canadians than to completely squander their fiscal surplus and capacity.

When the member of the Bloc raises support for the Conservative budget because of the \$300 million for foreign assistance, he ought to remember that is only there because of the NDP's better balanced budget in Bill C-48.

I want to applaud the Conservatives on this front because they have recognized the importance of respecting the will of the House. They have acknowledged that Parliament passed a budget last year, which called for the expenditure of \$4.6 billion over two years for education, housing, aboriginal affairs, the environment and foreign affairs. Those are all areas that are important to Canadians.

We waited a long time for the Liberals to move on the implementation of that bill and that money. They failed to do so. They dilly-dallied and delayed as long as they could and finally went down to defeat and no longer had the opportunity to do so. Thank heavens, after considerable lobbying on the part of the NDP, the Conservatives did listen and agreed to flow the money, at least close

to \$4 billion of that \$4.6 billion, knowing they had a huge cushion on which to draw, a tremendous surplus that made it quite easy for them to pay down that debt and to honour that commitment. We are grateful this money is flowing.

Canadians will see the benefit of having a strong New Democratic force in Parliament. They also will see the benefit of having a minority Parliament and how we can make it work for the betterment of all Canadians.

When it comes to the budget and our opposition to the Conservative plan, we are opposed because it is not a plan. It has no vision. It is government by tax credits, and government by tax credits does not a country make. It is the scattering of tax credits to the detriment of a coherent vision that is forward looking. That is the very purpose of a budget. It is to present a blueprint to Canadians to help us sort through where we go in the future, to know that some of those economic barriers that Canadians now face in terms of their ability to contribute to their fullest are addressed on a number of fronts. A budget is intended to address those obstacles, those barriers and to ensure that everyone in the country, regardless of sex, race and ability, is able to contribute to his or her fullest ability.

● (1705)

The budget fails to recognize that fundamental principle. It fails to accept people as individuals. It fails to ensure that it is gender neutral in its approach and does not present a bias or an ideological bent in its configurations. Nowhere is that more apparent than when it comes to the issue of child care.

I do not perhaps have to repeat the fact that we are only here because we have had 13 years of Liberal government that promised child care and never delivered, as my colleagues have pointed out, not one space in that entire period for child care. If they had at least delivered one space per year, we would have had 13 child care spaces, and that would have been at least better than what we have. Unfortunately, we have zero from the Liberals. They can stop the hot air in this chamber and their bragging. They had these agreements at the eleventh hour in a minority Parliament.

With pressure from the NDP, they finally decided to keep a promise and put in place a child care program by signing three deals with three provinces and beginning some discussions with some others, hardly making a dent in the formidable task of establishing a national child care program. Yet now they are ready to claim victory if only they had been given another month in the House.

They might want to remember that it was their former leader who told the House and Canadians that he would have an election by the end of February. What difference did a month make in how Canadians would decide on the future of the Liberals? Canadians defeated the Liberals, not the NDP. Canadians had it with their irresponsible lack of transparent operations, their borderline corruption practices and their broken promises.

The Budget

Maybe I should not be so gentle and talk about borderline. Other people in the House are quite willing to talk openly about the corruption that appears to have been the case among Liberals, but I do not want to go there. All I need to do is focus on broken promises, which leads us to this point today of having still a serious problem and another government that refuses to recognize the problem of the day.

The government has not given us a child care program. It has given us an allowance that gives a few dollars to parents who have children under the age of six. As all the newspapers have reported and as all the documentaries have suggested, this will benefit women who stay at home. I wish I could say women or men, but I think the truth of the matter is the government is using a public policy to pursue a particular ideological perspective. I would not go so far as to suggest Conservatives would like to see all women barefoot, pregnant in the kitchen, however, let me point out—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: My goodness, I guess I have struck a raw nerve.

Perhaps I could go on and describe for the members the difficulties inherent in their policies from the point of view of working women. They might not recognize that 70% of women in the workforce today have preschool children. I would hope it might get through to the Conservatives so they could understand that when this is the reality and when they have a policy that does not address the needs of those families and working women by ensuring good quality care, instead giving a few pennies to help parents juggle working family responsibilities, clearly they have ignored the reality of women in our society today.

Perhaps I only need to point out to them the numerous headlines that suggest the birth rate is at 0%. The birth rate is not growing because it is very hard for families to juggle their responsibilities without any decent support by government. Decent support means quality child care. Decent support means places where people can take their children when they are working, places that are safe and regulated, where there is professional staff, places that are non-profit so no one can make money off the backs of kids.

• (1710)

What we have is a policy that is slanted against working women. The Conservatives today are where the Liberals were 20 years ago when members in this House stood and said, “Working women are a social phenomenon”, or, “We only have to worry about men who are employed between the ages of 18 and 40, because after all they are the primary workers”. Never mind the contribution that women make. Never mind the fact that because of the policies of consecutive Conservative and Liberal governments, families cannot possibly manage to make ends meet without two people in the family working. Those members should get that through their heads because that is what we are dealing with today. We are dealing with a situation where women want to work or have to work, and our policies should ensure that their children are able to go to the best quality child care spaces available.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Conservatives and the Liberals should stop and listen just for a moment. I did not heckle during their speeches. If I struck a raw nerve, maybe that will cause them to listen a bit more, because this is a serious problem. There are one million children today in unregulated child care spaces.

I ask, which member in this House is prepared to place his or her child in an unregulated child care space without knowing whether the child care professionals have been trained appropriately, without knowing that there are certain safety standards, without ensuring the best quality care? I did not do it. I would not do it. I do not think anyone else in this House would do it.

It is time the Conservatives recognized that we have to invest in child care spaces. They did not do that in this budget. What did they do? They gave some money for a child care allowance, for a baby allowance. That is fine. I am not quarrelling with that. They could have done both. They could have ensured families had an allowance and they could have put money into child care spaces. They had two choices.

The Conservatives could have taken it away from the \$7 billion that went to corporate tax breaks, despite the fact that we have the highest profits ever in our corporate sector, and despite the fact that we have shifted the burden away from individuals in terms of paying taxes to corporations. That would be one choice. I think that is reasonable. Let us give to families for a change, ordinary Canadians, working women, children. Why do we have to squander our future by neglecting our children on the backs of corporate profits? Why does the government insist on sacrificing our children because it is so shortsighted and so close-minded about the fact that working women are here to stay?

There is a second option that the Conservatives had. If they had wanted to keep their corporate tax cuts, fine. Canadians disagree. We disagree. But if they are that focused on that, then so be it. But they had another choice. They decided to put \$5 billion in additional money beyond the norm against the debt because of their incredible surplus they had going into this budget process.

If we look at the books, \$8 billion went against the debt. That is \$5 billion more than the normal \$3 billion in prudence and contingency funds. Five billion dollars more to bring down the debt from \$494 billion to \$486 billion, which means we are not paying off the debt hardly one second sooner than if we did not do that.

• (1715)

That \$5 billion would have created one million child care spaces, one million spaces to ensure that children are properly cared for in a nurturing environment, so that women can work and feel confident that their children are cared for and people can feel that they are doing their best as parents. They are not listening to this nonsense from the Conservatives that somehow women are bad mothers if they put their children in child care. That is the essence of what the Conservatives are saying. There is so much more we need to be saying. That was the first point I wanted to make.

The Budget

The second point has to do with the failure by the Conservatives to keep their commitment to Canadians in terms of their election platform. We hear them boast and brag a lot about their five priorities, five issues that they want to accomplish. Interestingly enough, there is one that is hardly mentioned at all in the budget, yet it is the most important issue facing Canadians. It causes the most grief and agony. It is the most difficult matter in real, personal, human terms and that is the quality of our health care system and the length of the waiting lists.

The Conservatives clearly promised a reduction in wait times. It was a big to-do, a big fanfare in the last election. They said, "This budget will accomplish all five of those priorities, including the reduction in wait times". What have we got in the budget on health care? There are some words about the government working on it with the provinces. The Conservatives will enforce the money that the Liberals put in, even though that was not working and the Conservatives were the first to criticize it. They were the first to jump all over the Liberals for suggesting the money was not going to where it should in terms of reduced wait times.

There is nothing else. There is not one penny toward the hiring of more nurses, even though there is a looming shortage of 78,000 in this country, or soon to be. There is not a penny in terms of developing primary health care to take the burden off the institutional expensive side of the system. There is not a mention of alternative remedies and natural herbal medicines. There is not a mention of anything in terms of building a health care system where people do not have to wait for agonizing weeks and months and years to get the help they need.

There is so much more to be said. I want to talk about the absolute betrayal of aboriginal people in this country. I want to talk about the impact on my own constituency of Winnipeg North where the average individual income is \$21,000. People will not benefit from the GST cut. Really, just as the newspaper said, the rich benefit the most. People in my constituency will be hurt and will not benefit from the budget.

We believe there has to be investment in very serious areas that affect working families. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the amendment be amended by adding the following after "for over a decade":

And that this House further condemns the government for the continuation of the last government's obsession with corporate tax reductions as opposed to spending to help working families, specifically condemning the higher priority given to physical infrastructure while ignoring direct financial assistance for students at our post-secondary institutions, the lack of spending to reform our inadequate employment insurance system, and the ongoing lack of commitment to create not for profit child care spaces with multi-year funding.

• (1720)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I will take the amendment under reserve and get back to the House as to its admissibility.

We will proceed to questions and comments. I hope we have a little more order during questions and comments than we did during the speech by the member.

• (1725)

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's concerns

regarding assistance for moms with kids. We know from the studies for example that only one-half of moms—

An hon. member: Lights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I think we might be having some technical difficulties with the microphone system. Would the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance please repeat her question? We could not hear her original question when she started.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I do commend my colleague for her passion about Canada's kids. I think it is very important. But we know from studies that only one-half of moms with kids choose some kind of child care and of that half, only one-third of them actually choose full time day care. In other words, because of family and work circumstances, other arrangements suit those moms better.

If we focus our whole debate and all of our resources on that one-third of one-half, which is one-sixth of Canadian moms who want full time day care, what about the other moms who make different choices, who have different needs? Of course, that is why this government campaigned on offering Canadians a universal child care allowance that would help all moms look after the kids in the way they choose.

If we take enormous resources and just provide services for the one-sixth of Canadian moms who want full time day care, we are disrespecting the choices and the needs of the five-sixths of Canadian moms who have other choices. How does the member help us to square that circle when we know that we want to help all families, all kids, all moms, but they have such a wide range of needs and choices in day care?

I would like to hear from my colleague on that issue because it is very important. It is one that we forget when we just argue for one type of care and forget about the choices of the vast majority of mothers in this country.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, the member raises an interesting question. However, the premise of her question is not reflective of the reality. The reality is that the vast majority of working parents want to put their children into safe child care centres and spaces.

Hon. Chuck Strahl: That is nonsense.

Mr. Daryl Kramp: That is wrong.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Let me finish. Mr. Speaker, could we have some order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order. Please allow the member for Winnipeg Centre to finish responding to the question. I am having difficulty hearing her. If we could allow her to finish without interruption, I would appreciate that.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, the fact that not all children are placed in child care spaces is not because the parents do not want to have those spaces that are provided for on a quality basis. It is because those spaces do not exist.

The Budget

When we talk about child care, we are not talking, as the Conservatives like to suggest, about only full time child care in a certain building according to a certain pattern. We are talking about a child care service that meets the needs of all families, whether it is part time child care, 24 hour child care, shift work child care, rural child care, after school child care, infant child care, child care for children with disabilities, the whole range. That is what a truly responsible child care system provides.

In fact, that is the kind of system that exists in Manitoba, but it cannot keep doing that on its own without some federal support and partnership. That is what this debate is all about. In Manitoba, despite the involvement by the provincial government for many years and despite the fact that it is one of the best systems in the country, there are 15,000 children on the waiting list.

What we need is a government that is prepared to partner with a government like Manitoba, which is also in partnership with the vast array of people concerned about child care, the whole movement, the whole coalition around ensuring the best possible care for children. We need to invest in child care and ensure that those one million children who do not have access to proper, regulated, quality child care do so.

Let me add one more point. As a mother with two children who has gone through the system, I first tried the route because I could not get a child care space of an unregulated place in someone's home. I was not happy with that situation because I did not know what qualifications that person had and what was happening to my child during the day. I worked like crazy to ensure that I found a way to get my children into organized, quality child care offered on a non profit basis, and my kids are wonderful people. They will make a great contribution to society, just like all the other working women out there who want the very same thing for their children.

• (1730)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to the hon. member's speech and I got the distinct impression that she was making her own personal contribution to our Kyoto deficit.

I fail to understand the almost ridiculous presumption on the part of the hon. member opposite. The previous government had a signed agreement with all of the provinces with respect to the aboriginal issue. It was fully funded and fully signed. That party pulled the plug.

The previous government had fully signed and fully funded operational agreements with all of the provinces with respect to day care, yet the members have the unmitigated gall to stand here in this chamber and claim to be part of the progressive side of the political equation.

With her party's actions, in effectively defeating the previous Liberal government and substituting for that previous Liberal government a Conservative government that has absolutely no interest in day care spaces and absolutely no interest in the Kelowna accord as demonstrated by its budget, how can she possibly stand here without further adding to the deficit that we are suffering under Kyoto?

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, members may think I have a lot of power in the House or that the 29 member group of New Democrats has a lot of power, but we did not defeat the Liberal Party on our own. As far as I know, people voted and Canadians defeated the Liberal government because they were just not happy with its record of achievement or non-achievement.

The Liberals felt so desperate on the eve of an election, and knowing that their leader had committed to one by the end of February of this year, that it drove them to suddenly go about this country frantically trying to sign deals even though they had not planned for them. Even though they did not book the numbers and had no commitment to actually keep those promises, based on their previous record of 13 years, does not make a case on their side. It certainly does not address the situation we are faced with today, which is in fact trying to convince the government to invest in those areas that give us the greatest bang for our buck.

Rather than this scattergun approach of tax credits, we should be taking that money and ensuring proper education so that students can get enter university or college without facing prohibitive tuition costs, so that our environment is protected and pollution does not go up, so that aboriginal people can have some sense that the government is working to close the gap between the rich and the poor, and so that working families can access quality child care. That is the challenge before us. That is why this debate is so important and why we oppose the Conservative budget.

• (1735)

Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not agree with a lot of what the hon. member said. Although I respect her passion for Canadian families, I disagree that all families should put their children into a day care program or they are not doing the right thing for their kids. I agree that the Liberals were sort of kicked out by the Canadian public, but I have some good news for the member. It is not really a question but just a comment.

I have some good news. In the budget, had the member read it, the Conservatives are putting \$250 million toward day care spaces and 125,000 spaces will be created. Hopefully, she feels much better now.

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis: Mr. Speaker, I do not mind a good healthy debate in the House, but I sure do not like misrepresentation. Clearly, at no point did I stand in the House and suggest that all parents should send their kids to day care. I said the opposite. I said parents need to have a choice and if there are no spaces, there is no choice. If we do not invest money to create the spaces, there is no choice. The government's obligation today is in fact to create the choice.

The \$250 million that the member is talking about, and he failed to actually give the full description of the program, is money for businesses to provide a tax credit for the creation of spaces. He only has to look at the Mike Harris government which tried this and did not create a single child care space as a result of that.

The Budget

He knows as well that this amount, even if it did go directly into child care spaces, is still a very small percentage of what is required to meet the needs of working families and working women in society today to ensure that all children are able to get the best care possible and go on to make great contributions to this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I have reviewed the subamendment moved by the member for Winnipeg North and I have found that it is in order.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to rise to speak to budget 2006. As we have just seen in this House, this is a budget that is generating a lot of excitement and it is good to speak to it. This is the first budget from the Conservative government and one that we are very proud of.

The Government of Canada spends a great deal of Canadians' money. In fact, this budget will spend \$188 billion, taxed from the pockets of working Canadians. This is not government by tax credit. The government is spending \$188 billion. This is a government that is very much engaged in programs and in areas of responsibility that assist Canadians. We do not want to be over-involved, and that is a balancing act that we are determined to win.

Of the \$188 billion of spending, less than half of that is actually discretionary. It is like a family when they have money coming in the door from income. There are some things they have to spend money on whether they want to or not. They spend money on their mortgage or their rent. They have to spend money on food. They have to spend money on the necessities of life like clothing, transportation, educational costs, all the things that families have to spend money on. There is of course some area of discretion.

We went to Canadians during the last election campaign and we told them that if they chose us to run their finances, to spend their money to do the things that would administer the country on their behalf, then these were the things we were going to make a priority, and we listed our five priorities. This budget delivers on those five priorities. It is focused on the things we told Canadians we were going to do.

Why is that important? It is important because the faith and trust in political leadership has eroded. It has gone down a lot over the last few years. It is important that leaders tell people what they are going to do, and then actually follow through and keep their word. That is what this budget does.

It restores some accountability and some discipline to federal spending, and I am going to talk about that in a minute.

This budget provides tax relief for working class Canadians which is important because their tax burden has now outstripped the money that they spend on the necessities of life. That is not fair. It is not right and it is not necessary. We also reduced the national debt and are committed to balanced budgets. These are very important principles.

I would like to start with a determination to be accountable. The previous government would routinely make five year, pie in the sky promises, most of them to be delivered half a decade down the road. We think that Canadians should only have to spend money on what can be delivered today, what they know is going to happen now, and

not down the road after many years. Basically, in this budget, our plans are over a two year period. We will only put in measures that are affordable and ready to be implemented.

Over the last five years, government spending has grown by an average of 8.2% annually. That is close to 10%. I ask Canadians watching this debate: How many of their incomes have grown by close to 10% per year over the last five years? The answer is none.

Last year, the party opposite, that was governing our country, actually spent an increase of 14.4% over that one year, nearly a 15% increase in spending. How many Canadians had a 15% increase in their income in order to support that level of spending by government? The answer is none. We have been much more moderate. Spending growth in this budget is 5.4% and next year it will be down to 4.1%. That is important.

We also want to ensure that when we do spend, we are not just throwing money out there to have bragging rights. We want to ensure that the spending actually buys something for Canadians. It gives real results if there is some value for money. We are re-evaluating the programs where there is spending taking place. Some of those programs get a D on this evaluation. A lot of them get an F. We are not going to continue to spend hard-working Canadians' money on programs that are not getting results for them. We are going to re-evaluate and spend money that actually gets results.

● (1740)

We will also be reducing Canada's debt by \$3 billion a year. We are considering putting any surplus after that \$3 billion in debt reduction into the Canada pension plan and the Quebec pension plan. These plans have huge unfunded liabilities. The bulk of the benefits from these plans is going to be borne by younger Canadians who are not even taxpayers yet. We want to help them all we can to be fair to them in meeting their obligations down the road.

We also will improve the financial accountability on how money is spent. We believe the Auditor General should be able to tell Canadians how their money is spent when it goes into crown corporations and into federally funded foundations. This should not be hidden as the Liberals hid it. It is Canadians' money and they have a right to know how it is spent.

This budget also recognizes that Canadians pay too much tax. The average working Canadian's burden for the necessities of life has risen about 1,000%. Let us guess how much the tax burden has risen in the same time. It is 1,600%. That is the tax they are being overtaxed.

The Budget

We want to make sure there are some tax reductions to even it out, to give Canadians the right to spend their own money as much as possible, so our budget plan delivers on our commitment to cut the GST by one percentage point. That will be effective July 1. We also will benefit all Canadians with this tax cut, not just those who earn income. Every single Canadian is going to benefit from this reduction in the GST. In fact, the benefit will be close to \$9 billion back into the hands of Canadians over two years, even those who do not pay any personal income tax. Although the GST rate is being cut, we are going to keep the GST credit at current levels to protect low income and modest income Canadians.

That is not all. The budget also proposes a comprehensive plan to reduce personal income taxes for all taxpayers. That means there will be a new Canada employment credit for all working Canadians. Effective July 1, the first \$500 of income that a working Canadian earns will not be taxed. That will then double in 2007 to \$1,000. This will help all working Canadians to keep more of their own money and to meet the costs of employment.

We will also permanently reduce the lowest personal income tax rate. Starting on July 1, it will go from 16% to 15.5%. This is the rate that applies on the first \$36,400 of income. It benefits the low income earners who need this decrease in taxes the most.

The Liberals claim that this is a tax reduction they wanted to put into place, but they did not put it into place. They announced it and did some technical things to make it happen, but they never passed it into law.

This is now going to become the law of the land. The personal income tax rate on the lowest tax bracket will actually permanently be reduced from 16% to 15.5%. If the Liberals had wanted to do that, why did they not do it? They had 13 years.

We will also legislate an increase in the basic personal amount of income Canadians can earn tax free. Again, the Liberals claim they wanted to do it. They started to do it, but they never passed it into law because it did not matter enough to them to actually do it in time to pass it into law. It was a deathbed promise to try to get more votes during the election. Thankfully it failed, because now we have a government that means business about tax reduction for Canadians.

Also, we want to help the job creators of this country, the economic engines, people who engage in business and economic activity, so we are going to eliminate the federal capital tax as of January 2008. If businesses have capital needs, they should not have to pay extra tax in order to bring money into their business.

● (1745)

We are going to eliminate the corporate surtax starting in 2008. This was a tax the Liberals brought in that was supposed to help reduce the deficit. It was not needed in the last few years and yet the Liberals kept it on. We also are going to reduce the general corporate tax rate from 21% to 19% by 2010.

This will make us competitive with our largest trading partner. We do 85% of our business with one country and that country has a better tax regime than we do. Our businesses cannot compete. They do not have enough cash in their hands. They cannot keep enough of their own earnings in order to compete. We want to make sure we change this so that we are on a level playing field, so that we can

vigorously use our talent, our innovation and our entrepreneurship in this country to succeed and to create prosperity for all Canadians.

We did not stop there. In budget 2006 we also recognized small business as the backbone of our economy, so we are going to increase the amount of small business income that is eligible for the 12% tax rate from \$300,000 a year to \$400,000 a year by next year. And we are going to reduce that 12% tax rate to 11.5% in 2008 and to 11% in 2009.

We want to free the economic engines of country to create good jobs for Canadians and to create prosperity for all of us.

Canadians know that with a small population our education and skills are very important in making us competitive in the global market. We know that education and skills training are key to our economic future. That is why we are going to invest significantly in training and education.

Starting immediately, there will be a new tax credit of up \$2,000 for employers who hire apprentices. In January 2007, a new apprentice incentive grant will provide \$1,000 a year to apprentices in the first two years of an eligible program. That is in addition to all the other tax reductions for working Canadians.

Many tradespeople have to provide their own tools in their work. We are now going to allow a deduction of up to \$500 for the cost of tools.

We are going to help post-secondary students with a tax credit for the cost of textbooks. We are going to fully exempt all scholarships, bursaries and fellowship income for students.

In addition to that, we have allocated \$1 billion for urgently needed investments in post-secondary educational infrastructure. In fact, the federal government spends \$8 billion a year on education. As of this budget, that has been increased by \$800 million more in this year.

On aboriginals, we note that under the past government aboriginals lived in the most appalling third world conditions. We are determined to change that. In this budget, we will spend \$450 million to upgrade water, housing and education facilities on reserves and also to help aboriginal children. We will provide \$300 million for off reserve housing and \$300 million for badly needed housing in the north. We also have allocated \$2.2 billion to lay to rest this terrible situation of the residential schools problem. Thus, in this budget, there is \$3.2 billion allocated to aboriginal spending.

The Budget

Over the next few years, and beginning now, we will be holding discussions with aboriginal leaders as to further programs that will assist aboriginals, and we will be funding those in future budgets. We do not believe in the Liberal way of having a big meeting on the eve of an election, on an electoral deathbed, allocating big bunches of money with no plan at all. We will make plans. We will put them into place. We will fund them. We will make the lives of aboriginals better in this country.

• (1750)

We also want to support our primary economic sectors that are facing serious challenges, both at home and abroad. That is why this budget provides \$2 billion in support for the agriculture sector over two years, including an additional special \$1 billion immediate investment to assist farmers.

I compliment my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, who has been meeting for months across the country with stakeholders in this important industry, hearing their concerns and bringing together a plan to address the immediate needs and the future needs of this critically important industry.

We also commit \$400 million over the next two years to the forestry sector, in addition to delivering what the Liberals could not for years, which is an end to the war on softwood lumber that was robbing our communities of income and robbing many Canadian families of jobs. We have put that to rest.

We will also invest an additional \$400 million for the sector, particularly to help support worker adjustment as this new softwood lumber agreement comes into effect, to strengthen our industry's long term competitiveness, and to combat the pine beetle infestation, which was ignored by the previous government and is destroying our forests at an alarming rate. We are going to get busy and do something about that.

We have already had some discussion about our measures to help families with children. This of course is a priority for all members of this House. We have, I think, reasonable disagreements on how to go about it, but as members know, our party believes that all parents need help. We want to have universal assistance and support for every single parent and family in this country, so we have introduced, as we campaigned on, our universal child care plan. It will give \$3.7 billion in funding over two years for a universal child care benefit. It will give families \$100 per month for each child under the age of six to assist them in raising their children, in caring for their children, in providing for whatever care families think is most appropriate for their own family situation. It will benefit 1.5 million families and over 2 million children.

As well, we are mindful that many parents, some parents, choose full time institutional day care. We will invest \$250 million a year, starting next year, with real plans to increase the number of child care spaces by 25,000 spaces each year. We are now building plans to make sure those spaces actually are created, unlike the Liberal deathbed plan to throw out money with no requirement that actual spaces be created. We are going to create spaces so that the segment of families that need them will actually have them.

We are also going to increase the child disability benefit so that more families can have that assistance for children with disabilities.

We are going to also keep our promise to introduce a tax credit of up to \$500 on fees for fitness programs for children under 16.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much more in this budget and, although you say I have one minute, I have three more pages. How can that be?

We are going to protect Canadians.

We have plans to address the fiscal imbalance in a meaningful way and open up discussions with the provinces.

We are going to apply the fiscal discipline that we talked about, that Canadians are needing.

Budget 2006 keeps promises. It is a promise-keeping budget. Ours is a party that believes when we say we are going to do something, we actually keep our word. That is what Canadians are like. They are honest people who keep their word. They want their leaders to do the very same thing. We focus on the priorities that Canadians elected us to deliver. It sets the stage for future action, as future budgets and future financial resources become available, to continue to build an even better Canada for all Canadians.

• (1755)

Mr. John Cannis (Scarborough Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question I want to quote something on page 15 of the budget speech under the heading "Economic and Fiscal Update":

—Canadians have reached a level of accomplishment few other countries can rival.

I want to point out that the Conservatives keep saying that they have only been in government 100 days. The budget further goes on to state:

Looking at our current situation, Canadians have many reasons to be confident. Unemployment is at a 30-year low, we have low inflation and strong consumer confidence, and corporate profits are at record levels.

How can the Conservatives stand and say that they have accomplished it when bureaucrats privately joke behind their backs that this is the first balanced budget by a Tory government since Robert Borden was prime minister in 1912?

We made record achievements in this country. If the Conservatives were honest with Canadians, they would acknowledge the results. She says, "you guys didn't implement it". She knows very well why we did not implement it. It was because the Conservative Party, with the same old NDP Party, which should rename itself, and the Bloc Québécois were in cahoots and prematurely brought down the government. The member cannot fool Canadians.

The Budget

You guys say, “We say what we are going to do and follow through”. The Minister of Justice is here. In their pamphlets the Conservative candidates said they would cancel the gun registry right away and take the money and put it into health care for wait time reductions. They said they would immediately repeal same sex marriage. Will you then immediately bring in legislation for same sex marriage as we had before? Will you cancel the gun registry immediately as you promised in your pamphlets? With regard to health care, for which there was only one line, you are only going to implement—

• (1800)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. The member for Scarborough Centre knows that he must address his comments through the Chair. I will allow the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance to respond.

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, I think the member opposite should be proud of some of the things that were done by the former government. We did inherit a balanced budget and we are glad for that.

The fact of the matter is that the fiscal health that this country has enjoyed is largely because of free trade. The party opposite fought free trade tooth and nail. Without free trade we would not have been in such a good economic position.

The Liberal government stumbled so badly on issues it did not need to stumble on. One just has to look at the aboriginal communities that are living in the most appalling conditions. One only has to look at the lack of trust through the sponsorship scandal, the million dollar boondoggle, the wild spending that was not supposed to take place and the lack of fiscal responsibility. If the Liberals are going to be proud of the good things, they need to take responsibility for the failures.

It was a government that promised a lot of things and says that if it had not been defeated by the opposition it would have brought them in. The fact is that the Liberal government had 13 years to bring them in. What was it that had to be done in the last 13 days?

Every minority government knows very well that it can be defeated at a moment's notice. It does not have the votes to keep going. Therefore, to suddenly cry the blues because a minority government fell, a government that was hanging on by a thread, disgusting Canadians day in and day out with the corruption that was coming out in the news and the inquiries that were going on into its affairs, does not make a lot of sense.

The former government deserved to be defeated. The present government is going to begin, in a sensible way, to repair the damage that was done and to move forward to build a better Canada. That is our mandate and that is what we will do.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, before putting my two questions to the parliamentary secretary, I would like to add something for my Liberal colleague. Of course, we defeated the Liberal government. And we realized later that the voters shared the same opinion as us, since the Liberals are now sitting on the other side of the House. The voters threw the Liberals out. We were not wrong about this.

I have two questions for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

First, she says that her government can help families, especially those with one parent who chooses to stay at home and not send the children to day care. However, since the Conservatives did not make this \$1,200 allowance into a refundable tax credit, these families will have to pay income tax on the amount they receive for each child. Furthermore, as of next year, the Conservatives will get rid of what is known as the national child benefit supplement. That will directly affect the people they wish to help. In fact, this will affect first and foremost the people who do not have to pay for child care. As soon as they have to assume these expenses, their national child benefit supplement is not reduced. Otherwise, if they have two children under six, they will lose \$486 a year. The Conservatives are thus making life hard for those they wish to help.

Second, I would like to put a question to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food through his parliamentary secretary. In the redefinition of the CAIS, that is, the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, would it be possible, to his mind, for the amounts provided for Quebec to be transferred directly to La Financière agricole du Québec? That would avoid a lot of red tape in connection with the new federal program and that would more directly help the agricultural producers who really need it.

• (1805)

[*English*]

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, with respect to the universal child care benefit, it is \$1,200. It will not be clawed back by the federal government. It will be taxed in the hands of the lowest income earner. Five provinces have also agreed that there will be no clawback.

Because different families are in different tax positions, there will be some differences in the net benefit, but every family will benefit from this universal child care benefit, and that is the important thing.

Also, with respect to the redefinition of stabilization, I would point out to my friend that Quebec is \$850 million better off today than it was yesterday. The budget has provided additional funds in a number of areas to the province of Quebec, as well as to other provinces, and this is very important.

However, discussions will need to be ongoing as to how to address the issue of going forward. The member will know that the finance minister will be meeting with his—

Mr. Yvan Loubier: Do you have an open mind?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Yes. The finance minister will be meeting with his finance minister counterparts from the provinces this spring. The Prime Minister will be meeting with the premiers of all the provinces in the fall and we will hold discussions about how to go forward on this.

I do not think at this point that anyone has the final answer. A major report by Mr. O'Brien will be coming out in the middle of the month on the whole area of the fiscal imbalance and equalization. Other reports have come out and will be coming forward.

The Budget

These will be fruitful discussions. The important thing is that we work cooperatively for the benefit of all Canadians and a stronger country going forward into the future.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the big petroleum companies receive tax breaks but the fact is that families with children with autism receive no help at all.

Why should families with children with serious disabilities, especially those with autism, feel any good about the budget and yet petroleum companies, which are making record profits under the current tax regime, stand to make even more money?

Ms. Diane Ablonczy: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that we have made some very significant moves to help the families that he is talking about, both with the universal child care benefit and with the increased assistance for children with specific disabilities.

As budgets unfold this would be a healthy discussion as to whether we could or should do more in different areas, but the important thing is that we have made some very strong strides to assist these families. I think the member should be complimenting the finance minister and the government on the progress that we have made.

Mr. Lui Temelkovski (Oak Ridges—Markham, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Eglinton—Lawrence.

I am pleased to speak today to the Conservative government's first budget. A budget is both a beginning and a focal point of a government's economic policy and I am very happy to have the occasion to respond.

For more than 20 years I was in the financial services industry. I have sat at the table with families struggling to make ends meet and families looking to maximize their investments. This background and awareness gives me a unique perspective on the Conservative budget.

No budget document is perfect and no budget document is all good or all bad. Unfortunately for Canada, this particular budget seems to have missed the mark in a number of important areas. This is a shame because the government has an enormous amount of potential that rides on the Liberal financial coattails.

This is an important point. This contrasts the Canadian financial picture from late 1993, after nine years of Conservative rule, with the present financial picture. Let us consider this. In the 1990s, Conservative spending was on a roller coaster. The deficit was close to \$40 billion. The debt had ballooned to nearly 70% of GDP. The unemployment rate was in double digits. Consumer and business confidence was very low. There was no real economic growth. I know how bad it was. Canadians had no work or they were underemployed. People were sick with worry and uncertain about their future and the future of their families. Canadians were worried about their CPP.

Canadians lost confidence in the Mulroney and Campbell governments because of poor financial management. What a difference a decade makes. Canada's books were balanced in eight consecutive budgets. The federal debt was reduced. Taxes have been reduced by more than \$100 billion since 2000. Canada's unemploy-

ment rate is at a 32 year low. Indeed, on this final point, the finance minister said in yesterday's *Hansard*:

Canadians have reached a level of accomplishment few other countries can rival.

I could not have said that better myself. This is the same Minister of Finance who, under Mike Harris was cutting, slashing and burning, and who is now swimming in surpluses but offers no reassuring vision for Canadians.

How are Canadians supposed to have faith in the present finance minister and his budget? The budget is not up to par and risks putting Canada in a dangerous fiscal position.

There are some positive aspects to the budget as well: tax cuts for small businesses and tax credits for workers. However much of the rest of the budget leaves much to be desired.

First, I am outraged that the government has decided to raise the lowest tax rate for Canadians from 15% to 15.5% while the Conservatives say that they are decreasing it. The basic personal exemption is decreased by \$200 after the Liberals raised it. For the Conservatives to state that this is a tax cut budget is not accurate and a misrepresentation of the facts to Canadians.

The biggest losers will be low income Canadians. With such a robust economy and a projected surplus, these tax increases were not necessary. Instead, we will see a cut to the GST. I think that is a meaningful tax cut but it is not the best tax cut for most Canadians. This tax will only benefit Canadians who spend more money on goods and services. The more money we spend, the more tax we will save.

● (1810)

For example, for many Canadians, most of their pay cheques are spent on rent, tuition and groceries. There is no GST on these items, so how will the GST cut benefit Canadians who need it the most? Unfortunately, this is undertaken for purely political reasons. This is a flashy campaign strategy to deceive Canadians that their taxes will go down while the government puts their income taxes up at the same time. This is a political and poor policy.

The second item I wish to discuss is child care. Aristotle reminds us that the success of a nation is measured by the way it treats its most vulnerable, including the young. The Conservatives are eliminating the national child care program, substituting it with monetary gifts. In so doing, it fails to build more social policies that will benefit Canadians for generations to come.

The Conservatives are reducing the number of child care spaces, yet pledging to increase the number of spaces in prisons and correctional facilities. Rather than ensure children receive quality care in their formation years, the government will put more people behind bars later on. Why not invest in children?

● (1815)

The Speaker: I regret to interrupt the hon. member, but it being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made on Tuesday, May 2, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the motions relating to interim supply.

*Supply***INTERIM SUPPLY**

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That this House do concur in Interim Supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding \$43,494,658,430.59 being composed of:

(1) nine twelfths (\$30,619,976,223.75) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Proposed Schedule 1.3 and Schedule 2 of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007, which were laid upon the Table Tuesday, April 25, 2006, and except for those items below:

(2) eleven twelfths of the total of the amount of Agriculture and Agri-Food Votes 1 and 10, Fisheries and Oceans Vote 10, Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Foreign Affairs) Vote 10, Canadian International Development Agency Vote L50, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Vote 35, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Votes 10 and 25, Indian Specific Claims Commission Vote 45, Industry Vote 5, Statistics Canada Vote 95, Library of Parliament Vote 10, Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote L70 and Treasury Board Vote 5 (Schedule 1.1), of the said Estimates, \$6,303,923,163.68;

(3) ten twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Vote 20, Citizenship and Immigration Vote 5, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada Vote 10, Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Vote 20, Finance Vote 5, Health Vote 5, Public Health Agency of Canada Vote 40, Human Resources and Skills Development Vote 5, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Vote 1, Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Vote 10, Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee Vote 75, Transport Vote 30, Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote 60 and Veterans Affairs Votes 5 and 10 (Schedule 1.2) of the said Estimates, \$6,570,759,043.16;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2007.

(Motion agreed to)

Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-8, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the public service of Canada for the financial year ending March 31, 2007, be now read the first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

[*Translation*]

Hon. John Baird moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

[*English*]

An hon. member: Could the President of the Treasury Board please confirm that the bill is in the usual form?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I can tell my friend opposite that the form of this bill is essentially the same that passed in previous supply periods. However, the supporting schedules have been modified to provide better clarity and transparency by reflecting the portion of funding that was provided through Governor General special warrants.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: On division.

The Speaker: Accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole House.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Andrew Scheer in the chair)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: (On Clause 2)

Shall Clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

(On Clause 2.1)

The Assistant Deputy Chair Shall clause 2.1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2.1 agreed to)

(On Clause 2.2)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 2.2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 2.2 agreed to)

(On Clause 3)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

(On Clause 4)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

(On Clause 5)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

(On Clause 6)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

(On Clause 7)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

(On Schedule 1.1)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall Schedule 1.1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

Supply

(Schedule 1.1 agreed to)

(On Schedule 1.2)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall Schedule 1.2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Schedule 1.2 agreed to)

(On Schedule 1.3)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall Schedule 1.3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Schedule 1.3 agreed to)

(On Schedule 2)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall Schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

(On Clause 1)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall Clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

An hon. member: On division.

(Bill reported)

● (1820)

Hon. John Baird moved that the bill be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. John Baird moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

[For continuation of proceedings see part B]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, May 3, 2006
(Part B)**

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, May 3, 2006

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

* * *

NORAD

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC) moved:

That this House support the government's ratification of the North American Aerospace Defense (NORAD) Agreement.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in this special debate this evening, and support this motion.

I should indicate at the outset that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills, the very able Minister of National Defence. I urge all members to support the government's ratification of the North American Aerospace Defense Agreement, commonly known as Norad, which is before the House for debate.

Canada is indeed a fortunate country. We have met many challenges over the years to remain united, and we are prosperous and free. Much of our success can be traced back to one overwhelmingly important fact of national life, and that is for 60 years Canadians have enjoyed a level of security unparalleled in the modern world. Yet comfort cannot give way to complacency on security matters.

[Translation]

Not only has this security protected us against direct threats to our physical well-being, but it has given us personally and politically the freedom to construct our democracy, to expand our economy, to welcome new citizens here and to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to grow and develop in this extraordinary country of ours.

National security is multi-faceted. As circumstances change, we are often obliged to consider the relative importance we accord to each of the many priorities in this area. That said, there remains one incontrovertible responsibility. A country not prepared to protect itself against outside threats will certainly have to face them one day.

[English]

The government will stand up for Canada. We will deliver on our promises to provide a strong Canadian military, aided and with the leadership of our very capable Minister of National Defence who has exceptional personal career experience in this field. We will deliver on our promise to provide a strong Canadian military with the resources to protect us at home and meet our obligations abroad.

Our greatest resource is all of the dedication and skill of the brave men and women who serve in our armed forces. They are outstanding people, doing a superb job and working for Canadians at home and around the globe.

All members will agree that, with an enormous country, a small population and the ability to defend Canada properly, we need to work with others. This is why we place such importance on our military alliances with other countries such as Australia, as the Pacific Rim takes on increased importance in the modern world.

Our membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the North American Aerospace Defense Command have been more than just a bedrock of Canadian defence. They have also been the pillars of our foreign policy.

● (1825)

[Translation]

Our membership in NATO has always been for us the primary way of working with Europe in response to shared security concerns. For decades, NATO has stood as a bulwark against threats by the Soviet empire, threats directed not only at western Europe but at us all.

Today, the political landscape in Europe has changed forever, and Canada was at the forefront of the successful efforts to redefine the role of NATO in the world, as we can see in southern Afghanistan, where we head a multinational force and are preparing the way for handing over powers to NATO in the coming months.

[English]

Our Norad commitment is closer to home. Since 1958, Canada and the United States have jointly managed this military organization that monitors and defends North American air space. Norad is responsible for detecting and warning of attacks against North America from aircraft and missiles.

As part of its mandate, Norad participates with civil authorities in the surveillance and control of Canadian and U.S. airspace. In August 2004 Canada and the United States also reinforced their commitment to this binational command's existing functions by amending the Norad agreement to allow its missile warning function, which it has carried out for nearly 30 years, to be made available to U.S. commands responsible for missile defence.

Government Orders

Norad is not however involved in the U.S. missile defence system. While Norad shares its missile warning function with the United States commands, it has neither the authority nor the capability to act on the information. As a binational command, Norad is a unique defence alliance. It is a place where men and women of the Canadian and U.S. armed forces come together as equals in a common cause.

The benefits to Canada have been substantial. First, Norad has been central in protecting us from any direct military attack. Second, it has ensured that Canada has a strong and permanent influence on U.S. decisions that engage Canadian interests. Third, Canadian Forces have developed a level of cooperation and coordination with American forces that have served us well, not only in Norad but also in NATO and other multinational operations. Fourth, Norad has given generations of Canadian policy makers invaluable access and understanding of U.S. military thinking.

The Norad agreement has been renewed nine times since 1958 with substantial revisions to the agreement on four of those occasions, in 1975, 1981, 1996 and in 2006.

As was the case with NATO, the strategic environment in which Norad operates has shifted dramatically and so these latest revisions are among the most substantial ever. The most important change is the expansion of Norad's role to include maritime warning. My colleague, the Minister of National Defence, will discuss these operational details in more detail in his remarks to the House this evening.

Another change to the Norad renewal is that it has become a permanent agreement. Until now, each Norad renewal has been for a limited time and if the two sides did not renew the agreement before a specified expiry date then the agreement would lapse and that is in fact the case today. If we were not to pass this by May 12, the agreement would lapse.

There is a suggestion that Canada and the United States would get together for a limited time to cooperate in countering specific threats. By implication, this way of proceeding suggests that if those threats were to recede or even disappear, then the alliance could disappear. Surely, as we all know, the threats that we face today, I would suggest, will be with us sadly for many years to come. As we saw in the attacks on the World Trade Centre, we can never be certain of what the next threat might be or from where it might come.

Defence is different than policing where much of the work begins after the crime has been committed. We do not maintain our security or military forces in order to deploy them after an attack, to say the least. We have them to prevent the attack from taking place at all, to deter, to intercept or to eliminate that threat if possible before it eliminates us.

The Conservative government of Brian Mulroney tackled the need for permanent commitment to the bilateral issue when it signed the free trade agreement with the United States. There were many predictions at that time that Canada would disappear and that our economy would be left in tatters. Is there any respected commentator in the world today who would make that argument now? Are we not the country running a substantial bilateral trade surplus, I ask rhetorically?

The simple truth is that North America is our region. Geography is destiny and our destiny as a country is grounded ultimately in how we manage this enormous continent in cooperation with our neighbours. Canada will continue to look after its own affairs as the United States will do within its own borders, but increasingly, how we manage our affairs at home depends on how we manage our responsibilities toward one another. We see this in the environment, energy, water quality and coastal fisheries, among other examples. It is a long list and growing.

We can either retreat or react as each new challenge arises or we can look ahead and try to anticipate where that bilateral management challenge will arise, so that we have the procedures and policies in place to deal with them before they become difficult.

I will conclude now by suggesting that the Norad agreement is yet another important step in the evolution of a sovereign and free Canada. I urge the House and all members present to give its unanimous support for this important pillar of Canadian society.

● (1830)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am in great support of what the hon. member said and the agreement. The minister mentioned the threats that are in place today would be in place for a long time to come. Would he give us more detail and his thoughts of what those threats are and in particular the maritime threats and how they were handled in the past? I would also ask the hon. minister, if the maritime threats were handled correctly in the past, then why are we adding this part to the agreement?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, it raises an important issue of why the addition of maritime security. Suffice it to say that in recent years we have come to recognize in Canada, as I would suggest the Americans have as well, that one of the largest vulnerabilities of the continent right now is on the water. Currently, there is a lack of surveillance at our ports and there are challenges that exist in terms of the amount of container traffic coming in to both countries right now. The water is an enormous, vast expanse of territory to cover.

Having the Norad capacity and ability to oversee incoming threats on the water is a great advantage and great security to our country. As for the source of those threats, I need not list them but only say that the terrorist threat is ever present. Sadly, we know of the existence of al-Qaeda operations on the continent and the source of terrorism can come from many corners of the globe.

I would suggest that having this added dimension of maritime security, coupled with the importance and the stress that we place on surveillance of any incoming ballistic missile, is the type of agreement that we need to be a part of. We need to be at the table. We need to be able to give input on important decisions that affect our national security.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, would the minister clarify some issues? I am not sure that everyone in this chamber or those listening understand the full, intricate details of what the Norad mission is and what the future of it will mean.

I have a definition for the minister to respond to if it is possible or, if not, he can get back to us later. It says:

Government Orders

—our two governments agree that Norad's aerospace warning mission for North America also shall include aerospace warning, as defined in Norad's Terms of Reference, in support of the designated commands responsible for missile defence of North America.

The minister knows the House voted in the last Parliament that Canada would not be part of missile defence. I wonder if this does not in any way preclude Canada's possibility or even acceptance that we may in some way be part of the U.S. missile defence shield.

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, the House has pronounced itself. This country has made it clear that we have no intention of being part of this system of which the hon. member is referring.

I would tell the member that this amendment reinforced the Canadian and U.S. commitment to preserve the existing functions of the binational command that has served both countries for well over 50 years.

Norad is not about ballistic missiles. I would suggest it is not involved in a U.S. missile defence system. The U.S. northern command is charged, however, with a ballistic missile defence mission for the continental U.S. and Alaska, of which we are not a part.

We may share information. We may in fact share the type of information necessary to make important decisions in the future, but this new Norad agreement does in no way alter the existing relationship that we have had in place for many years, nor has it given the authority for the Americans to override our sovereignty in any way, shape or form.

I hope that answers the hon. member's questions. I look forward to his participation in the debate this evening.

• (1835)

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the government for the steps that it has taken to give Canadians the security and stability that they look for.

Would the minister enlighten us a little more with regard to how the review will work? There is the fact that we are now tied to Norad on a permanent basis, which I think most people understand the importance of, but how will the review work? Is this a review that will come before Parliament every four years? Is this a review that is just an automatic grandfathering? What type of mechanism is there to review in four years?

Hon. Peter MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Alberta. I know that he has a very strong interest in support of our armed forces and an interest in this subject matter.

I am glad he asked the question because it does allow for a further explanation. While this agreement will, in principle, come again before the House potentially in four years, both parties, the United States and Canada, have the opportunity, should they desire such a debate at that time and should circumstances require, to bring it back before their respective houses or simply exchange the type of diplomatic letters that are often used to renew this agreement.

However, it does put in place a more permanent agreement. It does allow for review. It does allow, in fact, for either party to pull out of the agreement, giving 12 months notice. To that extent, this Norad agreement is on much more stable footing today and will be when it passes through this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I wish to remind all hon. members that this is a regular debate, so in order to partake in questions and comments, I would ask that they stand in their proper places.

Resuming debate, the hon. Minister of National Defence.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to be participating in today's debate on the renewal of the North American Aerospace Defence Agreement.

The defence of North America is something this government takes very seriously and we know that the militaries of Canada and the United States do so as well. The pilots, aircraft technicians, radar operators and air controllers, and the men and women who keep a close eye on our continent and work 24 hours a day to ensure our safety, will tell us that Norad is not just another agreement between two countries. It is a reflection of their commitment to protect their loved ones and their fellow citizens.

Norad is about protecting people. It is about providing for the safety and security of our citizens. That is why we worked with the United States to renew the Norad agreement, an agreement that has been revised to meet the specific challenges of today, and an agreement that demonstrates the longstanding friendship that exists between Canada and the United States and stands as an enduring symbol of the willingness of the two nations to defend their shared continent in an unstable and dangerous world.

When the first Norad agreement was signed in 1958, North Americans were facing the terrifying prospect of attack by nuclear armed Soviet long range bombers. Developing a joint air defence system to protect Canada and the United States became a clear necessity.

• (1840)

[*Translation*]

Throughout the Cold War, Norad was on guard against the Soviet aircraft that would enter North American airspace to test Norad readiness, conduct attack simulations, and undertake electronic snooping.

I am reminded of one particular incident on a summer night in 1985 when Norad detected three Soviet bombers flying off the coast of Labrador. Norad responded by scrambling a CF-18 fighter from Bagotville, Quebec. Within minutes, the Canadian CF-18 pilot had located those Soviet aircraft and ensured that they ventured no further.

[*English*]

Norad has shown great flexibility over the decades, keeping pace with evolving weapons technologies from nuclear armed intercontinental ballistic missiles in the 1960s to air and submarine-launched cruise missiles in the 1980s.

Norad continues to keep pace today. The traumatic events of September 11, 2001, underscored Norad's continued relevance in the new security environment. As events unfolded that day, Norad became our first line of defence and Canadians played a critical role. The person in charge of Norad's response that morning was a Canadian general and a Canadian navy captain was the command director in the Cheyenne Mountain Operations Centre at Norad.

Government Orders

Norad increased its alert-readiness measures, scrambled combat and surveillance aircraft, and in conjunction with U.S. Federal Aviation Administration and NAV Canada, coordinated the rerouting and grounding of every single commercial aircraft in North American skies.

Norad then launched Operation Noble Eagle, an ongoing internal air defence mission. As part of this operation, our two countries' air forces have flown more than 42,000 sorties and scrambled fighters more than 2,100 times.

[*Translation*]

Today, Norad is also working in close collaboration with other government security agencies.

For example, last February, Norad fighters—including CF-18s from CFB Bagotville, Quebec—worked with the FBI, RCMP, US Coast Guard and local police forces to secure the Windsor-Detroit area during the Super Bowl.

As a CF-18 pilot said on the day of the Super Bowl, “We want to let people know we are there and ready.” That is exactly what this government wants Norad to do—to be there and be ready to defend the citizens of Canada, and our neighbours to the south.

[*English*]

The renewal of Norad clearly supports this government's Canada first commitment to protect Canadians and defend our national sovereignty. It is the most cost effective and logical, common sense way to exercise control over our vast airspace. In fact, Canada bears only 10% of the total cost of providing aerospace defence for North America.

Norad gives us access to valuable training opportunities with our American allies, as well as to important defence related information and intelligence. Norad ensures that we have an important voice and influence in the continental aerospace defence issues.

[*Translation*]

Through the last half century, our participation in Norad has never inhibited us from making independent choices. Norad's unique bi-national command structure allows both of our governments to exercise exclusive control over our respective territories and command over our national forces.

[*English*]

Norad is not only being renewed, it is also being enhanced. First of all, the new agreement will renew Norad indefinitely. Norad will still be subject to review at least every four years, if not requested sooner or by each party, and it can be cancelled on 12 months' notice. But we are dedicated to a permanent agreement. The new agreement also includes a maritime warning mission.

North America is not shielded by the Arctic, Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Recent events have shown that terrorists can strike in unexpected ways. Keep in mind that some of our largest cities and population centres are located along our shorelines. Millions of tonnes of freight pass through North American ports every day. A terrorist strike against the ports of Halifax, Montreal or Vancouver, or even on the Great Lakes or the St. Lawrence Seaway, would be catastrophic.

[*Translation*]

That is why we must do everything possible to prevent this from happening—to make sure that North America and its citizens are safe.

That is why, for the first time in its history—building on nearly five decades of aerospace defence cooperation—Norad will work on developing an ability to contribute to the monitoring of our maritime approaches and our internal waterways.

Norad will process available data and advise the national commands of each country—Canada Command and US Northern Command—on issues of concern. Responding to maritime threats, however, will remain the responsibility of each of these national commands.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Canada and the United States have also agreed to let the Bi-National Planning Group expire. Established in 2002 to facilitate information sharing and coordinate contingency plans for defending against potential threats to North America, such as disasters or terrorist attacks, the Bi-National Planning Group has fulfilled its original mandate and recently issued its final report. Its functions will instead be integrated into a number of other bodies, such as the Permanent Joint Board on Defence, Canada Command, U.S. Northern Command, the Military Cooperation Committee, and of course, the new enhanced Norad.

At this very moment the men and women of Norad, Canadians and Americans, are maintaining a silent but effective vigil to keep our country safe. These often unseen sentinels are committed to protecting the lives of their fellow citizens, to protect us all 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Their work is critical for the defence of our national sovereignty and for the protection of our citizens.

We are now presented with the opportunity to make Norad a stronger organization. Norad has evolved considerably over the years keeping pace with the times and it must continue to do so. It is in the interests of North America. It is in the interests of our relations with the United States. Above all, it is in our national interest. A renewed and enhanced Norad is a clear indication how this government is putting Canada first.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I said I am a big supporter so the member does not have to worry, but he might want to get his pen out because I have four quick questions. Before I ask them, for the record, my riding of Yukon is right beside Alaska, a few seconds from a missile base in Alaska and we had students who went to that base and protest. They are quite against that operation.

First, there is a huge expenditure in the budget for the military. Out of that money, which specific equipment would be for things that could be used in Norad, maritime and air equipment, and if interoperability is going to be used, what would be the specifications because of Norad in the contracts?

Second, it was great to hear the minister mention the word “Arctic”. That was fantastic and I thank the minister, but what out of that military budget is related to the Arctic?

Third, does the minister foresee any time when American ships would be in Canadian waters related to this agreement and could he give us an idea of how that would work?

Last, as the Bi-National Planning Group is disbanding, does that mean there is no further discussion related to land troops of a similar nature?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to answer the member's four questions as clearly as I can, starting with the last one.

The Bi-National Planning Group that was set up in 2002 is closing down. I mentioned a number of organizations that will take up its responsibilities, but essentially Canada Command and Northern Command are going to cooperate to see where they can combine on doctrine and agreement so that we have a seamless border if we have problems on it. We are not worried about closing down the Bi-National Planning Group.

With respect to American vessels in our waters, the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of North America is divided. Canada has an area of responsibility and the United States has an area of responsibility. It is the same on the Pacific coast. The idea of this warning system is that if vessels were entering our area, we would note right away what they are. If they indicated that they were going to the U.S., we would then inform the U.S. that vessels had entered our waters and in two days they should enter U.S. waters, or whatever. The U.S. would do the same thing so that we could keep track.

Especially on the east coast, the tracks from Europe cross through both of our waters. Nearly all vessels go through both of our waters so it helps to keep track of which vessels are in the waters to add security.

With respect to the Arctic, yes, the \$5.3 billion in the budget above the Liberal government's financial commitments will include a lot of activity in the Arctic, as we mentioned in our campaign last January.

With respect to equipment, yes, once we have the final plan from the military and it is approved by cabinet, we will be bringing forth equipment for the air force, the army and the navy. Where possible, we try to standardize with NATO on various technical aspects of equipment. Yes, equipment will be available for all three.

• (1850)

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have just two questions for the Minister of National Defence.

Clause h of the proposed new treaty says that there will be the sharing of all information and intelligence relevant to the Norad mission. This is a rather broad idea. I want to know if there is any limit to what information and intelligence could be relevant to the Norad mission.

The proposed new treaty extends Norad's mandate to include the sharing of maritime surveillance over internal waterways. Does the agreement therefore include the sharing of maritime surveillance in the Northwest Passage?

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, yes, it includes internal waters. If there were vessels going through the Northwest Passage, I

am not certain we would report that to the United States. That is up for question. Certainly, if vessels were in the St. Lawrence Seaway or the Great Lakes, we would probably share that information back and forth, but we may not necessarily send information to the United States that we had detected vessels in the Northwest Passage.

With respect to the member's other question regarding limits of information, the information would be relevant to the Norad mission, that is, intercepting either missiles or aircraft or basic information on which vessels are entering or leaving our waters. That is the kind of information that would be transferred.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Egmont.

I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the official opposition in support of the renewal of the North American Aerospace Defense command, known as Norad.

Norad has long been an anchor of Canadian security and defence policy. Established in 1958 at the height of the cold war, Norad is an expression of our shared resolve with the United States to defend North American air space against all threats. It is also emblematic of the shared interests that make Canada and the United States the best of friends and the strongest of allies.

While the cold war rationale for Norad no longer exists, both of our nations understand that the world remains a very uncertain and dangerous place, rife with constantly evolving threats against which we must remain always on guard.

For proof, we need only recall the awful events of September 11, 2001. Out of the clear blue sky, commercial airliners were turned into flying bombs and thousands of innocents were slaughtered. In the space of a few hours, North American air space was thrown into complete chaos and then shut down completely. It was an unprecedented event that required unprecedented cooperation between Canada and the United States that managed the crisis.

In the post-9/11 world, Norad is as relevant as ever. The Liberal Party is pleased to reaffirm today our support for a modernized Norad framework. The renewal of Norad equips it to deal with a broader range of threats than before. The inclusion of existing maritime surveillance mechanisms into the Norad monitoring framework is just common sense.

While the official opposition supports the new Norad treaty itself, we are, however, concerned with the sloppy and secretive manner in which the government has handled a security and defence issue that is of paramount importance to Canadians.

Government Orders

When our party formed government and we signed international agreements, we had formal signing ceremonies which were public knowledge and which were often open to the media. But Canadians found out that Norad had been renewed not from their government but from the United States Department of State, and not with a formal public signing ceremony announcement but with a secret signing behind closed doors.

Representatives of the Conservative government will tell us that signing a treaty in secret is not a problem given that the treaty was earmarked for this debate in the House with a vote to follow. They will say that the treaty is not finalized until a formal exchange of diplomatic notes between our two countries, but that, with respect, is beside the point.

The troubling fact is that the Government of Canada entered into an agreement with another state and expressly decided not to inform the Canadian public. Worse still, the government actively endeavoured to conceal the decision.

According to the *Toronto Star* on April 28, the Prime Minister's office would not return phone calls asking if the agreement had been signed, and when first asked, government officials refused to confirm that the deal had been signed. I quote the article:

With Canadian officials saying nothing, it was left to U.S. officials to lay out the details of the renewal.

The Prime Minister made no public mention of the treaty signing until cornered afterward by journalists.

Since when does the Government of Canada allow a low level spokesperson from another country the prerogative of informing Canadians about international treaties into which their government has entered? What does it say to the United States of America, our most important ally, when the Canadian government refuses to publicly admit that a treaty that has formed the bedrock of our security partnership for nearly 50 years has been renewed?

It says that we have a government elected on the facade of openness and accountability which in office has revealed its true obsession with secrecy at all costs, no matter how embarrassing such secrecy may be to the country. It tells the United States that it is dealing with clumsy amateurs.

● (1855)

There is no doubt that the House will vote in favour of the new Norad treaty, and we should, but I question the Conservative government's clumsy handling of this matter.

What if the House did not vote in favour of the agreement the government has already signed? Would the government then make a mockery of the honour of the Crown and of our country internationally by refusing to follow through on an agreement already signed? This is not how a responsible and competent Canadian government conducts international security relations.

The government's handling of this matter also reinforces its growing reputation for ducking accountability with Canadians. It is a government which, for shabby public relations reasons, now prevents the Canadian public from witnessing the repatriation of the remains of our fallen heroes to Canadian soil.

It is a government that in its budget ducks its responsibility to make needed procurement decisions for the armed forces, possibly because the Minister of National Defence is mired in outdated cold war thinking that is at variance with the views of General Hillier about the needs of a modern military.

It is a government that refuses to fess up that it cannot afford the pricey and unnecessary polar icebreakers that it promised during the election.

And it is a government that has put the capacity of the Government of Canada to make needed military purchases at risk by abandoning the Liberal tradition of fiscal prudence and returning to the irresponsible budgeting practices of failed Conservative governments of the past.

Throughout my time in public life I have conducted myself with one main principle, and that is that governments should be as open and transparent as possible with those they have been given the privilege of governing.

While the official opposition will certainly support Norad, we lament the way the government has handled this file. Let me warn them that a government that allows secrecy to seep into all manner of its operations, that thinks it can pick and choose the facts it acknowledges and the promises it keeps, will not long be in a position to exercise the authority with which it has been entrusted.

● (1900)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am gratified to hear the member opposite indicate that he and the Liberal Party will strongly support the new Norad agreement, which is a positive thing.

However I was very concerned to hear what I thought was a very shallow grasp of the law of treaties and how treaties are entered into. I thought perhaps in response the member could share with us whether he has an appreciation of the difference between the signing of a treaty and the ratification of a treaty.

Those who are familiar with international law are aware that obviously the people who sign treaties that are sent abroad by governments are not the same ones who ratify treaties and treaties do not come into force until ratification. The government has not yet ratified this treaty. We are having a debate tonight in the House and then a vote. Ratification comes at a later point and it is only with ratification that a treaty comes into force. It seems the hon. member has missed that point.

I wonder if the member appreciates that difference. If he does, would he like to share with Canadians that he does understand the difference between signing a treaty and ratifying it?

I was hoping he could also add for us a list of all the treaties, since he was a fan of openness, in the time the Liberals were in government that were subject to a debate and a vote in the House by the members of the House of Commons. That would show us how open the Liberal Party was with foreign treaties when it was in government.

Government Orders

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, when a government attempts to impose American processes on a parliamentary form of government, that is the kind of distorted thinking we get.

In the past, when a government signed a treaty it signed the treaty after full cabinet consultation. There is absolutely no doubt that diplomatic notes would be exchanged.

What the government says now is that it has earmarked this for debate. That is wonderful. However, in the United States of America, where Congress has the right to ratify treaties, it has a different system of government. In our system of government, if I might let the hon. member know, we derive our authority from the House based on the confidence of the House, not on ratification of individual issues that come before the House.

Whether it is a majority or a minority government does not matter, if the government has the confidence, then government, on behalf of the Crown in this country, has the right to sign those treaties and ratify those treaties.

I just want to advise my hon. friend that I do understand and appreciate the differences. When we try to bring American processes into a parliamentary form of government, then we have the kind of bastardization that occurs in the process where it is still maintained that we dishonour the Crown and we do not keep in mind the honour of the Crown if the House votes against the treaty. If the House were to vote against the treaty, we would dishonour the Crown. The government would not be able to actually keep the honour of the Crown intact, which is very important. When the Crown signs a treaty, that means the Crown will ratify that treaty.

I am happy the matter is here for debate but I think we need to understand that we are trying to graft on to our system of government something that is alien, which is from the United States. It is an Americanization. It is a different process. It does not jibe with our system. We may have to make some changes to make it jibe with our system. I am happy it is here for a vote and for debate.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has made a number of interesting points, not the least of which is that bringing new processes into play do often cause a little consternation. The Charter is a perfect example. That, in and of itself, was not something that was particularly in line with the British North America Act and the Westminster system which we have followed for years in this country.

However, my colleague opposite neglected to answer the very straightforward question posed by the Parliament Secretary for the Minister of Foreign Affairs, which was: In the last session of the last Parliament did the government, in which he was a member, partake of this type of openness? Did his government allow the Parliament to engage in a debate and have a vote?

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, that question is a red herring. The fact is that during the time I was here there was no treaty signed. This is a treaty negotiated by us and this is a treaty that was to be signed.

With respect to the Charter, the Charter was an amendment to the Constitution. It came to this chamber and it went to the provinces for ratification. That was important. The member cannot say that an

amendment to the Constitution is the same as ratifying a treaty within our current framework.

This has now been changed. I am happy that it is here for debate and a vote. I am not opposed to that. I like the spirit of that but we need to understand that when we try to graft different alien processes on to an existing parliamentary system where we function differently, there will be some problems and we will have arguments coming at us that make no sense.

● (1905)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the member for Vancouver South and I am glad that he is arguing for more openness, more transparency, more debate and so on.

However I know he was a member of the cabinet over the last couple of years before the Liberal government was defeated. I assume he was aware that there were many months of negotiations going on between his government and the U.S. government over the agreement that is now before the House.

It is not just members in opposition who are shocked to find this week that we are now faced with an agreement that only came to the light of day because American officials made it public.

Could the member tell the House whether there was any transparency between those who were negotiating this on behalf of the Government of Canada and the very cabinet on which he was a member? Did his cabinet make its colleagues aware?

However, my real concern, which is one of many, is that Canadians are truly astounded to realize that we are now looking at an agreement that clearly deepens the integration, militarily in terms of foreign policy, between Canada and the U.S. We have an agreement that, by the officials' own description, is now a permanent agreement, which is a very different situation from the kind of agreement we had in the past. The member for Vancouver South sat at the same briefing session as we did earlier this week.

I wonder if the former minister, the member for Vancouver South, could address these questions, please.

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of External Affairs mentioned earlier, this is a long term, permanent agreement that is reviewed every four years. It can be reviewed at the behest of either party even prior to four years. It also can be terminated with 12 months' notice. It is not something that if tomorrow we believe as Canadians that it is not in our best interests that we are stuck with. We can obviously get out of it with 12 months' notice.

I believe that all the work, in terms of maritime surveillance, has been done, is currently being done. No more work is going to be done than what has been done. It will simply be coordinated and put together with the rest of the surveillance that Norad does. I think that is an appropriate way to go.

Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure tonight to rise in the House to offer some thoughts on the renewal of the Norad agreement. I will attempt to avoid as much as possible the comments made by the hon. member for Vancouver South. Even though I agree with the remarks he made, I would like to concentrate on other aspects of the debate.

Government Orders

The North American Aerospace Defence Agreement between Canada and the U.S. is a long-standing 52-year-old partnership. This agreement is reflective of a special and unique relationship in the shared defence of North America.

Norad is a binational information sharing and surveillance agreement. The system monitors the airspace of North America, warning of potential attacks by aircraft, missiles or space vehicles, as well as providing surveillance and control of the airspace of Canada and the United States.

Tonight I want to focus my comments mainly on the issue of maritime and waterway security, which represents an expansion of the previous Norad agreement. It is critical that the House recognizes the importance of an integrated North American aerospace and maritime defence system.

Five years ago we saw how the tragic events of September 11 shut down North American airspace. As the hon. minister stated, on that day there was a Canadian in charge of Norad in Cheyenne Mountain and he performed very well under extreme pressure. Unfortunately, with the current threat of global terrorism, international drug smuggling and the accessibility of weapons of mass destruction, an agreement like this is more crucial than ever.

Canada currently maintains sovereignty over more than 200,000 kilometres of coastline. This is a vast amount of exposed territory. Lessons from the past concerning maritime threats affirm that it is essential for us to adequately protect Canada and North America. This issue is of particular concern to me as a resident of Prince Edward Island.

Being surrounded by water, Islanders and Atlantic Canadians grew up with stories from our history books about attacks being launched from the water. There are true stories of German U-boats being in Canadian waters and sinking ships in Canadian waters during World War II. In fact, the *Empress of Ireland* near Rimouski is an example of that. Identifying and responding to potential threats by land, air and sea is crucial to the defence of any nation.

Expanding the Norad agreement to integrate maritime surveillance and early warning represents a logical step forward in North American defence. It opens up the possibility that issues at sea can be dealt with in a much more efficient fashion than previously. As well, including maritime warning under Norad strengthens Canada's maritime security, a goal identified in the national security policy unveiled by the Liberal government in 2004. This renewed agreement demonstrates a commitment to national security and binational coordination, and adds to the over 80 treaty level defence agreements we already have with the United States.

The mechanisms for monitoring maritime activities, approaches and area threats have already been established and are currently functional. As a result, this will facilitate the quick and efficient integration of a maritime warning system with Norad.

It is clear that information sharing can be beneficial for Canada's national security. The more we know about a ship prior to it docking in Canada the better it is for the safety of Canadians and North Americans in general. This agreement also represents a useful weapon to counter drug smuggling business in North America.

I believe that Canada should be an active participant in Norad because it is better to be at the continental defence table rather than not, and to pull our weight at that table. As an active participant, we can remain well informed and maintain a voice in the security of North America.

While fully supportive of this agreement, I want to acknowledge several concerns that were briefly mentioned by the member for Vancouver South. I want to be clear about what the full implications and ramifications are or will be for the maritime regions.

I want to be certain that an expanded Norad will not compromise Canada's control over its military or potentially lead to U.S. warships patrolling Canadian waters. We must recognize the importance of our ability to exercise sovereignty while devoting our utmost attention and concern toward the security and protection of Canada and North America.

• (1910)

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. friend on the other side of the aisle for a very substantive speech, 95% of which I agree with completely. I want to put on the record that I did partake, when his party was in government, in a mission to Cheyenne Mountain to observe first hand our men and women in uniform working hand in hand with the United States personnel. I wish every Canadian could take that trip.

As our Minister of National Defence mentioned, the fact that there was a Canadian ostensibly in charge of North American airspace on the day that the Americans were attacked on September 11 shows how much confidence they have in us. It is a wonderful arrangement for this country in terms of the benefits we get out of it.

I want him to perhaps expand upon the fact that we pay approximately 10% of the cost, but as he eloquently said, we are very much at the table and it is better for us to be part of this continental security than not to be there. Could he perhaps expand upon the fact that Canadians, and for Canadians watching today, should realize that we not only get our money's worth but get a sense of protection out of this continental security, which is priceless? Would the member opposite comment on that?

• (1915)

Hon. Joe McGuire: Mr. Speaker, it certainly was a proud day for Canada even though it was a devastating day for North America, particularly to our American friends, but it did show that the United States and Canada, who worked together for so long since the second world war on the protection of not only North America but the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as I said in my speech, have also signed over 80 bilateral agreements between the two countries. That really binds us together in the defence of North America and, by extension, to the world.

We pay 10%. I am not sure what the new expenses will be on the maritime side of the NATO agreement. Maybe the hon. minister could give that information, but paying 10% is a small price to pay to be involved in Norad and participate in the defence of our continent.

Government Orders

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since 1958 Norad has always been renewed for three to five year periods only. This tradition allowed the Canadian government to regularly reaffirm Canadian sovereignty in our relationship with the world's most militarily powerful state. Does the hon. member consider that the Conservatives now wish to make Norad a permanent organization to sacrifice the opportunity to reaffirm Canadian sovereignty in the future? I would like to have his opinion on this.

Hon. Joe McGuire: Mr. Speaker, the way I understand it, even though it is a more permanent longstanding agreement, it can be reviewed every four years. So in that respect, this country and the United States can review the agreement and make or propose changes, and bring those changes to the attention of this. It is not an exclusively permanent unchangeable agreement. It is an agreement that can be reviewed every four years and in that way it makes it more permanent, but it is not an absolutely permanent fixture between the two countries.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would invite the hon. member to comment on the openness and the transparency of this process. The entire agreement has been laid on the table of the House and, in fact, it was his party and part of the legacy of the Liberal Party that there was participation in the original debate in 1958. Prime Minister John Diefenbaker consulted with then leader of the opposition, Lester B. Pearson, who was to become external affairs minister. Paul Martin Sr. also took part in that historic debate in 1958. There was a discussion then as there is tonight of the importance of the protection of both countries within this continent.

Is this debate tonight not very much in keeping with the spirit of openness and discussion about the Norad agreement, and a continuation of a legacy that allows Canadians, allows parliamentarians on behalf of their constituents, to have input and discussion into this important matter?

Hon. Joe McGuire: Mr. Speaker, maybe it is only the Minister of National Defence who can remember the situation back in 1958 at the height of the Cold War. I know his career was probably just beginning then.

At that time, the Cold War between the U.S. and Russia was at its height. There was tremendous fear in the free world of what the Russians were capable of doing. In fact, they demonstrated it many times with their testing of hydrogen bombs, et cetera. At that time, it was imperative that not only North America but the free world would bind themselves together in treaties to protect themselves from the incursion of the Russian threat.

Those times are now gone, but there is a new threat, as was demonstrated on September 11, which was a reminder that we still have to cooperate as a free world, as a portion of North America, to continue to demonstrate our willingness to participate and to cooperate with the United States for the protection of our continent. The original reasons for the development of Norad and the present reasons are very similar, and I think most welcome by the citizens of both countries.

• (1920)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde (La Pointe-de-l'Île, BQ): Mr. Speaker, as I was preparing my speech, all alone in my office, I said to myself that I have to salute this, a first: for the first time, we in this House are discussing the text of a treaty that has been signed. To me, this is the equivalent of signing drafts of collective agreements before putting them to the general meeting. That is how I see it. This House could decide that it disagrees with the treaty. The government would then have to go back to see the Americans to negotiate something else or to say that the matter is closed. So this is a first and for that, I salute the government.

You know that the Bloc Québécois has introduced three bills seeking to put an end to the Crown prerogative that means that Cabinet alone may be consulted about documents to which only those people had access and which remained secret. What one expects to see in a democracy is that the documents setting out the general terms of our relations with foreign countries will be submitted for examination by parliamentarians.

I am therefore pleased to see this. Honestly, however, I would have preferred that we be given a little more time. I would have liked to have time to meet in committee and hear witnesses so that we could better understand certain new expressions.

To celebrate how pleased we are to be considering this document, let us recall that sometimes we did not know that correspondence had been exchanged. We were given a news release telling us about an agreement on something or other. Here, we have a document that I have studied, I have peeled back its layers, and it leaves me with questions, but at bottom, we are having to make a decision tonight and we are participating in a debate that is going too fast. We have to decide whether we will continue to participate in Norad, to cooperate in terms of exchanging information and to be part of a joint command for greater effectiveness, given the new threats we are facing today.

I trained as an historian, and so I will always look to the documents. I said to myself that my colleagues might be curious to read the 1958 founding document. I am going to read a few passages. It is interesting because it places us in the context of that time. I must note that there are few changes in the current document. The document is written in the form of a letter.

Mr. Secretary of State,

I have the honour of referring to the discussions that have been held between Canadian and American authorities on the subject of the need to unify the administration of Canadian and American air defence operations and, specifically, to the studies conducted by the Canadian and American military task force and its recommendations. The studies resulted, on August 1, 1957, in a communiqué by the Minister of National Defence of Canada and the Secretary of Defence in the United States announcing that our two governments had decided to establish a unified system of administration of the air defence operations of the metropolitan United States, Canada and Alaska, under the orders—

This seems to me to be the meaning of Norad:

—under the orders of a unified command reporting directly to the chiefs of staff of the two countries.

I will go a little further.

Government Orders

For a number of years, prior to the creation of Norad, it could be seen that Canadian and American air defence had to be considered a single entity. While arrangements concluded up to that point between Canada and the United States permitted the coordination of the separate air defence plans of the two countries, they did not permit the exercise of supervisory authority over all defence equipment.

In 1958, they said this:

New threats require a prompt decision.

The same thing could be said today.

I want to add this:

—to set out, in light of the foregoing and in view of the experience acquired during provisional operations...the following principles are proposed.

● (1925)

1. The Commander-in-Chief of Norad reports directly to both the Prime Minister of Canada and the President of the United States, who report directly to their respective governments.

I think it is important to remember that. If we are not happy, we can ask questions in the House of Commons and we have the text. I will continue.

He will abide by an air defence plan approved by the appropriate authorities of both our governments, which will have to take into account their objectives in terms of defending the Canada—United States region in the NATO zone.

It is specific. It is not just anyone. It all stems from a plan that was prepared by each government and then approved by both governments.

By the way, I have been a sovereignist for many years and in every Parti Québécois or Bloc Québécois platform we have always said we would exercise our defence and security responsibilities and participate in Norad and NATO in particular. Accordingly, I think securing the safety of the people for whom this work was done is a security responsibility.

In my research, still in the same vein, since I also wanted to know the impetus behind this text, I understood that it stemmed from the second world war when U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King established the basic principle that would from then on guide defence relations between the two countries.

I did not know it, but “the United States will protect Canada from a possible attack from outside the continent and in exchange Canadians will ensure that their land cannot be used or crossed by enemies of their neighbour to the South”. I found that interesting, but it left me with all sorts of questions.

I could see that I was preparing for a long speech.

I now want to look at the text of this treaty to point out certain aspects that caused me some concern. I am talking about the amendments.

The first aspect that worried me was the addition of maritime surveillance of inland navigation. I raised this question in the briefing session we had. The wording of the preamble worried me because I found it too general. It seemed to me that it was giving Norad permission to carry out mission orders. However, the end of paragraph 1.2 (c), which specifies what is meant by “maritime warning”, reassures me. It says:

Maritime surveillance and control shall continue to be exercised by national commands and, as appropriate, coordinated bilaterally.

Surveillance is Norad's mission; control, as we will see, is the mission of National Defence.

As for national commands, in Canada now there is the Canada Command and in the U.S. there is the US Northern Command. I learned that recently, when visiting the military base in my riding.

I had put the question to the officer in charge of us. I told him I knew that there cannot be any military activity in Quebec, except at the request of the Attorney-General of Quebec.

● (1930)

This is also true for the other provinces, under the Constitution. The officer told me that this principle was still the same and that it is within these parameters that the responsibilities laid down in the text are exercised.

To my mind, it is important to have a text like this one. When something occurs that we do not agree with and we think it is inconsistent with the text, we can go and see the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister, and tell them that something is not right.

Having a text now is extraordinary progress, though I do not agree with the wording. Obviously, no one, apart from cabinet members, looked at that. Sometimes, the text is very vague. This aspect seems important to me.

With respect to the amendment, the fact that this was supposed to be a permanent text bothered me, until I noted that either party may at any time ask for amendments to be made. Once again, if Parliament exercises its powers and says it needs an amendment in this respect, the government cannot claim to be unable to touch the text. We can go over it and ask for amendments. We are keeping an eye on what is happening. Moreover, one party can always advise the other that it is terminating this treaty. That is carried out within the following 12 months. We understand that separating unified commands can take some time.

There is one aspect to which I have not responded. It is in nearly all elements of life in Quebec and Canada, namely the fear of integration.

The foreign affairs committee examined the fear of integration when it did a study on the effects of NAFTA. In the study, what surprised me most was that integration takes place mainly through economic players. It occurs chiefly through these large companies that restructure, that create a market completely indifferent to borders and that thus create a large integrated market. The North-American market can be integrated more readily than the European one. Members will agree that different countries do not have the same electrical outlets. When we travel, we have to take along all sorts of gadgets so we can plug in our appliances. Here, the market is easy to integrate. Does this treaty really make integration easier? Some additions have been made.

In committee, I would have liked to ask some independent experts about these additions. This is not to say that the members of the military we heard were not experts.

Government Orders

The Bloc is in agreement with the principle of the importance of intelligence sharing. However, in view of the Arar affair and its repercussions, we would like to see some guidelines. Personally, this is something I will look at. However, since we have a text, we know that it is done. That also goes for confirmation of Norad's ability to conduct information operations.

Another small paragraph bothered me somewhat. Earlier on I stated my beliefs and they are recorded in the blues. There was the officer who answered my question about control over the territory given by the Constitution to the provinces. I mentioned that there were no military activities, unless they were at the request of the provincial attorney general. We are told that:

This treaty deals with national defence and consequently falls under the legislative jurisdiction of the Parliament of Canada. The provinces and territories will undoubtedly support the proposed improvements because these will enable the federal government to intervene efficiently in emergencies—

Important questions must be asked in this regard.

● (1935)

Once again, we shall see, we have a text and we will ask questions. This is a domestic organization. It has nothing to do with the United States. Thus, we will be able to defend our interests.

In doing the historical research, I found that over the years, Norad has had a number of opponents. First, there were opponents who wanted to preserve the ties with the British Empire. Norad marked the end of ties with the British Empire. There were other opponents who said no to cooperation and collaboration with the United States in the name of sovereignty. These were not Quebec sovereignists, but Canadian sovereignists who did not encourage cooperation with the United States.

There are also people who are concerned. I share a little of our difficulty with having control of the military. However, it is important to understand that Norad is not defence, it is a command unit, a commander for the United States and a deputy commander for Canada. Once an evaluation is done based on information that is mostly shared, there is a plan for defence and a plan prepared for each country, which is supposed to be approved by the governments. We could also ask to see them, but in my opinion that would be a much later stage.

Given all of that, and given the vigilance that we must exercise as citizens, I said to myself that our inland waterways, the St. Lawrence Seaway, must not be invaded, but we are told no because there was already an exchange of information. Now, however, it is being formalized. That does not mean that we are going to see American ships and submarines in the St. Lawrence. That is what I was told. I have the text. So I am going to fight to defend the sovereignty of the territory of Quebec, and at this point in time, still, that is achieved through Canadian sovereignty.

I will conclude by reiterating that in my opinion, it is a great advantage to have a text because with it we are able to ask questions, to track what is happening and, in my opinion, to provide our fellow citizens not only with greater security but also with greater assurance of our ability, as parliamentarians, to know what is happening and to ensure that sovereignty is not sold off. I am talking about three kinds of sovereignty: the sovereignty of Quebec, Canada and the United States.

● (1940)

[*English*]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while I thank my hon. colleague for her comments, I do have some experience in Norad and I think she may be missing a couple of basic connections with respect to sovereignty and the kinds of operations that are allowed in the name of air space sovereignty.

I wonder if my colleague could explain to me her understanding of the relationship of sovereignty over North American air space to Quebec sovereignty, to aid of the civil power, which requires the request of a province.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member does not think I am stupid. I had asked this question earlier regarding inland waterways. I know that what was called air space and then aerospace has, since 1981 or 1988, been regarded as North American.

[*English*]

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am always interested in the comments of the member for La Pointe-de-l'Île, because I know she is a longstanding member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs. I appreciate the fact that she pointed out the value of having the text to review.

Personally, I am always most interested in the maintenance of civilian control over the military. I would like to ask her a question about the text. I would direct the member's attention to article 2 and clause f compared to clause l.

Clause f states:

No permanent changes of station of forces assigned, attached or otherwise made available to NORAD operational control will be made without the approval of the national authority of the Party concerned.

I think that is very good, because it states that no real changes can be made unless the government of each of the two countries approves.

Looking at clause l causes me some concern, because it states:

Terms of Reference for NORAD shall be updated expeditiously following the entry into force of this Agreement...Changes in the Terms of Reference, including the addition of other aspects of the missions heretofore identified, shall be made by agreement between the Chief of the Defence Staff of Canada and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States...

Then, almost as an afterthought, it states:

—with approval of higher national authorities as appropriate...

What strikes me is, who is going to decide when that is appropriate? Because essentially, changes to the terms of reference are going to be made by two people and it sounds to me as if they can decide when they have to refer it to the civil authority or not. That raises concerns in my head. That is my first question for the member.

Government Orders

My second question for her goes to clause e, and reflects her mention of the fact that Canadians fear any further integration between the Canadian and the American military. I share that concern, because if this is air and sea, maybe this clause is not too frightening, but if it ever became air, sea and land, it would become very frightening. This clause sets a precedent, should the government decide to go in that direction and to include land, when it states:

Temporary reinforcement from one area to another, including the crossing of the international boundary, to meet operational requirements is within the authority of commanders having operational control.

Once again, having the text allows us to think into the future. In my opinion, we should watch that clause very carefully if anybody starts talking about integrating land forces.

• (1945)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague for her question.

First of all, I would say that the matters raised would make for some interesting discussions by a committee examining the issue and making recommendations for the next version of the treaty. However, my experience leads me to believe that the texts, once known, can always be understood by reference to each other, and that the parties never write anything without a purpose.

Clause E of the text seems vague. I am not an expert on Norad and so I will not be defending this matter. However, I know that it is an advantage to have a text because it will be clearer and more specific the next time. If we have concerns in this regard, we can raise them, delve further into the matter, and be vigilant on behalf of the public.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are many Canadians—I am one of them and probably there are some in the member's constituency—who believe that Canada should be out of Norad altogether, that Norad is a relic from the past, that it was something that came out of the cold war and was intended to allow the Americans access to Canadian territory to shoot down Russian bombers that might be headed this way, if there were ever any that were actually poised to do that.

There are Canadians who believe that this is a concern about deep integration between our two countries, a further enhanced military integration. In fact, we have a report of the bi-national planning group, the subtitle of which is about enhanced military cooperation between Canada and the U.S. There are Canadians who see Norad as a key precursor and key part of that enhanced military cooperation.

There are also a lot of Canadians who believe that we should be making more progress on nuclear disarmament and not giving credit to a military operation that has the world's largest nuclear capacity. They have very grave concerns about our participation, agreement and integration into that military system.

I wonder what the member would say to those constituents and people like me who say we should be out of Norad altogether because of those concerns and we should put our efforts into renewing the United Nations, into making sure that UN agreements and the UN are the leaders in this kind of role in our society.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, those are serious questions that my hon. colleague asks. I expected nothing less from him.

I was thinking about these questions on my way to the House. I too wish that we did not need armies. However, we are living in strange times in which there is more and more talk about Darfur. What do the NGOs want in Darfur? They want armed forces with mandates that allow them to shoot. In English they say robust. Such a request had not been made for some time. We will have to see how things develop in the world.

I do not know whether my colleague shares this feeling with me, but one realizes, in seeing the situation in Iran, Iraq, Africa and elsewhere, that events we thought never happened any more still happen. Under the circumstances, is the main concern to put an end to Norad and NATO?

I am obviously in favour of getting rid of nuclear weapons. However, until we can really succeed in doing so—and I will take the specific steps that seem important in this regard—NATO is becoming a political organization.

Late last week, I went to a meeting in Brussels—it was a kind of PPP—in which political representatives and senior journalists took part, as well as business people. There were some NATO representatives there too, including Mr. Scheffer, Mr. Javier Solana and others. They told us that we should make no mistake: NATO is a political organization. At this very moment and contrary to all expectations, it is conducting nine missions on four different continents. People want NATO troops everywhere. The NATO mission involves a certain coalition. Some participants in the meeting replied that it was not NATO that was needed but United Nations troops.

In Darfur, we hope to achieve a peace accord between the rebels and the government in Khartoum. A major UN mission can then be deployed in support of the African Union mission. However, it is still a question of troops. I know that General Dallaire will propose sending another 1,500 Canadian soldiers. Will I be opposed to that? No, I will be in favour.

I am not quite answering my colleague. It seems to me that the situation is not conducive to putting an end to Norad and NATO.

• (1950)

[*English*]

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Halifax.

It is with some reservation that I speak in the debate tonight. I firmly believe this debate is not in keeping with our democratic traditions and is, therefore, unparliamentary. I want to explain why.

First, this is a debate on a motion that cannot be amended, what the Conservatives are now calling an “up or down vote”. This terminology cannot be found in any of the procedural texts of our Parliament. This is terminology that emerged in the U.S., particularly with regard to the appointment of judges.

Government Orders

It is an ancient right of Parliament to debate as it sees fit and to amend the motions before it. The Conservatives would only allow the House to consider this motion to hold this debate if we waived that right.

A second unparliamentary aspect of this debate is that it is limited by time and not, as is traditional, by the full and complete expression of parliamentary views. It is a longstanding, fundamental parliamentary principle that a question is not put to a vote in the House until the debate on that issue is over.

The Conservatives have essentially invoked closure over this debate before it even started. I ask, why? Why limit debate? What is it about debate that so terrifies the government?

Stanley Knowles, the NDP House leader for the better part of a half century and a distinguished member of Parliament from Winnipeg, said:

Debate is not a sin, a mistake, an error or something to be put up with in Parliament. Debate is the essence of Parliament.

We learned last week from the U.S. Department of State, from a foreign government, that the Conservative Minister of National Defence signed a treaty in secret. The secret treaty was tabled only two days ago in the House. It has not been distributed to the public at large, no citizen consultation and no parliamentary hearings. It is likely that many of the people who voted for the Conservatives on January 23 saw that party's commitment to parliamentary review of treaties as a genuine attempt to engage Parliament and citizens in foreign and defence policy. This hollow exercise tonight, with no opportunity for an amendment, is not a genuine attempt to do those things.

When we scrutinize this treaty we see a sellout of our country. This secret treaty allows for the instantaneous sharing of maritime surveillance information with the U.S., including surveillance over internal waterways, such as the Great Lakes and the Northwest Passage.

A constituent of mine, Derek Wilson of Port Moody, British Columbia, wrote to me on Monday. He said:

I would suggest that the primary reason for including maritime surveillance, from the point of view of the United States, is to have a justification for their military and "support" ships to ply Canada's Northwest Passage without the need to obtain Canadian authorization.

He went on to say:

At some time in the future if there was a Canadian public protest about American vessels transiting the Northwest Passage, as there undoubtedly would be, the American response will simply be, "You guys gave us blanket approval in the perpetual Norad agreement in 2006".

During and immediately after the last election, the Conservatives made a great deal out of their commitment to Canadian sovereignty in the Northwest Passage. Why, if they have been negotiating to share maritime surveillance concerning the Northwest Passage with the United States, did they not seize the opportunity to secure, in return, U.S. recognition of Canada's sovereignty claim?

Another equally disturbing section of the treaty states, "—arrangements shall be maintained to ensure effective sharing between the Parties, of information and intelligence relevant to the NORAD missions".

● (1955)

Considering that other provisions of the secret treaty already cover all aerospace and water in North America, what missions are being alluded to here? Is there any intelligence that will not be shared with the U.S.?

The present administration in Washington has recently been caught illegally spying on its own citizens. How does this bode for the honest and sensitive treatment of any information about Canadians transmitted to the U.S.?

This secret treaty also allows for the instantaneous transmission of surveillance information to the U.S. for the purposes of ballistic missile defence. I know there are some members who will doubt this but allow me to quote from the document itself. It states:

NORAD's aerospace warning mission for North American shall include aerospace warning...in support of United States national commands responsible for missile defense.

The NDP opposes Canadian participation in U.S. missile defence and the use of Norad assets for missile defence is but one small step away from Canadian participation. It is clear that the Conservatives, by signing this treaty, are joining their Liberal predecessors in inching slowly but surely toward signing Canada up to U.S. missile defence.

This is just the beginning. The recent report of the Bi-national Planning Group, which actually deserves a debate all on its own, spells out where the American-Canadian defence establishments see us going. The Bi-national Planning Group proposes a wholesale merger of the Canadian and U.S. militaries with joint commands and shared operational control.

The bi-national planning group states in its report that integration must be achieved in an incremental way because of the "small but vocal minority" of Canadians who are worried about losing our sovereignty. The bi-national planning group even recommends much closer cooperation in both security and foreign policy. I am not making this up. The report states:

—Canada and the United States must continue to act as partners; indeed, that the partnership must be expanded, to shape the future of North American defense and security, using all of the instruments of diplomatic, economic, informational and military power.

The treaty before us tonight takes us on to the slippery slope of full continental integration. It deserves to be studied very carefully in committees before being voted on in the House. For this reason, the NDP makes the following proposal. Instead of closing down the debate prematurely and rushing to a vote, why not simply conclude a 12 month extension of the existing unmodified Norad agreement and then refer the proposed new treaty to the standing committees on foreign affairs and defence? To do otherwise would be unparliamentary. To do otherwise would risk compromising Canadian sovereignty and independence.

Canadians need to take note of this debate and of our respective opinions in the House. They need to ask themselves who in fact is standing up for Canada.

Government Orders

• (2000)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the participation by the hon. member in this debate and I am almost overwhelmed as to where to start with the misinformation that she placed before the House in her remarks.

First, how can there be a secret treaty which has been laid upon the table of the House of Commons? How can there be a secret debate, which is being broadcast nationally, to have a full and inclusive discussion so that Canadians can understand the importance of the Norad agreement for Canada? How can there possibly be a suggestion, where there is a specific reference within the context of this debate, that it is not toward ballistic missile defence?

This simply gives Canada the ability to be at the table and to receive information that affects its national security. What greater threat could there be to sovereignty than to be absent from the debate around the defence of North America, which includes Canada? We do not live in some splendid isolation when it comes to North American threats, whether they be in the air or in the water.

I suggest that nobody believes it would be in Canada's interest to withdraw from Norad nor, I would suggest, which was her last suggestion, that we simply defer this to a parliamentary committee knowing full well, because of the references tonight, that this important agreement will expire on May 12.

I am left to wonder who actually believes this information that has been placed before the House. I can tell the House that they do not believe in Sasquatch or UFOs either.

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if there was actually a question in what the Minister of National Defence had to say.

We have tried to be very serious in the presentation we have made here tonight and present a perspective that is shared by many Canadians across the country. I have heard from a many them, and I know the minister has too because many of them have copied the information that they have sent to me.

What we are suggesting is that it would be totally appropriate to renew the existing Norad agreement for a 12-month basis and bring before the House of Commons, perhaps a shared foreign affairs and defence committee, the text of the agreement that the Minister of Defence signed last week. This would give Canadians a well-deserved and important opportunity to look at what is in this agreement, to see if they support the move to more integration with the U.S. and to hear from them. It should not be a four hour debate in the House of Commons where there is no opportunity for citizen involvement and no opportunity to put forward amendments or any kind of changes that we would like to see or Canadians might like to see.

This does not give us full, open, democratic debate on something as important as our continental defence and we think that is wrong.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can only echo the staggering disbelief of the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the misinformation.

I have a specific question concerning the hon. member's understanding of maritime surveillance operations with respect to illegal drug operations. How does she believe illegal drug operations, whether on coastal waterways or internal waterways, are or ought to be monitored and controlled?

Ms. Dawn Black: Mr. Speaker, that is an interesting question. I do not think anyone wants to support illegal drug traffic, certainly not in this House nor anywhere else in the country.

However I would remind the member that we have different laws from those in the U.S. I am not sure Norad is the appropriate place to be enforcing our criminal laws. We have our own sovereign laws in Canada. We have our own police forces that are enshrined with the responsibility to deal with that.

• (2005)

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to share this time with my colleague, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

I listened carefully to the comments made by the foreign affairs minister and by the parliamentary secretary. I am not sure how parliamentary it is to accuse the member of presenting staggeringly misinformed facts to the House without addressing the substance of what she said.

What I do know is that the foreign affairs minister and the parliamentary secretary totally and utterly failed to respond to the reasonable, practical proposition put forward by the member who is the NDP defence critic and peace advocate. It makes me wonder about what a farce Canadians will think it really has been over the last couple of years for us to engage through the foreign affairs committee in a debate about the international policy statement that was brought forward on behalf of the government.

Is it so absurd to suggest that Canadians should have the opportunity to be informed of the implications of the agreement that is now before this House? Is it so ridiculous to think that the foreign affairs committee and the defence committee collaborating with Canadians would somehow be a danger to Canada's security? It seems to me the danger is to Canada's sovereignty for us not to be able to take some responsibility for what it is and what the implications are for what we are doing.

Before I turn specifically to the agreement itself, I want to very briefly quote from a speech made by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2004 in the run-up to the non-proliferation treaty review process that took place last year.

We are approaching a point at which the erosion of the non-proliferation regime could become irreversible and result in a cascade of proliferation.

What is the relevance of my introducing that into this debate? I do not have time to go through the 10 or so paragraphs of the preamble, but I want to refer briefly to two of them. One is paragraph six:

RECOGNIZING further that, despite non-proliferation and counter proliferation endeavours, efforts by others to acquire nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery pose a major security challenge.

Government Orders

I think that is actually a statement of fact. I do not know that anyone would disagree with that preambular statement, but it is worrisome in the extreme that the real implication, the real meaning of that clause indicates in essence that Canada agrees with the Bush administration that somehow non-proliferation efforts are destined to fail. That is deeply worrisome.

Let us go then to preamble paragraph eight. I will read from it very briefly. It is very difficult for people to follow. It is difficult enough for us on such short notice to really thoroughly examine this, but I will read preamble paragraph eight:

ACKNOWLEDGING that space has become an important dimension of national interest and has become an increasingly significant component of most traditional military activities, and that a growing number of nations have acquired or have ready access to space services that could be used for strategic and tactical purposes against the interests of Canada and the United States.

What we are really seeing here is a frightening indication that we are buying into the notion that there is no confidence that we can really deal with nuclear non-proliferation, with weapons of mass destruction proliferation, through anything but military means. This is a very worrisome thing.

• (2010)

On reading preamble paragraph eight, it is very difficult not to come to the conclusion that what this really means, what is really in the mind of our government in having made the changes to this agreement that we are now asked to ratify, is that effectively we are steadily and surely taking steps, maybe baby steps, but I think significant steps toward Canadian participation in Bush's missile defence madness.

There is a great deal of recognition this should be worrisome to us. The United States is one of the countries that has been very irresponsible in regard to upholding its obligations under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. In fact, in reviewing some of the documents leading up to the 2005 NPT review, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty was identified as one of nine major treaties in which the U.S. government was severely non-compliant. I think it would not be an exaggeration to say severely delinquent.

The nuclear non-proliferation treaty is absolutely crucial to global security, yet the U.S. is currently in non-compliance with the NPT requirements. When we examine the preamble and then the substance of the agreement that is before us, it is very worrisome that it almost seems as though what we are willing to be part of is a kind of tossing in of the towel on using our international mechanisms to really deal with these growing threats.

We need to be looking at what are the ways that we can in a genuinely multilateral way begin to look at the real threats to our security and what we can do about them as preventive measures as well as defensive measures.

Last fall I had the opportunity on behalf of the Canada chapter of the Parliamentary Network for Nuclear Disarmament to be at the United Nations and to speak on the occasion of UN Disarmament Week. It also happened to be the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. It was of great concern that after the virtual collapse of the non-proliferation treaty process in the spring, six nations, of which Canada was one, came together to really look at the ways to use UN

mechanisms that were available to get the non-proliferation process going again.

I heard reliably from a number of sources that the United States was extremely aggressive and the word was used, threatening, to several of those member nations in actively discouraging that there be any attempt made to reignite, to restart that non-proliferation review process.

There were six nations involved. Canada was one as a middle power. What was not only very distressing but as a Canadian parliamentarian and as a Canadian, I found it, and I think most people would find it humiliating that while five other nations were willing to stand up to those pressures brought to bear at the United Nations by the United States, Canada was the one that caved and withdrew.

Our point is that there are many implications to this agreement that we are being asked to ratify. It deserves to be fully aired before the Canadian people. We should use our parliamentary committees to look more thoroughly at what it is we are committing ourselves to do and how it fits into a global structure for peace and security in this very turbulent and dangerous world.

• (2015)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the member that our government does share the very heartfelt sentiment of the member for Halifax that non-proliferation efforts should succeed. We certainly are not throwing in the towel on that. However, in view of the track records that we see in Iran and North Korea, sadly the non-proliferation treaty is not always as effective as we might like it to be and we have to recognize in this world that protecting ourselves with a hope and a prayer is not always good enough. That is why we have to realize that at times defence solutions are required.

However, I want to go back to what the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam said because there were inaccuracies that need to be corrected. She spoke about how the new Norad treaty puts on the table maritime surveillance and how this was a Trojan Horse that the Americans would participate in maritime surveillance. I appreciate there was a concern that the three days they have had to read it is not long enough, but the treaty says, "Maritime surveillance and control shall continue to be exercised by national commands". That means by Canada Command.

If the concern is that in maritime surveillance being included we do not have an adequate recognition of our sovereignty, in fact, this is a victory for our sovereignty. There is an acknowledgement of maritime sovereignty there and surveillance and command remain exclusively national matters. That was not accurately reflected. In fact, it was inaccurately suggested that maritime surveillance was included.

In terms of the inclusion of the availability of information on ballistic missile defence, that is not new in this treaty. That has been there since 2004, since the previous amendment. In terms of looking at the changes of what is new in this treaty, there is simply no change whatsoever, no step in any direction toward missile defence.

Government Orders

As for the Bi-National Planning Group, I am sure that the member for Halifax West would be happy to share with the House the fact that it is coming to an end. That group is shutting down this month. As a result, any fears the member has from it should be dissipated. I am sure the member would like to confirm that to the House.

Ms. Alexa McDonough: Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary and I have a very different notion of what would constitute a victory for sovereignty. It seems to me a victory for Canadian sovereignty and a victory for democracy would be for us to accept the challenge put forward by the NDP defence critic on behalf of the New Democratic Party that we should do as has been done many times before. We should extend the current agreement without making these changes until there is a full airing through our parliamentary committees. We should invite informed researchers, policy experts who have done tremendous work on these issues to come before parliamentary committees and open up the debate.

It is a real worry to people that we are on a path to deeper integration. It is not a partisan comment to say that we are slowly but surely becoming more tightly integrated militarily, in foreign policy terms, in environmental terms, in trade terms with our American neighbour to the south. It is not a hostile thing to say that. It is a statement of fact.

No one can seriously deny that some of the changes are not major changes, but they are further steps in the direction of deeper integration about which many Canadians have had a great deal to say in the context of the international policy statement review process. Overwhelmingly they have expressed real concerns about how Canadian values and vision for a more secure world in which true human security is at the centre of our concerns is really going to be what is going to guide us in carrying out our work on behalf of Canadians.

Who are we here on behalf of if not Canadians to whom we are answerable? How does this in any way respond to the desire of Canadians to be sure that they have some say in what kind of future we chart for them and future generations?

● (2020)

Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very important item for us to be considering and debating in the House of Commons, on behalf of all Canadians, and we must keep that in mind. We are here on behalf of all Canadians. We should always reflect upon the first and primary responsibility of any national government, which is the safety and security of its citizens. Therefore, we should look at the renewal of the Norad contract in that light.

Will this enhance the safety and security of our citizens in Canada and, therefore, enhance our national interest? In that light my colleague with whom I will be sharing my time, the member for Provencher, the Minister of Justice, will reflect on these things.

For Canadians who may be interested, but not fully aware of the history of this agreement, I will reflect for a couple of minutes.

In the beginning and moving toward the first half of the last century, changes in how countries went to war against each other were affecting the type of alliances that countries would make to protect themselves.

At the start of the previous century, it was never dreamt that machines would be able to fly through the air and conduct war from a distance on other countries. With the inception of that in the first world war to a degree and then the ongoing capability, as nations like Canada and the United States saw moving through the thirties, not only was air warfare a fact of life, but the ability of airplanes to fly great distances, without having to refuel and to carry heavy bomb loads, was a reality. There was the onset of aircraft carriers.

All of this caused nations everywhere, and specifically Canada and the United States, to realize that there was a need to work together to protect our individual nations and corporately to protect the continent. As far back as 1940 with the advent of the Ogdensburg agreement, the initial makings of the Norad agreement, the air defence agreement to defend North America, started to have its genesis. Through the cold war, it was then evident to everybody around the world, and certainly to us in North America, that countries now had the capability through missiles alone to attack from a great distance and cause terrible damage and harm to another country. The need to work together for the protection of our individual nations, but being linked geographically with the United States to protect the continent, became paramount. Therefore, the agreement was put together.

However, when it was first put together, that Canada would work with the United States, we had, as we do now, issues of our own sovereignty and our own national interests. We wanted to ensure that there would be equal say in this agreement. Therefore, from 1958, and even until today, there is a joint sharing of command. There is literally times when there will be a Canadian commander, who is in the command position at a certain time of night or day in that great mountain, that great cavern in Colorado, directing the operations of the North American air defence system. For part of a shift it will be a Canadian and the other part it will be an American.

As a matter fact, a Canadian was on the command shift during 9/11 when signals and instructions had to go out across North America saying that all planes had to be grounded and that no incoming traffic could come into the United States. It was quite a significant time in history for a Canadian to be in charge of the North American air defence system at that particular time. Now, as is required, there is a renewal coming up for the agreement.

We have to look at the gains that can be made and are made for Canada in terms of our national interest. We always have to put Canadian sovereignty and Canadian national interests first. Through this agreement, our entire southern border is protected at very little cost to us. Ten per cent of the whole agreement falls upon Canadian shoulders, with ninety per cent being picked up on the American side.

● (2025)

When we look at the fact that we can offer protection to our neighbours to the south through observation and our capabilities to the north, and that together we can work to protect our own nations individually and the continent collectively, this is a tremendous advantage for us. There are few countries in the world have that capability and that advantage.

Government Orders

Because of the agreement, we are able to have insight and also influence on U.S. decisions related to military, intelligence gathering and the development of certain products that are needed when it comes to looking at protecting an entire continent. There is the fact that Canadian research and development teams and companies have great access to the type of equipment and capability that make this type of agreement possible. Some 50,000 aerospace jobs alone in Canada depend directly on the agreement. Not that we should be in the agreement just for economic reasons alone, but it is a tremendous advantage to us that we can.

The fact that we are adding a maritime component of this does not diminish in any way our national sovereignty. It simply increases the warning component. If there are threats from sea, not just the air now, in those instances, if they are threats internal to Canada, then Canada has full command. If they are internal to the United States, it has full command in those situations.

We are adding this marine component because we realize the capability now of those who would threaten peace, the nations around the world that have declared themselves to be haters and despisers of democracy and freedom. We need to be able to protect ourselves from ways and means of which they might use to deploy their destructive purposes upon us.

We look at the agreement also in terms of what does it bind us to and are we committed forever? This is an agreement that we want to have based on being a permanent agreement, but with a four year renewal clause. At least every four years it has to be renewed. Should Canada ever decide to get out of the agreement, we can pull out of that on a year's notice.

The commitment level in time and resource is definitely manageable. What is not manageable is our increased risk. People might say that the cold war is over. After the cold war, there was even discussion about whether NATO should exist, let alone Norad.

We know we are into a cold peace now in many ways. North Korea has been very aggressive in terms of its ballistic developments and the warheads that it is capable of putting on to its ballistics. Iran is far from having the capability to launch an attack on North America from its distance, but that is only now. In the future we know these nations increase in their capabilities.

It simply makes sense, and to fulfill our obligation to our citizens, that we do what is responsible as a government, ensuring that the safety and security of our citizens are being put first. It is for these reasons, in my view, that it is very advantageous for us to sign on to this agreement.

I listen to my colleagues, and I am not doubting their care and concern about Canada, but I wish they would be clear. Do they want in or out of this agreement? They use all these words to try and appeal to one group here or one group there. I wish they would just come out and say it. Do they want out of this agreement? They come out with all these verbal attacks and raise all these questions, and there should be questions raised about this agreement. We are trying to address them. If they are not for the agreement, then stand up and say so. They have to make that case and let Canadians know where they are at.

We are for the agreement for all the reasons that we have stated. I hope other colleagues would agree. We are working, at least partially, with an opposition across the floor which was a party to signing amendments to the agreement as recently as 2004. It was in place as a government when it signed on to the agreement. I take for granted, although I do not want to do that in a way that would diminish the members input into this agreement, but I hope we will have that type of collaboration. The agreement has served us well. It is also cost saving. As I said, we only have to put 10% of the cost of Norad into this.

● (2030)

The agreement has served us well. It is also cost saving. As I said, we only have to put 10% of the cost into Norad. Yesterday we announced \$1.4 billion, in what I think was a pretty positive budget, to go into safety and security toward our borders. However, we would not have been able to apply that yesterday because we would have had to redirect untold amounts of funds to make up for the fact that we were not plugged into a Norad agreement with the United States providing the lion's share of that protective capability.

We are pleased to do this. We are pleased that we have a one-year out clause if necessary. We are pleased to say to Canadians that it is in our best interest and our sovereign interest to continue to sign this historic agreement to protect North America.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to hear the comments from the minister when he said that the NDP had not been clear. If he heard both our members, who put forward the NDP position, he would have heard some very substantive questions and arguments about why we think this agreement is flawed and why we think it is a clear erosion of Canadian sovereignty.

One of our concerns, and it is certainly a concern that is expressed by many Canadians, is the government is taking a 50-year-old agreement that came out of the cold war, and it served its time, and is trying to give it a new life. One of the questions before us is whether Norad is now being used, in effect, by stealth as a cover vehicle for deep integration with the U.S., resulting in the loss of Canadian sovereignty. This is a very legitimate question, based on what is in the agreement before us tonight.

To come back to the Bi-National Planning Group, it states in its report:

The upcoming NORAD Agreement renewal...is an important step towards enhancing the defense and security of our continent. To continue this momentum a "Comprehensive Defense and Security Agreement" is the next logical step, as it would bring unity of effort and direction to each of the defense, security and foreign policy organizations, including NORAD.

There is a very real question that the government has not answered, and that is, where does this agreement take us in terms of the amendments that we see? We know one of the amendments, amendment h. is:

Arrangements shall be maintained to ensure effective sharing, between the Parties, of information and intelligence relevant to the Norad missions.

There is a great concern that this amendment, and there are others as well, moves us into this arena of shared intelligence and integration and we will lose decision making that we have in this country.

Government Orders

I challenge the minister to say that the NDP is not being clear. It seems to me we are expressing the very serious concerns we have heard from Canadians. What is not clear is where the government is taking Canada in terms of its integration with the U.S. That has not been put forward tonight by the government. It has a responsibility to do that and to come clean with the Canadian people. We would like to hear the government's position on that.

Hon. Stockwell Day: Mr. Speaker, I will attempt to address some of those concerns. I said in my remarks that questions are important. Valid questions are even more important and we are waiting to hear some of those. However, to simply dismiss the agreement by projecting that there is stealth going on is not valid. It is always this creation of the straw man or the straw person that one can deflect any intent to just stand up and make a decision. Bring on the legitimate questions, but do not dismiss it by saying there is some stealth going on when there is no evidence of that.

The member quite rightly talked about the binational planning group. If she is saying there is some kind of stealth going on, she is questioning the Canadians who form half of that binational planning group and assuming it is a group of Canadians that is secretly planning something other than what we are stating here. That stretches the imagination a little. Bring us that evidence because we would certainly want to know if that type of thing was going on.

She talked about the sharing of intelligence. Is she unaware of the amount of intelligence sharing that goes on now to protect our borders alone? We had an excellent pilot project called Shiprider on the Great Lakes just recently where our intelligence and enforcement officers worked together in teams to ensure that the border would be protected. They tried out that particular type of approach, each maintaining their own areas of sovereignty. American officers could not conduct their activities in Canada and we could not unilaterally go into the United States and conduct ours.

Through the sharing of joint intelligence great synergies can develop. No man is an island, no woman is an island, and no nation is an island any longer. We have to share our intelligence capabilities with one another to enhance our degree of protection. I say to go ahead and raise these questions.

The member also mentioned renewing the contract. Of course that is what we are doing. It has been renewed a number of times since 1958. We are saying we will not commit ourselves to something without any kind of renewal and that is why we want to be in a position where every four years we will review this agreement. If at any time Canadians send us the signal that they want us to move out of this, we can do so with a one year notice.

She can talk about consulting with Canadians, as she has, but I have not heard a resounding voice from the majority of Canadians saying, "Get us out of this deal, we do not want to enhance our own protection this way". I have just not heard that.

• (2035)

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians recognize that it is the fundamental responsibility of the Government of Canada to protect Canada and Canadians in an increasingly complex and uncertain environment. This past decade has seen significant and interconnected changes to the international security landscape. Exploring

ways to strengthen defence and security arrangements with the United States, including an enhanced role for Norad, is in Canada's national interest.

In response to the events of September 11, 2001, and recognizing the potential cross-border impact of emerging security threats, Canada and the United States have pursued a range of measures to enhance continental security cooperation both at home and abroad.

As part of its response, the United States established the U.S. Northern Command, mandated to protect American sovereignty, territory, domestic population, and critical defence infrastructure against external threats and aggression.

In Canada, the government developed a comprehensive security agenda by investing billions of dollars in domestic security arrangements and creating Canada Command, which is responsible for Canada and its air and marine approaches as a single operational theatre.

Today, the threats to our safety and way of life in North America are inextricably linked to what is happening far beyond our shores. Canada and the United States enjoy one of the most extensive and longstanding defence relationships in the world. The tradition of bilateral cooperation in the defence of North America dates back to 1940 and is a natural complement to the extensive political, economic, cultural, and social ties that link our two countries.

I noted during the debate in respect of softwood lumber how our colleagues in the New Democratic Party are now vigorous defenders of the NAFTA and do not want to see any compromise that would in any way jeopardize that close economic relationship between the Americans and Canada. In that sense, our colleagues, the New Democrats, have progressed. They see the benefit of this economic relationship and in fact are one of the most vocal parties in this House, concerned that the free trade created by NAFTA would be in any way compromised.

They have come a long way in that respect, but now we also have to proceed and put this military agreement into its appropriate context and also demonstrate to our colleagues in the New Democratic Party the benefit that this creates for Canada.

It has been well understood, for more than 60 years, that the North American continent can only be defended cooperatively. We need to work together with our neighbours. We cannot simply say that we will protect the continent from air attack, but that protecting it from marine attack is somehow inconsistent with the principles on which Norad was established. I do not think that is inconsistent. It is perfectly consistent and as threats change, the agreement needs to change, and that is what this new amendment to Norad is doing.

Since 1958, Norad has been a key component of this bilateral defence relationship and a pillar of Canada's global security architecture. More than any defence organization, Norad embodies the binational teamwork that is needed to counter today's transnational threats. I note my colleague's comments in respect to who was in fact directing Norad at the time of the September attack in 2001.

Norad detects and warns of attacks against North America from aircraft missiles or space vehicles, and participates in the surveillance and control of American and Canadian airspace.

● (2040)

The benefits to Canada have been substantial. Norad has provided Canada with enhanced protection from direct military attack. Norad has reinforced Canadian sovereignty by providing influence over American decisions where Canadian interests are involved.

How could we simply allow the Americans to make decisions over Canada? That is what it means to pull out of Norad or in any way limit the influence of Norad. We would have Americans making decisions about Canadian airspace and Canadian waters because the Americans would do that unilaterally in the legitimate defence of their country.

We want to be at the table. We have, through Norad, influence over American decisions that affect our sovereignty. This reinforces our sovereignty.

Norad has ensured that Canada and the Americans are full partners in continental airspace defence. In short, Norad provides Canada with an extremely cost effective capability to exercise surveillance and control over Canadian airspace.

For Canada's investment of approximately \$350 million, or roughly 10% of Norad's cost, we receive a degree of security we would never hope to achieve on our own. We should think of it. If we had to provide that security on our own, how would we pay for our social programs? How would we pay for our health programs? Our health and social programs are often financially available to Canadians because Americans are picking up a lion's share of the defence security for this country. To in any way bad mouth the goodwill of Americans in this context is simply unacceptable.

The events of September 11, 2001, underscored Norad's relevance in today's security environment. Norad has since made some important changes to adapt to the new threat environment by increasing operational readiness and its ability to respond to threats from both outside and inside North America's airspace.

Negotiations between Canada and the United States to renew the Norad agreement have highlighted the genuine interest on both sides to enhance the Canadian-American defence relationship in meaningful ways.

We now have a permanent Norad agreement. This change underscores the long term commitment of both Canada and the United States for the joint defence of North America. This, however, does not signify inflexibility, for contrary to the prior requirement of a fixed renewal period every five years, this agreement we are debating tonight calls for renewal every four years or at the request of either party. This will continue to force re-evaluation of the

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arrangement on a regular basis or when extraordinary events occur that could cause Norad to evolve to meet new challenges.

The new agreement also reflects the reality that threats to North America now come in all shapes and sizes, and from a variety of directions. Significantly, it recognizes that threats to North America do not simply come from the airspace domain. The agreement therefore expands Norad's mission to warn both governments about real and potential maritime threats to the continent. As a result, Canada and the United States now have a more complete picture of the approaches to the waterways of North America.

In conclusion, I began this speech by saying that Canada and the United States enjoy one of the most extensive and long standing defence relationships in the world. Norad has been an essential pillar in the defence of North America. The new agreement is flexible enough to evolve with changing global threats, including maritime threats. Norad has served the interests of Canadians and Canada and I would urge the support of the agreement by the House.

● (2045)

Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I fear that the hon. minister has misunderstood the NDP position toward NAFTA, but that is perhaps the subject of another debate.

[*Translation*]

The member assures us that this Norad agreement is simply an extension of our relationship with the United States. However, in its report, the bi-national planning group describes the extension of Norad as the first step in a gradual process of full integration with not only American military policy, but also American diplomatic policy.

The report refers to establishing a single organization responsible for warning and response in all domains with respect to defence and security.

As I understand it, this could include Canada's participation in ballistic missile defence, something that greatly concerns me and most Canadians. I do not want to assume anything, but I would like a guarantee for myself and all Canadians that the government will not secretly involve us in missile defence, as it did with Norad.

I would therefore ask the minister whether he is prepared to support an amendment to the Norad agreement that specifically and unequivocally excludes pursuing integration with the American military apparatus and Canada's involvement in any ballistic missile defence system.

[*English*]

Hon. Vic Toews: Indeed, Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the NDP position is on NAFTA. I know that in the last election their candidate in my riding ran on a platform of how he was proud to be associated with a party that opposed NAFTA and wanted to be pulled out of NAFTA. When I was hearing the free trade discussions coming from the NDP in respect of softwood lumber, I thought those members had shifted their position from the one pressed by their candidate in my riding. That certainly is the topic of another discussion.

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In respect of my friend's concerns about extending the agreement, I think what we are seeing here is not an extension but a response to a perceived threat. We have always seen the threat as coming from the air. Now what we are saying is that the threat does not come simply from the air; it can also come from the maritime areas. What we need to do is ensure that the—

An hon. member: Watch out for the Maritimes.

Hon. Vic Toews: We are very concerned about the protection of our maritime coast as well, because that is indeed where the threat can first be felt.

There are no guarantees in respect of where the next threat will materialize, but the agreement is clear that this does not extend to ballistic missiles. On that, the agreement is clear. My colleagues in the NDP should take some comfort in that.

• (2050)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a technical question and a comment. Could the minister explain the amending formula and the least number of people who could be involved in an amendment?

As well, of course, a maritime threat is not new. It has been here since the beginning of our nation.

My comment is for the technocrats working with the agreement. On September 11, as the member has mentioned a number of times, I was actually in a congressman's office in Washington, away from my riding. In my riding in Yukon there was a very chaotic situation in which American fighter jets brought into my riding a Korean jetliner that was thought to be hijacked. There was a lot of chaos in town. I think the communications were not as good as they might have been. In fact, it took months for the local citizens to understand the situation.

So I would encourage the people who work on the agreement at the base level to make sure that local citizens of whatever country is involved in an incident are made quite aware of that incident and know what is going on. I think that will then give them more confidence in the agreement.

Hon. Vic Toews: Mr. Speaker, I think the member raises a very good point and in fact illustrates the importance of integrated intelligence sharing, so that the citizens of both countries are made aware of the exact extent of a problem or the fact that no problem exists. The argument the member is raising, which is that he wants to see more information shared, is in fact a further argument in respect of responding to the concern that an attack may come from the water rather than the air.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Pierrefonds—Dollard.

[*English*]

As the member of Parliament for Nipissing—Timiskaming, I am pleased to participate in this evening's debate regarding the pending Norad agreement between Canada and the United States. This evening's debate is of particular interest and importance to my

constituents given that the Canadian air defence sector of Norad is located at CFB North Bay in my riding.

As we know, the North American Aerospace Defense Command is a military organization established by Canada and the United States in 1958. It is responsible for North America's air space control and protects Canadian and American air space against possible aircraft, missile or space vehicle attack.

The major driving feature behind Norad at its inception was to provide a means of defending against Soviet bombers carrying nuclear bombs. Following the cold war, when the threat of nuclear conflict had subsided, there was a great debate over whether Norad was still relevant.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, Norad has taken on an even greater importance. Norad is now responsible for detecting and reacting to terrorist threats throughout North America. In August 2004, Canada signed an amendment to the Norad agreement to allow the organization to share its information with U. S. commanders running the country's missile defence system. This ensured the long term survival and effectiveness of Norad.

The current Norad agreement between Canada and the U.S. was due to expire on May 12. However, late last week, Canadians learned through American news sources that the Canadian defence minister and the U.S. Ambassador to Canada had already renewed the agreement at a meeting here in Ottawa.

Not only was there no notification of any signing ceremony, but when Canadian journalists questioned government officials about the agreement, officials at both the foreign affairs department and the defence department initially refused to confirm that the deal had been signed.

With Canadian officials saying nothing, it was left to U.S. officials to lay out the details of the renewal, whereupon Canadians learned that the new deal commits Canada to take part in Norad indefinitely, with added responsibility for terrorist attacks and the smuggling of drugs and people by sea.

The fact that we are finding out from American officials as opposed to our own government about major change to a treaty involving our military relationship with the United States is completely unacceptable. The fact that the agreement was signed before Parliament had an opportunity to discuss and debate the issue also sets a dangerous precedent.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs can say all he wants about how the deal has been signed but not yet ratified, but the truth of the matter is that Canadians have been kept in the dark.

While I intend to support the renewal of the Norad treaty, including its expansion into the realm of maritime surveillance, I find the Prime Minister's decision to craft this agreement under a veil of secrecy very troublesome. The Prime Minister campaigned on a platform of openness and accountability. So far, Canadians have witnessed nothing more than a conspiracy of silence, which both he and his government have given us.

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As the MP for Nipissing—Timiskaming, I have a responsibility to determine how the new Norad agreement will impact the people of my riding. Given that MPs were not allowed to see the agreement or debate it in the House of Commons before it was signed, some very serious questions remain unanswered.

Norad is an integral part of CFB North Bay. I want assurances from the Prime Minister that a renewed commitment to Norad will also guarantee that the base remains in place well into the future. A new, state of the art, above ground facility was recently built to house Norad operations at CFB North Bay, replacing an aging underground installation built deep within the Canadian Shield in the 1960s, which was initially designed to withstand a nuclear attack.

As the new above ground facility was being constructed, the then minister of defence visited the complex, reiterated the Liberal government's commitment to CFB North Bay and emphasized its strategic importance to defending Canada and indeed all of North America.

• (2055)

This past January, just prior to the last election, the current Minister of National Defence visited CFB North Bay and pledged that a Conservative government would boost staff at the base as part of its party's commitment to increased military funding.

There are more than 800 military personnel, civilian staff and contract services currently employed at CFB North Bay, and I want to ensure that the Conservative government remains committed to each and every one of these people.

Norad has proven to be a very useful and valuable pact between Canada and the U.S. I am pleased that the negotiations that began under the Liberal government have led to an agreement that will see this partnership continue for many years to come. Furthermore, I believe that the decision to expand Norad's tactical surveillance functions to include maritime security functions is a positive one.

What is much less positive is the Prime Minister's penchant for secrecy. Canadians deserve to hear important defence policy initiatives from their own government, not someone else's. Is it any wonder that Information Commissioner John Reid, in his special report to Parliament, described the Conservative approach as "retrograde and dangerous"?

Perhaps the question that we as Canadians should be asking is this: if the Prime Minister cannot trust Canadians, why should we trust him?

Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Nipissing—Timiskaming struck some of the same notes the member for Vancouver South did earlier, so I am going to ask the member a number of questions.

First, does he agree with the member for Vancouver South that this debate should not even be happening because it is improper in our constitutional process to put debates like this before Parliament?

In regard to the member's view of openness, does he agree with the member for Vancouver South that this debate should not be happening in that regard?

Also, could he point me to any agreement or any treaty that the last government put in front of this House for debate and approval by Parliament?

Furthermore, could he advise this House whether the 2004 amendments that the previous Liberal government brought into the Norad treaty, which deal with sharing of information for ballistic missile purposes, were brought to this House for a debate and a vote?

• (2100)

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, the question is, should this debate be happening? This debate should have happened a long time ago, before they agreed. What has happened with this government is that it went ahead and signed an agreement binding on the Crown. In the United States, when Congress makes a decision—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, I listen carefully. I do not heckle the other side. I would ask for the same respect from them.

An hon. member: You weren't here.

Mr. Anthony Rota: That is a point of order, but anyway, when we look at the United States, we see that Congress gets its power from the people and so does the president. Two separate entities can make that decision. The Crown, the government of the day, has to make a decision but it gains its power from the House, and the decision has to be ratified by the House in order to take effect.

What we have here is a decision that was made by a very small group of people who have control of the House, or think they do, and they have actually bound the Crown to this agreement. What they have not done is get consent from the House, and I do not think that is right. That is something that could come back to haunt them should they not have the approval of the House. That is just not good process.

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address a question to the member opposite.

The fact that this debate is even taking place tonight is precedent setting. The fact is that this government campaigned on this issue and said that any major treaties that were signed would come to this House for a debate and for a vote, and that is about to happen.

I can remember, in my past nine years here, many treaties being signed by the former Liberal government that never did come to this House for a debate or a vote.

I have served on the defence committee with the member opposite. I have a lot of respect for him, because I do believe his heart is in the right place when it comes to the armed forces. Over the years I think our committee has developed that rapport where we work together for the betterment of the armed forces in this country.

It seems to me it would be a little disingenuous for him to stand and complain about the fact that we are even having this debate. His ability to stand in this House and raise these issues is an opportunity that has not been granted to the other parties in the past by his own government.

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I would like him to clarify his position on the fact that tonight we are standing in this House, we are having this debate and we will have a vote.

Mr. Anthony Rota: Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the hon. member for Lethbridge. We worked well together on the defence committee and I have a tremendous amount of respect for him.

I am not complaining about the fact that we are having this debate. It is a necessity. What I am complaining about, and do not like, is the fact that we are having this debate because the Conservatives got caught with their hands in the cookie jar. This is all happening after we found out from the U.S. government and U.S. media, not our own government, that this had gone on. That is where the problem lies.

If there were real transparency within the Conservative government, this would have happened a long time ago and we would have had this debate before anything was signed. That is what I have a complaint about. The debate on the other hand is a necessity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in the debate tonight about the ratification by the government of the North American Air Defence Command Agreement, Norad. To begin, I will say that I welcome that ratification, particularly because the previous agreement will expire on May 12, in nine days.

Certainly the government can be accused of signing this agreement by stealth, and then afterward having it ratified by Parliament.

Nonetheless, Canada and the United States cannot do without Norad, and our two countries, more than ever, must work hand in hand to provide for our continental defence. That defence must include the maritime component, because since the events of September 11, 2001, no one can predict where, when and how another attack will occur. No matter who is in government, we have a moral duty to protect our country and our continent against all attacks.

Canada has been a party to Norad since it was created in 1958, and because of the cost, but also the exchange of information, it cannot decide to go it alone.

Some members have said that this agreement should first be studied by the defence committees of both Houses, but the members of those defence committees have visited the Norad facilities in Colorado several times in the past. The Liberal members were more than satisfied with the importance of Norad and the role it plays in combating terrorism and protecting our country.

However, it should be said, parenthetically, that Norad's role must not be confused with the role of antimissile defence.

On August 5, 2004, Canada and the United States amended the Norad agreement to allow the American command units responsible for ballistic missile defence to perform a function that the organization had performed for nearly 30 years.

The Minister of Defence at the time said then that the agreement did not mean that Canada was joining the missile defence program. On the contrary, the Liberal government's position at that time was that they had agreed to the amendment because the Americans were about to construct an air space defence system that would have made Norad obsolete.

In early 2004, Ottawa discussed Canada's possible participation in an anti-missile defence program. One of Canada's conditions for joining such a program was that Norad should play a major role in its implementation. These negotiations followed a motion passed in the House of Commons in 2003 aimed at conferring on Norad the responsibility for creating "any system developed to defend North America against ballistic missiles". Some Liberal members voted against this motion at the time because the word "any" left the door open to the weaponization of space.

It is important to note that the amendment made to the Norad agreement on August 5, 2004 preserved its function as a missile warning institution that should not be confused with its missile defence functions.

On February 24, 2005, the previous Liberal government informed the United States that Canada would not participate in the American missile defence initiative. The Prime Minister of the day had said that Canada would only join a missile defence program if it served our interests, specifying that he was against the weaponization of space.

The modernization of Norad involves two major changes: first, the agreement will be perpetuated and a four-year evaluation period established, rather than the usual modernization which takes place every five years; then, as I mentioned, the tactical warning and surveillance functions will be expanded to include maritime security.

The Liberal Party supports the expansion of Norad's missions to include the defence of maritime regions. Last year, the previous Minister of National Defence stated before the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs in Syracuse, New York:

We believe that it is an appropriate time to consider the possibility of expanding our current defence cooperation to include maritime and land-based elements.

That is why the members of the official opposition will support this ratification.

● (2105)

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the hon. member for supporting the agreement. My concern is with the confusion that we have had coming from across the floor. Earlier this evening, we heard the member's colleague indicate that somehow the agreement should not be here in the chamber at all.

That is the prerogative of the Crown and Privy Council, and that is where the decision should be made. Just a few minutes ago, his other colleague stated that this is exactly where it should be, here in this chamber. I am wondering where this member stands on the issue of whether this ratification should take place within this chamber or it should not be ratified at all by the members in this House.

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• (2110)

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, this ratification has already been agreed to by the current government and we would have liked, if possible, to discuss it before ratification. It is the first time it is done in this fashion by the present government. In the year 2003 we passed a motion in the House to go ahead with the modernization of Norad in a certain way because it needed to be modernized and there is no doubt that we should be part of Norad.

I really feel that any discussion should be held before a ratification is sought. This treaty is quite easy because both the government and the official opposition agree with the treaty in the sense that we support Norad. It is very important to support it in all its scope including the maritime aspect. However, in the future, I hope the government will come to the House for this discussion prior to ratification.

Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I know that the member chaired the foreign affairs committee of the House of Commons in the previous administration and was part of the international policy statement review. I have two questions for him.

First, in the spirit of consultation with Canadians, I want to ask the member if he would support the notion that I put forward that Norad could be extended in its present form for 12 months in order to give Canadians an opportunity to come before a joint foreign affairs-defence committee on this proposal that was signed by the Minister of National Defence to expand Norad?

Second, the proposed new treaty includes the phrase: "Norad's airspace warning mission for North America shall include airspace warning, as defined in this paragraph, in support of United States national commands responsible for missile defence". This language confirms the 2004 agreement entered into by the Liberal government. Does the member think that this aspect of our relationship with the U.S. should be revisited? Does he support or oppose Canadian participation in missile defence?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, the first question is in regard to the extension for 12 months of the current ratification. I disagree with this because it is just going to postpone the maritime security aspect. I think it is very important that the maritime aspect should be included in this Norad agreement.

As for the second question, I am one of the members who totally disagreed with BMD. I will always disagree with Canada's participation in BMD, with a liberal but. The wording may have been included, but I do not think that is what it means. The member may have a different opinion about it, but my party, the one I have been with since 1993, has always disagreed with Canadian participation in BMD.

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for supporting Norad. It is very important to the defence of Canada and it is something of which I am very proud.

I am also very proud of the government for this debate in the first place, and the fact that this is going to come to a vote. I would like to point out to the member that it is very common in business and so forth for an article of intent to be signed. We certainly see this in real estate and we see it in the automobile industry. Where articles of

intent are signed and if certain conditions are met, an agreement is reached. In this case, it would be ratified by a vote in the House and the agreement would come into effect.

Would the member not agree that this is very similar to what we see here, that we are going to respect the will of the House in ratifying this agreement?

Mr. Bernard Patry: Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member does not compare the ratification of Norad with automobiles or housing. When there is a discussion in government, we always prepare a memorandum of understanding. This is the first step. If we had this MOU here in the House before the ratification and discussed this MOU, I would then agree that this ratification would be a second step, but I—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (2115)

Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be dividing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Over half a century ago, my family had a decision to make. They were refugees from Soviet tyranny. They had fled a war-torn Estonia, seeking freedom, hope, opportunity and democracy. While apparently initially safe in Sweden, they feared a bellicose and expansionist Soviet power, one that had imprisoned family members in Siberian camps and killed others in the family. That Soviet threat was a short distance away, in fact only minutes by plane.

My grandfather chose Canada as the place he would find that freedom, along with hope, opportunity and an enduring measure of security.

The Norad agreement, for the collective security of Canada and the U.S. from the threat that might reach our continent by air, is one of the reasons his choice of Canada as a place of freedom and democracy that would be secure from hostile threat has proven to be so prescient.

Much has changed since that time. Some good things have happened: democracy has spread; global conflicts are generally in decline; free markets are spreading; and people around the world are enjoying growing prosperity. The Soviet Union is no more and, remarkably, my grandfather's homeland of Estonia once again enjoys freedom and democracy.

However, there have also been less welcome changes in the world. We have seen unprecedented acts of terrorism in the air against both Canadian and American targets. Nuclear proliferation is altering our global system. The potential use of new weapons of mass destruction has emerged. Rogue states and authoritarian dictators have demonstrated increasingly belligerent attitudes. And, of course, all the traditional forces in the international system that make the ability to defend ourselves important remain today.

Norad is a critical vehicle for ensuring Canadian security in the current context. Taken together with NATO, we have the two key elements of collective security upon which Canada relies.

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Defence cooperation has become a key requirement of our security and prosperity in an interdependent world. More than any other defence organization, Norad embodies the binational teamwork that is needed to counter today's transnational threats.

Canada is a country blessed with vast territory. Such a vast territory demands corresponding vast defence efforts. Since 1958 Norad has contributed to those efforts by serving as North America's first line of defence against an aerospace attack.

Norad detects and warns of attacks against North America from aircraft, missiles or space vehicles, and participates in the surveillance and control of Canadian airspace. These two missions provide Canada and the U.S. with the means to ensure an appropriate level of air sovereignty by ensuring the surveillance and control of North American airspace; attack warning; and assessment of aerospace attack against North America by manned bombers, cruise missiles, or ballistic missiles and defence against bomber and cruise missile attack.

[*Translation*]

The benefits to Canada have been significant.

Norad has strengthened Canadian sovereignty and, for nearly 50 years, has given us an important voice in the defence of North America.

Norad has enabled Canada to protect its sovereignty and influence American decisions about the defence of North America, especially when Canadian interests are at stake.

Thanks to Norad, Canada and the United States are full partners in continental air defence.

[*English*]

In short, Norad provides Canada with an extremely cost effective capability to exercise surveillance and control over Canadian airspace. The decision to enhance Norad by incorporating a maritime warning function will provide increased protection against emerging maritime threats, such as terrorism, and will enhance the ability of Canada and the United States to respond to those threats from both outside and inside North America.

The renewal of Norad further strengthens Canada's extensive and long-standing defence relationship with the United States and the tradition of cooperation between our two countries. The continuation of Norad to meet the security challenges of today is therefore in Canada's fundamental national security interest.

We are fortunate in Canada to have as our next door neighbour the United States, a great power that shares our commitment to freedom and democracy. For 200 years we have lived peacefully side by side. Through two great wars we have stood together for freedom and democracy against authoritarian powers, even if the Americans were a bit late to the fight each time. Our shared commitment to freedom and democracy has given us the mutual benefit of confidently relying upon one another for our common defence. For Canada it has been a particularly good value.

We bring to the table over half the terrain to be defended, yet contribute less than 10% of the cost of Norad. We share an equal partnership in the command and operation of Norad, yet we enjoy

the protection of significantly larger American air force assets to protect our continent, including Canada. The degree of authority Canada enjoys as an equal partner in Norad was demonstrated on September 11, 2001. On that transformative day a Canadian was at the helm at Norad.

Norad is a robust defence agreement that uniquely ensures our sovereignty in a way unlike any other bilateral defence treaty in the world, and Norad has served Canada well. The new aspects of Norad under this treaty are also welcome, although they do not significantly alter the agreement that has served so well.

The maritime warning element responds to the new threat of hostile activities reaching our shores by water, but even so, this new innovation is modest. Both the surveillance and the command control response aspects of maritime defence will remain exclusively under Canadian command in Canadian waters.

The most dramatic and historic change resulting from this new Norad treaty is in fact the very debate that we are having tonight and the vote that will follow. Throughout Canada's history, ratification of treaties has been the exclusive prerogative of the executive, the governor in council. The constitutional framework in Canada has put treaty ratification firmly in the hands of cabinet.

In fact, there are some learned academics, and we have heard some members across the way say it tonight, that view the behind closed doors traditional approach to Canadian treaty ratification as superior to the messier ratification processes one might find elsewhere.

This new government has chosen a different path. As the throne speech committed, the government will submit significant treaties to Parliament for a debate and a vote before ratification is finalized. With the greatest of respect to my friend from Pierrefonds—Dollard, ratification has not occurred. We have had the signing of a treaty. We are now having the debate and the vote. Ratification will occur at the later stage.

It is always a two step process, as anybody who has looked at Kyoto or the landmines treaty knows. Parties sign them but they do not always ratify them. Nations do not always ratify those treaties. In fact, many treaties provide for in force mechanisms only when a certain proportion have actually taken the step of ratifying the treaty. To not understand that is to not understand the dramatic nature of the precedent setting evening we are having tonight with this debate.

Those participating in tonight's debate are thus truly making history. So will every member of Parliament make history when voting on this treaty either to support its ratification or not. All members of the House of Commons will be participating in a historic debate and vote.

For that reason, I urge all members in the House to recognize the importance of Norad to Canada's defence and security, its value in safeguarding democracy and maintaining our sovereignty. Norad is a genuine partnership that has served Canada and the United States well. The decision to strengthen and continue that partnership will be a cornerstone of ensuring a Canada strong and free for the generations of the future.

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• (2120)

None of my family that came to Canada seeking that freedom, hope and opportunity are with us today, but my mother and grandmother lived to see the astonishing end to the Soviet Union and the restoration of Estonian freedom. It was something that sadly my grandfather did not live to see. Although he wished fervently for that day to occur, in his heart he probably really doubted it possible. But what he never doubted, what none of them doubted was that living in North America, my brother and I and the generations to come would enjoy freedom and democracy safeguarded by the collective security arrangements of NATO and especially Norad. It is why they made their lives here.

Norad has worked well in the past. Norad continues to work well today. With the support of this House we can ensure that Norad will work well for Canada for years to come securing the freedom and democracy that are the Canadian values we treasure most of all.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important issue and an extremely important debate, and I am surprised and quite appalled that there are no members of the Liberal Party here in the House this evening to debate this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member is experienced in this House and knows that this is not one of the things we mention.

• (2125)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I will continue with my comments about the hon. member's speech. He raised a couple of points that deserve to be clarified.

First is the issue of growing prosperity in the world. As the member well knows, even Statistics Canada tells us that 60% of Canadian families are earning less now than they were earning 15 years ago. What we are seeing is an increase in concentration of wealth in this country. We are also seeing it worldwide. In fact, two billion citizens of this planet are trying to get by on \$1 to \$2 a day. That is an important point because it leads into a second conclusion that the member made.

He spoke very eloquently about the history of his family after the second world war. It is important to note that terrorism peaked after the second world war at a time of great disparity of wealth. There were terrorist groups in eastern Europe, Nazi and Fascist groups that were terrorizing the populations. A very enlightened American administration at that time took the care to invest in the Marshall plan to invest in economic development right throughout Europe. We are not seeing that kind of enlightened American administration today.

At the same time, what we are seeing is the Conservative government, with the support of the Liberal Party, moving to further military and defence integration with the United States.

We have here in this document issues that our critic, the member for New Westminster—Coquitlam, and our foreign affairs critic, the member for Halifax, have been raising questions on all evening. Those questions have come without any responses.

They have been asking about the issue of missile defence and its inclusion in this Norad treaty. They have been asking about the issue of internal waterways. They have been asking about the permanent nature of this document, the fact that we are no longer talking about renewal dates, that indeed what we are talking about is a document that would exist in perpetuity unless we choose to move in some other direction.

I know the member is a learned lawyer. Is he used to proposing documents where he does not, and clearly the government does not, understand all the implications of what is being put before this House?

Mr. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will start by responding to the issue of prosperity. We do not have quite the prosperity we would like in the world today but there is no doubt that there is more than there used to be. In eastern Europe, where they used to have socialism, which I know my friend is a proponent of, having cast off socialism they are enjoying the fastest growth rates in the world today. That is thanks to having abandoned the wayward ways that some over there have not yet abandoned. Enough on prosperity and on to the issue about understanding the agreement.

We are very fortunate in having this treaty before us because rarely do we have a treaty that actually reflects basically half a century of practice. The changes to it are very minor and there is nothing like the past practice of what the treaty has shown us to know what it will mean for the future. What it will mean for Canadians is safety, security and the comfort that we have a collective defence arrangement that keeps Canadians safe, that protects us from military threat and does so at a minimal cost.

If we had to do the same kind of military build-up to protect ourselves, if we did not have the enjoyment of the shield that Norad gives us and which we share in, we simply would face ruinous expenses.

For us, we know what the treaty means. We have seen how it has worked in practice. It has been very good for Canada. It has been very good for Canadians. That is why we are pleased to endorse it and ask this House to endorse it for the next four years until there is a quadrennial review. In four years there is a review and that is the way it should happen. It can be ended at any time by any party on 12 months' notice, and that seems to me better than waiting five years if we decide we do not like it anymore.

In the unlikely event that the NDP ever forms a government, I have no doubt it will give that 12 months' notice and will walk out of the arrangement. The NDP would then either have to do a great big military build-up for Canada, or perhaps it would simply leave us unprotected, but that is a question the member will have to wrestle with.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be participating in tonight's debate on the renewal of the North American Aerospace Defense Command agreement, or Norad.

[*Translation*]

As the hon. members are well aware, Canada and the United States have a longstanding friendship. No two countries could have stronger political, economic, social and cultural ties.

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• (2130)

[*English*]

Our security and defence relationship remains the closest and the most highly developed in the world. There are few other countries that have such trust and confidence in each other.

Norad is a key element of the Canada-U.S. defence relationship and is a symbol of our shared commitment to the defence of North America. However, our military cooperation does not end with Norad. For decades we have been working together in a wide range of other defence activities.

I would like to put the renewal of the Norad agreement into context by reviewing the Canadian-American defence relationship.

We have maintained a strong defence and security relationship between our two countries for over 60 years. In 1938 American President Franklin D. Roosevelt said in a speech at Queen's University that the people of the United States would not stand idly by if domination of Canadian soil were threatened by any nation. A few days later Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King replied that Canada would not permit enemy forces to attack the United States by land, sea or air from Canada.

Both countries agreed then, as they do now, that they would never become a security liability to the other. This commitment was reaffirmed during the second world war with the Ogdensburg Agreement of 1940, the first bilateral defence agreement between Canada and the United States, which created a permanent joint board on defence to oversee the defence of "the northern half of the western hemisphere".

[*Translation*]

Over the years, new bilateral agreements and arrangements have been negotiated between our two countries, and Norad is the best known of these.

[*English*]

Our military partnership includes a long list of treaties and memoranda of understanding that covers all aspects of our military activities, ranging from joint planning, operations, logistics and combined exercises to defence production, research and development, and intelligence. In total, our partnership includes roughly 145 bilateral fora which provide regular consultation between our two countries.

Canadian-American defence cooperation also extends to the field of defence production, research and development. The Defence Production Sharing Agreement signed in 1956 has defined the terms of our bilateral defence trade and has provided the Canadian defence industry with significant opportunities, including access to the American defence market.

[*Translation*]

At the same time, the Defence Development Sharing Agreement, signed in 1963, has helped Canadian companies develop products used by the American armed forces while promoting research and development in Canada.

[*English*]

Trade in defence goods between Canada and the United States amounts to over \$3 billion annually. The long-standing industrial cooperation between our two countries has resulted in a highly integrated North American defence industrial establishment supporting some 50,000 aerospace and defence jobs in Canada.

There is also the Canada-U.S. test and evaluation program which allows our countries to use each other's defence facilities for the testing and evaluation of weapons systems and military equipment. And of course, Canada and the United States are linked to a wide range of multinational organizations, including NATO and the United Nations.

[*Translation*]

Our troops work together on the national and international scenes. About 600 members of the Canadian Forces are serving in the United States at present, about half of them assigned to Norad duties, and more than 150 Americans are serving in Canada. Of course, our troops are working together on the mission in Afghanistan, alongside other allies.

[*English*]

In times of national emergency our military forces have always been there to help each other. Such was the case on September 11, 2001, when terrorists struck the United States. On that terrible day, Canadian CF-18 fighters worked closely with their American counterparts in Norad to defend North American airspace from further terrorist attacks. Our disaster assistance response team and HMCS *Preserver*, *Iroquois* and *Ville de Québec* were all put on standby in case of further emergency.

The Canadian Forces also responded quickly to the demands of more than 200 rerouted commercial aircraft grounded in communities across Canada. Within hours, Canadian Forces transport aircraft worked closely with local airports, government agencies, Red Cross workers and countless volunteers to help cope with the heavy influx of travellers.

Just last year, as the images of the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina flashed across our television screens, Canada responded by sending three naval vessels filled with medical supplies, water and other essentials to New Orleans and the devastated areas along the Gulf of Mexico.

This is what neighbours do. This is what friends do.

And we will continue to work together to protect our continent.

Canadian-American defence cooperation has lasted for more than 60 years and continues to thrive today. This government believes that this relationship serves the fundamental interests of our two countries and that it is consistent with our commitment to put Canada first.

• (2135)

[*Translation*]

The world has changed dramatically since the cold war ended, and we are faced with new threats now, from international terrorism to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

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The events of September 11, 2001 underscored the need to adapt our defence relationship in order to be equal to these new security challenges.

[*English*]

One of the strengths of the Canadian-American defence partnership has always been its flexibility. On countless occasions over the years, we have adapted our mutual defence arrangements to meet new security challenges. We must continue to do so.

That is exactly what the new Norad agreement aims to do. Under the new agreement, in addition to pursuing its traditional mission of aerospace warning and airspace control, Norad will also help monitor our maritime approaches.

As the Minister of National Defence said in his speech, recent events have made it all too clear that terrorists can strike at us in unexpected ways from unexpected places. Adding the maritime warning mission to Norad's function is the prudent thing to do. We are showing due diligence in the face of this unpredictable threat.

The defence partnership between Canada and the United States is extraordinary. We know each other well. We trust each other. We have a long history of working together. Our shared commitment to provide for the defence of the North American continent is constant.

[*Translation*]

We have taken concrete action when our neighbours to the south have needed our help in emergencies.

[*English*]

We know and understand that the details of our defence and security relationship must be flexible, that they must evolve with the changing times we are witnessing together. Alfred North Whitehead, a British philosopher who lived through the turn of the last century, said, "The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order".

The proposed renewal of the Norad agreement preserves the continental order to which we have become accustomed and which has served us so well, but also brings about the change that is required to adapt our relationship to today's evolving security threats, security threats that we face together as neighbours in North America, security threats against which we will continue to stand strong, side by side.

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member on his position. It is very important. I had the opportunity to serve in the role of parliamentary secretary, and the work parliamentary secretaries do is very important, not only in support of our government but in answering to Canadians, speaking with them and meeting them.

I have no difficulty in supporting this renewal of Norad. I think it is very important. Expanding it to look at maritime threats is quite appropriate in today's world if we consider the ensuing threats that could come to Canada, to the United States, to our continent. I think it is quite reasonable that we work together and see how we can improve our relationship in the future.

Through Norad we have worked together on areas such as drug interdiction, where we have been able to use the resources of both

countries, the resources of our allies, to see what is happening in the air space of the Americas and to see what is happening in the waters of the Americas. Modernizing that and looking specifically at our waters and in maritime areas is quite reasonable, I think.

Where Canadians have some concern, and I would ask the member to speak about this, is where we would go beyond that, where there is the potential that we would leave inner space and use tools such as Norad to foster a partnership with our principal ally into outer space. I mean not only in the area of surveillance, because I think in the area of surveillance we quite understand that is where we are now and that is quite necessary, but in the area that would have weapons of interdiction, where we would have what we commonly call weaponization. I would ask the member if he has any comments on that. Does he see this agreement leading us there?

If it is going in that direction and if there are negotiations at that time, would the government commit to coming before Parliament to deal with this, maybe not in this House but in camera at committee? I would be happy to deal with this in camera at committee. If we get to this situation, then I think it should be done in an area that is respectful of the secrecy that sometimes has to happen in discussions among nations. There must be a way of engaging parliamentarians in a responsible fashion so that we are aware of discussions like these or what necessities there are.

Would the government commit to such an enterprise?

● (2140)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's opening remarks congratulating me on my new responsibilities. It is an honour to stand in this place and to serve with such an honourable Minister of Defence and with this new government.

The member raised the question of where this whole negotiation might lead, where things might go in the future. With all due respect to my colleague, those are hypothetical questions that we cannot answer. The current situation is clear. We have made it clear to Canadians and to all countries that are listening that we will not participate in a missile interceptor system at this point. We will not participate in operation or development and that is the bottom line.

We have also made it clear that we are not going to initiate discussions about where this might go in the future. That is simply not part of the plan. Thankfully, the U.S. ambassador has confirmed to us that he—I cannot say never—will not ask us to participate in these sorts of projects.

For the time being, let me put the fears and concerns of my hon. colleague to rest and assure him that this is not one of the plans of this government despite the fact that we are moving very strongly on a number of other areas.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of things I would like to clarify with the member. Much has been said tonight about the events of 9/11. One of the things that occurred to me is that at the time Norad was not the kind of command and control operation that really had any efficacy with regard to what happened to the twin towers. Indeed, one could think back to the Maginot line in terms of what our capacity is. We are dealing with a very different kind of war. That has been mentioned many times.

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With regard to the fact that we now have a nation talking about pre-emptive strikes using nuclear capabilities, is my colleague not concerned in terms of the arrangements we are entering into with the United States that this could put us in some jeopardy and in fact in some danger?

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Speaker, I do not think this kind of fearmongering is necessary at this time. Simply, we have made some slight adjustments to the agreement that are in our favour, that help Canada maintain its sovereignty. This increases our ability to monitor the maritime situations, which we have complete control over. I do not think the member has any reason to be concerned.

● (2145)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak on behalf of the Bloc Québécois about the Norad agreement.

I visited the Norad command centre at Cheyenne Mountain on two occasions in my years as defence critic. I was extremely impressed by what I saw there.

First, the mountain itself is very impressive. When you go into the heart of the mountain, and you see the entire detection system and the military people controlling it, it is very impressive. There are almost as many members of the Canadian military in the centre as there are American.

It is very impressive to witness a simulated attack on North America. The simulation sent shivers down our spines. No matter where on the planet a missile is launched, the Cheyenne Mountain command centre detects it in less than about 15 seconds. Not only is it capable of detecting it, but its destination is known about one minute after the launch. In terms of detection, that is very impressive.

The command centre is equipped with incredible instrumentation and programs like the Space Detection and Tracking System have also been created. The centre has a catalogue of 15,000 objects orbiting the Earth in the atmosphere. The catalogue is very important; when space shuttles are launched there must be no dangerous debris in their trajectories. It is truly impressive. I was very glad to have gone on those two visits.

The Norad treaty is an evolving treaty, like many others. It is evolving because we live in a world that is continually changing. Treaties must therefore be capable of adapting to this new environment.

I think that it is important to review the history and prehistory of Norad if we want to understand where we are today, and perhaps see where we will be in a few years. I will take a few minutes to do that.

In terms of Norad's prehistory, we can talk about the first detonation of a nuclear weapon in 1945 over Japan. That was a watershed in the history of humanity. From that moment on, people realized that this was a terrible weapon that could not just be used for anything at all. Naturally, the Americans had won that arms race—the nuclear arms race.

Soon after, Western powers, especially European, acquired nuclear weapons. Russia, among others, successfully developed

nuclear weapons. So did Great Britain. And France. At that time, an exclusive club, made up of those four major powers, was equipped with nuclear weapons. Today, that club has grown substantially. This coincided with the end of the war against Germany and the division into two separate blocs, which began in 1945. There was the Warsaw Pact, associated with Russia and Eastern Europe and NATO, which at the time included only six or seven countries.

One of Western Europe's deterrents was atomic weapons. The Warsaw Pact had massed troops on Western Europe's doorstep. As a deterrent, Western Europe said that it had nuclear fire power. This marked a beginning. The Americans then decided that they had to keep an eye on Russia, since the Russians now had weapons—just as did allies of the Americans. This is how it all began.

Around 1954, the Americans decided to begin detection so that if airplanes, Russian bombers, were headed toward North America, an action plan would be implemented to send them back where they came from and even shoot them down, if necessary. At the time, it was only a question of airplanes; there was no other way to drop a nuclear weapon on the North American continent.

● (2150)

So the Pinetree Line was the first network situated in southern Canada. It consisted of 33 radar stations. It served to monitor approaching aircraft. However, technology was not well developed in those days. Three years later, the distant early warning line—DEW line—was created. The network was pushed further north to give them more time to react once the radar detected the planes approaching. At the time, the aim of the DEW line was to provide three hours' advance warning of a Russian attack on the American continent. This is why Canadian air bases are important now. They were just as important then. Fighter planes could take off from Winnipeg and Bagotville, as is still the case.

You will have guessed that the situation has changed and we have to deal with attacks that are much more impressive and harder to stop. There are the ICBMs, the intercontinental ballistic missiles, which are very hard to block. The Americans are just beginning to see how to block them. In my view that is a mistake. I will talk about this shortly in connection with the missile defence shield concerning which the Bloc has been very active.

So, then, an attack could be predicted three hours in advance. Now there is what is known as the North Warning System, where all the data are kept. I visited the DEW line at Hall Beach just before the latest election. I was very impressed by the whole series of radar stations where there was nobody. Just two people look after the maintenance of the 57 stations.

I note in passing that, at the time, native peoples, particularly the Inuit and the Dene wanted to be consulted on the operation of the DEW line. They had claims on the land. I believe an agreement was finally reached with them, ATCO Frontec and an Inuit organization. They created what today is known as the Nasittuq. It is the group operating and maintaining the whole North Warning System line.

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It is also important to note that the aboriginal peoples also have a stake in the matter. I confess to being impressed. A team had gone to check a radar installation that was no longer working. The team had left two weeks earlier and could not return because of a storm in the area. There was concern at the time. Their fate was unknown and a reconnaissance team was going to be sent out. This is how the aboriginals came to be involved and to give their consent. Maintenance and operation of the north warning system are important. Americans fund 60% of the program and Canadians fund 40%. This is a source of significant income for the Inuit of the far north. The arrival or the new fear of intercontinental ballistic missiles was very important.

The doctrine of mutual assured destruction (MAD) came into existence at that time. It was pure folly—as in madness—because if one country attacked another, it too would be destroyed. It was mutual destruction. Whether or not we believe it, this doctrine remains current since everyone knows that if a ballistic missile is launched at the United States, the country launching the missile will probably disappear from the face of the earth.

Aboriginals maintain and operate the north warning system.

As I stated, it is an evolving treaty. On August 5, 2004, there was an agreement. Minister Pratt wrote to his counterpart, Mr. Rumsfeld, advising him that he was ready to enter into discussions. Fortunately, huge demonstrations were held in Montreal to protest the missile defence shield. In the House, the Bloc Québécois questioned the minister almost every day. This led the Liberal government to finally state that it would not be part of the missile defence shield.

•(2155)

Nonetheless, through a diplomatic letter—which is the equivalent of a treaty—Minister David Pratt said he was prepared to modify the Norad agreement. Then the next step was taken. It was no longer just about detection. USNORTHCOM had Norad's information used for determining the plan of action, because at Norad there are two commanders: a U.S. commander and a Canadian deputy commander. They alternate in command of Cheyenne Mountain, which I was talking about earlier. If North America is attacked, they have to call the Canadian prime minister and the U.S. president. It is the U.S. president who will decide on the course of action.

This is new. There was no longer just Norad. Norad continues to conduct aerospace detection, but North American defence is now assured by USNORTHCOM. Naturally, USNORTHCOM said, "If Canadians do not want to take part, we will not give them a place in USNORTHCOM". Personally, I agree with that. I do not want to repeat all the arguments that have already been made on the missile defence shield, but we think the threat was overestimated in terms of the mutually assured destruction doctrine I mentioned earlier. On whole range of issues, this was truly costing a fortune and the technology was not there. In my opinion, we did well not to join the missile defence shield. Nonetheless, this is a significant change.

I have to say that the Bloc is somewhat satisfied with this evening's debate. For years, we have been saying in this House that international treaties should be brought to the people, to the elected members of the House of Commons. This treaty was brought before us this evening, but unfortunately, we were disappointed to find out from the media that the Minister of National Defence and the

American ambassador had signed some kind of agreement in principle. Later, the members attended a briefing and were told that we could not amend it. Furthermore, time is running out because according to the briefing and military personnel, the doors to Norad will close on May 12 and there will not be any more Norad. I have a problem with this situation because they are telling us to hurry up and pass it without amending it. Then we find out that the agreement is practically signed already.

I believe that the next time we sign an international treaty, more consideration should be given to members of Parliament, who should be allowed to debate the issue properly. A proper debate does not mean members of the House of Commons standing to vote on Monday. It means holding consultations. We should consult the people. This is an international treaty that will have a serious impact. It will be expensive to maintain. The DEW Line is expensive to maintain, as is the Canadian command, which I will discuss a bit later. Canadians, who are taxpayers, should find out more about this kind of international treaty.

I would now like to turn to the information process, as I see that my colleague from North Bay is here. The way this works—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): I am sorry to interrupt, but the hon. member is a man of great experience. He is seated in the first few rows and knows that hon. members must never remark on the presence or absence of another hon. member.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I thought we could not mention an hon. member's absence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Members must not refer to the presence or absence of an hon. member.

Mr. Claude Bachand: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the presentation by my colleague from North Bay. I feel it is important to say that North Bay has an important role to play. When the North Warning System detects something, the data are sent to North Bay and probably, within the few seconds that follow, to Norad. So there is one important intermediary. In my opinion, as far as Canadian sovereignty is concerned, the people have understood that we will not send data detected in the north directly to Norad. However, there might be a problem concerning the maritime approach. I am therefore going to look a little closer at this question.

Not only is the North Warning System going to send data to North Bay and Norad, but Norad is going to send them to USNORTHCOM, which decides on the plan of action. Then the American president and the Canadian prime minister are consulted so that a decision can be made. Things are different, though, regarding a maritime approach. Since Canada refused to take part in the missile defence shield—and we supported that position—it is impossible for Canada to decide on a plan of action if missiles are sent towards North America.

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Still, if rebel boats coming from rogue states deviated from their route, for example, and there was cause to intervene in Canadian waters, it is really up to the Canadian government to do so through CANADACOM. Of course, if the boat is in American waters, it is USNORTHCOM that must decide on the plan of action. So we have to ask ourselves a few more questions in this regard, since it is not indicated in the agreement, which mentions only general facts. As far as operations are concerned, this matter is far from clear. Actually, I think we should have a lot more details about this.

In my opinion, when that occurs in its waters, Canada will want to take action or counteraction against a rogue boat and it is probably Norad that will send the information. Furthermore, they have all the necessary equipment to do so.

There are many secret things. When visiting, we ask questions and are sometimes told that they cannot be answered because of secrecy concerns. The number of satellites Norad has in orbit is secret, but it is clear that they can detect ballistic missiles within 15 seconds. They obviously have what they need to detect ships. If a ship changes course, they will know right away. That is when the response plan is sent to CANADACOM—or so we hope—and to USNORTHCOM to ensure that each country responds in its respective waters.

The Norad treaty is evolving. It has evolved significantly over time, of course. Technology is also evolving. Military doctrine has evolved. Our way of seeing things has evolved. The geopolitical situation of all countries has evolved. We no longer have two major powers facing off. We have threats like North Korea and Iran. As for the Americans, we have to face the geographic reality.

On the American side, current interception counter-measures are based in Fort Grizzly, Alaska. We are told that if North Korea launches a missile, Fort Grizzly will probably intercept it. In the east, it is not so clear right now because there is no interceptor. There has been talk of placing missiles on boats to cover the east coast. All of this is evolving. We have to ensure that Canadian citizens are well-informed about the whole issue, given that they are the ones footing the bill and they are the ones who have to live with the consequences. I think we are having a good debate here tonight and I hope the voters are listening. It is likely that 99.9% of the people listening to us tonight do not know that in Cheyenne Mountain, both Canadian and American soldiers are keeping a constant watch to ensure their safety.

• (2200)

Therefore I thought tonight's debate was important.

In closing, the Bloc Québécois will support the treaty. We will remain vigilant in the future about its application and we want to ensure this security measure is operated in the greatest respect for the electors and taxpayers.

[*English*]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned ballistic missile defence and the DEW line and I want to talk about both of those briefly.

To go on record, a number of people and students in my riding have marched on missile defence right next door in Greely, Alaska. We have a peace coalition in the Yukon that was quite opposed to us joining missile defence, and a number of other Yukoners contacted

me. These people were very happy when Canada made the decision with the last government not to join the missile defence program.

My other comment is related to the DEW line which, of course, also goes through my constituency. The Liberal government created the largest environmental program in history, the clean up of federal contaminated sites. My hope is, as the various federal departments are fighting for that, that the Department of National Defence is in there full force trying to get enough money to quickly clean up the remaining DEW line sites that have not been cleaned up. I wonder if the member would support that concept.

As there was nothing about cleaning up federal contaminated sites in either the throne speech or the budget, would the member support the government keeping that program intact and that the Department of National Defence be very aggressive in using that money to clean up northern DEW line sites?

• (2205)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from the Yukon for his question.

I want to tell him that when I visited the North Warning System at Hall Beach, the Department of National Defence was conducting a full clean-up operation. I was saying earlier that the treaty is changing, but I would say environmental thinking is too. At the time, all the equipment used was left behind.

As we know the environment in the far north and particularly the Yukon is very fragile. I think it important for us to make sure now that we do not repeat these mistakes and that we clean up the mess created at the time. Work was underway when I went before the latest election.

I hope too that the present government will continue this approach, because the environment is very fragile, and the food chain could be come contaminated very quickly. I also think that the Inuit are keeping a very close eye and want to make sure the government continues cleaning up. They understand the major issue of the possible contamination of the food chain, which would necessarily affect them.

So, I want to reassure the member for the Yukon and tell him I share his viewpoint. We have to make sure the decontamination and clean up continue for years to come.

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Ernie Regehr from Project Ploughshares, writing in a briefing note directed to parliamentarians for this debate tonight, describes the Norad agreement as a practical response to a particular political problem, that is, the negative sovereignty implications of U.S. forces acting in defence of the U.S. in Canadian air space.

He points out that Norad was originally set up to allow the United States to pursue any incoming airborne threat to the United States over Canada. I remember figuring out when I was in public school about the whole arrangement around Norad and the interception of incoming aircraft or incoming missiles, that it would happen over Canada.

It seems to me that this has not changed, only now we do not really expect incoming missiles. We are afraid of terrorists, although I am not exactly sure how Norad protects us against terrorism. It seems to me that the border agency, CSIS and our police are the main line of our defence against terrorism, not this gigantic military operation known as Norad.

It seems to me that the justification for this is to give the United States permission to come into Canada to pursue a threat to the United States and that we are giving it permission to make Canada the theatre for that counterattack. Is it in the interests of Canadians and Canadian security to give the Americans permission to do that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Bachand: Mr. Speaker, this is a very interesting question.

I think there have been agreements between the Canadian government and the American government on interventions over Canadian territory. I will explain.

If there were an invasion by a Russian plane, probably from the east, it would most likely be the Bagotville military base that responded. If there were an invasion by air, still Russian, in the middle of Canada, Winnipeg would intervene.

We do not have enough CF-18 military bases in the west, but I think that the Canadian government asked the Americans if they would agree to intervene on the west coast, if there were a threat? I believe it was just a few years ago that a Korean plane was escorted by some American planes because the Canadian government had detected some suspicious behaviour by this plane but did not have the means to send CF-18s. So they asked the Americans to handle this intervention.

I also wish to remind the member asking the question that it is still possible for hijackings to take place. And Norad now has a primary role here. Monitoring flight plans, it can see if a plane is off course. Fighter planes can very quickly be on their way to see what suspicious things are going on.

Unfortunately, I recall the instruction given by Dick Cheney saying that, if there is a suspicious plane over Washington or over the U.S., it must now be shot down. We hope that will never happen, but we think that hijackings are still possible. I think that Norad has an essential role to play in this area. I think it will have to play this role in the future.

• (2210)

[*English*]

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my hon. colleague across the way who is the defence critic for the Bloc.

He mentioned a couple of issues where Norad would respond to airplanes or objects going into North American airspace. I think we

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have seen that happen in a couple of instances. I think we had a plane that landed in Yukon that was escorted down. We saw a plane coming from Europe which was reported as suspicious and it was escorted in. This is a function that goes on every day.

Norad is watching over the entire North American continent every day and has been doing that for almost 50 years.

We may read about something happening and Norad being mentioned a few times a year at the most but the rest of the time this organization and its system is in place doing its job and, when the need arises, it will do its job.

What I do not understand is why the NDP is undecided as to whether it supports Norad. It wants to delay the agreement. The agreement will lapse on May 12 so it has to be done. The agreement has been renewed a number of times in the last 48 years and it has been changed a number of times.

We are adding the maritime aspect to it because we have been told that Norad was created to look north for incoming long range ballistic missiles. That is no longer the entire threat to this continent. We have all kinds of possibilities coming at us from all directions.

I personally believe that this expanded mandate for Norad is necessary. I would appreciate it if the hon. member opposite would relay his thoughts on what he thinks of the expanded mandate that Norad will have.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): The hon. member has one minute to answer the question.

Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my colleague that I support the integration of the maritime approach.

I would even say, from having attended many discussions at NATO and elsewhere, that people are beginning to look at a third component. Yet we have not even begun to discuss the Northwest Passage. In the very near future, due to global warming, it is possible that more and more ships will be tempted to take this passage. However, there is also a third approach that I have heard about. Perhaps it will be the subject of future Norad amendments. I am referring to a land approach through the far north. For now, no one is capable of detecting such an approach. Discussion has already begun concerning the relevance of including this possibility in Norad.

In short, I believe that this issue must be examined comprehensively and that the safety of Canadians and Quebecers must be ensured.

To conclude, I would like to acknowledge the people who work at Norad and who ensure our safety, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

[*English*]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Government Orders

I am very pleased to stand in this place today to support the renewal of the North American Air Defence Agreement, Norad. I have personally spent many years involved in the business of Norad air defence over all three coasts in the cockpit of a CF-18 and as a staff officer in Fighter Group and Air Command headquarters. Norad has been a key element of the Canada-U.S. defence relationship and a symbol of our friendship and cooperation for nearly 50 years.

Throughout the cold war, Norad provided our two countries with an effective means of defending our continent against aerospace attacks. Norad has been able to adapt to new and emerging threats over a half century of changes in the international security environment.

• (2215)

[*Translation*]

I would like to take this opportunity to illustrate Norad's evolution and show how this agency has always adapted to new challenges.

I will show that the new Norad agreement will allow us to be more effective in handling the threats we face today.

Renewing the Norad agreement is part of the government's primary commitment to defend Canada's sovereignty and keep Canadians safe.

[*English*]

Norad emerged in response to the cold war threat of Soviet intercontinental bombers carrying out nuclear attacks against North America by crossing the Arctic. Canada and the United States both responded to that threat but our efforts became joined when the Norad agreement was signed in 1958, creating a bi-national command responsible to both Canada and the United States for North American air defence.

Over the years, the original mission of Norad, aerospace control, attack warning and response, was modified to keep pace with changing weapons technologies. During the 1960s, the advent of ICBMs caused Norad to adjust its role to emphasize missile warning. In the 1980s, it was the new threat of cruise missiles that caused the mission to again change to one of intercepting Soviet aircraft before they launched their cruise missiles.

New early warning systems were deployed and forward operating locations were built in northern Canada and American airfields capable of operating U.S. and Canadian fighters. However, then, with the end of the cold war, many believed that Norad would be obsolete, that it would not be relevant in a post cold war world. They were wrong.

[*Translation*]

In 1991, Norad's mandate was expanded to include tracking and monitoring aircraft suspected of transporting illegal drugs.

Today, Norad continues to work together with police authorities in both our countries, closely monitoring aircraft that enter Canada's airspace without a flight plan until law enforcement officials can ground them to do an inspection.

Since September 11, 2001, we can see that the classic Cold War enemies have been replaced with a new type of enemy, an enemy

that lies low and inflicts terror and that in a cowardly and callous way kills and injures innocent people.

That is why we must do everything we can to protect our fellow citizens from this new type of threat.

It is just as important to renew the Norad agreement as to adapt it to the current security context.

[*English*]

Successive Canadian governments have recognized that Norad represents the most effective way to provide for Canada's aerospace defence. The government agrees. The world has become increasingly dangerous and unstable. Along with our American partners, we must stand on guard and respond to new threats to North America together. Norad will continue to play a vital role in ensuring our security.

The new Norad agreement, which we are putting before the House today, has been adapted to meet the new security challenges that lie ahead. For one, our two countries have decided to renew Norad indefinitely, subject to periodic reviews.

[*Translation*]

Until now, the Norad agreement has been renewed for limited periods of time. It has actually been renewed nine times since 1958 and must be renewed again in May 2006.

By making the Norad agreement more permanent, both countries are making a strong binational commitment to North American defence.

We are also sending a strong message to potential hostile parties, who will see that we are serious about protecting the continent we share against any threats we may face.

[*English*]

Canada and the United States have also agreed to add a maritime warning function to Norad. September 11, 2001 and subsequent attacks around the world have reminded us all too well how terrorists can strike us anywhere and in many forms. The terrorist bombing of the American warship USS *Cole*, in October 2000, and the French tanker *Limburg*, in October 2002, demonstrated that terrorists can strike from the sea.

• (2220)

[*Translation*]

Canada and the United States are maritime nations. Canada has the longest coastline in the world. Maritime traffic in our waters is particularly heavy, and the trade that moves between our ports is important for both countries' economies.

We must act before terrorists attack our ports, our ships and our maritime trade. It is therefore essential that both countries continue to work together to improve North American maritime security.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Even though our countries' navies, coast guards and other agencies have been cooperating extensively for years now in the maritime domain, no single binational organization has ever been responsible for collecting and analyzing information related to potential maritime threats to this continent. No single organization has been responsible for providing such data to both American and Canadian authorities.

We now have an opportunity to address that gap and to provide the assistance of a very experienced binational organization to help us control this complex and dynamic environment. Norad has the necessary flexibility and experience to undertake this new mission.

Norad will contribute to the processing, assessing and disseminating of intelligence and information on maritime activities taking place off our shores and on our waterways. It will also contribute to the overall warning capability for Canadian and American authorities of maritime threats or attacks against North America.

Responding to maritime threats, however, will remain the duty of each country's national commands namely, Canada Command and United States Northern Command. By adding maritime warning to Norad's mission to deter, detect and defend against airborne threats, Canada and the United States are developing more tools to safeguard our shared continent for 21st century threats.

The uniqueness of Norad is its binational nature, and that has provided Canada with access to critical security information in a timely manner. It has also given Canada an umbrella of aerospace security that we could not afford on our own. There are no other examples of international defence agreements where personnel of two militaries work so closely in a seamless operation.

Indeed, on that awful day of September 2001, it was a friend of mine, then Major General Rick Findley, who was on duty in Cheyenne Mountain in Colorado. It was a Canadian who was responsible for managing the immediate reaction to the events as they unfolded, even though the activity was taking place in the United States. I do not think we would find that anywhere else in the world.

If we were ever to abandon Norad and if we were to remain serious about providing for our own aerospace sovereignty and security, we would have to duplicate most of what we have available through Norad. Simply put: we could not do it.

Norad remains a key element of North American security and a highly efficient defence arrangement. After almost 50 years, the Canadian and American governments still agree that it makes a lot more sense to perform the missions and functions of Norad together than to perform them apart.

While the basic objectives of Norad have endured for years, Norad has also appropriately responded to changes in the security environment. The new Norad agreement will see this trend continue. It will provide Canada with an effective and efficient means of carrying out an important and ongoing national objective: the maintenance of Canadian sovereignty and Canadian security.

[Translation]

Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Edmonton Centre on his very detailed remarks. It is not just something he picked up from reading. I know it is something he has experienced in recent years.

Not long ago, I travelled to Cold Lake, and his colleagues in the army were very proud of his being here in the House of Commons.

[English]

The question is not so much one about whether we are here to debate the importance of Norad. I think we can all agree on the importance of Norad. It has to exist to defend not only Canada but the United States and the whole of North America. The concern I have is the process in which it happened. It happened behind closed doors, it happened in secrecy and it was signed. By signing it, the Crown was bound by that agreement, but there was no real power for that signature to take place. Now the Crown is bound.

If the House should vote against Norad, would that dishonour the Crown? There is a commitment there, but no real power to enforce it.

• (2225)

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, yes, I do have many friends in Cold Lake.

The hon. member is confusing signed and ratified. Nothing has been done in secret. In fact I believe it was my hon. colleague who mentioned that the negotiations had been started by the previous Liberal government, and I would like to congratulate that Liberal government on starting the automatic negotiations on the renewal of the Norad agreement, the secret date for which has been known for five years.

Notwithstanding that, an agreement was signed in principle. It is being ratified by this House by a vote on Monday. There is no doubt, with the support of at least three of the four parties in this House, that it will pass easily. It is a yes or no vote. It is not amendable, and we expect it to pass without fanfare.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from Edmonton Centre on his eloquent presentation in this debate. As my colleague across the way has said, I especially appreciate it when it is based on personal experience.

If we listen long enough in this place, we will hear some say that Canada's participation in Norad is somehow a threat to Canadian sovereignty. Could my colleague comment on that?

As well, specifically, because he has experience in this area, in the almost 50 years that we have been participating in this way, does he know of any occasions when, because of our relationship in Norad, Canada was unable to respond in an independent way when it needed to do so?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, Canada has contributed to Norad over the years. We currently contribute about 10% in terms of economic participation. There are many things we contribute to Norad, but ultimately, when we are talking about sovereignty, it is Canada first.

Government Orders

When we say Canada first though, it is not Canada only. People want to isolate Canada from the United States. Members of the NDP want to isolate Canada from the United States and pretend that by doing this, we are protecting Canadian sovereignty. In fact, we are jeopardizing Canadian sovereignty. The worst possible thing we could do would be to pretend that somehow Canada and the United States are physically separated. It is just not reality.

Earlier someone mentioned, I believe it was the Minister of Public Safety, that no man is an island, no woman is an island and no country is an island. Canada is certainly not an island. Some members of one of the parties in the House do live on an island. I think it is called *Fantasy Island*, if they think that we can isolate Canada from North America when it comes to shared responsibility, shared sovereignty and security concerns.

There have been many times, and I should not give a specific example, when American forces have bailed us out in times of need. We do contribute person per person, aircraft for aircraft, just as capably as anybody, but there are times when we just do not have enough and we have to rely on the Americans to supply the rest of the pieces that are missing in helping them support us in our Canada first objective.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great honour as a member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, home of the warriors posted to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, that I participate in this historic debate before Parliament, the renewal of the Norad Treaty for parliamentary approval.

It is time to foster a growing public awareness of Canada's role in the world in this age of globalization. Our role in the world, as never before, must be capable of operating under close public and parliamentary scrutiny.

Our new Conservative government is committed to greater accountability and a more meaningful role for Parliament in Canada's international relations. That is why we are submitting for debate and a vote in the House the renewal of the agreement between Canada and the United States, which underpins our participation in the North American Aerospace Defense Command, Norad.

This is another example of a promise made and a promise kept. The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of National Defence have already described for members the reasons for renewing the Norad agreement and why it is in Canada's national interest to do so.

It is my privilege to be able to elaborate on their remarks and further help the case for the full support of the House for renewing the Norad agreement.

Canada and the United States have been partners in the defence of our shared continent since 1940, when Canada signed the Ogdensburg Agreement. That agreement first enshrined the principle of mutual defence between Canada and the United States. It acknowledged the indivisibility of the national security of our respective countries and the collective security of our continent.

At that time, Canada did not want its territory to be susceptible to attack by global threats. We readily agreed to enter into such a

mutual defence pact with the U.S. because of the inherent vulnerability posed by our large land mass and our small population.

Canada and the U.S. had also fought together as allies in the first world war, and the U.S. was about to join us in fighting World War II. When the second world war ended and our countries faced a new threat from the Soviet Union, Canada and the United States immediately renewed their commitment to mutual defence through cooperative air defence arrangements to protect our continent. This led within a few years to the signing of the Norad agreement in 1958, an agreement concluded under the umbrella of the NATO Treaty.

Today, the indivisibility of the security of our two countries and our continent is perhaps greater because of the economic interdependence that has grown between us. We know the figures and the volumes of cross-border trade and its value to Canada. We know that we are each other's largest single trading partner, though admittedly in our case, to a much higher order of magnitude than for the United States. Neither country is immune to disruptions in the other.

One need only recall the images of the clogged border crossings in the immediate aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, or the unprecedented scene of aircraft gridlock when U.S. bound flights were diverted to the airport in Gander, Newfoundland. The economic impact of the attacks on the U.S. was acutely and instantly felt in Canada, but the indivisibility of our security goes well beyond the vital economic relationship between our nations and the prosperity we derive from it.

Our nations and our people face similar threats in today's world. As a freedom loving people, our values and interests are being opposed, not just theoretically but with overt hostility by radical extremists, rogue states and terrorists around the world. There is a community of values that we share, not only with our American neighbours but with all our other allies who are under a threat today.

Those who threaten our values rarely make distinctions on the basis of nationality, and though a large conventional threat to Canada is remote, the possibility still exists.

Canada must remain capable of dealing with the possible emergence of all threats, given the unacceptable implications of ignoring the realities of today's world. Members need only consider the debate we recently held on Canada's involvement in Afghanistan. There Canada is confronting an enemy at a safe distance from our shores, but in this day and age of globalized risk, we must also defend ourselves at home.

• (2230)

Traditional security paradigms have been shattered. We live in a new era, where threats present themselves internally with greater stealth and surprise than in the past when we faced a more conventional set of adversaries. These factors make our participation in Norad all the more relevant today. Norad has adapted to the new threat environment we now face.

Government Orders

Since the last renewal of Norad in 2001, just months before the attacks of September 11, Norad's mission has been transformed. Norad radars, communications, fighter jets and other assets have been recalibrated to address threats not only in the approaches to North America, but those emanating from within. After all, the 9/11 attacks were conducted within sovereign territory with civilian aircraft, with civilians as the targets.

Canada's national security and defence policies have evolved. Norad has adapted to this new framework by establishing direct links with a host of agencies outside the military, such as Nav Canada and its U.S. counterpart, the FAA, for civilian aviation, and with law enforcement and other security agencies in Canada and the United States.

The purpose of these growing linkages is to promote timely information sharing and a better preparedness against a wide spectrum of traditional and non-traditional threats.

In the next renewal of the Norad agreement, due before its expiry on May 12, 2006, Canada and the U.S. have not only reaffirmed Norad's aerospace defence mission, but we have negotiated a new mission to warn both nations of threats in the maritime domain.

Adding a maritime watch to Norad is a recognition that threats to our countries can reside anywhere, not just in the air domain. It is also a recognition by both countries of how well continental defence cooperation works through the vehicle of Norad.

Let me focus for a moment on the unique structure of Norad and why it has served both countries so well for so long. Norad is a binational military command where both nationalities are represented in a single chain of command. The commander is a four-star American officer and the deputy commander is a three-star equivalent Canadian officer.

In the Norad organization, whether it is in the strategic headquarters in Colorado or the Norad regional headquarters in Manitoba, Alaska and Florida, Canadian and American military members work side by side as a seamless team. Norad is based on mutually agreed protocols for the military defence of our sovereign territories.

The Norad commander reports to both governments and shares the warning threat information equally with both capitals. Norad is a venue where Canada has an equal say in the development of plans and the strategies for the defence of our shared continent. It is this unique arrangement that entails a higher degree of reciprocity and cooperation than can be found in any other alliance or coalition.

For Canada, Norad is a way of enhancing our defence capabilities through cooperation with the U.S., in effect by tapping into the economies of scale in the U.S. military. Canada's security benefits from this formula much the same way our economy benefits from its access to the U.S. market. Norad enables Canada to defend its share of the continent in ways that it could not do on its own, or not without ultimately prohibitive expenditure.

The U.S. derives benefits from assured cooperation with Canada in the defence of North America, particularly with the ability to detect threats before they reach national borders and the valued contribution of our Canadian Forces personnel and assets.

Norad has provided both nations with a flexible and adaptable framework for sharing information and warning of threats and the capacity to take action in response, either collectively or individually depending on the circumstances. It is a forum where the sovereignty of each nation is not only respected but enhanced by guarantees of mutual assistance in the event of attack. Those guarantees are backed by the necessary plans, the training and the operating procedures to render that assistance on a moment's notice.

• (2235)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many Canadians are concerned about nuclear weapons. We heard from the member for Halifax on that topic this evening. Many Canadians hope that disarmament will become a reality on our planet, especially when it comes to nuclear weapons and those dramatic weapons of mass destruction.

We know that the United States, which has the largest arsenal of those weapons, has been found to be in non-compliance with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. We also know that the United States has failed to ratify the comprehensive test ban treaty.

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has said that the "erosion" of non-proliferation agreements may soon be "irreversible". I think that is something that causes very grave concern for many Canadians.

I am wondering if Canada should be entering into a military agreement with a country that is in non-compliance with an important international agreement such as the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. I do not think that is appropriate, but I wonder what the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke thinks.

• (2240)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the role of Norad is to detect and warn our countries of incoming or variations in man-made vehicles or missiles. This agreement has nothing to do with the proliferation of nuclear arms. This is a protection method so that we can see if something is coming in, if something poses a threat to our airspace, and thus provide our countries with a warning in advance.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about some of the threats the member thinks we will be protected against. The preamble to the agreement states:

Recognizing that, despite arms reduction agreements, large nuclear arsenals still exist, deliverable by strategic ballistic missile, cruise missile or long range aircraft capable of striking North America;...

The member mentioned non-traditional threats and rogue states. I wonder if she could give examples.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, in my speech, I was giving examples of the types of threats there are for our continental North American airspace. The threats could come from outside the country, off the continent, but these threats could also come from within.

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for her great presentation and the hard work she has always put in on the defence committee and in recognizing the contribution that the armed forces make on behalf of all Canadians.

Government Orders

I think the Norad agreement and the chance to renew and expand it is a great opportunity for Canada. It is about putting Canadians first. It is about protecting the interests of Canadians first and foremost. The member definitely laid that out eloquently in her presentation.

There has been some debate tonight, which I find rather peculiar, surrounding the whole issue of whether or not we should even be having the debate, that somehow or other it is wrong. I think it is great that we are actually having this opportunity to have input from parliamentarians on a strategic agreement like this. It is something that Canadians have asked for and something our party has stood for: wanting to make sure there is an opportunity for parliamentarians to talk about this. I would like to hear the comments of my hon. colleague on this matter.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the new Canada Command was stood up just last year. South of the border, the United States Northern Command was established in 2002. Both are responsible for defending their respective homelands and providing military support for disaster response and other domestic contingencies. Norad, Canada Command and the United States Northern Command have complementary defence missions and are increasingly working together to ensure seamless air, maritime and land defence across a full spectrum of threats to our nations and our continent.

With a new regiment like CSOR, Canada is well placed to do its part in all these endeavours through the new measures at home and through our position in Norad. Norad not only continues to provide us with a high level of visibility to the U.S. decision making on defence, but it gives us a voice, influence and a meaningful operational role in the defence of North America.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say first that I will be sharing my time with the member for Yukon.

I would like to thank all members for being present this evening and indicate that I, like the majority of them, support the Norad agreement and its extension. I recognize, as do most of the members in this House, that it is necessary for Canada's defence to form alliances with other countries, including the United States and those of NATO. Canada is often involved in alliances formed within the United Nations.

Now let us talk about the New Democrats as well.

● (2245)

[*English*]

The NDP believes fundamentally that there are no world crises that cannot be solved with singsongs and that we do not need necessary military alliances, but I do not share that view. I believe it is very important that in the defence of Canada we do participate in these alliances and that we do understand what our limitations are.

We can beat our chests, wave our flags and be very proud of who we are, what we can accomplish, what our science and technology can do, what our military training systems can do, and what our men and women in the forces can do. I am quite proud of our men and women in the forces; I have a military base in my riding. But at the end of the day, our territory is so vast and our population so small

that there is no reasonable way that we can protect the security and safety of Canadians without being in international alliances.

Let us look at NATO. I think that what we have been able to accomplish in the security of the northern Atlantic and Europe since the second world war has been largely, if not entirely, due to NATO. The fact that our opponents or people who would have attacked some of our allies knew of the formidable strength of the NATO allies certainly served as a deterrent.

If we look at Norad, we see a similar sort of thing. We are looking at a vast, vast area that has a huge amount of commercial and military flights over its territory. The capacity of both countries is needed in order to ensure its security.

We have come to a point in the renewal of that treaty where we have to look at whether or not it requires modernization and whether we should go further. After long discussions and much consideration, we agreed this time that the question of the information on our maritime zones should be included within our Norad agreement. It was agreed that both countries should advise one another as to what they see happening in the maritime zones.

Let us be honest. There is nothing new here. We are adding maritime zones to the agreement, but we have already been doing this, and it was and is the responsible thing to do.

Norad has been doing some great work in drug interdiction. People in my riding have served in this capacity, one as a general and another as an officer. One of these officers wrote a good paper suggesting how Canada could have a drug interdiction centre working with the information collected by Canadian organizations such as the military, the RCMP, CSIS, the Coast Guard, drug agencies or others. All that information could be brought to bear so that we could be a better partner with Norad and more effective within Canada. I congratulate Mr. Gagnon for some very good work. I spoke with the Minister of Public Security, who has agreed to review that documentation and proposal and ensure that it gets the full consideration of government. I thank the minister for that and I thank Mr. Gagnon for his work.

Tonight we are in debate on something that to me is a little bit nonsensical, because I think we all agree on what we are talking about. The problem I have with this debate is that the government is putting on what I believe is a little bit of a sham. It has called the House together on a votable motion on an agreement that it has already reached, and it had the absolute right to reach an agreement in those negotiations, I do not doubt that.

There are some important questions to ask if we are going to have this type of discussion. What happens in the future on a go-forward basis? In the past, the agreement had a definite date and it died on that date. The government had to renew it and negotiate on it. The public could, one way or another, question the government on it. Now, and I agree with this position, we have said that it is going to be a living, breathing agreement that continues and that we will modify as we go along.

Government Orders

What happens, and here is my question, if we decide to go in a direction that is quite different from where we have gone in the past? In the past, we did not mention maritime zones. We added it this time. It was the logical thing to do. I agree with it. But what if we said in the area of missile defence that in the future we would participate? I think we understand now what information we gather, whether it is inner space or outer space, and what information we share, as we should, but what if we want to go further?

● (2250)

We can say that the United States is not asking us to do that. As a matter of fact, the Americans definitely said that they did not want us to be part of their missile defence. That is true, but only after our newly minted Minister of National Defence offered to be part of it and said that Canada should be part of it.

We know the minister has been a lobbyist for a lot of organizations. Perhaps some of them had an interest in that. Perhaps some of them would have liked to participate within that plan and have some agreements. Is that it? Am I being paranoid? Perhaps, perhaps not. I think a logical question to ask is, how would that be dealt with in the future?

During the election campaign the government said that it would not enter into conflicts or commit Canadians troops without bringing the issue to the House for a vote. I did not agree with that then. I do not agree with it now. I think the government has a responsibility. The government answers to the public at the right and proper time, and defends its actions.

The government sometimes has information it cannot share with the public, that it cannot share in this chamber. Perhaps we would put our troops at risk if we gave out that information, or we would put our allies at risk. We might put the people who collect and give us that information at incredible risk. That cannot be done.

Perhaps there are ways that could be explored. I raised this in the House when we had the debate on Afghanistan. The leader of the NDP laughed at it. I think this is a serious discussion and we should consider in camera meetings of the national defence committee. The government could make the members sitting on that committee privy councillors. Then, information could be discussed that could not be made public. The government would get feedback from the House. I think that would be a reasonable way to do it.

I do not disagree with the way we are going with the document that was negotiated by the government. I think it is a necessity in the modern world. However, it supposes a certain confidence between the public of Canada and its government. I think that confidence is important. The government always seeks the confidence of Canadians.

Recently, we have seen times where a government that prides itself on ethics promised an elected Senate. Then it appointed a member to cabinet from the general public. He was a campaign manager and not just anybody, but a campaign manager and someone in whom the Prime Minister certainly had great confidence.

However, the government did not do that directly. First, he was appointed to the Senate, so that he would be a parliamentarian. The Prime Minister, when he was the leader of the opposition, always promised Canadians that should his party form the government that

there would be an elected Senate. I understood that to be true, as you did, Mr. Speaker. What you and I both failed to understand is that only the Prime Minister would vote in that election.

That changes a little bit the understanding that Canadians had. It changes a little bit the confidence that Canadians had. The former opposition leader also said that he would change the way government does business, that the way the government was lobbied would change.

The Prime Minister never mentioned to us that he would put lobbyists in cabinet positions. He said that if a person had been in a cabinet position, they could not be a lobbyist for five years. He did not tell us that his campaign managers would be named privy councillors, so that they could advertise that on their websites and attract defence contractors perhaps, or perhaps people who have an interest in this from around the world. I do not know, but it is a question of confidence in government.

This is the same government that told us two days ago in the House that it was lowering taxes. Yesterday, the taxes were lowered and then we had the parliamentary library confirm what we understood as an increase in the base rate of taxes for Canadians with the lowest income.

Those are the fears that we have and it is not about the agreement. The agreement is a good agreement. I congratulate the government. It followed through on what the Liberal government had done. It is the same thing as the softwood agreement and the government followed through. As a matter of fact, the government liked our agreement so much that they got the minister.

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Westlock—St. Paul I am honoured to represent the men and women of 4 Wing Cold Lake, as well as part of the base at 1st Battalion PPCLI. Anyone who takes the time to sit down with these men and women will understand the importance this agreement has not only on them but on all Canadians.

I have a comment on the hon. member's tirade and I take exception to many of the things he said, but one in particular. He talked about the Prime Minister appointing as cabinet minister our Minister of National Defence. This is a man who has worked tirelessly for the people of Canada for over 20 years, dedicating his life to them. Finally we have someone in that position who has real experience in the military.

I would like to ask the hon. member a question. I sat here tonight and listened to many of his colleagues, including the defence critic give his position on the agreement. I also heard some of his other colleagues give opposing opinions. Does this member support the agreement?

● (2255)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am the member for West Nova, and there is a military base in my riding. A number of retired soldiers live in the riding and many families have sons and daughters in the military. These soldiers want the base to be operational and well funded and the soldiers to have the proper equipment. They know what kind of equipment and investment they need.

Government Orders

At the time of the 2000 election, I remember that the incumbent in my riding spoke about having aircraft carriers on both coasts of North America. That was the policy put forward by the leader of the opposition at the time. This candidate was told that the idea of aircraft carriers was ridiculous. He replied that they were not aircraft carriers because helicopters were involved. In my dictionary, helicopters are aircraft and the ships that carry them are aircraft carriers.

But that was not what these soldiers needed. That was not part of their plans. The soldiers never said that this was what they needed to serve Canadians.

I think that the investments stipulated in the treaties and contracts, the commitments we are making as Canadians, must meet needs and help soldiers do what we are asking of them. Does this treaty do so? Yes. It protects Canadians. It is a good treaty. I support it 100%.

I would ask that the government reassure Canadians. We cannot rely solely on the government's goodwill and benevolence. In future, if the agreement is amended, the government must be accountable for the amendments to the House of Commons in some way. It can be in committee of the whole or before the Standing Committee on National Defence, or even in camera, but in a reasonable manner. The government must be accountable for amendments to this treaty.

[English]

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this evening we have heard a number of times about the binational planning group's final report on the enhanced military cooperation between Canada and the United States. I want to read an excerpt from the executive summary of that report. It states:

The upcoming Norad Agreement renewal (including a potential expansion of its mandate into the maritime domain) is an important step towards enhancing the defense and security of our continent. To continue this momentum a "Comprehensive Defense and Security Agreement" is the next logical step, as it would bring unity of effort and direction to each of the defense, security and foreign policy organizations, including Norad.

We now know that it is not a potential inclusion of the maritime domain but that it is part of the agreement that we are debating tonight. Some observers have said that this reveals that expanding Norad to include maritime surveillance is intended to create momentum toward a complete military security and foreign policy integration between Canada and the United States. I ask the member, does he support that? I certainly do not.

Hon. Robert Thibault: Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that he does not support it. This is a member whose logic would say that one brings down the Liberal government and elects a Conservative government, so that one has a more left wing government. This is a party that never misses a good opportunity to miss an opportunity. What the NDP would tell us now is that sharing of information on maritime traffic between the two neighbours on the Canada-U.S. border should not be included. That is absolutely ridiculous.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by making a comment on the number of speakers in this debate and previous evening debates we have had this session. There were a number of debates, including this one, where we had more speakers than could get up. I know one lady who has been very passionate about defence in North America could not get on our roster tonight. On Monday night I had to send one of our chaps home

and in the previous debate I could not get on, so I hope the government will be open to extending debates in the future so that more members could speak.

I have a great interest in this having been chair of our foreign affairs and defence caucus two Parliaments ago and on the defence committee last Parliament, but most important because it is of interest to my constituents. Although we are not discussing missile defence tonight, I will go on record that not many of my constituents were very happy when the former Prime Minister listened to the people of Canada and made the decision not to join missile defence.

Norad has worked well since the Ogdensburg Agreement in 1940. There have been thousands of incidents and this has been a very good arrangement for the protection of Canadians. I referred earlier to an incident which occurred in my riding in Whitehorse where U.S. fighter jets escorted potentially hijacked Korean planes into the Whitehorse airport and of course there could have been significant damage in Alaska or in Canada. It is a very sensitive situation and it is fortunate that we had an agreement where everyone was cooperating and working together.

Unfortunately, in that situation there was a lot of miscommunication with the Korean airline itself and then down the road it took a long time to get a full evaluation of the situation. As I said earlier, I hope the people working on the ground with these agreements in the future will take into consideration the local people who probably have no idea about these agreements and how they work. They need to be fully informed as to what happens after these situations occur.

I would like to close with a number of questions. I know in the spirit of the debate the government takes it seriously or it would not have had this debate. Conservatives are open and want to listen, so I hope in that spirit they, perhaps before the vote, could get back to me in writing, or perhaps the department of defence, to some of these questions. They are just interpretation questions on the agreement itself that I am curious about and it will give me a better feeling. Some are technical questions about some of the words.

First, if Parliament votes against this agreement, I assume the government will not ratify this agreement, but I am curious to hear about that. I want to read a section of the preamble and then ask a question about it. It says:

ACKNOWLEDGING that space has become an important dimension of national interest and has become an increasingly significant component of most traditional military activities, and that a growing number of nations have acquired or have ready access to space services that could be used for strategic and tactical purposes against the interests of Canada and the United States;

And then Article I:

1. The primary missions of Norad in the future shall be to provide:
 - b) Aerospace control for North America;—

Government Orders

I wonder exactly what that means. The preamble talks about space and more activity in space. What does this aerospace control for North America mean in relation to the sections in outer space? What activities would occur there? What surveillance, and more important than the surveillance, is the actual control function? What would that mean in outer space?

The next paragraph in the preamble states:

REALIZING that a shared understanding and awareness of the activities conducted in the respective maritime approaches, maritime areas and inland waterways, including the capacity to identify vessels of potential interest, are critical to their ability of monitor, control, and respond to threats so that their shared security is ensured;

● (2300)

I would like more interpretation of what that means in our inland waterways. In particular, what control or surveillance would be undertaken, for example in the Great Lakes and maybe in the Ottawa River beside the member's riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, and in particular in the Northwest Passage? We have a bit of a dispute at times as to who might own the Northwest Passage, as to which nationality the waters belong, or whether they are international waters.

My fourth question relates to a section in the preamble as well. It says:

RECOGNIZING that, despite arms agreements, large nuclear arsenals still exist, deliverable by strategic ballistic missile, cruise missile or long-range aircraft capable of striking North America.

I have been at a number of meetings where a number of parliamentarians, not me, but others have suggested there are no large nuclear arsenals threatening Canada at the moment, that any large nuclear arsenals are in the hands of countries that for whatever reason cannot or would not ever be attacking North America. I would think that a majority of parliamentarians think it is small isolated or illegally traded nuclear weapons and not large nuclear arsenals. Those should be referred to in this agreement if we are going to refer to anything.

My fifth question relates to disputed territory. Members who wanted to make sure they understood this agreement and might have had concerns wanted to know where the control would take place related particularly to maritime activities. Because it only talks about surveillance of maritime activities, my understanding from the debate is that the actual control and any enforcement, et cetera, would be done by the ships of the nationality in whose waters the incident occurred.

How is this going to be dealt with in disputed waters? For instance, there is a large section of the Beaufort Sea where there is a dispute between the United States and Canada. Canadians say that we own it. If we put a line between Yukon and Alaska and go straight up into the ocean, we say we own everything to the right or east of that, yet the United States has put out oil leases in that area and the U.S. considers that it owns that water.

If it is only the ship of the nationality where the crime is occurring, and there have been interdictions of illegal ships going into that area, not American or Canadian, which ship is going to enforce that and what type of arrangements have been made? What type of cooperation arrangements have we made for disputed areas?

My last question relates to the amending of the agreement. It is right at the end of the agreement. It says, "The parties shall meet to review this agreement and consider possible amendments, under a mutually agreed mechanism, at least every four years or at the request of each party....The parties may conclude such further arrangements as necessary to advance the objectives and purposes of this agreement, including mutual support arrangements with other commands and agencies".

If they are going to make the amendments under a mutually agreed upon mechanism, what is that mutually agreed upon mechanism? Canadians do not know. Members of Parliament who are going to be voting on this bill do not know. Exactly what mechanism might be used to amend this agreement?

This agreement may be totally acceptable to parliamentarians. In fact, I assume it is going to pass by a large margin, but these amendments made by a mutually agreed upon mechanism which no one knows about may lead to something that is totally unacceptable to members of Parliament.

The final part of that is "may conclude such further arrangements as necessary to advance the objectives and purposes of this agreement, including mutual support arrangements with other commands and agencies". Does this mean that by signing this agreement, by agreeing to ratify this agreement if we vote in favour of it, we can bring out all the other divisions of the armed forces and make all sorts of other arrangements as necessary? It is open-ended.

● (2305)

I would feel much more comfortable if I could get a letter from the Minister of Defence, in the spirit of the cooperation we have had in the debate tonight, to—

● (2310)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know the Norad agreement has provided safety and security for decades to North America as a whole and that has always brought me, personally, and my constituents a lot of comfort.

I would like to ask the hon. member a couple of things. Prior to 9/11, he made reference to the fact that, with respect to nuclear ballistic missiles, he does not believe there is any threat from those missiles. I believe that on September 11, 2001, we became aware that there are unforeseen threats that Norad can defend us from and I believe that there is a lot of value.

Does the member intend to support the Norad agreement? Does he appreciate the opportunity for this debate this evening, which I view as a promise kept by our government?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, the member's question shows that he did not understand one of my points or I did not make them clear enough.

Government Orders

The point I was making on nuclear weapons was that it was not just or even large nuclear arsenals, that most members of Parliament would think it would be smaller. In fact, I think he was even suggesting smaller or individual nuclear arsenals. The agreement should at least include those or read that way. I do not think it is as appropriate as it should be.

With regard to how I will vote, I hope the member will support me and ask the Minister of Defence to provide me with the answers to those questions when he reads them in *Hansard* tomorrow. If I am provided with the clarification I need, in the comfort and spirit of this debate, I will be able to make the best decision possible.

Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will try to address a couple of points that have been raised by the member for Yukon.

In terms of disputed waters, if we are dealing with disputed waters today, the situation on surveillance is exactly the same as it would be after this treaty is in place because those remain under the national control of the respective countries. If we believe it to be our territory, then it is our obligation before this treaty is put in place to exercise our sovereignty and deal with it. After this treaty, it will be the exact same situation. There is no change there whatsoever. I am sure when the member reviews it he will understand and appreciate that.

In terms of future processes for amending this, obviously it all depends on what kind of amendments he might have. The hypothetical question is whether they constitute what we consider to be significant amendments.

Since the member is asking for that commitment from this Parliament, did he ever ask, when he was sitting as a member in the government, that the amendments in 2004, which his government negotiated at that time, be put to a debate and voted on in this Parliament? Did he ever ask that of his Minister of Defence and his Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, I think it is ridiculous that the member keeps bringing up the past and irrelevant stuff. I would like to give the NDP time to ask their question.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do have a question about the previous government.

I know the member for Yukon has been quite active on the defence committee. Does this agreement that is before the House tonight for debate have any changes in it from the previous administration or is this the same agreement that the previous administration had negotiated with the United States?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, there are two changes. The first change adds the maritime aspect to the agreement which relates to surveillance only. I looked at it very carefully to ensure it did not include control and operations. However, there are two sections under aerospace, one is surveillance and the other is control.

The other change is that the agreement will not expire every five years, as the previous one did, and it can be signed, with the agreement of the parties and the mechanism that is outlined in here, every four years.

●(2315)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): Resuming debate. The concluding speaker this evening will be the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since I will be wrapping up the debate, I will approach this as if I were doing a summation after a trial in a courtroom.

I am doing that in light of what I saw develop during the debate. I will start with what concerns me. I looked at the number of points that were raised this evening and I have to say that the government stands accused, and I will convict it, of not answering these points.

The first one is the whole issue of sovereignty. It has been raised repeatedly by way of a question to a number of the ministers and a number of the members of the government about whether this is just another step to full integration of our military, and to some degree, our foreign affairs into a continental, particularly U.S. dominated process that will leave Canada seriously short of its sovereignty. That answer was never given.

There were a number of questions with regard to whether this was the best use of our resources within Norad. Would there be better ways of doing it? In that respect it raises the issue that there are clauses in the agreement about intelligence sharing. It was interesting to hear the Minister of Public Safety in a somewhat facetious and perhaps sarcastic fashion indicate that we already do share intelligence and do we not understand that. I think that was in response to one question.

I can assure the minister that I understand that having worked in this area for the better part of two years now. We do in fact share a lot of intelligence and I do not see that this particular agreement adds anything. There was no explanation of that given.

There was no explanation given as to why there is reference to missile defence. There is a long preamble and a subclause where the U.S. reserves its right to deal with missile defence. There is no explanation of why that is in there.

As a lawyer I can say that clauses are not put into an agreement unless they have some purpose. There was no explanation given by the government as to what the purpose was of those two clauses. There was no explanation and in fact very little was addressed.

We heard a lot about the history of Norad. I can say to the government that I understand the history of Norad. We did not need to spend all that time on that.

There was no explanation as to why Norad is now being used as a mechanism to fight drug crime. That seems to be a bit of an overkill. Certainly we have any number of other agreements with the United States and agencies for which we share similar responsibilities on both sides of the border that are much more appropriate to deal with drug crimes.

I have to say that I was left with the image of a ballistic missile coming in and blowing up a drug runner some place, whether it was at the border in Windsor or somewhere else in the Great Lakes or in the Rocky Mountains. There was no explanation.

It begs the question, why would we be spending money through Norad for that purpose as opposed to using that money for instance to raise the wages of our military which is badly in need? It seems to be a waste of money when one looks at it from that perspective. Again, there were no answers.

Finally, there is the issue of the maritime area and why this is in Norad. Norad was always designed to be a mechanism to deal with air defence. It has no expertise and no background in the maritime area. We cannot help but wonder if there is not a better mechanism.

If we look at those points, whether it is about missile defence, user resources, the fight against drug crime, and the issue of how best to protect our maritime borders, have we had the answers here this evening? In each one of those cases I can say with absolute assurance we have not. It begs the question as to whether this debate has produced the necessary information for the House to deal with whether we approve ratification. It certainly has not elucidated these issues for the sake of the Canadian public.

Government Orders

● (2320)

From that perspective, this debate should have been a much longer one. If the government is really serious about opening this up and ratifying these agreements on an ongoing basis, we need a better process than what we had here this evening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau): It being 11:21 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to the order made earlier today, the motion is deemed to have been put and the recorded division is deemed to have been demanded and deferred until Monday, May 8, at the ordinary hour of daily adjournment.

[*English*]

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:21 p.m.)

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