



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, May 4, 2006**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 4, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1000)  
[English]

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-9, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (conditional sentence of imprisonment).  
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

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### CRIMINAL CODE

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-10, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act.  
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### CANADA TRANSPORTATION ACT

**Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts  
(Motions deemed adopted, bill read the first time and printed)

\* \* \*

• (1005)  
[English]

### DIVORCE ACT

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-252, An Act to amend the Divorce Act (access for spouse who is terminally ill or in critical condition).

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour today to table this bill to amend the Divorce Act. It would allow terminally ill or critically ill

parents the right to see their children one last time. It adds a section to the Divorce Act.

I hope, when this comes back to the House for debate, that I can get all party support on this issue.

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

\* \* \*

### INCOME TAX ACT

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deductibility of RESP contributions).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce this bill which would amend the Income Tax Act to make contributions to an RESP deductible from the contributor's taxable income.

Students are facing some difficult concerns with rising tuitions, as well as the importance this spells for the future prosperity of our country in terms of a skilled and educated workforce. We certainly do not want post-secondary education to become the purview of only the wealthy.

The bill would provide a regulatory regime similar to the one governing registered retirement savings plans. It is hoped that the passage of this bill will assist more Canadian families to save for their children's post-secondary education. I look forward to the support of all members of the House.

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

\* \* \*

### CRIMINAL CODE

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskij (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-254, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (hate propaganda).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to table, for a second time, my private member's bill, an act to amend the Criminal Code regarding hate propaganda.

The purpose of the bill is to expand the definition of an identifiable group under the hate propaganda provisions of the Criminal Code to include any section of the public distinguished by its gender. The way our current law is written, it is prohibited to propagate hate against an individual because of colour, race, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation. However, it is not against the law to propagate hate against individuals because of their gender.

*Routine Proceedings*

By enacting this change to the Criminal Code, Parliament can begin to address the serious issue of promoting hatred and violence against women or men. This is an amendment that should have been made long ago. It is my sincere hope that my colleagues on all sides of the House will support this worthy and overdue initiative.

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

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**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-255, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (herbal remedies).

He said: Mr. Speaker, as we know, many people are allergic to sulphha-based drugs or are unable to take them for medicinal purposes. The bill asks that anyone prescribed a herbal alternative by a licensed physician be allowed to claim that as a medical expense.

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

\* \* \*

**INCOME TAX ACT**

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-256, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (physical activity and amateur sport fees).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this is a bill I first introduced in 1999 and will continue to do so.

The bill would give true tax relief for all those involved in sports and physical activity. Basically it says that if a person or any member of his or her family is a member of a gym, or if the kids are part of sports groups, the entire fee, for example, if it were \$400 or \$500, should be claimed as a tax deduction, similar to that of a charitable donation, without any limits.

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

\* \* \*

• (1010)

[Translation]

**CANADA LABOUR CODE**

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-257, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers)

He said: Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to table this bill, seconded by my colleague for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert.

The purpose of this bill is to prohibit strikebreakers, which will end the disparity between the labour codes of Canada and Quebec.

I am proud to table this bill today because many workers in Quebec are victims of the fact that there are two classes of employees in Quebec.

The Bloc Québécois has submitted similar bills nine times in the hope of ensuring that workers subject to the Canada Labour Code have the same rights as those subject to the Quebec Labour Code.

During the last Parliament, the Bloc Québécois' bill was defeated by only 12 votes. The Bloc hopes that the new Parliament will make it a priority to act in workers' best interests.

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

\* \* \*

[English]

**PETITIONS**

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions today to present to the House.

In the first petition, the citizens and residents of Canada want to draw to the attention of the House that undocumented workers play a vital role in Canada's economy and are usually employed in highly skilled jobs and needed professions and their removal would significantly damage Canada's economy.

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to immediately halt the deportation of undocumented workers and to find a humane and logical solution to their situation.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my second petition concerns child care.

On November 2, 2005, the Government of Canada signed a full funding agreement with the Province of Ontario that would have created 25,000 new licensed child care spaces by the end of 2008 and would have increased per annum funding for child care in the province by 69%.

The residents of Ontario call upon the Prime Minister to honour the early learning and child care agreement.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition by parents who are calling upon the government to reconsider its position on child care.

They are asking that parents have choices in early child care, that true choices necessitate options and that the deal the premier signed with the Prime Minister did create those options. They are asking the government to reconsider that agreement.

**Mr. Blair Wilson (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House this morning to present a petition that has been signed by many concerned Canadians who are calling upon the government to honour the early learning and child care agreement.

In November of 2005 the Government of Canada signed a full funding agreement on child care. Today, 84% of parents with children are both in the workforce and 70% of women with children under the age of six are employed. This petition calls upon Parliament to recognize that child care is an everyday necessity in this country and that there is an urgent and immediate need for additional child care spaces.

HUMAN RIGHTS

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present this morning.

The first petition has to do with a very serious matter that is quite disturbing. The petitioners want to bring to the attention of the House that recent evidence has shown that there is a concentration camp in Shenyang City in China expressly for Falun Gong practitioners.

They also point out that no one has ever come out of this concentration camp and that the practitioners have been killed for their organs which have been sent off to various medical facilities. This has apparently become a very large business. There are numerous reports from witnesses and family members that organs in fact were missing from the bodies of dead family members.

The petitioners urge the Prime Minister and the Government of Canada to condemn the Chinese Communist regime for crimes against Falun Gong practitioners, in particular this concentration camp. They ask us to speak out at the UN to mobilize an investigation and rescue.

•(1015)

CHILD CARE

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition is most appropriate for today's motion before the House concerning early learning and child care. These petitioners from my riding of Mississauga South understand that choice is necessary and that we need spaces in fact to have real choice.

They point out that the previous government established agreements with the provinces, a number of which had full funding agreements for the five year period. They also point out that a very substantial proportion of families have both parents working and children under the age of six. As well, they point out that this is an everyday necessity in our country and that we need policy to deal with it, such as the policy of creating early learning and child care spaces.

The petitioners call upon the Prime Minister to honour the early learning and child care agreements with the provinces.

\* \* \*

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Business of Supply*

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*English*]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—CHILD CARE

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.)** moved:

That the House recognize that an effective, Canada-wide early learning and child care system requires both continued vigorous effort to provide supports for family incomes and proactive intergovernmental activity to create a sufficient number of high quality, universally accessible, affordable and developmental child care spaces to meet the broad range of needs of Canadian children;

that the House observe that the present government has made, in both these tasks, significantly less progress than its predecessor, which had provided income support programs for families with children totalling more than \$10 billion per year and had negotiated child-care space-creating agreements with all provinces valued at at least an additional \$1 billion per year; and,

therefore, that the House urge the government to increase substantially its activities in this regard in order to provide Canadian families with the early learning and child care facilities that they need and deserve.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to this motion because Canadian families face a genuine crisis caused by the shortage of quality child care and early learning services in this country.

[*Translation*]

This government has torn up federal-provincial agreements that would have created up to 350,000 day care places over the next five years. It replaced this plan with a cash allowance that offers only minimal benefits and that in no way allows for the creation of places in early learning and child care services.

[*English*]

I want to begin by asking, what is the role of government? The role of government is to govern. It is not to use administrative tactics to pander to its supporters as they exist. This is about the future of the country. The future of the country is about our aboriginal people, about post-secondary education and research innovation. The future of the country and the planet is about climate change, but the real future of the country in terms of human capital is our kids.

Today, this motion is about why the Prime Minister of the country would agree to not cut and run on the people of Afghanistan, but is prepared to cut and run on our kids. It is extraordinary that ideology has replaced evidence based practice and real research on what will underpin the future of our country in terms of social justice and what will underpin the future of our economy as a country in a globalized world.

That being said, in 20 years as a family doctor, I cannot imagine that there was one time, as I delivered a baby, that the parents or family did not have a huge understanding of the challenges facing them as parents and the choices that they would have to make in terms of being the best parents possible and offering the best possible opportunity to their children.

*Business of Supply*

There were some families that actually did have choices. There were two parents, one at least with a fabulous job such that there was a choice. One of the parents could stay home. Even in that situation, there were situations where that parent that was able to stay at home needed the support of a community drop-in centre where there was some help in terms of the kinds of things that could happen.

Some of those children may have had special needs and special concerns. Some children may have had autism where it was virtually impossible for those stay at home parents to give the kind of care that they would want 24/7. But for those families there was a real choice in terms of a parent being able to stay at home.

For the other parents there was a choice, as well, and they had to decide whether with two incomes they could actually support their child in a better way and perhaps move out of a certain neighbourhood, or change a balcony for a backyard. Those were parents making the best possible decision for their children.

I think it has been extraordinarily unfair to be fanning the flames of a fight between those difficult choices that those sets of families have had to make in our country and to pit one choice against another choice as a better choice, or indeed to say that parents did not know what was best for their kids and could not make the choices that were best for their children.

Today's motion is very much about the people who have not had choices, who know they have to go to work. They know that they need affordable early learning and child care spaces in order for them to do what they have decided is best for their child. For those families whose children are still on waiting lists and therefore have no choice, this is the insult of this government plan. It is referred to as choices in child care. In fact, it is a family allowance that has absolutely nothing to do with early learning and child care, and is indeed the most insulting thing that I have heard in a very long time.

There is too much misinformation out there and I think that it is extraordinarily important that the government understand how it is flying in the face of the public's understanding of the importance of the best possible experience for kids in their early years.

Statistically, 94% of Canadians know that the most critical years for brain development are in the first six years. Regardless of a family's background, 89% believe that poor quality child care hurts a child's development. Some 79% believe that child care providers who have had more training provide better care. Child care services have passed some important hurdles. It is extraordinarily important that the parents who need to go into the workforce do so and 94% of Canadians believe that child care is essential to allowing that decision. Approximately 90% know that it is important in assisting a child's education and 78% see it as important to developing stronger community ties. We all know that isolation is one of the most important determinants of poor health.

●(1020)

It is important as we go forward that we not deal with ideology. We should deal with the facts and the research that is there. In fact, province by province in this country, in determining what would be the best for the children of those provinces, elected to sign on to an agreement with the Government of Canada to use the \$5 billion in a

way that was completely flexible and best for the families in their province in order to go forward.

Three of the 10 agreements were fully funded before the NDP decided to sellout and help force the unnecessary election. In Ontario alone, 25,000 new spaces would have been created in the first two years, including investments in training in quality programming.

●(1025)

[*Translation*]

In Quebec, the aim of the agreement was to allow the province to reach its objective of 200,000 spaces in licensed services this year and improve both the quality and availability of training in all regards.

[*English*]

The Manitoba agreement, meanwhile, placed special emphasis on creating spaces in rural and remote areas, in stark contrast with this government's insistence that the Liberal government's early learning and child care strategy catered only to urban families. Quite clearly we have heard from many people in Manitoba how important this is in terms of protecting the family farm for those spouses who have had to come into town to work in a bank or a hospital in order to be able to keep the family farm. Those families know they need affordable quality child care, like in small-town Ontario, and this government does not seem to understand that.

Quite frankly, I am convinced that the Prime Minister and his caucus have never actually read these agreements, because it was so clear how carefully the provinces had designed what would be best for them. Other provinces had detailed plans. I think the members from Saskatchewan should understand that cancelling the full universal preschool program for all four year olds in the province of Saskatchewan is devastating to those people who thought those children would be going to school this fall, those people who thought they would be going into the workforce.

Alberta focused on training because in Alberta almost 80% of early learning and child care is done in the private sector. Those operators wanted to have those funds to be able to go back to school so they themselves could qualify as regulated child care space operators, with the understanding that parents have much more confidence in a place that knows the public health requirements and those kinds of things around exercise, nutrition and the training of those workers.

Last week the Leader of the Opposition and I were able to visit the Andrew Fleck Child Care centre here in Ottawa. It is one of the examples of the kind of quality child care that helps children get the best possible start in life. There is an exciting range of programs offered there, programs that are inclusive, supportive, flexible and fun for children. This is a centre that provides all kinds of care, including flexible hours, drop-ins and playgroups for families where a parent is able to stay at home. It is inclusive programming that meets the needs of today's diverse families, including those with special needs.

*Business of Supply*

The Andrew Fleck centre is also designed to offer caregivers answers to questions with information about programs and services that are available for young children, and an opportunity to talk to early year professionals as well as other parents and caregivers in the community. It is a truly integrated service for Ottawans and their children and has been since the early 1900s.

It is what will happen to that centre that is the issue of today's motion. The two story building next door currently has 30 children and the funding the centre was to receive from the early learning and child care agreement would have been used to renovate the whole building and create an additional 34 spaces, including integrated spaces for those special needs children and especially those children with extraordinary special needs, children with autism, in order to help those families. Because the funding was lost, the centre cannot renovate. The building is now so old that there will be no spaces in the building. Essentially the loss of funding means the loss of 64 child care spaces for Andrew Fleck alone.

Meanwhile, this government's plan offers the vaguest of promises to create child care spaces. The government has backed away from the tax incentives as a solution because it now understands that it would not work and it is just not evidence based. There were seven pages in the plan for discussion of the new family allowance, yet less than a page for the discussion of creating spaces; it was funding starts only and costs only. There was nothing for the ongoing costs of service delivery and nothing to ensure the quality of care. It is the same approach that failed under Mike Harris, and here I have to say as a member of Parliament from Ontario that we cannot let the Prime Minister do to this country what Mike Harris did to Ontario.

The government keeps saying that giving parents money gives them choices. They cannot choose what does not exist. All families can benefit from child care and early learning services. I remember in the very early days of prenatal education how it was very important for people to understand that the community needed to help those expectant mothers and their families understand the best they could about how to become a parent.

• (1030)

Nobody would question the need for communities to support prenatal education. We are now saying that with extended parental leave and all of the exciting things that we as a Liberal government were able to do, it is a necessity to have parent-child drop-ins in communities, and it is important to have licensed child care, early learning activities and after school programs. We have to get around the rhetoric of this government, which continues to explain, as though we do not know, that parents are the experts.

Of course parents are the experts in terms of raising their children, but some of these experts, as parents, have come together in boards to put together what they think is the best for the community and their needs. Those parents now sit on those boards and are making sure that the experience of those children is the best it can be in terms of the best possible start in life.

[*Translation*]

The real catastrophe, however, is the fact that the plan gives little to those who need it most. Taxing the allowance based on the salary of the parent with the lower income means that low income families

will keep only part of the allowance, while those better off will keep the most.

[*English*]

It is astounding that the \$249 young child supplement is being eliminated so that wealthy families can have their share. Those on waiting lists will continue to wait. As we have said, there is the single mom who will not be able to go back to school and also what have seen on so many of the petitions, such as the nurse who thought she was going back into the health care sector but who will not be able to go back because her child will stay on a waiting list.

I thought that "a hand up, not a handout" used to be a Conservative mantra. What happened? How are single parents struggling to get off social assistance and get jobs or the training for better jobs going to do it if there is no one to look after their children? It has often been said that the real measure of a civilized society is in how it treats its most vulnerable. If that is true, then this so-called plan represents a giant step backwards. What happens when parents cannot read to their children?

As members know, Fraser Mustard has been studying this for a very long time. It is appalling that the government would not understand his extraordinarily seminal work in understanding what other countries around the world are picking up on, whether that is India, China or South America. It is going to be extraordinarily important that children have the capacity in terms of literacy to be able to compete in a globalized world, to be able to partake of a post-secondary education. We know that starts at the earliest possible time and that we actually must do this in order to compete economically in a globalized world. Besides, it is just the right thing to do.

There is huge evidence that money invested in early learning translates into savings down the road, both socially and economically, and in health care, social services and correctional services. We know that is the case. We know from these programs, particularly in Vancouver, that by having an early learning and child care program we can identify at the very earliest stage a child with FASD and be able to help that mom, who may herself have had FASD, get the kind of help that she needs for her dependence on drugs or alcohol, and for her then to have that kind of intervention so that she does not have a second, third, fourth or fifth child affected with FASD. If her first child had not been identified in a program such as this, she would go without those really important services.

I am offended that the minister, who knows that she is abandoning the most vulnerable of Canadians, would kind of deflect this by pitting families against one another, fanning the flames of this extraordinarily important choice that every family in this country makes in terms of what is the best choice for their families, also understanding that by taking away the choice for our most vulnerable families, she is putting our country at risk and she is flying in the face of basic Canadian values of social justice.

*Business of Supply*

I am thankful for being able to articulate today how much the people of Canada support what was the Liberal plan. On January 23, 63% of Canadians supported a party that supported the Liberal plan for early learning and child development. It is extraordinarily important for us to understand that 89% of Canadians have been clear that it is important to offer the same level of services to everyone. Eighty-nine per cent have said it is important to make quality child care available to everyone. Eighty-eight per cent have said it is important that child care be inclusive for children with special needs. Ninety per cent have said it is important to make quality child care affordable for everybody.

It is so important now as we go forward to understand that the choices have to be real choices. There cannot be real choices if these families do not have a place in their community to take their children to if they are staying at home, to get the kinds of services they need or to be able to make a choice of re-entering the workforce and being confident every day they are in the workforce that their children are getting the best possible experience and the best possible start in life.

I cannot say strongly enough how proud I am of the Liberal record on this, how proud I am of how quickly after the member for LaSalle—Émard became Prime Minister that our minister was able to go across this country and negotiate these 10 deals with the provinces, because it is so important to those families and those communities.

• (1035)

We call upon the government to substantially increase its activities. Please listen to the research. Please do not hide behind individual little payouts and handouts. Give the vulnerable families in our country the handout they really need.

I hope we will see some changes. We cannot wait to see this approach dealt with properly in committee.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned autism a couple of times in her speech. I have a 10-year-old son with autism. Like many families in this situation, we made a decision to have one parent stay at home. My wife, who was a teacher, has stayed at home for 10 years. For us, that probably equates to roughly \$400,000 in income that we have gladly given up to do what we think is best for our child.

Many families who have kids with autism make that same decision. The Liberal day care plan does absolutely nothing for families in that situation.

My questions relate to another family in my riding, a family with five children. I mentioned the Matychuk family earlier in a speech I made in the House. One of the things I pointed out was, if they were just starting out now, if their first child was born now and they went through the 15 years, that would take their last child to age six. Under the Conservative plan, that family would receive \$36,000 after tax.

The family has one income. Jeff, the father, earns \$39,000 a year and the mom stays at home with the kids. They drive a 12-year-old minivan. They have a simple house without a garage. They have made these decisions because they feel they are best for their family. I admire the family. Their kids are among the most well adjusted, incredible kids who I have ever met.

First, I believe they would receive absolutely nothing from the Liberal day care plan. Could the member confirm that?

Second, under the Liberal plan, this family would pay through their taxes to send their neighbours' kids to day care. Why is that fair?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I would invite him to go to the Andrew Fleck centre to which I referred. That program would have assisted children with autism. Many families have acknowledged they cannot do this at home 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This is an extraordinarily difficult situation.

I had a patient whose twin grandchildren suffered from autism. I know how much help that family needed in terms of support from the community.

I also remind the member that some of the most poignant letters have come from his riding. One letter states:

I am totally opposed to the program proposed by your government. Quite frankly, \$1200/year for my youngest daughter, taxable to boot, does nothing for me. I have been extremely involved with my daughters' childcare centre for the last 4 1/2 years and can assure you that this province's childcare system is in crisis.

The letter goes on:

As if the lack of qualified staff, lack of funding and astronomical costs weren't bad enough, our daycare centre faces additional challenges in that it is the only French daycare centre in Edmonton and one of only two in Alberta. Yes indeed, I am a francophone and my husband and I have chosen to raise our children in French, which is still one of Canada's official languages.

These are the kinds of letters we are receiving from across the country about this ideology overriding the kind of flexibility and creativity that the minister had negotiated with every province, Alberta being number one. The member should be ashamed.

• (1040)

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the member for St. Paul's talks about flexibility. I would like to remind her that child care is an integral part of family policy. In our opinion, it is most definitely a matter of provincial jurisdiction and thus a matter for Quebec.

As everyone knows, Quebec has its own, well integrated day care system. I will come back to this later.

The opposition motion talks of a Canada-wide system. This is blatant meddling in areas under Quebec's jurisdiction.

I would like to put the following question to the member. Would she be prepared to allow Quebec to opt out unconditionally with full compensation?

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, it is very important to recognize provincial jurisdictions. However, it is also very important in our opinion to recognize that all Canadian children must get the best possible start in life.

We have tried to help Quebec achieve its objective of 200,000 spaces this year in licensed services, and I think that our federation would have benefited nation wide from the best of the Quebec model.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, once upon a time there was a famous Liberal red book. It first unveiled itself in 1993. It promised to create thousands of child care spaces. Children across the land rejoiced and their parents celebrated and waited for the service for their children to descend upon them. Their children grew bigger by the day and working parents, desperate for support, waited. The Liberal minister said that child care spaces would be available only if the growth rate was 3%. When the parents checked, they noticed that the growth rate was 3%, and they pointed that out. Various Liberal ministers said that creating child care spaces was a very serious business and told the parents to wait until 1997.

The Liberals made more promises in the 1997 election. Children grew older and no longer needed child care, but then their younger brothers and sisters came upon the earth and they needed it. The parents were told they had to wait until the 2000 election. In that election campaign another promise was made.

What did the hon. member do in 1993, 1994 all the way to 2004, when children and working families across the land waited in vain for child care? Their dreams and hopes for child care were completely dashed. What has she been doing?

• (1045)

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to explain the hon. member's misinformation on just about everything. That party brought down the government in November and as a result, there are no spaces available at Andrew Fleck this year.

The member knows perfectly well that in 1993, when child care was in the red book, it was a cost sharing agreement. The member knows better than anyone else that we did not have a partner in Alberta nor did we have one in Ontario. It was only when the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard became prime minister that Liberal women's caucus and the caucus as a whole were able to persuade the provinces. A unilateral \$5 billion was put on the table that they could take or leave. We asked them to work with us to build child care, and we abandoned the proposition of cost sharing, which had failed. Therefore, we were able to put all of this in place.

The hon. member and her party should be ashamed, now that these waiting lists continue to grow. They support a government that clearly has no plans for early learning and child care.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Mégantic—L'Érable.

The safe and well chosen care of our very youngest citizens is an issue of paramount importance for governments and, indeed, for millions of Canadians. It is therefore only proper that we debate this issue in Parliament. However, I would respectfully disagree with the basic tenet of today's motion.

The role of government is not to tell Canadians how and where to raise their children. It is to ensure a range of child care options is available to them and to help them take advantage of these broadened choices. That is the underlying premise of Canada's universal child care plan, one of the new government's five key priorities.

The cornerstone of the plan is a direct benefit to parents of \$1,200 a year for every child under the age of six. Combined with numerous federal supports already available to Canadian families, this universal allowance would help parents afford the child care they choose. At the same time, the plan also recognizes that many parents find their choices are constrained by the acute shortage of good day care spaces, which is why, beginning in 2007, our plan will also invest \$250 million annually in the creation of 25,000 new flexible child care spaces per year.

When it comes to child care, every family in Canada has its particular needs. Nine-to-five care in a regulated day care facility is used by the families of about 15% of preschool-aged children. Over half of all the families look after the children at home by themselves, or with the help of a close relative like a grandparent. There are many other alternatives, from nursery schools to informal care at neighbours' homes.

The unfortunate truth is that many Canadians do not have a real choice in child care because there simply are not enough options available. Some families cannot afford to let one parent stay home to care for the children. Others cannot find a suitable caregiver or a day care centre without a mile-long waiting list. Indeed, statistics do tell us that there are only sufficient formal day care spaces for one in every four children up to the age of five. That is where our government and its universal child care plan will make a real and tangible difference.

Beginning in July, the parents of each of Canada's 1.2 million preschoolers will be eligible to receive \$1,200 per year to offset the costs of raising a young child. The money is there for the child who stays at home to be raised by mom or dad, or for the child cared for by someone else at home or perhaps a neighbour down the street, or for the child who does attend a day care. Whether the funds are used for books, musical instruments, enrolment fees at a nursery school or to boost a child's registered education savings plan, the choice would be made by the experts: the parents themselves.

I also want to underline that the universal child care benefit comes on top of the \$13 billion a year that the government already invests in other supports for children and families. These include the Canada child tax benefit, the child disability benefit, the national child benefit supplement, the child care expense deduction, extended parental leave provisions and the Canada learning bond.

All that said, we also recognize that some people's options are limited by factors beyond their control. The shortage of day care spaces, for instance, is a legitimate concern. It restricts the choices of people living in big cities, as well as those in rural and remote parts of Canada. It is another concern that our universal child care plan seeks to address.

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Beginning in 2007, in collaboration with provinces and territories, employers, community groups and non-governmental agencies, our objective will be to create 25,000 flexible community-based spaces per year.

• (1050)

We know better than to put forward a one size fits all program. We understand that not all Canadians can be served by the same uniform network of child care centres. I want to emphasize that the goal of the government is flexibility.

Once again we are vesting control in the real experts, the parents. The parents, along with co-ops, community organizations and non-governmental enterprises recognize the local need and they have a compelling reason to address it.

Here is how our proposal would work. Let us say an aboriginal community, a small town or big city neighbourhood suffered from a serious shortage of child care spaces. In conjunction with local businesses, provincial and territorial governments, non-profit institutions, such as hospitals and colleges, or other interested parties, the community would determine what kind of service was needed, regular nine to five facility perhaps, or maybe not. Perhaps it would something else more suited to shift workers or more suitable to seasonal employees.

For example, in Weyburn, Saskatchewan the Souris Valley Child Care Corporation is open from 6 a.m. to midnight Monday to Saturday helping to meet the needs of the health care workers at the Souris Valley Extended Care Centre.

The point is that the arrangement must be flexible to accommodate the needs of local parents. In rural Canada, parents and community organizations might unite to create a child care centre in some kind of multi-purpose establishment offering a range of services, including learning resources, a community centre, and outreach support for families with unique needs, for example, farmers, cultural communities or fishermen. In a town or small city, a group of employers might band together to offer child care for employees working shifts that run late into the night or on weekends.

An initiative as ambitious as this will obviously take careful planning. We will take the time to get it right. We will also be appointing an advisory committee to assist us in our efforts. Over the coming months we will be talking with provincial and territorial governments and drawing on the knowledge of employers and community groups and people who have had experience in developing innovative approaches to child care across Canada.

Most important, we will talk to the experts. We will talk to the parents. We will find out their needs and their priorities for child care.

Canada's universal child care plan has been designed with two things in mind: the well-being of the children and the freedom that parents gain through real and meaningful child care options.

We know this is the right way to go because parents have told us so, including many in my riding. Parents like Kim Krett of Saskatoon wrote in support of our plan because, "It gives parents the confidence that they can choose what is best for the child and that they are capable of making the right decision for their child". Misty

Cey, as a professional dietitian and the mother of two, also of Saskatoon, supports our plan because it shows parents that we value their choice.

Kim and Misty made it clear that they know how to raise their own children. They do not need us to tell them how to do it, but what they do need from us is a bit of help. That is what Canada's universal child care plan provides.

In addition to a practical and direct financial benefit for all parents of preschoolers, our plan will promote the creation of a substantial number of flexible child care spaces by the people who truly understand the particular needs of local communities.

I call on all hon. members to reject the motion before us because it is not flexible and it is not universal, and to support the speedy adoption of this government's important initiative by supporting the budget.

• (1055)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member has laid out some ideas for Canadians to think about.

I am very concerned that there has not been full transparency in terms of the impact of the \$1,200. For instance, a \$20,000 income earner getting the \$1,200 actually on a net basis will only benefit about \$200 because \$1,000 of the \$1,200 will be either clawed back or charged as additional income taxes. Consider someone earning \$40,000. It increases to \$700, but when filing his or her tax return the person will still have to pay \$500 because the \$1,200 is taxable. Someone who makes \$100,000 actually gets a benefit of \$1,100 out of the \$1,200 that is being paid for the year. That person's increased taxes are only \$100. These facts are from the Caledon Institute, and the member well knows that.

I wonder if the member would agree that maybe we should be very careful to alert parents of children under age six that the amount is taxable and that other benefits may be clawed back or income taxes will increase. Because there is no withholding when the payments are made, they will have to pay some money back when they file their income tax returns.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, it is taxed on the lowest income earner. Most of all I want to say to the member that it is not about money. It is about child care. It is about people who want to raise their children and want a choice.

The parents who have come to us are not asking for a handout. They are not asking for money. They are just asking for the same choices that other parents have of sending their children to an institution or keeping them at home. They do not want others to choose what their taxpayer dollars go toward. As they are staying home and taking care of their own children, they want to have the flexibility to choose whomever they want to take care of their children, whether it be a grandparent or someone else.

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The member is probably as old as I am and would know that the child allowance was very well received in the days when our parents raised us. It may not have been much then. It was a significantly smaller amount than today. If he remembers, as I do, parents welcomed that payment.

It is not about the money as much as it is about child care. We want to give an option to parents who want to stay at home, those who home school their children or perhaps want to have a little extra money to put their children into child care of their choice.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. member.

First of all, family policies of course fall under provincial jurisdiction and, in our case, under that of Quebec.

Day care centres in Quebec are unlike any others in the world. From their inception, they became places for early detection, infant stimulation, socialization and education.

Our child care network works in partnership with CLSCs, private homes, youth centres, a system of agencies that support the child care networks and that provide excellent services adapted to young children.

The Conservative Party's current policy indicates that it is willing to respect the areas of provincial jurisdiction and to resolve the fiscal imbalance, in keeping with the themes of its election campaign.

Why does it not agree with a refundable tax credit, which is something that could help families and that would certainly be more fair for families? This is a tax measure that would respect provincial jurisdictions, including Quebec's, and that would support parents as well, but in a more fair manner. Furthermore, Quebec's jurisdictions would be respected.

● (1100)

[*English*]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, we respect provincial jurisdictions and that is why we are offering the program that we are today. I ask the member to encourage the other opposition parties to vote for it, because we are talking about a universal day care plan that will not be interfering in the provincial jurisdictions. We will be working with all of the stakeholders, parents, businesses and co-ops.

We want to create universal child care for parents in all provinces across Canada. We want to make this a truly universal child benefit.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the opposition day motion on child care.

This motion implies that the government is not keeping the promise it made to Canadians during the election campaign.

It suggests that Canadians were not aware of the two components of the universal child care plan: providing parents with an annual benefit of \$1,200 for each child under the age of six years and creating 25,000 day care spaces a year starting in 2007.

This plan will honour the bilateral child care agreements made by the previous government for one year.

When our Prime Minister said publicly during the election campaign that we were going to create our own child care plan—not the previous government's plan—he was not joking.

Canadians then took action and elected the Conservatives. We are respecting the democratic will.

The provinces and territories will receive full funding in 2006 and 2007, the transition period during which we will gradually terminate the child care agreements that were made.

During that year, Quebec will receive \$152.8 million. It will have the latitude it needs to invest its share of the federal funding in child care and the well-being of families.

I would note that only three provinces had signed funding agreements, and each of those agreements included a provision permitting either party to terminate the agreement on 12 months' notice.

I would also note that it is up to the provinces and territories to decide what child care strategy reflects the consensus of their populations.

As far as possible, the Government of Canada will respect the right of parents to choose what is best for their children and their families. We will respect the great diversity of this country, from one province to another and from one family to another.

The universal child care benefit amounts to \$1,200 paid directly to parents every year, so that they can make choices that meet the needs of their families. This benefit helps parents during a time when expenses are high and income is lower.

No two families are the same. Every family is unique in itself. They live on farms, in small municipalities, on reserves, on the coast, in the urban core and in the suburbs. As a government, our role is to help parents raise their children in the best possible way.

By supporting parents in the formidable job of raising children, a job that contributes to the development of the nation, we are encouraging them to do even better.

Starting in July, parents will receive \$100 a month for each child under the age of six years. That money will be taxable in the hands of the spouse with the lower income.

Parents may use the universal child care benefit in different ways. Parents may want to invest in a registered education savings plan for their children. Some parents may use it to enrol their children in a nursery school or junior kindergarten. Others may use it to pay for swimming lessons or to enrol in a sports league. Or this benefit may help a working parent to pay a family member or neighbour for child care. The benefit can also be applied to the child care expenses of a parent who works nights and weekends and who does not have access to daytime services.

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I would like to remind the House that the universal child care benefit will complement a range of federal benefits offered to Canadian families: the Canada child tax benefit and the national child benefit supplement, tax-free monthly payments to help families assume the costs of their children's education; the child care expense deduction, which allows parents to deduct the cost of child care when they are working or studying; and extended parental leave, which provides parents with income support for a maximum of one year when they decide to stay at home to care for a newborn or a child they have just adopted.

It is a real feat for certain parents to earn their living while trying to provide their children with the best possible care. Not all parents can entrust their children to established day care centres: sometimes that option is impossible because of their hours of work or the fact that they live in a rural community.

Statistics Canada recently released a report on child care in Canada. It mentions the wide spectrum of choices that families make in the area of child care. It also indicates that in spite of the increased number of mothers working outside the home, nearly half of parents decide to care for their children themselves in the home.

• (1105)

For those who cannot manage this, the report says that a growing number of parents turn to family members to act as caregivers for their children, and others to friends and neighbours as well. In fact, only 15% of preschool children are enrolled in established day care centres.

We know that, of all the provinces and territories, it is Quebec that has the highest proportion of preschool children in day care, at nearly 52%. That tells us that the cost is very reasonable: seven dollars per day per child. There seems to be a consensus among the people of Quebec that this solution is right for them, and the province is willing to support it.

The Government of Canada recognizes this diversity among families and within our federation itself. Each province is developing a child care strategy that suits its culture and its social policy.

That is why we are offering another solution which will be based on and enhance the nine-to-five child care service model. Starting next year, we are resolved to join with employers, communities and the other governments to create up to 25,000 new child care spaces every year all across Canada.

The plan is simple: we want to offer choices in terms of the design and establishment of child care services. No government can impose a national child care system that is strict and closed to change.

In the months ahead, the Government of Canada will be speaking with employers, small and large businesses, community organizations, the provinces and territories, and people knowledgeable about innovative child care strategies. We will talk to parents to find out their needs and priorities in this regard. Above all, we want to support Canadians and Quebecers in their important role of parent.

To close, I will mention that Canadians have voted for a government for which children are one of its five major priorities. Our objective is not to impose a solution, but to recognize the

diversity of our country and the great ingenuity to be found in each of our communities.

Canadian parents are the real experts on child care. Let us support their choices.

**Mr. Gilles-A. Perron (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I have two concerns this morning. The first is that I am wondering why we are discussing this motion since this is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

I heard what my Liberal colleague, among others, had to say. The inference is that provincial governments, with the exception of Quebec's, which has its own child care system, do not have the ability or the intelligence to set up such a day care system.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks about the involvement of the federal government in this area of provincial jurisdiction.

**Mr. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with one portion of my colleague's speech. Truly, it is impossible for a government to impose a solution, as the previous government wished to do.

For its part, the current government wants to propose a flexible approach that takes into account the needs of parents. In this regard, the government made a clear commitment in the election campaign and already it has put in place a program and undertaken, together with the provinces, to create additional child care spaces.

• (1110)

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the budget that was just unveiled rips \$806 million out of Quebec, money that could have been used for child care. That is about half of what the Quebec government spent in 2003 and 2004 for child care services. In Ontario, \$449 million, in just one year alone in 2007, will be eliminated for child care. That totals \$1.3 billion being taken away from child care services and being replaced by about one-fifth of that \$1.3 billion.

Will the new government use part of the \$250 million in 2007 to continue funding child care centres that have just been established this year? These are much needed services for children.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the current government's plan is very clear. The government will allocate \$250 million to create additional spaces and address the actual situation parents face. It is all well and good to make speeches and toss around figures, saying that a given province is being deprived of this or that. We took an approach that will give real, immediate results for parents.

I myself have three young children. I come from a rural area. I can say that the flexible, concrete, practical measures that the government has proposed will help families that are not necessarily covered by so-called omnibus programs.

It is also important to mention that according to a recent Environics poll, many Quebecers are satisfied with this program. Hon. members should stop tossing around figures and let us present a flexible approach. That will allow us to implement this program, which will address the situation and create day care spaces.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I hope the hon. member recognizes that as part of the government he has to represent all of Canada and not just rural Quebec.

Francophones outside Quebec who live in rural areas rely heavily on this plan in order to create spaces, pay people reasonable salaries and have the flexibility to enter into negotiations with the provinces.

A centre is currently being built in my riding in Baie Sainte-Marie, Nova Scotia. However, the money for operations and salaries has been withdrawn, in order to keep talking about these issues. If we want to give parents a real choice, as the hon. member and the minister say, then we must also give them options so that there is a choice to make. The option of creating spaces in rural areas by using tax credits has been dropped.

There are no major companies here and there that will create these centres. The centres have to be created by the community. The responsibility of the federal government is to work in cooperation with the provinces to help these communities build, operate and run these early childhood education centres.

**Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite raised an important point and I agree with what he said.

Indeed, consultations will have to be held in the communities. The current government is not claiming that it will sit down only with the provinces and territories. The areas concerned, as well as the not for profit agencies and small and medium businesses, will be consulted, as will the experts on this matter, parents.

Consultations will be held. The government has a real desire to do so. If we allow the government to go ahead with its policy then I think the problems will be resolved because real people will be consulted.

• (1115)

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak today about respect and what is needed to provide equitable child care services for all families. Among other things, we must speak about respect: respect for how Quebec is different, for our jurisdictions and powers, for Quebec's financial needs for its day care system, and most importantly, respect for families. We also need to provide more support for families so that they can realize their desire to have children.

Quebec has given a lot of thought to this issue; it has found its solutions and wants its differences to be respected.

Family policy does not fall within the competence of the federal Parliament. Today's debate strikes us as surreal: the Liberals want to convince us that their family policy is the best, the Conservatives want to convince us that their family policy is better than the Liberals', and the New Democrats want to convince us that their family policy is better than that of the Liberals or the Conservatives. But what the three federalist parties need to understand is that family policy does not fall within the competence of this Parliament but

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rather of Quebec and the provinces. For us in the Bloc Québécois, the best family policy is the family policy that Quebecers will decide upon on their own; in short, the policy that they themselves will choose.

It is very important for us, therefore, to respect our areas of jurisdiction. We have a day care system that is really in the vanguard of all that is done in North America. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said the following, "There are, however, positive developments that are important to underline: The extraordinary advance made by Quebec, which has launched one of the most ambitious and interesting early education and care policies in North America. ... none of these provinces showed the same clarity of vision as Quebec in addressing the needs of young children and families".

In order to have this day care system, of course, Quebec really needs a lot of funding. What we should talk about, therefore, is how to deal with this problem by settling the issue of the fiscal imbalance.

We have established our child care system and it is also a national early learning and child care system.

This Liberal motion says that we need proactive intergovernmental activity to create a child care system, but in our view this is wrong. Quebecers have never asked Canadians for permission to develop a child care system. In our view, there is no question of that changing.

It is no accident that family policy is an exclusively provincial jurisdiction. We just need to remember that it is closely connected to a society's intrinsic culture and values.

All of that seems quite striking to me. This family allowance the Conservatives want to give, the \$1,200 they say is equivalent to child care services, will never, in our opinion, amount to one. At best, it is a family allowance. They are forgetting the whole socialization and education component of a child care service. It must be seen as an integrated unit which prepares our children for school and their future. Quebec's day care network is integrated with a child care network in an educational setting and provides for socialization. Many studies have shown that our children will thus be prevented from dropping out of school and will avoid a number of learning problems.

So, clearly, Quebecers will not accept the thrust of the motion, which is to have the federal government substantially increase its activities in this regard and provide Quebec families with preschool education programs. We can look after that ourselves, and education, like family policy, is a provincial matter. It is an integrated whole, and day care centres come under Quebec family policy, which includes parental leave and family support, where child care services come in. Separating child care services from family policy is a serious mistake.

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• (1120)

We have no doubt that the Government of Quebec, the government closest to the people, can best understand the needs and determine the values and priorities of its society.

I quote the OECD once more:

As the experience of Quebec has shown, a rapid increase in expenditure is not enough—

Increasing spending alone is not enough to create day care spaces.

—building administrative capacity is a key issue. Detailed strategizing and planning are necessary to expand a large system efficiently and coherently.

Citing the example of the recent budget tabled by the Conservatives, it provides for \$175 million for day care. That really falls short. We do not think it is up to businesses or non-profit organizations completely separate from a network to create an effective day care system. This sort of thing was tried in Ontario and elsewhere, and it seems obvious to us that businesses lack the administrative capability. It is just not their job to establish day care services.

A system like Quebec's, which is managed by social economy enterprises and a board made up of parents, can truly meet needs and monitor changes in those needs. If a pan-Canadian system were put in place, we can imagine how complicated it would be to try to solve problems that have to do with people's day-to-day lives.

We reject federal standards in areas that do not come under federal jurisdiction. The motion mentions federal criteria for the quality and universality of child care and even the educational content, because the government wants child care facilities to promote child development. At least that is what they say. In our view, this federal approach is totally unrealistic and runs counter to our values and priorities. A Canada-wide network of child care facilities could not work. For the Bloc Québécois, it is out of the question.

Regarding the Canada child tax benefit, Quebec already rejected a federal family policy. The motion applauds the Liberals' income support programs, totalling more than \$10 billion per year for families with children—that is, the Canada child tax benefit. I would like to remind this House that Quebec refused to implement the federal benefit and piggyback it onto its own programs.

I would remind this House of Quebec's position:

[Quebec] is opposed to implementing any pan-Canadian social program, such as the "national" child benefit, as this would mean that Quebec would not have full authority in this area.... The Government of Quebec has exclusive jurisdiction over social policies...and...intends to exercise full authority over this area in Quebec. Quebec therefore called on the federal government to transfer tax points or funding equivalent to federal expenditures for the child benefit in Quebec and any funding allocated to meet the goals of its family policy....

The motion says nothing about Quebec's opposition, even though Quebec's refusal was made clear in 1997 at the federal-provincial conference of ministers of social services in Toronto.

Are the supporters of this motion not aware that Quebec rejected the federal social program? The federal government created this program despite the division of powers. We cannot accept this motion as it is worded.

On the issue of child care, all Quebec wants is a new unconditional transfer and the possibility to opt out of any pan-Canadian program.

Certainly, the Conservatives' rejection of the agreement between Quebec and the federal government has increased the fiscal imbalance.

• (1125)

This has also reduced the Government of Quebec's ability to fulfill its responsibilities, which include family policy.

It is imperative for the Bloc Québécois that Quebec recover the \$807 million shortfall. There could be a new federal funding program for child care. There could be a specific agreement with Quebec. It could be part of fixing the fiscal imbalance. The Bloc could not support a motion that eliminates these three avenues right away. At least this agreement did not impose any conditions and did allow Quebec to pursue its development.

As for the \$1,200 payment to parents, the Bloc Québécois is not opposed to the principle of this family allowance. Families certainly need funds, money and support. Direct payment to parents, however, is a form of interference in our fields of jurisdiction, although the Conservatives have promised to respect Quebec's fields of jurisdiction. This allowance is taxable and is more to the advantage of well-off families than low-income families.

We are very disappointed that the government has not accepted the suggestion by the Bloc Québécois to have a refundable income tax credit. That kind of tax measure did not interfere and enabled us to grant a larger amount to disadvantaged families. In our opinion, this was a much more equitable solution, because it made it possible to help families in need.

While the hon. member was talking about flexibility, it is a shame that her government did not display any in this case. The only shortcoming the government agreed to correct concerns the reduction of benefits that the program would have entailed, including the Canada child tax benefit and the GST refund, which will be amended so that the \$1,200 allowance does not penalize those most in need. Still, at the end of the year, when families have to declare this income, calculate the tax on it and then repay the government, they will realize the extent of the damage. This money will already be spent and long gone but the corresponding income tax will still have to be paid.

Quebec has always refused to let its family policy be decided by Ottawa. With these initiatives, the problem remains unsolved. Will Quebec agree to amend its laws and adapt its social programs to compensate for federal interference? We do not know. We do know, however, that the Government of Quebec said that the \$1,200 will be taxable. That will again create new disputes, new tugs-of-war between Quebec and Ottawa. All this arises from this Conservative initiative, which is inconsistent with all our demands and wishes not to have our fields of jurisdiction invaded.

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In Quebec, the huge coalition to maintain the child care network in Quebec, which represents over 200,000 members, is asking that the Conservative measure to be replaced with a refundable tax credit, a solution similar to the one proposed by the Bloc. The Conservative initiative has been widely criticized throughout Canada. It is too bad that the government is stubbornly refusing to amend it and correct its shortcomings. It is time to realize that, where issues like this are concerned, Quebec and Canada are working at cross purposes.

• (1130)

Quebeckers treasure their early childhood centres. As a woman and a mother, I had the privilege of knowing that my children were benefiting from quality services that were accessible at a reasonable price. I was able to witness, first hand, all the benefits for working mothers, who do not have to worry when they leave their children at a day care centre that provides quality services and opportunities for children to socialize and learn.

For Quebeckers, the obstacle to the development of the network is financial and, until sovereignty is achieved, it hinges on resolving the fiscal imbalance. Obviously, we will revisit this issue. Based on the text of this motion, the development of the child care network would fall under a federal child care program.

We understand that, for Canadians outside of Quebec, this may be logical and acceptable. For us, however, this is unacceptable. We already have such a network that works very well. We are at the forefront in this area. This whole child care issue once again illustrates the difference between Quebec and Canada.

In conclusion, as long as Quebec is part of Canada, it will prevent Canada from developing the coherence desired by the rest of the Canadian public, and Canada will prevent Quebec from developing at its own pace. It would be better for us to be good neighbours than a bad couple. Our relations could only be better.

In addition, I would like to put forward an amendment to this motion. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Montcalm, "That the motion be amended by adding after the word 'deserve' the following expression: 'by giving Quebec the unconditional right to opt out with full compensation'".

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform the House and the member that, pursuant to Standing Order 85, such an amendment must first receive the consent of the sponsor of the motion. I would therefore ask the member for St. Paul's if she consents to the introduction of this amendment.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No, Mr. Speaker. There has been no consultation. The answer is therefore no, absolutely not.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 85, the amendment is not acceptable.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, since the member wanted to deal with the issues as they relate to child care in Quebec, the member probably will be in a position to comment on the situation that will occur should the government proceed with its proposal to provide \$250 million in tax credits, \$10,000 to each company that is prepared to take it up, which it is estimated would create some 25,000 spaces in a year.

The member has told the House, and we have heard it many times, that the Government of Canada does not have jurisdiction over child care and that the money should simply go to the provinces. It does raise an interesting question. Because the federal government does not have jurisdiction over child care it means it cannot set standards for child care spaces.

I am wondering whether the member would care to comment. If we give tax credits to corporations to set up child care spaces, what guarantee will we have that those child care spaces will not be just glorified babysitting as opposed to early learning and childhood care facilities?

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, I do not believe in the creation of 125,000 daycare spaces.

First, experience has shown, especially in Ontario, that not all of these spaces will be created. I believe there is very little control over the quality of these daycare services.

According to the agreement negotiated between the former government and Quebec, which included an unconditional transfer of funds, the province could create its own daycare network according to its own priorities. By closely monitoring the development of these daycares, the province could ensure that they were located in suitable areas, served the population appropriately, and offered quality services.

It also made the universality of daycare services possible. In Quebec, there are daycares that cost \$7 per day. Among other things, this enables women to enter the workplace who would be unable to do so with \$30, \$35 or \$40 daycares. They will make a major economic contribution to society.

[English]

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the member from the Bloc. I visited Quebec last year during my tour to hear from people across the country on a national child care program. We all know that Quebec has one of the best programs going. It is very comprehensive in that it includes parents in every aspect of the delivery of that program.

We hear the government suggest that its approach will provide more choice, so I would like to hear from the member. Will \$100 a month per child for children under six and the approach to tax credits to build more spaces actually provide more choice?

The government splits hairs on the experts that we are so-called listening to. It seems to me that in Quebec the experts are parents themselves, who rose up initially demanding a provincial child care program and who have now taken ownership of that program by sitting on various boards and commissions to govern those programs. Could the member tell us about the involvement of parents, how many are involved and in what way, in the wonderful and successful child care program in Quebec?

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[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, when parents sit on the board of the child care network they can control everything to do with child care. They control the food children eat and the education program they receive. Child care is not a parking lot for children. It is not a question of leaving your child with someone who goes on with their daily activities. It is a place where children are taken in hand and introduced to the basics of reading and writing.

The child care boards develop their child care programs according to their environment. In some low-income areas, where parents have a lower level of education, the contribution of child care is very important. Child care allows children to learn things they might not learn at home.

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe there is a desire in the House to meet the needs of our children and families. I appreciate the comments made by the hon. member across the way.

My wife and I raised five children, who are grown now, and we have two grandchildren and a half. Families are very important to me and to all Canadians. I recognize the passion expressed by the member that universal child care is very important to her, as it is to everyone in the House.

The question before us, though, is whether what is being proposed in the budget is good. It will provide Canadian families with \$1,200 for each child under six. We had five children, so this would have been a huge help for our family. There are families, whether they live in cities or rural areas, that need help and need choice. We cannot create something for only a small segment of Canadians.

Canadians need a choice. The needs in child care are diverse. I am sure the hon. member would recognize that. Recognizing how unique and diverse each situation is, would she not recognize that all families need to have a choice in types of support and child care spaces?

What we have proposed is an opportunity for everyone who has children and needs help to receive it. Every Canadian family will be receiving help. Does she not support providing families with choice?

● (1140)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, it is good to offer families a choice, but the choice has to be real. It seems to us that giving a \$1,200 taxable allowance does not help provide child care service. A family allowance is being offered as support for a family in which the mother or father stays at home. This small amount of money certainly does not allow that family to use a child care service.

In Quebec, the average daily fee for child care for one child is roughly \$28. What is more, most of the families in Quebec who use child care are single parent families. They are the poorest in our society. They are the ones who need support and child care services the most.

I agree that we must be flexible, but let us really be flexible. Let us create child care spaces and offer a choice of high quality spaces for families. Nothing can replace an integrated network of child care.

That is the conclusion we came to in Quebec. That is why we implemented this child care network. It allows women to get off welfare since they have access to \$7 a day child care and can become active members of society again. Our formula does not deprive stay-at-home mothers of anything. We have the necessary flexibility. That is the Quebec formula. We respond to women's desire to be part of the labour market. We have to stick closely to meeting the needs of our people.

[*English*]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Sault Ste. Marie.

Last week in Trinity—Spadina, I was at a wonderful event with many happy children and parents. It was the unveiling of Kensington Kids, a wonderful, new, community based, not for profit child care and early learning centre. Parents and children across Canada need affordable, accessible, quality centres like Kensington Kids. When the children entered the centre, I watched as they immediately started to laugh and play. Both the kids and the parents had beautiful smiles on their faces.

These parents have been waiting for child care for a long time. Kensington Kids child care centre is their choice. In fact, those parents helped create this child care centre. Because it is community based and is set in a public school, it is the parents who are on the board of directors. One of the parents, Lynne Woolcott, is the chairperson.

It is parents who want the best for their kids. These parents created the kind of child care centre they want for their children. It is their choice. They dreamed about this centre for a long time. It is based in a community school. The kindergarten teacher, Sandy Banting, explained to us the importance of early learning and child care. She said that kids who go to this centre enter kindergarten ready to learn and have a much better academic performance in grades 1 and 2 as a result.

A really cute little boy named Ryan asked me to give a message to the Prime Minister of Canada and to this House of Commons. He said he wants his little brother to be able to join him next year. That was his dream. I said “was”, but that is his dream and maybe that dream will not be fulfilled.

Parents and kids in my riding as well as those all around Toronto and right across Canada have been disappointed time and time again when we have tried to create new child care spaces. We have had 12 years of empty promises from the Liberals since the first time they promised a national child care program back in 1993. Finally last year, with the minority government, we saw some action and some federal funding. With that action, Toronto was able to give the green light to Kensington Kids, with the best start funding, to create badly needed new child care spaces.

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Unfortunately, the child care agreements were not enshrined in legislation by the Liberals, so Kensington Kids did not secure multi-year funding. That means it will have no funding after this year. These happy, smiling children may be booted out by this government. They may be out in the cold. These children cannot wait another 12 years. They deserve better and so do their parents. Their dreams and their parents' choices have been crushed by this callous budget.

These parents and kids and early learning and child care experts face the real impact of the government's bogus \$1,200 choice in child care scheme. As we have shown time and time again, this scheme provides no choice and no child care. It does not even provide the full \$1,200. The government has dropped some of the clawbacks, but it has failed to protect the allowance in the child tax benefit, so it is still taxable.

As well, the government plans to take away the young child benefit. This young child supplement is \$250. The government is reducing this allowance for the working families that need it most. This government is delivering more to the stay at home spouses of wealthy Canadians, not the working families who need child care, and certainly not to the kids. It is certainly not delivering to Kensington Kids. They had no reason to smile yesterday and they have no reason to smile today.

It is the same old story. This is another government that gives with one hand and takes with the other. With this budget, most working families will see only a couple of dollars a day at best. That is barely enough for diapers, let alone child care. It certainly is not enough to fund a quality centre like Kensington Kids.

• (1145)

This scheme is a cruel joke. Maybe we can call it a choice of diapers plan because at least diapers are available in shops but child care spaces are not. Thousands of kids are on waiting lists. This country can do better. We have waited too long and have had too many disappointments, and closing down a new and badly needed child care centre would be the cruelest joke of all.

For the sake of children, for Kensington kids and the parents, families and communities in my riding and all across Canada, New Democrats have been working on a three point plan: multi-year funding to create and sustain new child care spaces; the full \$1,200 to families through the child tax benefit so it is not taxed back; and entrenching quality, accessible, affordable, not for profit child care in legislation, with the option, of course, for Quebec to opt out.

The Liberal opposition motion that we are debating today is well-meaning but it is vague and flawed. It is designed to let the government off the hook. It has a lot of bluster but not enough teeth. The Liberals may be distracted by the leadership race, I do not know. They seem to be more interested in blaming the NDP. They cannot get over the fact that it is Canadians who are tired of empty promises and corrupt government.

The motion today opens the door for the funding of corporate, big box child care rather than the public, not for profit, community based child care programs. The NDP would support a motion that specified not for profit child care. No taxpayer money should go to big box

profiteers. We would also support a motion that required government accountability on child care.

Therefore, I would move, seconded by the hon. member for Sault Ste. Marie, that the motion be amended by inserting "not for profit" before the word "facilities" in the last part of the motion and adding to the last part of the motion a new section, which would read as follows, "That the House urge the government to ensure that funds designated for early learning and child care are spent to deliver high quality, universally accessible, affordable and not for profit child care spaces, and that this House ask the government to report to Parliament in order to provide for transparency and accountability on how funds designated for child care have been spent by the end of the 2006 fiscal year".

I urge all members of the House to do the best we can for the children of this country. We have the power to make children smile. Let us use that power wisely.

• (1150)

**The Deputy Speaker:** As I did with respect to the previous suggested Bloc amendment, it is my duty to inform the House that in order to properly move any amendment on opposition days, the amendment must have the consent of the mover of the motion.

Therefore, pursuant to Standing Order 85, I would ask the mover of the motion, the member for St. Paul's, whether she gives consent for this amendment to be put.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** There is no permission on the part of the member for St. Paul's so we will proceed to questions and comments following the remarks of the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina. The hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of concerns and the first one is with regard to the proposed tax credit that the government is offering to companies to create child care spaces.

The issue has to do with how we determine whether there will be regulatory type guidelines to ensure we do not have just glorified babysitting, which is what the OECD basically characterized existing child care in Canada, other than for the Quebec model. It is of concern. Babysitting is not what we need. We need child care.

The second and maybe more important question is, admittedly, a political question but an important one. I think it is important that the member explain why the NDP supported the defeat of the government knowing that it would kill the five year program. Why is it that during the election campaign the NDP did not make the case to Canadians that they would lose these early learning and child care spaces, particularly in Ontario?

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**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the member has chosen to use this issue, which is really, at the end of the day, about children and working families, and tries to blame the NDP. It was not the NDP that voted down the government. Canadians who were tired of empty promises and tired of corruption made that decision.

After all, it was the former prime minister who said that he wanted the election to be on the Gomery commission. It was perhaps two months later but I think the judgment of Canadians would be the same. Whether it was two months before or two months later, I do not see any difference.

However, let us get back to the question of \$1,200. Unfortunately, because the \$1,200 is taxable and because the child supplement of \$250 is being eliminated, at the end of the day this \$1,200 is not universal. At best, it is less than \$1,000 and after taxes, whether provincial taxes or federal income taxes, there may not be a whole lot left.

Children need regulated, non-profit, high quality child care and that is not available through babysitters because most of them are not early childhood educators who have been trained in colleges for many years.

• (1155)

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of remarks by the member for Trinity—Spadina that I found particularly interesting.

First, let me explain something for the member since she comes from a very urban riding. The situation is somewhat different in rural Canada. I have some good friends, who I mentioned in my S. O. 31 on Tuesday. Andrew is a farmer and Vicki stays at home with their three children, all of whom are under age six.

To drive from Willowbrook to Yorkton, which would be the nearest centre for child care, would be roughly a 30 mile drive. For this couple to drive, because Andrew also works for a feedlot, they would have to buy an extra car. They would have to spend the extra money on gas, which is over a buck a litre on average most days now. When we begin to add all that up, even if Vicki were to work, it would be very difficult.

Under the program that the member was proposing, this family would receive absolutely nothing, whereas under the current government, they will be receiving support.

Why is the hon. member proposing a plan that would clearly discriminate against people in rural and remote regions, giving them absolutely nothing? Why would she support a plan that would discriminate against rural Canada?

**Ms. Olivia Chow:** Mr. Speaker, I have visited many parts of rural Ontario and I have talked with many farmers.

During the seeding period and harvest period, I am sure Vicki would welcome some kind of support so she too can help her partner in the fields. I do not know what kind of farm they have but I know all hands are on deck during those periods of time.

Rural child care could be in a different style. We are not talking about one size fits all. We are talking about flexible community based child care.

There is home based child care. Vicki would then not need to drive all the way to another child care centre. A group of parents can come together and operate a child care centre. However, the child care centre should be licensed and of high quality so our kids are taken care of properly. We are talking about flexible community based child care and not the kind that is envisioned by the Conservative government.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this important subject this morning and to put a few thoughts on the record.

I spent a lot of time in the last Parliament working on this agenda, travelling the country, listening to parents, communities and advocates and hearing their very sincere requests for a national child care program.

I have to say at the outset that I am very concerned about the agenda of the government. I became even more concerned on Tuesday when I looked up in the gallery and saw Mr. Harris, the former premier of Ontario, listening to the budget being read. It was a bit of déjà vu all over again.

I was in Queen's Park in 1995 when the provincial Conservatives delivered their first budget and I must say that the damage is still reverberating in that province. It was the beginning of the dismantling and the consequent difficulties in our public education system, our post-secondary education system, our health care system and the list goes on. When all of these very valuable programs were put into place and substantial public money invested, they were challenged in the same way as the Conservatives and their supporters attack a new national child care program today.

However, I do want to address the inadequacy of the Liberal effort. The Liberals had over 13 years to build, thoughtfully and confidently, the best early learning and child care program in the world and to fund it generously with the surpluses they had generated year over year. Instead, they waited until the last hour, pushed by New Democrats in a minority government, to introduce a very half-hearted, lukewarm effort that was easy for the Conservative government to walk away from.

I tried and my caucus tried to get the Liberals to take some leadership with the provinces, in an accountable, transparent, full court press, and enshrine a national child care program in legislation, rooted in the principles put forward by communities, advocates and parents, a program based on quality, universality, accessibility, developmental and available to people challenged with disabilities, and a program delivered through a not for profit network across the country.

I met with the previous minister on many occasions and spoke to him precisely about this and asked him to consider our contribution. I think he was very sincere in listening to me and trying to factor that in but, alas, it seems there were forces afoot in the Liberal government of that day that would not allow him to go the distance. If it had been adequately funded, this would have provided real choice to families everywhere, in cities, towns, rural, northern and remote Canada.

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I travelled the country last year meeting with and listening to parents, communities, advocates and experts. The experts we listened to were parents who had become frustrated with the lack of opportunity and choice for them in terms of child care and became active and involved. Some of them became involved in child care for their own children and now are grandparents fighting for child care for their grandchildren. They spoke overwhelmingly in support of a national child care program. They did not say that parents were not the primary care givers and ultimately responsible, or that parents were not good teachers and nurturers, but that many parents wanted more and needed help because of the changing nature of our society and our economy. Two parents working with no extended family close by and not sure who their neighbours were wanted assurances of quality, safety, consistency and learning.

● (1200)

People know the value of early learning, people like Charles Coffey, David Dodge and others from the financial world who speak about this. They talk about the value of early learning in later life as children become adults and participate in the economy and the way that they can contribute if they get that early start. They know the nature of work and that the workplace is changing, which calls for creativity and flexibility.

I was in Saskatchewan where I heard from farm families who asked me to make sure that they were not left out. Farming can often be dangerous. With both parents working, oftentimes off the farm, they want a safe, secure place to have their children nurtured and involved in early learning activities.

The offer in the budget by the government is totally inadequate. To emphasize and expand on the remarks by one parent of the argument made, "This will not provide more choice. It will reduce the potential in fact for greater choice". Look at the response of a couple of families in my town of Sault Ste. Marie after the budget came out the other day.

One mother said, "I am a mother of three. I have a three year old, a two year old and a newborn baby of nine weeks. I am currently in subsidized housing and on maternity leave from my job. My husband has made the choice to stay home and raise our family. I am what you call a typical low income family here in Sault Ste. Marie. This is all well and good to say, but Mr. Harper is not helping low income Canadian families with his \$1,200 per year per child subsidy. Even if I wanted a tax break, even if I wanted to put my children into day care, I could not afford it, because unsubsidized day care costs on the average \$25 a day or more and only if the space is available".

Here is another situation, and I dare say all members have the same situation in their ridings of people who have children but they are over six years of age. This is from a family in my community, "As you know, the province is using the last year of federal funding to fund the next four years and therefore, the cost per space has decreased significantly". This is from a person working in child care, "In Sault Ste. Marie this is having a negative over all aspects of child care, including the elimination of summer programming for school age children".

A woman with two kids over six wrote to say that she gets no allowance from the government and now hears that the programs for

the summer have been scrapped because of the funding cuts. She does not know what she will do.

People in other communities are saying the same thing. A woman in Sudbury said, "It will take a lot more than a 1% reduction in the GST or a \$100 a month child care allowance to endear greater Sudbury voters to the fiscal agenda of the Stephen Harper government".

"A hundred dollars a month does not even come close to paying for a month of child care", said Chris Kattle, a father of three children, "Creating more spaces is a better way to go. The way things are now, we have to give up our spaces every June and find new ones in September. There is no continuity or consistency for our girls".

In the April 12, 2006 issue of *The London Free Press*, a letter to the editor stated:

While the Liberal program, like most of their promises, was too little, too late and too long between promise and delivery, it did move the affordable day-care challenge forward. The Tory program shuts down those gains and turns back the clock.

Their proposal, while allowing people to keep a bit more money in their own hands (the rich more so than others), does nothing to create the spaces needed, to ensure the spaces are licensed and to make them more affordable.

The City of London's research supports the position put forward by NDP MP Irene Mathysen that more people can benefit from the same dollars by expanding the current program rather than shutting it down. Stephen Harper's Tories ignored ideology to appoint—

● (1205)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The member several times has quoted from a letter in which the Prime Minister has been referred to by his name. Members cannot do indirectly what they are not supposed to do directly.

I failed to call the member to order on the first two occasions. I have since had a consultation on the matter because I was not sure exactly what the rule was, but I would ask the member not to do that again. If he must read letters in which the Prime Minister is referred to, he could refer to him as the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, the letter ends with:

[The Prime Minister]'s Tories ignored ideology to appoint a Liberal to their cabinet, so how about asking them to rethink their approach to child care?

Let us not play politics with our children. We all know parents are the best and primary caregivers of their children. That is why we are not opposed to giving them more money to do that, but \$100 a month taxed and clawed back is unjust in its design, giving more to the rich than the poor. It will not pay for child care or create one new child care space, so choice will not be enhanced.

The tax credit to industry will not create more spaces either. We saw what happened, or did not happen, in Ontario. It will most certainly not create new spaces in rural, northern or remote Canada and therefore, no new choice for parents.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed listening to what the member had to say.

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I am actually very blessed to have a lot of experience in this field and a lot of understanding. My wife is in ECE, as is my sister-in-law. They have a long history of working in licensed child care centres. As such, I have a couple of questions, but first a comment specifically relating to my riding.

My riding is a big winner under this plan. The riding of Peterborough was slated to receive \$2.5 million and will now receive about \$7.8 million. My riding is very happy as a rural riding to be treated fairly and equitably with other ridings around the country.

I wonder if the hon. member is aware that licensed day care centres often employ people who are not ECEs, people who have no formal training whatsoever in day care. As such, they are no more qualified than anyone else is to provide early learning.

I would like to hear a comment from the member with respect to that.

• (1210)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly be interested in seeing how this magic happened in Peterborough. I am sure every community across the province will be phoning Peterborough to find out how that in fact happened. It is certainly not happening in my community. It is certainly not happening in Sudbury, London, or Windsor.

In fact, I am told that across the country the two biggest provinces are experiencing decreases in funding, some \$269 million in Quebec and close to half a billion dollars in Ontario. Where Ontario is going to get the extra money to actually give Peterborough more is something I would like to hear more about.

**Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member how the efforts of the NDP in a minority government influenced the commitment in the 2004 Liberal platform for \$5 billion in early learning and child care.

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, it is really a very simple answer. We made the Liberals deliver. The Liberals had been promising that since 1993, in four Parliaments, and they did not deliver. What was the difference in Parliament in 2004? In 2004 the difference was a minority government with a significant presence by New Democrats who believed in a national child care program.

The very simple answer is we made the Liberals deliver.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to the statements the member made in his speech.

To begin, as you know, we have a daycare program in Quebec. It is in place, it provides daycare services in rural areas—where I am from—and it gives people access to services.

We are somewhat opposed to the NDP position, which calls for a national daycare network. We already have a Quebec daycare network. Currently, we are requesting full compensation from the federal government, money that can then be transferred directly to the Quebec daycare network.

Why refuse this request? Why hire more bureaucrats in Ottawa to supervise the daycare network in Quebec when we are already

running it ourselves? We are only asking for full compensation so we can support our existing network.

Where does the member stand on this issue? Does he agree that Quebec should receive full compensation to support its daycare network, which is not for profit and is partially in line with his position? Basically, we want Quebec and the provinces to support this network.

[*English*]

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I agree. I think Quebec should be compensated. Quebec should be congratulated. Quebec is the model that we are looking at. It is not perfect. There are some challenges, as we all know, in that particular program, but Quebec has spent the money. Quebec has made the commitment. Quebec listened to its parents. Parents in Quebec rose up and demanded a provincial child care program. Quebec delivered, and it delivered in a really creative, flexible way. As the member said, there is child care in rural Quebec, in northern Quebec and in remote Quebec.

The criticism of the national child care program made by the Conservatives is that choice is not being provided in those parts of the country when in fact we would provide choice. There would be choice provided if it was done properly. To simply give parents \$100 more a month that will be taxed and clawed back and to talk about a tax credit for industry to create more spaces will not create choice.

Quebec has the answer. Let us look at Quebec. Let us compensate it for the good work it has done, and then let us focus on the rest of the country and get it done there.

• (1215)

[*Translation*]

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first speech in the House since the last election

First of all, I would like to thank the voters of LaSalle—Émard for placing their trust in me for the sixth consecutive time.

[*English*]

I rise today to discuss the importance of the Government of Canada honouring and building on the early learning and child care agreements signed with all 10 provinces over the course of the last year. Today the government is moving to implement a different plan, one that has at its core a theoretical payment of \$1,200. There is a tactical elegance to this proposal. It is easy to understand. It is easy to remember. Furthermore, families need support, and I for one will not argue when it is provided.

However, the government claims that these cheques will provide tangible and fair assistance to families who need it. Furthermore, simply by distributing these cheques, the government says it will be giving Canadians a choice in child care. Again, the tactical elegance is who could possibly be against choice.

Therefore, in my remarks let me address not the government's political tactics, but on the basis of substance, the two important questions that we need to deal with. Is the government's plan truly fair? Does it provide real choice?

As the Caledon Institute of Social Policy predicted, and unfortunately it predicted correctly, "The new child care allowance will be a flawed scheme creating deep inequities". For example, the Conservatives are going to cancel a young child supplement which goes to the most needy families. Why? They are going to do it to partially pay for the new benefits for better off families. They are doing this in the same budget that has actually increased income taxes for low income Canadians.

It is difficult to understand the perverse thinking that would take money out of the pockets of the working poor so that their better off brethren might benefit.

[Translation]

When we take a closer look at the proposed annual benefit, it boils down to a few dollars per day after taxes. That is fine if we wish to leave our child at the day care for 40 minutes per day and no longer.

For some families, especially low-income families, this benefit heralded by the government will be even smaller after taxes and clawbacks of other government benefits.

It amounts to a few dollars per day to help parents raise their children, whether they go to day care or remain at home. What choices do individuals have with these few dollars per day?

[English]

Giving parents a few dollars a day does not provide choice. It is not a child care strategy. It is not a child care solution. It does little to help those with children in care and it does nothing to help those who have trouble finding affordable quality care for their children.

Over the course of the last number of years, the federal government has pursued and implemented initiatives that were designed to make a real and positive difference in the lives of Canadian families.

We created the child tax benefit, over \$10 billion a year in crucial income support to some three million families. We created the national child benefit. We created the young child supplement, so that families who need help most get it. We expanded maternity and parental leave benefits, so that mothers or fathers can spend up to a year at home with their babies. During the past two years, as the member for St. Paul's has said, we reached an agreement with every province to put in place a nationwide system of early learning and child care based on the principles of quality, accessibility, universality and development.

The member for York Centre and I travelled to provincial capitals to sign these agreements. Child care workers, families, volunteers, provincial premiers of all political parties, and ministers of all political stripes were there to welcome the birth of this program. Yet, the new federal Conservative government has attempted to characterize it as the state interfering in the parenting decisions of Canadian families.

This is not about and has never been about government telling Canadian parents how to raise their children. The government demonstrates an abysmal lack of understanding of how Canadians live today and the challenges that many families face when they make that allegation. Parents make their own decisions and what

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they have decided, out of necessity or out of choice, we ignore at the expense of the next generation.

At the present time, well over half of all Canadian children age five and under are in child care of some sort. Too often this occurs against virtually insurmountable odds, arising out of the difficulty in finding or affording quality care. When parents cannot find quality care, their children suffer and the family suffers.

A national child care program, in which all governments cooperate, is the nation standing behind the choice that more and more families have already made. Handing over a couple of dollars a day to Canadian families is not going to give them the ability to afford quality care, nor is a grant to build new spaces without recognizing the ongoing costs of operating those spaces anything more than a political patch for a deeply human need.

In short, the government speaks of providing choice, but it is a false choice that it is offering Canadians. It is a false choice it is offering families in need. Whereas, the national program that was signed last year by the federal government and all of the provinces provides the foundation for that choice.

So far in the national debate that is underway, concern has been focused primarily on the need to create new spaces, but as the member for St. Paul's said earlier, there is another aspect to the debate that is every bit as important. It is an aspect that in my belief has been insufficiently touched upon since the election. It is the need for early learning, the recognition of the importance to be paid to a child's development in the crucial years of zero to six.

As Dr. Fraser Mustard and the Hon. Margaret McCain said in their study entitled "The Early Years":

We consider, in view of this evidence, that the period of early child development is equal to or, in some cases, greater in importance for the quality of the next generation than the periods children and youth spend in education or postsecondary education.

I would hope that the recognition of the importance of early learning in terms of its unique benefit to the child as a person would be enough to carry the debate, but in case it is not, let us look at a harder equation, one which might appeal to the government.

● (1220)

The Governor of the Bank of Canada has said that early learning is the single most important investment a society can make in its own future. James Heckman, the Nobel laureate economist, put it as follows:

We cannot afford to postpone investing in children until they become adults, nor can we wait until they reach school age—a time when it may be too late to intervene.

He went on to say:

Since learning is a dynamic process, it is most effective when it begins at a young age and continues through adulthood.

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Finally, a recent study from the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis in the United States, hardly the hotbed of left-wing social engineering, concluded that early childhood development should be at the top of a government's priorities, that such investments in children yield high public and private returns in terms of better schools, better workers and reduced crime. In short, learning begets learning; and skill begets skill. What greater gift can we give to our children?

The agreements that the Liberal government put in place with the provinces are not just about child care. They are about better care, with a real emphasis on development. The focus is not only on creating spaces, but on creating opportunity to providing a real head start for Canadian children.

We live in a country that, like many in the industrial world, is facing the challenges of an aging population. We have fewer young people supporting more older people. It is therefore more crucial than ever that the children of today and tomorrow are afforded the best opportunities, are given every advantage, and every possible chance to succeed.

This is true for the children of all Canadians. It is one of the most powerful economic arguments for the higher social principle of equality of opportunity. An argument that is made all the more powerful when one considers the needs of aboriginal Canadians who represent the youngest segment of our population and the needs of new Canadians who represent the fastest growing segment of our workforce.

The simple fact is that if we want to ensure that the children of all Canadians are given a head start in a world of ever increasing global competition, then we had better understand that what the current debate is really all about is how we provide all our children with the opportunity for early learning, not just a select few. Unfortunately, the government is walking away from a system that would do just that.

The presidents of a number of school boards and teachers federations said after the budget that "By failing to uphold the federal-provincial child care agreements, the Prime Minister and his government have chosen to forego a once in a generation opportunity to give our children the kind of start that assures their readiness to succeed in school and in life".

The research is overwhelming, consistent and irrefutable, that children's readiness to learn at the start of grade one is the single greatest predictor of how they will do in school in every grade, whether they will graduate successfully, what their earning potential will be, how positive their contribution to society will be, and how healthy they will be. Every child deserves the best possible start in life.

• (1225)

[*Translation*]

Our social policy depicts our country as we would like it to be. This policy bears witness to a profound conviction: we feel that Canada's success depends on our common belief that we must not leave anyone behind.

Together we are stronger than any one individual on our side, and over the years it is this belief that has been the basis for so many Canadian success stories.

Today, we must act on this belief once again so that the requisite resources are made available to continue building a national day care system, a system adapted to the individual needs of the provinces and one that respects their areas of jurisdiction.

Over the last decade, we have accomplished remarkable things in Canada. We have eliminated the deficit. We have reduced our debt by over \$60 billion. We have surpassed all other G-7 countries in terms of economic growth, employment and standard of living.

[*English*]

In the last decade, Canada's achievements have put us at the forefront of the world's evolution. We must not become complacent. Every day we are confronted by new challenges. We will meet these challenges only if we support Canadian families by building this generation's legacy to the next, a national program of early learning and child care so that Canadian children, regardless of income, can enter school ready to learn and succeed.

For years, we as a nation struggled to live within our means. We fought to curb the chronic deficits that ran up the national debt and hampered us from investing in the things that mattered most. But we did the hard work of eliminating the deficit. We did the hard work of putting in place the foundation for a nationwide system of early learning and child care, the first new social program in a generation and one that we must continue to build on.

What we have gained must not be lost. I ask indeed, by what intellectual rigidity does the government now tell us that child care is not a priority and that early learning is not a worthwhile goal? Today, we have the means to prepare Canada to succeed and our children to succeed. We have the opportunity to invest in our shared future. To achieve these goals we have to come together. We must recognize where lies the common good and that is the role of the federal government.

For sure, let the new government build on, let the new government improve on, that which has been achieved, but let it not seek to destroy that which has already been set in place with the provinces.

The role of government is not simply to govern for today. It must govern as well for tomorrow. That is what our first action on taking office was, to eliminate the deficit. That is why when we eliminated the deficit, our first budget was to bring in the education budget, and it is why the national child care and early learning program is so important. This is an approach that has produced the best country and one of the strongest economies in the world. We must not abandon that now.

The early learning and child care debate is not a debate only about the families of today. It is about the Canada of tomorrow. The choice that we make on child care and early learning will speak to the kind of society we want to have. The federal government has a duty to contribute to a culture of learning that goes to the heart of when learning begins, and to ensure that each child will get a better start, a better chance of thriving in the later years of school and in life. It is the right thing to do for children. It is the right thing to do for Canada.

• (1230)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I see that quite a number of members of Parliament are interested in some questions and comments. I would like to keep the questions to a minute or less and the response by the member to a similar time.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question will be brief. Our right hon. Prime Minister campaigned on the child care program. Our hon. finance minister announced the program. The right hon. member has held both of those positions and had 13 years to deliver it. He held both of those positions. Why was that child care plan never delivered if it was such a priority for the Liberal Party, as he has said?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** Mr. Speaker, if I may correct the hon. member, in fact, the Prime Minister did not campaign on a child care plan. He campaigned on a family allowance plan. This is not a child care plan and no expert in Canada will characterize it as such.

The second point I would make is that there is no doubt that the government in place has the right to bring in its legislation. Two-thirds of Canadians voted against the government. Two-thirds of Canadians, those represented by the rest of the members in the House, support early learning and child care.

As was said, when we were the government and the current government was in opposition, it believed that the government should listen to the House. Two-thirds of the members in this House support early learning and child care.

As far as the other question is concerned, I would simply ask the hon. member, would she take a look at what the Liberal Party did? We inherited a huge deficit from the Conservative government of \$42 billion. We had to deal with that.

Then, after we had dealt with it, look at what we brought in: the child tax benefit worth \$10 billion, \$3,000 for every child; we brought in the child care expense deduction; and we expanded it to \$7,000 and then we expanded it to \$10,000 for children with disabilities. It is like the old days. I could go on and on.

• (1235)

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is shameful to hear the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard speak as he has done.

We have before us the father of the fiscal imbalance. He did not hesitate in the 1995 budget to make savage cuts to transfers for post-

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secondary education. The result has been that colleges and universities today find themselves faced with problems.

Neither did he hesitate to slash programs for the most disadvantaged people of society by savagely cutting transfers for social assistance. He has never invested in social housing. He stole \$50 billion from the surplus in the employment insurance fund.

He speaks about poor children. We have poor children today because we have poor parents. He is the artisan of that poverty.

When he was finance minister, the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard did not hesitate, from 1994 to 1998, to change the tax laws and change the regulations to favour international marine shippers, including his family company. Thanks to that he has saved himself over \$100 million since 1998. How then can he come and lecture us today?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** Mr. Speaker, it is totally incredible to hear the hon. member's speech. We are here to discuss the issue of child care and the protection of our children. We see the Bloc is not really interested in protecting our children. It is not interested in early education. It is always the same speech.

As a Quebecker, I am very pleased to say that the model used for this program is one that is based on a Quebec success. As I see it, the hon. member should be more proud to be a Quebecker and to say to Canadians: "That is our vision". He is afraid to do so. What is he ashamed of?

For my part, I am happy and very proud to be a resident of the province that put all this in place.

[English]

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to that fine, well researched, prepared speech and I am having one heck of a time choking it down when I consider, since 1993, the former Liberal government traded on child care to achieve three majority governments. The hon. member opposite gave billions of dollars in tax breaks to corporations. Other members of the former government played fast and loose with public money to the point where they lost the confidence in the House. Now we hear them trying to blame the NDP, which is really a stretch.

The Liberals lost the confidence. We did not. Now like spoiled children, they continue to try to gain crass political points, and it is sad to see. It is hard to understand. To this point in time they are in denial and they do not seem to realize the Canadian public gave them the boot.

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**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** Mr. Speaker, in my remarks I did not blame the NDP. I really thought what might happen is the NDP would rise, understanding the responsibility we all have to deliver a national child care program for Canadians, and would be positive on this. However, what I see is exactly the same kind of speeches that we heard in the last House when the NDP did everything within its power to cooperate with the then opposition to ensure that child care and aboriginal health would not go further in the process. That is unfortunate.

This is an incredibly important national program. NDP provinces signed along with it. I do not understand why the NDP now seeks to work together as an accomplice with the current government whose ideological bent is totally contrary to what everyone expected were its principles. What would Tommy Douglas say if he heard the speech that the hon. member just gave? He would not be very proud.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for LaSalle—Émard for his attendance and participation in debate.

It is with some amusement that I listen to him now heckling anyone in the House about partisanship. It seems that anyone who takes a position contrary to the member and his former government somehow is off base or intellectually dishonest as opposed to the realization that his own record is somewhat spotted on so many issues.

He started by talking about how an incoming government has an inherent right to do nothing other than follow the predecessor. Yet we know his government, upon coming to office, cancelled the helicopter program. It cancelled the Pearson airport program among many other things. It promised to get rid of GST and free trade, which they did not do. We know as well, while he tries to take credit for having slain the deficit, that it was free trade and the GST. He dined out for many years as finance minister on the previous government's policies.

However, let us talk about child care. Under that member's watch, while it was promised in the 1993 red book, his government did not create a single child care space in 13 years. Child poverty rose substantially under his watch.

Why does the member think that somehow the one-size-fits-all approach of his government will recognize the realities, which he should know as the former prime minister, that exist in rural Canada where they do not have child care spaces available?

• (1240)

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise to speak to the new minister in charge of child care—

**An hon. member:** Yes, where is the minister?

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** That is a very good question. Where is the minister in what is an incredibly important debate?

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

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** The right hon. member for LaSalle—Émard is familiar with the Standing Orders. We do not make reference to attendance or absence from the House.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin:** You are right, Mr. Speaker. I am a little rusty.

The fact is that when we took office we had a \$42 billion deficit, unlike the current Minister of Finance, who when he took office had an ever rising surplus. As a result of that, we had to deal with it.

We did deal with it. As a result of that, we were able to bring in the child tax benefit of \$10 billion today. We brought in the child care expense deduction. We brought in the improvement in the child disability tax credit. We brought in a comprehensive plan for parental leave, and now for child care. We did it as we can afford it.

The issue before the House is this. What is the ideological reason that the minister opposes early learning? Why does he oppose child care? That is the fundamental issue before the House.

Rather than go back into the position of opposition critic, that is the government. Why does it not act on behalf of Canadian children and support—

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I would like to inform the House that the minister has an important appointment with her specialist today.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I appreciate that clarification. Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

I am proud to say that this government is acting on behalf of Canadian children, every Canadian child and every Canadian family, because that is our commitment and that is what we are doing.

We all recognize that the most important investment we can make as a country is to help families raise their children. This is the most important work that parents do. Strong families ensure a bright and strong future for our country.

Equally though, the government understands, while the previous government never did, that no two Canadian families are alike. We also understand that parents with young children balance their work and their family lives in different ways and for different reasons. It is for that reason that we believe parents must be able to choose what type of child care is best for them and for their children.

I am proud that our government offers parents options through Canada's universal child care plan. Central to this plan is the universal child care benefit that places money in the hands of parents so they can make decisions regarding the needs of their families. Government should not be making these decisions. Bureaucrats should not be making these decisions. Parents should be making these decisions, and that is what we are supporting.

Effective July 1, Canadian families will receive \$100 per month for each child under the age of six. Our plan is a balanced approach. It recognizes that parents are best placed to choose the type of child care that suits them. It is a plan to meet the needs of families, regardless of where they live, their hours of work and the choices they believe are best for their children. This plan supports parents and their freedom of choice.

A one-size-fits-all approach to child care simply does not work. It does not meet the needs of Canada's diversity. A Statistics Canada report, released on April 5 and entitled "Child Care in Canada", shows that the choices families make in caring for their young children are manifold. There is a wide range of choices that parents make. Despite the increase in the number of mothers working outside the home, it is striking that almost half of parents still care for their children inside the home. For those parents who choose alternative forms of child care, most turn to family members, friends or community facilities. That is why, as part of Canada's universal child care plan, we are committed to introducing new measures that will help employers and communities build new spaces, where they are needed most, to help working families.

We have introduced a child care spaces initiative. We will create up to 25,000 new spaces per year. We are doing this with a concrete plan, not just throwing money out and crossing our fingers and closing our eyes. These spaces will be designed, created and delivered in the communities where parents work, live and raise their children.

It is important that these spaces not be designed by a government that believes it can tell parents what works best. These spaces will be designed by parents who know their children and who know what works best for them. These new child care spaces will be flexible and responsive to the needs of working families.

• (1245)

Our approach is to ensure that these measures work, not just for businesses but also for non-profit and community organizations, because we are going to provide them with incentives that will be translated into workplace based child care centres in big cities and rural areas, and for parents whose work hours do not fit a 9 to 5 model. We are not going to rush into an ill thought out, government imposed approach to creating child care spaces, because we are establishing an advisory committee of parents, businesses, non-profit employers and community organizations, as well as the provinces and territories. In the weeks and months ahead, we will be working with this broad-based advisory committee and drawing on its experience to promote the creation of new child care spaces.

These groups will be able to work together under our plan. They can form partnerships and we believe they will in many cases, with businesses and non-profit organizations partnering with the community to establish day care spaces.

In rural areas that do not have the quantity of resources available in the urban centres, employers could partner with parents and with community and farm organizations, such as the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, to create child care spaces in a multi-purpose child care centre offering child care and learning resources and family centred meeting places. These are some of the options that are

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already coming forward. These are just a few ideas, because this work is just beginning.

Canadians have already proven that they have the skill and the imagination to do this, and when it comes to finding the best care for their children, we trust parents and we trust the communities where these children live. I am confident that, through Canada's universal child care plan, new avenues to explore will come forward, avenues that lead to innovation and quality care that meet the individual needs of children, families and parents.

We know that Canadian parents support our plan. We have heard this from parents across the country. They have told us that our plan provides just the kind of flexible, responsive approach they are seeking.

Now, through the work that we will be doing, we will be hearing Canadians' ideas about how to make the plan work. We know that flexibility is a key because our goal is to meet the needs of all parents and all children regardless of their individual circumstances.

I am pleased to say that the premiers of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Alberta have all endorsed this plan. The New Brunswick premier said, "I stated very clearly that I support the approach of the federal government to provide more choices to parents".

Groups with an interest in child care have also voiced their support for our plan. Here are just a few: Advocates for Childcare Choice, Kids First Parent Association of Canada and Prairie Advocates for Childcare Choices.

I think the representatives of Advocates for Childcare Choice summed up exactly what we are trying to achieve through our plan when they said, "The proposal is going to give parents more flexibility, which is what they need". They say, and we all know this:

Different families have different requirements: home-based business, shift work nurses who work 12-hour shifts...all kinds of people don't work 9 to 5...The greatest thing about [the plan] is the principle and philosophy that says each person, each parent, is in charge of their own child.

We trust parents, says the group. They are the ones who have the legal and moral duty and responsibility, and the right and privilege, to care for our children. That means they deserve flexibility to carry out those responsibilities.

Our universal child care plan is about flexibility. Our role as a government is to ensure flexibility. We are here to support families, to ensure they have choices and to respect their choices. That is what we deliver with our plan, Canada's universal child care plan.

• (1250)

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have several comments and questions for the member opposite.

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The first one is about the question of partnerships with the private sector and with not for profit organizations producing up to 125,000 child care spaces. Has the hon. member actually spoken with three of her colleagues, that is to say, the Minister of Health, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister of Finance, who were in a government that tried this very strategy and failed abysmally?

Second, the fact is that there will now be \$4.6 billion less over a five year period for the provinces, money they were counting on. Does that get added to the sum of the fiscal imbalance? Does that not increase the fiscal imbalance over a five year period by \$4.6 billion?

My third observation and question for the member would go something like this. Using the logic of putting so much emphasis on individual choice, why does the hon. member not suggest abolishing the public school system? The public school system also is a system that is designed to help all parents with children in similar situations. I do not understand why one simply would not extend this to almost any social system.

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to the hon. member's last question is that there is choice in the public school system. In my province of Alberta, we have any number of charter schools where children can be trained and educated as their parents wish. There are charter schools that emphasize sports. There are charter schools that emphasize the arts. There are charter schools that are faith based. There are charter schools that have an emphasis on learning about Canada, such as the Juno Beach Academy.

There is a wide variety of public schools available to parents, at least in my province, and that is exactly what we are delivering with our choice in child care. Parents are so approving and so appreciative of the kinds of choices that are delivered in my province—I do not know about others—in the public school system. That is what we will have with this system as well.

With respect to the question about how the provinces were counting on this money, that is not true. Only three of the provinces and territories had even signed a firm agreement with the federal government, and those agreements had a one year opt-out clause on the part of either party, either the federal government or the provinces.

The provinces were under no illusion during the election campaign that voters were choosing to move in a different direction to support all parents with our benefit, so there was no surprise on anybody's part, least of all parents, who are the happiest with this arrangement.

•(1255)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is always entertaining, amusing and a little sad to watch the Liberal Party, which could not create any child care spaces in 13 years, argue with the Conservative Party, which has a plan that will not create any child care spaces whatsoever.

My question is a specific one. I have not heard it in the debate in this House. I come from one of the rural ridings the parliamentary secretary mentioned, where apparently there are not enough child care spaces. That would then lead me to this question: why not put some actual serious funding toward creating such spaces?

A single parent came to me the other day and said that she was going to be so-called given this \$1,200, which will be taxed, and which also will include a \$250 removal of support that she gets for her child right now. She said that she has to work, which she does. She said she was looking through this plan and trying to understand what incentive or possibility this plan is making available for single parents in this country who are forced to go back into the workplace to support their families and children.

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is that this parent will be better off because money will come into this parent's hands every month. There will be no clawbacks from the federal government. It will not reduce any other benefit to this parent. Also, many of the provinces already have promised no clawback, so it is additional support for parents like this.

As for rural communities, this is part of the discussion that will be taking place under our plan. People from rural communities, community groups that work and operate mostly in rural Canada, will be bringing forward their proposals to assist in child care.

Let us be clear. This benefit benefits every single parent. That is what we campaigned on. That is what Canadians asked for. That is what we are delivering with our budget.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am dividing my time with the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance.

I appreciate this opportunity to participate in today's debate to discuss a matter that is of vital importance both to Canada's parents and to all Canadians.

I am sure most Canadians can agree on one thing: our children must come first. Few issues matter more than ensuring our children get off to a good start in life.

•(1300)

[*Translation*]

I would like us all to take a minute this afternoon to reflect on what is happening in Canada. More than half of young Canadians under six years of age are cared for by someone other than their parents, often in arrangements that differ from one family to the next. Institutional day care does not necessarily suit all these families.

[*English*]

In fact, a recent Statistics Canada report found that only about 15% of preschool children are in formal day care centres. The biggest proportion, well over half of all children under the age of six, are actually cared for at home by mom, dad, a close relative or a neighbour. The report clearly shows the wide diversity of child care choices Canadian families make.

As the father of five children, I am well aware that there is no one size fits all solution to child care, and so too is this government. There was a time when four of my children were under the age of six. I can tell members that the Liberal government did nothing to help me or other families like mine.

What it did do was increase taxes and then insult parents by stating that the Liberals knew better than parents how best to raise their children. What arrogance. Earlier this week, we had a Liberal member implying that without the Liberal day care program crime would go up. It is unbelievable.

Canadian parents are the real experts on child care. They do not need to be told how to raise their children, least of all by government. Parents know best when it comes to raising their children and preparing them for future successes.

That being said, this Conservative government recognizes that parents could use a little financial help. That is why we want to provide parents with real choice in child care: so they can choose the best form of child care to meet their unique needs.

[*Translation*]

During the election campaign, we defended the right of families to choose for themselves the kind of care that suits their children. We want to give parents the right to decide what best meets their needs.

For this reason, one of the first actions that the government takes will be to give all parents of pre-school children a universal child care benefit. Beginning in July, Canadian families will receive \$1,200 a year for every child under age six.

All parents will receive the universal child care benefit, regardless of the type of care that they choose. Whether they care for their children at home or have them cared for by a neighbour or family member, whether they send them to a day care or opt for something else, they will get the benefit.

[*English*]

We know that there are as many ways to raise a child as there are children. We understand that no two Canadian families are exactly alike. What works for one may not work for the other. Parents must be able to choose the child care that best suits their family. That is why parents could use this benefit as they see fit to pay for child care. It might be public or private child care, provided by a neighbour or a relative, or whatever works best.

Today many parents work evenings, weekends or night shifts to make ends meet. Other parents have seasonal work or run a small business from home. These parents need child care options to fit their families' unique schedules and needs.

[*Translation*]

The day care systems that work well in Canadian cities do not necessarily work well in rural areas, and vice versa. For example, in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, the Liberals' institutionalized day care system would not work. There would not be any day care spaces in such small towns as Embrun, L'Orignal or Vankleek Hill.

Canadians want a system that suits all children and their parents, whether they live in a large urban centre or in a small town or on a family farm.

[*English*]

Quite simply, Canada's universal child care plan is about putting the choice for child care back into the hands of parents. We want to

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give Canada's parents the freedom to choose the best care for their own children. The universal child care benefit will help Canadian families in a very real and tangible way.

After 13 years of being told about grand designs for day care by the former government, Canadian parents were left with nothing more than empty promises. That is why Canadians voted for a new government that is making child care one of its top five priorities. This government honours its commitments and will follow through with child care.

We know that the right investments work wonders today and for decades to come. Strong families ensure a bright future for Canada. One of the most important investments we can make as a country is in our children. We are offering something real to all Canadian parents, something that will make life easier and help parents with their child care choices.

If we work together and get this budget passed, parents will receive their first cheques in July. Why would anyone want to deny parents this money? This allowance is in addition to the \$13 billion that the Government of Canada already invests each year in Canadian families and children, including the Canada child tax benefit, the national child benefit supplement, the child care expense deduction and the Canada learning bond.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

Some families will choose to send their child to a day care centre. However, as most Canadians know only too well, there are simply not enough spaces in day cares for the families that need them. This lack of spaces only aggravates the stress that the families of today already feel. That is where the second part of the government's new child care system comes into play.

[*English*]

We are going to introduce new measures to help businesses and non-profit organizations create child care spaces where they are needed most. To that end, our plan will invest \$250 million per year to create 25,000 more child care spaces per year across Canada beginning in 2007. These are spaces that will be designed, created and delivered in the communities where parents live, work and raise their children. They will be flexible and responsive to the needs of working families.

Our solution is to help employers and community organizations to create new child care spaces that make sense for the way Canadian families live and work in their communities today. We will be working with provinces and territories, businesses, communities and non-profit organizations to make sure we get this initiative right.

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Unlike the previous government's record, which is one of neglect and inaction, this government has a real plan to support Canadian families. Simply put, Canada's new government is going to the wall on the issues that matter most to Canadian families and children.

[*Translation*]

The lives of our children are very dear to us.

During the last election campaign, we made a firm promise to protect Canadian families.

Protecting Canadian families means protecting all kinds of families—whether they are urban or rural, whether they consist of two parents or one, whether the parents are in the labour force or stay at home.

For too long, the people in power have been dismissing the difficulties that hard-working parents face.

[*English*]

Let us give hard-working Canadian families the choices they need to raise their children as they see fit. Let us give Canadian parents a break. Let us give Canadian families a real choice in child care with Canada's universal child care plan.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member will be familiar with the report of the Caledon Institute, which lays out different scenarios. For a family that has an income of \$20,000 this \$1,200 transfer is actually only going to benefit it by \$200. For someone making \$40,000 it is going to be about \$700. For someone making \$100,000 the benefit would be \$1,100. It has to do with the tax implications, as well as the reduction in benefits that otherwise would be receivable.

I am a little concerned that the issue of transparency to Canadians has not been demonstrated in this regard. This is a taxable benefit. I am very concerned that when those families file their income tax returns, they are going to be faced with a substantial tax liability, many of whom will not have the cash to pay.

I wonder if the member believes that transparency is important and a significant element of accountability and that in fact the way it has been presented by the government is neither transparent nor accountable.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, regarding transparency, I can only say that this government is very transparent, unlike the previous government.

In terms of the tax, the child care benefit, the child care plan that we are putting together is accessible to all families in Canada. It is a universal program for all families and it will be taxed in the hands of the lowest income earner.

• (1310)

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments the member made.

The Caledon Institute specifically said that the choice in child care allowance will do little, if anything, to address the lack of affordable quality child care, nor will the added money do much to help families pay for child care since it will only offset a small fraction of child care costs.

We want to talk about truth in advertising. This is not a child care plan. How does the plan actually address the creation of quality, affordable child care spaces in Canada?

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is a universal plan that will apply to all families. It will be taxed in the hands of the lowest income earner.

There are numbers flying around the House in terms of what one family will earn and what another family will earn, but what this government is doing for Canadian families is giving them money to assist them with the raising of their children, which the previous government never did.

Canadian parents are ahead with the Conservative government. It is plain and it is simple.

We will work with the provincial governments, with industry and with private non-profit organizations to put in place the child care spaces across Canada. It will not just be a big city plan. This will also apply in small rural communities.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have proven ourselves to be a pro-family party through some of our tax measures and the GST reduction. Does he think this will also benefit families?

Families will not just benefit from our universal child care, but we will continue to support families with young children so that at six and seven years old, we are still supporting them.

I want the member to tell the House how important young families are to us as a whole through our other tax measures.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux:** Mr. Speaker, we saw in the budget that the Conservative government is working for Canadians and for Canadian families.

The universal child care program will give money directly to parents to assist them in raising their children. This is something they never had before. It is new for Canadian families.

I have spoken to people in my riding about the benefit of this particular program and they speak very highly of it. They do not have access to the institutionalized day care spaces that the Liberals wanted to implement. People want financial assistance to help them with raising their children.

We have other measures in our budget to assist families, such as the reduction in the GST, a tax credit for sports programs and other such initiatives.

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga—Erindale.

Truthiness: something that is spoken as if true that one wants others to believe is true, that said often enough with enough voices orchestrated in behind it, might even sound true, but is not true.

Truthiness: \$1,200 a year before taxes for every child under the age of six. The words say it is for child care but of course the money can be spent on anything: a brace for a child with a disability; for parents who work hard and never get a break, a night out; gas for the car. All good things, maybe necessary things, but still anything.

*Business of Supply*

This is not a voucher and yet it is called the universal child care benefit. It could be called a universal transportation benefit, an affordable housing benefit. We could call it anything we want. And theatrical indignation and political outrage do not make it any different.

Truthiness: The word “universal”; we think of universal in terms of education or health care, something that is for everyone, but something that also meets basically all our needs in education or health.

[*Translation*]

Here, \$1,200 before taxes. After taxes, for a family with an average income, less than half, less than \$2 a day.

The average cost of child care in this country is \$8,000 a year. Even your neighbour down the street who takes in two or three other kids costs more than \$5,000 a year.

• (1315)

[*English*]

Here, \$1,200 a year before taxes; after taxes, for a family with an average income, it amounts to less than \$2 a day. The average cost of child care is \$8,000 a year. It even costs the neighbour down the street, who takes in two or three other kids, more than \$5,000 a year. However, the government says it is for everyone so it is universal. If we were to give 10¢ to everyone that would also be universal.

Truthiness: choice. Let us take the full \$1,200 a year and imagine that every penny of it will go for child care, to give every benefit of the doubt. Let us pretend that truthfulness is actually truth. Will that \$1,200 a year enable a family to afford to choose child care when otherwise it could not? Will it enable it to afford truly better child care? Will it put enough more money into child care as a whole to enable notoriously poorly paid child care educators to get paid better, to encourage the right people into the field and to keep them there, to offer the safe, interesting, exciting learning place parents want for their kids? No, no and no.

Will it enable a family to make a different choice? For one parent, usually a woman, to leave the outside workplace where she earns an average salary of \$25,000, perhaps \$17,000 or \$18,000 after taxes, because now she has \$1,200 or less in her pocket; \$17,000 or \$1,200. Let us see. Choice. Providing a broader inability to do just about everything. Choice? No.

Truthiness: the national system of early learning and child care we were creating with the provinces, the Conservatives called it “institutionalized child care”, “socialist style child care”. “Just governments putting money into each other's pockets”.

We have no federal child care centres and no provincial child care centres. What we do have are some municipal child care centres. They know that. The biggest child care provider in the country is the YMCA. The great majority are Bunny Bear Day Care and Tiny Tots Day Care. They know. They are in their ridings. Do Canadians talk about kindergarten and elementary school as institutionalized education? I do not think so. Why here?

“The only experts are mom and dad”, the Conservatives like to say. Moms and dads are experts. They have to be. However, what do

moms and dads say about their daughter's grade two teacher? Is it possible that here and there parents might be looking for a little help to help them be even better parents?

Truthiness: Why say things that they know are wrong? Why do they not want the public to understand? What are they trying to do here and for what purpose?

The \$250 million a year to build child care spaces is for bricks and mortar. We have a shortage of spaces and we have wait lists. If we encourage businesses and community groups to build these spaces, the logic goes that they will come. Who will come? Who can afford \$8,000 a year. That is more than it is for university. We must remember that there is no other money here for subsidies. Who will come and who will not come and, if they do not come, who will build it?

Truthiness: The \$1,200, let us call it what it is. It is a family allowance. If that is what makes the government proud then it should be proud of it. It should be proud of the truth but it is the truthfulness that is wrong, obscene and offensive.

It is the same throughout this budget for low and middle income Canadians, for aboriginal peoples, for students and for the environment. The government offers some programs because Canadians have said that each matters and matters a lot. It uses words that suggest more, deliver less.

Truthiness:

• (1320)

[*Translation*]

It is veneer. It is about now. It is about me. It is about illusion. We all want more money in our pockets, but Canadians also want more money in other people's pockets too. We want it now but for the future as well. To many people, this budget appeals to the least in us. We are so much more. This country is so much more.

[*English*]

It is veneer. It is about now. It is about me. It is about illusion. We all want more money in our pockets but Canadians also want more money in other people's pockets too. We all want now but we all want for the future as well. This budget appeals to the least in us. We are so much more. This country is so much more: not a vision but a blink.

What are the words we hear most often about the Conservatives' campaign platform in the last election and about this budget? It is clever. It is smart politically. All that is said with a sense of admiration for pulling it off, for its truthiness, and all the time in a rush to the next election wanting to move so fast our heads cannot stop spinning long enough for us to discover what truthiness really means. But in order for them to win the next election, who has to lose?

*Business of Supply*

Black is black and white is white except if we need black to be white and then we call it white. We do it again and again, louder and longer, until black seems white. However, it is not and it will not be. In the Conservatives' early learning and child care and the rest, the more we look the less is there. Truthiness.

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I admire the work that the member has done in this area. I would like him to come to where we are at with our plan.

We are at the grassroots in my constituency. I have not gone into day cares to ask if they want day care. I have gone to mothers and to rural communities because the provinces deliver day care. I have been talking to working parents and to parents who choose to stay at home and I have been asking them what they want. They have told me that they want our plan. They think there are some real possibilities with it and some uniqueness, something this House has not seen for a long time. Early childhood development is excellent. We are being asked to provide parents with a universal plan because they all want to be treated equally.

How many parents has my colleague asked? There are 2.1 million children in preschool. How many of those children does he really think will benefit from the Liberal plan?

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, under the Liberal plan for a national system of early learning and child care, the understanding was that it was for early learning. It was to build a system and a sense of what a system is, like an education system or an elementary system. It would be there for everybody. It would be there for parents and kids in big cities and those in small towns.

One of the great advantages of the steps that we were able to take over one year was the fact that the provinces had about 48% more money to meet the needs of underrepresented areas like rural areas and underrepresented needs like people with special needs. This is exactly what creating a system means. This is not truthiness. This was a real system of early learning. This was a real system that would be there for every kid and kids with parents in lots of different circumstances and with lots of different needs. There are very few parents who, when they decide to stay at home, also do not want their kids having different experiences in somewhat different circumstances in the course of a week. This was not an all or nothing thing. It was not five days a week or no days a week. It was for a day a week, or two afternoons a week—

• (1325)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I apologize to the hon. member for York Centre but I must allow another question or two here. The hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we take the same view as the hon. member because we want equitable, universal, accessible child care.

However, since child care and family policies come under provincial jurisdiction, could the hon. member explain to me why his party refuses to recognize Quebec's right to opt out of the child care plan unconditionally, with full compensation?

[*English*]

**Hon. Ken Dryden:** Mr. Speaker, we signed an agreement with the Government of Quebec. In the nature of the agreement, the Government of Quebec received its share as other provinces would. At the same time, the understanding was that the money would go for the benefit and well-being, of families and children. That was an agreement that we signed.

[*Translation*]

It was an agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec for the benefit of families and children.

[*English*]

**Mr. Omar Alghabra (Mississauga—Erindale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand before you today to express my disappointment with the recent budget announcement. As a newly elected MP, who has been entrusted by the voters of Mississauga—Erindale, I came to the House with a sense of great responsibility and a determination to protect the interests of Canadians. Above all, I am committed to working positively with the members of the House for the collective good of our nation.

I will be honest. I was looking for reasons to celebrate the budget. It contains some reasonable proposals. We all welcome the idea of reducing taxes. The more I studied the budget, the more concerned I became. I felt like someone who has just been told that they won a fancy car, but after the excitement had faded and after reading the terms and conditions, I realized that I had to keep up the hefty monthly payments, which I cannot afford.

The Conservative government had the benefit of inheriting one of the strongest fiscal conditions in recent history. Instead of building on the best track record of the G-7 nations, it opted for a one-dimensional, short-sighted approach. If we believe that the federal government has a role to play in investing in the prosperity and unity of our country, we will find that the budget misses the mark. The Conservative budget will weaken our federal government, as it shows a disregard for its responsibilities to the public.

The budget has serious shortfalls. Raising income tax less than seven months after it had been reduced by the previous government is unacceptable. Reducing the GST should not be at the expense of increasing income taxes on the lowest income tax bracket. If the government truly believed that the GST cut would balance out this increase, why did it not opt to raise income tax on the highest bracket instead of the lowest?

Also of concern, the Conservative government is breaking a major election campaign promise. It committed to help new Canadians in accrediting their foreign credentials. The Conservatives committed no money and outlined no plan to deliver this promise. Taking steps toward the creation of an agency does not fulfill their promise, and it is just not good enough. I know I have the unfortunate task of breaking this news to thousands of new Canadians who live in my riding.

However, even more disheartening, is that early learning and childhood programs have been neglected and hundreds of thousands of child care spaces across Canada are at risk. Working families have been advocating for more choice in affordable and high quality child care. The government is ignoring their call and cancelling the agreements that were struck with the provinces. Despite what the government claims, this will take away the choice for most working families and set our country back more than 30 years.

In the Peel Region alone, the previous Liberal plan, which had already been negotiated and agreed upon with the province of Ontario, would have created about 2,100 new child care spaces. Now it is all gone because of a government that wants to take the choice away from working parents.

The hopes of many parents have been devastating and the plans of many child care facilities have been destroyed. There are 1,100 children on a waiting list right now for child care spaces in the city of Mississauga alone. Those families were not forced by the Liberal government to sign up for that waiting list. Now these children and their parents have to fend for themselves because the Conservative government does not care about them.

The proposed taxable \$1,200 is a great child bonus that will be helpful to any family, but will it actually cover the cost of child care? The average cost of day care in Mississauga is about \$800 to \$900 a month. With that calculation, a parent requires \$9,600 a year to cover child care expenses. That is far more than what the government is paying a family for the whole year under its plan and that is only if the parents are able to find a quality space for their children.

What is next? Will the government end funding public education and give parents money and say the choice is theirs?

• (1330)

In my riding there is a great disappointment that funding has been reduced and will come to an end. Waiting lists for fee subsidies and special needs resourcing exist now and are growing, but the Conservative plan will do nothing to help the situation. The notion that its proposal offers a choice is outrageous and must be exposed. It takes away their choice. Parents who work hard and contribute to our economy and prosperity will soon realize that they cannot afford nor find quality spaces for their children. This takes away any choice they have and may require one parent, who is often the mother, to stay at home with the child.

I would like to draw attention to a recent study conducted in Alberta. The study showed that given the lack of quality, affordable child care spaces in Alberta, the participation of women in the workforce has declined to one of the lowest in our country after being one of the highest. A government sponsored early childhood learning program not only ensures quality and accessible spaces, but it provides parents with a real choice. A parent can choose to stay at home with their child and possibly receive the child tax benefit, which could amount to thousands of dollars per year, or they could choose to use a high quality day care program and maintain a career of their choosing. It is a shame that the government does not realize that.

If one believes the government does not carry the burden of ensuring the collective good of its citizens and can afford to fend for

themselves, then one would cheer the budget. However, like the majority of Canadians, I feel the government has the responsibility to invest in its citizens, in its future generations and to build for the prosperity of our nation.

I point out that the budget failed miserably to address the environment, education, multiculturalism, immigration, resource and development and aboriginal needs. We in Ontario have seen what a simplistic, short-sighted ideological government can do. Premier Mike Harris, who was here on Tuesday cheering on the architect of the horrendous financial and social failures in Ontario during the nineties, and who also happens to be the current spokesperson for this budget, has left deep wounds in Ontario from which we are still trying to recover.

If I did not care and if I were a cynic, I would have chosen to stand by the sideline and watch with interest how the government is digging a hole for itself and let it expose its incompetence on its own. However, my concern is the government will not damage its credibility, but irreversibly damage the fiscal and social foundation of our country.

The government has chosen to mortgage the future of our country and hide the fine print from Canadians. It has no plan and no vision.

On behalf of children, students, aboriginals, farmers, immigrants, environment, working families and all Canadians, I ask the government not to allow ideology to dictate its action. I ask them not to do it for me, not to do it for the people who voted for me, but do it for the people who voted for them expecting that they would treat them with respect.

• (1335)

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in listening to the Liberal speakers, I am left wondering if any of them did any door knocking during the campaign. While the Liberal funded special interest groups made a lot of noise during the campaign, the people at the doorsteps were clearly in favour of our plan. Thank goodness, on January 23 they sent a strong message in favour of a new Conservative government with an actual plan.

First, a majority of parents would not have benefited from a Liberal plan. Many of the parents to whom I have talked have one parent stay at home and they have gladly sacrificed income to make that decision for their family. Under the Liberal plan they would have received nothing to help them out.

How is that fair? On what level is it fair that those people would pay through their taxes, after sacrificing so much, to send their neighbours' kids to day care? I do not understand.

**Mr. Omar Alghabra:** Mr. Speaker, I am puzzled by the member's question.

First, I am curious to know how many doors he knocked on in his riding, especially since the council of the city of Edmonton passed a resolution supporting the establishment of national child care program, a federal and provincial child care program.

*Business of Supply*

In the city of Mississauga, 1,100 children are on a waiting list. Trust me, I did not force the parents to sign the waiting list. Parents are looking for child care spaces. If the government looks the other way, parents will know what that government stands for. It is not listening to them.

Nobody is against the \$1,200 a year. I am all for it. I think all families could use it. However, what will that do to create child care spaces? Parents, who work, earn money and pay taxes, expect their government to work for them and to work on their behalf.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I understand the hon. member comes from Ontario. In the year 2007, Ontario will lose close to a billion dollars in child care funding. Then it will lose another half a billion dollars in 2008 and the same amount in 2009. It is a tremendous amount of money.

When the Liberal government was in power, why did not enshrine a national child care act in legislation so it would be protected for future generations of children?

• (1340)

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that the Liberal government was the one that signed 10 agreements with 10 provinces, which would have built a child care program. If it were not for the party opposite, this plan would have been implemented and built. Unfortunately, the funding for Ontario, and other provinces as well, is gone.

We had a vision for our working families. We had a vision for building child care spaces. We will continue to defend working families and advocate for building high-quality child care that is accessible to everybody across the country.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I knocked on 40,000 doors in the last two and a half years and I can tell the member that the message we got was clearly on our side.

There are 850,000 children under the age of six in the province of Ontario. If we do the math, that is a little over \$1 billion every year. Even if I accept the member for Trinity—Spadina's math that Ontario would lose \$2 billion over three years, it will get \$3 billion to replace that over the next three years.

Could the member comment on that?

**Mr. Omar Alhabra:** Mr. Speaker, the reality is, some people are trying to position this as a zero sum game. This is not a zero sum game. There are parents who stay at home and there are parents who want to send their kids to child care.

I take his word that people supported his plan. I support the plan of \$1,200 to a family. Families will support that. However, has he asked them if they want child care spaces in that city? Has he asked them if they are having difficulty finding child care spaces? Those are the questions he should ask those parents. Those are the questions I asked. I know what the answers were, and the member knows—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Compton—Stanstead.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member from Laval.

Today's debate is becoming surrealistic. The Liberals want to convince us that their family policy is better than the Conservatives'; the Conservatives are trying to have us think that the \$1,200 family allowance is better than the Liberals'; and the NDP is attempting to convince us that its family policy is better than the ones proposed by the other two parties. None of these three parties seems to realize that family policies are the exclusive jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

For the Bloc Québécois, the best family policy for Quebec is the one developed by the members of the National Assembly, in collaboration with civil society in Quebec. It is not surprising that Canada wishes to acquire a child care system based on the Quebec model, since Quebec's is the best model ever, according to the OECD, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The creation of these centres, however, is not within federal jurisdiction, but within the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces.

The early childhood centres contribute a lot to Quebec. For example, they make it possible for women to get back into the labour market after having a baby. For someone earning a small salary and wishing to get back into the labour market, it is much better to pay \$7 a day for child care than the \$30 that it would normally cost. Quebec developed a family policy for itself in order to help those young women and the young women who wish to go back to school but cannot afford to pay \$150 a week for child care. Once again, it is preferable to pay \$7 a day. Early childhood centres are non-profit agencies that provide a structure for children to help them progress in society.

The \$7 a day early childhood centres have an economic impact. These women who are returning to the labour market pay income taxes to the government. If the early childhood centres cost \$150 a week, we do not think that these same women and these young families would get back into the labour market. We are thus investing in our young people and our children, as well as in the young women and young men who wish to get back into the labour market. This also helps our children grow. Early childhood centres are like little schools where children learn to grow. They are also in contact with other children and are properly supervised during the day. Thus they can progress. This is the choice made by Quebec and it is a very good investment.

The Liberal motion mentions that proactive intergovernmental measures are necessary. That is false, because Quebec did not give permission and certainly did not wait for whomever it might be to create its own child care system.

I have nothing against the provinces creating child care centres. That is their choice. Each province should invest in that, it is not up to Parliament to do it for them, or to impose its terms. Family policy is under provincial jurisdiction, because it is closely connected with the transmission of values and culture. And in that vein, child care centres socialize and educate our young children.

In any event, Quebecers do not want their money to be invested in federal interference, unlike the Liberals who have interfered in the provinces' jurisdictions for over 100 years. Child care centres must absolutely remain under provincial jurisdiction, and in Quebec they must be managed by Quebecers. But we will give this a chance.

The Bloc Québécois is pleased with the agreement for \$1.1 billion that came out of the child care agreement. Unfortunately, Quebec is losing \$800 million because the Conservatives have thrown that agreement overboard, even though it was welcomed in Canada and in Quebec.

• (1345)

Canada had its child care centres and Quebec had its financial contribution.

The Conservatives are now offering families a taxable benefit of \$1,200. The Bloc does not oppose this measure in principle, but it could be unfair and it has serious flaws. Instead, the Bloc proposes a refundable tax credit that will be equitable for families.

The government has fixed some of the flaws; for instance, its benefit will not affect the national child benefit. This is only a start, which the Bloc welcomes, but there are other things to be done in order to keep moving forward.

The Bloc Québécois also welcomed the government's plan to put an end to the fiscal imbalance. Obviously, the \$800 million that Quebec has lost is included in the solution. We are extremely pleased.

In the meantime, the fiscal imbalance must certainly not be exacerbated, as the Liberals are still proposing. When the fiscal imbalance is corrected, Quebec and the provinces could be in charge of their own investment choices, which include education, health and child care.

As well, since Quebec established its early childhood centres, Quebec and Ottawa have been pocketing even more of the taxpayers' money. The government confiscates \$250 million from parents in Quebec, an average of \$1,300 per child. That is more than the taxable \$1,200 that the government is offering them in the recent budget.

The Bloc Québécois has for years been calling on the government to transfer the money it is saving on the backs of Quebeckers to Quebec. However you look at it, those are our taxes. Transferring it back would enable Quebec to invest in its family policy, among other things.

The Bloc Québécois is grateful for the concern of Canadians who want to raise our children, but we will tell them no, thank you, because we are grownups and we prefer to look after it ourselves.

Quebec has an effective child care system that is the envy of the rest of Canada and the world. We are very proud of it.

I would like to point out that if the fiscal imbalance were solved—better yet, if we were a sovereign country—we would not be here debating a societal choice that should be made only by Quebeckers. While we wait for that magical moment to come, the Bloc Québécois will continue to put its heart and soul into defending the interests of Quebec's families.

• (1350)

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us have some honesty.

### *Business of Supply*

I am sorry that there is a false impression in this debate, which has nothing to do with the facts.

[*English*]

If the government had made the wrong decision to continue to spend \$1 billion a year to live up to the previous Liberal government's agreement with three provinces, there would have been only enough money for a day care space for 1 in every 20 kids. The other 95% would have received nothing at all. Those numbers are very easy to arrive at.

If we assume that it costs \$40 a day for a day care space, we multiply that with the number of working days in a year and the number of children under six that live in Canada, we find that only 1 in 20 of those kids would have been afforded a day care space with \$1 billion. It is very easy math. In fact, it is more like 1 in 23, but I will round it off and say 1 in 20.

That confirms what the lobbyists, who support the Liberal day care plan, have already said. They have said that to create a universal government run day care program would cost around \$10 billion to \$15 billion. Instead of giving 1 in 20 kids a day care space, why not give every single preschooler the choice in child care allowance?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question, but let us not forget that there is provincial responsibility as well, considering the money transferred from the federal government to an early childhood centre. It is not a question of counting on just the federal government, because in Quebec we have a part of the \$805 million intended for early childhood centres. All the same, the provincial government also makes an investment, which is complementary.

So that is why we are calling for the \$800 million to be returned, without the federal government's interference in our jurisdictions. We have developed them and will continue to do so.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government proposal with regard to child care spaces is to provide tax credits of \$10,000 to corporations to create spaces. The member will be very interested in this. There is a jurisdictional issue. The federal government, constitutionally, is not responsible nor does it have jurisdiction over child care. The OECD characterized day care in Canada outside of Quebec as being glorified babysitting.

Does the member share my concern that in fact any child care spaces that would be created by corporations would not be regulated in any way, nor would they constitute anything other than more glorified babysitting?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I have understood correctly because of the corporation. However, the early childhood centres remain under provincial jurisdiction. We will continue to work on this point.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. Discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe you will find consent for the following motion: That at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for St. Paul's, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to the end of government orders on Monday, May 8, 2006.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Does the opposition whip have the consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

• (1355)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** There is no consent. Questions and comments. The hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec has the best child care program in Canada. It is the envy of a lot of parents outside Quebec. However, thousands of parents in Quebec are desperately waiting for child care. There is a long waiting list.

In the budget \$800 million will be cut from Quebec, funding that Quebec parents desperately want as the member said. Also, in the Conservative budget \$7 billion will go to corporate tax cuts. I am not sure that there will be any money left to deal with the fiscal imbalance. On top of that, the cheques that are going to Quebec, the \$80 a month cheque, will not be from the Quebec government. It will be from the federal government.

Given all that, how can the hon. member and her party support this new Conservative budget, especially for all the kids in Quebec?

*[Translation]*

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the \$805 million the Quebec government will receive in the agreement for this year has already been invested in one way or another in the early childhood centre policy.

The Bloc will continue to fight to get the \$800 million back in order to correct the fiscal imbalance. It is true that people are still waiting for spaces in early childhood centres. So the fight to settle the fiscal imbalance must go on, as must the fight for all Quebec families and for our very generous early childhood centres, to keep them generous as they are now.

\* \* \*

*[English]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I believe you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member for St. Paul's, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to the end of government orders on Monday, May 8, 2006.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Does the opposition whip have the consent of the House to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

**STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***COALITION FOR A NUCLEAR FREE PEEL**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the many constituents of Brampton—Springdale, I would like to voice my support for a nuclear free Peel. As one of the fastest growing regions in the country, we must ensure the highest quality of life is provided to children, seniors and families, and that includes a nuclear free region.

Radioactive waste should not be allowed to be trucked through densely populated urban areas, and neither should the incineration of nuclear waste be permitted.

I commend the many citizens of Brampton—Springdale and the Coalition for a Nuclear Free Peel for fighting this charge and this change, and I hope this leadership will ensure that Brampton—Springdale does remain nuclear free. It is important for the children, the seniors and the families who live there.

\* \* \*

**CHASE MCEACHERN**

**Mr. Patrick Brown (Barrie, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Chase McEachern was a great young hockey player from my riding of Barrie, but he will forever be known in our arenas for his accomplishments off the ice.

Unfortunately, at 11 years of age, Chase left us far too young, but not before putting a national spotlight on the need for defibrillators in our community rinks. Chase, who was awaiting heart surgery, wrote a letter to Don Cherry two weeks prior to his death, calling for a defibrillator in every school and hockey arena.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, more than 35,000 Canadians die each year from sudden cardiac arrest. The odds of survival for cardiac arrest outside a hospital are only 5%. With a defibrillator, they rise to 50%.

On behalf of the millions of Canadians who have been or will be affected by heart conditions, I recognize the contribution Chase's campaign has made across the country. He died too soon, but he lived long enough to show his peers at Prince of Wales Public School and the residents of Barrie what it means to be a courageous young Canadian.

*Statements by Members*

●(1400)

[Translation]

**INTERNATIONAL DANCE DAY**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on April 29, as honorary president of the Centre de création artistique de Laval, I had the privilege to attend a choreographed dance called *Human in Terra*, which was presented on International Dance Day.

Diane Major, dancer and choreographer from the r2k2 dance troupe, is behind this interactive creation where artists and the public come together to trigger the idea of expressing yourself the way nature does so well.

Blues music and painting came into play as fragments of inspiration and interaction. For this live creation, Diane Major was surrounded by the songwriter and arranger Lou Simon, painters Denys Arel, Mélissa Montagne and Jasna Corriveau and performer Josianne Delisle.

Through her choreography, Diane Major helps us focus on what is most important in us.

I want to congratulate her and these artists for sharing this delightful experience with us.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TAXATION**

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before taking office, this government talked a great deal about tax fairness and justice for seniors. Now, after more than 100 days and a new budget, the thousands of Canadians who continue to be unfairly taxed on their U.S. social security benefits are still waiting. The longstanding unjust treatment of these pensioners living in Canada continues.

When in opposition, both the Conservative member for Essex and the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister stood in the House to support Canadians Asking for Social Security Equality, or CASSE, a group started in my community over a decade ago to fight on behalf of these retirees. They both introduced private member's bills on this issue, so many held out hope that the government would remedy the unfairness.

Sadly, when the budget was tabled, with all the tax breaks for large corporations and high income earners, there was no inclusion of tax fairness for these seniors. It begs the question: where is the Conservative pledge for justice and fairness now?

\* \* \*

**PUBLIC HEALTH AGENCY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce to my colleagues in this House that today the Public Health Agency of Canada and its Division of Aging and Seniors will be presented an award from Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle in recognition of its outstanding work on emergency preparedness for seniors.

This award, hosted by the well known international organization Help the Aged, pays tribute to the division's domestic and

international lead on emergency preparedness for seniors, and in particular, its efforts to ensure that emergency response measures take seniors' needs into account in emergency situations.

Recent disasters such as the Asian tsunami and hurricane Katrina in the United States have brought global attention to the high numbers of seniors and disabled persons left stranded, injured or killed in emergency situations. Thanks to the efforts of our government, and specifically the Public Health Agency of Canada, Canada is leading the way on emergency planning for the most vulnerable groups during crisis situations.

In light of this award, I encourage all my colleagues to continue to support Canada's lead and its innovation in the areas of public health and emergency preparedness, particularly as they relate to others who heavily rely on our health care system.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CAROLINE BRUYÈRE**

**Mr. Marcel Proulx (Hull—Aylmer, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the stunning performance of a young athlete from Gatineau.

Caroline Bruyère, a student in the international program at Polyvalente Le Carrefour school, has been practising fencing for only five years. It was by leafing through the local sports and recreation guide that she became interested in this discipline.

She placed second in Canada at the Junior World Cup in fencing, which was held in Montreal in January.

This excellent performance in épée earned her a berth at the Junior World Championships in South Korea, held from April 8 to 17. This young, 16-year-old athlete placed 51st overall.

In order to help her in her development, Les Braves du Coin, a sports and leisure association gave her a bursary in 2002.

On behalf of myself and the citizens of Hull—Aylmer, I want to commend her on her extraordinary determination to excel.

Congratulations, Caroline!

\* \* \*

●(1405)

[English]

**VE DAY**

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 61 years ago on May 8, the warring guns of Europe went mute. It was VE Day, Victory in Europe Day. The crescendo of all-out war was silenced, but was soon replaced by the cheers of millions celebrating this peace in the streets of the free world.

Canada had answered the call to war and served with great distinction on the long road to peace. From the lessons of Dieppe to the shores of Sicily, the streets of Ortona, the Battle of the Atlantic, Juno Beach, Holland's liberation and more, Canadians were there. Over one million served in uniform. Forty-one thousand still lie in Europe's graves.

*Statements by Members*

VE Day is a day to celebrate a great victory. VE Day is also a day to remember the tragic toll, the true price of peace. We must not forget.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH WEEK**

**Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the week of May 1 to 7 is National Mental Health Week. Many people struggle with mental health issues and are unfortunately left to deal with their problems for months before they can access specialized medical services.

For over 30 years, I worked with young children with mental health problems and I can attest to the fact that many people—children or adults—who struggle with this problem all too often suffer in silence. I can also tell you that their pain—which often goes unnoticed—is just as real and intense as any physical pain.

The Bloc Québécois wishes to underscore the enormous empathy and determination of everyone—workers, families and volunteers—who help such patients, thus alleviating their suffering and distress.

We salute their contribution and extend our thanks.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

**PETERBOROUGH PETES**

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this being the first time I am rising to formally address the House, I would like to begin by thanking the constituents of the Peterborough riding for placing their trust in me as their representative.

I rise today to pay tribute to my hometown Peterborough Petes. They have advanced to the Ontario Hockey League championship for an unbelievable 14th time in franchise history. This year, the Peterborough Petes are celebrating their 50th anniversary and will face the London Knights in what promises to be a very exciting series. I am proud to report to this House that no other team in major junior hockey has produced as many NHL players as my hometown Petes.

In closing, I would like to submit that Peterborough, Ontario, truly is hockeyville. We love our Petes. We say go, Petes, go, all the way to the Memorial Cup championship.

\* \* \*

**SOMALIA**

**Mr. Borys Wrzesnewskyj (Etobicoke Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a famine's death march does not wait. Over the past months, the 100,000 strong Somali Canadian community has been in anguish. In southern Somalia, surface water has disappeared, boreholes have dried up and over 80% of livestock has died.

The UN reports that only 20% of an emergency \$426 million appeal has been raised and that eight million people are in immediate danger. This is a human catastrophe. Mr. Bondevik, the UN special humanitarian envoy for the region, called this a “silent tsunami”.

A letter signed by a number of members of Parliament appealing to the Prime Minister for emergency action has gone unanswered for nine weeks. Now we have a budget with no funds to prevent this slow and silent death by famine.

Canadians are world renowned for their generosity of spirit. Let us act now, not when we are compelled to action by photographs of children with distended bellies on the front pages of our newspapers. The famine's death march has arrived at Somalia's gates.

\* \* \*

**PACIFIC GATEWAY**

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the federal budget tabled this week is great news for Canadians and great news for British Columbians. For 13 long years, B.C.'s needs were ignored as the previous government wallowed in scandal and corruption.

During the recent election, we promised to address B.C.'s needs and this past Tuesday we delivered. We are investing \$591 million in the Pacific Gateway because this government realizes B.C. is pivotal to Canada's economy. Trade with Asia is set to double over the next 10 years and Canada will not be left behind.

B.C. also receives \$106 million for affordable housing, \$130 million for transit and municipalities, \$400 million for the forest industry and much, much more.

Finally, after 13 years, we have a budget that serves British Columbians. Our vision is clear, our commitment is clear, and that benefits all Canadians.

\* \* \*

• (1410)

**VIA RAIL**

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, currently about eight VIA trains pass through the city of Hamilton every day, but since 1992, none have stopped there to take on passengers.

In 2001, the people of Hamilton were promised by then transport minister David Collenette that VIA service would return to Hamilton.

As the federal representative for a growth region in the Hamilton area, it seems obvious to me that there is a need for a station there. Naturally, any site, regardless of its location, will need local public transit that adequately connects the station to other services within the wider community.

Nearly five years have passed since the federal government promised to return rail service to my community of Hamilton. It is time for a solution to be found and for the government to fulfill the promises made to the people of Hamilton.

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it appears that the government is abandoning Kyoto and instead joining with what the *Globe and Mail* has called its “more lax” rival: the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate.

Members of the House recently attended the 12th annual General Assembly of Asia-Pacific Parliamentarians, where it was unanimously resolved that meeting Kyoto commitments should be the world's priority.

Smog, clean air and sustainable economies are the primary objectives of the Asia-Pacific partnership and worthy of support. However, the Asia-Pacific conference declaration states that only through support of Kyoto and its international action will the escalating natural disasters that are the result of climate change be avoided.

I hope the government will agree with the Asia-Pacific parliamentarians that support for the Asia-Pacific partnership and Kyoto is not an either-or situation. Kyoto is our best and perhaps last chance for international action on climate change.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### BICYCLE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, eight months ago the Canadian International Trade Tribunal recommended to the Minister of Finance that a surtax be placed on imported bicycles. This decision was rendered following a safeguard inquiry into the importation of bicycles and painted and finished bicycle frames.

The Tribunal recognized that Canadian and Quebec bicycle manufacturers were seriously affected by increased imports of foreign bicycles between 2000 and 2004. The measure suggested by the tribunal respects Canada's commitments in respect of the World Trade Organization and various other trade agreements signed by Canada.

The bicycle industry is mainly based in Quebec. The two main Canadian manufacturers are Raleigh Canada Limited, of Waterloo, and Groupe Procycle, of Saint-Georges de Beauce.

In order to protect the Quebec and Canadian bicycle industry as well as related jobs, the Minister of Finance must act with due diligence and immediately implement the decision of the International Trade Tribunal.

\* \* \*

[English]

### THE BUDGET

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as an Inuk of which there is no reference, I am deeply troubled by the Conservative government's budget tabled in the House of Commons on Tuesday, May 3.

The current government has not addressed the needs of Canada's aboriginal peoples. The government has neglected to address the serious challenges for the people of Nunavut, to develop educational

### Oral Questions

programs and promote language skills geared specifically for Nunavummiut.

The recent Berger report stressed the importance of education and development in Inuktitut and English language skills in the north and yet another opportunity has been ignored to implement the recommendations.

The announcement of the annual \$1,200 universal child care benefit for children under the age of six does not address the serious shortage of child care spaces in Nunavut.

While I applaud the funding for housing, it is a one time investment, not the multi-year plan we had under the Kelowna accord.

\* \* \*

### CHILD CARE

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, even out of government, the Liberal culture of entitlement and arrogance festers like a sore spot on Canada. This time the Liberal leadership candidate from St. Paul's is making spurious attacks upon parents who choose to raise their own children.

While attacking the Conservative choice in child care plan, she said and I quote, “It's a good job they're putting more money for prisons in the budget, because we're going to need them if we don't get this early childhood right”. She has just slandered every parent who chooses to raise their kids at home, every parent that believes in choice. Of course this type of attack is nothing new to a Liberal Party that claimed parents would rather waste child care dollars on beer and popcorn.

Canadians told the Liberals that they wanted the Conservative choice in child care. It is time for the Liberals to end their arrogance and listen to Canadians.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

● (1415)

[English]

### AGRICULTURE

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we got complete baffle-gab from the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food about immediate assistance for farmers spring planting. Recently 10,000 farmers stood on Parliament Hill pleading for spring planting assistance. They need the money to put crops in the ground now, not in the distant future like other promises of the government.

Since the minister will not answer, will the Prime Minister give farmers a straight answer today: Will they or will they not have money for their spring planting?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to hear the Leader of the Opposition talk about farmers. Farmers can only wish that he cared about them when he was in government over the past 13 years.

*Oral Questions*

This government and the Minister of Finance have put forward in the budget an unprecedented amount of money into agricultural programs this year in order to restructure income support programs. I can assure the hon. member that these dollars will result in positive improvements and in real money for farmers this year.

\* \* \*

**CHILD CARE**

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, spring money for farmers is like choice in day care.

Earlier today the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development had an epiphany in the House and admitted that there is a shortage, that the waiting lists are too long, and that some families have no option.

Why is the government taking \$1 billion out of existing child support systems and killing a plan with all the provinces that would have created the many thousands of day care spaces that the government today admitted in the House do not exist?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, not only is this government spending more on child care than the previous government, it is spending a lot more than the previous government.

One of the unfortunate things under the existing agreements is that the provinces have been given one additional year. That in a sense is unfortunate because the agreements signed by the old government do not create any targets for child care spaces. The program we intend to proceed with will establish 125,000 spaces over five years.

More importantly, since the member raised farmers, our program will give farm families real child care money and theirs would have given them nothing.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we will see.

In the meantime, this government does not understand that the country needs a real daycare program. The NDP abandoned children in November. Now the Bloc Québécois is capitulating to the Conservatives. Nevertheless, the Liberal Party will steadfastly defend the interest of children. We are sticking to our guns.

Can the government explain why it took a billion dollars away from benefits paid to families to finance this disappointing plan in the budget?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the funds allocated to families and children in this budget are much higher than before.

The Leader of the Opposition said we will see. And we will see the creation of 125,000 new daycare spaces across Canada in the next five years. If the Liberals here and in the Senate cooperate, we will provide a universal allowance of \$1,200 for every single child under the age of six, in every family, this year.

• (1420)

[English]

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives inherited the best fiscal record of any incoming

government. They had an opportunity to invest in the children of this country and they failed. They delivered a Mike Harris style budget and they failed to create a single child care space in Canada. The minister herself has stated that her plan “may not be the ideal”. I guess the Prime Minister forgot to muzzle that comment.

If both the minister and the parliamentary secretary do not believe in their plan, how do they hope to convince Canadians that they do have choice for child care in this country?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are people out there who would like the government to pay for everything for them.

What we are trying to do is provide parents with young children, who are at their lowest earning years and who have high expenses, with the resources to access the choice in child care that suits their needs. We are also trying to make sure that they have 125,000 new spaces from which to choose when they are making that decision.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot believe that the minister has become a stooge of Mike Harris.

I know the Conservatives have trouble counting past five, but let me tell them that under the Liberal government we created 6,000 child care spaces that no longer exist because of the fact that they have provided no money.

It is clear that the minister has no plan and no policy. Day after day she repeats the same lines from the PMO.

Canadian parents want action and they want it now. Will the minister admit that the tax credit that is being offered has absolutely no benefit to non-profit day care centres to create accessible, affordable—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Social Development.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the facts are that our plans for the universal child care benefit have been endorsed by many in communities right across the country.

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation has said that the one group that will benefit immensely from this budget is Canadian households with young children. Economically they will rocket ahead, thanks to the government's fulfillment of its promise to provide all families with \$100 a month for each child under the age of six.

That is a strong endorsement.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Bloc Québécois questioned the Prime Minister about the establishment of a program to help older workers. We concluded from his response that he did not understand the question. So, I will put it to him again.

*Oral Questions*

Since the government talks in its budget of the importance of helping older workers, will the Prime Minister confirm that, by the time the House adjourns in June, he will implement an income support program for older workers?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I spoke of a pilot project for seasonal workers.

In the case of older workers, the leader of the Bloc Québécois knows that the budget provides a fund of some \$100 million this year for the forestry industry. We are looking at options for a program to help older workers.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, that affects only forestry workers. I could mention the textile, clothing, furniture, bicycle and many other sectors. If the Prime Minister was capable of setting up a schedule to resolve the fiscal imbalance in a year, he is surely capable of resolving the problem of older workers in a month.

Will the Prime Minister promise to establish a real program by the end of June to provide income support to older workers? They cannot wait any longer.

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister indicated, we do recognize the challenges faced by older workers, particularly in communities that are depending upon single industries. That is why the Prime Minister has committed to making this work.

We are going to be doing a feasibility study. I look forward to the participation of the opposition members in that process.

• (1425)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government's answers are evasive. In the context of globalization, thousands of jobs are lost or at risk of disappearing. Older workers who have worked all their lives in certain businesses that close their doors are hit hard.

Beyond the intentions set out in the budget, can the government tell us in specific terms whether it plans to help these older workers by the end of the current session in June?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just to repeat in case the sound system is not working, we do want to help these people. We do want to do it in consultation to get the benefit of the years of experience and wisdom of hon. members like the one who just posed the questions.

That is why I have invited him to participate in this process and to do a feasibility study. I have also invited him to participate in assessing the five weeks program because we need his input. We want it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I hope to have better luck with my next question.

Another group plunged into uncertainty are seasonal workers. Pilot project No. 6 to help these workers concludes on June 4, and the minister says she is studying the question.

I ask her this: could she not extend this pilot project for a while until she has made a final decision in the matter?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I believe that we owe it to Canadians to be careful with every single dollar that we spend, and we will do that. We will not go extending programs because we have not bothered to take the time to make an informed rational decision.

That is why I have been trying to make arrangements with my colleagues in this House who have a concern on this issue. Unfortunately, their schedules have not allowed it yet. We are trying to meet next week to deal with this together, so that we can come up with a solution that would actually work for the workers and for Canadians across the country.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**CHILD CARE**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we learned that the Liberal government in Quebec will do the same as the Conservative government and tax back the \$1,200 allowance per child.

When we talk about this allowance, the message to Quebeckers is clear. The Conservatives will tax it, the Liberals will tax it and the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of it all. Families in Quebec and Canada will not receive the \$1,200 they were promised.

Will the Prime Minister apologize for this broken promise?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Not at all, Mr. Speaker. The election promise is the same as what appears in the budget. We have a universal payment to families of \$1,200 a year for every pre-school aged child.

Today, I am very pleased to say that the Government of Quebec wisely chose not to withdraw the benefits from the social programs in that province.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the Government of Quebec is going to tax back the \$1,200, just like the Prime Minister's party intends to do. The words will never cross his mouth because it does not match the message box.

The fact is the government is breaking its promise to Canadians. If it were to deliver the funds through the child tax credit, this money would actually end up in the pockets of the parents who need it the way they were promised.

There are a couple of surprises here. We have a multi-year plan to tax back the \$1,200. It was no surprise to have a multi-year corporate tax giveaway, but this one is a surprise.

*Oral Questions*

Will the Prime Minister apologize to the people of Canada for breaking his promise and taxing back what he is giving them with the other hand?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, we promised a \$1,200 per year payment for every preschool-aged child.

The Minister of Finance announced in the budget that there would be no clawbacks from this social benefit. This benefit will go to every family with preschool children. The greatest benefit would go to those with the lowest incomes. That is shown in the budget. That is a fact. The NDP should be supporting Canadian families and children instead of—

• (1430)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Don Valley West.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is playing a dangerous game with the provinces. On the one hand, it has created expectations by promising to correct the fiscal imbalance this year. On the other hand, it has allocated the entire budget surplus to program spending and tax breaks.

How can the Minister of Finance give the provinces more money without creating a deficit, when he has already spent the whole budget surplus?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the budget provides for an increase in transfers to the provinces of \$4.5 billion this year and \$1.5 billion for Quebec.

The Liberal Party and the former Liberal minister of intergovernmental affairs continue to deny that there is a fiscal imbalance. This party recognizes that an imbalance exists, and we are taking steps to correct it.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the provinces want much more than that. They want more federal money, about \$10 billion more each year to correct the fiscal imbalance.

The government has spent its entire surplus on tax breaks and programs.

Where is the new money for the provinces?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize, as the Prime Minister just said, the reality of the effort that is necessary to achieve fiscal balance in the Canadian federation. Not only do we recognize that reality, which was denied by the members opposite for 13 years, we recognize the need to work on making the economic union in Canada work better for all Canadians.

To that end, we are going to get together as ministers with the finance ministers and other ministers. We are going to receive the O'Brien report in the middle of May. I encourage all members of the House to read it and we will move forward with those consultations as the—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT**

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, under the previous government, the current Prime Minister stated that some of the legislation passed in this House was not relevant to most Canadians because it was passed with the support of the Bloc caucus.

Can the Prime Minister tell us whether, according to his own logic, his government is not relevant to most Canadians when he must rely on the support of the Bloc caucus to hold on to power during the vote of confidence on the budget?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if I understand the member, he thinks that the legislation that was passed in the last Parliament was illegitimate. All I can tell him is that there is a process. We will honour the process that has served this country very well for the passage of legislation.

[Translation]

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am just trying to understand the logic of the Prime Minister and the leader of the Bloc. Since the budget was tabled, the separatists have been at each others' throats. In Quebec, André Boisclair said that the budget contained nothing new and that the agreement on the fiscal imbalance will be put off until kingdom come. But here, the leader of the Bloc said that the budget is very positive.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what he promised the Bloc leader to make him turn his back on René Lévesque's party?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I think that the Liberal Party should thank the Bloc Québécois for supporting this budget. The Liberal Party is making a big show of opposing the budget, despite the fact that, as we all know, the party that most fears an election right now is the Liberal Party of Canada.

\* \* \*

• (1435)

**INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the manufacturing industry has been hard hit by the effects of globalization and needs strong government support to adjust to the new global context.

Why was the Minister of Industry unable to have assistance for industries threatened by globalization included in the budget tabled on Tuesday?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite is asking for loan guarantees in the forestry sector. What the government has to offer people in the forestry sector is not loan guarantees, but a guarantee of repayment, the guarantee to have free access to the American market without duties or quotas, the guarantee of a bright future for workers in the manufacturing sector.

People voted for real change on January 23, and that is what they got.

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should have the pages in his briefing book numbered; he is on the wrong page.

The rise in value of the Canadian dollar, energy costs and competition from emerging countries are major factors affecting industries such as textiles, furniture, clothing and bicycles, all industries in the minister's riding.

How can the Minister of Industry abandon these sectors, do nothing, miss the boat, when it is his duty to take action and he has the means to do so? I want an answer to my question.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the budget it tabled this week, this new government finally gave tax breaks to all Canadians and Quebeckers, to small businesses in Beauce and throughout Quebec and Canada, and to big business.

Our new budget will benefit 90% of Canadians. We are improving Canada's competitiveness, which will be good for business and for the country.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government says that it wants to review the Kelowna agreement, and it maintains that it is respecting its objectives because its budget provides for financial resources for the first nations.

However that budget contains only part of the funds provided for in the Kelowna accord.

How can the government claim to be respecting the objectives of the Kelowna accord when, for the next two years, it is cutting more than \$640 million from the original agreement?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated a significant commitment to aboriginal Canadians.

The budget provides \$300 million for northern housing, as much for housing on the reserves, \$150 million for the additional fund and a \$300-million increase for departmental spending. The total envelope is \$1.050 billion. That is a lot of money. We are making progress.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, at the time of the health accord concluded in September 2004, the government was supposed to pay the first nations the sum of \$700 million over five years. This amount was not confirmed in the budget.

Where did the first nations' health money go?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a fair and reasonable budget with respect to aboriginal Canadians. It contains extensive funding. In terms of the total budgetary situation, there was additional money allocated to the Department of Health relating to aboriginal health for the coming year. It is a fair and reasonable budget and I invite the hon. member to read the specifics of it.

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[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has cut \$5 billion earmarked for the environment. He has compensated with a vague promise to reduce that amount by 60%. In his budget, he did not even offer one dollar.

How can the minister let the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister sacrifice Canada's environment and the future of Canadians?

● (1440)

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government and our Prime Minister are very concerned about the health risks associated with pollution. Last year, the member across the way might like to know, there were 53 smog advisory days in Ontario, 35 in Quebec and, for the first time ever, we had 10 winter smog advisory days in Canada. That is the Liberal record.

On those days, children with asthma and elderly people with respiratory diseases cannot leave their homes. We took positive steps forward in the budget to clean up the air that Canadians breathe by investing in cleaner types of transportation and encouraging Canadians to use that transportation.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the minister were an honest woman, she would admit that she has been totally ousted from the budget, and has no weight in Cabinet and no plan for protecting our environment.

Canadians want a real plan, made by Canada and for Canada.

When will the minister stop bending over backward to please President Bush instead of doing some good for Canadians and our environment?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today unfortunately, after years of Liberal rule, we have fallen behind in every single industry sector compared to the U.S. on pollution control. The Liberals did not make the necessary investment in clean transportation.

We have taken significant steps to invest in cleaner transportation and invest in environmentally friendly choices for Canadians to use that transportation. I hope that the hon. member will work with us and every one in the House to develop our clean air act to deal with industrial pollution.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the finance minister and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development defended a budget that scrapped the Kelowna Accord.

There is no new funding to address serious health issues like TB, diabetes or HIV in aboriginal communities, no new funding for education or water, and no funding increases for economic opportunities. The government will never understand the pain our people feel. The government promised funding contingent on a budget surplus.

Will the minister admit there are no real dollars for aboriginal peoples in the budget?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us compare this Conservative budget, not with Liberal promises but with previous Liberal budgets.

The 2004 Liberal budget had no new money for aboriginal housing, zero, nothing. This Conservative government has invested \$300 million in northern aboriginal housing, \$300 million in off-reserve housing. The Liberal budgets were about multi-year procrastination, fuzzy language and empty promises. This budget is about action. It is about a two year action plan. It is about real money.

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is trying to sell aboriginal people a case of diet Kelowna: little flavour, none of the punch and truly tasteless.

It talks about meeting the Kelowna targets. Talk is cheap but the government is cheaper.

With less money than was agreed to in 2005, nothing for the Métis, nothing for health and nothing for education, will the minister admit that he has broken his promise to aboriginal people and denied progress for us, the aboriginal people of Canada, for generations?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of apologizing to that hon. member or anyone on that side of the House about promises to aboriginal Canadians.

This government has provided \$300 million in northern housing, \$300 million in off-reserve housing, an additional \$475 million,

\$500 million for the Mackenzie Valley pipeline, \$2.2 billion in relation to residential schools. We have nothing to apologize for. It is a good budget for aboriginal Canadians.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

**FISHERIES AND OCEANS**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has become apparent that the member for Halifax West is suffering from amnesia. He now thinks that he actually did something about the capital gains exemption for fishers.

My question is for the real Minister of Fisheries. Did any of the former Liberal ministers, besides crowing like roosters on a dung pile, have anything in place to help the fishery with this important capital gains exemption?

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the credit for this great initiative should really go to the member for South Shore—St. Margaret's. He was the first to introduce two private member's bills on this issue. He was with the Prime Minister and myself in Indian Harbour in Nova Scotia when we made the commitment before the election.

It is interesting to hear the member for Cardigan and the member for Halifax West trying to take credit. It must be a great program. They are not criticizing it. They are trying to take ownership.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for over 10 years, the Liberals first dithered and then failed when it came to climate change. Now their own environment commissioner, and this is true, said that they were all talk and no action.

The Conservative Party must have been studying hard all those long years for after all this time. when dealing with climate change, Canadians are now presented with the option of one more study and more consultation from the government when what they need is action.

Is the government prepared to live up to its throne speech commitments and table a bill in the House today and a plan to address the serious challenges we face on climate change?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with the hon. member as we develop our plan.

*Oral Questions*

Our government has 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 our environment. We will continue to work with industry, our colleagues in the House, the provinces and Canadians in the development of our plan to ensure that we can show real results on the environment.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to see the record and play button is working well.

The problem with this is that Conservative MPs stood in this House more than a year ago and claimed that they already had a plan for the environment. On April 13 of last year, their then environment critic said, “On the Kyoto plan, yes, my party has a one”. However, just three days ago we learned that the Conservatives do not have a plan at all. Did they lose their plan on the way to becoming government or are they just like the Liberals, a lot of hot air and all of it bad?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. How is anyone going to hear the minister's answer? The minister was asked a question. The Minister of the Environment now has the floor. We will have a little order so all hon. members, including the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley, can hear the answer.

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with most of what the hon. member said. I would like to make sure he understands that under the Liberal Kyoto plan we could have seen up to \$600 per Canadian family shipped overseas on international credits.

I can assure the member that under our made in Canada plan our Canadian transfer values will be spent right here at home on our own environment.

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there needs to be some accountability for the billions of dollars that went missing in Atlantic Canada in this budget. There is no new money in this budget for strategic infrastructure or for housing.

The Prime Minister and Premier Lord dine at \$5,000 corporate tables while six Olympic size swimming pools full of sewage is dumped into the Saint John Harbour every day.

Will the Prime Minister give Saint John some crumbs off his table and clean up the harbour this summer? Will the Prime Minister allow it to start?

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member is the guy that fell asleep on this file in his first term here in the House. That problem has been around for years. We addressed it. The Prime Minister was in Saint John, New Brunswick, along with the Minister of ACOA. We put real money into that project. The member put zero dollars in it. He put zero dollars into Point Lepreau. Bogus promises to New Brunswickers is the member's record.

• (1450)

**Mr. Paul Zed (Saint John, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is a non-partisan issue—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I am not convinced but I do invite the hon. member for Saint John to take the floor and we will have some order so we can hear his question.

**Mr. Paul Zed:** Mr. Speaker, this is a non-partisan issue because the sewage that flows into Saint John Harbour comes from everyone.

I must tell the House that we worked in this community for three years as a community for team Saint John. The Prime Minister has promised \$2 million, not \$44 million which he has failed to deliver.

Where is the money? Will he call Premier Lord today and ask him to sign a deal so we can begin harbour cleanup this summer?

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that member obviously fell asleep on the job. When we were in Saint John he obviously was asleep on the job as well because we were in his home town announcing real money for that project.

Not only did the Liberals fail on Point Lepreau and the harbour cleanup, they also failed our aquaculture industry where they promised money for the ag industry and delivered absolutely nothing.

The member's record is a record of failure.

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**PACIFIC GATEWAY**

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this week's budget, the Prime Minister broke his campaign promise to deliver at least the Liberal government's commitment of \$591 million over five years for the Pacific Gateway Strategy, choosing instead to dilute and delay this urgently needed funding over eight years instead of the previous five year period.

Why has the Prime Minister broken his election promise to British Columbians? Are there not enough potential votes in our province?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, \$599 million was projected. It was done over eight years to provide sufficient flexibility so that if some of those projects took longer the appropriations would not lapse. If we can put money into projects faster we will do that. The gateway has been protected. There is over \$5 billion in new infrastructure money that will also connect to gateway initiatives and other money for border security, border initiatives, technology and investments that will complement the gateway.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister can spin this any way he likes but the bottom line is that dollars earmarked by the Liberal government for gateway initiatives have been severely diluted and delayed, with less than half of the gateway money flowing in the first four of eight long years.

While he flagrantly laughed off this concern yesterday, could the Minister for the Pacific Gateway explain why this was not good enough when he was a Liberal but is good enough now?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I hate to have to say this to the hon. member but this government's commitment to the gateway is stronger than the commitment that was made by the previous government. It is much stronger.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, while the Conservatives are proposing a biased approach by generalizing minimum penalties for various types of crime, the real problem is that criminals such as Donald Matticks are released after only 16 months, even though they might be sentenced to eight years.

Is the minister aware that he is barking up the wrong tree when he focuses on minimum penalties, since all studies show that they are ineffective and that, all the while, real criminals involved in organized crime can continue all too easily to get off scot-free?

• (1455)

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the legislation that this government tabled today to improve our criminal justice system and to restore confidence in our criminal justice system. I look forward to working with the member in improving crime initiatives involving mandatory minimum prison sentences.

[Translation]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois opposes the bill tabled this morning because the minister is taking the wrong approach and is aiming at the wrong target.

Does the minister understand that the problem lies in the quasi-automatic nature of the Parole Act, because it allows for the release of individuals who have served one-sixth of their sentence, when it is the Bloc's belief that all conditional releases should be based entirely on merit?

[English]

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the evidence is clear that mandatory minimum prison sentences in respect of targeted offences are very effective in reducing crime in these matters.

In respect of the issue that the member raises, I trust that he will be working with us to improve our justice system and to ensure violent and serious criminals remain behind bars.

**TAXATION**

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has warned the government that changing the GST will be an expensive proposition for them.

Could the Minister of National Revenue inform the House how much it will cost small businesses for these changes? Could she also assure small business owners that they will not bear the brunt of these costs?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for raising the Federation of Independent Business. The president and CEO, Catherine Swift, reviewed the budget and her comment was, "We did have high expectations but the budget has actually exceeded those expectations".

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bill Casey (Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for 13 very long years, the people of Sydney watched the Liberals dither, delay, stall and study the Sydney tar ponds but they did very little. Now that they are in opposition they have suddenly discovered that the tar ponds are a problem.

Would the very distinguished Parliamentary Secretary for Public Works tell this House what the new Conservative government will do to clean up the tar ponds?

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, cleaning up the Sydney tar ponds is an issue of importance to all Nova Scotians.

**Some hon. members:** We want the minister.

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The parliamentary secretary has the floor and we will now hear from him.

**Mr. James Moore:** Mr. Speaker, we would like a real opposition but it looks like we are not going to get one, unfortunately.

The Government of Canada will contribute up to \$280 million, in concert with the Government of Nova Scotia which is contributing \$120 million, to clean up the Sydney tar ponds. Let there be no doubt that the project is going forward as planned and we will ensure that the Sydney tar ponds are cleaned up for Cape Bretoners, Nova Scotians and all Canadians.

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**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, during last night's debate on Norad, I asked the Minister of National Defence if Canada would be sharing information about our internal waterways with the United States. He responded by saying, "I'm not certain. That's up for question".

*Business of the House*

How could the minister be so clueless on such an important aspect of an agreement that he signed just last week? Why did the government not ensure Canadian sovereignty through the Northwest Passage?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the Norad agreement we will share information about vessels going through the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence Seaway. We will not for the Northwest Passage or for our lakes or waters. Those are all our internal waters. We do not share that with the United States.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there seems to be almost no restrictions placed on the U.S. when it comes to our sovereignty. The Liberals did not ask for any and the Conservatives do not seem to want any.

When it comes to information sharing, the minister bends around for the U.S., but when it comes to sovereignty, who will stand up for Canada? It is not that government.

In how many ways has Canada's sovereignty been impeded, been given away in this Norad agreement?

• (1500)

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, none of our sovereignty has been given away. We are sharing information with the United States. It is sharing information with us.

The government stands for our sovereignty. Our defence policy is to enforce our sovereignty. With the help of the House, we will pass the budget so we can enforce our sovereignty.

**Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh (Vancouver South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government was sadly silent in the budget in getting our military the equipment it needs. Out of the National Defence Headquarters, we now learn that conflicting lists of priorities were being passed around between the offices of the chief of defence, the minister and the PMO. The conflicts remained unresolved, with the result being no new announcements to support our troops in theatre.

Who is really in charge of defining what the military needs to perform their mission: the Chief of Defence Staff, the minister or the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find it incredible that the member would even ask such a question. That party, when in government, hollowed out the army, rusted out the navy and grounded the air force. The member should put a bag on his head. For shame.

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**THE BUDGET**

**Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this week's budget has been accepted by Canadians for being incredibly family friendly. Hard-working, law-abiding Canadians, who have struggled under an oppressive Liberal tax regime for 13 years, also like it.

Unfortunately, the former government, now in opposition where it belongs, continues to fearmonger and spread misinformation.

Would the Minister of Finance tell the House the true facts on the many benefits low income Canadians will see in this week's budget?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have delivered on our promise of our commitment to reduce taxes for all Canadians, including lower income Canadians.

On the personal income side, we have the Canada employment credit and the increase in the BPA, which means people will be able to earn almost \$10,000 in 2007, without paying federal income tax.

We have also removed about 655,000 low income Canadians totally from the federal tax roll.

On the GST, I heard the member opposite, who is the finance critic, say that a cut in the GST would, "fritter away all taxpayers' money". It is not frittering away for the one-third—

**The Speaker:** It being Thursday, I believe the hon. member for Wascana, the opposition House leader, has a question.

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**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, aside from House business, I would also be interested in the views of the Minister of Finance about the theories of Herb Grubel with respect to tax policy in our country.

More particular, could the House leader inform us of his plans for business in the House for the rest of this week and next week? Could he tell us when the expedited legislation to distribute at least \$2 billion to Canadian farmers this spring will be introduced?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the hon. member, as a former finance minister, has nothing but admiration and respect for the wonderful job done by the Minister of Finance and the budget he delivered this week. All Canadians should support and thank him.

In response to the second part of his question, we will continue with the opposition motion today.

Tomorrow there is an agreement to adopt the motion on notice regarding the address of the Prime Minister of Australia to be delivered in the House at 3 p.m. on May 18. We also hope to conclude the second reading debate on Bill C-5, the public health agency, and begin the second reading debate on Bill C-6, an act to amend the Aeronautics Act.

Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of next week will be taken up with the final three days of the budget date.

Finally, I designate Thursday, May 11 as the second allotted day in this period.

*Business of Supply*

● (1505)

[Translation]

**POINT OF ORDER**

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. During oral question period, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine attacked the integrity of the Minister of the Environment by saying that she was not an honest woman.

This is contrary to the rules of the House.

I am wondering if the Speaker could examine the rules to discover whether the hon. member should immediately offer an apology to this House.

[English]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if you decide to follow up on the parliamentary secretary's suggestion and look into this, I hope that your reflection on this matter would be enriched and inspired by the number of times you had to warn that exact member in the last Parliament not to use unparliamentary language. Maybe you will find his new found sanctimony amusing.

[Translation]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the record of the proceedings in Hansard will indicate clearly that I said, “—if the minister were an honest woman—”.

I did not say she was dishonest. I did not say she was a liar. I did not say she was honest.

I said that “if” she were an honest woman, she would admit there was no real plan for protecting our environment, that she had no weight in cabinet and that she had no interest in protecting the future of Canadians.

And I am still waiting for her to admit it.

[English]

**The Speaker:** The point of order raised by the hon. member for Nepean—Carleton indicates the difficulty the House has when members make personal comments about one another. This is the third time in as many days that this expression has been used in the House. It was raised on the first occasion, I believe, by the hon. member for Welland in respect of an answer given by a minister at the time, and exactly the same expression was used. This is the third time it has been used.

As I indicated then, my initial reaction was that it was not out of order because it did not say that any member was, as the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine has just said, dishonest. She said “if she were honest”. This is not to say that she is not, or he is not, or whoever is not. That is the point. I will look into the matter further. I have taken the previous point of order under advisement.

However, I caution hon. members that continual reference to individuals on a personal basis and, indeed, references to the wild beasts, which frequently come up in the course of question period, are not particularly helpful. We have had a lot of talk of weasels and

ferrets and various difficulties about that in the last few days. Frankly, the Chair would prefer that these matters not be raised in the House and that we stick with talking about ministers and members. I urge all hon. members to bear that in mind in future, including the members who have raised the points of order today.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

OPPOSITION MOTION—CHILD CARE

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on May 26, 1995, 850 women put on their shoes and marched on Quebec City with nine demands. They wanted changes from the Quebec government that would improve their economic situation. For 10 days, the marchers received massive support from the people. On June 4, 1995, after walking 200 km, they were welcomed to Quebec City by nearly 20, 000 people who supported their demands. The Bread and Roses March caught the imagination of Quebecers to such an extent that the Government of Quebec in power at the time, the Parti Québécois, decided not only to support some of their demands but also to offer them a day care system that would facilitate their entry or re-entry into the work force.

On International Women's Day, women throughout the world celebrate their achievements and their commitment to continuing the struggle for full equity. For female workers, child care is a matter of equality and fairness. It has to do with their equal right to work, their ability to find and keep a good job, and their right to go to work without having to worry about their children.

Two women in three with children under three years of age work outside the home, as do three mothers in four who have children between three and five years of age.

Women need and deserve safe, affordable, accessible, quality day care for their children while they contribute to our country's economy and the well-being of their families.

But instead of supporting quality day care, the Conservative government is offering parents \$1,200 a year for each child under six, even though more and more studies show that a child's experiences between zero and six years of age determine in many ways the kind of adult that he or she will become and even though other studies indicate that investments in child care and early childhood learning are eminently beneficial to society.

One after another, these studies show that access to a quality early learning system increases the chances that children will become productive adults capable of making an effective contribution to society. Quality early learning and child care services help children develop well and achieve their full potential, in addition to keeping them safe and in good health.

Child care services must support the emotional, social, intellectual and physical well-being of children. Most of all, quality child care is not babysitting.

Educational child care services stimulate harmonious childhood development and support families by reducing poverty, promoting equality for women, reinforcing social integration, and building a knowledge-based economy.

Experts agree that all children benefit from access to a high-quality educational child care system, and that their development is compromised when they receive poor-quality services.

Quality child care services can provide children with an excellent learning environment that helps them reach their full physical, cognitive, cultural, social and emotional development potential. These services also support families, complement parental responsibilities, and promote the integration of children with disabilities.

Nowadays, it is widely acknowledged that learning starts at birth and that early learning has a significant impact on lifelong development and adult well-being. Quality child care services enable families to balance their professional and family responsibilities while providing their children with stimulating learning environments that are adapted to their development.

Stimulating, child-focused daycare services encourage children to become lifelong learners and productive members of society.

I see that my Liberal colleagues are looking pretty smug because they think I support their motion. I do not. I have described a good daycare system just like the one in Quebec.

• (1510)

Quebec and the other provinces do not need a pan-Canadian program. They need money to develop their own child care system, one that reflects their values.

To be effective, a family policy has to contain various elements, as Quebec's family policy does. It has to be integrated and implemented by only one level of government. Only Quebec can do this for Quebeckers.

The Bloc Québécois is not against the Conservative Party's plan to give money to parents, but it is against how the government is going about it.

The Harper government did not support our idea of a refundable tax credit instead of the \$1,200 allowance, a proposal that received broad support.

The child care allowance remains taxable, even by the federal government, and is unfair to the families that need it most. With a little humility, this problem could have been corrected quite easily. Instead, to pay for the universal child care benefit, the government will eliminate a supplement in the Canada child tax benefit for parents with children under the age of 7. This will save \$390 million.

Eliminating the child supplement will penalize families with children under age 7 who were receiving the benefit and do not have any child care expenses.

The Bloc Québécois proposed to replace the taxable \$1,200 allowance announced by the Conservatives with a refundable tax credit.

The Coalition pour le maintien du réseau des services de garde, a huge coalition of 15 organizations that represents more than one

### *Business of Supply*

million Quebeckers, is also calling for a refundable tax credit instead of the Conservative allowance. The formula and scale that the coalition is proposing are very similar to the Bloc Québécois proposal.

This proposal has several advantages. Because a tax credit is not income, it would not reduce any government benefit and would not penalize low income earners. Because it is a tax measure, the federal government is not interfering in areas of provincial jurisdiction, and the credit has no impact on Quebec's social programs. Because the credit is refundable, even the poorest parents who pay no tax would be entitled to it. Because it is based on household income, it is much more equitable and benefits those who need it most. What is more, because the credit is based on family income, it helps the neediest households the most, unlike the Conservative proposal, which is based on a couple's lower income, whether or not the household income is high. Most allowances of this sort are based on family income.

There are other credits paid in advance based on the previous year's income. The government could very well do the same thing for the tax credit for parents and pay an advance starting next summer, or send monthly cheques if it prefers.

Thus, all families with family income under \$35,000 would receive a \$1,200 refundable tax credit per child. The amount of the tax credit would gradually be reduced until it reached a universal minimum of \$700.

Family policy is closely intertwined with the transfer of values and culture in a society, and even the survival of this society. Respect for the jurisdiction and full autonomy of Quebec and the provinces is vital to its success.

The Bloc Québécois, in the interests of Quebeckers and the well-being of their children, opposes any national family policy and calls for the \$807 million promised by the previous government to be part of the solution to the fiscal imbalance.

• (1515)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Caledon Institute did a report on the \$1,200 child care allowance, which it described as "a flawed scheme". The institute said, "For example, an Ontario two-earner couple with net family income of \$30,000 would end up with just \$199, while a \$200,000 one-earner couple would get a net benefit of \$1,076". Clearly this is inequitable between families.

The member will also know that we have a Canada child tax benefit program that delivers benefits to families with children. It is income tested and makes sure that it targets those most in need. Would the member agree that it might be more plausible and maybe more equitable if this increase in a child care allowance were in fact simply used to enhance the current Canada child tax benefit and therefore also eliminate the administrative cost of trying to distribute cheques every month?

*Business of Supply*

• (1520)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, the position of the Bloc Québécois is very clear and very simple: the \$1,200 allowance should be changed to a tax credit. This would allow all parents to benefit from this measure and poor parents even more so.

[*English*]

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for her intervention. She has long been an advocate for the rights of women and children in this country.

There is a specific point I want to address. The feminist alliance group FAFIA has been in Geneva this week, talking about the record surpluses over eight years and how the number of programs and services have been cut in Canada.

The member spoke specifically about fiscal imbalance. I would like her to address what this current Conservative plan for child care, or lack of plan, would do to existing child care spaces in Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for her question. However, I can only speak to Quebec's position on the number of spaces that would be lost or gained because of this program.

I know that the \$1,200 allowance will not create more spaces in Quebec. What would create more spaces is the \$807 million we are asking for as part of correcting the fiscal imbalance.

I am aware that the fiscal imbalance affects all of the provinces, and that the large deficit prevents them from establishing effective child care and daycare programs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the other element of the child care policy is the tax credit for corporations, the \$10,000 a year to create child care spaces. The federal level of government has no jurisdiction over child care. My concern is this: even if these corporations could establish child care positions, how are they going to be regulated? Who in fact would provide the standards to ensure that the spaces created do not simply become glorified babysitting?

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, as I told my hon. colleague earlier, Quebec worked within its prerogative to establish a very effective child care system that takes into account children's and parents' needs.

I wish that all provinces could do the same, were willing to do the same, and could get money to do it. We are certainly aware that it improves the quality of our children's lives.

Yes, there are ways to regulate the child care system, but it is a provincial responsibility. The provinces must implement various processes to monitor and develop various child care services.

[*English*]

**Hon. Shawn Murphy (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the motion that is before the House. I should say at the outset that my greatest disappointment so far in this 39th

Parliament has been this particular issue. I think it is an issue that affects us as Canadians, and it is certainly going to affect our future as a society.

In the long run, we as a society are only as good as our educational system. A primary determinant of our future economic prosperity and growth is our education system. It is a determinant of health, social skills, cognitive skills, well-being and subsequent success in the workplace.

I am talking about education in its broadest sense. Of course, everyone knows that it starts in the home and that mom and dad are certainly the most important components of it. That is why I, like most other people in the House, am proud of the parental care provisions that the House adopted several years ago. This extends to the extended family, the nuclear family, the community, the churches and what is offered by the religious organizations, the primary education system, the post-secondary education system, skills training and lifelong learning. And a very important component of that is our system of early childhood education.

As indicated by all the literature quoted in the House by other speakers more familiar and more knowledgeable on this topic than I, one of the primary determinants of how well a child does in the primary school system is how ready that child is when he starts school. That depends on a lot of factors. It depends on the environment he comes from. It depends on the health of the child and the health of his parents. Every family is different. It depends, in a lot of cases, on the formal early childhood programs to which the child was exposed.

In a situation like this, I like to quote David Dodge, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, who says that early learning is the single most important investment a society can make for its own future. I would like everyone to consider that when we vote on the motion.

How ready that particular child is when he or she starts grade 1 sets in motion a whole trajectory of other factors. It determines how well he or she does in the primary system. It affects his or her health. It affects whether or not that child will in the future be involved in the criminal justice system. It is a determinant of how well that child eventually does in the workplace. Of course, it affects the intergenerational transfer to his or her children at a later date. I am not saying that the formal early childhood system that this country adopts is the sole determining factor, but it is a very, very important one.

There are many children who are at risk. There are many children who need help. The answer this House is giving them in the legislation and in the budget is that mom and dad are there and we are not going to go any further than mom and dad. That is not a very satisfactory answer. That does not reflect the reality of Canadian life as we know it.

A lot of the time there is no mom and dad. There is only a mom. In a lot of cases that mom has to work. That mom has a lot of other pressures. That mom needs help. It is my submission that the Government of Canada should be there to help that particular mom.

A lot of the time that mom has not been dealt a great hand in this whole card game of life, but the mom has to play the cards she is dealt. This is not poker where we get a three card draw. She has to play the cards she is dealt.

But that mom has dreams. She dreams that when her child goes to school he or she will be ready for school. She dreams that the child will have the cognitive and social skills to develop as a child, that he or she will be well adjusted, that he or she will be a participant in the workforce, and that mom may become a grandparent someday. That is her dream.

• (1525)

What is the House telling her by the budget? The House is telling her to dream on. That is what we are telling her.

I am not going to stand here today and suggest for one minute that the Liberal plan was a perfect plan. It was not. It was a \$5 billion plan over five years. There were 10 agreements signed. There was a lot of work done by the Minister of Social Development. It was a tremendous step in the right direction. It is a development that should be built upon, not torn down, not gutted. It is not a distinction between what the left wing and the right wing should do. It is a difference between right and wrong. It is very disappointing that the intention is to gut it.

The \$1,200 that is being proposed will be welcome in most families, but how possibly could it be equated with a formal early childhood development plan? Nothing that has been suggested, stated or written to me will answer that question. It is income support.

The previous Liberal government, with the assistance of the opposition parties, adopted about 10 years ago the child tax benefit. It is probably one of the most progressive social acts by the House in the last generation. That provides families with income support. That was enhanced over the years.

Right now the lowest income family gets approximately \$3,000 per annum for the first child. It is income support. Every month that is very welcome. If that is increased by \$1,200 and if it is means tested, that would be good, but I really have a difficulty in giving parents out there who are making over \$100,000 a cheque for \$1,200. If the payment, which is income support pure and simple, were given to families who need it, let me be the first member of the House to support that, but please, let nobody in the House call it child care, because it is not child care.

If we wanted to take the argument to the extreme sense, why would we stop at early childhood development? Why would we not go to grade one? Let us leave it to moms and dads. Give parents real choice in grade one. Instead of offering grade one, give them a \$1,200 payment. Just think of the money the federal and provincial governments of Canada could save. That is how ridiculous the argument could get. Why stop at early childhood development? Go right to grades one, two and three.

That is why eight premiers in Canada and all opposition parties, representing 64% of the people who live in this great country, support the plan that is in existence now. I am disappointed that the budget has turned its back on families. I am disappointed that the budget has turned its back on children and on all Canadians.

### *Business of Supply*

In closing, again the \$1,200 is welcome, but how possibly could it increase a child's ability to go to school on the first day?

I am supporting the motion and I will be interested in the rest of the debate. I hope that members agree with me that the plan in the budget is foolhardy and that we should develop the existing plan that we all supported before.

• (1530)

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last year in the House when the former minister of social development was before a committee of the whole, he said, "The central developmental relationship is a parent to its child". That is not a child to a child care worker or a child to an ECE teacher. That is a child to his or her parent or parents. Yet the member opposite promotes a system of child care that encourages the separation of parents from their children, from that central developmental relationship.

Is the true best start for children not with their parents, or does the member believe the best start for children is to replace parents with government day care?

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I thought I addressed that in my remarks. Again, please do not let anyone think that I am trying in any way to replace the role of the parents, mom and dad. That is the primary function right there. As I said in my speech, and I thought I explained it very carefully, there are a lot of parents out there, single parents, low income parents, parents with health problems, parents who just do not have the capacity and they need help. I stated that the government ought to be there to help those particular parents.

What governments have to offer in the whole field of formal early childhood development is one aspect of it, but it is a very important aspect. If we tear it down, we do so at our own peril.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it appears to me at least that the members of the government just do not seem to understand life in the urban cities. Some 60% of the citizens of this country voted against the party of this particular government. It seems to me that they were the people from the urban areas. That probably accounts for the lack of connection they feel.

• (1535)

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member. It seems that a lot of the rhetoric we are hearing is a lack of understanding. I am not going to say it is urban-rural because I do not agree. It is a reality of what is going on in families across Canada.

It seems to me there are members of this House who think that the typical family in Canada is a mom and a dad, and the dad works, the mom stays home, the family has a van and a little black dog and 2.86 kids. That is not the reality. The programs and initiatives as we go forward here have to reflect that reality.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's speech. In fact, I thought that he had a lot of good things to say. Unfortunately he lost all credibility when he mentioned that the budget does not help any Canadians. I think that is the rhetoric he was referring to just a moment ago.

*Business of Supply*

My first question is on the issue of child care. He certainly does not want us to refer to it as child care, but indeed we are helping parents who ultimately provide child care. I wonder if he would correct his terminology. What the Liberals are now claiming is essential but failed to do leads me to ask the question, if this was so important, why did they not just do it? But on the issue of the terminology of child care and abandoning this rhetoric, would he not admit that what they are providing is a limited day care program, not child care?

**Hon. Shawn Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I would disagree with that. I am not going to stand here and say the program is perfect. It is a step in the right direction. It is not one program. It is 10 programs. We have to appreciate the jurisdiction of the issue. That is why the previous minister had 10 separate agreements signed by the 10 provinces. Each family is unique and each province is unique with its own objectives.

I want to clarify a point that the hon. member did make. I did not suggest that there was nothing in the budget for Canadian families. That is not the case at all. We are talking about child care here. This is a continuum of what the previous government started. Perhaps one of the most important starts in this continuum was the one year of parental leave. That is very important for Canadian working families. It was continued with the early childhood development agreement that provided limited funds to provinces for child care. It continued with the child tax benefit and that was enhanced over the last 10 years.

This is what I find most curious in this debate. We are all very familiar with the child tax benefit and the child tax supplement. It does provide about \$3,000 per annum for the lowest income families. I have never heard one person, whether it is an academic, a member of Parliament, an advocacy group, I have never heard any Canadian of any stripe or size refer to that as child care money. Why are we referring to this \$1,200 as child care money? Please, will somebody answer that question?

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the constituents of Don Valley East, I am grateful for this opportunity to debate the future of child care in Canada. It is a future that is in jeopardy because of the plans of the government to tear up the early learning and child care agreements that the former Liberal government brought into fruition prior to the last election.

Before the Conservatives were elected, all 10 provinces and the territories had finally reached a comprehensive agreement with the federal government to enhance programs and services for children under six in four key areas: promoting healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; improving parenting and family supports; strengthening early childhood development, learning and care; and strengthening community supports.

With these agreements in place the federal government started to transfer the first \$5 billion worth of payments to the provinces and territories. In Ontario, with the cooperation of the municipalities, the plan created 14,000 newly licensed child care spaces and an additional 4,000 subsidized child care spaces in the 2004-05 fiscal year alone. By 2007 the Liberal plan would have created 25,000 new spaces for children and parents to access regardless of the individual's economic or social circumstances. Sadly, these future spaces will never be created because the Conservative government

has terminated the early learning and child care strategy, a historical agreement that took so much time and effort to create.

Today the Government of Ontario has announced that as a result of the federal Conservative promise to terminate this agreement, the province will no longer be able to enhance child care programs. This is devastating news for children and parents living in my riding of Don Valley East and in fact all across Canada.

In place of the early learning and child care strategy, the Conservatives have reshaped the old family allowance that promises to give parents \$1,200 a year for each child under the age of six. On the surface, the so-called universal care benefit sounds like a good deal, but scratch the surface only slightly and the benefits quickly fade away.

First of all, the child care allowance is a taxable benefit that will increase a family's federal and provincial annual tax bill. For low and modest income families this is disappointing news. The Tory plan is to hand out monthly cheques and then tax it back at the end of the year. How many licensed and subsidized child care spaces will this create? Not one single, solitary space.

The Caledon Institute of Social Policy recently released a study on the new child care allowance that states, "The allowance will do little to ease the often heavy financial burden of child care expense for the large majority of families with low or middle incomes that do not have access to subsidized child care, get little or nothing from the child care expense deduction and that often cannot find affordable, good quality care".

The fact is most Canadian families need and use child care outside the home so that both parents can participate in the workforce. For single parents, especially women, that need is even greater.

We should view the so-called universal child care benefit for what it is. It is a form of income support, but in no way does it resemble a child care plan. There is no way of telling how much money will be spent. There is no means of measuring the actual quality of child care if no one knows where the money goes.

According to recent polls, 90% of Canadians believe high quality child care is important to help ensure Canada's social and economic well-being. Eighty-one per cent think governments should develop a plan to improve child care. Seventy-six per cent of Canadians believe child care should be available to all families with costs to be shared by government. In fact, 65% of Canadians are willing to pay more taxes to ensure that all children have access to quality child care facilities.

*Business of Supply*

•(1540)

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care notes that there is growing evidence that investments into government subsidized child care programs return considerably more value than the original investment. It also notes that children who enter elementary school with ready to learn skills are far less at risk of having difficulties in school, leaving before high school graduation, becoming involved in criminal behaviour or becoming addicted to tobacco, alcohol or drugs.

In 1994 the National Forum on Crime reported that early childhood experience in literacy skills and completion of high school are major determinants in the prevention of youth crime and recommended that early childhood development programs be expanded.

It is also estimated that the cost to Canadian businesses due to absence for family reasons is estimated to be \$2.7 billion annually. Furthermore, costs to the education system for remedial education due to poor early learning environments are estimated to be \$2.5 billion annually.

It is a fact that 74% of mothers whose youngest child is between three and five years old is in fact a working mom. This means that most moms require child care in order to make ends meet.

Why are the Conservatives taking such a mean-spirited approach to low and middle income families? Why are they so hostile to single parents, especially working women? What do the Conservatives have against families where both parents work?

In order for Canadian families to prepare for the demands of the new economy, the federal Conservatives must admit their mistaken promises to eliminate the early child learning strategy because the future of our children is at stake. There is no need for ideology but there is need for creative solutions.

•(1545)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of questions for the member and then a comment.

The member made the suggestion that low and middle income families would be excluded from our child care policy and that is absolutely untrue. Low and middle income families will benefit the most from this policy. Thirty per cent of Canadians do not pay income tax and for the member to suggest that it could be done via income tax does not help 30% of Canadians.

The government just took another 655,000 people off the income tax roles. In order for low income families to benefit this is the only fair way to do it.

Earlier this afternoon the leader of her party suggested something that really did not sit well with me at all. He referred to the children of families who choose to look after their own children as abandoned children. Does the member opposite agree that families who choose to raise their own children or find a family member to look after them are committing something that would constitute abandoning children?

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, as an accountant I need to make corrections. Her assumptions are totally false.

The Conservative government has increased the tax for middle income Canadians and those people will not be any better off within the Conservative plan. By giving \$1,200, Canadians will get \$1.20 a day. When it is calculated, they are not getting any benefit.

We are not being bound by ideology. The Conservatives are so stuck on that neo-conservative ideology that they cannot see that there are other solutions. The early learning strategy would have given children the ability to be intellectually available and engaged if a parent had to go to work. The member has no idea how many parents living in the urban area work outside the home. If they have to work, they should have an opportunity to participate in subsidized day care.

The mayor has announced that he is cancelling 6,000 spaces because of the Conservative plan. If the government is so keen on helping children I do not understand why it is so ideologically bound to that neo-conservative ideology.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier today I moved an amendment to deal with the whole notion of non-profit child care. The hon. member understands that big box child care is basically allowing large multinational companies to make a profit on the backs of children. Using government money to make a profit is unconscionable.

Why would the member and her party not accept an amendment saying that the child care spaces being created in new facilities with 2005 and 2006 dollars should be not for profit child care centres?

•(1550)

**Ms. Yasmin Ratansi:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, I will not be ideologically bound. I do not believe in ideology. I believe in helping kids and in order to help kids a process has to be regulated.

When the early childhood strategy was adopted by the provinces, they agreed to help those parents who needed to go to work. The program had flexibility and that flexibility would have allowed parents to choose how to improve their parenting skills, how to have a healthy pregnancy, birth, infancy, learning strategies and strengthening the community support.

There is a whole way of looking at it and I am not ideologically bound.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to be splitting my time with the member for Prince Edward—Hastings.

I am very pleased to respond to the motion of the hon. member for St. Paul's. On January 23 of this year, Canadians chose a platform that puts choice in child care as a top priority. We promised, Canadians voted and now we are delivering.

*Business of Supply*

On Tuesday, the Minister of Finance tabled a budget that commits this government to a new vision in child care, a new universal child care plan that provides benefits directly to families and supports the creation of new child care spaces. Both of these components, benefits to families and new child care spaces, work in tandem, and behind both components of the plan lies one unifying vision. That vision is to give flexibility so that parents and communities can create the solutions that work best for them.

With the support of the House, we will create a new universal child care benefit in time to have cheques in the mail to parents this July. The cheques will provide \$100 a month for each child under the age of six. This will put \$2.5 billion per year directly into the hands of parents. It will provide direct federal support to 1.6 million families and more than 2 million children.

The essence of our vision is that these cheques will give parents flexibility. They will put the universal child care benefit to work where it makes the most sense for them. For some parents it might go toward the cost of formal day care. Other families might use the money to help pay for different kinds of care, with neighbours or family members, for example. Still other families might choose to have a parent stay at home to raise the children. For these parents, as with parents who work outside the home, the benefit provides choice.

Parents may use it to purchase children's books or educational toys. They may use it to purchase educational software or a trip to the local museum. They might even use it to attend a mom and tot program at the local library or community centre. Different families will put the benefit to use in different ways to help their children. That is how it should be.

The day following the budget, for example, the *Globe and Mail* carried a story about a young single mother in Halifax who has a job as a cashier at Tim Hortons and she earns, as one would expect, a modest income. She has to manage her family finances very carefully. What has she decided to do with the benefit? She is going to invest it in an RESP so that her four year old son will be able to pursue post-secondary education when he is ready for it. This is an investment that she would not have been able to make until now.

This is the kind of choice that individual Canadians make when given the flexibility to put the benefit where it makes the most sense for them. However I want to emphasize that the universal child care benefit is only one of the two components of our universal child care plan. We know that many parents want formal day care. We know also that child care spaces are difficult to find in some communities. We also know that the demand exceeds the current supply. That is why we will be creating new child care spaces.

● (1555)

Tuesday's budget set aside \$250 million a year for each of five years beginning next year to support the creation of new, real child care spaces. In fact, we will create up to 250,000 child care spaces each year. Once again, our vision is different. Our vision is to encourage flexibility and innovation. Some parents work shift work. Some must work very long hours at key times of the year. Some have a long commute and cannot make it back to their care centre by

the time it closes at five o'clock. Some need to drop their kids off for only a few days a week. There are not very many formal day cares that can accommodate all these variations, so we are creating a child care spaces initiative that will help create spaces that are designed with real life situations in mind, the working realities of parents in communities across Canada.

We want community associations, non-profit organizations and businesses, both large and small, to come up with ideas for child care spaces that make sense for them. We will also include parents as they, believe it or not, are the true experts.

We can see many examples already of innovative ideas in creating child care spaces. In Toronto, for example, a former tin factory on the corner of Spadina and Richmond was converted into a commercial and cultural centre. The developers worked with the Canadian Mothercraft Society to set up an innovative child care centre in the workplace that supports the architects, visual artists, filmmakers, performers and scientists who are tenants of the building. Not only does it offer child care, it also provides a very stimulating environment for children to learn about culture.

These are the kinds of results that we can achieve when people are given the opportunity to innovate, to be flexible and to choose. They are the kinds of results that we will look for when we invite various partners, who have a keen interest in child care issues, to come together to create solutions for their communities.

Over the coming months we will consult with the provinces, territories, employers, non-profit organizations and parents on ways to implement our spaces initiative. We expect to have the results of these consultations late this fall and specific commitments for the initiative will be ready for next year's budget. Very soon we will see the creation of new child care spaces across Canada.

There are two elements of our universal child care plan. They represent a fresh vision of child care, one that encourages flexibility, innovation and, most important, choice. Perhaps most of all our plan is one of our top five priorities. It is not one of 30 or 40 or 50 priorities, which would mean that it is not a priority at all, as we have seen with the previous government at any time. Ours is one of our top five.

Canadian families now have the hope that they will see real action, real child care spaces, real money in their pockets to help with their children and real choice. We will act on our five priorities. We will act on our universal child care plan. Canadians will soon see the benefits of these results. That is why I believe our universal child care plan is such a good one for parents and children right across the country and that is why I urge the hon. members in the House to vote against this motion.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member is aware, in the province of Ontario the social services boards essentially uploaded the cost of child services and child care back to the province. The province took the agreement it had last year and applied it over four years as opposed to creating spaces this year, which, in a three or four year process, will result probably in the downloading of services back to municipalities, thereby adding to the property tax base. That is quite unacceptable.

I have seen several other people from the municipal field who have essentially come to the House in another order of government, so there is a great deal of empathy for them.

The property taxpayers of Ontario will be the big victims of this. How will the government overcome that either this year, next year or in four years, once the money allocated to the provinces has expired?

• (1600)

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Mr. Speaker, in many ways our children are our greatest natural resource.

Our program is designed to provide three things: support, choice and spaces. It is not the role of the federal government, constitutionally, to provide 100% child care.

We believe that our role is to provide the parents with the support they need to get the choice that meets their needs, the choice in child care, and we will do that in two ways. One way is through a \$1,200 a year universal child care allowance for parents of every child under the age of six. That will help them with affordability to access programming.

As Leslie Wilson, who is the vice-president of the large Canadian day care program, Wee Watch, said the affordability of licensed care has always been a sticking point. For parents currently planning day care for their children, that \$1,200 appears to be bridging the gap between the cost of our services compared to unregulated care.

We are talking about spending more than twice as much on our child care program than any previous government has even promised, much less delivered. There is a lot more money going into the system. That money will be there to support the choices parents make. Whether it is formal day care or stay at home, the money will be in the system to make it happen.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on December 5 last year, the Prime Minister had a press conference, and I have the press release right in front of me. The Conservatives announced a new choice in child care allowance. In fact, the press release was very cute. The Prime Minister was holding a cute baby. In the announcement, if we read the fine print, it said very clearly that there would be a rollback of the \$250 young child supplement, which means the \$1,200 is not real; it is actually \$950.

I believe the Conservative Party knows full well about this. It is right in its press release, that it will roll in the current \$20.25 per month supplement. That is the young child supplement.

Is it not dishonest to tell Canadians there is a universal \$1,200 when the minister knows full well that it is not \$1,200, but really \$950, because the young child supplement is being rolled back? Should she not come clean on that?

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Mr. Speaker, I am surprised the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina would be arguing about us giving parents more money. This is something for which she has advocated for a long time, and that is what we are doing.

Historically, parents have not been given money for child care, not one cent. We are offering \$1,200. That is the choice the hon. member has and will have when this comes to a vote. She can support \$1,200 a year for each child or she can vote against it and vote for giving them nothing. That is the choice: \$1,200 a year or nothing.

I hope, for the sake of parents and children across this country, that she chooses \$1,200.

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to take the opportunity to speak to my colleagues as a parliamentarian and as their colleague. I would also like to speak perhaps in another general term, and that is as a dad, as a parent. Obviously we have a number of people in the House with that same characterization. I think there perhaps may be a few who would fall into another category similar to myself. I also speak as a grandparent.

I can assure members, after raising a family of three wonderful daughters, professional ladies in their own way now and very established, my wife and I naturally went through the trials and tribulations of raising children. At that time, we had a self-employed business where my wife literally worked dawn to dusk, along with myself, so the needs of child care were very important.

We found a way. We found many different ways. Occasionally it was with a licensed child care centre. Occasionally it was with a parent. Occasionally it was with a family member and/or a friend. The point is, we used a number of versions, depending on the situation at the time that would work for us.

Now I find a similar situation. My three daughters now have children of their own. They are professional ladies, all accomplished in their own life and they are using various different methods of child care, depending on the situation.

Therefore, members will understand that I am a proponent of using what we have available to us as a society. I suppose in an ideal world we would take \$30 billion and we would have an automatic, wonderful universal child care system for everyone in the country. That would be wonderful. Let us get a grip on life. Let us get a grip on reality. Let us find the simple situation.

I can understand my colleagues over there cheering wildly and saying, “\$30 billion, no problem”. That is very simple. Are we going to pull that amount of money out of our health care system? Are we going to pull it out of our education system? Are we going to pull it out of our social system for the disadvantaged and the needy? Are we going to pull that out of our defence budget? Where are we going to pull the money from?

*Business of Supply*

Let us be real and try to find the proper balance. That is what we have done as a party. That is why I am privileged and proud to be a part of the government where I have an opportunity to express my support for our plan, which is a universal child care plan. It offers choice.

In particular, I would like to focus on our plan and the potential benefits for families living in our nation's smaller communities. I happen to come from a smaller community and so do many members of the House. Choice is definitely the operative and key word in my vocabulary and to many hundreds of thousands of people in the country.

The Conservative child care plan will help Canadian families to act on their own and make their own choice in child care, regardless of the preferred methods of child care, the economic situation or where they might live. Whether it is for a stay at home parent, or a friend or a family member, or a non-profit organization, or a for profit or institutionalized child care program, we believe that parents know best. When it comes to raising their children and preparing them for their future successes, our plan is designed to support the freedom of choice for parents.

I am especially proud of the fact that Canada's universal child care plan will assist families in every community in our country, no matter how small, how large, how remote or how concentrated they are. We are committed to supporting families. I and many Canadians across the country share the feeling that families are the building block of our society. Strong families build strong communities, strong families build healthy communities, and healthy communities are the foundation of this nation's economic and social well-being.

There is absolutely no doubt that the Conservative child care plan will bring benefits that enhance the quality of life for all our citizens. As most of my colleagues are aware, our plan has two parts.

One part is to provide the direct cash infusion of dollars to people who need it, regardless of their situation. There will be \$1,200 universally across the board for every child under the age of six.

On the other side, and it is a two barrelled approach, we recognize the value of a form of early childhood learning and education and of having proper institutionalized child care where we can raise standards universally, if possible, to the best of our ability across the country. That is why we have put in another \$250 million to create another 25,000 child care spaces per year.

● (1605)

Will it be a challenge? Of course it will be a challenge, but nothing happens unless a decision is made to make it happen. We have made this decision. We have made this commitment. We have budgeted the money. We have a minister and a government committed to following through on it.

It is a lot of work. It is not going to happen if we just sit here and badger back and forth, saying no, they will not, or yes, they will. We are going to do it. A decision is made to do things: that is how a government should work. We will do this.

To my mind, unless the second part of the plan comes through this initiative, we will have secured only half the problem. We will have solved only half the problem. Our goal is to deliver a total package.

The total package is dollars and choice, as well as a diversification of choices. I am so proud that our minister, our finance minister and our government have put the money where our mouths were, per se. We said we were going to do it and we are now backing it up with dollars.

Our plan, therefore, reflects the fact that more and more Canadian parents work shifts and weekends. Our plan also takes into account the fact that one-third of Canada's population lives in rural and remote parts of the country.

As members of this House who support rural and remote constituencies know very well, these regions do not have either the resources or the staff to operate child care facilities like those we might see in some of our urban cores. Our plan definitely recognizes and respects these people.

For example, our plan recognizes the particular needs of families who work on farms or in the fishery. For these seasonal workers, how they earn their living is the core of who they are, and it is at the heart of the community's identity. These families, whose work is largely seasonal with times of peak demand, make flexible forms of child care an absolute must. One size fits all just does not work for them. Only this kind of flexibility does. We must have that flexibility, which would achieve the right balance of work and family life.

The universal child care benefit, it should be noted absolutely, is in addition to the \$13 billion the Government of Canada already invests in support of families. That includes the Canada child tax benefit, the child disability benefit, the national child benefit supplement, the child care expense deduction, extended parental leave provisions, and the Canada learning bond. Do we throw all of these out, take that money and simply put it into institution based education and child care centres alone? I do not think so. A lot of these programs have provided a tremendous benefit to our society over the years.

We always want the utopian solution, but unless we start to deal with the reality that is in front of us, there is not a prayer that we are going to deliver results for people. Let us be responsible and let us be reasonable in our approach. Let us recognize that we need the diversity. Let us recognize that we need the choice. Let us get on with doing the job.

As well, we believe that employers, both businesses and non-profit organizations, are well placed to create child care spaces in partnership with community organizations and with the help of government incentives. Employers and community organizations all know at first hand the diverse and complex demands on Canadian society today.

Like many of my colleagues, I have visited many early childhood learning and child care centres in my riding that perform their duties in an efficient and rewarding manner. They are to be commended for their contribution. But in the case of rural Canada, parents and community organizations from various small towns and villages try to come together to create their child care spaces in a multi-purpose child care centre. And because parents will be involved in designing this program, it could offer flexibility in hours of care to families from the surrounding areas as they require. Parents must have some kind of involvement.

• (1610)

Where do we draw the line on this? Quite obviously, it comes back to choice. It comes back to a simple recognition that one size does not fit all in this country. The broad diversities of this country are such that one size fits all will not work.

• (1615)

**Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest both to the minister and to the hon. member. I think they forget that six out of ten voters did not vote for their program. In fact, looking at the entire population, seven out of ten who could have voted did not vote for them.

I think we have to recognize that under the EI system we allow parents to take one year off work and be supported by EI during the child's first year of birth. We also have to recognize that we are hearing a philosophy coming forward which seems to say that most Canadians have good family incomes and can make a decision as to whether or not one of them wants to stay home and look after that child during the first five or six years.

We have to recognize the fact that about one child in three is born to a single parent family. A woman quite often has to make a decision about what she has to do. Unless we have adequate, well funded, well organized child care, we do not have a good program for those single parents.

I would ask the hon. member to please reflect on the poor, those people who are trying to support children on their own, that 30% of our population. Would his program work for those poor mothers who are trying to get the economic opportunity to work, to be part of society, to be responsible and to see that their children are well looked after in a well organized, definite day care program?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Mr. Speaker, it is amazing how the member will start to pull out statistics. We can go with statistics of any kind, anywhere. It is the old story: figures lie and liars figure. We have all heard those stories.

As we know, probably half the people in this country do not want some form of official child care, whether they are stay at home parents or parents who have their own arrangements with family or friends. Is that number going to 30%, 50% or 60%? We can play with the semantics of numbers all we want.

To go directly to the member's question, I have an editorial with me from a local paper in my own riding. The timing may be apropos. A journalist went to our local mall and asked people walking down the corridors what they thought of our government program and our approach to child care. He talked to the average person. Are they

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wealthy? Are they poor? These were just simple everyday individuals who talked to *The Intelligencer* for its local news:

Providing day care for their two young children just got a whole lot easier, say Tonya and Steven Greaves.

The Trenton couple will have extra money in their household under the new Conservative budget to help pay for day care expenses for three-month-old Deja and three-year-old Dezirae.

"It's great news. I'm glad to see that because day care is so expensive and every little bit helps," said Tonya, during a break in shopping Tuesday evening at the Quinte Mall.

Steven agreed.

"We'll be able to send both our children to day care. Without a supplement from the government, we would have found it very difficult. So this really is a bonus for us".

The article continued:

Pat and Heather Ketcheson also welcomed the child-care allowance.

"Day care is so expensive that any little bit helps," said Heather. "Even with both parents working, it still hurts to pay day care expenses."

Her husband agreed, saying the child-care allowance "is good news for the employed because it puts more money in their pockets."

The couple, who lives just east of Belleville, has a three-year-old daughter, Courtney.

Heather operates a day care out of their home. She looks after three other children, besides her own daughter.

"I believe these moms will be happy with the government's budget because they will certainly benefit from it as well," she said.

I could go on with comments from other people, but they are all similar in nature. These people are so thankful that we have moved a step forward. It is not the total solution, but it is certainly a strong step forward.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this plan is out of touch with Canadians. I am a grandfather. Members have spoken about being grandparents. A number of members have children and grandchildren. I have four children and seven grandchildren, five of whom would meet the criteria of this program.

Their parents would tell us that this plan is so far out of touch with reality that it is just like an episode of *Leave It To Beaver*. It is that old. Even if the government creates the spaces it is talking about, how does it believe that ordinary hard-working Canadians can possibly afford them?

• (1620)

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Quite honestly, Mr. Speaker, we cannot. There is no one in this country who can afford to pay for complete 100% child care across this country, and neither can the government. That is the point. It is not real. It is not feasible, but rather than say no, there will be none, we try to find the balance between being able to have a government provide some assistance, some form and some guidance and also having people take on parental responsibility themselves and pay as well.

We cannot come up with \$20,000 or \$30,000 for every child in this country to cover the care that is necessary. If the hon. member thinks that is possible in this budget, then I would suggest that his party will probably never, ever see the governing side in this House, because the NDP will not recognize what it is to run a responsible government.

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**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the member can possibly say it is balanced or how it is going to help poor people. The Caledon Institute suggests that it is about 85¢ a day. What type of balance is that? What kind of care can we get for 85¢ per person per day? What kind of choice does that give?

As the former minister said this morning, that would provide not even 40 minutes of day care a day. Is that really a choice? Is that 85¢ really balanced when it costs \$8,000 a year for day care?

**Mr. Daryl Kramp:** Mr. Speaker, I believe the hon. member is referring to the Caledon report. The Caledon report is absolutely flawed and is certainly not cognizant of the real realities.

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Mississauga South.

It is a pleasure to speak to the issue before the House today which is one that touches the very heart of this great country and each of its citizens. Health care is an incredibly important concern for me and all my colleagues and, indeed, the future of Canada.

I know that I as a parent have always wanted the best for my children, the best opportunities, the best learning and the best care. I am truly thankful that my wife and I have been able to provide a safe and loving home for them.

However many of our fellow Canadians do not have this. Far too many in a land of such wealth and prosperity have little and must engage in a daily struggle for survival. Their pain far too often does not have a voice, rather, only cold, unfeeling numbers tell the undeniable story of their unspoken tragedy.

Infant mortality is a clinical phrase, one that only suggests the terrible anguish it brings. In 2000, Health Canada reported that the first nations infant mortality rate was 6.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, a rate 16% higher than the general Canadian population. Those who survive are often brought home to live in a house that overcrowded and need of repair. Indian Affairs and Northern Development reported that in 2005 12% who live in a first nations community live in overcrowded conditions in comparison to 1% elsewhere in Canada.

Moreover, 27.6% of these homes are in desperate need of major repairs or need to be replaced outright. Many of these children suffer greatly because of the twin scourges of poverty and disease. The rate of child poverty in Saskatchewan, for instance, is already far too high at 17.6%, but for off reserve first nations and Métis in Saskatchewan, the number shows a truly dire situation. Fully 55.9% of first nations children and 36% of Métis children live in poverty.

I ask members to please not confuse the culture of poverty with the culture of aboriginal people.

Too often poverty also means disease. In 2000, the gap between first nations and Canadian rates of enteric, food and water borne diseases among children aged 0 to 14 were reported by Health Canada to be 2.1 times higher for shigellosis, 6 times higher for rubella and 7 times higher for tuberculosis.

These horrible statistics are linked to other troubling and chilling numbers. Aboriginal youth are eight times more likely to be incarcerated than other Canadian youth. In Saskatchewan, 75% of all

youth incarcerated are aboriginal. As a terrible last act, 22% of all deaths of first nations youth were as a result of suicide. We need more than anything to listen to these silent voices for their anguish says the most.

I ask the House to try to fully comprehend the tragedy of these numbers. This is a tragedy with silent voices, voices that all need to be given strength, to be listened to and to be responded to.

The response we need to give is one of compassion, support and help. This support is not a hand-out but a helping hand up. Right now there are little or no supports for aboriginal children aged 0 to 4 in first nations communities, especially children born with disabilities. With no services and few accessible quality early childhood intervention programs try to imagine the anguish that parents and children who want and need but they cannot get. This is what it means to be powerless.

Saskatchewan as a whole needs more spaces in order to meet the needs of dedicated working parents. A University of Toronto report recently found that Saskatchewan does not have nearly enough spaces to meet these families' needs. In fact, only 4.9% of Saskatchewan children under age 12 had access to regulated child care spaces, the lowest in the country.

• (1625)

The Progressive Conservative Party recognized this country's obligation to protect and nurture children. In 1959, Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, a Saskatchewan boy, signed the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child. In 1989, Prime Minister Mulroney signed its successor, the Convention on the Rights of the Child. By doing so, they entered into a pact with the world to ensure that all children, including the ones living within their own country, would not be left behind.

The Liberals, however, implemented commitments, 13 years of commitments and results, to ensure no children would be left behind. Head Start is an excellent example of this commitment. This comprehensive early childhood development program for aboriginal children and their families now serves 3,500 children in 114 communities across Canada. The on reserve component provides services to 7,700 children in 265 communities.

The national child benefit also introduced by the Liberals has also helped Canadian families greatly. The national child benefit helps: one, prevent and reduce the depth of child poverty; two, supports parents as they move into the labour market; and three, reduces overlap and duplication of government programs.

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For Saskatchewan, the Liberals entered into an agreement with the province to commit \$146 million in funding over five years devoted to creating 7,600 funded child care and early learning spaces, spaces that the parent experts asked for.

For first nations on reserve, the Liberals committed \$100 million to child care spaces and, on top of that, committed to an additional \$100 million for northern aboriginal early learning and child care agreed to at the Kelowna first ministers meeting in November 2005.

As a result of these initiatives, Canada's strong economic performance, which has been aided by eight consecutive balanced budgets, the number of low income families with children has dropped from close to 16% in 1996 to 11% in 2000. These are real achievements. This guaranteed parents and children real support and help.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government is slowly tearing these commitments down. For Saskatchewan, the funding for spaces has been choked off, closing off the opportunity to create more spaces. For aboriginals, the Kelowna accord has been tossed aside.

Instead, the government offers \$3.25 a day to parents, taxable in their hands and subject to a myriad of clawbacks and hocus-pocus tax credit plan. There are few guarantees that this money could even get to families who need it most.

First, \$3.25 a day will not allow needy parents to quit work when they need to earn at least \$6 or \$7 an hour to provide for themselves and their children. What is worse, this small amount could actually lead to more problems than it solves: clawbacks on child tax benefits, missed eligibility for GST credits, clawed back social assistance payments and so on. On top of this, these working parents will be taxed. It will be the harshest for parents who are barely at the poverty line.

At the end of day, April 30 being that day, the Caledon Institute reports that families with two working parents with a combined income of \$30,000 will only take home \$199 a year. The \$3.25 plan becomes the 55¢ plan. Meanwhile, families making \$200,000 a year with a stay at home parent will take home \$1,076 a year.

Low income aboriginal Canadians need support. This \$3.25, or rather 55¢, will not help with threats of disease and terrible living conditions. This is an attempt to explain away the problem without dealing with it, without building capacity, creating opportunities for early learning and care, and giving parents the support they need.

The tax credit plan will do even less. It will not create spaces on reserves with their different tax environments or in inner cities and economically marginalized areas. It does not respond to the challenges of remote and rural communities which need real commitments and real funding.

I know the government will consider this old hat but the Conservative plan is inadequate. The government needs a lesson about the differences of equality and equity. Legislating the equality of opportunity and treating everyone the same does not eliminate discrimination. The measure of equality is in the equity of results, not the equity of opportunity.

●(1630)

We must strive to listen to the silent voices and the voices of all Canadians who struggle and need real help and real commitment. I call upon all members to support the opposition motion.

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member to the House.

I agree with the member when he says that the housing problem with aboriginal people has deteriorated, that schooling has deteriorated, that suicide rate has deteriorated, that the crime rate has become worse, that water quality problems in our aboriginal communities have deteriorated and that the lives of aboriginal people have been deteriorating and the gap is widening. The Auditor General will confirm that.

To me he has just described a damning indictment against a government that has governed this country for 13 years. From of his own lips, he has said that the lives of aboriginal people have deteriorated and the culture of poverty that exists among aboriginal people has become worse.

Why is the member involved with an organization that has basically failed the aboriginal people over the past 13 years and led to this really dreadful situation that we are seeing today?

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, I cited some statistics in my speech that talked about how the actions of the Liberal government actually helped. We began to set the stage for making even bigger differences in the lives of aboriginal children.

What we see across the floor today is that Kelowna has been tossed aside, child care has been tossed aside and there is no mention of health care. These kids need the help of the government today.

The Liberal Party is proud of its record when it was in government. The Kelowna accord set the stage for bigger and better things.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, earlier I moved a motion to amend the Liberal motion. The amendment clearly said that we needed to ensure that the money that is still flowing in 2005-06, a total of \$1.3 billion, should be accounted for and that taxpayers should see at the end of fiscal year 2006 how that money has been spent.

My amendment was very clear. It asked the House to urge the new government to ensure that all the money would be spent on child care, that the money would be accounted for and a report sent back to the House by the end of fiscal year 2006 on how that money had been spent.

Why did the Liberal Party, the member's team, decide to vote against this very good amendment?

●(1635)

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, back in the riding that I so proudly represent, we talk about the opportunity that the Kelowna accord presented, that the child care plan presented and that the actions that were talked about with regard to health and economic development presented.

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Unfortunately, the people in my riding of Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River realized that it was the NDP that prevented all of that from occurring. That is an unfortunate reality but that is what we have to deal with. Now we have to hope that the government across actually responds and stands up for aboriginal Canadians.

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal member for Malpeque produced a report last year that recommended direct financial support to farm families for child care, not a nine to five bureaucratic day care plan. The Conservative child care plan, a universal benefit to all families, includes farm families. It is what this report called for.

I know hon. Liberal members like to say that we are wrong, but is the hon. member saying that his Liberal colleague from Malpeque is wrong?

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, I think the hon. member for Malpeque is an outstanding individual who has done a great service to the House and to the people he represents.

In rural Saskatchewan, I have met with people with families who say, "The \$1,200 is fine, but what do I do with it? Where do I spend it to get the spaces? I need that support".

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a book I once penned supporting a private member's bill, I tried to define what I would suggest was real love. I defined real love in the book as a situation where one puts the interests of the other ahead of one's own.

We have to presume that parents have real love for their children and that they will put the interests of their children ahead of their own interests. In some cases that may mean for a family that a parent will give up on that paycheque and stay at home because the parent wants to be with that child and the parent will decide when that child is ready to go into some third party care arrangement.

It may also be that the parent has to get the child into a third party day care arrangement because the parent is not a good parent. The parent does not have a good home for the child to be stimulated properly. The parent could be distracted totally with everything else in his or her life and maybe real love would be demonstrated by putting the child into child care immediately.

Those are the extremes and we have everything else in between, so it is a truism that one solution will not fit all.

We have heard a lot today from the members who have participated in the debate about the mechanics, about the \$1,200, that it is universal, and why will the government not be transparent and say it is not really \$1,200 because concurrently with introducing this, the government is also proposing to eliminate the young child supplement under the Canada child tax benefit. That is \$249, so all of a sudden \$1,200 a year is less than that for those who qualify for that benefit. On top of that, it is taxable, in the hands admittedly of the lower income earning spouse of the family, if there are two parents in the household.

The Caledon Institute basically found that the lowest income Canadians would get the least benefit because the tax shelter of their personal exemption, which they would transfer to the earning spouse, would be reduced by the amount of \$1,200 and they would

lose the young child supplement. They would also get a lower GST credit.

Cumulatively, it sounds peculiar that low income earners would lose more than the high income earners, but when we think of somebody making \$200,000 getting the \$1,200 for a non-working spouse, all it does is marginally reduce the transfer of the personal exemption by \$600 and the tax on that is about \$150. In fact, someone making \$200,000 with no income for the other spouse will actually get \$1,100, according to the Caledon Institute. I have checked the numbers.

This should not be about numbers. Every government has choices to make. This was a political strategy simply to attract votes and the Conservative Party made that choice.

The other aspect was the tax credit that will be offered to businesses, some \$10,000 a year. In the first year we are talking about \$250 million to create 25,000 spaces. There are some problems because non-profit organizations cannot use a tax credit. How do we have a not for profit child care arrangement that will also benefit and create spaces? The \$1,200 per year for each child under six will not create a child care space. The spaces the government is referring to are coming as a consequence of the tax credit, so there are people who have been left out.

On top of that, if companies take up the option of having the tax credit of \$10,000, they may say that they will incorporate it into their current buildings. Maybe they have a few spare rooms and they can do a little something with them, paint them and put up a few pictures, maybe make some places for the kids to sit and play. This is not early learning child care. It is not regulated child care.

● (1640)

In fact, there are no provisos at all for there to be any rules or regulations guiding this operation. What it really means is that it is babysitting. It is absolutely going to be babysitting. We should be concerned about that as legislators.

Members will recall that the OECD, in doing a major study of day care around the world commented on Canada's situation, with some exclusions relative to the Quebec situation. Canada's day care facilities as they exist were characterized as glorified babysitting.

I believe it was the parliamentary secretary who said that he had never been to a day care, that they did not have to consult with them about what they wanted, that it did not matter. When we consider the needs of children, we also have to consider how this fits into the whole scheme of things. I must admit this unregulated situation is not dealing with the fact that today's child care, as the OECD says, is glorified babysitting and is not even early learning and development. Kids are not in stimulative care.

Many years ago there was a study called the Perry Preschool Project. They went into a black ghetto in the United States, an area where the outcome of those children was terrible under any criteria. They picked some kids and put them in a group. High powered, well trained child psychologists and behaviouralists worked with them for years. They followed these kids through their development and found that lo and behold, the kids performed much better than the kids from the ghetto who were not in the program. Well, duh, go figure.

That is where the statement about a \$7 benefit for every \$1 investment came from. We have to take the most bizarre and extreme case in the worst case and compare it to what can be done when dealing with a totally losing situation.

These arguments can be used to spin this early childhood learning any way we want it, so I do not want to play that game.

I do want to make reference to Dr. Fraser Mustard. The first week I was on Parliament Hill I had an opportunity to sit down and talk with Dr. Mustard. He has been before various parliamentary committees and has talked to many members of Parliament about the importance of the wiring of the brain.

Bonding with a child begins before birth. The fetus hears the mother's heartbeat, the words, the sounds of the family members. It hears the singing and all of the movements and the patterning. What we are doing in fact is patterning the brain. There are these things called synapses. As the stimulation and input to the child happens, the brain begins to get wired in response to these inputs. That continues on during the first year of life, which is the most accelerated period. Dr. Mustard calls the period up to age one as dynamite. That is where it happens in terms of wiring the brain.

My interest would not be so much where I could find an early childhood learning program. All I know is that the experts have said that a secure, consistent attachment to an engaged, committed adult is the best scenario for a newborn child. It has that consistency of involvement with someone. A mother could do it, but another person could also do it. It does not say parent. It says an adult, someone who can provide that consistency.

There is a lot of information about raising children. Parents do have to make choices. The \$1,200 puts money into pockets but there is going to be a price to pay when those people file their income tax returns, because it is a taxable benefit and because lower income Canadians are going to have a loss of other benefits and will have to pay tax on it. For instance, someone making \$40,000 a year will be faced with a tax bill of about \$700 when filing a tax return. The example was given that a person will spend the \$1,200 by investing in an RESP. I hope that the person does not invest the pre-tax amount because a lot of that money is going to have to go back to the government simply because it is taxable.

This is an issue of transparency of all the facts, of all the details. Without transparency there is no accountability. The proposals that the government has made in fact do not meet the test of transparency or accountability.

•(1645)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I proceed to questions and comments, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform

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the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, Aboriginal affairs.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Cambridge.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that I have a great amount of respect for the member opposite. We have had many discussions.

I have to try to correct some things and then perhaps he would comment on them. The last thing he mentioned was putting the \$1,200 into an RESP and that it had better not be the gross amount. The member should know that once it goes into an RESP, it is completely tax free. I guess that is part of that rhetoric.

The member alluded to the synapses in this developmental process and he is absolutely correct, that does happen. Indeed, that first year is such a crucial time for children. The EI program allows folks to be off work for a year.

This is my concern and also my question for the member. I am absolutely sure he does not share the views of the majority of his colleagues on the Liberal side of the House when he suggests that we need to get these kids at that early stage and put them into an early childhood educational program especially since parents can do a much better job given all the love that everyone knows they can give.

I am concerned that the message I am getting from the opposite side of the House is that heaven forbid if parents choose to rear their children, in some way they are being offensive and maybe should be charged with child abuse. Clearly the member does not mean that. I know that is the impression we are getting from other members in his party. Surely that is not the impression the member wants us to believe.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, on the RESP, the member may know that I am a chartered accountant. I think he should maybe check with me a little later. Contributions to an RESP are not tax deductible like an RRSP. The money simply goes in to the RESP and when it comes out, it is not taxed. If the parent invests the full \$1,200 into an RESP, come tax time the parent still has to pay the income tax because he or she has to declare the taxable income of \$1,200. The parent must pay tax on it. The member does not understand that. I can see that from the look on his face but he should please speak to me.

I think the best way that I can present my position on this question is to repeat a petition that I presented to the House. I know the former minister knows this petition which I probably gave hundreds of times. It went something like, "Managing the family home and caring for preschool children is an honourable profession which has not been recognized for its value to our society. The Income Tax Act discriminates against families who choose to provide direct parental care".

My personal values are that parents are in fact the ones who are in the best position to determine what the best possible care arrangement is for their children. Some children are ready sooner than others to be in third party care.

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I am a big fan though of promoting breastfeeding for the first year. The medical profession has said that this is important.

I think we should stop pitting stay at home parents versus those that decide to go to work. It is a family decision. We should respect the family decision. Let us make absolutely sure that if there is care being provided in third party situations, that there are rules and regulations to make sure it is good quality care.

• (1650)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, research shows that every dollar invested in high quality child care generates \$2 in return for socio-economic benefits to children, parents and society. Research also shows a cost saving of seven times the original investment in quality child care for at risk children in terms of social responsibility, crime reduction, success at school and success in employment. Research also shows that access to quality child care enhances children's development in every way, intellectually, physically, emotionally and linguistically.

We know that parents want child care. We know that workers want child care. We know that businesses want child care. Why did it take the Liberals so long to introduce child care? Liberal Tom Axworthy gave us a line and said that it was a deathbed repentance. Why did it take so long for child care to be finally introduced last year just before the election was called?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, the member probably is not familiar with the OECD report about existing child care in Canada. It is glorified babysitting.

People who work in the existing child care system of Canada have terrible wages. The turnover of staff in these places is so high that there is no possibility of providing that secure, consistent attachment with an engaged, committed adult. We have to fix that, as well. The member seems to think that we can put a litre of clean oil into a dirty engine with the old oil and that somehow will fix it. The roots of the problem have to be fixed.

The member seems to think that there is only one person who can take care of the child best, and that is somebody who is not a parent. I fundamentally disagree with the member on that. Parents decide.

As far as early child learning situations go, it is costly to have people who are qualified for that. The member will know that in Ontario only about one-third of the people who provide child care services have a degree in child care services. How can we say it is a developmental child care system when we do not even require nor pay enough to keep and attract good people who are trained in early childhood development?

The member just does not know what she is talking about.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to participate in the debate this afternoon on child care and I am pleased to have the opportunity to do so.

I want to pick up where the former speaker left off and where my colleague from Trinity—Spadina was going.

Unfortunately, we are in the position today in Canada of not having the kind of child care program that we need. Part of the reason for that is the 13 years of Liberal promises that went without action. How many red books is that? I do not quite remember. For 13

years, the Liberals took the votes of Canadians who wanted a child care program and did nothing. Then when they were in a minority Parliament and they needed the support of this corner of the House, they finally came up with a program. However, they did not entrench it. They did not take the necessary measures to ensure that it was a permanent part of our society in Canada.

Now the Liberals complain, when Canadians passed judgment on them for the corruption and the failure of their previous government, that it is somehow our fault. That is pretty rich. We could have gone through all of that if they had paid more attention to what it meant to be in a minority government and worked with all the ideas that were present in the House. They could have played to all three corners of the opposition of the House, but they chose not to do that.

The Conservatives need to be a little careful. They talk about now delivering on a campaign promise, but they should remember that Canadians did not give them a majority. They do not have it here in the House and they did not get a majority of the popular vote.

The Liberals' own arrogance made it impossible for them to understand that they no longer had a majority and they did not figure out how to work in that situation. The Conservatives need to be careful with that as well. They need to draw on the best ideas of all political parties in the House to be true to the mandate that they actually received from Canadians. This plan does not do that. It may well have been a Conservative promise, but it is not what a majority of Canadians voted for.

The Conservatives should have honoured the commitment made previously in the agreements negotiated by the previous government with the provinces. That would have been a start to showing they understood the election results and the wishes of Canadians for a child care program. However, they did not do it, and that is a missed opportunity.

The Conservatives have the proposal on the table for a \$1,200 a year benefit for children paid to families for children under six. Everyone in the House knows that comes nowhere close to meeting the costs of child care. It is a drop in the bucket when we look at the actual costs of child care.

I also seriously doubt that the Conservative plan will make it possible for many, if any, families to make a choice to have one or the other of the parents stay home and take care of the children. It is just not in the cards with that kind of proposal.

This is not a child care plan. We might call it a family allowance, or perhaps a baby bonus, or assistance to families to raise children, but we cannot call it a child care program. It just fails under any measure when we look at what is proposed and the need and cost of child care in the country.

*Business of Supply*

It would have been better if the Conservatives had chosen to add the money to the child tax benefit where it could not be taxed back. The \$1,200 that they are proposing is taxable. However, if they had put it under the child tax benefit, it would have brought the child tax benefit to a level urged by most child advocacy groups in the country, a level that would have been a real help to most families.

The Conservatives could also take action to prevent the clawback of the child tax benefit by provinces. In this case, if they had chosen to increase the child tax benefit, it would have been a significant anti-poverty action.

We know that too many Canadian children live in poverty because their parents live in poverty. We know that government after government has failed miserably to meet the commitment made in the House in 1989 to end child poverty by the year 2000. Over one million Canadian children still live in poverty. That is unacceptable in a society as wealthy as ours.

As the member for Trinity—Spadina pointed out earlier, the Conservatives also plan to eliminate the young child supplement of \$249, reducing an allowance that was very helpful to working families. That puts the reality of their \$1,200 commitment down to around \$950, and it is still taxable.

• (1655)

When we compare that paltry sum to the billions of dollars in tax cuts to corporations, which the government is currently offering, it is really hard to understand benefit of the proposal to families. The \$1,200 a year, or in reality \$950 a year of a taxable benefit, will not be of significant help to many families, especially when it comes to providing child care.

This will not increase families' choices in child care if the spaces do not exist. Families want choice. They want to be able to choose affordable, high-quality, licensed child care. They want to know that their children are secure and safe and that they are stimulated and learning. This proposal will not do that for them.

Waiting lists for child care plague many families in my riding. We all know the terrible anxiety and frustration that causes for families. Those families need excellent spaces in non-profit facilities.

There is also a need for child care for children over six years of age. This proposal does nothing to address that situation. Children over six need out of school and after school child care, especially when their parents work, but the situation of these families is ignored.

I was moved by the terrible dilemma of a single parent in my riding, who has two school-aged children. She is on the verge of having to give up her educational and professional goals because she no longer can afford child care for her two sons and is ineligible for assistance for that. For her, finding child care was hard enough, but paying for it now has become impossible, and \$1200 a year is not going to help.

The Conservatives have also resurrected a failed plan from other jurisdictions: the credit to corporations for building child care spaces. This plan would not build any spaces. It failed in Ontario, under the Harris government. One would think some of the members on the government side would have understood that experience. It did not

create a single child care space. We need to hold them accountable for this and watch carefully what happens. Those spaces are absolutely necessary in our communities, and their plan will not do it.

We also need to see some accountability for the spending of the current money dedicated to child care. We need to see a report on how that money was spent by the end of 2006.

I also have concerns about for profit child care. Adding the profit motive into this system of child care will dramatically increase the costs in the same way it does our health care system. We know that when the need for profit is there, this is a significant new cost to a system. It will also encourage big box, for profit child care providers, who have proven problematic already in other jurisdictions that allow it, such as Australia. The entry of the big box child care profiteers into our child care system will be a dark day indeed.

The care of our children and their early childhood education and development should not be a profit-making activity. If there is ever a place where community needs to take collective responsibility, it is in the area of early childhood education. A publicly funded system is the most appropriate way to do that.

We know that early childhood education has been shown to be absolutely crucial to a child's future. We know that children who have had access to a high-quality child care environment do better in the long run. We know that they arrive at kindergarten better prepared to succeed. We know that the advantages of being wealthy and never having to worry about having to provide for one's children are evened out by a system of universal early childhood education. We know that education, working life, health and citizenship outcomes are all much more positive for children who are raised in societies that have provided a high-quality early childhood education and a child care system.

The work of Professor Clyde Hertzman of the University of British Columbia has made a significant impression on my home community of Burnaby in this regard. Many agencies have taken his challenge on the provision of a high-quality child care system to heart as we work on these issues in our community.

We need a permanent, entrenched child care system in Canada. We need legislation that provides for that kind of program. I am glad the member for Trinity—Spadina, the NDP spokesperson on these issues, is working on that kind of legislation. That, once and for all, will bring the kind of system on which families can depend. The New Democrats are proud to put that kind of proposal before Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

• (1700)

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with quite a bit of interest to the member's various criticisms of the Conservative child care plan, and I have listened all day, but ultimately I have one question. I realize why the opposition parties are opposed to it, but are they and will they be so committed and so opposed to it that if they ever have a chance to be in government, either individually or as a coalition, they will guarantee to the House that they will repeal the Conservative child care plan in its entirety? Whatever they call it, the family allowance, the support for families plan et cetera, will they stand behind their criticisms of today and guarantee that in the future they will do everything they can to repeal it?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, that is an easy question. Absolutely. I have already explained how we would put the \$1,200 into the child care tax benefit, where it is not taxable and where it has real meaning as an anti-poverty program.

I also said just minutes ago that the member for Trinity—Spadina is working on private member's legislation to do exactly that, to put in place a permanent, entrenched child care program for this country. We are not going to wait until we are government. We are going to put that option before the House and before Canadians as soon as possible in this Parliament. That is an easy question to answer.

The commitment is here. For decades we have worked hard for this kind of program. We are not giving up the fight now. We want to see that \$1,200 go to families, there is no question about it, but to call that a child care program is completely misleading. We want to put it into the child tax benefit where it has meaning as an anti-poverty program in this country.

• (1705)

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed that in the first part of the comments of my hon. colleague across the way he wanted to point back a awful lot to the number of years the former government was in power, and that is fair enough to do, but then he went on to point out all the good things that the government was finally moving forward on since he and I were first elected to the House in 2004.

He talked about the issues of finally moving forward on a national child care program. I think I will quote him; I wrote it down and I hope I have it right. He said, "I think the Conservatives should have honoured the Liberals' plans". He had an opportunity to do that. He blew it last fall. He made a big mistake by not supporting us.

Does he feel much better working with that crowd over there now? Or would he sooner have us back, where we had a plan on the table, where we were working toward something, where something was going to happen on our national child care plan? Now he is working with that group that is not going to do it.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, that is an easy one too. It was not the NDP that decided the makeup of the House. It was not the NDP that decided the outcome of the last election. It was Canadian voters from coast to coast to coast.

Unfortunately, the Liberals do not seem to want to accept that. They have had trouble in the past accepting the will of the voters. They have had trouble in the past accepting that voters listened to the

promises they made but they have not delivered on those promises. I think that is one of the reasons why they are sitting in that corner of the House instead of this corner.

I can hear the Conservatives cheering. They need to take a lesson from that, because as I said at the beginning of my speech, the kind of arrogance that the Liberals showed is the kind of arrogance that the Conservatives are showing by saying, "It is our option or the highway. There is no other option. Take this \$1,200 child care program because there is no other option". There are other options being brought forward in the House, and the majority of Canadians voted for parties that support a very different option than the one the Conservatives are putting forward. I think the Conservatives would do well to heed the example of the Liberals and the wishes of Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Harvey (Louis-Hébert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the past few days we have been talking about child care and we often refer to Quebec. Indeed, in Quebec 200,000 children receive child care every day in the various CPEs. However, there are not 200,000 children in Quebec, but nearly 420,000. That means that more than half the children did not have access to child care.

Today every child is covered. Where is the problem? What makes my colleague say that our program does not cover everything?

I must say I do not understand because I do not see where the problem is.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, the program in Quebec is the envy of the rest of the country. The people and the government of Quebec have made important strides that way. We should all be so lucky as to have the kind of program that exists in Quebec.

The government should be doing more to support the establishment of that kind of child care regime in every province and territory in this country.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House to participate in this important debate on the future of the children of Canada. The parents in my riding of Parkdale—High Park and indeed across the country have waited many years for a national system of early learning and child care. We have listened to promises by the previous government on this file and we were hopeful when finally, before the last election, the government made some modest beginnings on a child care system.

The throne speech and now the budget of the new government have talked about creating spaces, yet there is no real plan to do this. Tax credits without any operating funds for child care do not create child care spaces. When it has been tried, as in the province of Ontario, not one child care space was created, not one.

*Business of Supply*

There is no real plan, yet the agreements that were negotiated by the previous government are being cancelled after one year. In my own riding of Parkdale—High Park, children at the Holy Family School child care centre will lose the spaces they are in today, and other children who were hoping to get spaces will now not have the chance to do so.

In my riding, a deal is a deal, and the children of Parkdale—High Park, the children of Toronto and the children of Canada need child care now. Only about 15% of Canadian children have access to licensed, regulated care.

In Quebec, where successive governments have invested in child care, there is not nearly enough, but there is about 30% access in regard to child care spaces offered. Real choice in child care can only be achieved when we create spaces that today's working families can choose whether to take advantage of or not.

Investing in early childhood education is a key part of children getting a good start in life. This is so vital to the working families in my riding and across the city, but unfortunately, like so many other items in the government's budget, the government missed an important opportunity to invest in programs for working families. Tax cuts do not create child care spaces.

Now the plans made in the city of Toronto are in jeopardy. Toronto is the second largest provider of child care in our country, but without federal funding Toronto's children and families will lose \$125 million annually in new child care services and supports. These are community based child care programs. Thousands of new child care fee subsidies are at risk with the cancellation of the agreement. The loss of these subsidies will increase waiting lists and threaten the stability of the remaining child care system. This is unacceptable in a city where more than 8,000 children are waiting and waiting on waiting lists.

The government has found the fiscal capacity to spend \$7 billion on corporate tax cuts. I ask, does the oil and gas industry, with record profits, really need another tax cut? Why would we not invest this money to create spaces for early learning and child care for our country's children?

We support the Liberal motion, but we are concerned that this motion opens the door for commercial or, as some would say, big box child care rather than what we really need. What we really need is safe, licensed, not for profit, community based child care. This is what we need. It is what works best in Parkdale—High Park, in the city of Toronto and across the country. We just do not have enough of it. I know it works. My own kids were lucky enough to be part of such a system.

People in Toronto and the people I speak to every day in Parkdale—High Park work hard, pay their taxes and want to see that money re-invested in their communities. They want to see more child care spaces being created for their kids. They believe that is a good use of the tax dollars they work so hard to pay. They want multi-year funding to create a system of new child care spaces. That is a real choice.

I ask, when will Canada join with almost all other advanced countries around the world to offer families the real choice of quality, community based, not for profit care for our children?

● (1710)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the last member who spoke. I think the answer to her question is “right now”, that is, right now we are going to offer those child care spaces that she is looking for so desperately. I agree with the member. We need to have those child care spaces, and we can do it.

I would like to ask the member, though, if she agrees or disagrees with a comment that was made earlier today. I raised my children. I was a working mother as well. They were not in institutionalized day care, although they did go to playschool from time to time. One is a doctor and the other is an actor. Neither of them are criminals.

Does this particular member agree with what was stated over on the other side of the House today, that if children are not in organized day care they will end up being criminals?

● (1715)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I am so pleased to hear that neither of the member's children are criminals.

I do want to challenge the notion she has raised about institutional child care. The child care I am referring to is community based child care, child care where parents participate on the boards of these child care centres, where parents meet with the staff and are involved in every decision made in the community based child care centre. This is not institutional, bureaucratic child care. Those are the speaking notes that the hon. member's party seems to want to present to the people of Canada. I am talking about community based care, where parents are fully involved.

I will challenge the hon. member: I do not believe that tax cuts create child care spaces. I have not seen this where I come from in the province of Ontario. A previous government there tried this system. It did not create one new space.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member if she agrees that the Conservatives are really embarrassing themselves today by pretending to have a national child care program. It would not have been a problem if they had suggested they did not have one and they did not believe in it, but they actually are suggesting they have a national child care program.

The Conservative member just said there are 100,000 children who still need spaces in Quebec. The Conservative program, even if it worked, and the member said it would not create a single space, would create 25,000 spaces. That is only for a quarter of the people in Quebec who need them. What about the rest of the country?

The Conservatives are putting forward \$250 million for that purpose. Quebec itself spends \$1.56 billion. That is a sixth of the money just for Quebec. What about the rest of the country with that tiny amount of money? It has been said many times today that the Caledon Institute calculated this at 55¢ a day for child care for a low income person. That would be 14 minutes of child care. Is it not really an embarrassment to suggest that it is a national child care program?

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I think what is a national embarrassment is that a country with the wealth of Canada has no national child care program for our nation's children. It is an embarrassment that previous governments have not seen fit to use the resources of this country to make the care of our kids, from the earliest years, a national priority. I would argue that what is an embarrassment is that the current government and the previous government have not led the people of Canada to the creation of a program like those of most other advanced countries.

I would argue that the real choice for parents is whether they want to have their children in early childhood education or not and that this be available for all children whether their parents work or not. It is common sense. We have the resources to do it. Again I ask the question to all of us here in the House, why have we failed and why are we failing to do this?

**Mr. Alan Tonks (York South—Weston, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her overview and her analysis of the difference between institutional day care and community based day care.

Could the member just take the opportunity to point out to the opposition what the substantive difference is in the development of a community based day care system and why it works better in respect to meeting the overall needs of children in the environment within which it functions?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, that is one of the reasons that we believe having not for profit child care is important. Parents need to be involved in the care of their kids. If we have licensed not for profit care, parents can fully participate in every aspect of their children's care, even though they are getting good early childhood education. It is the opposite of what I would call the big box commercial care. It is good community based care. As a parent having been involved in a system like this, I appreciate how enriching it is for our children and for the parents involved.

• (1720)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, anyone with young children will tell us that, Dr. Spock notwithstanding, children do not come into this world with a manual. There is no definitive guide that tells us precisely how we are supposed to raise our children. Parents know every child is different and what works with one child will not necessarily apply to another. No formula applies to every child in every situation.

In the same way, there cannot be a one size fits all approach to child care. There is no right or wrong way and certainly no single way to meet the diversity of Canadian families' child care needs. Every family is different, with distinct approaches to child rearing that reflect their personal values and preferences and with varying dependence on outside support for child care based on their individual circumstances. This understanding is at the heart of Canada's universal child care plan which provides Canadian parents with true choice in child care so they can find what fits for them.

Our plan recognizes that the needs of Canada's families with young children depend on the kinds of jobs they have, the hours they work and whether they live in a rural or urban setting. It acknowledges that the needs of parents working night shift or

running a small business from home are very different from those who work nine to five outside the home.

Our plan responds to the non-routine nature of occupations, such as farming or fishing, where seasonal conditions can demand unpredictable care giving arrangements.

It also recognizes that formal day care facilities that work well in urban centres may be of little value to the roughly one-third of Canadians who live in small towns and rural communities across the country and that they do not help parents who choose to stay home to raise their children during their preschool years.

As the latest Statistics Canada child care survey underscored, almost 50% of children under the age of six are primarily cared for by a parent at home. A recent EKOS public opinion survey found that nearly 50% of parents would prefer to have at least one parent at home caring for the child. Our universal child care benefit gives these families options.

Effective this July, we will put \$1,200 per year for each child under six directly into parents' pockets. We believe parents, not politicians, should choose the kind of care that best suits their children's needs, whether that is enrolling them in nursery school, taking them to a local mom and tot program or buying them books.

At the same time, our plan also responds to the needs of parents who want to put their children in day care close to where they live or work. Our progressive plan will lead to the creation of new child care spaces to meet the needs of Canadian families. We will invest \$250 million per year beginning in 2007 to encourage the creation of new day care spaces for Canadian children. This could include workplace based child care centres as well as more flexible spaces that work for parents whose work hours do not fit the standard nine to five model.

Our government will provide financial incentives to businesses, communities and non-profit organizations, the amount depending on the number of new spaces they create. Working with provincial and territorial governments and these partners, our aim is to create 25,000 new child care spaces per year beginning next year. This is a much greater incentive than any previous initiative.

I want to remind hon. members present that the Government of Canada provides a wide array of supports to help parents raise their children. In fact, we invest over \$13 billion per year in these initiatives. Among them are the Canada child tax benefit and the national child benefit supplement, a tax free monthly payment to help parents with the cost of raising children.

*Business of Supply*

As the budget makes clear, we have taken into account interactions with these federal income tested benefits in the design of our universal child care benefit. That means that contrary to some of the false assumptions and speculations out there, all eligible families will benefit from the universal child care benefit no matter their income level or the choices they make in caring for their young children.

Then there is the child care expense deduction which allows parents to deduct child care expenses incurred when they work or go to school. The extended parental leave provisions provide income replacement for up to one year while a new parent stays at home with their newborn or newly adopted child.

There is also a range of targeted community based programs which support children and families at risk, such as the community action program for children and the Canada prenatal nutrition program.

• (1725)

Mr. Speaker, I must stop for a moment because I neglected to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Crowfoot.

The federal strategy on early childhood development for aboriginal children includes the improvement and expansion of existing early childhood development programs, including aboriginal Head Start, first nations and Inuit child care programs and efforts to address fetal alcohol syndrome—fetal alcohol effects.

These figures do not include federal spending on programs and services for families with children that are delivered by other levels of government. For example, \$500 million is transferred each year to provinces and territories under the federal-provincial-territorial early childhood development agreement. The agreement includes programs and services in four key areas for action: healthy pregnancy, birth and infancy; parenting and family support; early childhood development, learning and care; and community support. Clearly, we are both sensitive and responsive to the needs of Canadian families.

Government members believe profoundly that families are the key building block of society. We recognize that parents know what their children need and we understand that the needs of every family are different. That is why we believe in choice.

What we are offering is a new and different option for families seeking alternatives tailored to their unique circumstances and who want decision making powers left in their own hands. This is a refreshing and welcome offer for Canadian families after the dogmatic approach that has dominated public discourse for more than a decade.

Let us get past the debate and get on with the business of providing Canadians with the choices they desire. We owe it to Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government had signed a \$1.2 billion agreement with the Government of Quebec based on this program. Now that the Conservative government is cancelling the agreement, Quebec is deprived of \$807 million.

My question is very simple. I want to know what my colleague thinks of the fact that \$807 million is being taken away from the Government of Quebec.

[*English*]

**Mrs. Betty Hinton:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the same question raised several times today and I do not know how many times it has to be answered in exactly the same fashion.

Agreements were reached by the former government with three provincial governments. We honoured all those agreements and we took it a step further. We actually extended that offer to all provinces in this country.

We are honouring the agreements that were made, even though we do not agree that is the way to go for the long term, but we did not want to put the provinces in the position where they had gone so far with some plans and then all of a sudden there was no money for them to proceed.

The money is flowing and in 2007 we will implement our tax plan. This July, with the support of the House, parents in this country who have children under the age of six will begin to receive \$1,200 per year per child so they can make a choice, depending on their family circumstances, on how they want their child cared for.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member may remember that it was the former Conservative government in the early 1990s that eliminated the truly universal baby bonus. That baby bonus or mother's allowance was actually not taxable. It went to every family. It was not clawed back, deducted or taxed.

Now we have a new \$1,200 allowance, which is actually not \$1,200 but really \$950 because the young child supplement is being eliminated, but it will be taxed.

How can this be called a child care allowance given that it used to be called the baby bonus or mother's allowance? What kind of giant flip-flop is this when the Conservatives cancelled a program and now are introducing a much more inferior program?

• (1730)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton:** Mr. Speaker, I do not believe this is an inferior program and this is not the Conservative government that the member refers to. This is the new Conservative government. We are looking for solutions to long term problems that have faced this country for more than 20 years.

I am sure the member would agree with me that it is rather outrageous that when the former Liberal government originally talked about child care, it was 13 years ago. The children who were supposedly going to be taken care of by government help are now old enough to babysit. That is pretty pathetic.

We are trying to give \$1,200 to each and every family who has a child under the age of six. It has been said many times in this House as well that the taxable portion of it will be placed against the partner who earns the least amount of money. We are trying to have the least negative impact on families and provide the most positive alternatives to all families in this country and to treat them all equally.

*Business of Supply*

If we were to do it on a tax reduction basis, which I have heard the member already say today, she would be overlooking the fact that more than 30% of Canadians simply do not earn enough money to be taxed, so using it as a tax basis would not support them at all. As I said earlier today, we have just removed another 655,000 Canadians off the tax rolls.

If we really want to help every Canadian family and if we want to be there to support every Canadian child, this is the best way to do it. All through the day today I have heard that it has been tried somewhere else and it did not work. I really hate to hear those kinds of comments. Maybe they did not do it right. I think we are going to do this the right way and I believe it will be very successful.

I hope the member for Trinity—Spadina will support this system. We need to do something for Canadian children and this is the best opportunity she will have.

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand in the House to discuss the motion before us today. I also want to thank my colleague from Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo for sharing her time with me and I thank her for the comments that she gave in her speech. She gave an excellent speech and she understands the issue very well.

I campaigned on the promise of providing Canadians with choice in child care. Today we are delivering on that promise. Before and during the most recent election campaign, the Liberals and the New Democratic Party maintained that the only answer to expanding child care in Canada was their one-size-fits-all plan, to build a massive child care bureaucracy which would benefit only a very small percentage of Canadians.

Only the Conservatives believe in true freedom and true choice in child care. The best role for government is to allow parents to choose what is best for their children and to provide parents with the resources to balance work and family life as they see fit, whether that means formal child care, day care, informal care through neighbours or relatives, or a parent staying at home.

Since the election the government has kept its promise to Canadian voters. The budget on Tuesday introduced our government's universal choice in child care plan. Our budget fulfilled the commitments and the promises that we made. That is a major difference between this side of the House and the Liberal side. We do not have dozens of promises that will not be delivered on.

In the last election we highlighted five priorities, five key commitments of this government. We are acting on each of them, as our budget so clearly indicated.

Canadian parents waited 13 long years for a child care program that was continually promised but never provided. It was constantly announced, election after election, but never delivered. Canadian parents on January 23 said enough is enough. Our minister responsible for Canada's choice in child care plan was quoted in the *Toronto Star* yesterday, pointing out that our government was actually doing something when it came to child care.

This is why I have yet to refer to the wording of the motion we are debating here today. The motion is full of references to false promises and tired rhetoric that Canadians rejected on January 23 this year. Canadians want something real and they can clearly see in

Tuesday's budget what they are really going to get from our new Conservative government.

On July 1, every parent will begin receiving a cheque for \$100 a month for each child under the age of six. This is something they can take to the bank for a change. Our government is providing these families an extra \$1,200 a year for each child under six, to be taxable in the hands of the spouse with the lowest income. This will be in addition to the current Canada child tax benefits, the national child benefit supplement and the child care expense deduction.

This added support will help parents choose. This added support will help parents decide which child care option best suits their family's needs. This federal government will not decide for the parents. This federal government will not be in the business of raising the children for the parent. It will allow the parent to do their responsibilities and to decide.

• (1735)

We will help employers and non-profit groups create flexible child care spaces in the workplace or through cooperative or community associations. We have allocated \$250 million a year in incentives to employers, communities and community associations that create spaces.

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of our plan, at least from my perspective, is that our plan serves the rural communities in our country as well the urban. This is not just a big city plan. This is not another plan or another piece of legislation that pits rural against urban. Our plan will serve moms, dads and children even in the most remote regions of our country.

I have spoken on the child care issue before. In the last Parliament I spoke out against the attempt by the previous government to create a two tier child care system that would have discriminated against families who chose to stay at home or find care outside of the publicly funded system. I quoted from a report entitled "Canadian Attitudes on the Family", which I really believe is worth repeating again today.

It states:

—many Canadian parents feel trapped by economic pressures and are not able to make the sort of choices they would like for their families. Sometimes, of course, this is unavoidable. Economic reality has a way of interfering with our dreams...

In February last year a Vanier Institute of the Family study on family aspirations found that the vast majority of mothers and fathers with preschool children would prefer to stay at home and raise them, but if they could not, their strong preference would be to have a partner or another family member look after their children rather than placing them in a formal day care centre.

*Business of Supply*

The Vanier study complemented a Statistics Canada analysis, also released in February 2005, which found that in 2001, 53% of Canadian children between the ages of six months and five years old were in some form of child care. That is up from 42% in 1995. About one in three children are being looked after by their relatives, one in three by non-relatives in someone else's home and the remaining one in three are being looked after in day care centres. This is not to say that parents should choose one form of child care or another. The point is the choice should be theirs.

The Liberal government's proposal, before the election this year, would have supported only one-third of Canada's children, the ones who were willing to enrol in a day care centre. Not even all of them would have left their day care centre, which their children were in now, to go to the new one being created by the previous government.

The author of the motion, which we are debating, seemed to forget that, under the plan her government almost foisted on Canadian parents and children, two-thirds of Canadian children were totally ignored.

The Conservative Party of Canada's plan is universal and it is equitable. Our plan is not just some phoney abstract idea. It is real. It is in the budget. It is happening on July 1 this year, not 12 or 13 years down the road. We are giving dollars directly to parents this year, in only two months. We are treating all parents, all families and all children equally. We are allowing Canadian families to make the choices that best serve their needs and the needs of their children.

Canadian families need help raising young children and the government recognizes that. The realities of work and life conflicts are having a huge impact on our country and on our society. Long work hours and workloads are affecting our lives more and more and it is becoming harder than ever to strike a balance.

A Conference Board of Canada study found that the percentage of Canadians who reported moderate and high levels of stress as a result of work-family imbalance increased from 26.7% in 1989 to 46.2% in 1999. This work-family imbalance is costing employers billions of dollars in sick leave and lost working time, which translates into decreased productivity for companies.

● (1740)

In 2003 a Health Canada study, entitled "Work-Life Conflict in Canada in the New Millennium", found that the high job stresses doubled and job satisfaction and employee loyalty dropped.

We all know that there is also much stress in the workplace, yet all the previous government could offer was a hastily drawn up plan that only addressed a small percentage of Canadian families.

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to the member's comments. He should review the information. He should ask his researchers to have a closer look. A number of the points he made were completely false.

He made the point that, with the plan negotiated by the 10 provinces with the Government of Canada, some day care/child care spaces would be closed and these children would be moved into new government spaces. That is completely false. The plan foresaw provinces working with the communities and with the people in existing spaces as well as in new spaces so we could improve those

spaces, build upon them, bring salaries to a reasonable level for those people and grow in areas where we could and should grow.

He made the point that his plan was the best one for rural Canada, and that is completely false. For me that is important. I do not disagree that there is a role for a transfer of money. However, it is not the only point. To say that this is the best one for rural Canada is completely false, not if it is done alone. To give families true choices, they need to have options from which to choose.

I live in rural Canada. The private sector will not create those spaces. The not for profit sector cannot create those spaces without the help of government. They cannot afford to maintain the spaces they have now. One of these day care centres I visited last week in Nova Scotia was at risk of closing because of a 35¢ an hour increase to the minimum wage.

[*Translation*]

The official language minority communities in this country could never create child care spaces without the help of a federal-provincial assistance program as previously negotiated.

I encourage the hon. member to support the motion so that we can at least keep the foundation of a national system that we could improve in the future.

● (1745)

[*English*]

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson:** Mr. Speaker, when we the comments of the experts who looked at the old Liberal plan, most of them agreed a number of groups were missed in that plan. This is the plan that was never delivered. This is the plan that was announced just before an election. The Liberals tried to make it look as if they were going to finally deliver a universal child care program, after 13 years.

The former government could not give a universal child care program to rural Canada. It did not have the infrastructure. It did not have the people who would be able to put in place a plan that would affect small communities. I have towns, villages and hamlets in my constituency in which a couple of hundred people live. Every expert recognized that most of rural Canada would not benefit from the Liberal-NDP plan.

Most experts also recognized that the Liberal plan was a nine to five program. It would not have benefited the shift worker. It would not have benefited the single mother who was working odd shifts and needed a day care, or a grandmother, or an aunt, or someone to look after that child in the evenings while she was at work.

I referenced the Vanier Institute report. It made it very clear that in one-third of the families, a parent looked after the children, one-third of families used an outside relative or someone in a home and one-third used day care. I did not say those day care centres would close down. I simply said that some of those day cares may not qualify under that former government's program.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first I want to say that contrary to what the hon. member said in his statement, 64% of Quebecers and Canadians did not vote in favour of this program. Neither women nor families want this program. It is not fair to poor families. The allowance under this program is taxable. It is not normal that in wanting to help people we are making them poorer than they were before.

If the hon. member does not realize that political arrogance is very dangerous then I have news for him. It does not work. They absolutely have to realize that this is a bad program. They have to show a little humility and accept that 64% of Quebecers and Canadians are opposed to it.

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The time is up. There was no question. It was a free statement. The hon. member for Beaches—East York on debate.

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for West Nova.

The government keeps referring to the \$1,200 allowance as universal child care and as giving choices to parents. Let us look at the facts and make a proper distinction between income support and child care. That \$1,200 is a family allowance, not a child care plan and as a family allowance, it is fine.

Let me take a moment to put this in a historical context. In 1997 the Liberal government established the child tax credit with the child benefit supplement and young child supplement. The most effective weapon we have had to fight poverty in this country is the child tax benefit. Experts believe that the benefit has reduced child poverty by approximately 26%.

The research shows that the child tax credit should also be increased to about \$4,900. As \$1,200 is not a child care plan and gives no choice, it should be added to the child tax credit base as income support for families. All families would receive the \$1,200 and that would make a great deal more sense. This would make a true family allowance to all families as well as stay at home moms and working mothers. But the Conservative government is so mean-spirited that it has actually decided to hurt low and modest income families. The Conservatives are cutting the young child supplement portion of the child tax benefit. This means that many families, most with low or modest income, will lose \$249 right off the top, reducing the child care benefit to \$951.

The child care allowance treats some families better than others even though they have the same net income and the same number and age of children. Because the benefit is taxable in the hands of the lowest income earner, single parents and two-earner families are going to lose out.

Two-earner couples will lose a significant portion of the benefit to income taxes, but still not as much as single parents. Single parents in the \$30,000 to \$40,000 income range will lose on average close to \$400 of the benefit in taxes. If this is added to the \$249 they will lose because of the elimination of the young child supplement, these families will be left with only about \$550 of the \$1,200 benefit, less

than half of the benefit that some other families will be receiving. This is unacceptable.

What the government is basically doing is choosing which type of families it prefers and which type of families it does not. It is not giving choices at all to families and is penalizing choices that families are actually making about themselves.

**An hon. member:** That is what your plan did.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** No, that is what you are doing.

Mr. Speaker, early education in child care is both a child development program and a child care program. We are talking about a quality developmental program. We are talking about well trained and well paid professionals who are respected. We are talking about an affordable program, a program that is accessible, that is inclusive of special needs children, autistic children and other children.

Even families which can well afford it and have a stay at home parent will have their child start in the Montessori program because they want to give their child the best start in life that they can. The early education and care program does that for all children. This is what we are talking about. We are not talking about some strange out of the way thing.

In addition to the national child care plan and the child tax credit which we started in this country, in 2000 we also started the early years program, the best start program. In my riding of Beaches—East York the stay at home parents have said to me many times that this is a wonderful program for their children and they use it quite often.

Again I go back to choices. I keep hearing from the opposite side about how the \$1,200 gives choices. If there are no spaces to choose from, there is no choice whatsoever. The money that parents receive is not enough to pay the full amount that is charged in child care, and therefore, there are no choices. This program is not going to be delivered by the federal government. It is not an institution. It is delivered by communities. Most of the programs in my riding are community based and are delivered by not for profit organizations.

• (1750)

The program in rural Canada, again through the provinces and municipalities, would have given the choice to however small the community to develop its own program, whether it be for 3, 5, 10 or 15 children. It would have given every child in rural and urban Canada a best start. This is what this is about.

The Conservatives say that a measly \$100 a month, which is also taxed, gives choices to families. It does not create spaces. It does not provide quality. It does not provide development. It is not an inclusive program for special needs kids. It really does not give choice.

*Business of Supply*

The Conservatives keep saying that business will create the rest of the spaces in child care. Yet the Minister of Finance, who was the minister of finance in Ontario as a matter of fact, knows full well that it does not work. He was there. He knows. He knows that Harris tried it and it did not work. He knows that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has already said no because small and medium businesses cannot afford it and will not do it.

After listening to all of the people, businesses and others say it does not work, my conclusion is that the government is really not interested in child care and it is all rhetoric. If the government were interested, it would not go in the direction that it is going and it would apply the \$1,200 as a family allowance and then create a proper child care program.

The city of Toronto will lose 6,000 spaces. This means that in Beaches—East York families will suffer. The United Way of Greater Toronto did a study of communities at risk called “Poverty by Postal Code”. In my riding of Beaches—East York there are two areas identified as communities at risk. These families will lose the young child supplement, pay increased taxes as a result of higher brackets, receive few benefits from the GST, and receive a small amount from the \$1,200, as I have said, only about \$500. And there is no child care on top of that. These families need assistance and they need it now. They need the full amount of \$1,200 and proper child care. It is mean-spirited to take it away from them. These families need child care.

Will the government give the young child supplement back to the families of Beaches—East York? Will it amend the child tax credit? Will it make the \$1,200 allowance exempt from income taxes? Will it add the \$1,200 to the base benefit of the Canada child tax benefit? The result would be that everyone would receive a full \$1,200, up to a net family income of \$112,000, and it would then be indexed after that.

A fair way of dealing with it is to add it to the child tax credit. If the government would do that, it would actually help many families a great deal more. It would address the issue of child poverty, as well as the issue of child care by investing properly and respecting the agreement that was made by the Government of Canada with all the provinces and territories and putting in multi-year funding for child care.

I do not think we have a choice in this matter. It is important that children in this country have a proper, valuable best start in our society. It is about recognizing and respecting families and allowing them to make their own choices. By providing a family allowance that is not taxed and by providing a universal child care program that is accessible and affordable, it gives all parents, regardless of the type of family in which the children live, a proper choice.

I keep hearing comments from the members across the way who say that the Liberals were going to do something strange with the children, that we were going to put them in institutions. The children will be in community organizations and programs. The program was not going to be run by the Government of Canada. It was an agreement with all the provinces in partnership with municipalities, not for profit organizations and school boards. It would also address the issue of children over six. What do we do with children over six?

The Conservative plan is not a plan at all. It helps no one. What I find most offensive is that the government is pitting one family against another and that is totally unacceptable. All children in society, regardless of the type of family they live in, have the right to a proper start in life both in terms of income support as well as child care.

● (1755)

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all day I have been listening quite intently to some of the members across the way. The member was saying something which I found to be very confusing and very hypocritical. She said that our government is picking and choosing which kids should have a benefit.

I come from Oshawa. Oshawa is a very urban area. I am sure in Toronto there are shift workers. I am sure there are commuters. I am sure there are stay at home parents.

I think of one of my constituents who came up to me during the last election, a single dad named Chris who decided to work midnights because he wanted to see his kids. In talking about child care, he was very offended that his hard-earned tax dollars would be used to pay for a plan such as the one the Liberals proposed but he would get absolutely no benefit. Here is a gentleman who is working hard, doing his best to spend time with his kids whom he loves and cares for, and he would be paying for a program from which he would receive no benefits.

When the member says how hypocritical we are, what would she say to people like Chris in my community who would like to stay at home and spend the most time possible with their kids?

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, I come from a family where my parents were working class people and they both would like to have stayed at home. I was nine years old when I was looking after my baby sisters, so I know what it is like, with all due respect. I do not need any lessons from the member opposite and I quite object to the language he is using.

I will tell him that the plan we had would have given that family income support, which his government is not doing. It is clawing back money and taxing the benefit so it does not really buy very much. At the same time, the program was to be designed and delivered by communities. It was not going to be the Government of Canada.

Nurses are shift workers. They also need assistance, absolutely. The program was designed for that as well. Otherwise, how do we deal with communities in this country? The design of the program was that it could have been at the workplace or it could have been somewhere else. It would have been done by the community. What the member was talking about, the program did not in any way eliminate that opportunity.

What the member is saying is that by giving that individual less than \$100 a month, because by the time it is taxed it is a lot less, he is not able to pay anything at all and has absolutely no choice whatsoever, whereas under our program, once it was fully developed, he would have had a great many choices.

*Business of Supply*

• (1800)

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it comes as no surprise to this member to hear the government member speak about parents who would like to stay at home with their young children. I agree. That may surprise the member.

However, in the real world of work today, in most cases both parents have to work. They need affordable, licensed, not for profit child care. I think the member would agree that the government is totally out of touch with the needs of the working people of Canada.

**Ms. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, I agree wholeheartedly with the hon. member. As I was saying earlier, in my own riding, in the areas which have been identified by the United Way as areas at risk, one of the major needs of those families is child care so that the women can go to work. They want to go to work, and they are. However, many of them are leaving children in places that are not regulated and are not necessarily developmentally stimulative. It is not very effective and many of them are struggling terribly. They are at risk and they need assistance. They need services, but they also need child care.

I meet with the women on a regular basis. I will be meeting with them a week from this Saturday to discuss services. Child care will be on the table again as one of their requests.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the third time today I have heard someone from that side shamelessly suggest that the Liberal program has something to do with helping parents who have kids with autism. I have a 10 year old child with autism. I have no idea how the program that the Liberals had in place was going to help parents with the \$50,000 they need for ABA, for autism funding. It obviously is a provincial jurisdiction, but how does the Liberal program help kids with autism?

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, I think I said earlier that this program was designed for what is called inclusivity of children with special needs. Some child care centres in the country do have children who are autistic and they do help. Part of the design of the program and part of the negotiations with the provinces was to ensure there were child care programs that did have those kinds of services. What I am talking about is the inclusivity of the special needs of children.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having this opportunity to address such an important issue for all Canadians from coast to coast to coast, and everywhere in between: preserving, safeguarding, educating and maintaining early childhood, and preparing our young children for their future as Canadians.

If there is one issue that should prompt us to set aside all partisan interests in order to properly discuss and find solutions, it is this very issue.

[*English*]

I would hope: that we could have a real debate on this matter; that all sides could bend a bit and perhaps compromise; that we could start by looking at the principles and then agree on what we can agree; that none of us hold the absolute mantle of being the saviours

of childhood; that none of us have 100% of the answer; that none of the programs that we had as government or the programs that the current government proposes are the perfect programs, the one solution, the one and only true light that would bring us and our children to a good future in this country.

However, if we know what principles we want to achieve and if we all agree on those principles and work from there, then there is a way forward. What are the principles? Let us look at what the Conservatives are saying. They want a plan that assists families so they can choose the best course for their children. I have no qualms with that. I have no arguments with that. That is a good point.

What did we say in our plan that we negotiated with the provinces? We said that we should have a system across this country that gives parents an opportunity to have early childhood education and early childhood care for their children. I have no problem with that either and I do not think any member opposite would have any problem with that.

There are weaknesses and problems with both of those. The plans are very costly. To make them universal is very difficult. We have to negotiate with the provinces and the provinces have to work with their communities. Non-profit organizations are involved. There are problems with what the government is proposing because it does not help everybody equally. The rich get more disproportionately than the people with the highest need.

I would like to see the government change or modify its plan a bit. I would suggest, and I think everybody would agree, that the government has the right to implement the plan it ran its election campaign on. I would say that the government even has the responsibility to do that. However it should bear in mind that it did not get an absolute majority. The majority of the people who voted in this country voted for parties that had another view. They did not vote just on one issue but on a multitude of issues.

I would like to see that transfer to families done in a way that would benefit those who need it the most. I would suggest that the child tax credit would be a good way and others have made that suggestion.

What is more important to me is that the government maintain the basis of the agreement that we have reached with the provinces because it was a difficult agreement to reach. We had budgeted \$5 billion toward it. The government has other priorities and maybe that \$5 billion is not achievable at this time. We also said in our campaign platform that we would put another \$6 billion in for the subsequent five years. Perhaps it is too early for the government to talk about that.

However if the government would look into its heart and have a true debate, we could maintain a base. In Nova Scotia it was \$137 million. Maybe it has to be less. Maybe it could be \$2.5 billion over five years. What it would maintain is the basis for negotiation, the basis for a program across this country that could be increased later.

*Business of Supply*

The transfer to the parents could be changed later on. It could be increased or modified. It could be non-taxable if the government chooses to do that in future years. The government has that option. While it might not be perfect, it is a basis. It is a basis for looking at a way to do transfers to parents so parents can make their own choices.

Choices means options. In many parts of Canada there are no options and where there are options they are very difficult. I will give the House an example of the area where I live.

I went to villages, such as Berwick, Digby, Middleton, Yarmouth, Church Point, Meteghan, Pubnico, areas where they are developing child care. They have day care but they also have preschool education and provide assistance to families. Non-profit groups do it and they do it by going to every federal, provincial, municipal program they can getting a nickel here, a dime there, somebody to donate a building or a church group to sponsor them. They do this however they can. They have developed these places. They saw the deal that was signed between Nova Scotia and the federal government as a recognition of what they were doing and an opportunity for them to grow.

● (1805)

The people who work there are salaried people. Management spends more time raising money than developing programs and working with children, which is a shame. However they truly believe in what they are doing, they love what they are doing and they understand how important it is for the community.

I think it would be reasonable for us to make an investment as a society into a level of salary for those people that would be more reasonable. My mother and father started teaching school in my community under the old system of the school trustees, where the secretary of the small trustee group for the little school had to go door to door and collect the money to pay the teachers. Sometimes the teachers were paid in the spring, sometimes in the fall and sometimes 18 or 19 months of back pay would have to be paid.

At one point a decision was made in Nova Scotia that education was important so we created the consolidated school system. We tried to have the same level of education for everyone in our province. It has not been 100% successful that everyone receives the same education but it is a lot better than what we had. It goes toward the same direction. I think that is what we have to do with early childhood education and early childhood care.

I would ask the government to consider that. It has a little time. Interim agreements were signed with the provinces. The government could send a signal now that it is willing to negotiate with the provinces. I do not think that would be a retreat or anything the government should be ashamed of. I think that would be a positive step. It would mean that the Government of Canada is working, that it is listening to Canadians and that the House of Commons is doing what it should.

I know I have received many calls from constituents, as I am sure members on the government side have received calls from their constituents, saying that they want to see assistance in that area. Granted, some people do not want to use anything outside of their home and assistance to them is good.

However, where is the magic in age six? I do not understand that. Why does it stop costing money to raise a child because he or she has reached the age of six? If we do another calculation and it is done under the child tax credit we can get by that. We can have the children or the families with the greatest need receiving more than a family with a higher income, as the current proposal has.

Again, I come back to my opening comments that our plan was not perfect, the government's plan is not perfect but if we use the proper principles and know what we want to achieve at the end and we work toward those in cooperation, I think that can be achieved.

When I look at the entire budget and look at what is being proposed and where it is going, I have fear. I see a lot of abandoning of what we believe in. If we look at the native communities, what we see in this budget for the native communities is atrocious. This is similar to early childhood education workers. They saw a better tomorrow, saw the potential for making investments and saw a partnership with their provinces and the federal government and they are now seeing it all scrapped.

I know about the problems in rural Nova Scotia and in my immediate community, the francophone community, so I can only imagine what it must be like on isolated reserves in northern communities and how difficult it must be to maintain their languages and culture and to raise their children in their culture.

We pay a premium. I attend fundraisers at day cares and preschools in my community to raise the money that they need to exist and try to preserve the language. The rate of assimilation is incredible in the Acadian community, particularly in Nova Scotia.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

I have seen the work these people do and I am aware of the potential they saw in the Canada-Nova Scotia agreement. Not only was Ottawa negotiating with the provinces, but the federal and provincial governments agreed that a special allowance was needed for official language minority communities. This meant that the difficulties and additional costs facing these communities would finally be recognized.

I therefore encourage all political parties to bend a little, to recognize the strength of all the arguments, the weaknesses of all the programs, and to come up with a solution in the best interest of our country's children.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 6:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today all questions necessary to dispose of the business of supply are deemed put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Monday, May 8, at the expiry of the time provided for government orders.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. With the indulgence of the House, I wonder if you would seek unanimous consent to see the clock at 6:30.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

• (1815)

[*English*]

### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I asked the minister to act on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, explicitly created to prevent another Oka from happening.

I asked because the people of the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory found it necessary to take action due to the failure of the federal government to deal with its well researched claim to land near Caledonia.

I asked because the federal government has failed to take action on the recommendations of the royal commission. It still has not responded a decade later.

The government has not devoted enough resources to assessing, negotiating and settling claims. There was not a penny in the budget to indicate that any claims will be settled in the coming year. What is the Conservative government going to do to accelerate the settlement of claims and resolve the backlog?

The uncertainty felt by many first nations across this country is directly linked to outstanding land claims. The Six Nations is only one example, but a telling one. They have watched as surrounding communities have continued to grow right up to the boundaries of their reserve while the government drags out negotiations on Six Nations' claims.

Where are the principles the federal government uses to ensure that the honour of the Crown is upheld in all land dealings with first nations? Or is the mantra that "it is cheaper to negotiate than to settle land claims"?

Many claims take five years just to be given initial consideration. I have met with chiefs who were trained as children to negotiate land claims and they now realize they may die before there is resolution.

Testifying in front of the aboriginal affairs committee, the Indian Claims Commission said that a delay in giving a first nation a substantive answer of any kind is equal to denial of the claim. What is fair and reasonable about that?

Will the Conservatives agree to establish an independent claims tribunal that can impose settlement deadlines and/or rule on claims settlements where the federal government is unreasonably delaying negotiated settlement?

First nations and aboriginal peoples across this country are asking for something that is fair and reasonable. When will the government act?

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

I intend to touch on all three topics raised in her question: the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, the Indian Claims Commission, and events near Caledonia, Ontario.

In the 10 years since the royal commission concluded, its report has inspired all of us who believe the federal government can do better in its efforts to support aboriginal Canadians. I cannot do justice to a five volume report in a four minute speech, but I can tell my hon. friend that I see common threads in the themes identified in the report and the priorities addressed in this week's budget.

The commissioners sought out women's perspectives and considered the needs of aboriginal youth. The hon. Minister of Finance announced \$450 million in new money over two years for key priorities like aboriginal education, support for women, children and families, and on reserve housing and water.

As well, the commissioner's report specifically addressed the needs of aboriginal Canadians in urban communities and in the north. Likewise, we have also set aside \$300 million for off reserve housing in the provinces and another \$300 million for affordable housing in the three territories.

As for the Indian Claims Commission, the government believes that the independence of the commission is critical. We are open to new ideas that will help first nations resolve claims in a fair and efficient manner.

My hon. friend may be aware that the minister served on the commission for 10 years. He came into his new office with a clear understanding that this system is far from perfect. Our government will seek ways to improve the process and to ensure that settlements are reached on a faster basis.

Finally, we must address the events near Caledonia, Ontario. I know I can speak for each and every member of the House when I express my wish for a peaceful, honourable and long-lasting solution.

The minister has taken a number of important steps to enhance the dialogue between the Government of Ontario, Haldimand County and, of course, Six Nations members.

He appointed a fact-finder in March. He has been in constant contact with federal officials at the table, his provincial counterpart, the Hon. David Ramsay, and his cabinet colleague, the member for Haldimand—Norfolk. Yesterday, he appointed the Hon. Barbara McDougall to be the special federal representative in the talks.

Progress at the table has been promising. That progress builds on a long history of neighbourly relations between Haldimand County residents and Six Nations members. The many historic bonds between these two communities point the way toward a solution.

To bring these three separate topics together, the royal commission noted that the federal government has not always addressed aboriginal people in a just way. The Indian Claims Commission demonstrates that current systems are not always an effective expression of the government's best intentions.

However, relationships between communities, between individual Canadians, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, are strong, and that goodwill can carry us through the current challenges.

• (1820)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his response, but I have to say that we are looking at decade after decade of lack of action around land claims.

The litany goes on in communities across the country. There is Garden Hill, with outbreaks of tuberculosis, with 3,500 people and only 4% of the people actually having access to running water. There is Kasechewan, with another emergency crisis there, and where is the money for the funding for the housing? Now we have Caledonia, a nation of people who have waited decades for some justice in this country. Six Nations people are a peaceful people. They deserve to be recognized for the long-standing claims that they have brought to the table.

#### *Adjournment Proceedings*

On another topic, what is the status of discussions on an alternative approach to Bill C-6, the 2003 specific claims resolution act? Is the federal government considering implementing Bill C-6 without the consent of first nations and is Parliament going to be informed of the discussions on this?

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge:** Mr. Speaker, our government is moving forward on all the issues that have been raised. We are doing so after moving through a period of 13 years of inaction. Our minister has taken the initiative in his first days in office and I am glad to be a part of the government as it is in fact moving forward on the responsibilities that have been left by the side by the previous government.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*English*]

Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:24 p.m.)

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