



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, May 18, 2006**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, May 18, 2006

The House met at 9 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (0855)

[*English*]

### AGRICULTURAL MARKETING PROGRAMS ACT

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-15, An Act to amend the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act.

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

\* \* \*

• (0900)

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### HEALTH

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Health.

The committee has studied Bill C-5, an act respecting the establishment of the Public Health Agency of Canada and amending certain acts, and has agreed to report it to the House without amendment.

\* \* \*

• (0905)

### OVERSEAS MILITARY MEMORIAL SITES STUDENT VISITS ASSISTANCE ACT

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-308, An Act to propose and examine a program giving financial assistance to high school students visiting overseas military memorial sites.

He said: Mr. Speaker, as the House knows, we have about three World War I veterans left and we lose about 75 to 80 World War II and Korean veterans every day in this country. Fairly soon, the history of those two battles and the Korean War will be lost due to old age.

What I am attempting to do in the bill is have the federal government work with the provinces, the school boards and the private sector to set up a fund that would enable students the one-time opportunity to travel to overseas gravesites so they themselves can stand on the sites to witness and understand the historical nature of what they mean.

I can assure the House that any of us who have had that opportunity have been extremely moved by that experience.

In order to keep the remembrance of that service alive and of the words “lest we forget” alive, we need to keep passing it on from generation to generation. I believe this fund would be well worth it in the end because it would teach our children and future generations the history of our brave men and women in our military.

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

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### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BANK OF CANADA ACT

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-309, An Act to amend the Business Development Bank of Canada Act and the Canada Student Loans Act (student loan system).

He said: Mr. Speaker, a lot of students are on the cusp and cannot access student loans because, according to the rules and regulations, their parents make \$1 too much over the minimum in order to achieve this.

All students in this country have the right of access to university, post-secondary education and vocational training. We should not restrict access to student loans and opportunities for students to upgrade their skills in order to assist us in the future economies.

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

\* \* \*

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I move that notwithstanding the order adopted Tuesday, April 25, public safety and national security be the committee for the purposes of section 145 of the Anti-terrorism Act, 2001.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The parliamentary secretary needs unanimous consent to do this at this moment because there was no notice. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

*Government Orders*

**Some hon. members:** No.

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## IMMIGRATION

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to present a petition on the subject of immigration policy signed by residents of the Fraser Valley, including some of my constituents.

The petitioners desire a substantial revision of Canada's policy on accepting refugees.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[*Translation*]

**BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2006**

The House resumed, from May 15, consideration of the motion that Bill C-13, An Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on May 2, 2006, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that the question be now put.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois has already made known that it intends to vote for this budget.

As the hon. members know, one reason is that the Conservative Party promised in writing to correct the fiscal imbalance. We will make sure that it keeps its promise to Quebecers.

We are particularly concerned because late last week, in the media, the Prime Minister was already backtracking, and his commitments seemed less firm. We hope that this was simply a moment of weakness and that he will keep his promises.

The Bloc Québécois had been proposing a number of other measures for quite some time, and we worked hard to get them. We got \$1 billion for post-secondary education, \$800 million for affordable housing, assistance for farmers and a tax exemption on bursaries. The Bloc Québécois had been calling for that for a long time, and we are glad to have obtained that gain for Quebec. As well, we obtained a tax credit for public transit users, something we had also long been calling for in this House. We are happy to have gotten the excise tax lifted from jewellery and to have obtained a tax credit for tools and a reduction of the tax on the landing fee. While we would have preferred that this tax be completely eliminated, this is a step in the right direction.

That said, the budget includes several negative measures that we do not agree with. I have already spoken in this House about all the government's continued and new intrusions into the jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec. The \$1,200 child care allowance is one example. We had suggested a refundable tax credit, which would have respected the provincial and federal jurisdictions, but the government did not want this.

The budget talks about creating a Canadian securities commission. Again, the Government of Quebec has always refused to allow any interference in its exclusive jurisdictions.

The annex on the fiscal imbalance cites notions of accountability, of Canada-wide standards. They say they are driven by considerations of the social union, but Quebec has always been opposed. As far as the fiscal imbalance is concerned, it is simple. All we need is an unconditional transfer of tax fields to Quebec.

This budget also talks about new research foundations, which is yet another overlap. It talks about a cancer strategy, which already exists in Quebec. The money should have been transferred. In connection with immigration the issue of refugee credentials is another good example. The government is interfering in something that is none of its concern. This area is one of Quebec's jurisdictions. Furthermore, when it comes to looking after its own jurisdiction and setting up a Refugee Appeal Division, which would require only \$10 million, the federal government is not assuming its responsibilities. It is quite sad and I have seen the impact this has had in my riding.

As hon. members know, Abdelkader Belaoui is currently in a presbytery in Pointe-Saint-Charles. He did not have the opportunity to appeal the arbitrary decision made by a commissioner. All Quebecers are allowed to appeal decisions they disagree with, but new arrivals are not allowed to do so.

This budget still contains far too many encroachments on jurisdictions of the provinces and Quebec.

In addition to being an interference, the allowance for child care services is very unfair in its proposed format because it will be taxed based on the lowest income and not on the family income.

I have two examples to illustrate this point. In a family of four, only one person works and earns an annual income of \$213,500—a federal minister, for example. The other adult stays home with the two children. The tax on the allowance will apply on the lowest income, which is zero dollars in this case. This family will receive the entire initial sum and will not pay any tax on it.

● (0910)

On the other hand, the head of a single-parent family who earns \$28,000 will have to pay an additional \$800 in income tax whether in Quebec City or in Ottawa.

Our proposal was to solve this problem by introducing an income tax credit based on family income and a decreasing contribution based on income. The cost would be the same. Frankly, we have a hard time understanding why the government did not consider our proposal. This still has not been explained.

It surprises me that during the debates we have held in this House, not a single Conservative has ever explained what is wrong with our proposal. They are always trying to avoid the issue, always handing us the same old lines. They talk about choice, but what about Quebecers' choice?

Quebeckers have chosen to have child care services that they pay for through their income taxes. But then they are penalized because when they fill out their federal tax return, they declare lower child care costs on line 214 than other Canadians. That means the federal government saves money every year because Quebeckers chose to set up their own system. The government is \$250 million a year to the good on the backs of Quebec parents, who are paying for these daycares with their income tax dollars that go to the rest of Canada.

If the federal government really wants to respect the choices made by parents and by Quebec society, it will give the \$250 million it is saving thanks to Quebeckers back to the Government of Quebec.

As far as older workers are concerned, we have often asked for an assistance program to be set up for older workers who lose their employment following a mass lay-off. Sometimes this affects two people from the same household who have worked for the same company for 20 or 30 years. The day the company closes, these people have difficulty qualifying for other jobs. They end up having to spend all their savings and going on welfare until their retirement at age 65. What a sad way for them to end their career after being contributing members of society their entire lives.

This program was not expensive. We know what we would be getting into since it already existed. The federal government did not include it in its budget, but opened the door to it in the Speech from the Throne. We hope this will be a done deal as soon as possible.

There is nothing in this budget on the Kyoto protocol. We understood why last Tuesday. It is because this government is against the Kyoto protocol. What were this government's arguments? It said it was unable to keep this commitment. Rarely have we seen a government cite its own incompetence for not moving forward. Essentially what the Conservatives are saying is that they are not competent enough to do the job.

The argument that our reduction goal of 35% would mean shutting down the transport sector, simply does not hold. That would be like a person who lives a lavish lifestyle drinking alcohol and partying being asked by his accountant to cut his expenses by 35%. That person could retort that this would cut into his rent and that he would end up on the street. Of course, everyone would tell him to cut from his excesses. The same goes for the federal government.

This government has not met Quebecers' expectations. In the case of the Kyoto protocol, it chose the oil industry over the interests of Quebecers. We will be watching this government over the next year.

● (0915)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the comments by the hon. member on the environmental aspects of the budget and what was and was not in the budget. In fact, the Green Budget Coalition has said that there is virtually nothing in the budget to make good on the government's

### Government Orders

throne speech commitment to tangible reductions in pollution and greenhouse gases. The coalition stated:

Furthermore, the federal government missed a great opportunity to announce the phase-out of the \$1.4 billion in annual subsidies to the oil and gas sector, and the over \$150 million annually to nuclear power. For decades, these "pollution subsidies" have contributed to market failure, industrial inefficiency, unsustainable energy consumption, and unnecessary pollution and health damage.

Could the member comment on why he thinks the Conservative government kept those \$150 billion worth of subsidies to the oil and gas industry in its budget?

● (0920)

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, that is what we are asking for.

We have often criticized subsidies and gifts given by the Conservative government to oil companies. We had every reason to expect the Minister of the Environment to demonstrate a true desire for change in this first budget. We wonder whether she is not, in fact, the "minister of oil and gas", since this budget provides nothing for the environment.

As for the budget overall, we will support it because it promises to correct the fiscal imbalance, which is something the Bloc Québécois has worked on for quite some time, as it is in the best interest of Quebecers. Nevertheless, we will remain vigilant throughout the year.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the new member. I know that he is a very passionate individual and I wish him luck in his career in the House of Commons.

His comments are interesting. He has done a good job exposing the problems and shortcomings of this budget. I find it very interesting that he wants to remain vigilant, yet at the same time, he supports the Conservative government in spite of the problems that he himself has raised.

As for the NDP member's comment regarding the nuclear industry, personally, I do not believe that this industry causes pollution.

I would simply like the member to explain how he can, ironically, support a budget that, according to him, is not really a budget since it has so many holes and gaps. Is it not strange that he supports this budget, although his speech clearly indicates that he opposes it?

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to clarify something: I am not here to make a career in this place, only to support the cause of Quebec sovereignty.

*Government Orders*

I am not very surprised that the Liberal Party plans to vote against the budget. The Liberals never even acknowledged the fiscal imbalance. For 13 years, they demonstrated arrogance and scorn toward Quebecers by refusing to recognize this problem and by refusing to give Quebec what it needs to reach its potential.

We will support this budget because it includes a promise about the fiscal imbalance. This is a transitional budget. We will see whether the Conservative government keeps its promises to Quebecers.

[English]

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of things couched in my hon. colleague's comments on which I would like some clarification.

The oil and gas industry is very much a part of my riding of Yellowhead. Some of the comments about the subsidy were rather extreme. Alberta has actually allowed a 1% royalty until recovery of cost of project. To deem that a subsidy, I would challenge. After it redeems its cost of recovery, the royalty is then 25%. The majority of that goes not to Albertans, but to the federal coffers and, likewise, across the country, including Quebec.

The member commented on the child care provisions. The budget provides \$1,200 for a child under the age of six, and 125,000 new day care spaces. I have a difficult time discerning how that challenges Quebec's provincial child care program. It actually helps it. How does this challenge Quebec's program?

• (0925)

[Translation]

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr:** Mr. Speaker, it is very simple. Through their income taxes, Quebecers are already paying for a child care system in Quebec. This enables them to pay less out of pocket, but means they get fewer income tax credits from the federal government. The federal government puts away \$250 million of Quebecers' money every year because the people of Quebec made this choice. The Canadian federation is unable to take this choice into account and to respect it.

[English]

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk today about how the budget affects Canada and my province of British Columbia, particularly my riding of North Vancouver. There are a number of areas I would like to address.

The first is affordable housing. I had the pleasure a week ago of attending an affordable housing forum in North Vancouver. The people involved in the delivery of housing in my community raised concerns that the federal budget would only to deliver \$1.4 billion for affordable housing, reduced from the \$1.6 billion that was announced as part of the Liberal's Bill C-48 last year.

Nearly 1.5 million Canadian households are in core housing need. They are living in housing that is inadequate for their needs. It is either in poor repair or it is unaffordable. High rents are the single largest factor in the escalating use of food banks.

The CHRA proposes that the federal government provide resources to develop 25,000 units of housing per year for the next 10 years. Yet the promised one-time funding in the budget will only

see perhaps 20,000 units. We need predictable, stable and ongoing funding.

We also need to look at the EnerGuide program for low income households. This program provided for retrofits to help address rising energy costs. We need to retain what we had for the marketplace and for reducing the cost of energy related to rental buildings. We also need to help individual owners. For example, under the EnerGuide program, Canadians who had their homes renovated to save energy could qualify for an additional grant of thousands of dollars. About 300,000 people have used the program since it started in the late 1990s.

A home retrofitted under the program saves its energy costs by an annual cost of about 30%. However, EnerGuide has now had its budget slashed by \$227 million over the next five years. In other words, the program is now gone.

I also will talk about the film industry. The film industry, both domestic and foreign, is one that affects just about all parts of Canada, certainly Toronto, Vancouver and Calgary. These areas are the centres of the film industry. In my riding we have Lions Gate Studios, a major film producer in Canada and around the world.

For British Columbia alone, the film industry produces over \$1.3 billion to our economy. In my riding it is \$100 million to the North Vancouver economy, employing over 6,000 people. I see nothing in the budget to provide any assistance to the film industry. It is going through a very challenging time as the dollar rises. Although we have a good base of skilled workers in Canada, the dollar is very important to the film industry. We also see a growth in the area of animated films.

There is a company called C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures. The chief executive officer, William Shatner, a well-known Canadian, better known as Captain Kirk in the *Star Trek* series, said that the opportunity for animated films in Canada was enormous. He said that the strategy was to sell itself to Hollywood studios based on the track records of films, did such as *The Wild*. Because of Canadian tax credits, a lower Canadian dollar and expertise in animating these television shows, it had the ability to produce films less expensively.

The problem is, with the rising Canadian dollar, the ability of tax credits becomes even more important. When this issue was raised with the film industry a few years ago, the Reform/Alliance/Conservative response was that it amounted to corporate welfare. It is not considered welfare by the 6,000 residents in my community who depend on the film industry and its viability. Remember the film industry is like tourism dollars. It brings in fresh money, particularly when we bring in foreign films, which is primarily what we do in British Columbia. It enables us to build a base of expertise to continue to develop domestic films, as we have across Canada.

*Government Orders*

The other area of concern is shipbuilding. It is an area that is now in crisis in Canada. We are talking about the loss of one of the major shipyards in Canada, the Davie shipyard in Quebec. It produces 50% of the Canadian capacity. It is now in bankruptcy. On June 12 its assets, the cranes, the tools and everything, will be sold off at auction and it will effectively cease to function.

● (0930)

We need to help the shipbuilding industry in Canada and there are two vehicles that we have used in the past: the structured financing facility, otherwise known as the SFF; and the accelerated capital cost allowance, which is the ACCA. Under the current regulations companies have qualified either for one or the other. What they really need is both. We need to provide that incentive.

The Allied shipyards and the Washington Marine Group are in my riding. Then there is Irving Shipbuilding in Halifax. We have now three Coast Guard vessels for the west coast, three for the east coast and three for the Great Lakes. We need to ensure that these vessels are built in Canada. We need to help the shipbuilding industry position itself so it can effectively compete internationally against Korea, China and Europe.

I have spoken already about the situation with aboriginals and the need to help aboriginal communities across Canada to develop their own fiscal economy, their ability to be self-sustaining. The Tsleil-Waututh First Nation and the Squamish First Nation are in my riding. The Kelowna accord, which they saw as a benefit, has effectively been gutted by the budget. It is down to 20% of what was agreed to after a historic accord between all provinces and first nations. This would have enabled first nations to get the economic base to provide employment and to deal with the social and economic problems on reserves. It is a shame.

In addition, Capilano College is in my riding. The Conservative budget is basically providing \$80 in textbooks instead of the \$6,000 proposed by the previous Liberal government, \$3,000 tuition tax credit in the first year and \$3,000 in the final year. That was a real incentive to help young students across Canada. When I spoke to students during the campaign, they said that was where they needed the help. They are not getting the help they need from this budget.

I have already spoken on the issue of the Pacific Gateway. I am the critic for Pacific Gateway. In the previous government, I worked with my colleagues in developing the Pacific Gateway strategy and initiative. This was to enable Canada, in particular western Canada, to benefit from trade from the Asia-Pacific Rim and to recognize that British Columbia, through the ports of Prince Rupert and Vancouver, would provide this opportunity for increased movement of goods and people to assist both the import and export of goods to and from Canada.

The Pacific Gateway program under the Liberals would have provided \$590 million over five years. In fact, during the campaign, when the Prime Minister spoke in Prince Rupert last December, he said that a Conservative government would deliver at least the Liberals' commitment of \$590 million over five years. What we have now is a commitment of \$591 million over eight years. Again, it has been delayed and diluted.

In fact, in year one the Conservatives have only proposed \$19 million. The Liberal plan for Pacific Gateway would have seen \$190 million worth of projects begin almost immediately with a further \$400 million to be allocated by a Gateway council, which would have consisted of representatives of the four the western provinces and stakeholders interested directly in the port operations.

When we take the amount over five years, under the Liberal plan we would have seen \$590 million expended. Under the Conservative budget, by year five we will see only \$239 million. It is what I call the Tory Pacific Gateway gap of \$351 million. That is not good enough for western Canada. It is not good for Canada. It is not good for British Columbia. We need a budget that recognizes the importance of the economy, the importance of jobs and the importance of the Asia-Pacific, China and India in the growing markets.

Therefore, I am very disappointed that the budget has neglected the areas of concern for the people of my riding, the people of British Columbia and, in my opinion, the people of Canada.

● (0935)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments of my colleague across the way. We are both fellow British Columbians.

The Pacific Gateway part of his speech was especially disturbing. I would like to ask the member if he recalls that there were only 41 words in the proposed Pacific Gateway project that came forward from the previous Liberal government. There were no plans and no details, just 41 vague words about what it was planning to do.

As a Conservative government, our extension to five years is to cover the fact that there will be very many projects that could not be completed in such a short timeline. It is a consideration that has been given to the projects to make certain that they are completed and funded by the Pacific Gateway project and not to shorten the projects. We are trying to expand them and to allow for them to actually occur.

I wonder if the member opposite would like to comment on the fact that there was no money for the Pacific Gateway funding in any of the Liberal budgets that were put forward before and if he would agree that it was simply a Liberal promise.

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, the Pacific Gateway initiative by the Liberal government was more than a promise. In fact, it was a commitment. It was a commitment to the people of Canada, to western Canada and to British Columbia.

There were specifics included in the Pacific Gateway initiative. For example, I talked about the \$190 million, \$35 million of which was to set up the Pacific Gateway Council. It was going to include more than the existing stakeholders that are involved currently in promoting trade to Asia-Pacific. It would have included representatives from the four western provinces to ensure that we really did address the economic opportunities for the four western provinces that are represented through the Pacific Gateway initiative.

*Government Orders*

More particularly, there were specifics. There was \$90 million for the Pitt River Bridge and the Mary Hill Interchange Project. There was the Deltaport road grade separations project. One of the problems is getting access to and from the port for containers coming in. We are the second busiest port in North America. I do not know now, after the flooding, but Louisiana was number one because of oil and Vancouver was the second busiest port in North America.

Goods that come from China, for example, can arrive at Vancouver one to two days faster than any U.S. port with which we are competing. That gives us the opportunity, through rail, to get goods into Chicago, into parts of the United States and Canada up to two days faster. That is an economic advantage. We were going to talk about improving the rail access to grade separations.

There was a third detail. In North Portal, Saskatchewan, more road and rail grade upgrades worth \$3 million and intelligent transportation systems deployment worth up to \$2 million. Those are specifics. We said that \$400 million would be available for the Pacific Gateway Council to then apply for other projects. We agreed, for example, to an environmental assessment of the south perimeter road needed for Delta Port. We know the priorities of British Columbia and we responded to them.

• (0940)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to come back to the Pacific Gateway initiative as well because I do agree with the member for North Vancouver that there is a Pacific Gateway gap in the current budget. I also want to ask him about the project itself.

Many people in my constituency are concerned about the plan to twin the Port Mann Bridge and widen Highway 1. We know we cannot build our way out of traffic congestion and this will only dump more cars on to our roads.

A key part of the Pacific Gateway project that has not been addressed either by the Conservatives or the Liberals is the federal government's railway bridge across the Fraser River, a swing bridge which causes a huge backup in rail traffic. If we want to improve transportation, we have to fix that bridge. Why is that not part of the Pacific Gateway project?

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member refers to the Port Mann Bridge twinning, which I know is a concern for some of the communities in the lower mainland. When that issue was raised, the position of our government was that it was not one of the projects to be included. It is a priority of the provincial government in its Pacific Gateway initiative. We said that, in terms of the improvements of road and rail, this would really come from the Pacific Gateway Council.

I agree absolutely with the importance of improving the rail bridges, the rail access, and that is what the Pacific Gateway initiative was attempting to do.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today not to oppose the budget but to propose alternatives.

The fundamental flaw in this budget is the absence of a long-term vision. Given the fiscal capacity of the government, it would have been possible to invest in crucial sectors to serve as Canada's engines

in the new economy. Health, education, worker training and the move towards a green economy all require investments in order to achieve prosperity and sustainability. This takes courage and leadership, as well as fiscal capacity.

Instead, by deciding to manage the country through tax credits, the Conservatives are wasting their fiscal capacity, shirking their obligation to provide leadership and a long-term vision, and allocating surpluses to the wrong priorities.

Conservatives talk a great deal about competitiveness and productivity. They have a rather narrow view of competitiveness, even when I make allowance for the fact that my view is quite different than theirs. I believe that the key to our prosperity is an educated and motivated labour force, excellent educational institutions for our youth, learning and development opportunities for children, a healthy environment and a well-established social security system, which includes health care and child care. Thus, you can imagine my disappointment with this budget.

We have the extraordinary opportunity to invest an enormous surplus in sectors that will develop our human capital, protect our natural capital, and narrow the gap between rich and poor in Canada. The budget tries to do quite the opposite with \$7 billion in tax cuts, \$100 per month for day care expenses—where \$800 is needed—and one free textbook for students. These are not investments. This is not a vision; it is a lost opportunity.

[*English*]

The doublespeak in the Speech from the Throne would make even George Orwell turn in his grave with expressions like investing, standing up for ordinary Canadians and getting results for working families. When we look at the outlook for budgetary revenues, we can see that the government is investing less in families and more in corporations. When we look at personal income tax going up by 12%, judging from the projections of 2007-08, and corporate income tax going up by something like 6.5%, we can see where the real investments are going.

My NDP colleagues and I believe that true competitiveness is built with a fair taxation system, of course, and by investing in those areas of natural and human capital that are truly sustainable for the long term. Investments are made in literacy, post-secondary education, lifelong skills training, health care and the environment.



*Government Orders*

On post-secondary education, we missed the opportunity to reinvest in stable, long term core funding of our colleges and universities to enhance accessibility and quality, to reduce tuition and class sizes, and to hire more professors and provide better resources. Instead, the Conservatives opted for minor tweaking that does not help the majority of students.

Paying one-third of the current deferred maintenance costs of institutions does not even begin to address the needs of institutions that are struggling to maintain and enhance the quality of education. One free textbook does not make university more accessible to low income, rural or aboriginal students. Exempting scholarships from income tax does not help the majority of students who do not even use all of their existing tax credits. Students do not want lower taxes. They want smaller class sizes and less debt when they graduate. This budget profoundly misunderstands the true needs of today's students.

Just as the deficit has been paid on the backs of working Canadians, cities and provinces, new growth continues at the cost of our environment. Canada committed to lower its greenhouse gas emissions by 6% over 1990 levels, as we all know.

The Liberals have done Canada and the world a tremendous disservice. First, they refused to require their corporate friends to reduce emissions, not even getting anything in exchange for the tax cuts, and they allowed our greenhouse gas emissions to rise to 35% above 1990 levels. Now, a Conservative government is in denial and is ready to cut and run, as the expression goes, on the problem that will have the largest impact on our children's future.

The Conservatives now believe that the Kyoto targets are impossible when in reality, although they are daunting, they are still eminently achievable. I hope that the minister would look at the NDP's Kyoto plan, which is realistic and fully costed. Its innovative ideas may not appeal directly to the interests of the oil patch, but according to a late April survey, 90% of Canadians want to see real investments in sustainable solutions like renewable energies and green industry, not more tax giveaways to the oil industry.

Finally, I would like to speak to child care, an area in which the NDP has proposed a concrete, realistic alternative to the \$1,200 Conservative plan. In Victoria this week, a large rally was held by child care stakeholders, including parents, at the B.C. legislature. Their signs read: "Find me quality day care for 70¢ an hour" and "\$100 a month pays for child care all right, in 1986".

In British Columbia, 85% of children aged six months to five years living with a single parent are in some form of child care, and 73% of children with two working parents are in child care, a drastic rise since the mid-nineties.

● (0945)

In Victoria, child care can cost up to \$800 a month, and there remains a desperate shortage of spaces, with long waiting lists. B.C. parents waited 13 years for the Liberals to act as the crisis developed. Finally, in a minority Parliament pressure forced them to act, albeit hastily. This allowed the Conservatives to come in and uproot the whole process, setting us back more than a decade.

There is no choice in British Columbia and it is no way for a government to help parents along the difficult path of raising children. Yesterday I introduced a genuine alternative to the

Conservative plan, the NDP's early learning and child care act, which enshrines in law the principles of quality, accessibility and universality, among others. It recognizes that the government has a responsibility and an opportunity to make it easier for parents to raise their kids.

In summary, this budget is a wasted opportunity. It could have been a historic long term vision document that would launch Canada into the new knowledge and green economies, to overcome the initial fiscal hump of transition to environmentally, socially and economically sustainable economies, and to show bold leadership for Canada. Instead, it is business as usual, managing by tax credit. This is no way to run a country. That is why I cannot in good conscience, as a mother, a teacher and a citizen, support this fundamentally flawed budget.

● (0950)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of my friend and former teacher. I want to bring out a bit of education for my hon. friend and perhaps the House on one of the areas she slagged, and that is the oil industry.

With the support of this government and, to its credit, the previous government, the oil industry in Canada has supplied tremendous prosperity. It is investing \$41 billion in Canada in 2006. It paid governments \$27 billion in 2005. The contribution to individual Canadians in terms of training, mobility of labour and immigrant training just by one company alone, Suncor, amounts to millions and millions of dollars.

The industry is supporting education in NAIT. Twelve per cent of Syncrude's and Suncor's workforce is aboriginal. It is also investing \$100 million in contracts with aboriginal companies. Suncor alone is investing \$100 million to eliminate trucks in the mine sites, therefore having a tremendous impact on SOx, NOx and CO<sub>2</sub>, plus other technologies such as CO<sub>2</sub> collection and re-injection.

*Government Orders*

One of the industries that party and that member like to slag is in fact doing a tremendous amount to help the environment while contributing tremendously, with a job impact in Canada of over 500,000. Would my hon. colleague not like to cut an industry like that just a bit of slack and give it some credit for doing the job in an environmentally friendly way as much as possible?

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments, but they further illustrate the flaws in this budget. To continue to give tax credits to a sector that is overheating local economies is just plain poor thinking.

It also highlights the fact that this sector is performing a great service if we only consider money. We are not considering, for example, the billions of litres of water that the tar sands are using, the greenhouse gases that are being created and the pollution that results.

Yes, undoubtedly there is a benefit, I admit, and our Kyoto plan recognizes the need to transition from that polluting economy to a sustainable one, but to accept this as status quo is simply flawed thinking.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two quick questions for the member. First, during the election campaign the leader of the Conservatives complained about politicians giving grants to politicians, yet he took the billion dollars the NDP and the Liberals created for students in Bill C-48 from the students and gave it to the provinces. Would the member comment on that?

Second, perhaps unlike the NDP, I agree that wealthy people and corporations should also receive tax breaks, but I believe everyone's tax breaks should be equal. I would ask her if she agrees that this particular budget is prejudiced against the poor. Everyone received some tax decreases, but the poor received tax increases. For instance, on July 1 their rate of taxation goes up from 15% to 15.5%. There is a decrease in the basic allowance of \$200. The poor receive less of the \$1,200. The Caledon Institute said they would receive as low as 55¢ a day or 14 minutes' worth of day care. Does the member think that everyone should receive at least equal tax breaks and the budget should not be prejudiced against the poor?

• (0955)

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer the member's first question referring to Bill C-48. The bill allocated \$1.5 billion to post-secondary education. In their budget, the Conservatives chose to redirect only a part of that amount through the provinces to institutions for their infrastructure. I agree that this is problematic because it does not help students. It does not reduce tuition fees. It does not help students with their huge debt load.

On the member's second question, yes, I certainly agree that increasing the tax for the lowest economic group is highly unfair. The Conservatives seem to be practising old, discredited trickle-down economics, which does not work. It has been shown not to work and it still does not work.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, although I have made statements and asked various questions during this session of Parliament, this represents my first full speech. I want to say at the outset how very grateful I am to the residents of Brant for re-electing me to serve as their representative here in Ottawa. As so many fellow members of the House have stated, it is truly a privilege

and an honour to serve one's constituents. I feel sincerely indebted to the citizens of Brant for their confidence in me and for providing me the opportunity to be here.

Just briefly, I would like to tell members about Brant. It is a most interesting riding that comprises the city of Brantford, with a population of approximately 90,000, and also encompasses the most populated first nations community in Canada, that being the Six Nations of the Grand River. In addition, within my riding are the picturesque communities of Paris, St. George and Glenn Morris. I also represent the hard-working individuals who form a rural sector in my riding, individuals who live in or near the villages of Burford, Oakland and Scotland. All in all, Brant is diverse in its population base and rich in both its industrial and its agricultural history.

The budget which we are debating does not represent the shared feelings or views of the hundreds of Canadians with whom I speak. As someone once said, taxes are the price we pay for a civilized society. I rarely hear from a constituent complaining about the level of taxation in Canada. Much more often, I hear from constituents who are prepared to share, who are prepared to do their part financially and otherwise to build a tolerant, generous society.

The budget delivered by the Minister of Finance does not, in my respectful view, represent the best of Canada and does not represent the best of Canadians, nor does it in any way present a compelling vision for the way our country should now advance. A country is not ultimately gauged or judged by how much money it returns to its shareholder residents. Rather, a country is properly assessed or judged by how it treats all of its citizens. I was extremely disappointed with the treatment afforded to the citizens of Brant and, by extension, of Canada, in this budget.

I think, for instance, of those hundreds of Brantford families who live in very close proximity to brownfields, acres and acres of industrial wastelands that have lain dormant and decrepit for many years. These brownfields are unsightly, they are dangerous and they need to be cleaned up.

Communities like Brantford, as vibrant and as economically viable as we have become, cannot count on private developers to spend the millions of dollars needed to remediate or clean up the brownfield sites. A prudent developer simply will look elsewhere and will typically choose to build on a greenfield site, away from residential areas.

Without federal government assistance, as it is frankly beyond the financial means of municipalities to clean up brownfield sites, those families who live in very close proximity to brownfields will continue every day to walk or drive past contaminated acres of land, which their children are warned not to play in or near.

That is why I was very pleased to receive from the Liberal government in 2005 a \$12 million commitment to assist my city of Brantford in the remediation of the Mohawk-Greenwich brownfield site. The members of my community were ecstatic. Nearby residents could finally look forward to the day when their neighbourhood would be like other neighbourhoods, with a park close by rather than an ugly brownfield site.

*Government Orders*

When the Prime Minister campaigned in my riding in January, he stated, "We will help you clean up your brownfields". As other members on this side have stated during their speeches, the environment was barely mentioned in the budget, and there is seemingly no realistic expectation that brownfield sites will be the beneficiary of federal money, notwithstanding the Prime Minister's campaign promise.

In the budget of 2005, delivered by the then Liberal minister of finance, \$150 million was committed to the remediation of municipally owned brownfield sites. There is absolutely no mention of federal assistance for those sites in this budget.

The issue is leadership. It is about the federal government taking a leadership role. It appears from this budget that the leadership role has been abdicated.

● (1000)

The termination of the early learning and child care agreements is extremely disappointing to parents and caregivers in my riding. The government has a view of a typical Canadian family as consisting of two parents residing together and able to afford a home having a value of \$350,000. What a peculiar example the Minister of Finance used in making reference to his much vaunted but only marginally important 1% cut in the GST.

A \$350,000 home does not represent all Canadian families or most Canadian families. Thousands and thousands of single parent families have children under the age of six. I spoke to many parents who were very pleased with the early learning and child care agreements which had been signed by the then minister of social development and his counterparts in all parts of Canada.

Parents were pleased as they finally saw an opportunity to return to school to better themselves or to accept an employment opportunity without having to worry about what would happen to their children. They were pleased that their child or children of pre-school years would be stimulated, nurtured and cared for during the parents' studying or working hours by a licensed, certified and very capable early learning and child care provider. They were gratified that early learning and child care centres would be assisted by federal funding.

Their hopes and expectations have been dashed and the provision to them of a few dollars a day in order to obtain care for their child is insulting and grossly inadequate. These young parents will have no choice now but to stay home, will have no choice but to put their education plans on hold and will have no choice but to reject any employment opportunity.

How visionary the early learning and child care agreements were. What a demonstration of leadership those agreements represented. Unhappily, in this budget there was no such vision and no such leadership.

How disappointed the 11,000 residents who live in the first nations community of Six Nations on the Grand River were when this budget effectively scuttled the Kelowna accord. How ironic for members opposite to talk about the longstanding problems faced by our first nations communities and how long term solutions will be required in order to correct problems which have taken years to develop. How sadly ironic it is that the long term problems have not

resulted in a long term commitment by the government to one of Canada's founding peoples.

The budget, rather, presents temporary band-aid solutions only, and inadequate ones at that, for the significant economic, social, health and educational issues which confront first nations communities across Canada. How much better it would have been for the budget to speak about long term plans for first nations, a real commitment to our first nations peoples.

Other components of the budget have been trumpeted by members opposite as being generous but, in reality, those measures are almost inconsequential. How meagre the assistance is to our post-secondary students, the non-taxation of their scholarships and bursaries, when we all know that most students pay no income tax in any event. How token is the \$80 credit for textbooks.

The Liberal Party would have provided to all post-secondary students, unconditionally, \$3,000 outright in their first year of studies and \$3,000 in their graduating year. This was not a tax credit. This was not a token. This was an outright grant of \$6,000 to students so that education, one of our most precious resources, could be affordable for anybody who wanted to attend a post-secondary institution.

Under the budget tabled by the government, presumably the sons and daughters of parents who live in \$350,000 houses will be well able to afford a university or community college education, but the more typical Canadian student will suffer the loss of \$6,000 which would have been provided to him or her by the Liberal Party.

All in all, this is a disappointing budget and one that, in my view, does not speak to Canadians, does not speak to their core values and does not speak to the advancement of a society that should be inclusive of everyone.

● (1005)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for my colleague who just spoke.

In the coming months, important decisions will have to be made in the textile, clothing and furniture sectors in order to avoid major catastrophes. This budget contains nothing new for these sectors, which are suffering economically. The government rejected POWA. We have the CANtex program, but it does not fully meet all the needs of these industries. We must take action.

The government can act by imposing safeguards to protect the industry until 2008, setting import quotas and introducing modernization programs. But this new budget does nothing.

How does my Liberal colleague explain the Conservative government's inaction and its lack of sensitivity toward these sectors, which are faced with serious problems because of globalization? The government has the means to act, but it is not doing anything. That is my question for my colleague.

*Government Orders*

[English]

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot in any way explain the lack of action on the part of the government with respect to the textile industry. I can only indicate that there are small companies in my riding that will suffer the loss of any type of assistance vis-à-vis the textile industry. I shared the member's hope that something would have been put into the budget for the textile industry.

The reality is that there are small companies, particularly in my riding, that are hurting and need some assistance. They need the proverbial hand up but this budget does not help them or speak to them in any way.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question for the hon. member goes to the issues he raised around support in the budget for aboriginal people. He spoke about the Kelowna accord and the failure of those dollars to show up in a meaningful way in this budget.

Over the past many years we have seen a status quo or a decline in the standard of living and the opportunities aboriginal people have in our society.

Does the hon. member feel that the Kelowna accord, which would have delivered \$5 billion over a number of years, had adequate funding to deal with the large problems facing over one million of our citizens across the country? Maybe the hon. member could outline how he feels those dollars would have given aboriginal peoples across the country the opportunity for a better future.

• (1010)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has properly stated the grossly inadequate standard of living that most first nations people have.

The Kelowna accord, signed not quite six months ago, was hailed by everyone who knew the details of it as a watershed moment in the lives of our aboriginals. It would have significantly assisted them with respect to health, housing and education. Those are three areas in which our aboriginal peoples have not kept pace.

Simply put, they need considerable assistance and the Kelowna accord would have provided them with that assistance. I share the member's disappointment that the Kelowna accord has been scuttled.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak to Bill C-13, the budget implementation bill.

I believe the Conservative budget is a missed opportunity, an overall disappointment and does not serve the people of Burnaby—Douglas well, which is why I voted against it earlier this session. I will talk about some of the issues that are important to my riding and some of the things that did not happen for my constituency.

A budget that includes over \$7 billion in tax breaks for corporations and throws another \$5 billion against the debt shows that there is a lot of room to do things for Canadians, such as invest in programs that mean something to Canadians, but the Conservatives made other choices.

We know families need those investments. In fact, families have been losing ground. In a study that looked at family income in Canada since the NAFTA agreement was signed, only the top 20% of Canadians were doing better, and dramatically better, whereas in

every category below that the real incomes of families have gone down. That is not a good situation and does not speak well to the situation of most Canadians. We needed some investments in programs that help Canadians and help reverse that trend, which is totally inappropriate in our society today.

Furthermore, we have seen that the government can forgive \$1 billion in illegal levies against our softwood lumber industry and ignore the fact that Canada won every decision under NAFTA panels. This comes from a government that supports the NAFTA agreement. It does not look like it is worth the paper that it is written on. If our neighbours to the south cannot abide by the terms of that agreement, then what good is it?

As well, last night we made a commitment in this House, unfortunately in my opinion, to start a new mission in Afghanistan beyond February 2007. We already know that the mission in Afghanistan has cost \$4.1 billion and we know that our financial commitments will rise over the next few years.

The surpluses for the next five years have been projected at \$83 billion and yet the budget did precious little to show how that would be spent to improve the situation of Canadians.

I now want to talk about immigration, which is important in my riding because almost 50% of the people of Burnaby—Douglas came to Canada from other countries. On the immigration file, we are seeing a trend from the Conservative government that we saw from the Liberals, where they announce over and over again the same things. We saw the commitments in the budget and in its platform but then, last Friday, the Prime Minister had a big event somewhere in Toronto and announced them all over again like they were brand new. What is even more interesting is that the media covered them like this was some new revelation from the government on immigration policy. It was not new. It was the same old stuff. We are going through that same cycle of announcing and re-announcing things that are already on the books and in the public domain. It is a strange way to run a program.

One of the components for which the Conservatives are very proud, and I agree that it is an important step, is the reduction in the right of landing fee from \$975 to \$490. That is money new immigrants need. When people move halfway around the world to start a new life in Canada, they need all the money they have to establish themselves here and acquire the basic necessities to re-establish themselves in a new country. The \$975 fee hurt new immigrants dramatically at a time when they needed the money the most. When the Liberals introduced that, the NDP argued that it was an unfortunate tax that would hurt people at a time when they needed all their financial resources.

*Government Orders*

In this corner of the House, we, as New Democrats, have always called for the total elimination of that right of landing fee. The Conservatives only reduced it. If a \$975 fee is wrong, then a \$490 fee is wrong. This is money that people need when they arrive in Canada and it should remain in their pockets so they can use it as they see fit to establish themselves here.

• (1015)

We know about the significant financial pressure that new Canadians face and refugees face. These people need the dollars to which they have access. This could be considered an anti-poverty measure, given the rate of poverty among new Canadians. Unfortunately, it is a missed opportunity. The Conservatives could have done the right thing by getting rid of it all together. It is a step in the right direction, but it does not go far enough.

The other aspect of the budget around immigration was an increase in settlement funding. That is necessary, and I applaud the Conservatives for that. However, we have not seen how they plan to dole out that money or the program that will accompany it.

In settlement funding we know there is a huge imbalance among provinces. If we want to talk about fiscal imbalance, all we need to do is look at settlement funding across the country. Quebec gets almost \$4,000 from the federal government per immigrant. Ontario, under the terms of the agreement negotiated last fall, will get \$3,800 per immigrant. British Columbia gets a third of that, around \$1,000 per immigrant. There is a huge difference in how funding is distributed for settlement work in Canada. We know how absolutely crucial settlement funding is to the success of our immigration program. If we are not putting money into the adaptation and integration programs, or into language training, the success of new immigrants is dramatically affected. This is a very important aspect of the settlement program.

We need to ensure that all provinces and every immigrant gets the same amount of money directed toward the settlement programs they desperately need. We have to watch. We are all anxious to know how the Conservative government will roll out that program. We need to ensure there is increased funding for language training, that the skill level which comes through the language training offered to new immigrants is much higher and that professional language skills are included in this. We know that it is crucial to the success of our immigration program.

Right now there is greater competition for immigrants around the world. This afternoon in this place we will hear from the prime minister of Australia, Mr. Howard. Australia is now an increasingly stiff competitor with Canada for immigrants from around the world. There are many people who think Australia is winning that battle. If we are not paying close attention to the settlement program in our country, we will lose that battle for the best immigrants from around the world. We need to ensure that this is a key part of what we do as a society and that it is a key part of what the government does.

The other thing the Conservatives announced was \$18 million over two years for an agency to deal with foreign credentials. We still do not know what that means. There is no plan. The minister appeared before the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration last week and could not illuminate any plan for what

that agency would look like, what it would or how that money would be spent. This is an urgent need.

The Conservatives, when they were in opposition, talked a lot about the importance of international credentials and to ensure that when people came to Canada, they would be able to use their education, training and work experience. Every day they are out of the workplace and workforce, it gets harder for them to get back in. When they are away from the work they are trained to do and they do not keep on top of those skills, it becomes increasingly difficult to get back in.

We are not sure what this means yet. We have to keep the pressure on the government to follow up on its promise, to follow up on its campaign promise, to follow up on the work it did in previous parliaments and to ensure there is significant action that comes from this. The \$18 million could easily be a drop in the bucket in terms of what is really necessary around the whole issue of international credentials.

A number of things are missing. There is no new money to deal with the backlog. In fact, at the citizenship and immigration committee, we heard that the backlog, which was 700,000 applications, is now up to over 800,000 applications. We are not making progress in that area.

The refugee appeal division, an inexpensive measure by any account of around \$8 million a year, which would bring fairness to our refugee system, is not included in the Conservative budget. It is the law in Canada. The Liberals refused to implement the law. Now the Conservatives are refusing to implement the law. That is a serious problem.

• (1020)

There are no measures around family reunification. In fact, the minister addressed the standing committee. In the usual mantra about immigration to Canada, we usually hear about the needs of our economy and the need for the protection of refugees. Then we always hear about the importance of family reunification to both nation building and to families in Canada. That was missing from the minister's statement. Therefore, I am worried that it is a significant departure. We need to keep on top of this.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas questioned the funding in the budget for work in Afghanistan.

We had a vote in the House last night. I respect the point of view of many of my colleagues and others in the House who voted against the motion. I supported the motion for two basic reasons.

First, I think it is important for Canada to be in Afghanistan. Second, it is important for our government to play a role in the world. I supported our government when we did not go into Iraq, but I believe we have a role to play in Afghanistan.

*Government Orders*

The Afghani people are asking for our help. If we look at other aspects as well, we know that in Afghanistan there are the poppy fields and the drug trade that comes out of there is enormous. We have to deal with that issue. We know that terrorists are embedded in that country and Canada cannot claim immunity from terrorism. We know we are on al-Qaeda's list. Canada has a contribution to make. Being in Afghanistan is a contribution that we can make.

I supported the motion last night because it is important that Canada be in Afghanistan. If we are realistic, we have to understand that this mission could go beyond two more years. For me, it was that kind of fundamental question. However, because of the process of putting this before the House with such short notice, I can appreciate why many of my colleagues voted against it.

Would the member for Burnaby—Douglas comment on why he would object to Canada spending money in Afghanistan, which is uplifting the lives of women, giving people more human rights and freedom, giving them the opportunity to build democratic institutions and dealing with terrorism? The Afghani government has asked for our help. Why would he deny them that help?

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I am not really keen about going through the whole debate we had here yesterday and the one we had weeks ago on Afghanistan.

I am concerned about the cost of the mission in Afghanistan. It has already cost Canada over \$4.1 billion to be part of the military effort in Afghanistan.

I do not support a combat role for Canada in Afghanistan. It might be different if it were a UN exercise, if we were under UN command, but it is not. We are participating in an American exercise, a combat exercise. We are not there to separate combatants, which is our traditional peacekeeping role. We are there as an active combatant. Many people in my constituency do not support the Canadian military effort in Afghanistan.

If the member wanted to talk about development assistance for Afghanistan, I would be happy to engage in that. However, right now we are trying to deliver development aid by the military and we know is not working. In fact, I heard from a constituent, through his mother who lives in my riding, who is serving in Afghanistan. He talked about the efforts of the Canadian armed forces to build schools and dig wells in communities in the Kandahar region, only to leave that community and find them targeted by the opposition forces. That is the first thing they target when Canadians leave. That is not an effective way of delivering development aid. Constantly we see this happen in Afghanistan.

That is not the way Canada has chosen to deliver development aid in the past, and I have a serious problem with that.

• (1025)

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was here all night long listening to the debate. I find it quite shocking that the hon. member would bring forward solutions such as not to dig wells because they would be targeted once our troops left. However, last night the hon. member voted against extending the mission.

There are so many contradictions. The member's party joins us when we fight for women's rights around the world. Yet our troops in

Afghanistan have supported some 1,200 widows. There are 4.5 million children in school, but apparently that is too expensive.

Is it the member's intention, as his party whines and complains, to push for more support in Darfur? Ever since I came to the House, I have been in full support of doing what we can in Darfur. However, the minute we go to Darfur, should we be able to do that, and as soon as someone pulls out a little gun or a threatening rubber chicken, I suspect the member and his party will want to cut and run again.

What the world needs is a commitment that is solid, not chicken legs.

**Mr. Bill Siksay:** Mr. Speaker, I will not engage in that kind of rhetoric, which is demeaning and ridiculous.

I have every confidence in members of the Canadian armed forces. They know how to do the jobs they are asked to do and they perform that job admirably around the world. When we send them to do a job, I want to ensure that they have the support of Canadians and that they do the kind of work Canadians want to see done on our behalf.

I am distressed that we may be unable to make a contribution to addressing the important issues in Darfur, to addressing what everybody seems to recognize is a genocide. Because of our overcommitment in Afghanistan, perhaps we will be unable to play a role in Darfur. That is a very serious issue and I think Canadians want to see us address that.

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we are debating Bill C-13, the budget implementation bill. I had an opportunity to speak for about five minutes last week on the budget. I tried to give my perspective as former chairman of the finance committee and I would like to continue in the same vein as in the last budgetary debate.

Usually the debate is the highlight of the government's agenda, whether it is a new government or not. The budget outlines where a government's priorities lie. How? By providing funds for the programs it holds most dear, while at the same time setting out the government's long term vision of where it wants the country to be in five or 10 years. This sounds like an easy concept, but it is much more complex.

This brings me to one of the reasons why most of us come to Ottawa. We come to serve our constituents and all Canadians by trying to influence the government's policy, so that our concerns are reflected in their vision for the country.

We also come to Ottawa to have the government listen, so that it can build a Canada that we stand for, a Canada that our constituents and all Canadians stand for. That is precisely what the finance committee did during our pre-budget consultations last year. We listened to the concerns of Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

*Government Orders*

We heard testimony from experts from different financial and scientific fields. We heard from artists and environmentalists. They spoke to us about the Canada that they wanted, about what concerned them for our future. Sadly, their concerns are not reflected in the government's budget.

During the budget debate many members of the House have spoken at length about Kyoto, child care, infrastructure and post-secondary education. These are all complex issues that require a proper and well thought out strategy, not just a tax credit here and a taxable payment there. How we handle these issues today will affect the way our country will grow and continue to prosper, a vision. A vision for the future, a vision for tomorrow and the next day.

Canadians have had to make sacrifices and decisions in the past to be where we are today. Do we need to throw that all away? How can we attain the vision we want for this country for tomorrow with such a shortsighted budget?

Sadly, the budget lacks depth as it introduces tax credits that will be costly and inefficient. I will point to some of the tax credits the government is offering, so that we can see how difficult and costly it will be to implement these measures and how these measures lack any long term vision for Canada.

The first is transit passes. How will the government's plan be implemented? Are commuters supposed to save their monthly transit passes and then send them to Revenue Canada at tax time? How much will it cost Revenue Canada to process all these transit passes? Have the Conservatives seriously thought about how this credit will be implemented and what it will cost?

Although Canadians may appreciate a transit credit, most of the transit companies across the country are more than likely to increase their fares in order to clawback these tax benefits. Canadians certainly will not appreciate that this quick fix is replacing time tested environmental programs such as EnerGuide.

Canadians will not be pleased when they discover that the government's idea of saving the environment amounts to nothing more than a few dollars off their bus pass. The Conservative transit tax credit will cost between 10 and 100 times more than the proposed Liberal plan. Is this the kind of shortsighted vision the Conservatives have brought to the table after waiting in the wings for 12 years?

Second, there is the government's infamous cut to the GST. We already know that virtually every economist in the country is against cutting the GST and instead they are in favour of the Liberal plan to reduce personal income taxes. We already know that this cut to the GST will only help Canada's most wealthy, leaving low and middle income Canadians out in the cold.

Most Canadians spend their income on rent or mortgage payments, food and medical expenses, things that are not subject to the GST. Let us leave that aside for now and look at how this GST cut will be implemented.

How much has the government thought about the implementation of the plan? Retail owners, for example, already have their cash registers programmed to calculate GST at 7%. Will retailers have to overhaul their cash systems? How much will that cost? Did the

Conservative government bother listening to business owners? No. It preferred to grab votes with flashy announcements instead of consulting with Canadians.

To implement the reduction of the GST by 1% it will cost the Government of Canada at least \$10 million in administration costs per \$1 billion reduction in GST revenues of which \$4 billion to \$5 billion of GST revenues are expected to be lost. This is without even bothering to see how much it would cost businesses.

The Liberal plan of reducing personal income taxes would have been much more effective and less costly, since it would only affect a change on the income tax form. Is this short sighted GST cut the kind of long term planning that will allow Canada to prosper into the future? I do not think so. Where is the vision?

● (1030)

[*Translation*]

The 2006 budget is indicative of the Conservatives' mentality. This budget raises the tax rate on the lowest income bracket to 15.5%, which is 0.5% higher than the rate the Liberals set in 2005, and reduces the basic personal amount by \$400 effective July 1, 2006.

The tax increases, which hit Canadians with the lowest annual incomes, largely cancel out any benefits from the other measures the Conservatives announced, including the reduction in the GST, which puts only a few cents a year into low-income earners' pockets.

All the noted economists in the country have said that eliminating the Liberals' tax cuts and replacing them with a one-point decrease in the GST will benefit affluent Canadians at the expense of the most disadvantaged.

What are we to think of the Canada employment credit, which is almost completely cancelled out by this same increase?

[*English*]

Next I will examine the Conservative plan to help students, the textbook credit. Giving an \$80 credit to fix the debt load of Canadian students is almost absurd. A book credit sounds attractive but does not make for good policy.

*Government Orders*

Furthermore, there are details to this provision that need to be cleared up by the Minister of Finance. Will all textbooks be covered for this credit? If not, then which ones? Will students have to save their book receipts and send them in at tax time? How will Revenue Canada prove that the books were required for school? Will books only sold at university libraries count? What if a student is required to buy a textbook at an off campus bookstore? Maybe the government will ask students to save the course outlines they receive at the beginning of the semester and ask them to send those in when they file their taxes in order to prove what books they had to buy. Will this credit be available for all students: part time students, full time students or even adult education students?

Will this textbook credit secure post-secondary education in this country and ensure that our students are among the best in the world? I do not think so. Will it ensure that they do not graduate under a mountain of debt? I doubt it. I doubt that the Conservative government was thinking that far ahead when it drafted its budget. Again, it comes down to the kind of vision Canadians want from the government and how this Conservative government is failing them.

With regard to the child care plan, this is what the Liberal Party proposed. It was a vision that was about providing early learning opportunities to all children and giving them an equal and fair start in life. The Conservative answer is simply to give parents a taxable \$100 a month allowance and let tax authorities collect the taxes on these amounts at the end of the year when families have already spent the money they received all year long.

This is not a plan. What about the tax credit for physical fitness? Do I need to explain the bureaucratic nightmare to first implement the legislation, which has not even been provided yet, and then to administer the program? To look at it another way, in order to implement its plans, the government is going to have to increase the amount of bureaucracy in Ottawa. I thought Conservative governments advocated less government bureaucracy, not more, but I suppose if that makes for good politics, the Conservatives can sacrifice some of their core beliefs.

For a government that prides itself on efficiency, the implementation of this budget will be everything but. This budget offers no long term vision for the future of Canada. It offers no indication of what the government wants for our country. Where is the leadership Canadians deserve to lead our country into the 21st century? It is not in the party sitting across from me today.

• (1035)

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I found the remarks of the hon. member from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel very interesting. I share a position with the hon. member on the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance. I really thought he had a better grasp of the budget than he apparently does, which is somewhat distressing.

Nonetheless, I would like to ask the hon. member if he has actually read the budget. When he makes comments about the marginal tax rate for the lowest tax bracket individuals being raised by a point, I think he conveniently ignores the fact that we are adjusting the bottom tax rate. The effective rate for the taxation year 2006 will be 15.25% as opposed to 15%, not that much of a change. At the same time, the personal basic exemption is going up for all

Canadians and, in addition to that, we are adding in a Canada employment credit of \$500 this year, moving to \$1,000 next year.

Just in the area of personal taxation alone, does the hon. member not agree that the overall tax burden for taxpayers in all categories actually goes down? That of course is quite apart from the other cuts in this budget, such as the GST. Has the hon. member read the budget or is he simply speaking partisan words that would somehow, unfortunately, mislead the House?

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, the member and I do sit on the finance committee together. Finance officials did appear before the finance committee a couple of weeks ago.

It is a technicality. The budget does in fact state that the tax rate will be going down from 16% to 15.5%. The reason for that is because of a ways and means motion that was filed. Tax rates are actually going up. When the finance officials appeared before committee, they told us that the tax rate was going up from 15% to 15.5%.

From what I understand in reading the budget, the employment tax credit will become effective on July 1. From July 1 to December 31 it will be \$500, and 17.5% of that is \$80. Is the member going to tell me that is a great benefit for working class and middle income earners compared to the 1% decrease in the tax rate that the Liberal government proposed?

I have been going through some old newspaper articles and letters from middle income families who say that the changes overall are minor, but lowering income tax would have helped a lot more.

• (1040)

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what an excellent choice in this wall of conservatism that we have to jump over in order to enter this debate and talk about the things that people actually care about.

For many years the Conservatives rallied in the House and said that money must not simply be assigned without a plan for that money. They said it was bad fiscal prudence, bad for Canadians, and bad for the economy because it would send unclear signals. Lo and behold, the Conservatives now break tradition with their allocation of \$2 billion supposedly for climate change initiatives while at the same time cutting and gutting other programs that actually benefit Canadians such as the home retrofit program.

At the international meeting in Bonn, non-signatories like China and India produced plans to close the gap on their greenhouse gas emissions and increase the amount of green energy and green technology in their economies. Yet Canada, as the chair, was unable to produce a plan. Canada's only statement was that we were not going to meet our targets and to even attempt to meet such targets would absolutely shut down the Canadian economy. We would have to take every car off the road and every plane out of the sky was what was said by our so-called Minister of the Environment. I wonder if he could comment on that.



*Government Orders*

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti:** Mr. Speaker, I am one of the last people who would agree with the NDP, but unfortunately, I have to agree with the member here. There was no plan and I do not see a plan in the budget. Giving somebody a tax credit for public transit is not an environmental plan.

Like I said in my speech, a credit on a monthly pass comes out to about \$150 a year. That money is probably going to be clawed back by the transit companies. The normal transit user is probably going to end up paying more money for a transit pass at the end of the year because transit companies are probably going to increase fares by the gross amount and not the net amount. There will be no tax benefit to the normal transit user.

I was not in Bonn, so I am not sure what really happened there. I have to take the member's word as to what happened. We did at least have an environmental plan and a long term vision where we were investing in renewable energy sources.

**Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am more than pleased to speak today to Bill C-13, the budget implementation bill.

As probably the only member of Parliament who represents a 905-416 riding in the great region of the GTA, I am pleased to inform this House that the past two elections, under the circumstances, have both been rewarding and I hope to continue in this Parliament to be able to best represent my constituents.

The budget speech that we heard from the government was not a clear indication of what it had campaigned on. The Prime Minister had talked about some \$22 billion in terms of cuts.

I hear some baying from a member of Parliament down there in the corner but I am not exactly sure what he is referring to. Perhaps the hon. member is concerned about the fact that there is in this budget a raising of income tax, in particular for low income Canadians, and no real tax relief for Canadians.

It is clear that the GST cut, which has been panned by the most credible economists, is a cut that only benefits a certain segment of society, those who are much better off than the average Canadian.

With respect to how the budget implementation will take place, it is interesting to note that it is not clear yet whether small business will be able to implement this. As my colleague from Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel has just pointed out, businesses do not know whether it will be possible or feasible for them to make the adjustment, notwithstanding the eight weeks they have been given.

Something I heard in my constituency, which I am sure a lot of members heard right across the country, was the question of reduction of wait times. Our government had at the time proposed a very credible plan which now appears to be very much imperiled. This budget did nothing to address the promise of action on the reduction of waiting times. This is of great concern to Canadians, not just with respect to the fact that there seems to be increasing pressure on it, but that we see nothing from the government in terms of its ability to contain pharmaceutical costs which are leading the cost pressure as far as the overall budgets are concerned, not just of the federal government but also of the provinces, of various drug plans and of the various private plans that exist.

On that, I hope in the coming weeks and months we have an opportunity as a Parliament to debate this very significant and very important issue.

I cannot think of an area that distinguishes this party more from the Conservative Party, which is currently, as we know, in a very tenuous 125 seat minority, than its proposal to abandon a project that not only had merit from an environmental standpoint but was there to help seniors, at a time when energy prices are rising, to make adjustments to their homes by using a very credible process, a process that involved the review of proposals under the EnerGuide program to ensure people could meet the higher costs of living while at the same time doing something for the environment.

It is not lost on the members of Parliament on this side of the House, with this Liberal Party, that those who are most affected by this happen to be seniors, the kind of people who have tried over the years to build this great nation, and who have done a very good job at it, not necessarily always able to make the kind of savings, but who deserve literally a break. However, the government, through its callous actions, decided to scrap the program and even those who qualified for it were then told to forget it.

Now we see a contradiction between the minister, who twice told this House that the program would be honoured for those who were there and, of course, that the amount of money the EnerGuide program had in place would not necessarily be funded at this point. As we see from its website, it continues to suggest that, with respect to this program, it is subject to funding.

That is a cruel joke for constituents in my riding and, in particular, my constituent, Margaret Robertson, who qualified on April 7 but has been told by the government that no decision has been made, notwithstanding the comments by the Minister of Natural Resources.

● (1045)

Trying to bribe Canadians with their own money and having no vision for the future prosperity of this country is, in my view, not the way to conduct good public policy. It is not a good way to ensure that Canadians will continue to have confidence in the work we are doing here. We see no support for job creation, education or innovation to keep Canadians and Canada competitive at a time when energy prices are reaching historical levels, which obviously has an impact on the bottom line for Canadians and a deleterious impact on manufacturing in many places across Canada.

[*Translation*]

This is true particularly in Ontario and Quebec.

The government has not taken a position. To date, the Minister of Industry has not indicated any improvement nor addressed the situation.

This business could be lucrative but, at the same time, this government has not given us a plan. It is not currently prepared to address the real problems facing our fellow citizens. As for job losses in our sectors, I find it somewhat curious that this government and the minister have nothing to say.

*Government Orders*

[English]

This budget overall does not necessarily benefit Canadians. It benefits a particular constituency of Canadians, namely, the wealthy. I am not sure what outmoded ideology underpins the Conservative policies on the economy.

**An hon. member:** Reform.

**Mr. Dan McTeague:** My hon. colleague talks about Reform, perhaps Alliance.

It is impossible for us to be pragmatic and at the same time try to involve some kind of ideology which benefits the poor by somehow seeing the rich being provided better opportunities to make greater gains. We cannot afford to create what appears to be class differences based on a budget that only benefits a handful of individuals. The budget fails a good number of Canadians in my riding and in ridings across the country.

The budget has absolutely no real national child care strategy. The provinces, the regional governments, the municipal governments and many Canadians in my riding and in ridings across the country are extremely concerned in the deliberation by the government to not proceed with honouring the commitments that were made. It has broken a commitment with Kelowna and now the child care strategy.

Another broken promise, which Canadian motorists desperately needed with gas at 85¢ a litre, which this government promised, on which it never reneged and never rescinded, that it would drop the GST after the price of gasoline dropped below 85¢ a litre. Although much of that might have been predicated some years ago based on the work of members of Parliament here, this Parliament recognizes that above all the government has failed Canadians where Canadians need it and where they need it the most.

I will be voting against the budget implementation bill. I not only look forward to the questions but I hope the questions focus on the fact that Canadians need a real change in terms of the way this budget has been implemented so it benefits all Canadians.

• (1050)

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we often hear partisan talk in this place, which is not out of line, but having listened to the member speak this morning on this legislation, his comments go beyond partisan comments. Those types of comments become so partisan that members lose credibility.

The member made a comment that the budget benefits only a handful of Canadians when it comes to tax relief but that handful is every Canadian. For every 1% cut in the GST that means \$5 billion every year will be left in the pockets of Canadians.

When we look at the list of tax cuts that we have laid out, we see that \$20 billion in tax relief will be delivered to Canadians over two years. This is money Canadians have earned and money that can stay in their pockets. The member diminishes the importance of this. The fact is that the budget delivers for all Canadians. The fact is that \$20 billion over two years is very significant. It is not something that should be pooh-poohed or called insignificant.

Why would the member make such a blanket statement about the budget, a budget that delivers tax relief not only to low income

Canadians but to all Canadians, by indicating that nothing has happened and that the budget does not really help? Would the member justify his statements?

**Hon. Dan McTeague:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has no idea what ordinary Canadians are going through. If he believes that Canadians earning \$30,000 to \$40,000 a year will somehow benefit by having a disposable income of maybe \$10,000 and that they will benefit from having the GST dropped by 1%, which will save them \$70, big deal. They would have had a lot more with respect to the income tax cut that we promised and which the Conservatives have gutted.

The Conservatives know full well that money in the hand of any Canadian is a lot better than having to spend it in order to get some kind of a pittance, but that hon. member is defending it.

Canadians are not well served by what that hon. member just said. He has absolutely no understanding of what Canadians are going through. He knows that many of those tax cuts have nothing to do with ordinary Canadians. He has mixed into all of that some of the corporate taxes that are out there. I know the hon. member is there to justify and to defend his party, which is fine, but this Liberal Party is here to defend the interests of Canadians and to ensure that all Canadians benefit from the wealth of this nation, not just a handful of people who happen to support that party.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand this morning to express my disappointment in this budget. With massive federal surpluses, the new government could have invested in communities across Canada, such as those in my riding of Parkdale—High Park.

The government could have made health, safety and the vitality of cities like Toronto a priority. It could have invested real new money in transit for infrastructure to better serve people and the environment. It could have invested in our children by making early learning and child care a priority. It could have indicated a desire to reform employment insurance to ensure that all those who are temporarily unemployed would be covered.

In short, politics is all about priorities and it is about values. The Conservative budget showed where its values lie and where its priorities lie. Tax cuts for the oil and gas industry take priority over real investment in our communities, and prisons take priority over prevention. Pollution and its health impacts will go up while environmental initiatives will go down. Student debt will go up while the taxes for the wealthy will go down. Child care wait lists will go up while quality transit will go down.

My priorities are different. After 13 long years of neglect and failure to invest by the former government in our families, the Harper government has undercut the development of a comprehensive, fledgling national child care program in its 2006 budget.

• (1055)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park should know that we cannot refer to members by their personal names. If she wants to talk about the Prime Minister she needs to use his title and not his name.

*Statements by Members*

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, it is a serious blow to the thousands of families in Parkdale—High Park and right across Toronto who need a child care program to ensure their children are properly taken care of while they are at work. Money to parents with young children is fine but it is not a child care program.

Most experts in the transit field know the best way to increase ridership is to improve service with investments to capital upgrades and infrastructure. The Toronto Board of Trade, in its report “Strong City, Strong Nation”, highlighted the city's infrastructure deficit and warned that it could jeopardize Toronto's economic competitiveness. The Toronto Board of Trade recognizes that investment in transit should be a number one priority. Unfortunately, it does not make the Conservatives' top five.

The population and economy of the Toronto region is growing but transit infrastructure is not. Toronto is an economic engine for the country and provides billions of dollars in equalization payments. A tax break for commuters will not build more subway lines nor will it dramatically increase ridership which are keys to growing our economy while improving environmental sustainability.

Roughly \$1.4 billion of taxpayer money goes to the oil and gas industry each year. Surely this year, with rising fuel costs for consumers, some of that money could have been invested in transit for our large cities. Just this week the Toronto City Summit Alliance released its report, “Time for a Fair Deal”. I was delighted to be at the press conference that launched the report but shocked at some of its findings.

Employment insurance, the first level of our social safety net, is in tatters and yet this budget is silent. It contains no provisions to address the crisis that only 19% of women now qualify for employment insurance in Toronto and it fails to make EI easier for workers. In fact, only 22% of unemployed workers in the greater Toronto area are receiving benefits. The government talks about a fiscal imbalance between provinces and the federal government but we know there is an imbalance between those who have and those who have not. This is perhaps most obvious in the city of Toronto.

Politics is about values and it is about priorities that get reflected in budgets. This budget shows many of its priorities have failed Parkdale—High Park in the city of Toronto. It fails to put our city on the path—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member but we have reached an order of the day.

We will now go to statements by members. The hon. member for Peterborough.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the residents of the Peterborough riding to applaud this new government's commitment to a made in Canada solution for the environment.

Under the previous government, air quality in our Peterborough riding steadily declined. Invasive species were permitted to enter our rivers, lakes and streams unimpeded, the result of dumping in our Great Lakes. I am encouraged that this government's commitment is to measurable, positive environmental improvement for all Canadians as opposed to the previous government's commitment to a protocol with no plan on achieving the unattainable targets set out.

As a member of the parliamentary Standing Committee on the Environment and Sustainable Development, I look forward to working with the Minister of the Environment in contributing to a cleaner Canada and a cleaner planet.

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● (1100)

### HOCKEYVILLE

**Hon. Joe McGuire (Egmont, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I am proud to congratulate the O'Leary Netted Gems on cracking the top 25 in the Kraft Hockeyville competition. The local O'Leary committee is leading the campaign to crown its community Kraft Canada's Hockeyville, a distinction that goes to the Canadian community that displays exemplary community spirit and dedication to hockey.

It would be difficult to imagine a community with more involvement with the sport of hockey than O'Leary. From the early days of pickup games on frozen potato fields to the building of two community indoor arenas and the creation of the very successful minor hockey system, O'Leary has developed a reputation across P. E.I. and Atlantic Canada that is synonymous with the sport of hockey.

During its history, the warriors of the maroon and gold were also pioneers in the development of women's hockey. O'Leary recently won the 2006 male AAA Bantam championship backstopped by a female goaltender.

For decades, O'Leary and the surrounding districts of Unionvale, Knutsford, West Point, Bloomfield, Cape Wolfe and West Cape have prided themselves on producing three precious commodities: high quality potatoes and lobster and high calibre hockey players. I know this tradition will continue and I wish them the best of luck in the Hockeyville competition. I know that MPs from this House will join me in congratulating O'Leary for its hard work and dedication.

*Statements by Members*

[Translation]

**SPEECH AND HEARING AWARENESS MONTH**

**Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, every May, I make a point of drawing attention to Speech and Hearing Awareness Month and recognizing the three million Quebecers and Canadians who have a hearing problem. Yet, year after year, I realize that a great deal remains to be done to ensure that these individuals enjoy equal rights and are full members of our society.

The problem lies more particularly with French captioning, which lags behind. Just imagine: French captioning is not yet available for the proceedings of the House of Commons, even though this service is available in English. This situation is simply unacceptable.

First, we should adequately fund research. Also, all broadcasters should be required to provide closed captioning of their programs in both official languages.

The Bloc Québécois will tackle this issue with a bill to amend the Broadcasting Act to make captioning mandatory. I call on the government to support this bill in order for all individuals to have the same rights in terms of communication and information.

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[English]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in Tuesday night's vote, this House directed the Conservative government to live up to Canada's climate change commitments. Yesterday the Prime Minister made it clear he has no intention of listening to the will of Parliament.

This arrogance comes on the heels of the minister's embarrassing performance on the international stage in Bonn. Members of the international community are confused. They wonder why Canada is the lone signatory country to the treaty without a plan. They wonder about Canada's rush to join George Bush in this race to the bottom of the environmental heap.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Environment have grossly misled Canadians, suggesting that our economy would have to virtually shut down in order for us to achieve our goals. Many countries that started early and have already gone beyond their initial commitments have experienced tremendous economic growth.

There is no doubt that the Liberals made the job more difficult through their inaction over 13 years in power, but true leadership would mean finding a way to clean up their mess, not taking a defeatist attitude toward one of Canada's most urgent issues. Perhaps the minister will think I am meddling, but someone must—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

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**QUEEN ELIZABETH II**

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Victoria Day next Monday will mark the official 80th birthday of our sovereign, Queen Elizabeth. For more than half

a century, Canadians have been blessed with a monarch of exceptional grace and the entire Commonwealth has been united by her strong and dignified presence.

Queen Elizabeth's wisdom has guided two generations of subjects of all races and diverse backgrounds. Her close links to this country date back to her first visit to Canada, when she was still a princess, and have been reinforced by many subsequent royal tours.

Our Queen has reigned during five decades of worldwide turbulence and instability, but she herself has been a rock of stability and has brought her office into the 21st century as a modern, vital institution.

Fifty-four years after her ascension to the throne, Her Majesty has more support than ever from her subjects in Canada, in all her realms and around the world.

We salute our sovereign on this great anniversary. May her reign continue for many years to come. God save the Queen.

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[Translation]

**OEUF**

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate L'OEUF, the Office de l'éclectisme urbain et fonctionnel, an architectural firm which won third prize at the Global Holcim Awards in Bangkok for its innovative work in sustainable urban development.

L'OEUF was awarded the prize for its project Greening the Infrastructure of Benny Farm, a community greening and redevelopment project for old urban spaces in Montreal.

I am proud to point out that Bernard Olivier, an architect with L'OEUF, lives in my riding.

Benny Farm proves that urban redevelopment can be adapted to our social and community values, and can harmonize with the immediate environment and the neighbourhood landscape. It proves that we can build affordable housing for individuals who require greater accessibility to medical care, community services and recreation facilities.

L'OEUF has found a formula that will be repeated throughout Canada and the world.

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● (1105)

[English]

**RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, June 2 marks the seventh annual Relay for Life fundraising event of the Canadian Cancer Society in Renfrew county. As part of the single largest fundraising event in Renfrew county, the volunteers, sponsors and contributors, under the leadership of the Renfrew county unit of the Canadian Cancer Society, deserve our heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

In 2005 we had 233 survivors walk the victory lap. This year's honorary survivor for Renfrew county is Norm Edwards. We recognize the honorary survivors for the 2006 Relay for Life: Jody Barrett from Arnprior; Walter Vlastic, Barry's Bay; Lucy Plourde, Deep River/Laurentian Hills; Tammy Kowalkovski, CFB Petawawa; Linda Davidson, Eganville; Rose Lloyd, Pembroke; Beverly Bimm, Petawawa; Janet Robertson, Renfrew; and Karen Bromley from the township of Whitewater.

Last year, 141 registered teams raised over \$367,000 for the fight against cancer. This year's event promises to be the most successful yet. Cancer can be beaten.

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[Translation]

#### EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

**Mr. Michel Guimond (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, nowadays, many seasonal workers in my riding—especially in Charlevoix and along the Upper North Shore—and in the rest of Quebec are still failing to qualify for employment insurance benefits even though they pay into the fund every year.

Even when some of these workers manage to qualify, a major loophole in the current system lands them in the seasonal gap. That is why I am asking the government to renew pilot project no. 6, which extends regular benefits by five weeks, beyond the current deadline of June 4, 2006. This program should be renewed until a permanent solution is implemented to eliminate the seasonal gap.

Inevitably, problems with the employment insurance system point to a single imperative: amending the Employment Insurance Act. I urge the Conservative government not to forget our unemployed workers and to respond to their complaints quickly.

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[English]

#### NATIONAL POLICE WEEK

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise in honour of National Police Week in Canada, which runs from May 14 to May 20.

Safe streets and low crime rates have long been a hallmark of the Canadian quality of life. National Police Week is a chance for all of us to show our appreciation for these outstanding men and women who, as we were recently reminded, place their lives on the line every day to help keep our communities safe.

For 30 years I served with the Woodstock City Police and I can personally attest to the commitment and dedication police officers bring to their jobs every day to make our families safer, our neighbourhoods stronger and our country more secure.

This government is firmly committed to ensuring that police have the support and resources they need to tackle crime. That is why we have announced a series of new measures, such as making our laws stronger and putting more police officers on the streets.

Today and for the duration of National Police Week, I encourage all Canadians to join me in thanking the many selfless men and

#### Statements by Members

women in our local, provincial, and national police forces for their professionalism and courage in ensuring the safety of all Canadians.

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#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Mark Holland (Ajax—Pickering, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no greater national imperative than climate change. Whether it is nationally or globally, there is no issue that should grab our attention more than climate change and what it is doing to our planet, to our own nation today and to our own Arctic. This House has recognized that. The overwhelming majority of members of the House voted to support the Kyoto accord.

In Bonn, Germany, the Minister of the Environment shamed Canada because this government ignored the democratic will of the House. It ignored the majority of Canadians. It ignored overwhelming scientific evidence that we need to take action.

It is time for the government to listen to Canadians. Instead of slashing valuable programs like EnerGuide and keeping only the program that benefited the finance minister's brother, the government needs to focus on the priorities of Canadians, honour our Kyoto commitments—

• (1110)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre.

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#### LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the Liberals complain that a Bloc motion on Kyoto, a motion that would result in dire economic consequences for Quebec, is not being adopted, they should take a few minutes to reflect on their own long history of ignoring Parliament.

The plan to split the Departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade was rejected by Parliament, but the Liberals proceeded. The motion recognizing the fiscal imbalance was passed, but the Liberals continued to deny its existence. Parliament voted to expand access to information, but the Liberals ignored it, opting instead for less transparency. A motion to ensure the accountability of foundations was passed, but the Liberals refused to improve accountability. Parliament rejected the appointment of Liberal Glen Murray to the environmental round table, but the Liberals proceeded anyway. They rejected the call for an Air India inquiry and instead held a review. As well, the vote to extend the Information Commissioner's appointment by a year was ignored by the Liberals.

That is only a partial list of the Liberal record of ignoring Parliament. Perhaps the Liberals should examine their own behaviour before—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Western Arctic.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s the Mulroney government brought in the northern residents tax deduction. This was intended to deal with the high cost of living in the north and, when first introduced, did much to right the balance.

However, it has fallen behind. With continuously rising costs of living and 13 years of Liberal inaction, it no longer provides northerners across the country with the relief they deserve. Since 1989 the consumer price index for Yellowknife has gone up by about 50% and is higher in smaller communities in the north.

I ask the government to raise the residency portion of the deduction by 50% and to further index increases so as to keep pace with the ever increasing costs. Recently the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories voted unanimously to ask Parliament to increase the deduction.

I ask the government to heed the voice of northerners and increase this deduction.

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[*Translation*]**FRANCOPHONIE**

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as you are no doubt aware, the conference of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie was held May 12 to 14 in St. Boniface, bringing together ministers and representatives of 53 countries and 10 observer countries. We have the right hon. member from LaSalle—Énard to thank for his proposal to host the conference here in Canada. The meeting concluded with the adoption of a joint statement declaring the members' desire to play a greater role in international peacekeeping operations.

I would like to underscore the importance of holding such a conference in western Canada. The participants were delighted by the welcome they received and the vitality of the francophone community in Manitoba, of which I am very proud. They all witnessed how the French fact is deeply integrated and thriving all across Canada.

Despite the diplomatic incident provoked by the Canadian government involving the secretary general, Mr. Diouf, the delegates left St. Boniface with a better appreciation for our francophone community and with the intention of strengthening the many ties that already unite us.

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**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, older workers who are losing their jobs were abandoned by the previous government. They are now desperate, given the indifference of the Conservatives.

In a letter addressed to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, a former textile worker expressed her distress as follows:

I worked for 47 years in the textile industry, including 45 years at Cleyn & Tinker and two years at Huntingdon Mills. I started working when I was 14 years old and I

am now 62. Like me, my entire community has been hard hit by the closing of the textile mills and the resulting job losses. It is impossible to find other work; no one wants us. We have paid our taxes and paid into EI our whole lives.

Workers are on the Hill today to remind the Conservative government that it must immediately implement an income support program for older workers. This is an urgent matter.

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[*English*]**CANADIAN FORCES**

**The Deputy Speaker:** There have been discussions among representatives of all parties in the House and we will now rise and observe a moment of silence in honour of the fallen Canadian soldier in Afghanistan.

[*A moment of silence observed*]**ORAL QUESTIONS**

● (1115)

[*English*]**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last night's debate was one of the most important that Parliament could make, deciding on our commitment to the world and the safety of our troops.

Even the Prime Minister must have felt the frustration of a majority of members of this House who genuinely wanted to make the right decision but found that their decision had to be based on a lack of information and a partisan abusive process, something that has not escaped most commentators and the public.

Will the Prime Minister assure the House that lessons have been learned and that in future, Parliament will be respected and that members will be given a genuine opportunity for debate and consideration before such important considerations and decisions are required of them?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government appreciates the support of the Leader of the Opposition for this important vote last night. But he should be reminded that his party and every member of this place and all parties agreed by unanimous consent to the vote that was held last night. It is the first time that a vote has been held in this House on the deployment of troops abroad since 1939.

I find it passing strange that the Leader of the Opposition sat in cabinet that deployed our troops repeatedly overseas, including in Afghanistan, for the past four years without having come to consult this House of Commons. This government did so last night. It has kept its word in doing so. We are keeping faith with our troops and the people of Afghanistan as a consequence.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, even the overly partisan parliamentary secretary can recognize that last night's debate was not sufficient to consider such a weighty matter.

*Oral Questions*

Go back to the records in 1939. Do you think that this House decided to go to war in Europe after six hours of debate, Mr. Speaker? Is that even conceivable?

In the last Parliament we heard the current Prime Minister demanding that the government respect the democratic will of the House. The Prime Minister cannot show respect for the House only when it is his agenda. We cannot cherry-pick democracy.

If the government intends to respect last night's vote, will it respect the vote in this House on Kyoto, which we all adopted, the majority of this House, this week as well?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about respect for the House. That is precisely what the Prime Minister and this government demonstrated last night by, for the first time in over 60 years, giving members of Parliament an opportunity to express themselves and the views of their constituents on a foreign deployment of troops.

This is after the Leader of the Opposition as defence minister in cabinet committed Canadian troops to the current mission in Afghanistan. Nothing substantial has changed. The mission has not substantially changed. All that changed is that all parties and all members gave unanimous consent for a vote to be held. It was held last night and the minister should—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The Leader of the Opposition, a supplementary question.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is always the same partisan politics.

Yesterday when she was answering a question, the Minister of the Environment displayed a blatant lack of respect toward the House. She said, and I quote, “it is too bad we used taxpayer dollars” to pay for opposition participation in ministers' business trips, as though her own trip did anything for the environment.

Can the Prime Minister assure us that his government will stop scorning the privileges of all members of this House, and will finally respect our vote on Kyoto?

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment did an excellent job of representing Canada in Bonn.

For the first time in a long time, we have a Minister of the Environment who tells it like it is. She expressed herself truthfully before the international community by saying that the previous government failed utterly with respect to the Kyoto protocol, because greenhouse gas emissions had risen 35%, despite targets that were—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Bourassa.

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● (1120)

**PRIME MINISTER**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Conservatives have decided to take an arrogant and

disrespectful attitude toward our cradle of democracy: the Parliament of Canada.

My question is directed to the Prime Minister, but it could also be directed to Mini-Me.

This Prime Minister chose to ignore a motion on Kyoto passed by this House. This Prime Minister is completely dismissing decisions by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates with respect to his friend and bagman, Gwyn Morgan.

So, instead of behaving like a little Napoleon—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member's time has expired.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** I have no idea what he is talking about, Mr. Speaker. Let me point out that, last night, for the first time in 60 years, the hon. members were given the opportunity to vote on the deployment of Canadian forces overseas.

The hon. member and many of his colleagues, including the critics for foreign affairs and defence, voted against the mission of our troops in Afghanistan, which is to maintain peace and protect human rights. In doing so, the Liberal Party has proven itself irresponsible.

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**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, workers from Huntingdon and Montmagny are on the Hill to demand an income support program for older workers.

Through an amendment, the Bloc Québécois forced the government to add to the throne speech a mention of the importance of setting up such an assistance program.

In the budget, the government indicated its intention to create such a program. The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development recently said that she was studying the matter. Today, it is high time to move from talk to action.

Will the Prime Minister finally decide to act and create an income support program for older workers, who have long been calling for such a program?

[*English*]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as was announced in budget 2006, we are very pleased to recognize the contributions of older workers and the need to, wherever possible, keep them in the workforce, whether that is through retraining or mobility methods. That is why I was so pleased when the Prime Minister announced that we will be conducting a feasibility study into ways to assist older workers.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the time for talk is over. The Prime Minister has no excuse, and neither does this minister.

*Oral Questions*

The feasibility studies have already been carried out. The costs of such a program are known. All that is left is to put the program in place. Will the Prime Minister, who says he leads a government that makes decisions to act, prove it now by taking the necessary steps to help older workers? Everything is ready. The Minister of Finance has even been provided with the costs. The people across the way need to wake up.

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows that this issue has broad implications for a lot of people right across this country. That is why we are going to make sure that the decisions we make are based on a broad range of consultations. As well, they are going to meet the needs of older workers while respecting the value of taxpayers' dollars.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before proceeding to the next Bloc question, I neglected to give the hon. member for Bourassa his supplementary question.

The hon. member for Bourassa.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRIME MINISTER**

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the government's very partisan Mini-Me.

This is the Prime Minister who said that even if we voted against it, he would still go ahead. We will do democracy some other time. The day before yesterday, the Prime Minister thumbed his nose at democracy and this Parliament on the Kyoto protocol issue and with regard to his friend Gwyn Morgan. Now his Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and his Conservative pawns in the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development are getting in on the act. These are the people who decided yesterday, most disrespectfully, not to appear before the committee to discuss the government's position. Even if they do not have a position, they still have to be there.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I did not hear the question.

Last night's vote took place with the unanimous consent of all members and all parties, including the party to which the hon. member who asked the question belongs. The real question is why the Liberal foreign affairs and national defence critics voted against our troops' mission in Afghanistan, a mission that they themselves set in motion as members of the Liberal cabinet. Why place our troops in harm's way by sending them overseas if they do not support

• (1125)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The time allocated to the honourable Parliamentary Secretary has expired.

The hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this is further to the question of the Bloc leader. Hundreds of families, caught up in the massive layoffs and who can no longer count on an income support program for older workers as in the past, are in a very difficult situation.

The problem is widely known and the solutions have been identified. All the government has to do is make a decision. Why is the Prime Minister, who wants to make it look as if the government is capable of making decisions, leaving these workers high and dry? What is he waiting for before coming to their assistance?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are not waiting. We are taking positive action. I was pleased to have my staff meet with some of the people who were here on the Hill today. They received over 100 letters from these people. They also took the time to listen to their ideas and to receive their recommendations. I look forward to hearing them.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we know that the minister is capable of having meetings, but can she make decisions?

Yesterday, the government pushed for a decision on Afghanistan and, even though not all the information was available, the Prime Minister went ahead nonetheless. Today, we are talking about helping older workers who have lost their jobs and all the information is available, all the studies have been done, but the government is hesitating and not giving an answer.

What will it take for this government to help older workers who are the victims of massive layoffs?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we do recognize the importance of older workers. That is why we are going to take the time to review the documentation that is out there. We have received several recommendations. We want to make sure we get the best one. We are going to take the time to make sure we make the best decision, the one that is in the best interests of older workers and value for taxpayers' dollars.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PRIME MINISTER**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, why is there such contempt for hon. members and elected officials on the part of this government and the Prime Minister? We know he will only respect the decisions of the House when it suits his agenda. In other cases, he will disregard them. Just look at the Kyoto protocol and the appointment of Mr. Morgan. We know that a few Liberals supported his position on the war and now the Prime Minister will accept that decision.

Why such contempt for democracy?



*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is quite the opposite. For the first time, the Prime Minister has given a committee of this House the opportunity to question Mr. Morgan, a highly qualified man. The committee did not accept Mr. Morgan, who was named the best businessman in Canada, and the Prime Minister withdrew his nomination.

Last evening, he kept his word with the vote on the mission in Afghanistan. The real question is why is the NDP against Canada's role overseas?

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fundamental question here is respect for Parliament and democracy.

The Prime Minister has demonstrated very clearly that he has no respect for this House. The only time he will accept its decisions is when the House agrees with him. Other times he is going to reject the decisions of democratically elected representatives.

With respect to the nomination of Mr. Morgan, he did not like our point of view so he rejected it. In fact, he threw out the whole idea because apparently he cannot find anyone else to fill the spot.

On the issue of climate change, a most fundamental issue that we have to deal with, he rejects the House's view.

When the Liberals help him out on the war, he is all—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister.

**Mr. Jason Kenney (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, being lectured on democracy by the head of the NDP is a remarkable thing.

I heard that member say the other day on the way into the Morgan hearing that his member was going to “tear Gwyn Morgan apart”. Sure enough, those members did a hit and run, a partisan lynching, of Canada's top business leader, for no reason other than to score cheap political points. This government listened to the committee and took back that nomination.

Last night Parliament voted in favour of the mission in Afghanistan. The question is—

• (1130)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Mount Royal.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

#### FIREARMS REGISTRY

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister's plan to eviscerate the gun registry is irresponsible and is not only an affront to the pillars of the rule of law, but an abuse of the parliamentary process.

Two-thirds of Canadians want this registry to be upheld. The police on the front line and the provinces of Quebec and Ontario have already asked the government not to pursue this initiative.

Why would the government want to dismantle a firearm control system that ensures the safety of Canadians and saves lives in Canada?

[*English*]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, among other people, it was the Auditor General who indicated that the data from the long gun registry, and we are just talking about the long gun registry, is not reliable. She quoted police officers not having full confidence in that particular data.

As far as the method that we have taken with the amnesty, the member across has criticized the government. He may have to address those remarks to the former Minister of Justice and Solicitor General because the first time there was a firearm amnesty was in 1998 by the previous Liberal government and it modified it or extended it eight times.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Mount Royal on a supplementary.

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

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Mount Royal has the floor. Members to my right, control yourselves.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government cannot appear to distinguish between an amnesty to get people to stop breaking the law and an amnesty which invites people to break the law, which is what the government is doing.

Now, the essential point is that the government may not agree with the law. That is its prerogative, but how can the government announce an amnesty and suspend the rule of law? How can it tell prosecutors not to enforce the law?

In fact, I would ask the minister, has he asked the Canada Firearms Centre or asked federal police not to lay charges and not to enforce the law?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, we are taking our lead on the amnesty from the previous government which allowed time for people to register because the government had not put in place a system that could allow people to comply fully with the law.

We are keeping the handgun registry, keeping all the provisions for safety, keeping the registry for prohibitive and restrictive weapons, and individuals must still follow the regulations on storing firearms and also on taking the safety course. In terms of support for the long gun registry, I like what one federal Liberal MP said when he was a cabinet minister, he said—

**The Deputy Speaker:** We will have to catch that next time.

The hon. member for Miramichi.

**Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a very important element of the national gun registry is located in my riding of Miramichi. It consists of nearly 200 highly skilled employees, mainly women, who serve Canadians in both official languages. Yesterday's announcement certainly causes great concern for the future of their employment with the Government of Canada.

*Oral Questions*

Could the Minister of Public Safety please inform those people, and this House, of their future as employees with the Government of Canada.

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are transferring the firearms centre itself under the auspices of the RCMP. As we dismantle the long gun portion, which is the inefficient portion that has cost hundreds of millions of dollars, there will be some employees who may be affected. Anybody who is affected, who may in fact not still be at the firearms centre, will be offered other work.

For the benefit of members, because I did not attribute my quote, it was the member for Outremont who said:

The gun registry, it's a disaster, it's a living, breathing scandal, it has cost \$1.2 billion...it's a mess, the system doesn't work.

We agree with the Liberals on that.

• (1135)

**Hon. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his recognition that there will be 200 continued jobs in the riding of Miramichi. At least two of his colleagues in the front row of this House had promised that during the last election.

We certainly look forward to what happens. I hope that those employees will continue to have employment. They are good people. They worked well. The report that was referred to in the House yesterday is certainly no reflection on their work.

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that and I share the sympathy that the member has for hard-working public servants. I know he is especially sensitive to this because he also voted against this long gun registry. I appreciate that as well.

Also, we are encouraged to know that a Liberal leadership candidate, the member for Kings—Hants, in his view on the long gun registry has stated that we should be getting rid of the long gun registry and added that the billion dollars would have been better spent on health care or strengthening the RCMP.

We are going to be doing both of those: health care and the RCMP.

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[Translation]

**TEXTILE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government is hiding behind the CANtex program and doing nothing for the textile industry. According to Mr. Marcel Thibault, president of Consoltex, the CANtex program cannot make up for the disappearance of markets by increasing clothing imports. The mill in Montmagny is the most recent known victim.

When will the Minister of Industry pay heed to Mr. Thibault's arguments, which indicate that the foreign manufacturing program proposed by the Bloc Québécois is an essential program that has the full support of the textile industry and that is desperately needed by the industry? Will the minister answer this, yes or no?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question, which the minister will answer.

The Government of Canada is aware of the difficulties facing the textile industry. This is why, in the last budget, we reduced the tax burden for such businesses, cutting their taxes by \$20 billion over two years.

Canadians voted for change and change is what they are currently witnessing, namely, a reduction in taxes for all businesses, particularly textile businesses.

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**OLDER WORKERS**

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it is precisely because the government did nothing for the textile industry that businesses have had to close their doors completely, as Huntingdon was forced to do last year.

Given that the federal government is partially responsible for these closures that affect hundreds of workers in my riding, because it did nothing to help the industry, could it not at least immediately implement an income support program for older workers who face particular difficulties when businesses in our region, like Huntingdon, are forced to close?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, we want to work with older workers. We want to get them to stay on the job. We want them to get new jobs. That, of course, is because they are what makes us competitive. They are what makes us productive.

We always have a program to assist with mass layoffs, as the hon. member should well know. We are invoking that and do that as a matter of routine. We will be working on a feasibility study and I thank the hon. member for her contributions to that study.

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[Translation]

**FIREARMS REGISTRY**

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the governments of Quebec and Ontario, the police, the health sector, and representatives of victims of crime all see many benefits to society from the registration of all firearms.

If offering free gun registration would bring hunters on board, why does the minister not take that route instead of depriving us of the many benefits to be derived from the gun registry?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from coast to coast there are victims of crime who support us in eliminating the registry for long guns only.

I can assure the people of Quebec that we understand their concerns. We will redirect funding to certain initiatives such as suicide prevention for young people, for—

• (1140)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin for a supplementary question.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should realize that the system is effective. According to the coalition against the abolition of the gun registry, since 1991, gun-related deaths have decreased by 43% and the number of women killed by guns has decreased by 67%. However, homicide without guns has decreased by only 31% and armed robbery by 57%. I could go on at great length.

Free registration would make the hunters happy. Why not keep such a useful registry and make registration free for hunters?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, it was the Auditor General who said the system was not working. She was the one who said it was ineffective.

I will give just one example. In 2003, there were 549 murders in Canada, including two that were committed with registered long guns. That is why we want to reassign funding to support the victims and the people who need such programs.

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[English]

**FISHERIES**

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, 1,000 fish plant workers on the south coast of Newfoundland and Labrador are facing an uncertain future because Fishery Products International plans to ship Canadian fish to China for processing. FPI's groundfish quotas are allocated by the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on an annual basis. It is the minister's decision to allocate or to take away.

Will the minister remove FPI's groundfish quotas and protect them for employees and communities affected?

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member well knows, there is a crisis in the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in his own region.

In relation to Fishery Products International, we are in discussions at present with the provincial government and the union. FPI has not indicated at all that it does not intend to continue business as usual. However, I will guarantee the member that it will not ship any fish to China or anywhere else outside this country by water. If it goes by land, it is then outside our hands.

**Mr. Bill Matthews (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister knows that the fisheries resources in Canadian waters are a common property resource owned by the people of Canada. They are not owned by Fishery Products International or any other fish company.

What I want from the minister today is a clear determination. Will the minister impose a use it in Canada policy or lose it? It is the minister's decision. He has the full authority. I want a full assurance from him today that this fish will not go to China.

**Hon. Loyola Hearn (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member has been reading my notes and speeches undoubtedly. The fish in our waters is a common property resource owned by the people of Canada and should be caught by Canadians and processed for the people of this country, not for the benefit of any other country. The companies that have quotas, or the

individuals who have quotas, will catch it and use it for the benefit of our people or they will not catch it at all.

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[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative agenda contains nothing to improve the employment insurance system. It is not even one of their priorities.

The Prime Minister does not understand anything about this issue and the extremely difficult situation thousands of Canadians face every day.

In recent years, the Liberal government introduced measures including pilot projects to improve the lot of seasonal workers.

Why does the Prime Minister not promise right now to extend all pilot projects until the programs have been reviewed and to support my private member's bill on eliminating the two-week waiting period following a job loss?

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there are a wide range of employment insurance programs that are underway. Most of them are pilot projects and by that it means they are a test. Before committing Canadian taxpayers' dollar ad infinitum, we want to ensure that new ideas will work and that they will be in the best interests of workers, and of Canadian taxpayers.

That is why we believe in getting the facts before we evaluate a program, unlike my colleagues opposite. That is why, with the five weeks program, we are waiting until we get all the facts and have been able to consult with my colleagues opposite. We are taking their considerations of those programs into our evaluation as we design something appropriate with which to go forward.

● (1145)

[Translation]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is incredible to hear that. This situation is completely unacceptable. It is terrible to leave the people who are most in need in the lurch while the government ponders and evaluates.

I repeat that these pilot projects, including the pilot projects on the five additional weeks and the lower St. Lawrence and Madawaska economic zones, are very important to thousands of Canadian workers.

Time is running out, and the situation is urgent. I call on the minister to act instead of hiding behind evaluations.

Why is the minister refusing to help the unemployed while she waits for the evaluations of the pilot projects?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government was elected to be accountable to the people. They want us to spend their dollars wisely and well. That is why we are going to evaluate and ensure that the decisions that we make are right, not just take the opposition's word for it because it was trying to buy votes locally for their members. We are going to do it for the people of Canada.

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**AGRICULTURE**

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for the past decade the legitimate and escalating criticisms of Canadian farmers outlining the flaws and lack of delivery on farm programs were ignored by the previous Liberal government.

Can the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food tell the House today what our government plans to do for Canadian farmers in contrast to the inaction of the previous government?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to announce \$1.5 billion in additional spending for this year.

Today we announced the enhanced spring credit advance program that will double the amount of maximum interest free loans to \$100,000 per farmer. We will allow them to repay that until September 2007.

We are changing the AMPA program to include more agricultural sectors to get access to the program.

We are addressing the failures of the previous Liberal CAIS program by adjusting the inventory valuations back to 2003, 2004 and 2005.

We are putting \$950 million today into farmers' hands.

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**SOFTWOOD LUMBER**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the 23 page terms of surrender to George Bush on softwood lumber are an indictment of the government's fawning desire to negotiate any deal no matter what the price to Canadians.

The surrender terms give away over \$1 billion to the trade criminals, require Canadians to have a permission slip from George Bush for any forestry changes, and throw away our binding dispute settlement rights.

Our ambassador to Washington admitted that there were no instructions from the government to stand up for Canadian rights under NAFTA. In fact, the instructions were clear: capitulate. Why did the government surrender?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government and our Ambassador to the United States do not need explicit instructions to stand up for Canada. That is his job. That is what he is doing.

The softwood lumber agreement shows that. It protects Canadian sovereignty, it protects provincial forest management policy. It creates stability in the industry. It causes American protectionists to not be able to do more of that litigation in the future.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** The truth is, Mr. Speaker, the agreement is founded on deception, but in that way, it seems remarkably similar to the election campaign the minister ran in Vancouver Kingsway.

It is unprecedented. The softwood sector has to take our own government to court in order to uphold Canada's rights. What a mess.

Will the minister commit today, as his surrender is being rejected by Canadians, that the government will do what it should have done in the first place, invoke chapter 19, provide loan guarantees and litigation support for the softwood companies so that Canadians' rights are maintained and we get every single dollar back?

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is any greater deception on the people of Canada than the one that is being perpetrated by that member and that party.

That hon. member should have the courage to tell Canadians, to tell people employed in the softwood lumber industry that his strategy is a strategy for trade war. It is a strategy for litigation. It is a strategy for hundreds of millions of dollars to pay more lawyers. It is a strategy for uncertainty. It is a strategy for failure.

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● (1150)

**HEALTH**

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has failed to address the issue of wait times in its first 100 days in office. All we have heard are vague promises and a budget with no money for them.

This is in contrast to the Liberal plan which put \$5 billion on the table to address this issue. Canadians are still waiting for something, anything, to reduce wait times.

If this is still one of its top five priorities, when will the government act?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, indeed, there has been great progress in wait time guarantees. Right off the mark, the government of Quebec announced its own wait time guarantee program. We are initiating discussions with the other provinces.

The hon. member is misinformed when she cites the previous Liberal government's support for this.

Indeed, this government, in budget 2006 by my hon. colleague next to me, indicated a \$5.5 billion fund to address wait times and an extra \$1.1 billion this year alone in transfer payments to the provinces to assist them in health care.

That is leadership on this side of the House.

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister of improved wait times could answer this: Canadians with respiratory problems, including seniors and children, are being left to fend for themselves this summer when smog season begins.

The government has gutted key Liberal programs to reduce air pollution and smugly promises that it has a plan to clean up the environment.

It has now been 100 days and counting and we have not seen anything yet. Will the government admit that it has no plan?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said many times, our government is extremely concerned about the pollution problems and the health impacts on Canadians. As we know, in Ontario last year there were 53 smog days and 35 in Quebec. For the first time ever, we had winter smog advisory days.

Under the former Liberal government, every single industry sector in Canada has fallen behind on pollution control compared to the United States. We are working actively right now to bring legislation to the House to make sure that we not only catch up with the U.S., but that we outperform the U.S. on pollution.

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### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Prime Minister in statements to the media last Friday in Mississauga stated that he will not set targets for the number of new immigrants Canada will be letting in this year. This is wrong. Parliament and Canadians have a right to know.

The Liberal government was not afraid to set targets. Will the government reverse this outrageous decision? Why would it not set targets? What are the Conservatives trying to hide, a cut in immigration?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting the member would raise that, given that the Liberal Party set a target for immigration of 1% every year over the last 10 years. The Liberals missed that by a total of almost one million people.

I have to tell the hon. member across the way, the one thing we will not do is make a promise like that that we have no intention of keeping.

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister is wrong in his facts again. In the past six years not only were the targets met each and every year, but they were exceeded four times.

The Prime Minister further stated that it was important to make sure applications were processed quickly. If the Conservatives are sincere about wanting to speed up processing times, they would not

### Oral Questions

have cut the \$700 million put in place by the previous government to do exactly that.

Will the government do the right thing and restore that \$700 million?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say that the member is absolutely wrong about his facts. He is ignorant of the portfolio and that is very unfortunate, given how he holds himself out as such an expert.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment continues to make inane statements.

Yesterday, she stated that Quebec's economy would be hurt if we went ahead with the Kyoto protocol. Yet, the chief of staff of the Quebec minister for the environment, Claude Béchar, maintains that, on the contrary, it is possible to comply with Kyoto without hurting the economy.

Will the minister retract her irresponsible statements, tackle the job at hand, and reveal her plan for reducing greenhouse gas emissions?

● (1155)

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is obviously trying to distract from the irresponsibility of putting forward a motion in the House that he knows full well means the reduction of four times over of the amount of emissions in every single Canadian household.

This government will act, but we will act responsibly and make sure that we defend the interests of all Canadians.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, what does the minister have to say to the directors of Alcan, Bombardier, Mouvement Desjardins, Power Corporation and Tembec who, just a few months ago, were urging the government to continue and even intensify the fight against greenhouse gas emissions?

What is the minister waiting for?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was elected to make sure that we put forward an accountable plan on the environment to Canadians, not to corporations. That is the way we will proceed and ensure that we do what is right by the environment and what is right by Canadians.

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### AGRICULTURE

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in an earlier question the minister left the impression that there would be money for farmers today. When did September or later become today?

### Oral Questions

Earlier this morning the minister admitted there would be no cash for farmers this spring. That is a violation of the commitments that the backbench gave farmers for immediate cash. Worse yet, it is positive proof that the budget was less than honest with respect to farmers.

Why is the minister failing to provide immediate cash for farmers? Why have the Conservatives broken their trust with the farm community?

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as already mentioned, we have an enhanced spring cash advance program that will make \$1.2 billion available for farmers immediately. We have changes to the AMPA legislation which will include more sectors within the agricultural community. What is more, we are going to continue to put forward programs, including a biofuels program, in the days to come that will make sure that farmers take part in the value added process where the real money is to be made.

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### ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

**Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in my riding, as in the ridings of many other members, native friendship centres provide a valuable resource to thousands of aboriginal Canadians who live off reserves in our cities and towns. The 116 centres nationwide are places for people to meet and places for young aboriginal people to learn from their elders.

Could the Minister of Canadian Heritage please tell this House what measures the government has taken to ensure friendship centres are adequately funded?

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government recognizes the important role that the friendship centres play for our aboriginal community in our cities.

That is why I am pleased to announce today that we have made a four year commitment for \$77 million to the National Association of Friendship Centres. This will provide the centres with the long term stability that they need, which was previously lacking with the former government. In fact the executive director has said, "It represents a significant commitment.... We are also encouraged that the minister has agreed to work with us on addressing the long term sustainability of friendship centres".

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this past winter, hundreds of trucks bound for Victor Diamond Mine could not reach the site because there was no ice on the James Bay. Twenty years ago that would have been unimaginable. That is now a fact of life.

All across the Nishnawbe Aski Nation we are facing the economic impacts of global warming. We want action. We want commitments. We want stewardship. Instead we have a cheerleader for big oil and gas.

Since the environment minister is so clearly unwilling to stand up and fight for the environment, will her government at least pick up the economic tab for the cost that is impacting our northern regions?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that our plan will make sure that it is sensible and that we do not spend the good taxpayers' dollars that could be spent in the north on international emissions credits that will see no reductions in greenhouse gases here at home. We will invest in Canadian communities, including northern communities.

Just to highlight some of the comments by some of the Liberal members, it was the member for Etobicoke North, when faced with needing to vote for Kyoto, who said, "If I had my druthers, I would not, but the reality is the Prime Minister needs the votes". Then he said, "I am just concerned that the Kyoto accord may not be the vehicle—"

• (1200)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, before there were five priorities, there was one priority, and that was to build a firewall around Alberta's oil and gas industry. That firewall is the minister. Ask her about the environment and we get these ramblings about the Liberals or about economic ruin. Ask her to take a role on the international stage and she will cut and run.

I am asking her to be honest with Canadians and tell Canada that she has no plan other than something that was cooked up in a Calgary boardroom.

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in regard to our international commitments, I am proud to tell the House that yesterday Japan endorsed our position, as did Norway and New Zealand. When the hon. member insults my position, the Prime Minister's position and this government's position, I want to remind him that he is also insulting some of our key international partners.

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### HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, millions of Canadians make invaluable contributions to our society every day by helping to care for their elderly, ill or disabled friends or relatives. The previous Liberal government created an EI compassionate care benefit, a caregiver tax credit, and committed to invest \$5 billion over five years to develop a national caregiver agenda.

The current government has been completely silent on this issue. Would the human resources minister tell this House why the government is abandoning unpaid caregivers?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have in no way abandoned the program for compassionate care. I cannot understand why the hon. member would want to mislead Canadians into believing that.

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, under the proposed federal accountability act, Canada's new government wants to bring the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation under the Access to Information Act. This is an important move toward implementing more accountability.

Would the President of the Treasury Board tell the House how he is planning to balance accountability, while ensuring the freedom of the press?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government wants more accountability. The government wants more transparency.

What the Information Commissioner wants CBC journalists and reporters to do is to turn over all their notes on journalistic sources and interviews to him for him to decide if they should be made public.

*Oral Questions*

The government wants more accountability, but it will not support this attack on the independence of journalistic integrity.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order please. May I remind hon. members that the order adopted last week calls for us to adjourn the House at noon today until tomorrow at 10 a.m. Therefore, I would invite all hon. members to hold on to their points of order and questions of privilege until tomorrow.

I thank all hon. members for their collaboration in this regard.

It being 12 noon, pursuant to order made on Friday, May 5 the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 p.m.)

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**APPENDIX**

Address

of

the Honourable John Howard

Prime Minister of Australia

to

both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa

on

Thursday, May 18, 2006

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Address  
of  
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Prime Minister of Australia  
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House of Commons Chamber, Ottawa  
on  
Thursday, May 18, 2006

[English]

*The Honourable John Howard and Mrs. Howard were welcomed by the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable Noël Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and by the Honourable Peter Milliken, Speaker of the House of Commons.*

**Hon. Peter Milliken (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Order, please. I call upon the Right Hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Speaker of the House of Commons, Members of Parliament, Senators, Chief Justice, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great privilege to welcome to Parliament today the Prime Minister of Australia and his wife, the Hon. John Howard and Janette.

As anyone who has taken the flight can attest, Canada and Australia are not exactly close neighbours. We are thousands of kilometres apart, in different hemispheres, and on opposite sides of the equator. Yet despite the great distance between our two countries, we share remarkable similarities in many respects.

[Translation]

Canada and Australia would not be the countries they are today without the cultural and other contributions of their aboriginal peoples. Our respective first nations were joined by waves of immigrants, people who came to Canada and Australia for a better life for themselves and their children.

Our two countries are characterized by their natural beauty and their hard and often merciless wilderness. The land, whether it be the arid Australian outback or the rocky Canadian Shield, has played a defining role in shaping our respective national characters. It has left both our peoples a legacy of independence and determination.

[English]

Politically, we share an enduring affinity to the Crown and a commitment to a federal system of government. Over the years Australians and Canadians have travelled and lived among each other.

In Prime Minister Howard's home city of Sydney, communities such as Canada Bay and streets with names such as Marceau Drive serve as reminders of the Canadians who moved to Australia after the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada. Toronto, New South Wales was named in honour of Edward "Ned" Hanlon of Toronto, Ontario, a champion rower and the most internationally known Canadian of his era.

Perhaps most importantly, both of our countries have on many occasions stood shoulder to shoulder standing up for right when right needed to be defended.

I think particularly of the two world wars and the Korean conflict where our troops fought together to defend freedom and promote the ideals of human rights and democracy.

Our shared commitment to these values continues to this day, where for instance, Canada and Australia are actively contributing to the effort to bring peace, stability, and hope to millions of people in Afghanistan.

[Translation]

Clearly, our two countries have much in common and much to be proud of: freedom, democracy, the rule of law, values that millions of people around the world can only dream of, values that we should never take for granted, values that the peoples of Canada and Australia ask their elected representatives to uphold.

[English]

Prime Minister Howard is a principled leader with vision, a vision of a strong Australia that honours its past while embracing its future, a vision of an Australia in which opportunities are available to all through a strong economy that works for all Australians, and a vision of Australia that punches above its weight on the international stage.

Under his decisive leadership, Australia has become all of these things. Today Australia is a confident nation that simultaneously embraces its historic national symbols while welcoming people from all over the world.

Australia is also a prosperous nation. Under the Prime Minister's watch, taxes have gone down while productivity has gone up, unemployment has gone down while GDP has gone up, new jobs have been created in record numbers, and more and more Australians own their own homes. This is certainly a record of which to be proud.

As announced by his treasurer just last month, Prime Minister Howard's government has now paid down the country's net debt, an amazing accomplishment considering that when he took office the debt stood at almost \$100 billion in 1996.

[Translation]

Lastly, under the Prime Minister's leadership, Australia has consolidated its position as an international leader. Whether preserving human rights in East Timor, taking part in the global fight against terrorism or exercising strong regional and international leadership, as it did after the devastating tsunami in December 2004, Australia bravely defends the values it holds dear: democracy, human rights and a safer world for future generations. This government and all Canadians share these values.

[*English*]

In closing, as a new Prime Minister, I would like to express my warm admiration for Prime Minister Howard, my appreciation for his wise counsel, and offer him my sincerest congratulations for the outstanding work he has done since assuming office a decade ago. It is a record of laudable achievement and not bad for someone who leads a party called Liberal.

Through his leadership, Prime Minister Howard is moving his country forward, building a stronger Australia for all Australians, an Australia that works cooperatively with its allies, including Canada.

[*Translation*]

Without further ado, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to introduce a man who has always been and, I am sure, will always be a loyal friend to Canada: the Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. John Howard.

[*English*]

**Hon. John Howard (Prime Minister of Australia):** Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition and hon. members of both Houses of the Canadian Parliament, can I first say how deeply honoured I am at the privilege of addressing this joint sitting of the two Houses of the Parliament of Canada.

I am told that the only previous occasion on which an Australian Prime Minister spoke to such a sitting was in 1944 when one of my Labour predecessors John Curtin, on a visit to North America during the war, was extended that great honour and privilege. I do want to therefore say that I regard it as a great personal honour and also a great honour to my country, Australia.

As your Prime Minister has said, the ties of history and of common practice between Australia and Canada are very great indeed.

Both of our nations owe much to those nations of Europe that gave institutions and values, and formation to our societies, to Great Britain, to France, to Ireland and to other nations of Europe.

Both of us, of course, are nations of immigrants, not only from Europe and the Middle East, but in the case of both of our countries in more recent years from Asia. Indeed, the constituency or riding that I represent in Sydney has an ethnic Chinese enrollment of between 10% and 15% and the contribution being made to the modern vibrancy of Australia by immigration from Asia has been one of the many things that have made Australia a confident, outward looking nation in the 21st century.

We are, as the Prime Minister said, kindred nations. We are both, in a sense, children of the enlightenment, that period of rational inquiry, progress and modernity which burst out of Europe but indeed found some of its more fertile acceptance in the nations of the new world.

We share many values. We share the Westminster tradition of parliamentary democracy. We are both federations, Canada coming together in 1867 and Australia in 1901.

We have shared many sacrifices in war. We remember the sacrifice of Australians and Canadians, particularly in those terrible battles of World War I at Passchendaele and elsewhere, and in World War II, it

will ever be to the credit of Canada, Australia and Great Britain, and a small band of countries that stood together alone against the tyranny and horror of Nazi Germany for one whole year when all appeared to be lost.

Of course, during World War II, many thousands of Australian airmen trained in Canada, one of them was an uncle of mine from Petersham in Sydney. He fell in love, and wooed and married a girl from Calgary. It is a link that is replicated in thousands of Australian families.

Since then, of course, we have fought together in Korea, the Middle East, East Timor, and now together in response to the new and dangerous threat of terrorism in Afghanistan.

I pay tribute to the enormous contribution of the Canadian nation to the effort in Afghanistan, and I mourn the loss and the sadness of Canadian families in recent days.

We, of course, are nations that have a lot of history in common.

Perhaps if I could characterize our relationship I would put it this way. We have much in common but not as much to do with each other as we should. We have even followed different sporting paths. For reasons that have always escaped my comprehension and understanding, Canadians never embraced cricket. And ice hockey is not widely played in Australia. On that subject, can I congratulate the Edmonton Oilers on reaching the semi-finals. I wish them well as they do battle with those other teams from south of the border.

The fact that perhaps we have not had as much to do with each other as we should have is a function of geography, as the Prime Minister mentioned. I think, hon. members, that the challenges of the world in the first bit of the 21st century are really going to change that because many of those challenges, I believe, if they are to be effectively responded to, will bring Canada and Australia together as never before in common purpose.

Globalization presents to the world the most enormous opportunities. Those countries that pull down their trade barriers and open their economies and embrace globalization are the economies that will thrive and succeed. In that context, let Canada and Australia work together to do what we can as like-minded nations on the subject to bring about a successful conclusion of the Doha trade round.

Australia and Canada have interests in common at Doha. Not only have we legitimate national interests in common, but we have a legitimate interest in seeing barriers broken down so that the poorer nations of the world that rely so heavily on rural exports can gain access to markets that are closed to them at present.

There has in the context of Doha been a very generous offer made by the United States, one that went beyond many expectations of that country. That offer must be reciprocated, and if it is not reciprocated, then the prospects of a breakthrough in agricultural trade will be lost because the possibility of obtaining another authorization from the American Congress for a new trade mandate is very, very dim indeed. We only have a matter of weeks to bring about a successful momentum in relation to Doha, and greater pressure must be applied to the Europeans and to other countries such as Japan, Brazil and India that are not seeing the opportunities that can be embraced in this latest negotiation.

Another area where I believe because of our common interests that Canada and Australia can work together is in the area of climate change. Australia, as you know, did not join Kyoto, not because we are opposed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. Indeed, we committed ourselves to reach the target set for Australia by Kyoto and we believe that we will achieve that target. But we do not believe that the greenhouse gas challenge and the environmental challenges that Kyoto was meant to address can indeed be accomplished, or overcome rather, unless there is a full involvement of the major polluting nations of the world, the United States, China and India.

It is because of that that Australia has become part of the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, a partnership that brings together the United States, Japan, Indonesia, China and Korea. It is a partnership that seeks not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but to bring together the drive toward that and economic development.

In the energy area, which is of course allied to climate change, Canada and Australia have much in common. We are the holders of the largest uranium reserves in the world. Both of us must work together in relation to the recently proposed global nuclear energy partnership which seeks, laudably, to control proliferation, but we must, as the holders of these vast uranium reserves, ensure that that particular partnership does not work against the interests of countries such as Canada and Australia.

Hon. members, for the first time in history, the centre of gravity of the world's middle class is shifting from Europe and North America to Asia, in a sense from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In a few years' time, there will be 400 million to 800 million middle class people in China and India. It represents a historic shift in the experience of the world and will have a profound and lasting impact on the economic growth and economic development of the world.

We as two outward looking nations should not fear this in any way. In fact, this development presents unique opportunities to both of our nations, opportunities that our outward looking societies, if we fully embrace it, can bring great benefit to our citizens. This change in this development uniquely, I believe, suits the type of societies that Australia and Canada represent.

These are some of the opportunities of the early years of the 21st century. They are opportunities for nations such as Canada and Australia that are built on an approach to individual liberty and freedom and an approach to society that sees the worth of a person not according to that person's race, nationality, religion or social

background, but according to that person's character and commitment to the well-being of his and her fellow citizens.

It presents to our two nations imbued with those principles, opportunities that together I believe our two countries can embrace. They are the opportunities of the early years of the 21st century, but inevitably there are the brutal challenges of the early years of the 21st century. None of course is greater than the threat of terrorism, this new menace that knows no borders, that knows no morality, that knows no rationality, and defies in terms of ordinary behaviour, predictability.

Terrorists oppose us not because of what we have done. They oppose us because of who we are and what we believe in. Terrorism will not be defeated by nuancing our foreign policy. Terrorism will not be defeated by rolling ourselves into a small ball, going into a corner and imagining that somehow or other we will escape notice.

My own country, according to all of our intelligence advice, was in fact a target for terrorism even before the 11th of September, 2001. The greatest loss of Australian lives in a terrorist attack at Bali in 2002 in fact occurred before the coalition military operation in Iraq.

Terrorism will only be defeated by a combination of strong intelligence, military action where appropriate, and importantly, the spread of democracy particularly among Islamic countries.

In that last context, no nation is more important than Australia's nearest neighbour and most populous Muslim country in the world, Indonesia. Indonesia, in the last eight years, has undergone a remarkable transition, a transition that draws less comment and less respect than perhaps it deserves. In eight years it has gone from a military dictatorship to the third largest democracy in the world.

What is at stake with countries like Indonesia, but also Pakistan, which is also under moderate Islamic leadership, is fundamental to whether we succeed or fail in the fight against terrorism because if democratic moderate Islam can succeed in the Islamic world, that will act as a powerful and enduring antidote to the menace of terrorism in those societies.

So, in dealing with terrorism of course we need strong and timely intelligence. I note with pride the decades of close collaboration between the intelligence services of Australia and the intelligence services of Canada. However, it needs a combination of strong intelligence, military resolve and the spread of democracy.

None of us should imagine that we are immune from domestic terrorist attacks. We had a timely wake-up call in Australia in the last months of 2005 when some 22 Australians were charged with certain terrorist offences and quite a large number of those were people who had been born in Australia and had grown up in our country.

Just as the people of Great Britain were shocked by the backgrounds and the experiences of those responsible for the London attacks of July 2005, many Australians have found it difficult to believe that something like that could happen in their country.

While I am on the subject of terrorism I would like to say something about Iraq. I know that in relation to Iraq, Australia and Canada took different paths and it is not my point here today to dwell on that. I simply want to applaud the bravery and courage of the 8 million people of Iraq who defied terrorism and physical intimidation to cast their ballots on three occasions in a democratic election.

We, in Canada and Australia, who are used to voting in tranquil circumstances, whatever the passion of political rhetoric might be, should take pause to salute such an extraordinary act of courage and bravery.

In conclusion I would like to say something about the role of the United States in the affairs of the world. Australia, as everyone knows, is an unapologetic friend and ally of the United States. We do not always agree. We have not in the past, we do not now on certain issues and we will not in the future, but I have always taken the view, and the majority of my fellow countrymen the same, that the United States has been a remarkable power for good in the world and that the decency and hope that the power and purpose of the United States represents to the world is something that we should deeply appreciate.

The values for which the United States stands are the values for which Canada and Australia stand. They are values of spreading democracy, of individual liberty and of a society where free enterprise is the principal economic driver, but also a society where the less fortunate should be protected by a decent social security safety net. They are values that I know members on both sides of this House, as, indeed, on both sides of the Houses of the Australian Parliament, share in common.

For those around the world who would want to see a reduced American role in the affairs of our globe, I have some quiet advice, and that is, be careful what you wish for, because a retreating America will leave a more vulnerable world. It will leave the world more exposed to terrorism and it will leave a more fragile and indeed dangerous world.

Mr. Speaker and hon. members, as I said at the commencement of my remarks, you have done me a great honour. To be invited to address the Parliament of a great nation such as Canada, a nation with which we have shared so much in the past and with values we hold so much in common, is for me, a veteran of 32 years of membership in the Australian Parliament, a tremendous honour.

Mr. Prime Minister, I know that I will not be departing in any way from the bipartisan traditions of being a guest in your country in wishing you well in the early months of your prime ministership. I remember the early months of my prime ministership in 1996. I know that there will be some on that side of the House who may not wish for you an emulation of the period of time that I have been in government, but I can say, Prime Minister, that you have brought to your office great vigour, great vitality and a commitment to do some new and different things in Canada.

You lead a minority government, an interesting experience, I am sure, and one that thankfully I have not had to cope with. I do not think I could. I do wish you well, but very importantly, through you,

I bring to this Parliament the good wishes of not only the Parliament of Australia but also the people of Australia.

We do believe in the same things, we Australians and Canadians. We are people who do share so much common history and common experience. In the new challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, I believe that with that shared history and experience there is more indeed that we can do in the future, not only for the betterment of the people of Australia and the people of Canada, but for the betterment of all the peoples of the world. Thank you indeed.

[Applause]

**Hon. Noël Kinsella (Speaker of the Senate):** Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Howard, Prime Minister, honourable senators and members of the House of Commons, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen: On behalf of all parliamentarians and all those assembled, I am honoured, Prime Minister, to express our gratitude for your visit and to thank you for addressing this joint session with such clarity and eloquence. Your words here today remind us of the depth of our shared values and of the importance of defending those values.

Prime Minister, that you would visit Ottawa when the tulips are in bloom might have some of the historians in this chamber recalling that at one time the name "New Holland" was associated with Australia.

[Translation]

Mr. Prime Minister, as you said, the last time an Australian Prime Minister addressed a joint session of Canada's Parliament was in June 1944, a year before the end of the second world war, during which 39,000 Australians and 45,000 Canadians lost their lives. Today, it is all too easy to take for granted the freedom we have thanks to their sacrifice.

Two generations have passed since the end of the war, and our two countries have evolved in that time. Our development has been parallel, and our respective current situations are astonishingly similar.

During the 1950s, we undertook ambitious national construction programs to build the infrastructure for our modern societies. Since the 1960s, our societies have welcomed waves of immigrants, as I mentioned, from all over the world. They brought with them a variety of ideas and talents. They helped create the dynamic societies we live in today.

In fact, Australia and Canada are among the most diverse, dynamic and prosperous countries in the world.

[English]

Prime Minister, we must not forget that the reason our forward-looking societies are so successful is that they are based on the same fundamental values that our predecessors fought for, values, as you have mentioned, that we continue to defend in places such as Afghanistan. Most important, Prime Minister, again as you have mentioned, we share the precious heritage of parliamentary government. We have each grown our parliaments, recording changes whether great or small, and always with the practice of freedom as our beacon.

[*Translation*]

Like a huge extended family, Australians and Canadians have forged strong ties. We visit each other, enjoy each other's films, music and literature, and exchange ideas and goods with each other. When we meet, we recognize in each other a familiar set of ideas.

[*English*]

Prime Minister, by your words and your deeds, you have reaffirmed the lasting ties between our two great countries. Your address today at this joint session of the Parliament of Canada has resonated with the members of both Houses. Our members are attentive to your message and your words, which are unabashedly and refreshingly open to the world of 2006. We share with you, Mr. Prime Minister, the contemporary thirst for the inherent goodness of nature and culture and are unafraid of dialogue with human kind, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, political ideology or creed.

Allow me, therefore, Prime Minister, to once again thank you for having expressed your thoughts so clearly, and on behalf of all present, we wish you Godspeed.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Peter Milliken (Speaker of the House of Commons):** Prime Minister Howard, Mrs. Howard, Prime Minister Harper, Mrs. Harper, Madam Chief Justice, Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Kinsella, members of the diplomatic corps, honourable senators, honourable members, ladies and gentlemen.

[*English*]

Prime Minister Howard, on behalf of all the members of the Canadian House of Commons, indeed, all the pollies in the room, and I understand that is an Australian term for politicians, I want to thank you for having addressed us here today. It is apparent from your address that you have through the years perfected the orating skills that served you so well in your days at Canterbury Boys High School, where I understand that in your final year you took part in a radio show. Apparently, a tape of the show survives and in it you demonstrate an early ability to think very quickly on your feet, trading unscripted humour with the experienced host and delighting the audience. This skill is doubtless one of the reasons why you were first elected member for Bennelong in 1974, and have just celebrated your tenth anniversary as Prime Minister of Australia.

[*Translation*]

Last August, I had the honour of leading a parliamentary delegation to Australia, aptly named the "Lucky Country", and there we met our counterparts in the Senate and the House of

Representatives, as well as colleagues in the Parliament of New South Wales and of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria. As you would expect, these meetings were both enjoyable and productive. After all, Canada and Australia share many attributes, from the vastness of our respective lands to the political system inherited from the British tradition of parliamentary democracy. We also enjoy close defence relations, having fought side by side in two world wars and during the Korean War, as the Prime Minister mentioned.

[*English*]

But while we are ever mindful of our shared history, I believe the friendship that exist between our two countries now rests on our shared present. Although your address to Parliament today was certainly a very special event, it is also but one of the myriad contacts that take place between Canada and Australia.

Not only are our nations regularly involved in formal economic, cultural, technological and, indeed, parliamentary exchanges, we also like to stay in touch on a much more basic level. We are constantly listening to each other's music, watching each other's television programs and visiting one another.

A recent newspaper headline for an article on the Canadian-Australian friendship asked the question, "Separated at Birth?", which speaks of the bond that Canadians feel for Australians. Vast countries both, yes, and a similar political system, but a whole lot more. Tuktoyaktuk and Toowoomba, Cutknife and Indented Head, these towns could be located in either country. Barbecuing, sports, mosquitoes, the amber fluid, which I understand is also known as beer, these are ties that indeed bind us as well as an easy going nature, a certain irreverence and a keen sense of the ridiculous.

Because we share this outlook on life with Australians, my colleagues and I always felt at home while visiting your country, even though we were half a world away. We will always remember the warmth of the welcome we received in Oz, and I hope, Prime Minister, that you feel equally at home when you are here with us.

[*Translation*]

In closing, please accept my thanks, on behalf of all Members of the House of Commons, for having addressed us today. We hope that you return soon for another Canadian visit, and we wish you Godspeed as you make the long journey to your other home.

Thank you.

[*Applause*]







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