



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 30, 2006**

—  
**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 30, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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•(1000)

[English]

## PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

**The Speaker:** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Privacy Commissioner on the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act for the year 2005.

[Translation]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(h), this report is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics.

in discussions on topics of importance to youth in Canada and other countries in the Commonwealth.

In the final communiqué, released last Friday, the ministers transmitted a message to the Commonwealth heads of government in which they reaffirmed their commitment to youth development and empowerment as a fundamental Commonwealth goal. They recommended that the Commonwealth heads of government, at their 2007 meeting, endorse the new plan of action for youth empowerment.

That plan provides the framework for all Commonwealth youth development work in the areas of poverty eradication, democracy and good governance, HIV-AIDS, and gender equality, topics that are close to the hearts of all Canadians.

[Translation]

During the meeting, as Minister for Sport, I held preliminary meetings with 24 Commonwealth delegations, most of which were responsible for sport.

[English]

These bilateral meetings were invaluable in promoting Halifax as the host city for the Commonwealth Games in 2014. I took advantage of these meetings to indicate Canada's interest in hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2014, to raise awareness about Halifax's bid for the 2014 games, and to solicit support. I was also pleased that Scott Logan, chief executive officer of the Halifax bid, was able to accompany me on this trip to assist me in this effort.

Last March I was in Melbourne for the Commonwealth Games to support the Halifax bid as well. My presence in Nassau was the continuation of my determined efforts and this government's determined efforts to promote Halifax as the host city for the 2014 Commonwealth Games. I hope I can count on the support of all my colleagues in this House to ensure that this bid is successful so that the beautiful city of Halifax in the beautiful province of Nova Scotia in this great country of ours can play host to these very great games.

[Translation]

**Hon. Albina Guarnieri (Mississauga East—Cooksville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for his statement.

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

•(1005)

[English]

## CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-16, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act.

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

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[Translation]

## COMMONWEALTH YOUTH

**Hon. Michael Chong (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of representing Canada at the sixth meeting of the Commonwealth youth ministers in Nassau, the Bahamas, from May 22 to 26.

The theme of the meeting was youth empowerment for the eradication of poverty, crime and violence and HIV/AIDS.

[English]

It provided an opportunity for the Government of Canada to demonstrate its commitment to the Commonwealth and to participate

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

I would like to thank the minister especially for finding the time in his schedule to journey to the Bahamas to participate in the Commonwealth conference on youth and to promote the Halifax bid for the Commonwealth Games. Of course, there could be few better places to engage Commonwealth ministers on the challenges of youth poverty, crime and the devastation of HIV.

The Commonwealth is fortunate to have a leader who has been focused for half a century on finding promise and potential among the perils of youth, a leader who set out on a personal crusade to create a better world by making the world better one young person at a time. That leader, of course, is the Duke of Edinburgh, with his Duke of Edinburgh awards.

Across the globe, the efforts of this leading Commonwealth organization have touched the lives of thousands of young people from every possible background. Projects have given hope to struggling youth across Africa, turned young men away from the path to prison, released the possible, and set their futures free.

This privately funded group, with its august leadership, has achieved where governments have failed and has found hope where others have found despair. The breadth of projects, the scope of innovation and the depth of genuine concern that we find in the Duke of Edinburgh's organization should be an inspiration to NGOs and governments everywhere.

I trust that the minister will continue to connect with his new-found colleagues among the Commonwealth ministers for youth and will agree that the inspiration and success of the Duke of Edinburgh awards needs to be followed by imitation and resources. The Commonwealth needs to match the challenge of youth poverty, crime and disease with its own commitment to reach young people across the ocean with the resources to reach for a better future.

• (1010)

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the organizers of the Halifax committee bidding for the games, and wish them the best of luck in the selection process for the 2014 Commonwealth Games host city. Contributing to the development of a group of young athletes who are so disciplined and passionate about their sport is an honourable goal in itself.

Last year, the United Nations proclaimed 2005 the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. According to the UN, the fraternity that comes with playing sports, and the values of sharing and social interaction associated with playing sports, provide excellent models for young people, and sport can even “contribute to [a nation’s] economic and social development, improving health and personal growth in people of all ages—particularly those of young people...Sport can also help build a culture of peace and tolerance by bringing people together on common ground, crossing national and other boundaries to promote understanding and mutual respect”.

We also believe that the spirit of fraternity that is a necessary outcome of playing sports is indeed a source of hope. The hope that harmony can be built among nations, and living conditions for

young people everywhere improved. But also the hope that something will be done quickly here at home so that Canadian sport “policy” serves some goal other than “the development of the Canadian sport system to strengthen the unique contribution that sport makes to Canadian identity, culture and society”.

A sport policy does not mean only funding for athletes or visibility for a government, and should not be developed solely on that basis; it should rather be directed toward incorporating physical activity and sports into a healthy lifestyle, with the goal of improving quality of life for individuals and communities.

Sport must therefore be developed within a framework that reflects the responsibilities and areas of jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Quebec must therefore be in charge in this area, an area in which, by virtue of its education and public health network, Quebec can and must promote a healthy lifestyle and stress the importance of an active life.

In closing, I hope that the 2014 Games, like the 11th FINA World Aquatic Championships held in Montreal last summer and countless other sports events that bring people together, along with the role models provided by the athletes who take part in them with their contagious enthusiasm, will encourage young Quebecers and Canadians to get involved in a physical activity and incorporate the benefits and lessons they gain from that experience into their lives as citizens.

• (1015)

*[English]*

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party to speak on the sixth Commonwealth Youth Ministers' meeting that was recently held in the Bahamas.

The ministers undertook several days of meetings that centred around the themes of youth empowerment for the eradication of poverty, crime and HIV-AIDS.

Youth, the 15 to 29 year old age group, make up over half the population of the Commonwealth. At the meeting, Canada's minister reaffirmed our commitment to youth development through a rights-based approach. In their communiqué to next year's Commonwealth heads of government meeting, the ministers at the Bahamas meeting committed to promoting the role of young people in national development, democracy and good governance.

These commitments toward youth provide Canada with a unique opportunity that I sincerely hope the government will take seriously in the years to come. This strategy of empowerment is intended to improve the mainstreaming of youth development and empowerment in all policy-making, planning and program delivery in the political, legal, economic and social spheres.

Today the minister also spoke, in his role as minister for sport, to the energy he has devoted to the promotion of the Halifax bid for the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

There are many benefits to sport development among youth and other groups with events like these, and there are significant social and cultural benefits. As a country that will see the 2010 Olympics on one coast and the bidding for the 2014 Commonwealth Games on the other, the Halifax bid does present an opportunity for developing new centres of excellence in sports. However, there is a cost to hosting these games.

I will take this opportunity to remind the minister and his colleagues in the government that if successful, both games should be viewed equally important. Recently, the minister created a working group of parliamentarians from the province of Nova Scotia and other interested members to prepare a strategy around the Halifax bid. I commend the minister for taking this important step toward increasing participation and transparency in the Halifax bid strategy.

I look forward to the opportunities to create a strategy that fits into Canada's commitments to youth and amateur sport as well as the needs of the community of Halifax.

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#### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

##### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs. Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) this report contains the list of items on the order of precedence which was established on May 19 under private members' business that should not be designated not votable.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2) this report is deemed concurred in.

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding the membership of House committees. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the ninth report later this day.

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#### ALTERNATIVE FUELS ACT

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-314, An Act to amend the Alternative Fuels Act and the Excise Tax Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise before the House and table my private member's bill, an act to amend the Alternative Fuels Act and the Excise Tax Act.

The purpose of this bill is to promote the use of motor vehicles powered by engines capable of operating on alternative fuels. This bill would increase the percentage of vehicles acquired by the federal government with engines capable of operating on alternative fuels from 4% to 10% of the fleet by 2009. It would also encourage people to purchase or convert to such vehicles by creating rebates on the goods and services tax paid by those people.

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

#### Business of Supply

● (1020)

#### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

##### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC)** moved That the seventh report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented on Friday, May 19, 2006 be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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#### QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Rod Bruinoog (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** I wish to inform the House that because of the ministerial statement government orders will be extended by 11 minutes.

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#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

#### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

##### OPPOSITION MOTION—CULTURAL DIVERSITY

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.)** moved:

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insist that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

He said: Mr. Speaker, first of all, it is important to remind the House what the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is and how it was created.

Last fall, on October 20, 2005, to be precise, a very large majority, more than 100 of the eligible countries present, voted to adopt that convention. Only two countries voted against it, namely, the United States and Israel. All other countries present, including Canada, voted in favour of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

*Business of Supply*

As I was saying, on October 20, 2005, the convention was adopted by UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The convention recognizes the dual nature of cultural goods and services that have both economic and social value. It underscores the right of governments to take measures to support the diversity of cultural expressions. The convention is on an equal footing with other international treaties—and that is very important.

Before going any further, I would like to thank and congratulate certain individuals for their hard work over a number of years.

• (1025)

[*English*]

I want to refer in particular to the past member of Parliament, Sheila Copps, former member for Hamilton East, when she was Minister of Canadian Heritage. She undertook this formidable task of creating or bringing together nations to create a convention, a new international instrument.

I remember when Madam Copps invited a number of countries to Ottawa in 1999. They met at the National Arts Centre. There were about 20 countries at the time. I remember that Greece and Mexico participated actively because the following meetings were held in those countries respectively.

To the credit of Madam Copps, she saw, and the government at the time saw, the necessity for such an instrument. The world is embarking more and more on international treaties for the liberalization of trade, for free trade areas such as NAFTA, the WTO, and the current rounds of negotiations on a number of fronts. At the time, the cultural and artistic milieu or industries were being threatened as well. There was a recognition that their economic and social importance was indeed missing.

After a number of meetings and years it came to be that the nations of the world indeed recognized the dual nature of cultural industries. They are important economically, as we will see, but they are also very important socially.

Following Madam Copps we had other ministers of heritage also supporting this, in particular Madam Liza Frulla. She was the one who actually helped bring it to fruition in October 2005.

[*Translation*]

I would be remiss if I did not recognize the active and very important participation of the Quebec ministers of culture, who have always supported the efforts made. There has been considerable reciprocity between the Government of Canada and the Government of Quebec in this regard.

There has been a great deal of support and collaboration. The arts community has definitely been involved. Coalitions for cultural diversity have been established and have been very active, with support from the Quebec and Canadian governments and from their own communities. Their approach is very constructive and they wish to ensure the survival of cultural industries in Canada and throughout the world.

Congratulations and thanks must be extended to these people for their perseverance and also for having discerned the needs and the

instrument required. In Canada this instrument, the convention, was ratified on November 23.

[*English*]

Canada was the first country to ratify this international convention, and we are waiting for a number of other countries to do the same. Indeed one of the questions the government may wish to address, and which I would hope it would address in this debate today is what exactly the government is doing to encourage other nations to ratify this very important convention.

The convention recognizes the dual nature of cultural industries, on the one hand the economic impact and the importance of the initiatives of these industries and on the other, the social impact.

Let us look at the economic impact. I will give an example from this area which is not the hotbed of television production. We would find more television production in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver for instance. In national capital region, I am aware of three companies. They are Sound Venture Productions with Neil Bregman, Knight Enterprises with Chris Knight, and Les Productions R. Charbonneau with Robert Charbonneau.

In the past few years those companies have grown. They have become more important to the local economy. They have hired a number of graduates from Algonquin College, la Cité collégiale, the University of Ottawa and Carleton University. They have studied in this environment. They have produced television shows and are looking into the production of movies as well. Some productions have been broadcast on our public television network. Some have been broadcast on privately owned specialty channels and some have been broadcast on educational networks that are owned by the provinces. Most of the productions have been sold abroad.

This very active industry is having a significant impact economically in terms of job creation, investments and exports. This can be applied one hundredfold when we look into the television and film production that occurs in the Toronto area and the television and film production that occurs in other parts of the country from coast to coast.

[*Translation*]

Montreal should not be discounted. It is a very active centre for television and film production.

[*English*]

The same thing applies in other cultural industries. Book publishing is one. Canada has a very good reputation in book publishing. We have worked at it. We have worked through the granting program of the Canada Council and through programs in the Department of Canadian Heritage to support publishing, to support artists, to support authors, to support the export of books. We have managed to build ourselves a great inventory of authors but also an industry that can actually thrive in this environment. The same thing applies in other areas of cultural industries, whether it be magazines or the theatre.

•(1030)

[*Translation*]

This is also the case for the visual and performing arts. These are all industries that provide jobs, boost the economy and gross domestic product, if I may call it that.

We must recognize that in terms of national importance, cultural industries hold a place of honour, just like the other industries, such as the forestry, automobile, fishing or agricultural sectors. Taken together, the cultural industries are a very important component of Canadian industry.

That, however, represents only part of the importance of these industries, as the international convention recognizes. The other aspect of their importance is the social and cultural aspect, the aspect that defines us as a nation, as citizens and as individuals. This other aspect adds to the value of everyday life. In a way it is what makes life worth living, when we can sample cultural expressions, such as literature, one of Canada's art galleries, a film, a television series or dance or theatre. These are activities in which we can become involved, either as active participant in presenting the event or as spectator, the passive participant appreciating the creative work of artists. They are of equal value. You cannot have one without the other. Together they give life its meaning.

We can see that the more a country develops its cultural industries, its artistic areas and communities, the richer its society. This is what the convention recognizes.

[*English*]

We have a situation where governments now have the right, and I would argue the duty, to protect cultural industries and to do so on an even keel in terms of other international instruments, be it the World Trade Organization or free trade instruments such as NAFTA. The situation now is that a convention has been ratified overwhelmingly. Canada has ratified that convention as well. Hopefully other countries are in the process of doing the same so that it will have force very soon.

Before anyone jumps on the anti-Americanism bandwagon, let me assure the House that is not what is driving this. It is absolutely not. Let us look at the situation in Canada. Movies are possibly the most extreme. Of cinema screen time, we see Canadian movies 1.2% of the time. If anyone were to argue that we are trying to restrict access into Canada of American made films or films made in other countries, that is not the case. There is ample access. There is hardly any room on our screens right now for Canadian made movies. The same does not apply in Quebec and in francophone Canada.

[*Translation*]

Quebec's film industry is flourishing. Last year, it enjoyed phenomenal success. It increased its share of the market to some 27%, primarily in Quebec.

Francophone and anglophone production combined has captured only 4% or 5% of the country's market. That is very little given that American film production occupies over 90% of it.

There is no question of blocking American cinema. Rather, the idea is to create a space for our own cinema.

### *Business of Supply*

The situation is the same in the case of books. We need only wander around any airport, bus terminal or train station to see that American best sellers are everywhere.

•(1035)

[*English*]

We are not trying to restrict access to American books, American music, American theatre, or any other artistic endeavour that is prepared in and exported from the United States into Canada. That is not the point of this exercise. It is absolutely not anti-Americanism. It is pro-Canadian. It is to make sure that we have certain restrictions and safeguards so that Canadian cultural products and images can be enjoyed by Canadians in their own country.

[*Translation*]

I would therefore like to make sure that during the debate today, members do not accuse us of anti-Americanism, because that is not the case.

We focus on three items.

[*English*]

We mention in particular three items that we want the government to maintain, such as the current Canadian content requirements. We are not suggesting that things stay fixed in cement forever. We understand that technology evolves. We understand that new methods and new means of communication are created. We understand that there may be a need to adjust, to innovate and to strengthen.

What we are looking for collectively I hope in the House is that we do not go backward, that we do not withdraw from requiring minimum Canadian content, be it on radio, television or in other cultural industries. We have demonstrated over time the usefulness and the appropriateness of requiring a minimum of Canadian content on our public airwaves for instance.

If we look at the most celebrated songstresses in the world, four or five Canadians could be named who benefited greatly from the Canadian content requirement. I think of Sarah McLachlan, Avril Lavigne, Shania Twain, Alanis Morissette and Céline Dion. They are perfect examples to justify requiring a minimum of Canadian content on the radio. It generated incredible support and enthusiasm for the Canadian music industry. This is the kind of result that requiring Canadian content yields. I would hope that all members in the House would support maintaining Canadian content requirements.

*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

It is the same kind of argument on foreign ownership.

[English]

It is the same kind of argument on foreign ownership restrictions. We have maintained over the past, a number of restrictions on foreign ownership of broadcasting facilities. Now we are looking at a situation where the government may put that into question. It is very important to reaffirm our desire to maintain the ability to own our own distribution networks and our own broadcasters, because if we have given up on that, then we have given up on everything, and I do not think that is where Canadians want to go.

I understand that the private sector, and those who would benefit directly from lifting such restrictions on foreign ownership, want them. That is human nature and one can understand that. But we have a duty here and the CRTC's of the world have a duty that goes beyond that. We have a duty to protect the interests of Canadians and the interests of Canadian cultural industries. That is why it is important that before we embark on the lifting of any foreign ownership restrictions, which is something the government is hinting at, we be very careful and establish protection policies.

We recognized that some arguments can be made, for instance on the telecom side, that there may need to be some consolidation and greater foreign ownership. Having said that, there have to be allocations made to keep the broadcasting industries under Canadian control and in Canadian hands. If indeed we are looking at a convergence situation where all the telecom companies own the broadcasters, then we would have a situation where we could end up with foreign interests owning all our broadcasting capacity. Therefore, the need to maintain restrictions against foreign ownership is very important.

● (1040)

[Translation]

This is a topical issue because the government apparently intends to lift these restrictions.

Lastly, there is public television and its funding by taxpayers.

[English]

We say that we want to maintain the level of funding, and perhaps even enhance it, of public broadcasting. In this case, we are talking principally about CBC Radio-Canada and its various guises and manifestations.

[Translation]

It is important to mention that the CBC, with its French- and English-language television and radio networks, has become an extremely important institution to Canada. The CBC tells Canadian stories. It is therefore important that this institution maintain its autonomy and its ability to plan.

As the government prepares to review the CBC's mandate, I think it is important that the House give its opinion on the importance of this institution and its funding, and I hope that will happen today.

Regarding the CBC's mandate, the other day in this House the minister answered me that she would bow to the will of the

committee or body that will be reviewing the CBC's mandate and will have a say in its parameters. I hope that we will have the opportunity to discuss this, because this is a significant debate. I would hope, for example, that Canada will look at funding models for public television and public broadcasters elsewhere in the world.

These are the issues I wanted to define today.

[English]

These are very significant debates in our country. We have extremely important and delicate issues before us. In my view and hopefully in the view of this House, as we go forward it is important that the House establish some parameters, some areas where we wish the government to go and where we do not wish it to go in terms of Canadian content, in terms of restrictions on foreign ownership and in terms of public broadcasting.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in the member's comments about UNESCO. When we were on opposite sides of the House and as members of the heritage committee, he may recall that I was very supportive of the work Sheila Copps did with respect to the instrument, which was ultimately negotiated.

He also will know that the Conservative Party supports the convention on protection and promotion of diversity in cultural expression. Our Prime Minister has worked very hard to ensure that Quebec has a particular place in the world with respect to UNESCO.

I have a comment and I would like his input on this. The Liberals believe that the thought of having Quebec play a role at UNESCO is a threat to Canada's very existence. Would he challenge that or does he agree with it? We know the Bloc believes that unless Quebec can veto Canada's position at UNESCO, then it is not effective. Those seem to be the two polar opposites, the two extremes.

I recognize the Liberals are currently without a leader so I do not know what their policy might be on this. Therefore, it will likely be that member's opinion on this. What is his attitude toward the statement that the Liberals believe that having Quebec play a role at UNESCO is a threat to Canada's very existence? Does the member agree with that statement?

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, as the critic and spokesperson for the official opposition in this matter, I said the government essentially made official what we had done. The fact that the minister of culture of Quebec was invited to participate in the UNESCO discussions and meetings held by the then heritage minister, Madam Frulla, is pretty well what the government agreed to formally with the Government of Quebec. Essentially, what the government has done, in terms of Quebec's method of participation in UNESCO, is formalize what we had done. How can I be opposed to that?



What I find regrettable in the member's question, as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Heritage, is that he would try to poison the debate by bringing up rather irrelevant issues at this point. We are trying to bring forward a debate that is non-partisan, one that calls for a cohesive approach to cultural matters. Yet all the member opposite wants to do is score cheap political points. I am really disappointed with that. I would hope we could elevate the debate today beyond cheap political points.

If the member wants to score cheap political points, we can get into that game too. We can start quoting what he wrote in his dissenting report on the CBC. We can start quoting his leader. I would hope we can avoid that and talk about the future and where we want Canada to go in terms of cultural sovereignty.

● (1045)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the hon. member who just delivered a fine speech about cultural diversity.

One of the major problems we face, as everyone knows, is the development of francophone Canadian content on commercial radio stations, a problem which comes from the advent of satellite radio. Even though satellite radio is still only a marginal player, the licence conditions granted to it are clearly less demanding than those imposed on commercial radio, and conventional broadcasters are taking their cue from it now and are having a fine time demanding that the conditions imposed on them should be eased.

We know that the hon. member's government had the power to send the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's decision back to it, and in not doing so, the government approved it. I would like to hear what my hon. colleague has to say about this. In my view, this is a policy that really hurts cultural diversity.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the satellite radio decision made last year was controversial. Regardless of which way the CRTC leaned, that is to say toward awarding or refusing the licences, it would have been a controversial decision.

My hon. colleague has a legitimate view. It is possible to be against this decision. It must also be admitted that this decision bore certain consequences, for example that commercial radio stations which do not broadcast by satellite would ask for a reduction in Canadian content. That is what is happening now. The hon. member's comments and question are legitimate. I will answer by saying that even if it were admitted that this decision should have been different, the facts are there today. It is up to us, as Parliament, to maintain a minimum amount of Canadian content.

The fact that the Canadian content required of satellite radio was different from what was required of traditional stations—because there still was a requirement—is a reflection of the technology, perhaps, and a sign that it is impossible to require the same Canadian content from satellite radio. It is these kinds of fine distinctions that the CRTC must be able to make.

Parliament's important role consists in issuing guidelines to the CRTC, and that is the opportunity we have today. By virtue of a vote today, we the members of this 39th Parliament of Canada expect

### *Business of Supply*

Canadian content to be respected and maintained; we do not want to back down but want to find innovative ways, when necessary, to continue encouraging a musical industry in our country.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during his speech, the hon. member made a statement related to the restrictions on public broadcasting. He said that if we gave up on that, we would give up on everything. That is a very fundamental point for which I know the member has been fighting for a long time.

In the preamble of the convention, there are a couple of statements about cultural diversity in which it states that it:

—creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations...

A critic of this convention said that these policies might be used by a nation to control what citizens could see, read, listen to and do and that the world must reaffirm the rights of all people to make the decisions for themselves.

There seems to be a debate about whether promoting cultural diversity and protecting public broadcasting is at odds with the principles of the convention. Could the member comment on that?

● (1050)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger:** Mr. Speaker, the conflict is between the private interests, which would wish to control what is broadcast to every Canadian, versus the public interest of having a variety and multiplicity of voices.

I fall in the second category. I believe that in a democracy such as this, the government, through the voices of its elected representatives, has a right to determine that there will be policies to encourage a multitude of voices on our airways and not just, if left to itself, a diminishing number of voices, as we have seen.

In the private sector, time and time again, decade after decade, there is a tendency to reduce the competition by acquiring it. That is likely the phenomena we would see in cultural industries, in broadcasting in particular. That would be a crime if we allowed that to happen.

A country that does not control its own airwaves through publicly governed institutions such as Parliament, and in this case the CRTC, is a country that has given up. That means its airwaves and whatever Canadians get to consume on their television sets or radios would be dictated by foreign interests, and likely private foreign interests.

I surmise and I put to the House that the airwaves are a public good and that they should be controlled by public entities, such as the Parliament of Canada. By and large, we have demonstrated a willingness to intervene and to say that there shall be restrictions in foreign ownerships and that there shall be requirements for Canadian content. In doing that, we have created a cultural space that is much more amenable to a variety of voices and to a diversity. The convention is all about that. It gives the state the authority to protect cultural diversity. Maybe it goes beyond that and gives the state the duty to protect cultural diversity, and it is about that.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Abbotsford.

I rise today to address the motion brought forward by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier. Before I do that, I reflect on the fact that this is the fifth time I have had the privilege of being the member for Kootenay—Columbia. I thank the people in my constituency for their continued confidence and commit to everybody, whether they voted for me or not, that I am their member of Parliament and I will reflect their views and their wishes in this chamber.

As I have also suggested on another occasion, Mr. Speaker, I think you look just fine in that chair. It is a job well overdue.

I cannot support the motion for a number of reasons, but since I only have 10 minutes to speak, let me concentrate on its potential effect on one of Canada's most important cultural industries, broadcasting.

The member's motion fails to consider the pace of technological change faced by broadcasting. The pace of change is bewildering, everything from TV on our cellphones to digital satellite radio. I suggest that the challenges and the changes are probably only restricted by the size of our imagination.

The government is committed to addressing those changes, but to do so, we need to develop a new policy framework. I cannot say exactly what the framework would look like and neither could the member opposite. The government is committed to work with the industry, the producers of television, radio and the people of Canada to develop those solutions.

There are many good ideas on these new challenges and the motion would slam the door on most of them. Just because something may have worked in the past, there is no guarantee that it will continue to work in the future.

Make no mistake, the government will not abandon Canadian content requirements, restriction on foreign ownership or financial support for the public broadcaster. We will keep those tools ready, but we will use them when appropriate. None of them are a complete solution to the challenges we face in the broadcasting sector. This is the essence of good public policy: consider the issues and adopt focused measures, a lesson the former government could have learned.

The motion seeks to deny the government the freedom to adapt those new policies or to modify old ones. I consider it an irresponsible motion. While I am prepared to accept he is an honourable gentleman, as I want to be, he probably did not have any intent for it to be irresponsible. The fact is, it ends up trying to paint the government as somehow being un-Canadian.

He protested a couple of minutes ago that the debate should be above politics. The motion basically attempts to create the impression that somehow the Conservative Party is un-Canadian and that it is not committed to cultural options. I will not take any lessons from the member on how to protect Canadian culture.

The motion talks about ensuring or expanding funding for the CBC. Where was the member when the government, led by his

party, slashed the funding for the CBC in 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997 or 1998? Where was he when his party presided over a government that denied the CBC stability in the years since then?

It is truly sad that the member tries to pose as a friend of the CBC when his own party failed to deliver stable funding to the CBC, even when the stable funding was supposedly part of his election platform. Again, we are faced with the meaning of Liberal promises: much committed; little delivered.

The government will not be bound to fund the CBC at any level, especially in light of the fact we are about to undertake a review of the CBC's mandate. The kind of commitment contained in the motion will not allow the CBC to develop a strategic plan. The government will ensure that the CBC breaks out of the cycle of short term plans that it has been locked into for the past decade by the former Liberal government. Based on a mandate review, we will ensure the corporation plans ahead and then we would deliver the appropriate support.

The government is committed to provide the needed funding for the CBC. In the last days I think we have shown we keep our commitments.

We will go further than simply promising cash to the CBC. We want to ensure it is truly working as a public broadcaster. We intend to ensure that not only does the CBC continue to exist. We want to ensure that it is genuinely relevant to Canadians. A public broadcaster that does not have the support of the public cannot be called a success.

● (1055)

With respect to commercial radio, there is no doubt that Canada's broadcasting sector is healthy. We know the numbers. There are more than 750 radio and television stations delivering news, entertainment and information to Canadians. Those stations use conventional signals, cable and satellites to get their programming into Canadian homes and as stated earlier, there are many more new, technological advances and challenges that are facing that industry.

In that respect the distribution networks are changing and changing dramatically. TV over the Internet is not with us yet, but I would be prepared to guess that it is only just very likely around the corner. If this motion were to pass, it would deny the government the tools needed to face that challenge. New solutions will be needed to solve these new problems and this motion denies the government the freedom. It puts us in handcuffs.

Much more is at stake than simply Canadian government policy. The industry employs thousands of Canadians and generates some \$11.5 billion in economic activity each year. The opposition motion would jeopardize all that just to make a political point in the House.

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The hundreds of broadcasters who make the industry vital know that we have to develop new business plans and strategies to ensure future success. I would advise the hon. members opposite to take the example of the broadcasters and to withdraw this backward motion.

The best way to ensure that there is Canadian content on the airwaves is not solely through regulation, though regulation has its part. It is through ensuring there is a vital broadcasting system. The government believes in finding a place for Canadian voices on the airwaves and we believe those voices must be heard.

However, there is also a place for healthy competition on the airwaves. We do not believe in monopolies. We believe in necessary government regulation, but we do not believe that all regulation is a good thing. We want to encourage Canadian talent so that it wins a place on the world's airwaves.

We will invest in artists to ensure that they can reach a level of excellence that sees the world coming to their doors. Canadians will have more choices in the future. Technological change makes that almost certain. We cannot simply pass a motion today that would ensure a significant number of those choices would be Canadian.

The government is committed to a strong Canadian broadcasting system which is why I cannot support this motion. It sounds like a proposal that will help Canadian broadcasters and cultures, but in reality it denies the government the tools it needs to develop the policies that will take our broadcasters to new levels of success.

Canadians always rise to the challenge. Canadians always succeed when they are challenged, and we want to maintain an open door for Canadians to succeed, not be tied down and handcuffed with a motion such as the member has proposed.

• (1100)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member repeatedly referred in his comments to broadcasters, yet I do not believe I heard him once mention producers of shows. For broadcasters to stay in business, they need a whole production industry and that comes from requirements of Canadian content, from financial support and so forth. I did not hear him mention any concerns regarding producers.

He did mention that the broadcasting industry is doing very well financially, and that is true, but the producers in the country, independent ones and others, are not doing very well. Their margins have been reduced to almost non-existence.

Would the member acknowledge that if we do not have constant funding and requirements, that producers will be in jeopardy and therefore the whole edifice could crumble if we do not have the content for broadcasters? We would then be relying strictly on foreign content which is already quite pervasive on our airwaves.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, I am sure the member is very well aware of the so-called industrial production. This would be production for American producers in particular coming into Canada where we are looking at \$10 million, \$50 million or \$100 million projects. That keeps the production facilities. That keeps the technicians at a very high rate of employment. There are dips and there are excesses, but that side of the industry is healthy.

I am inclined to agree with the member with respect to the question of ensuring that we have a place for Canadians in the Canadian industry. We have to be flexible. If the member were to take a look at our budget, he would not see the doom and gloom that had been forecast by some people, perhaps not by him but some people in his party, as to what we would be doing.

We are very much aware of the fact that Canadians have a place in Canadian production and certainly in Canadian broadcasting.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's speech and I find some of it hard to fit into what he is promising, what the delivered results will be, and the fact of being flexible. How much more flexible do we need to be when our domestic film audience in English Canada has deteriorated to about the 5% market?

We have seen in terms of cultural policy in Canada that if we do not have regulation, the private broadcasters simply do not step up to the plate as the hon. member promises. We have seen with Cancon that 30 years ago there was virtually no Canadian music being played on the airwaves by the private broadcasters until the Canadian government insisted. Cancon has created an international star system because of regulation and because we set clear rules in place.

We have not had nearly the same set of rules in television and neither have we had them in film, and our industries continue to lag. We only have to look back to 1999 and the CRTC decision which had devastating impacts for domestic television production in this country.

I am trying to get a sense of why it is that we should let the government have all the flexibility it needs to open the market without having clear commitments from it on what kind of regulations it will enforce in order to maintain a vital domestic cultural industry.

**Mr. Jim Abbott:** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member would want us to seek input and ask questions to find out where we should be going in the minds of the people in Canada and the people in the industry.

Surely the member would recognize that it was January 23 that the government took over after 13 years of Liberal government. I believe that he is referring to the failed policies of the Liberal government and certainly not to ours because we are still in the process of developing what is going to be best for Canadians, Canadian content and the Canadian industry.

I do not think we are diametrically opposed to where the member is, but he must recognize the fact that the Conservative government is going to put its stamp in a very progressive way on this aspect of Canadian culture. We are in the process of developing that and I think he will be quite pleased when he sees the final result which will be in a matter of a very short period of time in the future.

• (1105)

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the motion presented by the member for Ottawa—Vanier. I also want to thank the member for Kootenay—Columbia for sharing his time with me.

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The intent of the motion is to compel the government to maintain the existing program policies and regulations:

—by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting—

Let me state from the outset that we do support the convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions. The issue for us is its misuse and misapplication in the motion before the House.

I would suggest that the motion is misguided and should be defeated for three reasons. First, it is premature and prejudges the outcome of numerous mandate reviews which have been requested by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage.

Second, it essentially restates the status quo when, in fact, on January 23 Canadians voted for change.

Third, it completely ignores the time and effort which went into the preparation of the Lincoln report, a comprehensive and time consuming report on Canadian broadcasting which was completed in June 2003.

Let me first address the issue of mandate reviews. As the House knows, the Minister of Canadian Heritage is in the process of initiating a complete review of the CBC's mandate. The results of that review are critical to determining the future direction of Canada's biggest public broadcaster.

In fact, as recently as May 16 the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage unanimously passed a motion that the minister provide committee members with an opportunity to review and offer modifications to the terms of reference for the CBC mandate review.

The government is committed to long term, stable funding for Canadian broadcasting and the arts. Unlike the previous government, which promised to support the CBC and then slashed its budget, we will continue to deliver on our promises.

I also note that at the same May 16 committee meeting the members unanimously agreed to review the mandates of all crown corporations under its purview to ensure their capacity to carry them out properly.

The purpose of course of mandate reviews is to determine whether new policies and approaches need to be implemented to allow Canada's artists and creators to adapt to rapidly changing technology and fierce global competition.

Sadly, if the motion before us today were to pass, it would essentially render the mandate reviews meaningless, since the motion prejudges the outcomes of those reviews.

On the second issue, I note that the motion is focused on preserving the current status quo. It demands that existing Canadian content requirements be maintained. It demands that current foreign ownership rules be maintained.

What the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier conveniently forgets is that on January 23 Canadians voted for real change. Canadians rejected a Liberal agenda that ignored new technological realities and failed to help Canadian artists compete on the international stage.

The Conservative government on the other hand is committed to working with the cultural sector to develop policies that will ensure that this sector thrives. It is important that we work with cultural communities to ensure that they are equipped for the new technological realities of the 21st century.

The old solutions no longer work, yet that is exactly what this motion does. The motion guarantees that Canadian artists and cultural communities will fall further behind the rest of the world in pursuing their aspirations and their artistic goals.

My third reason for speaking against this motion is perhaps the most troubling one. It is the complete disregard, which this motion shows, for the comprehensive work done by a previous heritage committee. Case in point is the Lincoln report which was issued in June 2003 and is a sweeping and exhaustive review of the broadcasting industry in Canada.

● (1110)

The report highlights in great detail a host of challenges facing the broadcasting industry as it seeks to reflect our cultural identity and heritage while remaining viable and competitive in a global environment.

Audience fragmentation; loss of local, community and regional programming; rapidly changing and emerging technologies; consolidation and convergence of broadcasting entities; and challenges to our Canadian cultural identity are all issues that received extensive treatment in the Lincoln report.

Furthermore, the report makes numerous recommendations aimed at preserving and enhancing the viability of a distinctively Canadian broadcasting industry. The recommendations also address many of the needs of the producers and artists who deliver the product to Canadian televisions, radios and computers.

The motion, on the other hand, ignores several years of painstaking committee work and consultation. The motion simply reintroduces an outdated set of platitudes which serve no purpose other than to perhaps promote the particular political objectives of the tabler.

The motion is quite unnecessary. If there were any question as to the government's commitment to invest in culture and the arts, one would need look no further than the government's recent budget which provided an additional investment of \$50 million into the Canada Council for the Arts. It also introduced tax exemptions that would help create a pool of donations to charities equal to approximately \$300 million. It is also important to note that it was this government that dealt directly and effectively with Quebec's participation at UNESCO.

The timing and content of the motion do not bode well for the future work of the heritage committee. It is important to note that the motion does not emanate from the work of that committee. I perhaps had naively assumed that the work of our committee would be conducted in good faith with the interests of all Canadians at heart. I had assumed that the usual process of examination and review would be followed. Unfortunately, the motion appears to be a brazen attempt to circumvent the committee's mandate by reasserting a failed Liberal agenda.

If the motion passes, it places the work of the committee in a box. It implies that the minister and the committee members cannot be trusted to act in good faith and in the best interests of Canadians. Essentially, the motion renders useless any further work of the heritage committee. In that sense, it is vexatious and I ask members of this House not to support it.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions but I will limit myself to two.

The member from Abbotsford referred to Canadian content restrictions on foreign ownership in public broadcasting as a set of platitudes. I presume that was a slip of the tongue and he may want to correct that statement.

He also said “that he and his government are committed to stable long term funding for public broadcasting”, and yet those members do not want to vote in favour of the motion. Is it because they are only prepared to commit to reduced stable long term funding? That is the concern out there.

When the minister promised during the campaign to respect the commitment to fund the Canada Council it was not for \$50 million. It was to double its budget over three years. What the council received instead was less than one-third of what was committed to.

If the member reads the dissenting report of the Lincoln report he will know what I am talking about. The current parliamentary secretary to the minister favours the privatization of the CBC.

Are those members only in favour of reduced stable long term funding? If that is the case I can understand why they do not want to vote for the motion. We have no problems with reviewing the mandate of CBC in a universe where its level of funding is stable and predictable but not reduced.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member that it was his government that slashed the funding to the CBC. It was also the hon. member who just a few minutes ago talked about cheap political points. In fact, that is what the motion does. The motion turns the process on its head. It puts the cart before the horse.

Work is typically done within committee and the minister does her or his work. Policy is then formulated out of that process. Conclusions are not reached before that process is complete, which is why we are voting against the motion. It is inappropriate and it invalidates the future work of the heritage committee and the work that the minister wants to do in the interests of all Canadians.

• (1115)

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member for at least one or two particulars. He is talking about platitudes and saying that this is some kind of meaningless exercise that undermines the Lincoln report.

I would remind him that the parliamentary secretary for his party opposed the Lincoln report. I am confused. Is he saying that his party will now support the recommendations of the Lincoln report when the parliamentary secretary, chosen by the Prime Minister, was against the Lincoln report?

I am looking at the report to see what particular platitude bothers him so much. We are asking the government to ensure that we maintain or enhance existing Canadian cultural content require-

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ments. Is that some kind of outdated platitude that will affect our artists? We are asking to maintain current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector. Is that the issue? We are asking for continued financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages is that the platitude that is bothering him and that he thinks is handcuffing Parliament and his party?

He seems to be bothered somewhat but I cannot quite get my finger on what it is exactly he feels is so outdated and restrictive that it is taking away the mandate that was won by the Conservative Party on January 23.

**Mr. Ed Fast:** Mr. Speaker, the Lincoln report sets out a host of recommendations, some that I personally support strongly, some that I would consider and some that I would not. I am sure the government will review the Lincoln report and the minister will receive a copy of it. In fact, I believe a motion will be tabled at our committee in the future to refer that report to the minister for a response within 120 days. We will know then what recommendations the minister supports.

How can we come to the conclusions that are set out in the motion without doing our homework? That is the puzzling part of it. The motion has no place on the floor of the House today because there is so much work to be done yet. We already have the Lincoln report, which will be reviewed by the minister, and we have mandate reviews to be undertaken for every crown corporation under the mandate.

What we are opposed to is the fact that the cart has been put before the horse, which is no way to conduct business. I encourage the member to withdraw the motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, from the outset I want to point out that I personally do not consider this motion a platitude, nor do I consider the comments and arguments of my colleagues platitudes.

The Bloc Québécois is in favour of the motion. It is nonetheless convinced that it would be more realistic to consider that Quebec, in matters of cultural regulation, is better positioned to properly defend issues related to its own culture.

The Bloc Québécois considers it essential to regulate broadcasting and telecommunications. The Bloc Québécois reminds hon. members that the worst attack on Canadian content was carried out under, and with the approval of, the Liberals in the satellite radio case. Although the Bloc Québécois is in favour of appropriate financial support for public radio and television, it is nonetheless opposed to their use for the purposes of federalist propaganda.

The Liberal motion is based on the convention on the diversity of cultural expressions.

The official title of the proposed UNESCO convention is “Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions”. It will:

Recognize in international law the distinctive nature of cultural goods and services as vehicles of values, identity and meaning.

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Clearly affirm of the right of countries to have cultural policies to ensure genuine diversity of cultural expressions domestically.

Include provisions by which developed countries undertake to support developing countries in nurturing the development of their own emerging cultural industries.

Assert the principle of non-subordination—meaning the legal status of the convention in international law will be equal to that of other international treaties, including trade agreements.

Commit countries to take the provisions of the convention into account not only when entering into other international agreements, but also when applying and interpreting agreements to which they are party.

Include a basic dispute settlement mechanism, creating the potential that in the years ahead the convention will accumulate a body of written decisions on issues of cultural policy that will ultimately influence how culture is treated in trade agreements.

This introductory text being what it is, until Quebec's sovereignty becomes a reality, the viability of major aspects of Quebec's cultural interests is unconstitutionally and intimately linked to the position the federal government will take in each issue related to culture and communications domestically and abroad.

As far as UNESCO is concerned, it is too bad that Quebeckers are unable to make the necessary representations directly to the other member nations of UNESCO so that we could encourage them to ratify the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

This Convention needs to be ratified by 30 countries to become operational. At this very moment, there are only two countries that have ratified it: Canada and Mauritius. Does its inaction in convincing other nations to ratify this convention mean that the federal government, traditionally an international leader in this area, has already given up on the matter? I wonder.

Are we in this House once again going to be the privileged witnesses of the Asia-Pacific axis syndrome regarding this sensitive issue, as we were for the Kyoto protocol?

Let us briefly recall the crucial details that informed the debates surrounding this convention during the 38th Parliament.

The Bloc Québécois, nurtured and supported by the Quebec wing, its cousin and ally, the Parti Québécois, has waged a battle precisely to defend this issue, because it was important, decisive for its identity, for its culture, within this large North American family dominated by our large neighbour, the United States. So with tremendous passion we initiated representations among figures other than Canadians to raise their awareness so that, once back in their own countries, they could carry the message that this is a convention that will help to save us from cultural homogenization and standardization, from alienation and acculturation.

• (1120)

Because, what would we be tomorrow if by chance we let ourselves get lost in the cultural frames of reference and products that come to us from our big neighbour, which exports close to \$7 billion worth of cultural products annually? What would become of our children's and our grandchildren's identity if we allowed ourselves to be nourished by these references and models of identification?

That was the rationale for our struggle and we were glad to see that the previous government did not drop the ball until we found satisfaction on our side.

With its accountability neurosis, the new government, the Conservative government, should begin to set its own house in order by demonstrating its "sense of state". In other words, it should honour and actively promote the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, secured with hard work, and signed and ratified by the previous government. It should make sure in particular that this convention is not sacrificed on the altar of the WTO and that it keeps a mechanism for settling disputes so as to ensure that trade tribunals do not end up determining what an "acceptable" cultural policy is.

If culture were regarded as merchandise, we would end up with a form of cultural Darwinism in which only the strongest and the most powerful would survive.

The federal government must therefore confirm that it will not take part in such an undertaking by taking specific action here and now. This means—for us, until Quebec deigns to say yes—that federal government departments and agencies must maintain the programs, policies and regulations that support the artistic sector and cultural industries, specifically by maintaining or promoting the current requirements for Canadian cultural content. This point warrants a little fine tuning. In this regard, I will revive the matter of satellite radio.

The main problem in developing Canadian and francophone content in commercial radio arises from the advent of satellite radio. If it remains on the fringe, the licensing conditions set for it are considerably less stringent than those set for commercial radio and have considerably impressed conventional broadcasters, who have every opportunity now to call for relaxation of their own conditions of licence.

We must remember that the Liberal government could have rejected the CRTC's decision, and that by not doing so, it in fact supported its decision. In other words, the Liberals, who today are presenting this fine motion—I am not saying that ironically, but quite sincerely—helped weaken Canadian cultural sovereignty and struck a hard blow against cultural diversity.

The Liberal member for Bourassa, who disagreed with the position of his own government and with the CRTC, advocated the abolition of the CRTC, purely and simply.

In an open letter in September 2005, with the matter not yet settled, I set the problem out clearly, as heritage critic. The letter was entitled *The Threat comes from Space*. I will quote part of it.

The decision by the CRTC in June to award licences to Sirius Canada and CSR satellite digital radio services is most definitely bad news for radio in Canada and Quebec, but worse still, it illustrates the position of the federal government in its decision of September 8 to refuse to ask the CRTC to review its decision, as the law permitted it to do.

• (1125)

By deciding to ignore the many joint requests for review, in particular that of ADISQ, the Union des artistes, SOCAN and five other signatories in the entertainment sector, and by deciding not to instruct the CRTC to re-examine its decision, the federal government, by its own initiative, has surrendered both Canadian and—despite our best efforts—Quebec cultural sovereignty.

The Liberals modified the satellite-use policy to allow licensing, thereby enabling two U.S.-run companies, Sirius Satellite Radio and XM, the parent companies of SIRIUS Canada and CSR, to basically control this new medium.

I repeat that the worst blow to Canadian cultural sovereignty was dealt barely a year ago by the party that introduced this motion today.

I remember introducing a motion before the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage to encourage my Liberal, Conservative and New Democrat colleagues to react to what was going on behind closed doors. I did not intend to go on at length about the circumstances surrounding the decision ratifying the CRTC's move to issue these two operating licences. However, I must point out that the committee unanimously adopted the motion, which read as follows:

That in the opinion of the committee, the federal government must tighten its policies in broadcasting, as the Committee said in the report named *Our Cultural sovereignty: The Second Century of Canadian Broadcasting*, so that Canada entirely controls broadcasting in radio and television on its territory.

This motion was adopted unanimously by the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage on November 22, 2005.

I would now like to discuss foreign ownership. As my colleagues across the way no doubt expect, the Bloc Québécois is against any loosening of the foreign ownership rules in telecommunications. Because the telecommunications system is vital to any nation's sovereignty, it must be controlled by countries.

In its June 2003 dissenting report on *Our Cultural sovereignty*, the Bloc Québécois pointed out that

In our opinion, increased foreign ownership would not solve the problem of media concentration. On the contrary: weaker restrictions on foreign ownership and an influx of new capital would accelerate the concentration process.

Quebec creators who testified before the committee agreed unanimously with this position. I quote:

Without Canadian ownership of broadcasting companies, it would be impossible to maintain the integrity of the system and its fundamental mission, which is to safeguard, enrich and strengthen the cultural, political, social, and economic fabric—

We are extremely concerned by the fact that the Standing Committee on Industry, Natural Resources, Science and Technology has recommended the liberalization of foreign ownership in the telecommunications sector and indirectly the liberalization of ownership rules for broadcasting distribution undertakings.

At the time, the Bloc Québécois recommended that the Minister of Canadian Heritage actively lobby her industry colleague to maintain the existing foreign ownership rules for telecommunications and broadcasting.

• (1130)

However, the Telecommunications Policy Review Panel, which submitted its report in March 2006, recommended relaxing controls on foreign ownership, as indicated in a March 26 article published by the Canadian Press:

The three experts also issued a series of recommendations regarding two more controversial topics that did not fall within their mandate, namely, broadcasting policy and foreign ownership.

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According to them, it is extremely important that a group of independent experts take a close look at those two issues because they are inevitably linked to the telecommunications sector.

While awaiting the report, Ottawa should authorize foreign investments in telecommunications companies that are not subject to the Broadcasting Act.

The industry minister could therefore use the report as an opportunity to open the debate on foreign ownership, to which he claims to be somewhat sympathetic. In an interview with *The Globe and Mail*, the industry minister said that he would be open to discussion on that issue.

Naturally, the Bloc Québécois will fight against any relaxing of controls that will inevitably affect telecommunications in Quebec.

Let us now speak of current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector. When ordering a report with recommendations on the issue, some questions must be asked. In what direction were the Liberals really headed? Would foreign capital be seen more favourably? The question bears asking. Another step closer to the destruction of Canada's and Quebec's cultural sovereignty? This other question must also be asked.

The Conservatives have inherited this file. What will they do with these recommendations? In the event that this new government relaxes or eliminates restrictions on foreign ownership in the area of telecommunications, I am absolutely convinced that it will be creating serious difficulties for generations to come. With regard to the convergence of radio, cable and telecommunications, changes in ownership of telecommunications equipment will have serious repercussions for the current broadcasting legislation.

If the Bloc supports the Liberal's motion today, it is worthwhile remembering that, in September 2005, the Liberal Minister of Industry—the current Conservative Minister of International Trade—stated that he was open to more relaxed foreign ownership rules, as I mentioned earlier. That is what we were looking for in their election platform during the campaign: their vision for a cultural policy, and more specifically, their vision for broadcasting.

It should be noted that it is because of this Conservative perspective—that of integrating the market, bringing in the private sector and lowering our guard with respect to our neighbour, a large exporter of cultural products—that members of this House anticipate this weakening of Canadian, and consequently Quebec, cultural sovereignty. I know that the opposition will vote unanimously in favour of this motion.

• (1135)

[English]

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in many aspects of the member's speech.

I want to ask him how realistic he might be with respect to the question of satellite. Without my making any comment on the decision of the CRTC, I wonder if he would not recognize that some of his ideas are a bit pie in the sky, so to speak. One example is the difficulty the commercial broadcasters presently on the ground are having in the province of Quebec. Because they are restricted with their French radio stations and they are restricted to a higher limit on the popular music, they are finding that their audience is actually moving to the English radio stations because the audience wants to hear the different music that is available to them. The audience will go where it wants to go.

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When I was in Edmonton last Christmas, I happened to be in a mall and was offered to buy a satellite receiver for my automobile that would either be on the American or the Canadian program. I had that choice in Edmonton. I have no idea whether or not it was a legal choice, but I had the choice. I could have made the choice on the basis of what I was being offered by the American satellite broadcaster or the Canadian broadcaster.

Is the member not rather expecting these regulations to solve the problems, which of course is the point of the Conservative Party? There is a place for regulations but regulations will not resolve the issue because Canadians have every right in the world to make choices as consumers.

Is he being realistic when he is talking about giving up Canadian sovereignty with respect to satellite broadcasting?

● (1140)

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to clarify one thing: I have not asked that we give up sovereignty. I do not know if the translation was accurate, but I did not ask that we give up Canadian cultural sovereignty with respect to satellite radio: on the contrary. Am I being realistic? Yes, from the perspective of Quebec. Quebec is the fragile oasis here in North America.

When the hon. member opposite says that certain commercial radio stations are complaining that the audience is fragmenting and looking on the Internet for what it cannot find on commercial radio, I quite understand that. However, it is our duty, as representatives of the people and as representatives of the identity of a people who have French as their common language, to ensure that their presence, their voice, can make itself heard, whatever the medium, be it conventional radio, commercial radio or even satellite radio. We are looking through the lens of identity, anticipating all the dangers and all the assaults to cultural identity.

It is not from the financial perspective, or the profit motive, that we look at things. No, our sensitivity to the issue is anthropological in nature, something which probably is not shared by my colleague across the way.

What shall we leave as our legacy tomorrow, after our time here? Shall we all be appalling simpletons who leave behind an identity cloned from that of the United States? That is what I ask myself. It is a matter of perspective. I will respond very simply to his question by saying that it is a matter of perspective. We are all concerned about problems of identity. We are concerned about the problem of cultural heritage in the medium and long terms.

[English]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on the question the parliamentary secretary posed in terms of choice. We see in this world of privatized culture often the choice of do we want a Coke with our fries or do we want a Sprite with our fries.

The question being put forward with the example of the cars is that we have now mandated in Canada a notion of choice where of 100 stations that the CRTC gave licences to, how many were set aside for Canadian programming? Perhaps eight or ten. How many of those were francophone? Perhaps four. There was no obligation to

provide aboriginal radio programming. There was no obligation to provide any kind of real consumer choice.

At the end of the day, when the consumer buys a Chevy car, turns on the radio and there are 92 stations playing all America all the time, for the parliamentary secretary to suggest that is choice is a complete abdication of the fundamental rule that we have maintained in Canada, that our airwaves belong to the people of Canada and the people of Canada have a right to hear their voices on their airwaves.

I suggest to the member if he is being accused of being pie in the sky, what is pie in the sky when we have five or six stations in French across the entire country? I am being very generous with my examples of how many stations are being set aside for Canadian francophone content, because there is no real choice on the stations that are being offered right now.

[Translation]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. It is in fact a question which already contains its answer.

It was revolting to see the speed and the rashness with which the CRTC granted these licences in spite of our opposition, in spite of our initiatives, in spite of the interventions of the former minister of Canadian Heritage.

We have here a new vehicle, the radio of the 21st century, satellite radio. It offers 120 channels of which only 10% play Canadian content. Within that percentage we find 5% francophone content. In the beginning, it was 2.5%. We exerted the necessary pressure to get the francophone portion bumped up, and it was done. However that is still inadequate.

We should look at this new radio of the 21st century as we looked at the evolution of the Internet. In its development, the Internet slipped through every mesh of regulation; it is today an instrument that is uncontrolled and uncontrollable. Today that instrument conveys a certain culture to the detriment of other cultures. In my presentation just now, I spoke about cultural Darwinism. That is the logic of the Internet, and it will be the logic of satellite radio as well, if those who govern us today never come to a realization of these risks, never develop a critical rationale for the cultural heritage they want to leave.

● (1145)

[English]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that some of the discussion that has been occurring in the last few moments has indicated that satellite radio was similar to broadcasting. Perhaps that needs to be reconsidered in the sense that broadcasting is delivered free over the air. Satellite radio is delivered on an individual customer basis and the customer pays on a monthly basis for this service.



There is no question there is a key difference between satellite radio and general broadcast radio which licensors are able to broadcast freely over the air. There is no service charge for that.

My question for the member opposite is in relation to some of his points on reaffirming our protection of Canadian content in our broadcasters, both television and radio. There is no question that this has helped our lists in these areas over the years.

As we peer into the future it seems that both radio and television will be delivered over the Internet. I am not sure there is anything that can be done, but I would like to hear the thoughts of the member opposite as to what could be done in the future in the sense that both television and radio will likely be delivered entirely over the Internet.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto:** Mr. Speaker, the perspective of my colleague opposite is probably realistic. It is possible that two generations from now—or perhaps even in one generation—the Internet will be replaced by something else since everything changes so quickly. This new vehicle integrates every televisual and broadcasting means. What are we to do? Now is the time for debate. That is why we are here: to prevent the worst.

That is the purpose of the motion the hon. member from the official opposition is proposing. It is an opportunity for us to get together to express, through our vote, a sort of moratorium on this deviance in which we are losing.

If members opposite are comfortable with the idea of becoming cultural clones of the United States, then that is their problem. In Quebec, we have other ideas. I talked about them earlier, so I will not go over it again. However, we are here today to debate these issues. What should we do?

They were elected to govern. They are in a minority in Canada and in Quebec. So, it is up to them to come up with ideas to fulfill their mandate.

Earlier I heard another member opposite talking about the legitimacy of exercising the power they have today. He thereby dismissed today's exercise. I want to remind hon. members that they were elected to a minority government in the rest of Canada and in Quebec and that humility, under the circumstances, would be appropriate for reflecting calmly and providing the answers to the questions their counterparts opposite have just asked.

• (1150)

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to once again rise in this House and represent the people of Timmins—James Bay and the New Democratic Party in a discussion on the importance of maintaining cultural diversity.

I appreciate the motion put forward by my hon. colleague, the member for Ottawa—Vanier, because it is clear we need to give direction as the majority in this House to the government on where we need to go in terms of our obligations with UNESCO. Certainly over the last dozen years we have seen a mere lip service paid to

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cultural programming in this country. While we had some of the biggest surpluses in Canadian history, we saw steady cuts to the Canada Council, the CBC, regional programming and other arts programming.

[*Translation*]

In Timmins—James Bay, for example, under the Liberals, organizations that worked to promote Franco-Ontarians' language and identity lacked support. These organizations—the ACFO, ARTEM and the La Ronde cultural centre—fought for the vitality and heritage of families living in rural, isolated northern communities. The government must make commitments to these communities and these programs.

[*English*]

There is an obligation for governments to be committed, but we have to look at this in terms of a larger issue which is taking place right now, which is the trade component and foreign ownership issues related to cultural practices. All over the world countries are struggling against an ever-decreasing gene pool of cultural experience. They are fighting in every country to maintain a sense of regional identity and regional voices in the face of this monocropping Disney culture.

What we have seen in Canada is that paying lip service is not enough. Clear policies have to be in place. It is meaningless to talk about our support for UNESCO if we as a Parliament do not, number one, support our cultural policies very clearly on the ground, and number two, give very clear direction to our trade negotiators to insist that our cultural rights will not be traded away. What is very clear is that after UNESCO the United States has moved much more aggressively to get cultural issues on the table in terms of bilateral agreements. The U.S. does not support what is happening at UNESCO, and we see at the GATS in Geneva the ongoing efforts to undermine these rights.

[*Translation*]

The negotiations on the General Agreement on Trade in Services run counter to our commitments to UNESCO. For example, why offer Quebec a seat at UNESCO when the Conservatives have already eliminated our cultural diversity?

[*English*]

The ongoing negotiations taking place at the GATS right now will have profound implications on our ability to maintain a cultural identity. For example, in March, when the industry minister received the recommendations on changes to telecom, he said that it would take weeks and months to study and to come back with recommendations on lifting foreign ownership restrictions. Yet we know that at the same time he was receiving that, Canadian trade delegations in Geneva already had been given very clear instructions.

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Canada is part of a pluri-lateral request to the countries of the GATS to strip foreign ownership restrictions on all telecom industries. The trade request, as put forward by the Conservative government, is a radical change in telecom policy. It runs counter to present Canadian law and it will have profound implications on our ability to maintain domestic cultural policy in Canada. The Conservative government has already begun pushing ahead with these talks without a debate in Parliament, without input from stakeholders and without telling Canadians what is on the table.

• (1155)

[*Translation*]

We must look at the Conservative agenda for restrictions on media, telephone and cable ownership. I think that the Conservatives will want to open the markets to foreign ownership.

The NDP recognizes that Canada must support cultural industries. It must support broadcasting, the arts and magazines because they are vitally important to Canada's identity and its survival in a privatized global market.

[*English*]

When the telecommunications review was going on, questions were asked. We have not heard answers. GATS discussions are ongoing, but we have not heard any answers.

We have to look at who are the main people on the file. We look at the industry minister. Before he was elected, he was with the right-wing Montreal think tank that was committed to the complete free market deregulation of telecommunication. The other key player on the file is the member for Vancouver Kingsway. The pluri-lateral request had to have been initiated when he was the Liberal minister in charge of the review of telecom. Now he is the key figure on the trade talks on deregulation of telecom. Perhaps he did not have to cross very far on the ideological floor to fit in with the Prime Minister's agenda.

The question that has to be asked is, what do changes to telecom have to do with our ability to maintain cultural policy and our obligations at UNESCO? Given the convergence of telecom, the same companies that are open for foreign takeovers in terms of cable television and Internet services are the same companies that provide most of our radio, television and even newspaper services. Would we expect that these companies will divest themselves of their broadcast obligations if we change the foreign ownership restriction. It is a joke to suggest that somehow we will be able to maintain domestic Canadian content quotas, build a firewall around our domestic industry, if we allow the sellout of the ownership of that to U.S. giants.

In light of this, whatever promises we get from the government in terms of its support, it is meaningless. At this point Canada is on the receiving end of a GATS pluri-lateral request in Geneva in the area of audio-visual services. The ongoing discussions, which we are not privy to and which we have no idea what mandate the government has given its negotiators, include questions of stripping domestic content, erasing the favourable tax policies that have encouraged the domestic film production in Canada and ending all foreign ownership restrictions in the delivery and production of audio-visual services.

Parliament has set very clear limits on foreign ownership in broadcast and telecom. We need to insist that our trade negotiators, who are undertaking to represent Canada on the international level, understand that they have to be in compliance with present Canadian law. If the government wants to come forward with an agenda to change our laws on broadcast and telecom, it should then come into the House and open it to debate, but it cannot partake in this in Geneva and then bring it back as a *fait accompli*.

Any changes to domestic ownership in Canada, any changes to who controls telecom or broadcast, has to be brought before the House. I am very pleased that the motion has opened up this issue because it allows us for the first time to bring these issues forward to the Canadian people.

Therefore, I would like to put forward an amendment to aid us in our discussions and I think also aid the government in understanding its obligations to Parliament. I move:

That the motion be amended to insert the following immediately after "that the government":

"provide direction to trade negotiators to ensure that domestic cultural rights are not undermined in any trade talks and"

Then we continue on with the motion "the House insist that the government...".

**The Deputy Speaker:** It is my duty to inform hon. members that pursuant to Standing Order 85 an amendment to an opposition motion may be moved only with the consent of the sponsor of the motion. Therefore, does the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier consent to the amendment being moved?

• (1200)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I do consider the amendment to be friendly and I consent to it being moved.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I first want to congratulate my colleague on his insightful, enlightening, passionate speech. He is an artist at heart. There is no denying his roots. Artists are in a better position than anyone to appreciate the potential damage.

I have just one question for him. Does the fact that Canada shares the English language with the United States justify the Conservatives' lax approach to culture?

[*English*]

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, it is a very germane question because we are perhaps 21 million anglophones spread across 4,000 kilometres. We know our biggest trading partner and our number one ally sees culture as a product, the same as Tide soap or GM cars.

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We know the necessity of maintaining a sense of culture. I represent an isolated, rural area in the north. My constituents do not hear their voice very often. They do not hear their own cultural expression. Therefore, there is a necessity for government to play a role in maintaining a fabric. Otherwise, if we do not see the importance of maintaining a cultural fabric, then what are we other than 21 million potential shoppers at a Wal-Mart?

With regard to the success of English cultural production, where there have been regulations, we have been able to compete internationally. Where there have been no obligations for regulation, we have been almost wiped off the map. When comparing film to music, there have been complete diametric positions.

Quebec and the francophone regions of the country have been somewhat more placated because there is an insulation factor. We see the success in Quebec of a domestic film industry that is maintained by the province, with support from the federal government. It also is because of the sense of having a language difference from our number one trading partner. The other parts of the country are very envious.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from the north does have a unique perspective, which I would agree with on most occasions.

I would like to talk a bit about some of the comments he made in relation to telephony over the Internet. He commented that greater control was needed. There is no question that this is a challenging area at which the government is looking.

However, breaking out the argument a little further, I would suggest that media delivered over the Internet, fortunately or unfortunately depending on our perspective, can be done from any point on the planet. How would the member recommend that the Government of Canada force companies to follow certain regulations in Canada? Those companies could take their capital and reinvest in different markets if they decided they did not like the regulations. There really would be no impediment on them for delivering their business. There is no difference if they deliver that business in northern Canada, or in the southern United States or in the Caribbean.

How would government accomplish a real solution in that area?

• (1205)

**Mr. Charlie Angus:** Mr. Speaker, definitely this cuts to the heart of where we go with broadcast, which would be AT&T delivering broadcast television over the Internet and bypassing any domestic cultural rights.

I am somewhat confused. There is the fear that if we do not kneel before capital all the time, it will pick up its toys and go someplace such as the Caribbean. That is fine. Bell Globemedia can move to the Caribbean, but there still will be a market here, which people will want to access.

I do not see our domestic radio, television markets or media saying that because they cannot provide us ABC news all the time or FOX news instead of Canadian news, that they will pack up and go someplace else. That simply is not a reality. The reality is our

broadcasters will respond to the regulations that are put before them. What we must put before them are clear rules. Some of those rules must be an obligation for domestic, regional Canadian voices.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to speak today on the important motion put forward by the member for Ottawa—Vanier. My riding of Parkdale—High Park in Toronto is home to many artists and others who make their living in the cultural sector. They are our friends and neighbours and they make our community a unique and indeed better place for us to live.

Former NDP critic Wendy Lill once said that “art is the soul of any great nation”. She was right, and for the city of Toronto, it is also more than that. Culture and the arts represent jobs for Canadians. In Toronto, 25,000 jobs are tied to film and television production alone. Hundreds more are in the broader cultural sector.

Toronto recently commissioned a cultural plan for the city which clearly outlines that much of Toronto's wealth is “generated by people who work with ideas, and studies have shown that such people prefer to live and work where they find a vibrant cultural scene”. It goes on to say, “In fact, Toronto's cultural sector is the dynamo that turns the biggest economic motor in the country”.

However, unlike commodities that rely on non-renewable resources, the creative sector is in fact an infinite resource, and I submit that it is the key to a thriving 21st century economy. Our mayor, David Miller, recently said that Toronto's cultural sector is a \$1 billion industry but that we need to do much better in this sector. For example, he said, there are federal tax incentives that are “so out of whack that it actually makes more sense for producers to shoot a show about Toronto in Regina or Winnipeg”. He said:

When you undermine the viability of the industry in Toronto, you undermine the industry in the whole country...you drive hard-working men and women...out of their chosen profession...[and] you reduce the talent and diversity of that talent throughout the country....

The cultural sector is also one of those unique economic engines that leaves a very small ecological footprint. Investment in the arts creates jobs, strengthens our national identity and gives us all our voice in an environmentally sustainable way. It is a win-win if ever I could think of one.

Despite this, the arts and cultural sector has been under attack after years of cutbacks, deregulation, unfair trade rules and partisan patronage appointments to our public broadcaster. That is why in this caucus we not only support the motion today but have proposed an amendment to strengthen it. That is also why our caucus has proposed substantial amendments to the federal accountability act, to stem the tide of partisan patronage appointments that tarnished the reputation of the CBC under the previous government.

The decision of the CBC to cancel programs like *This is Wonderland* is having a profound effect on employment, but also on our collective identity. Now there is no hour-long, Toronto-made drama on the air. As well, the decision of the CBC to cut its design department, which will axe almost 100 jobs and inevitably affect the quality of our public broadcaster, is also profoundly short-sighted.

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I was pleased to join with CBC employees last Friday to oppose these cuts, but it is appalling to think that if these cuts are allowed to go through, the CBC will no longer be able to design sets or make costumes, props or special effects in the Canadian epicentre of English public broadcasting. They will no longer be able to produce complete shows inside the CBC. This is yet another CBC sellout and we are losing our public broadcaster cut by cut. We need to have our Minister of Canadian Heritage step forward and stop this sellout.

We need a strong cultural sector in order to tell our stories as Canadians and to protect our sovereignty. The spirit of this motion, as amended, needs to be respected by the government and the minister needs to take this seriously. If so, we will have gone a long way to protecting and enhancing our cultural rights and our cultural sector.

I am calling on the minister to seize the opportunity today to signal to the CRTC that TV drama content requirements be imposed on Canada's private broadcasters and that we strengthen our public broadcaster. As a former CRTC commissioner and a television executive, the minister, we know, understands the industry well. In 2004 she recognized the need for stable funding, saying that "they have to have confidence and stability that those dollars of support are going to be there year after year".

It is also my hope that the minister will push for increased long term investment in the CBC. It is the only way that we can tell our own stories and protect our own jobs in the cultural sector.

● (1210)

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened quite intently to what the hon. member had to say. I have a couple of questions. Being that the member is from the Toronto area, she will know that for decades the U.S. media has been able to reach into her area over radio and certainly over television. I would contend that Toronto is culturally significantly different from Buffalo and Rochester, despite the fact that there are probably more radio and television choices from those areas than there are in Toronto. Despite this, Toronto has maintained a significantly different cultural stature, and I think that speaks to the choice of the people who live in Toronto.

Furthermore, in some regards I think this motion reflects days gone by. Centuries ago, the regimes that ruled over China built a wall that was aimed at protecting China from those who would invade. We know that such a wall does not work any more because new technologies exist. We have to be prepared to look forward, work through committee and come up with ideas on how to maintain and strengthen our culture.

I would like to hear the member's comments on why she believes Toronto has maintained a different identity from that of the cities close to it despite the fact that U.S. media has had a very prevalent role in Toronto.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I would argue that the strength of the cultural sector in Toronto reflects decisions made by previous generations to establish a separate identity by investing in our cultural sector and by insisting that we intervene in the economy and create organizations like the CBC, the Canada Council for the Arts and Heritage Canada in terms of investing in our community.

Unless we are prepared to invest in our culture and to create rules that strengthen opportunities for our cultural expression, then we are opening the door for all of our cultural access to come from south of the border and we will not be able to reflect the stories that we need to tell each other.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, public broadcasting in this country has been under assault after years of neglect by the Liberals and now by the Conservatives, and it is getting worse. The CBC has just announced plans to shut down the television design department, which is located in my riding of Trinity—Spadina. This will be a big loss for the film and theatre community in Toronto and it will take CBC out of the production business.

What does the hon. member think about the jobs that will be lost, this move by the CBC, and this risk to cultural expression in Canada?

● (1215)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments, this is a devastating blow for not only the dozens of people who work in this department but for CBC production overall. The skills that people develop in makeup, in set design and in costume design are skills that benefit not only the CBC and CBC programming but the entire cultural sector. Many people have been trained in these skills at the CBC and then have moved on to private production or to other cultural outlets. This is a very short-sighted move by the CBC. It is in our interests as a country to see this decision reversed.

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I wonder how much interference the NDP wants to put into CBC management if those members feel that the House of Commons should take responsibility for the management decisions of an independent crown corporation.

We recognize that people's lives and livelihoods are impacted by this decision, and that is unfortunate, but this decision was made by an independent crown corporation. Is it the NDP position that the House of Commons should take over the management of all aspects of the CBC as a crown corporation?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, certainly what we do not want to see is a continuation of the patronage appointments that have undermined the credibility of our public broadcaster. Hopefully the hon. member will agree with me on that.

In terms of management decisions, it is clear that the previous government underfunded our national broadcaster so that there have been cuts and sell-offs that are undermining its continued efficacy. That is what we need to see changed.

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**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

I am honoured to speak before the House today on this very important issue of the support for and maintenance by the government of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries.

Before I begin, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people of the Churchill riding for electing me as their representative here in Canada's Parliament. I also recognize that the riding of Churchill is the ancestral home of my family at the Norway House Cree Nation at the top of Lake Winnipeg.

I mention this as it is pertinent to what we are discussing here today. I am a Cree woman and I have had an opportunity to participate in the arts and cultural sector of Canada in an extraordinary way. I have worked as an actor and producer in the arts sector and I have participated in the cultural industry of this country.

As an actor, I was lucky enough to be part of one of Canada's most successful television series. *North of 60* was a CBC series that ran for six seasons and focused, for the first time in Canada, a dramatic series on an aboriginal community. This program became part of the cultural fabric of this country.

It is significant in its success not only as a Canadian television show, but also in the story it reveals in its inception, development, production and impact. It was the creation of independent writers and producers, and a leap of faith by a production company and a broadcaster led this project through development.

Questions were asked in 1992 about whether a project of this magnitude could possibly be suitably written, cast and directed. The many trained and skilled aboriginal individuals who were eventually employed in these creative capacities were available, as many of us had been extensively trained through the arts sector. Aboriginal people were involved from the development phase in writing and casting and as creative consultants, as the production reflected a specific cultural group.

The awareness by the production team that the South Slavey Dene were to be represented in a culture-specific manner was groundbreaking in mainstream arts. It reflected, I believe, the consciousness of a country that puts an emphasis on the cultural industry.

For many individuals throughout our great country, it is this consciousness that defines us as Canadians. It is the consciousness of diversity that takes root and provides each of us the opportunity speak to one another and to hear each other. It is what made this country great.

Without a doubt I would not be here today if it were not for the arts and the cultural industry, not only because it has provided me with the opportunity to see this great dynamic at work, but also because this sector provided me with the opportunity to participate and to be employed as a youth through theatre and art. It was the economic sector that had a place for me as a young Cree woman when so many industries throughout the 1970s did not.

As a woman who has worked in and dedicated my life to the cultural industries I have been able to identify the importance of an emphasis on strengthening and protecting this industry in Canada. Last October, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, adopted the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. I was personally touched when, on November 23, 2005, the previous Liberal government, under the leadership of the former prime minister, approved this convention.

The convention recognizes both the economic and the social value of cultural goods and services and the right of the state to take measures in support of diverse cultural expressions. At that time, the Liberal government initiated a lead to build international support.

This convention recognizes the impact of globalization through the rapidly changing technology of our day and the challenges it presents to ensure that cultural diversity is respected, valued and maintained as a right. UNESCO says:

In spite of its moral force as a milestone for international cooperation, the Declaration was regarded by Member States as an inadequate response to specific threats to cultural diversity in the era of globalization. For this reason, a binding standard-setting instrument on the Protection of the Diversity of Cultural Contents and Artistic Expressions is being currently considered.

It has reflected on the 1972 convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage and also the 2003 convention concerning the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage.

• (1220)

At the international level, the effort is consistent regarding culture, and the preservation and promotion of diversity. They are pillars of our societies. Together, these instruments reinforce the notion enshrined in the UNESCO universal declaration on cultural diversity, namely, that cultural diversity must be recognized as the common heritage of humanity and that its defence is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity.

There are cultural goods and services, diverse cultural expressions, and an intangible cultural heritage. We are speaking here today about the imperative of the preservation of creative diversity. It has never been more timely than now that we seek to participate in and lead this effort. As I have mentioned, I had an opportunity to participate in the production of what would be considered cultural goods and services in Canada. This was to become part of the cultural landscape and it is a testament to the cultural expression and heritage of this country.

There are two elements I would like to address at this time which are pertinent to this convention. First, it was as a result of the position which Canada took in its commitment to multiculturalism and the protection of a culture through arts and the cultural industry that this production was even possible; and second, it was a time when the Canadian television industry was not so threatened by globalization.

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The impact of globalization makes it difficult to conceive that this project could be done today. This is why we need to adhere to the tenets of this convention more than ever. As an individual raised in a culture of a nation of people who have had a difficult and inequitable history in Canada, where even today people in this House have had the audacity to say that my nation is not real, this is the very reason that we must remain committed to this convention.

In order to strengthen our cultural industries at home, we must ensure compliance of the convention abroad. We see no effort from the Conservative government to convince other countries to ratify the convention. Canada has had the opportunity and capacity to lead by example in this regard, yet is failing to do so.

The reality of foreign ownership challenges is quite real. To this end, the Liberal Party places a strong emphasis on maintaining the current level of foreign ownership to preserve our cultural identity. Let us not underestimate the consequences of neglecting our responsibilities to this sector and to the country.

• (1225)

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to be as scrupulously fair as I possibly can be when I ask this question.

When I asked the member for Ottawa—Vanier the question about UNESCO and the convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression, and the fact that it has been proposed by our current Prime Minister that Quebec will have a role to play at UNESCO, I believe I heard him say that this was a continuation of the policy by the former Prime Minister. I want to be scrupulously fair because to the best of my knowledge, that is what I heard.

I would like to get this buttoned down in terms of where the Liberals may be coming from. Would the member agree that in fact there is a place, as described by the member for Ottawa—Vanier, that had been set forward by the former Prime Minister and by our current Prime Minister, carved out now officially by the Conservative government, and is a valuable function for the province of Quebec and for UNESCO, particularly in moving forward on these issues that have a particular significance within the province of Quebec in Confederation.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize that one of the important facets of the Liberal government's position is to participate in an international arena in which it recognizes the diversity within its country.

As an aboriginal person, a Cree woman from a Cree nation, I value that intrinsically. Within my own life, it has had an impact which is immeasurable because of the protection by Canada, through the previous government and its commitment through multiculturalism to protect and promote the arts and the diversity of the country. It has had an impact on the lives of people which is immeasurable.

As far as the specific question regarding Quebec and its seat at UNESCO, I fail to understand what the member is asking here, so what I am responding with is that I believe that Canada's position, or the position of the then Liberal government, was absolutely critical in terms of our lead at the international stage.

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have heard some members stand up and say that they want to see more Canadian content. They do not think Canadians watch enough Canadian television or enough Canadian programming, or listen to enough Canadian music or this, that and the other thing.

The question I have is kind of a philosophical one. What is the right amount? How many Canadian movies do the Liberals or other parties in the House think Canadians must watch every year? Is there a certain percentage? In other words, if Canadians watch television, must they watch 20% Canadian content? Must they watch 10% Canadian content? Must they watch 50% Canadian content? How much do the opposition parties want to regulate the lives of Canadians? When it comes to music, how much must they listen to? Should they be forced to listen to Canadian music?

I would take the perspective that people should be allowed their free choice and their free will on these matters. If they choose to watch programming from other countries or listen to music from other countries, so be it. Let that be their choice.

It is an intriguing question that I posed to the other participants in this debate. What is the magic percentage? What is the right amount? Would they want 20%, 50%, 30%, or 100%? What do they ask of Canadians? What do they demand of Canadians that they must participate in that is strictly of a Canadian nature?

• (1230)

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address that question in the sense that, once again, I find the question a little odd in that the member speaks to demands and stringent guidelines in terms of how individuals perceive the arts and what is available to them.

We are not saying that we are trying to enforce and regulate how individuals watch TV. We are talking about providing opportunity. We are talking about participating in diversity and creation. That opportunity is vital to our country without regulating the production, policies and available funding. Government programs and policies have to support this sector and provide opportunities for Canadians to tune into radio, watch television and go to the theatre.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the honour to stand here today to talk about culture and Canadian content.

I want to pick up on the question that was asked earlier by the hon. member for Calgary West on Canadian content rules and regulations. As a former broadcaster myself, I remember filling out many forms and going through the motions of doing the 30% Canadian content when it came to radio broadcasting.

It is a very good question because we have to ask ourselves whether it is a question of instilling this in order to put upon the public restrictions as to what they can listen to. The point is to promote our culture. The point is to expose the talent that we have to all three coasts. That is not an easy task to do when we are in the second largest country in the world.

*Business of Supply*

For example, *Great Big Sea*, a band from my home province of Newfoundland and Labrador, is a very popular band all over North America, but would it have succeeded in the absence of Canadian content rules? That question will probably remain unanswered, but it certainly did give it a start to go across the country. Recently, it has had great concerts in British Columbia and south of the border. Part of its success is due to the Canadian content rules that we have.

I do not think the purpose of it is to put restrictions on citizens, particularly our youth. The point is to promote what it is we have, to promote Irish, Newfoundland and Labrador folk music across the country. It is something that is now being seen in CD sales across North America.

To me, Canadian content rules and regulations are less about the rules and regulations and more about the promotion of the culture that we have, and in particular in this case the culture being Newfoundland and Labrador which I always say is over brimming with culture, one that Canadians certainly do appreciate and enjoy.

I have been on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage for quite some time. Right now the bulk of broadcasting and the bulk of film production is done in the major centres, whether it be Toronto, Montreal, Calgary or Vancouver. However, there are other regions in the country that have a story to tell. We have to achieve the widest audience possible for them to tell that story. It is a good story and it is successful.

My hon. colleague from Churchill is a fine example of a show that she was on called *North of 60* which I enjoyed very much. It was a good insight as to the culture of that region of our country, a part of the country with a small part of the population that probably would not have been recognized because the capital was not there to do this in the private markets. So as a government we helped. We helped them tell their story to the world.

Recently, there was a documentary about the seal hunt. It was based at Twillingate which is in my home riding. With the fuss going on and of course the arguments back and forth between the activists in the United States and Europe and we as seal hunters, and I fully support the seal hunt, our story had to be told. It was told from the viewpoint of an area that is rich in culture, rich in heritage, and dependent upon a way of life that we continue today. That story was told and thanks to the investment by the Government of Canada, we have done it.

When it comes to Canadian content, I have a few points to make. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, or the CRTC as we know it, is the central body for regulating and overseeing the Canadian broadcasting industry. The Liberal Party remains confident that the CRTC has successfully helped the broadcasting system to achieve its objectives. When I talk about regions, I remember seeing a documentary some time ago about the architecture of churches in the small towns of northern Quebec. I watched it in Newfoundland and Labrador and what a good story it was.

• (1235)

Even though some people may think our Canadian content rules are restrictive, they are not. They are a promotion, a promotion of the French culture in Quebec where churches were the focal points of

smaller communities. The architecture of these churches in small communities is unbelievable and a great story it is, and that is the key.

Canadians are best served by a broadcasting system that offers an ample supply of high quality, distinctively Canadian content that enlightens, entertains and informs citizens. I just gave the example of the interviews of sealers in Twillingate, Newfoundland and Labrador. This is programming that brings us together from coast to coast to coast. It is investments that we make to bring Canadians from places such as northern British Columbia, to the oil fields in northern Alberta, to the salmon rivers of New Brunswick.

We find that in a country this large with a population of only 30 million people, we need a crossroads of communication, one that is essential for a country this size and the culture that we have. That is our responsibility to the people of this country and, to me, that responsibility has to be emboldened within our Canadian content rules.

It is not so much a restriction upon content but it is the promotion of expression from all areas of this country, whether it be a terrible situation on the east side of Vancouver when it comes to homelessness, or whether it is the plight of a small village in Newfoundland and Labrador dependent upon the fishery, which has recently seen a downturn.

Some of the goals that we stress in Canadian strategy are: to put more emphasis on high quality Canadian content that reaches wide audiences and reflects Canada in its diversity, diversity of people and diversity of region; to put emphasis on funding Canadian drama, children's programming, cultural programming and documentaries that reach wide audiences; to provide the CBC, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, with specific funding for the provision of high impact programming consistent with its public service mandate; and to consider a number of measures to simplify funding in order to provide greater economic efficiencies and improved priority setting.

To ensure efficient and effective practices for monitoring Canadian content, the Liberal Party would focus the mandate on the Canadian Audio-Visual Certification Office and task it to conduct Canadian content certification on behalf of the federal agencies and programs.

In a letter dated September 30, 2005, Guy Mayson, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, or the CFTPA, proposed a new policy framework for Canadian television content. Among other things, the CFTPA requested that structural amendments be made to the Broadcasting Act and that the CRTC's 1999 television policy be revised to reintroduce compulsory expenditure thresholds on programming by conventional broadcasters.

*Business of Supply*

One of the issues we need to get back to is Canadian drama when it comes to the content we have. We contribute a lot to Canadian drama and over the years we have been extremely successful. Many Canadian shows, such as the one my hon. colleague from Churchill was on, *North of 60*, are prime examples of stories that are seen around the world and have touched many people around the world. Even though they started out as distinctively Canadian stories, the themes were attractive to everyone because of their human content and the perseverance of the human spirit.

If there were any message from my home town that I would like to bring to this House it would be that I believe in the promotion of our regions across the country. I also believe that our Canadian content rules help to promote the expression of our cultures from coast to coast.

• (1240)

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I posed a question earlier asking by what percentage the member and the other members in this place wanted to regulate what Canadians do. The member mentioned that under the content rules that he dealt with as a broadcaster, 30% of what was put on the air had to be of Canadian content. It is about regulation.

We have the number of 30%, for example, in the act. Maybe some of the people in this place would like to force people to watch, listen or perform more Canadian content.

If it is about regulation, which costs money, that poses a second question. Is \$1 million enough? We spend more than that on it in this country and that would probably be a single episode of a single program. Is \$10 million enough? We spend more than that in this country and that amount is probably good enough for an entire program. Is \$100 million enough? That is probably enough to fund an entire station. Is \$1 billion enough? That is what we spend for one channel in this country with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Is \$10 billion enough? When we take into account all the various programs and the department that is associated with this, we spend probably about that.

Would they want \$100 billion? It comes down to a cost as well in terms of this regulation. A money value is attached to it. It also has real repercussions. Artists, such as Bryan Adams, have left this country because Canadian content rules have forced their music to be overplayed, such that they will move to the United States just to avoid some of those overplay issues.

A money value is attached to this and there are consequences where we lose some artists due to these practices.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to go back to what I said earlier about the price people have to pay to express their culture across this country. This is merely a small price to bring to the world what it is we have.

When Bryan Adams was a struggling artist I am sure he would have said that he was completely in favour of all the Canadian content rules. He is a recipient of the Canadian content rules.

We have more than Bryan Adams. We should look beneath what is not as famous. We should look at the groups and the acts that struggle day to day but are able to tour the country because of the rules we have.

The dollar figures that the member mentioned are a small price to pay given the culture we have, the expression we want to bring across the country and the fact that he may be singling out one channel. This channel is one that I support. Over the past 50 or 60 years this channel has become the crossroads of communication that allowed us to be Canadian. It not only brought our message to this country but to the entire world. Bravo CBC, and for what it has done, not merely one channel but a channel that brings us all together.

• (1245)

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, does the member not recognize that there is a serious deficiency with the motion that is before the House? It reads:

—by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements;—

On January 23, the people of Canada voted for political change in Canada and they got change. They got the Conservative government and the heritage minister. We are working as a party. The minister is working hard in conjunction with the Prime Minister to bring forward new ideas to enhance the whole issue of culture in Canada.

Why would the member be inclined to vote for something that says that it will maintain or enhance only existing Canadian cultural content requirements? That puts handcuffs on our government and on our heritage minister, rather than giving us the freedom to do the kind of things that we need to do to enhance Canadian content, which is the objective that the member claims he wants to achieve.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that is probably the sixth commitment that the Conservative Party would like to bring, and that is to move toward some greater goal of cultural enhancement, which we have yet to see from the government as to the vision which it wants to put out there. I think the motion goes a long way in doing that.

It is not about the handcuffs. If the government does not want any regulations and it wants to throw this open to the free market, it could open this up to American broadcasters to come into this country and set up shop. They do not do that.

I ask the members opposite to believe in this country, to believe in the culture that we have, to make the right investments and not to worry about their own private interests across the globe and the proliferation of media. We need to be the protectors and the stalwarts of Canadian culture. We can do that through the policies by which we have made.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for this opportunity to address the issue in the motion before this House today.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Perth—Wellington.



*Business of Supply*

[Translation]

The member for Ottawa—Vanier is, of course, well known in this House for his continuing interest in cultural matters.

His motion raises a number of important points, and I will give them due consideration.

[English]

The members on this side of the House do support UNESCO and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. In fact, the government and the Prime Minister turned a new leaf and dealt directly and effectively with the question of Quebec's presence at UNESCO.

The Bloc and the Liberals continue to take positions which undermine the recognition of a more important and cooperative role for Quebec within an organization that addresses linguistic and cultural issues.

Open federalism means inviting Quebec to take its place and express its voice at UNESCO and complement Canada's efforts within the UN family of nations. I am proud to be part of a government that believes in a new era of progress within a strong, united Canada and a confident and proud Quebec.

On this side of the House we support our artistic communities and cultural industries. In fact, we believe in strengthening the opportunities for these sectors, both at home and internationally. As such, we cannot support the motion as it is written.

In many cases the existing programs and policies do not reflect the new realities, the new technologies and the new world. Rather than agreeing to maintain the status quo and just talking about solutions, we believe in implementing effective meaningful solutions that can improve things. In order to support the artistic and cultural sector in Canada, we need to move forward, recognizing the realities of the new world.

As we all know, an artist's dream is always for a bigger stage, a bigger canvas and a bigger audience. The members on this side of the House will continue to work with the cultural communities so they can see their dreams realized.

Regarding the specifics of the motion, we have always supported and continue to support Canadian content on our airwaves, in our broadcasts and across our cultural and artistic sector.

What I cannot support is the suggestion that by maintaining the Canadian content regulations as is, it is the best way to advance the need for this important segment of our population. Existing Canadian cultural content requirements, as written in the motion, would limit the ability to ensure that cultural content requirements can be adjusted to meet the changing realities in many sectors. We are talking not only about broadcasting, but the arts, publishing and new media, as well as many new technologies and techniques not yet even conceived of.

Regulations regarding broadcasting are in the purview of the CRTC which, as all members know, is an independent body. We cannot commit to maintaining existing regulations when they are not in fact made by us. In fact, the CRTC is currently doing a review of radio regulations to reflect the new technology and the realities of the

radio industry. We think this is good. We need to strive to advance these industries to ensure they remain relevant and competitive here in Canada.

Regulation is only part of the story. We also need to address the programs that support Canadian culture and artists.

Our party is committed to working with artists and creators to ensure that the money we have spent to support them goes to the people who need it and to ensure that the money is spent accountably. I am proud that in the recent budget our government made a commitment to exempt donations of publicly listed securities to public charities from capital gains tax and also committed \$50 million to the Canada Council for the Arts. The publicly traded shares' new measure has generated, according to my unofficial account, over \$60 million within a matter of days. This is projected to have the potential of adding some \$300 million to \$500 million annually toward non-profit organizations.

Again, our government is implementing real solutions, not just talking about them and not simply maintaining the status quo.

The question we must all ask ourselves is: How we can maintain or improve the market share of Canadian cultural products in the new reality of the 21st century?

• (1250)

If Canadians are drifting away from traditional radio listening patterns, acquiring music and audiovisual works off the Internet, what effects will this have on Canadian content rules? If audiences are going directly to the websites and downloading episodes of their favourite shows, what does this mean for the traditional television networks?

As the reality of these industries change, we must allow, indeed we must drive, our policy responses to reflect these advances or risk being left behind. For these reasons, the status quo is not good enough.

At present the CRTC is in the midst of a commercial radio review. The Department of Canadian Heritage has put in place a culture and technology task force to identify and assess the potential impacts of technology on our policies and programs. At some point in the coming months we will be responding to many questions being raised by Canadians regarding the role of our public broadcaster, CBC and Société Radio-Canada, in our Canadian broadcasting system.

All of these exercises have something in common: they are essential for the continued production and access of Canadian cultural products. We will build on the old and enter into a new dialogue with these communities. Our vision is one of dreams, growth and stability. Just as important, we must also identify if other new mechanisms are needed to foster long term growth.

*Business of Supply*

The second point raised in the motion has to do with the restrictions on foreign ownership. Maintaining current restrictions on foreign ownership is important to the cultural sector. Currently there are no plans to change anything in this regard. We believe that our cultural industries, artistic communities and broadcasting system must continue to support Canadian content in all its aspects. We should also make sure that each one of these sectors is valued and maintains relevance to all Canadians in every region of this country.

Finally, I would like to ensure that we support a strong public broadcaster for our country. We know that it faces many challenges. Consequently, we will be undertaking a response to those concerns.

We have to ensure that our broadcasters can meet the new technologies and demands for digital broadcasting and respond to the high definition technology that is being introduced in the United States and Europe.

I want to assure the House that we are committed to a clear vision for our artistic and cultural communities and to our Canadian broadcasting system. We will play our role. We will perform our due diligence. We will also make sure they remain strong and can grow as we move forward in this century.

In conclusion, I once again thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier for presenting the motion. It has allowed me to address some of the concerns that I have with the motion as it is written.

Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that the Conservative Party and the government believe that the artists and creators in this country deserve more than status quo. We believe they deserve a strong voice, strong activity and strong presence in the 21st century. I look forward to working with all of the members in the House as we move forward on these important issues.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the minister's comments and I thank her for her intervention.

I recall that no more than a year ago we sat together on the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. It seems to me that she did not say then what she is saying today in this House. We travelled across Canada as part of a study on Canadian cinema in order to understand how the film industry worked generally and, specifically, why Quebec cinema had much more success than so-called Canadian cinema. Many responded regarding Quebec cinema, "Because we are the best". I remind the minister that this answer struck us both.

We are solid in cultural terms throughout Canada. Without blowing our own horn, we are already doing quite well in Quebec. I have therefore the following questions for the minister.

How does Canada go about keeping the Camerons? How does Canada go about keeping actors and actresses, who, heeding the call of Los Angeles, London, New Zealand or Australia, leave Canada rarely returning except to receive the Order of Canada? What cultural policy does the minister intend to propose to make us the best, if that is still one of her objectives?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda:** Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed working with the member on the committee in the last session and look forward to working with him as we move forward.

He is correct that the committee studied the feature film industry in Canada. The difference in the success of the Quebec film industry and the English language film industry was quite noticeable. The realities are very different. The market conditions are very different for each of those sectors. That is why one of the first initiatives that was taken by this government was to set up a separate francophone secretariat within the Department of Canadian Heritage. In that way we can ensure that the different realities are recognized, and that appropriate program support will continue to be put forward for the Quebec industry.

The member is correct that the realities within the anglophone market are very different. There are major studios just across the border and we share a common language. The marketing and promotion of large American films comes across the border through various publications and broadcasting vehicles. These are the realities of the English language market. It is not because we do not have the talent here in Canada. In fact, the talent is in Canada.

Many of the successful American films are due to Canadian talent that is now present in the United States. We do not want to inhibit those who choose to move into a larger stage from being able to fulfill their professional ambitions, wherever they are. I am proud to say that many of them maintain their pride in their country of origin and that they are Canadians.

However, we have to ensure that we build up the industry here for those who would like to stay in Canada and to maintain their profession here. With the clear separation and identity of the market realities we can start formulating specific programs that will address the different reality that is being faced in the English language market.

As the member knows, it is also a matter of distribution. It is a matter of screen time. It is a matter of marketing and promotion. A lot of that has to do with our support with the magazine industry here in Canada, as well as the print industry. All of these things will have to come together. We are working very hard to respond to the report of the committee.

• (1300)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today about the extraordinary quality of Canadian artistic achievement and how this plays such an important cultural and economic role. Before I get to the point of my speech, I want to say what a privilege it is to speak after the hon. Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Unfortunately, this motion is seriously flawed. As such, this government will not be voting in favour of it. What strikes me as odd is why the party opposite, with such an abysmal record, would bring forward this motion in the first place. After 13 years of instability in arts funding, the official opposition has the audacity to try to champion Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries.

*Business of Supply*

This government recognizes the arts' fundamental contribution to the lives of all Canadians, to individual Canadians, whether they are in small northern remote settlements or in large metropolitan centres, or in places like Stratford, Drayton and Mitchell in my riding of Perth—Wellington. In fact, one could argue that the defeatist sentiment expressed in this motion is typical of the approach taken by the previous administration. It says nothing about the vibrant artistic and cultural community that makes up this great nation we call Canada. This is the typical government can do it better attitude that Canadians have flatly rejected.

Essentially this motion tells Canadians that Canadian artists cannot compete globally. It says that Canadian talent is not as viable as American or European talent and that without government assistance, arts and culture in Canada could not survive. I simply do not believe that government does everything best and I definitely do not believe that Canadian artists cannot compete globally.

The arts do so much to transmit our stories, project our cultural heritage and showcase our distinct identity on the world stage. Arguably, some of the most famous Canadians internationally are our actors, singers and writers. One needs only to look at Shania Twain, Céline Dion, Keifer Sutherland, Jim Carrey or Margaret Atwood, to name but a few.

The arts not only captivate and enrich us, but they also make it possible to survive and thrive in what is fast becoming an increasingly technology driven world. Through the arts we see the reflection of our past, present and future. We not only gain a better understanding of who we are, but how others see us. The idea that increasing Canadian content somehow protects and cultivates homegrown talent is dubious and shows how out of touch the Liberals are when it comes to the very community they profess to defend.

This type of artistic protectionism would have us believe that Canadians are not up to the task. This is simply not true. The arts are a driving force that helps to fuel our economy. The undeniable contribution of the arts is reflected in our achievements attained through creativity and innovation.

The Canadian arts sector can be viewed as the research and development wing of Canada's thriving cultural industries. It contributes an estimated \$39 billion annually, or 3.4% of the country's gross national product. This translates into more than half a million workers, or 3.9% of total employment.

In fact, economic indicators tell us that the arts sector is increasing at a greater pace than overall growth in the total labour force, but more importantly, arts and culture draws tourists. I am not sure if members have seen the recent series of ads on television where citizens of different parts of the world are standing in front of identifiable foreign locations, such as the pyramids or the Eiffel Tower. Those ads challenge Canadians to investigate their own heritage before they travel abroad.

The message is clear. Canada has a great deal to offer, and not just landmarks like the CN Tower. Our arts and cultural communities are among the most vibrant in the world. We can build on what drives the creative force behind them without taking the typical Liberal patronizing approach.

●(1305)

The government recognizes both the quantitative and the qualitative value of the arts. We need to provide long term stable support that will lead to clear results. The federal government seeks to stimulate the conditions that allow our arts and culture sector to produce uniquely Canadian artistic works and to flourish regionally, nationally and internationally. We understand that the arts make a positive difference in our lives.

Artists are crucial contributors to the quality of life that Canadians enjoy and the depth and clarity of our experience and understanding of the world. Artists are creators, visionaries, critics and teachers. They link us to our past and to our future. They challenge prejudices, break down barriers and prompt us to do the same and to make the world a better place. In so doing, the arts provide a safe place for citizens to engage in a democratic dialogue and contribute to cultural and socio-economic changes. They are the hallmark of this country's diversity and the expression of its distinctive identity, vast geography and landscape.

The arts are at the core of the mandate of the Department of Canadian Heritage. They are also central to many organizations within the Canadian Heritage portfolio, engaging other federal institutions and departments. Together with the private sector, all levels of government play a significant role. The government intends to develop these relationships to the maximum of their potential. Our goal will be to ensure that funding to the arts and cultural community flow directly into the hands of those who create the art. The government does not believe in the Liberal mantra, which seems to have been to dictate that half the money needs to be spent on administration.

The momentum of the work of the not for profit arts and cultural organizations requires significant and ongoing support to meet ever changing needs and challenges of the future. We need to determine what this practically means, working in collaboration with other funders, both public and private, to accomplish real results. Our approach of providing tax incentives to encourage Canadians to make donations is an important first step.

Investment in the arts generates direct and indirect economic growth. This is why the government included specific announcements for the arts in its recent budget. A total of \$50 million in additional support was provided for the Canada Council, thus reinforcing the government's commitment to arts and culture. In addition, the budget will exempt from capital gains tax of charitable donations of publicly listed securities to public charities. These are first steps toward developing new relationships and to securing support from private donors. In fact, this tax break should lead to new donations of roughly \$300 million annually to the not for profit sector. A good portion of this will go directly to arts funding.

*Business of Supply*

The government believes that adequate support for the arts and artists requires strategic collaboration between government funding and private sector support. Our tax assistance program for both cash donations and donations of listed securities to registered charities is the highest in North America and an example for other nations.

I want to be very clear that the government is committed to a shared approach to the arts involving artists, all governments, the private sector, volunteers and cultural workers. This will ensure that all Canadians in every community will benefit from the arts to Canadian society.

● (1310)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I respectfully wish to congratulate the member for his speech.

John Kenneth Galbraith, an eminent economist and visionary humanist of his time, who passed away recently, said:

The State has numerous functions, one of which is to prevent private economic powers from interfering in the public sphere. That is one of its clearest and most crucial missions.

In light of his vision for cultural policy, will the member say whether he agrees with this statement?

[*English*]

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Speaker, I have always looked at government when it has helped with funding. Over the years I have been in this place I have seen projects go on and support from government that was just about enough to maybe fix a situation, or just about enough to remedy the problem. We have given the public an opportunity.

It was a tremendous moment for me last evening to attend the 2006 opening of the Stratford Festival in my riding. I sat at a table with a gentleman who said that he could donate, without having to pay capital gains on his securities, to the arts to support the Stratford Festival. This was very important to him. He and his wife had just donated somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$1 million. I thought that was tremendous. He told me he was fortunate to have bought some relatively inexpensive stocks. He was lucky and made money on them. Rather than give it to the government, he wanted the arts to get it so he helped to fund that.

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we hold in high regard our performers. The performers in the Cape Breton—Canso area have made a significant contribution to the whole mosaic of Canadian culture, certainly the Celtic culture all the way down to the town of Canso, where again this year it will celebrate the Stan Rogers folk festival. I know people from across the country and beyond look forward each year to celebrating the life of one of our great Canadian artists.

What troubles me is if we are not committed to allowing these entertainers to perform for a broader audience. John Allan Cameron was a great ambassador for Celtic music. There was a great fear that this music would not be passed on and not make a resurgence. We have had the Rankin Family, Natalie MacMaster and some of the great new Celtic performers. I am very concerned that those performers will not be given the opportunity to show their skills on the broader national scale through support of the public broadcaster.

● (1315)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Mr. Speaker, when it comes to public broadcasting and theatre in our great country, my little town of Stratford is renowned for not only Shakespeare. It initiates new writings and plays. That is the way it performs.

People from across the country come to Stratford to participate in the Stratford Festival. My neighbour, who has since passed away, was a stage manager. He travelled all over the country. He had been in Charlottetown and Winnipeg as a stage manager. Yes, we do have a great culture in our arts and theatre, and it does bring us together.

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

In many respects it is the culture of the nation that defines its values and its character. Nations across the world are often associated with the cultural institutions they have nurtured and supported.

One has only to mention institutions like the British Broadcasting Corporation and immediately there is a multitude of thoughts that come to mind. High quality news coverage, documentaries, outstanding dramas and humorous comedies, all of which reflect the essence of British culture and the perspective that the British people have on the world.

It should be noted that even during the days of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who maintained a solid commitment to privatization, the institution of the BBC was essentially retained as she had found it.

It is in this respect that we today examine, among other things, the importance of arts and culture to the preservation and promotion of our national values and vision, of institutions like the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Since it was brought into existence, the CBC has been the epitome of Canadian culture and the values of this society. It is really quite remarkable when one reflects over the years upon the enormous contribution of the CBC to Canadian life. It is an institution that brings all parts of this enormously diverse country together, both geographically and in the spirit of Canada.

Whether a person lives in a remote community in Newfoundland, or in a large Ontario urban centre, or on our country's beautiful Pacific coast, the CBC carries the same message to Canadians, demonstrating that, although we may be far apart, we are all linked by this great national institution.

Today, as we discuss issues of arts and culture, we must remember that we are cheering on the Edmonton Oilers, the last Canadian team now in the Stanley Cup playoffs, and we are watching it on the CBC.

*Business of Supply*

If at Remembrance Day we are marking the great sacrifices made by Canadians to preserve freedom, we are watching the ceremony on the CBC. It is the same whether it is Canadian comedy, Canadian music, Canadian talk shows, Canadian political broadcasts, Canadian drama, and the list goes on.

We need to continue to fund the CBC. In fact, we need to increase the support it requires to continue to grow in service to Canadians. We need a strong and vital CBC. To achieve that, the CBC needs the proper funding. To help sustain our cultural fabric, the CBC needs the funds required to provide the level of broadcasting that will be competitive, interesting and informative for Canadians.

As Canadians, we inherently know the value of the CBC to Canadian life. We must also match this recognition with a commitment to provide the kind of funding that makes the CBC viable and pertinent in an ever increasing competitive market.

Today's debate also brings our attention to the issue of support for our official languages policy. Language is the essence of much of our communication. Through it, we express ourselves, our beliefs and we share our identity.

Our great former prime minister, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, recognized the importance of our two founding cultures to the character of our country. It is for this reason that he facilitated the implementation of our official languages policies. They help to accentuate the character of the two founding nations of modern Canada. Across the world we are known as a nation that speaks both French and English.

Indeed, when I travel, people across the world simply assume that as a Canadian I speak both languages. It is quite a laudable ideal and one that perhaps one day will be a reality, every Canadian having the ability to communicate in both of our beautiful languages. Since language helps to define who we are, it is imperative that our official languages policies are not only retained but nurtured.

I am concerned that the new government may lack the level of commitment to official languages policies that have characterized the beliefs of Canadian governments, both Liberal and Conservative, for quite some time now. I encourage the hon. members in the chairs opposite to join with us in maintaining a solid and abiding commitment to Canada's two official languages.

● (1320)

Similarly, as we look at funding issues in respect of the arts, we must also continue to expand our support for the Canada Council for the Arts. This agency is an arm's length body that supports the arts in Canada through grants, services and awards. Many individual groups over the years have benefited enormously from the support they have received from the Canada Council for the Arts. Across Canada the message of what it means to be Canadian expressed in arts and culture has been supported by the great work of the council.

The previous Liberal government had committed to doubling the funding for the Canada Council for the Arts to \$301 million by 2009. We do not see a commitment of this kind, or anywhere near it, from the current government.

Indeed, following the last Liberal budget it was Karen Kain of the Canada Council for the Arts who said that the budget was wonderful

news, as indeed it was. In practical terms, it provides the financial resources that are so essential to continue to promote our cultural growth and diversity, these being indispensable foundations of our Canadian identity. All of these institutions play an important role in fostering the multicultural identity that has become the envy of the world.

I am pleased and honoured to represent the people of Davenport. Davenport is located in the heart of Toronto, which is widely recognized as the most diverse city in the world. This diversity is one of the city's greatest strengths. It is also one of our country's greatest strengths. It is a great honour to be recognized like this across the world.

Whether it is the CBC, the Canada Council for the Arts, or the Canadian Television Fund, we must continue to support their work, work that promotes Canada to the world, work that sustains our great multicultural identity known throughout the world. These are the foundations upon which our cultural identity rests. Time does not permit a long discussion of the many other institutions that help promote the arts and culture of Canada but we certainly are very lucky with the importance of the arts in this country.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened quite intently to the hon. member's speech and I am somewhat disturbed by some of his comments. He was imploring the government to give a lot more funding to the CBC, which I have always found somewhat troubling. The CBC receives a large amount of funding from the Government of Canada. It seems to me that in a very competitive industry if CBC were to put together programs that people watched, it would be able to generate a lot more revenue from things like the sales of commercials.

Having been in business, I was approached many times from a great deal of media that asked me to purchase commercials during their programs. I was never approached by anybody from CBC radio or any other affiliates to purchase any form of advertising on their stations.

Furthermore, the largest CBC television network affiliate in Canada actually broadcasts out of Peterborough. It is owned and operated by an independent broadcaster. That company is actually turning quite a sizeable profit on its television broadcasts in Peterborough. I think the problem with CBC is not a lack of funding; rather, it is the lack of a sound business plan.

I would like to point out to the member that government funds are finite. Where would he like us to pull the funds from? Would he like us to take them from transfers? Would he like us to take them from old age security? If we are going to put more money into the CBC, could he indicate where he would like to take it from? My constituents do not want more of their tax dollars going to the CBC.

*Business of Supply*

•(1325)

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, I am concerned as well about the comments made by the member. Although the government has quieted down its disdain for the CBC since coming to power, we certainly know that many Conservative members have a very vocal and very august disdain for the CBC. Given that most of those members have been told by the Prime Minister not to speak unless they are given the official line, I am not sure whether the member was speaking on behalf of the government or on his own behalf. Certainly the message I got from the member opposite was that the CBC is not something we should be supporting or funding. I hope that is incorrect.

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro:** I didn't say that. I asked where you would like me to pull the money from.

**Mr. Mario Silva:** Mr. Speaker, the member asked where the funding would come from. If the member has forgotten, unlike when we inherited the incredible deficit from the Mulroney years, the current government has actually inherited balanced books and \$13 billion from the taxpayers. There is an incredible amount of money in the surplus for the CBC, if in fact the government chooses to make cultural funding for the CBC a priority. If the government chooses to do that, the money is definitely there. An incredible amount of money was left in surplus by the former Liberal government.

There was a Conservative Senate leader who said during the CBC lockout that it should continue indefinitely. There have been a lot of comments over the years and even now that do not lead me to believe that that party and that particular government are in support of culture and the CBC.

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. member about CBC and cultural policy in general as is being debated on the floor of the House this afternoon. CBC is taking a significant portion of that debate because I and members on this side of the House recognize that the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is a vital link to connect artists with the performing arts and to broadcast and disseminate that message and that form of artistry into the homes and hearts of Canadians.

The CBC has played an invaluable role not only in fostering an environment of broadcasting but in production as well. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the CBC has a mandate to produce, to mentor top notch public programming. Programs such as Salter Street Films' *This Hour has 22 Minutes* have their genesis from support from the CBC.

The question that has been asked of the member this afternoon is why does the CBC not generate more revenue, radio being a particular example. Those of us who actually are in tune with the CBC know that CBC radio does not conduct paid radio advertising. It does not solicit that form of revenue.

I would like to ask the hon. member if there is a vision, a strategic plan being developed for the CBC that could be brought before the House. If so, what particular elements are critical?

•(1330)

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's very informed question in part is linked to the former question that

was asked by the member opposite. It is on the whole issue about how to make the CBC more relevant in terms of getting more audience. It seems to me that there is an indication by the member who asked the former question that perhaps we should get American programming.

Part of the reason we have been promoting what we do in the CBC is it should speak for Canada. It should have a unique Canadian voice. It should be that voice across the country in terms of promoting and enhancing Canadian culture and fostering the Canadian identity as well.

I am not a member of the heritage committee, but that committee is looking at the mandate of the CBC. I would be curious of the outcome of that discussion. One would hope that anything that comes out of the committee's report would be to strengthen the CBC and not to weaken it. It would be a great travesty if we were to weaken one of the proudest institutions we have in this country.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to today's motion on a very important topic in Canada.

When I saw that the motion was to be debated it brought back a pleasant memory from the 2004 election campaign, the election in which I was first elected. It was a warm summer evening in June and I was sitting in Mildred Richardson's backyard with a number of people, a number of whom were former Progressive Conservatives who had come together to talk about issues of importance to them.

We talked about a lot of things. I remember most clearly, and it was a pleasant night as it always is in Milly's backyard, Joan Forshner, a great champion of arts and culture in the community, leaning over and quietly making the plea, "Don't forget about arts, culture and heritage. Nobody ever talks about it in Parliament and they should". She was right. I think about that episode quite frequently.

I was pleased that the first official function I had as a member of Parliament was to welcome Madam Frulla, the minister of heritage in July 2004, to a round table in my community to talk about arts and culture. There were participants from Neptune Theatre, Symphony Nova Scotia and the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. There were people from the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia and people representing the Mi'kmaq community. We talked about the contribution to Canada that is made by the arts and cultural community both economically and socially.

I know there are people who will ask why we are talking about this subject when there are so many other important issues. That may well be a good question, but the simple fact is there is always something more pressing and more urgent that requires more immediate attention than this. That is why arts, culture and heritage, as well as the cultural industries, always get put on the back burner.

*Business of Supply*

I remember being on the board of Neptune Theatre in Halifax about 12 years ago. We were raising money to build a new theatre. The provincial government of the day, wisely led by my father as premier, committed money to the project. I remember somebody asking him, "How could you do that? The economy you inherited from the Conservatives is probably the worst in Canada. Premier Buchanan left you nothing. We need the money for health. How could you put money into Neptune Theatre?"

His answer, and I believe he was right, is that we cannot segregate everything out in life. We are composed of lots of different things. There is a holistic approach in communities, just as there is in individuals. We need health. We need universities. We need economic development. Today we need a better budget than the one that was delivered in the House to work on the productivity of Canada and a more equal distribution of wealth in Canada. But we also need to focus every now and then on arts and culture. I applaud the member for Ottawa—Vanier for bringing this motion forward.

We need to recognize our heritage and understand that studying our heritage will help us make better decisions about the future.

A perfect example of this holistic approach has been taken in my province by the faculty of medicine at Dalhousie University. Obviously it is an institution where medical professionals are trained. Their training is important. That is what they do.

In the last number of years, under Dr. Jock Murray and Dr. Ron Stewart, a former health minister in Nova Scotia, and through the department of medical humanities, the Dalhousie medical school chorale has been developed. Health professionals who are being trained at Dalhousie have formed a choir of more than 100 students and faculty members. They perform all around Nova Scotia and around the world. The point they are making is they are using arts and culture, in this case music, as a way to complete the training of health professionals. It is the holistic approach to training health professionals.

In the same way, we as a society need to make sure that arts, culture and heritage are recognized and integrated into our communities and into ourselves. It is a mistake to ignore the importance of arts, culture and heritage.

I come from a province, as does the member for Cape Breton—Canso, where arts and culture are very important. People have heard of the Rankin family, the Barra McNeils. Now they hear of Joel Plaskett. They hear of Matt Mays and El Torpedo from Dartmouth, the best rising group in Canada. They also know about the Cheticamp hooked rugs. They know about Maud Lewis, the painter who overcame such incredible hardship. They know about people who celebrated local cultures, created products based on their heritage and rooted in their communities. Nova Scotia even has a premier from the musical industry, an excellent fiddler, but he is not quite as good a premier. In fact, he is fiddling his way through an election campaign as we speak and he cancelled the Nova Scotia Arts Council a few years ago which was a shame. All this shows the importance of arts and culture to Nova Scotia.

• (1335)

I know that every member of the House can point with pride to arts groups, cultural organizations and heritage societies in their own

ridings and communities that have helped to build Canada and make Canada what it is today.

In my own community of Dartmouth, the Eastern Front Theatre is a perfect example. It has become to some extent an economic engine of downtown Dartmouth, but more important, it is an expression of what makes Nova Scotia, Dartmouth and Cole Harbour so special. The former member of Parliament from the NDP, Wendy Lill, has had her plays shown and produced there, and rightly so, as she was always a passionate advocate for the importance of arts and culture.

One of the first things I spoke about in the House was the heritage of my community, as many members often do. In fact, as for Dartmouth, I am glad that the member for Kingston and the Islands is not in the chair today, because Dartmouth was in fact the birthplace of hockey. I am also glad the member for Kings—Hants is not here, because it is the only thing he often gets wrong.

The Shubenacadie Canal has an amazing history of commerce in the development of Nova Scotia. People like Bernie Hart, Allan Billard and Jake O'Connor are working to make sure that heritage is preserved. It is worthwhile. It is important work for a community where we had the famous Starr Manufacturing plant, which was a world leader in producing skates. Advocates like Paul Robinson have argued passionately, often in frustration, at the inability of governments to recognize how important art and culture is to a community.

At Alderney Landing this summer, we will be promoting the Dutchie Mason Blues Festival. We have had a large number of great prime ministers in the House, mostly Liberal, but there has been no greater prime minister than the prime minister of the blues, Dutchie Mason.

All members can speak to the importance of arts and culture in their communities, but I think it is pulled together nationally and forms the backbone of Canada. A lot of the artists I mentioned owe their success to Canadian content regulations, which gave them their start and enabled them to grow and develop in their own communities across Canada and now throughout the world.

I remember a few years ago asking somebody about what defines Canada. That is a tough question. What defines our nation? I remember a person saying to me that Peter Gzowski defined our nation. I think a lot of Canadians would say that was true, and maybe it still is true after his passing, but that speaks to the importance of the CBC. It binds us together, not just because it speaks to us, but because it comes from us and because it is important to us as Canadians. It speaks to Canadians and it speaks to Canadian diversity. It recognizes that Quebec is different from B.C. and Nova Scotia is different from Alberta, but there is a common bond, and I believe it is brought to Canadians through the CBC.

The CBC is a public broadcaster and it should stay as such. There have been cuts to the CBC. Our government made cuts and reductions to the CBC in times of difficult economic circumstances, but they have been restored. In a time of huge economic surplus, it would be a shame and a disgrace if the CBC were cut.

*Business of Supply*

Arts and culture speak to Canadians because they come from Canadians, because they represent who we are, where we have been and, most important, where we are going. I am proud here today to stand to support the motion, and I congratulate the member for Ottawa—Vanier, so that for once the House discusses the importance of art and culture and puts it in its rightful place. I hope all members of the House will support this important motion.

• (1340)

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, one of the Liberals mentioned a program he had seen or knows of that deals with the harsh situations in east Vancouver. I have family and friends who live in that city. He mentioned that he thought there were benefits to the program in highlighting some of the drug use issues and the prostitution that exists in that neck of the woods and making the rest of Canadian society aware of this.

I posed a question previously about how much money we spend on these things. Let us pull a number out of the air. Let us say, for example, that a program on an issue like that costs \$10 million. I think that is probably a fair guess. When we look at how many police officers that could actually put on the street at \$50,000 per police officer, that is probably about 200 police officers.

I wonder what would be better for that community. Would it be to have their plights and their problems glamorized on TV and have actors and actresses portraying drug users and prostitutes spread out across the rest of the country serving as an example? Or would it be to have 200 police officers, law enforcement officers or maybe even social workers on the street in that community? That \$10 million could be applied to the drug use problems and the crime that goes on there to try to end the cycle of drug use and crime. That might be a better use of money. I pose that question to the member.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, this hearkens back to how I opened my comments, which was to say that there is always something that seems more pressing than arts and culture. Hiring 200 police officers is important. We also could compare this to money that goes into health care. We could compare it to the universal child benefit that is going primarily to richer families in Canada. We could compare it to the budget's reduction in taxes that is going to Canadians making over \$150,000, which is more than 12 times as much as the reduction going to the lowest income families.

There is always a comparator. My point is that we always neglect arts and culture. We do not put the value on arts and culture that is represented in communities in celebrating the heritage of where we have been, and quite often it reflects where we are going. I honestly believe that we are made up of a lot of different things. Communities are made up of police officers, but communities are also made up of local theatre groups and dance groups.

If the member is going to compare, I would ask why we would have a credit for hockey but not for dance or violin or some other kind of artistic expression. Not all children play hockey. My son plays hockey, but he also plays the piano. I think it would have been a good start if we had treated those equally. Arts and culture and sports are both very important to the community.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech. He

talked about what the fabric of a community is and the role that arts and culture plays in a community.

My riding in northwest British Columbia relies heavily on the CBC for its information from outside. The concentration of media outlets in British Columbia in particular has been staggering over the last decade or decade and a half. Single owners have been able to acquire the two major dailies, most of the major radio media and a significant portion of the television market. Media concentration has been raised time and again in debates in this House, particularly in this corner, as citizens need the ability to have wide and diverse views about the news of the day and what is happening in and outside their communities.

Yet while in government, the member's party refused to make any serious commitments to actually having a diverse and transparent ownership regime in Canada. Now we get the sentiment from the new government that foreign ownership requirements may be dropped, if they have not been dropped in negotiations already, allowing outside ownership of our major marketing and our major media outlets, further distancing Canadians from their ability to have open and transparent reporting on the issues that are important to them.

My question for the member is with respect to the CBC. During his government's reign, the CBC was making drastic cuts in its ability to actually do local reporting. For rural communities in Canada this was significant, because getting news centralized from the city is completely unsatisfactory, yet the government allowed this cutting, and the Radwanskis and others, to go unhindered in the ability to concentrate, to not spread out and report more effectively.

• (1345)

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member and I are coming from largely the same place, but I do appreciate his question. It was our government that took a leadership position in gathering support for the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity. We believe in that. We have always been strong supporters of Canadian content regulations. Last year I personally lobbied against the satellite radio decision. Of course the decision last year was taken by the Minister of Industry, who is now across the floor, but I thought it was the wrong decision. I thought it meant that we would have less Canadian content regulations. I thought that was wrong.

In terms of the CBC, its budget is stabilized. I indicated that there were cuts when times were difficult. We might not have liked that at the time, but now, in an age of booming surpluses, there is no reason whatsoever to cut the CBC. We are firmly committed to it. I believe, as do many Canadians, that it is the national institution that most holds us together as Canadians.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo (Verchères—Les Patriotes, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will share my allotted 20 minutes with my colleague from Joliette.



Culture, a vital part of our national identity, is neither inert nor inviolable. To speak of it is to treasure it, to remember its fragility as well as its potential to drive and mobilize us. For these reasons, I am pleased to rise in this House to participate in the debate on a motion that reads as follows:

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insist that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

For everyone's benefit, I would first like to review what the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions will do; it will: recognize in international law the distinctive nature of cultural goods and services as vehicles of values, identity and meaning; clearly affirm of the right of countries to have cultural policies to ensure genuine diversity of cultural expressions domestically; include provisions by which developed countries undertake to support developing countries in nurturing the development of their own emerging cultural industries; assert the principle of non-subordination—meaning the legal status of the convention in international law will be equal to that of other international treaties, including trade agreements; commit countries to take the provisions of the convention into account not only when entering into other international agreements, but also when applying and interpreting agreements to which they are party; and include a basic dispute settlement mechanism, creating the potential that in the years ahead the convention will accumulate a body of written decisions on issues of cultural policy that will ultimately influence how culture is treated in trade agreements.

When we read that, it is easy to understand why Quebec, its artists and everyone connected with its cultural industry have taken and continue to take a leadership role in promoting this convention.

While the Quebec nation is creative and endowed with a vibrant cultural heritage, it is also up against foreign competitors that have enormous production and distribution systems, and so it is crucial that cultural products and services not be regarded as ordinary, disposable products and services.

Who is in a better position to defend, explain and promote a nation's culture, in all its forms, than the nation in which it originates? The recognition that Quebec is in the best position to do that is one of the key factors that is missing from this motion, which, all in all, is appropriate, and which the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of.

The motion addresses three related aspects of the convention.

First, there are the existing Canadian cultural content requirements. At present, 65% of musical performances broadcast by commercial radio stations must be in French, a requirement which, according to recent figures released by the CRTC on May 4, has not prevented FM broadcasters from increasing their profits:

In 2005, FM radio revenues grew by 11.8% over 2004, from \$923.7 million in 2004 to a little over \$1 billion.

ADISQ, however, recommends other criteria that would allow for a more diverse offering of French-language music. Valérie Lesage, a reporter at *Le Soleil*, wrote: "Out of an estimated total of 900 new

### *Business of Supply*

Quebec releases between March 1 and December 31, 2005, radio stations broadcast only 137, barely 14% of the music available". While she added that half of the artists on the list of the 50 top sellers between 2002 and 2004 were francophone, the Bloc Québécois agrees that broadcasters are entitled to want to increase their revenue, but disagrees with any reduction in Canadian and French-language content.

The big problem in the development of Canadian francophone content on commercial radio comes from the advent of satellite radio. Even though satellite radio is still only a marginal player, the licence conditions granted to it are clearly less demanding than those imposed on commercial radio, and conventional broadcasters are taking their cue from it now and are having a fine time demanding that the conditions imposed on them should be relaxed.

• (1350)

We know that the Liberal government had the power to send the CRTC's decision back to it, and by not doing so, they approved it

In other words, the Liberals who are introducing this lovely motion today actually helped to weaken Canadian cultural sovereignty and dealt a heavy blow to cultural diversity, despite the deep concerns expressed in particular by the ADISQ, the Union des artistes and SOCAN.

The second part of the motion has to do with foreign ownership in the cultural sector. The Bloc Québécois is opposed to any relaxation of the foreign ownership regulations in telecommunications.

In its dissenting report on the *Our Cultural Sovereignty* report of June 2003, the Bloc Québécois stated that "increased foreign ownership would not solve the problem of media concentration. On the contrary: weaker restrictions on foreign ownership and an influx of new capital would accelerate the concentration process".

The Bloc Québécois recommended at the time that the minister of Canadian Heritage should speak with her colleague in Industry and actively advocate the maintenance of the current foreign ownership rules in telecommunications and broadcasting.

That was our position then, and it still is. We will oppose any weakening, which would necessarily have repercussions on telecommunications in Quebec. The study group on the regulatory framework for telecommunications, which submitted its report in March 2006, advised for its part that the foreign ownership rules should be relaxed.

Rest assured that the Bloc Québécois will remain very vigilant in this regard because in September 2005, the Liberal industry minister, now the Conservative Minister of International Trade, said that he was open to relaxing the foreign ownership rules.

In an article published on September 22, 2005, it said that the minister had stated that he was open, however, to a relaxation of the current foreign ownership regulations in the telecommunications sector if that could ever help Canada become more competitive.

*Statements by Members*

We are even more worried because a report signed by the current Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, then sitting with the Canadian Alliance, which today is the Conservative Party, supports the relaxation of rules on foreign ownership of Canadian businesses, notably those in the areas of telecommunications and the distribution of broadcasting services.

The final aspect of the motion touches on the funding of radio and television. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of sufficient funding for public radio and television.

Though they were behind this motion, the Liberals blithely cut funding to the CBC. In early February 2005, we learned that the CBC was imposing additional cuts of \$13 million on CBC French television—\$6 million in general television programming, \$3 million in support and regional programming, and \$4 million in news and information.

These restrictions have a very big impact on the production of public affairs programs on television. I would therefore point out that we condemn these cuts in news and information programming and remind the Minister of Heritage that she has a duty to hold the CBC to its mandate.

It is clear from part II of the Broadcasting Act that the cuts to the news and information budget are contrary to the CBC's mandate. The 1991 Broadcasting Act stipulates that: “—the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, as the national public broadcaster, should provide radio and television services incorporating a wide range of programming that informs, enlightens and entertains”.

Obviously we want the CBC to have the funds it needs to fulfill its mandate. The Bloc Québécois is in favour of adequate funding for radio and television services that objectively reflect the reality experienced by people from here and elsewhere in all its subtleties, and that provide news that does not lapse into propaganda.

In closing, I would urge all the members gathered here to promote the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions among the representatives of all countries that have not yet signed this agreement, so that every nation can flourish and enrich the planet with the distinctive identities that make the world a beautiful place.

● (1355)

[*English*]

**Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no question that there is a wide range of cultures across this great country, English, French, European and Asian. Every culture we can think of is in our major cities, particularly in cities like Montreal. The CBC provides service to remote areas, which a lot of private systems do not provide. It also encourages the wealth of many cultures that we have in this country.

My colleague said he does not want French Canadian content to be reduced and I am concerned by those comments. I want him to make it clear to the House whether he and his party support encouraging cultures other than French in the province of Quebec.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Luc Malo:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Quebec has always been, for very many years, extremely respectful of its anglophone minority. Just think of the exemplary health services for the anglophone community. Or of the network of universities, colleges and all manner of educational institutions. They are quite representative and take into account the needs expressed by Quebec's anglophone community.

Of course Quebec is inclusive. As we said, what Quebec sovereignists and the Bloc Québécois are proposing is a society open to all cultures. Anyone living in Quebec is a Quebecker. And that includes francophones, anglophones, allophones and aboriginal peoples.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### MARINE INDUSTRY

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize National Marine Day sponsored by Canada's Marine Industry Alliance representing over 800 organizations.

Canada is a maritime country with a strong and proud tradition. With the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence system longer than the Atlantic Ocean is wide, Canada truly is a nation that goes from shore to shore to shore, the world's longest coastline.

Of particular interest to marine communities across Canada, like my constituents at Port Weller Dry Docks, is a strong and commercially viable shipbuilding industry. In Quebec, the Maritimes, British Columbia and Ontario our naval architecture and marine engineering has garnered a world renowned reputation. A revitalized shipbuilding policy could create an estimated \$800 million in additional commercial economic output per year creating up to 6,700 new jobs.

This evening between 6 p.m. and 8 p.m. members are invited to attend a reception at the Chateau Laurier hosted by Canada's Marine Industry Alliance. This is a wonderful opportunity to listen, review and understand Canada's great marine industry.

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● (1400)

### BIOLOGIC MEDICINE

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is imperative that we encourage and promote the use of innovation to ensure that Canadians live longer and have better lives. For example, new developments in the world of biotechnology can make great strides in improving the long term health of Canadians.

Biologic medicine is fighting illnesses that blight our society, such as cancer, strokes, kidney diseases and bone diseases. The time has come for a new national strategy on biologic medicine. Biotechnology after all has led to cures and treatments for diseases that previously had no cures or limited treatments. We cannot afford to leave any stone unturned in our fight for better health.

*Statements by Members*

To harness the benefits of innovation in medicine we need peer-reviewed science, better intellectual property protection, an effective regulatory system, effective industry and academic partnerships, and an unfettered and fully transparent market access across borders.

For Canada to become a world leader in health, we must not only be open for investment, we must be open for business, which is why the government must create a new national strategy on biologic medicine.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**RWANDA**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Rwandan genocide indisputably epitomized the ignorance and lack of understanding in our quest for humanity. The Université du Québec à Rimouski organized a symposium in Kigali, "Discourse on the Rwanda Genocide", in an effort to understand this tragedy.

This symposium provided an opportunity to reflect on the Rwandan genocide. The discussions focused on understanding conflict and educating for peace in an attempt to make some sense of this sorry chapter in the history of humankind.

Looking back at this terrible event, which took place in 1994, was often difficult and brought back painful memories, but I hope that speaking about the unspeakable triggered an openness that will, in turn, prevent condemnation and promote tolerance and understanding.

Congratulations to Professor Pauline Côté and the entire team for the success of this important symposium.

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[*English*]

**NORTHERN ONTARIO**

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, for 13 years the Liberal government failed the people and communities of northern Ontario. Mills closed, jobs were lost, farmers went bankrupt, gas prices rose, and students left the north in search of jobs. It is a litany of Liberal failure from the federal and provincial governments.

The people in northern Ontario are waiting to see if the Conservative government will do any better. Northern Ontario needs money. It needs a plan for restructuring and working with the new economy.

The federal government needs to be an active partner. The NDP is fighting for these changes: long distance learning and apprenticeship programs, the social economy, co-ops, and a better resourced FedNor agency.

We want FedNor to stand alone as its own regional development agency. With a solid partnership of FedNor, our education institutions and the private sector, the north's potential is unlimited.

**ELGIN—MIDDLESEX—LONDON**

**Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we know summer is quickly approaching. The weather is turning warmer and the summer student employment offices start to spring open.

Elgin and St. Thomas is only a little different. The student employment centre is a joint effort of the local Youth Employment Counselling Centre and Service Canada. It is housed in the Talbot Teen Centre, a main street teen activity centre which truly makes it a place for one stop solutions.

Finding summer employment for youth may be the best gift we can give them and I am sure that Teepa and Katherine and the gang will be working hard over the next months creating miracles for youth in Elgin County and St. Thomas.

Speaking of miracles, the same teen centre was the staging location for the annual day of caring this last Saturday. Over 100 youth helped complete dozens of community projects from clearing brush, to painting, to sanding windows in the century old railway station.

The volunteer efforts of Tiffany and the youth make a very positive difference to St. Thomas and Elgin.

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**JACQUELINE ALBANI**

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to pay tribute to a woman who gave to her family and her community all her life, Jacqueline Albani.

Born and raised in Toronto, Jackie left high school and a promising career as a violinist to look after her seriously ailing parents. Ten years later it would be her chance and she returned to school and graduated from university as a teacher.

For 29 years, teaching was her life's work but in retirement she found new purpose, working with her church, the Salvation Army and numerous other charities.

In 1995, with the planned closing of part of the military base nearby, she co-founded an organization to ensure the proper development of Parc Downsview Park for the future of her beloved Downsview area.

Jackie battled cancer and its effects for a long time but she always focused on tomorrow and the good that was left to be done. On May 11, Jackie Albani passed away.

I ask the House today to remember that very special woman.

\* \* \*

● (1405)

**CRIME FIGHTING**

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recently I held a contest in my riding where students submitted essays on fighting crime. I am pleased to announce that Nepean High School student, Danica De Jong, was the winner.

*Statements by Members*

Sponsored by a generous donation from an excellent corporate citizen, the Bank of Nova Scotia, Danica De Jong put forward a series of measured thoughts on how we can reduce crime in the community of Nepean and right across the country. Danica proposed that we needed more discipline in the system. She believes and understands that tough on crime actually works.

Danica believes that police officers must be given more resources, that there must be more of them on the street and that they must have tough laws that they can enforce to restore order in our streets.

Finally, she believes that mandatory detoxification and an end to drugs in prison is essential to ending the high rate of re-offence.

I am proud to stand up on behalf of the constituents of Nepean—Carleton and the Parliament of Canada to congratulate Miss Danica De Jong for her excellent work and as the champion crime fighter in Nepean.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ANDRÉ AUGER**

**Mr. Roger Gaudet (Montcalm, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to pay tribute to Mr. André Auger, mayor of Saint-Lin-Laurentides, who is celebrating his 35th anniversary in municipal politics.

The "mayor for life", as he is known in our region, has devoted the past 35 years to his city and his community. His contribution has been invaluable, both within Saint-Lin-Laurentides and the Montcalm RCM, since he has also been the reeve there for nearly four years.

To mark this anniversary, Mr. Auger released a DVD summarizing his career entitled *Une vie, la politique, les conséquences*. The May 27 release of the DVD was followed by celebrations and several tributes to both the man and the politician, attended by more than 650 people.

Congratulations and thank you to the mayor of Saint-Lin-Laurentides, Mr. André Auger. Keep up the good work.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EQUALIZATION PROGRAM**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for 13 years, one lonely Saskatchewan Liberal was able to get himself re-elected to the House of Commons. When he spoke, it was always in grand and flowery language, promising the world but we soon discovered that he could not deliver for his home province. The billions promised through the Crow payment buyout disappeared, farmers went to jail for marketing their own grain, Saskatchewan continued to suffer under consecutive Liberal governments and still he returned and continued his climb until finally he was appointed the minister of finance.

He made a deal with two Atlantic provinces to exclude their non-renewable resources from the equalization formula but when his own province asked for the same deal he said, "No way, maybe later". Well, later has arrived.

After only 100 days in office, our finance minister has made a decision, one that is great for Saskatchewan. Yesterday he announced that non-renewable resources will be excluded from the equalization formula.

Finally, after 13 years there is a government that is actually delivering for the people of Saskatchewan. What a welcome change.

\* \* \*

**MIDDLE EAST**

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the Ontario wing of CUPE made the illogical, absurd and unhelpful move to launch a boycott campaign against Israel. Its demonization of Israel is completely biased, lacks any reasonable approach to the very serious situation in the Middle East and totally undermines the peace process.

Israel is a great friend of Canada. This outrageous resolution must be denounced for perpetuating a one-sided perspective to the detriment of all parties. We do not need to demonize one side to help the other.

I strongly condemn this action and call upon CUPE to overturn its misguided, divisive and non-constructive stance toward Israel. I ask all leaders and members of the House to join together to reject outright and condemn this abhorrent action.

\* \* \*

**FIXED ELECTION DATES**

**Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the voters in my home province of British Columbia now enjoy the certainty of fixed election dates. This aspect of our provincial democratic process serves the interests of the electorate and not the political party in power.

At the federal level, the need for fixed election dates was never so clearly demonstrated than when the Liberal Party of Canada manipulated the timing of federal elections to suit its own political needs instead of the needs of our country.

In 1997 the Liberals sent Canadians back to the polls early despite the flood crisis in Manitoba.

In 2000, for the second time the Liberals called an early election to take advantage of favourable polls.

Three and a half years after that, in 2004, the Liberals called yet another early election when Parliament began to unearth the Liberals' dirty laundry in its inquiry into the sponsorship scandal.

This abuse of power, which sent Canadians to the polls often and at the whim of a Liberal majority, is an unfortunate yet perfect example of why today this Conservative government tabled legislation to enact fixed election dates.

*Statements by Members*

●(1410)

**RACISM**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are all reminded daily of the vigilance required to rid our society of hatred and discrimination.

Just this month, in my own constituency, the Ashkenazi Synagogue was vandalized in what may have been an act of anti-Semitism.

In the midst of such acts of vile hatred come voices of peace and acts of courage, and it is from the youth of our land that we see the path forward.

Today, in my constituency, the students and staff of Maple Collegiate have just completed a 12 kilometre walk against racism. This is the 11th annual march organized by the Maple Unity Group which was recently awarded the Sybil Shack Memorial Human Rights Youth Award.

In another part of my constituency, Shaughnessy Park students wrote and produced, for the fifth time, an award winning video in the National Stop Racism Video competition. This video, *Don't be the One*, makes us all question our own prejudices.

Just last month, I witnessed the peace symposium for Grade 4 students at the Ecole James Nisbet Community School. They said, "The seeds of peace grow here and inspire us all to live the message: Let peace begin with me and let it begin right now!"

\* \* \*

**SUZANNE ROCHON-BURNETT**

**Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I stand to honour the life and spirit of Suzanne Rochon-Burnett who passed away in my riding of Welland on April 2.

Beautiful throughout her entire life, she was a successful journalist and businessperson, being the first aboriginal woman to own and operate a commercial radio station and the first woman to be inducted into the Canadian Aboriginal Business Hall of Fame.

As a young woman she became the face of the Montreal Royals baseball team, as well as acting in numerous commercials.

She was also a passionate advocate for our first nations people, culture and the arts, with her clarion call being, "My people will sleep for one hundred years, but when they awake, it will be the artists who will fuel their spirits".

Over the years, she sat on numerous boards and organizations, including the Canadian Native Foundation for the Arts, TVOntario, the Métis Nation of Ontario, the Canadian Council for the Arts and Brock University.

Suzanne Rochon-Burnett exhibited her gracious spirit in her work and everything she did, from modelling and broadcasting to advocacy, to sharing her wisdom and enormous pride of her Métis heritage and its people.

She was warm and charming, a mother and a grandmother who met all her challenges head on.

Let us honour that great lady by following her example.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**MARINE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we are happy to welcome to Parliament Hill representatives of the marine industry, in particular officials from the St. Lawrence Economic Development Council. SODES offers a forum for discussion, cooperation and joint action to agencies whose activities are linked to the economy of the St. Lawrence. We pay tribute to their generous contribution to the defence and promotion of the St. Lawrence.

While American east coast ports are claiming a growing share of the market, the federal government is charging the marine industry significantly higher fees yet has cut services and withdrawn funding for maintenance of federal port infrastructures. This attitude has only weakened the competitive position of the St. Lawrence Seaway, which plays a vital role in Quebec's economy.

The Bloc Québécois urges the federal government to assume its responsibilities for maintaining the St. Lawrence Seaway and demands that the government put in place a program to support cabotage projects.

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[English]

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION**

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's access to information plan will not strengthen accountability. It will clearly weaken it.

Bill C-2 will actually reduce the amount of information available to the public and increase the government's ability to cover up wrongdoings.

The government's approach to the access to information reforms came as a surprising disappointment to many, including the Information Commissioner.

According to the commissioner's recent report:

No previous government...has put forward a more retrograde and dangerous set of proposals to change the Access to Information Act.

The Prime Minister just makes it up as he goes along, falsely accusing the Information Commissioner of intent to interfere with journalistic freedom instead of acknowledging the shortcomings of his own accountability act.

It is a step backwards and will actually work against openness and transparency. That is certainly not what I call accountability.

*Oral Questions*

●(1415)

*[Translation]***QUEBEC REMPARTS**

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the Quebec City area, I would like to congratulate the Quebec Remparts of the Quebec major junior hockey league on winning the Memorial Cup, the symbol of junior hockey in Canada.

I am especially proud that this team plays in my riding. It is always nice to see skill, team spirit, determination and the pursuit of excellence.

\* \* \*

**CHRYSOTILE**

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I recently had the opportunity to attend the International Conference on Chrysotile organized by the Chrysotile Institute.

I wish to congratulate the chairman of the institute, Mr. Clément Godbout, for organizing this event which set the record straight on the use of chrysotile fibre by reviewing the most recent research on this subject.

The Conservative government confirmed that it supports the safe use of chrysotile in Canada and around the world. However, action to this effect is not forthcoming.

It should turn to the recommendations contained in a unanimous report of the Subcommittee on International Trade, Trade Disputes and Investment, tabled in the House of Commons by the Bloc Québécois, which states that the Government of Canada must adopt a national policy on chrysotile that will provide information about and promote this product as well its safe use, undertake a comparative study of the hazards of replacement fibres for chrysotile, carry out a national and international public awareness campaign promoting the safe use of chrysotile, and promote the use of chrysotile in its own infrastructure.

That is what has to be done to help in a tangible way an industry that employs several hundred people in the mines of the Asbestos and Thetford Mines region.

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**ORAL QUESTIONS***[Translation]***CANADA ELECTIONS ACT**

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we showed to what extent the government dissimulates the truth and today we have even more evidence.

This morning, the government tabled its bill to supposedly allow fixed date elections. However, as usual, the difference between the legislation and expectations is shocking. Contrary to the government's press release, the bill still allows the Governor General to launch an election at any time and still at the request of the Prime Minister.

Why is the government presenting a bill that differs from its political message?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the leader of the opposition can make a comparison between this bill and the proposal I made as a private member when I was leader of the opposition.

In all these measures—and the same is true in the provinces that have adopted fixed date elections—it is necessary to respect the constitutional powers of the Governor General.

*[English]*

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is the whole point. This is just an illusion the government is trying to create around the idea of electoral reform.

The government told Canadians that providing fixed dates for elections every four years would eliminate partisanship, but the bill does not go anywhere near that. Again, there is a huge gap between what the government says and what it does.

If this act were enacted, the Prime Minister could go to the Governor General at any time and still ask for a snap election. Why does the legislation not specifically preclude the Prime Minister from seeking an early election or is this legislation designed to mislead the people rather than protect our democracy?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is clear that it will not be seeking an early election. At any time Parliament can defeat the government and provoke an early election, if that is what the opposition irresponsibly chooses to do.

I point out for the hon. member that the legislation is based on similar legislation that has been presented in British Columbia and Ontario by Liberal governments. It is about time the Liberal Party of Canada got into the 21st century.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has yet to explain to the House and the Canadian public why his press release talks about eliminating the opportunity of governing parties to manipulate the time of an election for partisan advantage, while at the same time providing that the Governor General has unusual powers to do whatever the Prime Minister asks her to do.

Those two propositions are totally inconsistent. The government gives the impression that it is flying by the seat of its pants. It scribbles down laws on the back of an envelope, which mislead rather than solve the problems of Canadians.

This is a constant series of sneaking constitutional amendments by legislative sloppiness. When will this end and can we deal with this in an intelligent parliamentary way?

●(1420)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government's position is clear. We brought in legislation, modelled on those of the provinces, to set elections every four years and set the next election for October 2009.

I think the real problem is the Liberal Party of Canada does not know whether it is for fixed election dates or not for them. It does not know whether it is for limiting the terms of senators or not for limiting them. This party is for reforming the political system.

Some day we will find out whether the Liberal Party has positions on any of these issues.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, relations between the provinces and this Prime Minister continue to deteriorate.

After abandoning the provinces on child care, now the environment is the issue.

We know how this Prime Minister operates. When things do not suit him he sends the problems to the provinces and takes their money. Quebec has just lost \$328 million that way.

Is this government finished making savage cuts to the provinces or will it continue to abandon the provinces by cutting even more?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is all clear to Canadians now and particularly to Quebecers, that the Liberal Party of Canada failed Quebecers when it came to the environment. The Liberals failed Canadians when it came to their commitment to our international friends in setting targets under Kyoto. They failed in putting forward any implementation plan to actually reach those targets.

We have made the largest investment in Canadian history in public transportation. Quebecers need that to ensure we can reduce greenhouse gases in Quebec.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, no one is buying her story.

The government continues to abandon the provinces and increase the opportunities to do so. We just saw that with the environment and with child care.

Yesterday, in response to a request from Quebec for the right to opt out with compensation from child care, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development uttered more empty words by telling Quebec she would provide a reply. When will she provide that reply? It smacks of improvisation and total abandonment. To me it looks as if this minister is also abandoning the provinces.

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has met with the provinces and her counterparts. She is in the early stages of designing this initiative. We will be consulting

with the provinces and the territories to ensure that the initiative complements their existing child care systems.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### KYOTO PROTOCOL

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Prime Minister said plainly in the House that if Quebec wants to achieve its Kyoto objectives it need only use its own money to do so. Meanwhile, his government uses Quebecers' money to fund tax reductions for the oil companies, a gift that will total over \$3 billion by 2008.

Is the Prime Minister taking Quebecers' money to help the oil companies, to the detriment of the environment?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great day for national unity when the Liberal Party of Canada and the Bloc Québécois defend Quebec within Canada.

This government's policy is to lower taxes for all Canadians. That includes a historic lowering of the GST, which will drop from 7% to 6%. All consumers in Canada and Quebec will benefit.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister talks of lowering taxes for all Canadians. Lowering them by 1% for taxpayers and by 65% for the oil companies—is that what he calls fiscal fairness?

Does the Prime Minister realize that he is giving gifts to the oil companies to the detriment of Quebec taxpayers, with money they have paid for their hydroelectricity? Does he realize he is governing for the oil companies and against Quebec?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign, I was one of the Calgary cowboys and now I am one of the oil company boys. The truth is that in our budget—

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

• (1425)

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Right Hon. Prime Minister is speaking and we must hear his answer. Order, please.

The Right Hon. Prime Minister.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper:** Mr. Speaker, Quebecers are smarter than the stereotype the Bloc is promoting.

The reductions in income tax in the budget are for consumers and workers. Most of the cuts involve taxes on consumer purchases and personal income.

\* \* \*

#### CHILD CARE

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, on the issue of child care, the Government of Quebec is calling for the right to withdraw, with full compensation, from the tax credit program intended to create new spaces because Quebec already has its own child care system.

*Oral Questions*

Is there not a single Quebec minister in this government who can make the government understand that Quebec will be penalized again because it already has a child care system in place?

[*English*]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said, we are in the early days of designing the child care spaces. There have been consultations with the provinces. After consulting with the provinces and territories, we are going to ensure that these initiatives will complement the design that Quebec already has in place.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know when the federal government will understand that child care is a provincial responsibility. I will tell the federal government that Quebecers are already penalized to the tune of \$250 million a year because they do not have access to the child care deduction, since they subsidize their own child care system. Now, because of the government's inflexibility, they are about to be deprived of an additional \$60 million a year.

I ask the Quebec ministers in this government whether someone can make the government see that in Quebec, we have paid for our child care system and that—

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

[*English*]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is correct. We do believe that day care should be in the hands of the province, but we also believe there is not a one-size-fits-all. We have a universal day care arrangement and we are very proud of it. I invite the members to please help us make it one of the best day care/child care agreements that we can possibly have for our country.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives seem to want to sink ever lower on environmental matters. Yesterday, the Prime Minister said, and I quote: "If...a provincial government wants to make its own decisions...it can also use its own money".

The government is abandoning the provinces to their fate. It is abandoning its international commitments on climate change. But what is the Prime Minister really abandoning? He is abandoning our children, our health, our well-being and our children's future.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in the budget, this government announced a federal-provincial program to support public transit. But the NDP voted against the program. This government supports programs for the environment.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, actually it was money in an NDP budget amendment that went to public transit.

The attitude of the Prime Minister is, "Tough luck, provinces. You are on your own when it comes to climate change". However, the Prime Minister adds his own personal touch. He goes and adds three great big SUVs to his fleet out in front of the House of Commons.

Yesterday the Prime Minister was lecturing us about how pollution was not the same as climate change. Really? Is that so? Could the Prime Minister stand in his place and explain the difference between climate change and pollution and how his new fleet of SUVs helps deal with either one of them?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can explain the difference. The climate change agenda is principally about carbon dioxide, which is not a pollutant. The government is also concerned with pollutants such as nitrous oxides, sulphur dioxides and other organic compounds. There are differences and that is the difference.

In terms of the particular security arrangements the RCMP uses, that is its decision, not mine.

If this really is an NDP budget proposal, people will be wondering why this government voted for it and why the NDP voted against it.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Minister of the Environment was in Bonn for a nine minute speech to tell the world that Canada was abandoning the Kyoto accord, she was hyping the U.S. Asia-Pacific partnership. Just last week, the U.S. House of Representatives voted to kill all U.S. funding for the Asia-Pacific partnership. Not one congressman, Democrat or Republican, tried to save the money: \$46 million of funding for climate change, 30% of the entire partnership's budget gone.

Would the minister tell us why Canada should join a partnership whose biggest contributor has just walked away?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is interesting how the Liberals love to change the channel because they do not want to face the facts. They do not even know where they stand on Kyoto. They had a Liberal environment critic who was anti-Kyoto, but they switched him for a new Liberal environment critic, whom I would like to thank for endorsing, on his first day, Conservative policies for transit. The member for Don Valley West said that when we encouraged people to take public transit, we also reduced greenhouse gases. That is exactly what this government is doing.

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this party knows where we stand on the environment. That party is still trying to make it up and figure out where they stand.



The Climate Institute recently published its findings on the Asia-Pacific partnership and it paints a very grim picture. The institute said that the AP6 modelling showed emissions would more than double worldwide by 2050.

Why does the Minister of the Environment want to convince Canadians and the House we should join something which the U.S. Congress clearly sees is a failure?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that the Liberals did not do anything on Asia-Pacific and they did not do anything on Kyoto. Within the first 100 days, we have already done more than the Liberals did in 13 years.

We already have set a national target of 5% content in biofuels so Canadians can burn cleaner gas. We made the largest investment in public transportation in Canadian history and we want those buses burning clean biodiesel. On July 1, Canadians will be able to get almost two months of free public transit through our transit pass tax incentive. On June 1, we are setting in place regulations to reduce sulphur in diesel.

That is cleaning up the environment.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, was the minister aware until this very minute that the U.S. Congress cut off \$46 million, the entire funding for the Asia-Pacific partnership?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not concerned with what is going on in the U.S. Congress—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Don Valley West asked a question and he is trying to hear the answer from the minister so he can ask a supplementary. I cannot hear the minister. I do not know how the hon. member for Don Valley West possibly could. So we have to have a little order.

The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor to give her response.

**Hon. Rona Ambrose:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for being appointed as environment critic and for endorsing our Conservative policy on transit passes.

However, I would like to point out to the hon. member that I am concerned about Canada. I am concerned about the priorities of the Canadian environment. Canada differs greatly from the U.S. in terms of the kinds of circumstances we need to address right here at home. I know he is obsessed with what the U.S. is doing, but I am focused on what Canada is doing to move forward.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is the minister who wants to get Canada to join the Asia-Pacific partnership. Did she know the funding was cancelled in the United States?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, any action that our government takes is in the interest of Canada. We are putting forward a made in Canada solution that will spend money—

**Some hon. members:** Yes or no. Yes or no.

### Oral Questions

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor to give her response. I remind hon. members this is question period, not answer period.

The hon. Minister of the Environment has the floor and she is entitled to give a response to a question that has been asked, and we are going to hear the response.

• (1435)

**Hon. Rona Ambrose:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member is obsessed with what is happening in the U.S. Congress, but I am not. I am focused on Canadian solutions—

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Rona Ambrose:** —and billions of dollars in Canadian industry investments, and thousands and thousands of jobs being created in our Canadian economy.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### EQUALIZATION

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the finance minister announced that he was seriously considering excluding non-renewable natural resources such as oil, gas and coal from the equalization formula. This would translate into a net loss of \$872 million a year for Quebec.

Does the government not realize that, with its policies on matters such as Kyoto, new day care spaces and equalization, far from correcting the fiscal imbalance, it will only add to it considerably?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question.

[English]

The question of equalization is one with respect to which provinces have differing opinions and comments. We are looking forward to the release of the O'Brien report within the next week or so which was commissioned by the former government.

We are looking forward to having an opportunity to review that in some detail. I am sure the provinces and territories will wish to do the same thing. We will then have the report by the big city mayors. We will then have a meeting of the finance ministers of the provinces and territories and the federal government. So there will be much to discuss and review as we go forward.

[Translation]

**Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, since the 1970s, the federal government has invested \$66 billion in the oil, coal and natural gas industry. Through their tax dollars, Quebecers have paid 25% of that staggering amount, while they, and they alone, pay for the development of hydroelectricity in Quebec.

Will the government ever realize that, in order to correct the fiscal imbalance, it must review the sharing of all resources, including oil, gas and coal revenues?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, that is an opinion that is held by some in the country. As I say, there is no uniformity of opinion with respect to the issue of how equalization should be calculated. I think it is important that all members here and certainly the other governments in Canada have the opportunity to consider this in some detail.

It is a very important issue for our country, this federal program of equalization. As I say, I look forward to seeing, as we all do, the O'Brien report within the next week or so.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***BICYCLE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian International Trade Tribunal recommended that the government temporarily impose a surtax on low-end imported bicycles to allow the local bicycle industry to adapt to globalization.

How can the government justify not implementing a decision whose direct effect is to protect the local bicycle industry and its jobs, when we know that only two plants remain in Quebec, one of which is in the riding of the Minister of Industry? It is absolutely unbelievable.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to learn that the Bloc Québécois is opposed to a decision that is good for Canadian consumers. I am surprised to learn that the Bloc Québécois wants this new government to impose a 30% surtax on bicycles and wants Canadians to pay 30% more for their bicycles.

This new government is on board with all consumers. We responded to the request by consumers to make these bicycles, here in Canada, affordable for all Canadians.

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the short term, this safeguard would have made the local bicycle industry more competitive in light of the onslaught of cheap imported bicycles. This measure would have allowed the Canadian and Quebec bicycle industry to adjust.

Does the minister realize that the purpose of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal decision is to give the industry time to adapt to globalization?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague for his question, but the questions this government has answered on this matter are as follows. Is imposing a surtax on foreign bicycles a good solution for competition in Canada in the long term?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier:** Does a surtax benefit Canadian consumers?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier:** Does the government want all Canadian consumers to pay 30% more for their bicycles?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier:** Does this government believe in the ability of Canadian businesses to be competitive on the international stage?

**Some hon. members:** Yes.

\* \* \*

● (1440)

*[English]***ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Kelowna accord built upon—

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

*[Translation]*

**The Speaker:** Order, please. We are now at the following question. The hon. member for Nunavut.

*[English]*

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell:** Mr. Speaker, the Kelowna accord built upon other successes like the creation of Nunavut, the Nisga'a treaty and other enabling legislation. It is the result of over 18 months of hard work with the aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Yesterday the western premiers reaffirmed their commitment to Kelowna. Premier Gary Doer said the federal government is morally wrong for breaking promises to Canadian aboriginals. How can the Prime Minister justify abandoning the Kelowna accord which has garnered huge support across Canada?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will say what is morally wrong. It was 13 years of Liberal ineptitude, mismanagement, incompetence, ducking, dodging, delaying, and cut and run tax and spend liberalism. Our government will not do that.

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a 90% cut, that is the difference between what the previous Liberal government had booked and committed, and what the present government committed to. That is not enough to close the gap on any aboriginal priority. Manitoba Premier Gary Doer said disbanding the agreement is simply not acceptable.

When will the Prime Minister admit that the western premiers are right, that he is wrong, and that he needs to put the Kelowna accord back on track?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, I wish to point out that the Premier of Nunavut has been supportive of the Conservative budget. Second, if we are going to quote Mr. Doer from the premiers' conference yesterday, let us really quote him. He said:

And if the new government wants to do some more constructive priority-setting under that accord my view is they should have the right, any new government should have the right—

That is what we intend to do. We will work together with first nations to set priorities, get results, accountability, targeted expenditures, and not what the Liberals provided.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, regardless of the empty rhetoric from the Conservative government on its commitment to aboriginal communities, Canadians know that the Conservative budget completely abandons the Kelowna accord commitments.

Aboriginal leaders like Phil Fontaine, Jose Kusugak and Clement Chartier have described the Conservative gutting of the Kelowna accord as an unacceptable step backward for Canada. Aboriginal communities need action now.

Why have the Conservatives turned their backs on the Kelowna accord and set adrift Canada's aboriginal peoples?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if we are going to quote the western premiers, let us be fair and let us look at what the premiers actually said. What Mr. Doer commented on primarily was 13 years of Liberal empty promises and corruption. He said specifically:

We don't want to be unfair to the [Conservative] government because the former government did not put the Kelowna money in the fiscal framework as every journalist here knows.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. I am sure the hon. member for Labrador appreciates all the suggestions for his next question, but he has the floor and we will hear his question now, not everyone else's.

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after hearing the repeated responses of the Conservative government, I would like to know, should I use a spoon or a shovel?

We have heard the empty spin, but it is completely out of touch with reality. Canadians know and aboriginal leaders have made it clear that the Conservative stance on Kelowna is completely unacceptable. The government is abandoning Canada's commitments for no other reason than because it was made by a Liberal government.

When will the Conservatives stop the games and honour the \$5.1 billion deal that all provinces, all aboriginal peoples, and all Canadians reached at Kelowna?

•(1445)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am cognizant of your previous admonition that we should not resort to barnyard references, so it is difficult to respond.

I would simply point out what Gary Doer said, and it seems to have found some disfavour with my colleagues opposite:

—the former government did not put the Kelowna money in the fiscal framework as every journalist here knows.

It was more Liberal rhetoric and empty promises.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, instead of a reduction in greenhouse gases, emissions in Canada actually rose by 35% under the Liberal government's watch. There

was a whole lot of talk, but little action. The government is committed to cleaning up the environment and we will produce a made in Canada plan that works for all Canadians.

Can the environment minister tell us about the consensus that was reached at the recent meetings in Bonn and the reaction of the international community to Canada's position?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals signed the Kyoto accord with no plan to actually reach our targets. Up against the wall, the Liberals' only solution was to spend billions of dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money overseas.

Actually, the Liberal leadership candidate from Etobicoke—Lakeshore said, “We'll clean up Kazakhstan, but we won't clean up downtown Toronto”.

The Liberals did not keep their word to our international friends, but more important, they did not keep their promises to Canadians. Our new government has forged a new path forward for Canada, one that will return Canada to its rightful place as a world leader on the environment. In Bonn, we were supported by the United Nations, our international—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday at the Senate committee, the Minister of Foreign Affairs showed once again that the government does not have any of the answers when it comes to Afghanistan. He said that Canada could be in Afghanistan beyond the referral date that we agreed to in the House, but he could not give an end date. He had no answers on the cost of the mission or the exit strategy. He could not even tell the committee if Canada is at war.

What is it? Canadians want to know and we in the House want to know, is Canada at war, yes or no? Canadians need to know.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we do know is that Canada is part of a global effort to eradicate terrorism. We are making a significant effort in Afghanistan, along with our international partners, to free and liberate the people of Afghanistan from the oppression that was in place under the Taliban.

We do know for certain that this hon. member and members of the NDP do not support Canada's effort in Afghanistan or the troops that are there making us proud every day.

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly do not need any patronizing lectures from that minister, who cannot even answer a simple question. Canadians deserve to know the answers to these questions, most of which—

*Oral Questions*

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam has the floor. There seems to be an unusual amount of noise. I cannot hear the hon. member. She has the floor and the minister has to be able to hear her question in order to give an answer. I can see that he is getting ready already.

The hon. member for New Westminster—Coquitlam.

**Ms. Dawn Black:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve to know the answers to these important questions, most of which were asked by the government itself while in opposition.

Will the minister concede that in fact the government has no clue as to how long we are going to be there, no idea how much it is going to cost and no strategy for how we are going to get out? Canadians deserve these answers. When will the government come—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was having difficulty hearing the member as well. Maybe she could raise her voice in her next question.

What we know, obviously, is that Canada, as I said, is part of a very important effort to try to eradicate—

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

• (1450)

**The Speaker:** If there were a little more order, none of us would have to raise our voices. The idea is to relax, hear the questions and hear the answers. I would urge hon. members to show a little more restraint. We are wasting time.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs has the floor to give his answer.

**Hon. Peter MacKay:** Mr. Speaker, Canada is involved in a very important effort in Afghanistan. The troops being there gives us the ability to help build democracy, to help build the capacity of the Afghan people themselves to eventually enjoy the same type of freedom that we enjoy in Canada.

This is the type of effort that Canada is involved in. This is what members opposite and members of the NDP should be supporting, not backing down, not suggesting we cut and run, as they did in the vote last week.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TAXATION**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is increasingly clear that the Prime Minister will not be able to keep his promise on the fiscal imbalance. It is clear now that one region's solution is another's nightmare. Worse yet, according to forecasts, the government would have to have a budget surplus of \$2 billion to meet all needs.

Will the Prime Minister finally admit that there will be winners and losers in this adventure and tell us which province he intends to drop?

[English]

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier in response to another question, there are differing views in Canada, certainly some strongly held, with respect to equalization issues. At the end of the day, equalization is a federal program paid for by the resources that flow to the Government of Canada from taxpayers in Canada paying Canadian taxes. At the end of the day, the decision has to rest with the Government of Canada in terms of the administration of a federal program.

That said, it is very important that we engage in these constructive discussions this year because at the end of the day we are all Canadians.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Then, Mr. Speaker, let us talk about the New Brunswick view. During the last election, the Prime Minister dropped into New Brunswick and took Bernard Lord on a couple of dates, but now the party is over, it is time to clean up the mess and the premier wants the Prime Minister to pay the bill. Yet it seems the Prime Minister has snuck out the bathroom window.

Is Bernard Lord, that loyal soul, the next premier to be jilted by the Prime Minister?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is talking about transfer payments or equalization or what issue.

These are important discussions that we are going to have this year, particularly with respect to the core responsibilities of the Government of Canada and the core responsibilities of the provinces and territories. With respect to the issue of post-secondary education transfers and with respect to the issue of infrastructure in respect of which there is very substantial funding, more than \$16 billion in budget 2006, these are very important and fundamental discussions for our economic federation.

\* \* \*

**ATLANTIC CANADA OPPORTUNITIES AGENCY**

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a short time ago when I asked about the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Minister of Veterans Affairs pretended they were taking politics out of ACOA. However, when a Liberal member of Parliament expressed his concerns about ACOA, the minister told him, right here in the House, "I'll look at the projects coming out of his riding, but his ability to influence me... is going to be severely diminished".

I hope I do not have to raise my voice, because I know that selective hearing is a wonderful thing, but will the part-time minister rise in this House and apologize to the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and to the people of Atlantic Canada for using ACOA to—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** As I have said before, Mr. Speaker, I guess I am able to do in half the time what it took a Liberal to do in twice the time and not do well.

*Oral Questions*

The member opposite may fancy himself an eloquent speaker, but what is really unfortunate about what is being done here is that it diminishes the importance of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency. It does away with the important work that is being done to ensure that the hiring practices are fair and open. What is really unfortunate is that members opposite are getting up and making completely unfounded and bogus allegations and then asking for an apology instead of offering one themselves.

• (1455)

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the reason why it took him half the time is because he is a part-time minister and the reason why it took us longer is because we did it right.

At a political rally for a Conservative candidate, the minister said when he was talking about the Conservative candidate, "...I can tell you he's going to come knocking and we're going to deliver". So what is next for ACOA? On the project application form, we will see something that says, "A disclaimer: only neo-conservative hacks need apply".

In my riding, the town of Bonavista wants to put together something for the Garrick Theatre, for the outport communities. Will they get fair treatment or will they be punished?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Imagine, Mr. Speaker, the party of Gagliano, Dingwall and Ouellet getting up and lecturing about patronage. When it comes to rewarding one's friends, when it comes to corruption, when it comes to waste, yes, the Liberal government had it right.

No, this Tory government will not do it that way. We will be fair, open and transparent and we will clean up the mess left by the Liberals.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### PRIVACY PROTECTION

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the sale of SNC TEC and its subsidiary EXPRO to the American firm General Dynamics will mean the application of the Patriot Act and the resulting removal of the firm's employees from the application of the Canadian Privacy Act. This is causing us considerable concern.

What does the government intend to do to protect the privacy of Quebec and Canadian workers?

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can tell my colleague from Quebec that this government takes the matter very seriously. Two days after a briefing on the matter, we announced measures. We are working very hard with the commissioner, who reports to Parliament.

[English]

I can indicate that within days of discovering this issue we immediately put in place an action plan to address the concerns that Canadians understandably have about their privacy. This government will do everything it can to protect the private information of Quebecers, of Canadians, from coast to coast. It is something we take very seriously.

The member opposite may be interested to know that the Privacy Commissioner has acknowledged the work that this government has done and we will be reporting back quarterly to ensure that we do—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, many EXPRO TEC employees are from my riding. They are very concerned that, as a result of this sale, their records will be sent to the United States.

In view of the very special and delicate nature of this problem, should the Prime Minister himself not put the matter to President Bush at their meeting planned for July 6?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will read for the member a press release put out by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. She said that the government has brought forward "a comprehensive strategy". She said that it is "a positive step toward addressing Canadians' concerns about the flow of their personal information across borders and the possible privacy risks posed by foreign legislation...".

We take this issue incredibly seriously. Canadians have every right to ensure that their private personal information is protected. The people of Canada can count on their government to do everything legally possible to ensure that happens.

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### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Ramin Jahanbegloo, Iranian philosopher and also a Canadian citizen, has been detained in Evin prison in Tehran for the last three weeks. There is worldwide concern for his well-being.

Does the minister not agree that the time has come for Canada to stop doing quiet diplomacy, switch to a more active role that involves public denunciation of this flagrant violation of intellectual freedom and demand Ramin Jahanbegloo's immediate release?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member, who I know has a personal relationship with Mr. Jahanbegloo. I assure the member that we do take this matter very seriously. We immediately engaged with our international partners in efforts to relay this message, as we did in terms of the Iranian ambassador himself.

### Oral Questions

I should indicate as well that on May 29 Canada joined with the European Union and several other countries in presenting a démarche to the Iranian minister of foreign affairs concerning this individual. The member knows as well, having contact with the family members, that they initially expressed reservations about their loved one's well-being if there were public discourse about the case.

We are going to pursue every diplomatic means possible. That involves, of course, engaging our international partners.

• (1500)

**Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal MPs and staff have hurled insults at international leaders with little regard to the fallout for their actions. Sitting in opposition has not changed this attitude. A few weeks ago, the Liberals snubbed Australia's Prime Minister Howard. Only yesterday, Liberal senators called Afghanistan's President Karzai a stooge.

Would the foreign affairs minister point out to the opposition how damaging these insulting remarks are and how this government is working to build strong relationships with international leaders?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the hard work he does in the area of international relations and international development. I could not agree more that this type of provocative and insulting approach to world leaders has done little to enhance Canada's reputation. We know that the previous Liberal government, members of its staff and members of that party have made those types of remarks to very little effect.

This government has taken a different approach. We have seen the change in the United States of America, for example, where we have now signed the historic softwood lumber agreement as witness to this type of approach being much more productive and constructive.

No, we are not going to pursue that type of approach. We will take a different approach. We look forward to seeing President Karzai, a respected international leader, in Canada.

\* \* \*

### ELECTIONS ACT

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the initiatives the government is presenting on electoral reform will do nothing to fix the outdated voting system in this country. Meddling with the ineffective Senate is not going to cut it. We need to modernize the way Canadians elect their representatives. We need a form of proportional representation to ensure that every single vote cast is reflected in this chamber.

When will the Prime Minister table legislation to truly fix the voting system so that every vote counts equally in Canada?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to democratic reform, so that is why I am very pleased with the actions we have taken. We have brought in the federal accountability act. We brought in a bill today to fix the dates for elections in the future. We have also introduced a bill into the Senate that for the first time will limit the tenure of senators to eight years.

This is democratic reform that should be supported by everyone.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is too little and way too late.

Last year, Ed Broadbent put forward a solid process to bring about voting change in Canada. The Conservative Party supported it at that time. Now is the time to move on it.

Will the Prime Minister commit today to create a citizens assembly to study real electoral reform in this country?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I disagree that real reform is not taking place, but I can tell the hon. member that we are prepared to listen to any constructive suggestions that come from other members of the House. We will be involved in a consultative process with the hon. member, his party and other members of the House.

I have to say that I am proud of a government that does more than just talk about electoral reform and does something about it.

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### HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when I asked yesterday about the future of federal literacy funding, the government claimed it would absolutely address the concerns of literacy groups with ongoing funding, but when I asked about a specific call for proposals, all I got was bizarre rhetoric about the government's half measures for university students.

So I ask again, will the minister ensure that a call for proposals for adult literacy is issued immediately, yes or no?

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the member has asked the question again. The National Literacy Secretariat has acted and continues to act as the focal point for adult literacy with Human Resources and Social Development.

In 2006-07 we will be allocating \$38.8 million for adult learning and literacy.

\* \* \*

• (1505)

### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Dr. Abdul Aziz Abdul Ghani, Speaker of the Shoora Council of the Republic of Yemen, and his delegation.

*Business of Supply***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take part in this debate on the Liberal motion on cultural diversity and its implications for the Government of Canada's cultural policy. As a question period has just ended, the people who are watching at home may have lost track of what is happening and the reason for the debate. I would therefore like to read the motion again.

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insist that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

As the member for Saint-Lambert said early in the day, the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion because its members clearly support the UNESCO convention on cultural diversity. We have always supported and defended this convention, and it must resonate here in Canada. This is particularly true of Quebec. I will come back to this.

I am especially pleased to join in this debate because I had the opportunity to see how this convention came about. I was very close to the Coalition for Cultural Diversity, headed by Robert Pilon. We had many discussions, I as Bloc Québécois critic on globalization and he as director general of the Coalition for Cultural Diversity. This organization was created in Quebec and then spread across Canada before giving rise to an international network.

I recall very clearly that in Porto Alegre, during the visit of Ms. Louise Beaudoin, the minister of international relations of the Quebec government of the time, we had discussions with certain French representatives—Mr. Bernard Cassens of the newspaper *Le Monde diplomatique*, among others—aimed at getting down on paper the first principles that led to this convention. As you know, there has always been a degree of collaboration between Quebec and France. To our satisfaction, the Canadian government, through Ms. Sheila Copps, the minister of the time, got on board the train which has been in motion since Porto Alegre.

After a good deal of work and, it must be acknowledged, of compromise, we finally came up with this Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, an outcome which has had the support, among others, of the Union des artistes, the Bloc Québécois, the Parti Québécois and the French and Canadian governments.

In that context, it is clear that Canada must encourage cultural diversity within Canada, but also internationally and within the framework of its trade agreements. That is the context I particularly wish to address.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** I would also like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Ian Pearson, MP, Minister of State (Climate Change and the Environment) of the United Kingdom.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** Finally, I wish to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a former colleague who served as the distinguished Deputy Chair of Committees of the Whole House, Mr. Ian McClelland.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## COMMENTS DURING ORAL QUESTIONS

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. In light of comments made today in question period, I would like to draw to the attention of the House the testimony of officials from the Department of Finance delivered on May 10, 2006 and recorded in the minutes of the House of Commons finance committee. Those officials indicate very clearly that approximately \$5 billion for the Kelowna accord was in fact contained in the surplus figures identified in the November 14, 2005 fiscal update of the Government of Canada.

**The Speaker:** I am sure all hon. members appreciate the clarification given by the hon. member for Wascana, but I do not think he has raised a point of order. It sounded to be perhaps more a point of debate.

**An hon. member:** It is a point of principle.

**The Speaker:** We do not recognize points of principle, as the hon. member knows.

## DOCUMENT QUOTED FROM DURING ORAL QUESTIONS

**Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, during question period today the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was consistently quoting from a document. Page 518 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states:

Any document quoted by a Minister in debate or in response to a question during Question Period must be tabled.

I would like to know when the minister will be tabling the document from which he was quoting in accordance with the rules.

**The Speaker:** It appears no one is rising to respond to the point of order the hon. member has raised at the moment. I am sure when the matter has been considered, if there was a document quoted from, we will hear about it later and the hon. member's point will be taken up in due course.

*Business of Supply*

However, I must first open an aside which yet seems to me essential. One of the major problems with the debate we are having in Canada on cultural diversity is that the Canadian government and the federalist parties do not recognize the existence of different national cultures within the Canadian political arena.

I will be told, of course, that they recognize the culture of the first nations, which is fine, although they do not give them the resources to adequately develop that culture. At the limit, they even recognize the Acadian culture and National Acadian Day. In the case of Quebec, they recognize a regional culture. I heard that myself from ministers of the previous government—a regional culture which is part of the greater Canadian culture.

That is not true. The Quebec culture is the culture of the Quebec nation. It is a culture that is enriched by the contribution of all of its citizens as well as by the contribution of all of its influences on the global scale. Obviously, in Quebec culture, the French influence is paramount. There is also the influence derived from the British presence. Obviously there is the influence of the aboriginal cultures. Also, as I was saying earlier, there is the influence of all the Quebecers who have come from all over the planet, bringing with them cultural knowledge which is now blending with what we call the Quebec culture.

• (1510)

I often say that Quebec culture, like Canadian culture as well, is a mass of influences and that is our view of the world on the basis of where we are, that is to say, our geographic area.

I will provide an example: the Cirque du Soleil. It is a Quebec view of the circus, but obviously not only Quebec performers help to put on the Cirque's shows. It is really a vision that arose in Quebec, in the Baie-Saint-Paul area, and took concrete shape in a company that performs all over the world. The same is true of singers, writers and directors. Think of Robert Lepage, whose *Andersen Project* I recently went to see: it is a Quebec view of a universal question and the action takes place in Europe, more specifically in Paris.

It is a shame, therefore, that parallel to this debate on the need for a UNESCO convention, there was not another debate in Canada about recognizing the diverse cultures that co-exist here, especially the culture of Quebec. But this subject was taboo within the Coalition for Cultural Diversity.

I cannot refrain from pointing out that, although the motion introduced by the Liberals is perfectly acceptable in our view, they did not raise this question earlier. As I was saying, this is true as well of all the federalist parties: there is no recognition of the Quebec nation and its culture.

Despite the importance of what we have gained at UNESCO and the enormous contribution that Canada and Quebec make, I would like to add that we should ensure that there is place within Canada itself for the cultural policies that we are trying to advance here.

I would remind the House that the purpose of the UNESCO convention is to recognize in international law the specific nature of cultural goods and services because they convey identity, values and meaning, as I was just saying in support of the Quebec example, and to clearly state that countries have a right to adopt cultural policies.

This is as true of the federal state as it is of the Quebec state and all the states in the world.

The framers of the convention also aim to establish provisions whereby developed countries promise to help developing countries support the development of their own culture, in particular by disseminating it internationally. And the convention on cultural diversity—let us call it that for the purposes of discussion—is far from an inward-looking approach. Rather, it promotes cultural pluralism and exchanges to enrich each of our cultures instead of seeking to bring various national cultures in line with a standard dictated by American big business. In that respect, we have a very heavy responsibility on our shoulders.

As well, there is still a lot of work to do to establish the principle that this convention will not be subject to WTO trade agreements. I would like to develop this point.

Experience has shown that developed, industrialized countries in particular are very creative when it comes to trade agreements and ways of enforcing them. Unfortunately, Canada and the United States are prime examples of this.

We must make sure—we hope that this will happen and we will make sure it does—that negotiations with the World Trade Organization totally exclude cultural products, which some, especially the Americans, consider entertainment. The battle is far from won. In the wake of the Liberal motion, I hope that all members of this House will ensure that our negotiators at the World Trade Organization make no compromises regarding services and that the UNESCO convention takes precedence over not only all our WTO agreements, but also our bilateral and trilateral agreements in the case of NAFTA.

The Bloc Québécois will support this position as a first step toward a broader debate in this House.

• (1515)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague from Joliette a question. However, prior to doing so, I would like to say that we should be careful about drawing inspiration from Mr. Lepage's work. Mr. Lepage has recently made certain comments. We should not forget the role played by the National Arts Centre in furthering his career.

The member alluded to, among other things, an item in the motion we are debating calling on us to maintain or even increase financing for public broadcasting in both official languages. I would like to know if the member is prepared to confirm that when alluding to this possibility he is speaking primarily of Radio-Canada and CBC. There are other entities that are equally important. I would like to know if my colleague agrees with me on this matter.

For example, the Canadian government's financial support of TV-5 is quite important because TV-5 provides a window onto the francophone world.

Would my colleague accept a proposal that broadcasting entities other than the CBC and Radio-Canada should be included?



*Business of Supply*

•(1520)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, to come back to the remark made about Robert Lepage, I do not doubt his convictions. But this is not the point of view I was talking about.

I know that a great Quebec artist was appointed a senator by former Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. I have a great deal of respect for this artist, even if he is a Liberal and apparently a federalist. I do say, “apparently”, since some days, to hear him, one might think he shared some of our convictions. Nevertheless he is a Quebecker and he has contributed enormously to the development of Quebec culture.

I am in full agreement with the member. This is a question of cultural policy. There are a lot of tools in broadcasting. Obviously, television plays a major role. I should say that we are very proud—I think this sentiment is shared by all of Canada’s francophones, at least those in Quebec—to see, for example, that Radio-Canada is able to capture a large market share. That means our public television service can produce programming that might not find a place on more commercial private stations. In this respect, I am in full agreement on the question of television.

As for radio, to my mind the Première Chaîne and Espace culturel play an extremely important role, just as the other broadcasters also do.

Obviously this is true for our public radio and television services, as I mentioned, but it is also true for the Canada Council. That is why the Bloc Québécois hoped that the Liberals’ promise to double the Canada Council budget would be kept by the current government. The promise has not been kept, even though I thought I heard during the election campaign that it would be.

As the hon. member mentioned, it is also true that Quebeckers will seek a hefty share of the Canada Council budgets, for two reasons. First, because Quebeckers contribute to it like other Canadians. Second, because Quebec’s current cultural creativity in many areas is remarkable.

I completely support my colleague. TV-5, in particular, plays an extremely important role not only in acquainting people abroad with Canada and Quebec, but also in acquainting Quebeckers and Canadians with the world’s francophone community. It deserves adequate funding.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it would be important for the House to know the views of the Bloc with regard to the funding of Société Radio-Canada and CBC. There has been a mixed situation with regard to support there but it would be helpful to understand where the Bloc Québécois is on the funding of our national broadcasters.

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, of course this issue deserves some serious debate. We must agree on the principle that television in particular should be public and provided with sufficient funding to enable the medium to fulfill all of its functions, educational, informational, and so on.

Over the past few years, funds allocated to television have been slashed. We must increase funding for both the CBC and Radio-Canada. I will leave it to my colleague from Saint-Lambert to discuss dollar figures elsewhere.

I really think it is essential that we provide adequate funding for our public television providers. This applies to Quebec, as I was saying, but it also applies to Canadian identity. It is in the best interest of Quebeckers, even after achieving sovereignty, that Canada as a nation be culturally strong so that we can stand up to our American neighbours. As we know, the U.S. exerts a very strong influence on culture worldwide, regardless of the fact that there is not one single American culture as the big business of the American cultural industry would have us believe.

•(1525)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today. This is probably not one of the more glamorous subject matters to catch a lot of public or media attention but it is vitally important to the sovereignty of Canada.

Just by way of background, on November 23, 2005, Canada ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions under the auspices of UNESCO. I listened to some of the speeches earlier today and I was a little taken aback at the cautious tone that was taken by some and the flat rejection of the premise of the motion today.

What I would like to do is perhaps fill in some of the gaps about where we came from. Canada had an idea to create an international body to protect cultural diversity and cultural sovereignty and that became a reality at the meetings of UNESCO on October 20, 2005, and was later ratified on November 23, 2005 by the Government of Canada.

The majority of the United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organization member countries signed the convention and recognized the dual nature of cultural goods and services which both have an economic and social value and emphasizes the right of states to take measures in support of diverse cultural expressions. It also will be on an equal footing with other international treaties.

The motion today is with regard to the convention that Canada supported. The motion before the House today for debate reads:

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insists that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing—

—that is important, maintaining or enhancing, which means not cutting:

—(a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

I suspect that at this point people are still not very enthusiastic or excited about it so why did it come up? The premise is multifaceted and it is articulated in the preamble to the convention. If the members have not had an opportunity to look at the convention it is accessible on Heritage Canada's website.

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If we look at the starting point of this, I found it very fascinating. It starts off by listing some of the premises. It states, "that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity". It is probably the first time I ever thought about how humanity had something in common and that was our differences. As a starting point I believe that is a floor to work on.

It also states:

—that cultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all.

It makes some sense to me that there is, in everything, some intrinsic good in that there is an opportunity, even in this regard about the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression in our culture, that should be looked at for the opportunities that it brings for all mankind.

It also states:

—that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations.

It continues to build on this whole philosophy of the richness that the world has today, nation by nation by nation, of the benefits of cultural diversity and being able to share cultures throughout the world.

It goes on to say:

—that cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels.

• (1530)

Notwithstanding some of the problems we have around the world, I suspect there are a lot fewer problems simply because there is a greater understanding of cultural diversity and a respect for cultural expression, which has brought tremendous benefits to many countries. The more we know about our fellow man around the world, the better this world will be.

The convention goes on to emphasize:

—the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies.

Again, it seems to indicate that there is something to offer on an international basis in terms of policy development. Canada has a rich heritage of cultural policy. I think all members are familiar with the history.

It goes on to say:

—that culture takes diverse forms across time and space and that this diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities and cultural expressions of the peoples and societies making up humanity.

Again, this is building on this view of the value and the synergies that could be created in any fora where cultural diversity was embraced.

It also recognizes:

—the importance of traditional knowledge as a source of intangible and material wealth and in particular the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples...

We do not know everything. Every country has something to offer. I am sure all hon. members are aware of situations where we have had people who have chosen Canada as their new country to make a

better life and who have brought with them the skills, knowledge and ability to trade internationally much more extensively than we ever could have if we did not have rich multiculturalism and immigration policies in Canada.

The convention recognizes:

— the need to take measures to protect the diversity of cultural expressions, including their contents, especially in situations where cultural expressions may be threatened by the possibility of extinction or serious impairment.

The first thing I thought about when I read that part of the preamble was that it had a lot to do with sovereignty. It had a lot to do with the fact that countries are different. Canada is unique and every other country is unique. We have some common elements, but we also have a distinctiveness and Canada, as a whole, is a very distinct society.

The convention emphasizes:

—the importance of culture for social cohesion in general, and in particular its potential for the enhancement of the status and role of women in society.

This is also a very important aspect of this convention.

Members will also know that in many jurisdictions in many countries around the world, the place of women is not the same as we see in Canada. Yet when we embrace other cultures and other peoples who come here, such as the European wave of immigration, Asian and other areas of the world, and when we raise the levels of refugees who have come here and who have taken on important positions in social life in Canada, the role of women who have come here from countries is been enhanced enormously. It is a model for all other countries.

The one compliment Canada gets more often than any other from other countries is about the so-called immigration experiment, where we have brought peoples from around the world, is that we have made it work to the benefit of all.

The preamble also refers to the cultural diversity as strengthening the free flow of ideas that it is nurtured by constant exchanges and interaction between cultures. This translates into probably some of the most significant economic increases in terms of activity that Canada has had in many years, the ability to draw on the knowledge of peoples who have come to Canada, to be able to both import and export with other countries and to know how to do business there.

I can remember being in Taiwan probably a dozen years ago. I had an opportunity to meet with a delegation of parliamentarians and the president of Taiwan, Lee Teng-hui. Since we had a negative trade balance with them, I asked him why did Canada not do more trade with Taiwan. The president said that it was because Canadians did not know how to do business in Taiwan. He basically said, in so many words, that friendship was a prelude to doing business.

Canadians always seem to think about the product, the service and the price and whether the customer wants it as opposed to whether the person is someone with whom they feel comfortable and would like to do business.

*Business of Supply*

•(1535)

When I think of my life as a parliamentarian over a dozen years, I can think of so many examples where the cultural diversity that Canada has embraced has brought so much to us. It has made us a much stronger and a more highly respected country around the world.

I think this has painted the picture, but it also goes down and gets into some of the harder issues where this convention ranks with other international treaties. All of a sudden we are going to get into some issues such as international property rights, the WTO, free trade and a lot of other things. How are those things impacted when we provide some special attention or at least promotion of cultural diversity? Does it in any way impair the right of people to choose? Does it impair our ability to do business under other treaties?

These are interesting arguments, but by and large we are talking about culture, diversity and the vitality that it brings to any situation. Canada has demonstrated that.

There are a few objectives in the convention, but I should highlight a couple. First, it is to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions. It is a fundamental objective of the convention. Second, it is to create the conditions for cultures to flourish and to freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner. We have all recognized that in our own communities across the country and it is something the Government of Canada and members of Parliament can support.

The next objective is to encourage dialogue among cultures with a view to ensuring wider and balanced cultural exchanges in the world in favour of intercultural respect and a culture of peace. It is somewhat of a platitude, but the essence is there and I think we can buy into that.

It wants to foster interculturality in order to develop cultural interaction in the spirit of building bridges among people. We are peace makers first and Canada has a tremendous record in promoting peace among people around the world. It goes on to say that it wants to promote respect for the diversity of cultural expressions and raise awareness of its value at the local, national and international level. We have always done that. It almost looks like Canada could have written this.

It goes on to reaffirm the importance of the link between culture and development for all countries, particularly for developing countries and to support actions undertaken nationally and internationally to secure recognition of the true value of this link. It says that we cannot do this alone. This is an international convention, a convention that has been ratified by Canada. It says that we have a role to play, even outside our borders. It means that we have to share our experience, particularly Canada. I guess that is why Canada is one of the leaders in this process which started way back. I believe the former heritage minister, Sheila Copps, gave a speech in 2003 which kicked this off. I found it very interesting that the flavour of this convention reflects the values that we have reflected in our lives, even for decades I would suspect.

•(1540)

Of the last three, one is to give recognition to the distinctive nature of cultural activities, goods and services, as vehicles of identity,

values and meaning. When I read that, I immediately thought about the francophone culture within Canada. We are a country of two official languages. I am not sure whether non-francophone Canada has a cultural identity. I suppose it does, but it is so broad, so diverse and so detailed. Because it encompasses many different nationalities, it would be difficult to articulate that. The francophone culture is a distinctive culture. It is well known in Canada for its uniqueness in many ways. It brings a dimension to Canada that few, if any, other countries can share and be proud of this linguistic and cultural duality.

Another objective is to reaffirm the sovereign rights of all the participating states to maintain, adopt and implement policies and measures that they deem appropriate for the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression in their territory. Even international treaties respect sovereign rights.

Finally, the objective is to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity in the spirit of partnership with a view in particular to enhancing the capacities of developing countries in order to protect and promote diversity and cultural expressions.

There is a lot of language in the convention and it goes on for some 19 pages, elaborating on these themes, these values and objectives. I find I can embrace them all fully without reservation.

The convention can be found on the Heritage Canada website. The department has worked for many years assisting with the drafting and the development of this convention. It was also instrumental in having the convention adopted and ratified by the Government of Canada.

However, we have a problem. The government of the day does not support the motion. I was taken aback by one of the first comments made by the member for Kootenay—Columbia, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage. He said that the government would oppose the motion. He talked about communications and referred to the technological change that had taken place with respect to television, cell phones, et cetera and how we needed a new policy. He could not tell us what the framework would look like, but he said that the government would work on it.

The CBC is a national institution. It is probably the only institution, of which I am aware, that has a unique role of being the only link to every part of Canada. It is one of the few things that we have in Canada that links us all together. I do not know what people would do if the CBC were gone or did not have the reach that it has today.

Ever since the Prime Minister became a member of Parliament, he has been opposed to strengthening the CBC. He wanted a full examination of it and recommended that it be privatized. I cannot support that. Issues like Afghanistan, softwood lumber, election dates, a number of cut and run issues, are issues that I would associate with the United States. I hope that is not true, but my fear is that we are entering the early stages of the Americanization of Canada.

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• (1545)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, many of the member's comments through the first three-quarters of his delivery were quite constructive. However, he indicated at one point that aside from francophone culture, there was no specific unique culture in Canada. I am an aboriginal Canadian and I am sure he would agree with me that there are other very distinct cultures out there.

In relation to how he finished his comments in terms of the Americanization of Canada, I have to take issue with that. Clearly, members on this side of the House are Canadians and believe in Canada. What culture does he suggest is the only culture that represents Canada? How can that be defined? I would like to know the answer.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, there is no one culture. The best way to define Canadian culture is that it cannot be defined. It is so diverse. We are a model to the world because of our multicultural policy and the way we have opened up our doors to people around the world.

The member seemed to be a little concerned about my feeling that we seem to be yielding to pressures from the United States. I have a son who lives in Michigan with his wife. I enjoy the United States as a neighbour, but Canada is a sovereign country and makes its own decisions.

I saw what happened with Kyoto. The United States is not part of it. Canada wanted to be part of it and now is not going to be. There was the softwood sellout. Canada took \$4 billion instead of \$5 billion. There is the border crossing passport requirement where the United States said it would not back away from it but decided to give us a bit of a deal. We seem to be taking bits and pieces.

With respect to the convention on cultural diversity, the United States is a melting pot and that is what it is known for. They are Americans. In Canada we are not. We are more of a tapestry. That is not to say we are anti-American. It says we are Canadian.

Even our decision on Afghanistan was a very fuzzy thing. By extending our term there for an additional two years, what we really did is free up the Brits so they can continue to fight with the U.S. in Iraq.

I have no special knowledge on this, but I continue to contend there are many things that have happened that seem to have undue influence on a sovereign nation. I would still contend that we are slowly moving to the Americanization of Canada.

**Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest while the member spoke at length on the CBC and its value to Canada. As with the other hon. member from this side of the House, I was in agreement somewhat with most of his statement, until he began his paranoid view of all the efforts this government has made for the country.

He brought up Kyoto as one of the elements, that in some way this independent and proud sovereign nation of Canada is kowtowing to an influence south of the border. I bring to the hon. member's

attention an article from the *National Post* of May 30, 2006, as reported by John Ivison, which states:

Ottawa won the unanimous support of developed countries at the conference in Bonn, Germany, for its reluctance to set new targets for the post-2012 period. It also received backing from several countries in arguing there should be no new commitments for countries like Canada until major polluters such as China and India sign up for their own targets.

I would like to ask the hon. member how that reflects on Canada kowtowing to the United States. Why the constant pandering for obvious political reasons, where it wins one favour with the voters in one's riding or area if one is anti-United States? I would say we should be pro-Canada. I wonder how the CBC and Kyoto seem to be associated in the member's view.

I have a supplementary question. We have other very capable Canadian networks in Canada, such as the Canadian Television Network, the CanWest Global network and several independents, such as the CHUM news agency. I worked in northern Ontario and in northern Canada there are satellite dishes from one end to the other. They produce good Canadian content. I wonder why the member wants to drag the United States into what obviously is just a Canadian discussion.

• (1550)

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Wrong, wrong and wrong. Mr. Speaker, the member can talk about post-2012 if he wants to, but the Kyoto deal is up to there and in fact, Canada had a plan.

I did not say I am anti-American. I said that I am getting these senses and it is my own personal opinion. I am not a cabinet minister. I am not a parliamentary secretary. I am not a critic. I have been a member of Parliament for 13 years. I sense this and I am expressing how I feel to the House.

Let me quote from the *Toronto Star*, June 9, 2004. It states:

The Tory leader has not backed away from his party's position on eliminating subsidies for the CBC where it competes with private broadcasters. He said the Conservatives would continue to subsidize the "unique services" the CBC offers...."Where the CBC does things that are competitive with existing commercial services, we'll try and make sure those things are not subsidized and are funded on a commercial basis".

I do not write these things. I raised that because of the attitude toward the CBC. It is the only issue that was raised by the parliamentary secretary when he addressed not supporting this motion and that was because the motion says we will not cut. We will maintain or expand. We cannot do that according to the current government. It will have to be determined by the pundits and by the people of Canada whether or not the government of the day in fact is in favour of public broadcasting and is prepared to support one of the only institutions in the country that links all Canadians very well.

We are going to find out exactly where the government stands on the CBC and Radio-Canada.

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**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the hon. member's comments with great interest. I come from the interior of British Columbia in the Okanagan Valley. We have a diverse community. Obviously part of our culture is wine. We have a great diversity of culture, vineyards and a beautiful eclectic community.

I had the opportunity to be deputy mayor of the city of Kelowna. I served nine years as a councillor. I led a delegation to Japan to look at opportunities for investment in foreign countries for exporting and importing. The member mentioned he had a delegation from Taiwan. We support Canadian business. We support working to help Canadian artists expand their artistic endeavours throughout the world.

By maintaining or enhancing the current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector, how will this foster positive relationships with countries such as Taiwan, or any country for that matter in the global economy?

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, expanding cultural diversity is a good thing, and that answers the member's question.

I will use the balance of my time to indicate that when we talk about withdrawing our commitment under the Kyoto accord, nowhere have I heard in the debate about what we are going to do about big oil. The Conservatives do not talk about big oil.

With regard to the UNESCO convention, the member should also be aware that only two countries did not support it: Israel and the United States. Again, this is another indication of where the Americans go, Canada seems to be open to where the Americans are going, and that gives me a problem.

• (1555)

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Beauport—Limoilou.

I appreciate the opportunity to address the House with respect to cultural heritage in Canada, but I have to admit up front that I am against the motion as it is written. I think that the motion is well intentioned, but the motion as it is written causes me great concern. I do not believe there is anything in the motion that allows my generation and the generations to come to make the changes that are necessary to ensure that Canada remains at the forefront with regard to cultural development within our country.

There certainly have been many achievements of Canadian authors. Canadian literature is really one of Canada's great success stories. I wholeheartedly support the authors and the publishing industry as well. Individuals who creatively craft Canadian literature certainly have become important on the world stage.

Today there are nearly three times as many Canadian owned publishers as there were 25 years ago. There are four times as many books being published every year by Canadian publishers. I am pleased to note there are five times as many Canadian writers as there were in the late 1970s. This really is an incredible success story. It is a given that Canada has one of the greatest and richest literatures in the world, thanks to the efforts and creativity of our dedicated authors.

There is more to the success stories than the wealth of brilliant writers. No writer, however gifted, could travel this road alone. This Canadian success story has also been created through the tireless efforts of all the great Canadian owned book publishers who have brought our writers' voices to the world, publishers such as McClelland & Stewart, Boréal, House of Anansi Press, Kids Can Press and Goose Lane Editions. There are so many others I could mention but there is not enough time. Many of the publishers in Canada have made important contributions not only here in Canada but around the world as well.

These Canadian book publishers are committed and insightful people who find and nurture emerging talents here in Canada. I could mention many different writers who have been brought up by Canadian publishers. Canadian book publishers are growing every year too. Since the 1970s, Canadian owned publishers have won a major market share from their foreign counterparts. They now control more than half of the Canadian market.

Also critical to this success is that Canadians love to read Canadian books. According to a national readership survey conducted by the Department of Canadian Heritage, over 70% of Canadians are interested in reading books written by Canadians. This is why Canadian author titles account for almost half of all the books that are sold in Canada every year.

The increased prominence of Canadian publishers is a great sign for our domestic industry and for Canadian cultural heritage. This increase speaks to the ability of our industry to adapt to the ever changing face of globalization. Regarding the maintenance and enhancement of current restrictions on foreign ownership which this motion addresses, I fail to understand why members of the official opposition continue to put such a negative face on the work that Canadian artists do. Why is it that they seem to believe that Canadians cannot compete on the global stage?

Although the growth in domestic publishing is a great achievement for the industry, this motion has the potential to deny Canadian authors the opportunity to be published. What do writers do when Canadian publishers cannot or will not publish their works? They often seek out foreign publishers. By limiting access to world markets, we are undermining our own potential and we are undermining our ability to be heard on the world stage.

We must ensure that the works of Canadian authors continue to be read around the globe. There are so many authors. Michael Ondaatje, Wayne Johnston, Alice Munro and Thomas King are only four of our brilliant writers who are gaining international attention. We must make sure that those in the future who have similar talents have the freedom and flexibility to get their works published as well.

• (1600)

Canadian children's authors have also been successful. Their books have been translated into so many languages that I cannot name them all and they are impacting young people across the globe.

I would be here all day if I mentioned every Canadian author who deserves to be named. There are many examples of many writers honing their craft in Canada today, sharing unique and inspiring stories, our stories, our ideas and our values with readers everywhere.

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Our writers share our culture with the rest of the world. These storytellers describe what it is to be Canadian through their endearing characters, such as in Mordecai Richler's *Duddy Kravitz*, Roger Lemelin's *The Plouffe Family* and Lucy Maud Montgomery's *Anne of Green Gables*.

This could not be more important in a globalized world. We need to know and we need to have the ability to share our history, our way of life and what makes us unique as Canadians.

Our writers transport us to the far north, to Iqaluit to live with the Inuit, to the prairie farms in Saskatchewan and to the fishing villages in Newfoundland. The world is applauding our efforts and asking Canadians to continue telling their stories. It is important that these authors continue to bring Canadian culture to the rest of the world. Any government attempt to obstruct the progress of Canadian artists with outdated rules and regulations is simply appalling.

One illustration of this superb literary reputation is the Man Booker Prize, one of the world's pre-eminent international awards. Canadian authors have been shortlisted for this prize several times and in 2002 Yann Martel became the third Canadian to receive the Man Booker Prize for his novel, *Life of Pi*, joining the excellent company of Michael Ondaatje and Margaret Atwood. These are very successful people who are working on the international stage.

I am very proud to say that Canadian writers have won nearly every prize in the book world, including the Prix Goncourt, which is the most prestigious award in the French language literature; the Prix Femina, an award decided by an exclusively female jury; the Commonwealth Writers' Prize; and the International IMPAC Dublin, which was won by Alistair MacLeod in 2001 for his novel, *No Great Mischief*.

The success story of these authors is certainly praiseworthy and government assistance has contributed to their success. However, I would be very arrogant if I were to claim that these brilliant Canadian authors could not have done it without government assistance. They need more than just government assistance. The government provides \$60 million in financial assistance every year to Canadian authors and book publishers. Programs like the Canada Council, the Public Lending Right Commission, the Governor General Literacy Award and the CBC Literacy Awards all provide assistance to our authors. Through their continued support, our government already provides much needed funding for Canadian publishers.

While these programs are great and they functioned adequately in the past, they are unfocused and do not prepare us for what media we might experience into the future. They limit the government's ability and the next generation's ability to ensure that cultural content regulations can be adjusted to meet the reality that will be faced by many sectors.

I welcome the opportunity to address this House and respect the cultural heritage of Canada but I have to say again that I am against the motion. The great achievements by many Canadian authors has been one of Canada's success stories but I would appeal to all members of Parliament to consider the impact this motion would have on my generation and the generations to come if we were to

limit it to the parameters that the motion provides us as parliamentarians.

As we move forward, I hope all Canadians will recognize that we must consider what future generations might need to do to remain viable and relevant into the future.

● (1605)

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the previous speaker proudly described Canada's history with respect to the cultural sector. He noted the authors, the painters and the musicians, and all of the cultural initiatives of which Canada is very proud. Does the hon. member believe these achievements happened by accident? Does he not see a link between Canada's support for writers, the publishing sector, the music industry, the musicians, the composers, the artists and all of the broad spectrum of the cultural sector and the creation of the CBC? Does he think this happens by accident or is it not the result of intervention in the market to ensure the development of a healthy cultural sector that has been fraying at the edges over the previous government's term and hopefully will not under the current government?

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more. It is very important for a government to have a strong understanding as to how it wants to assist our cultural communities and it does have a very important role to play.

What I am concerned about is that the motion, however well-intentioned it may be, would take us back a step and would not allow us to make the important investments that were expressed. The motion states that we must "maintain the program policies and regulations". I have a problem when we are stating that we have to stay the course and that we cannot move forward and help our cultural communities to ensure they will be viable and relevant into the future.

I could not agree more with my colleague that there needs to be a vibrant cultural community and that by working together with them into the future we, as government, in partnership with these cultural communities, will be able to do just that.

The motion is a situation where we have to be careful of what we ask for because we might get it and it might be exactly the reverse of what we wanted. That is probably the situation with this particular motion.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague from Peace River's speech. Given the description of his artistic endeavours across Canada, I would have thought he would support today's motion.

I belong to Canada's francophone culture, which must be preserved. To accomplish this, I believe that we need our government's cooperation and support. I think that Canada's anglophone community, which far outnumbers the francophone one, also needs help to maintain its distinct identity vis-à-vis the United States, a huge country.

Why then not vote in favour of this proposal, which reiterates Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions?

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, I would go back to what I stated at the end of my last response which is that we should be careful of what we ask for because we just might get it and it might be exactly the opposite of what we wanted. This is probably what the motion would bring forward. It is a call to have the status quo remain.

I do believe important investments have been made in the past, and they continue to be made under this government, but there needs to be flexibility to ensure our cultural integrity does not become an archive, that it remains alive and able to live, breathe, grow and change.

Like all of Canadian culture, there has to be flexibility. What this motion brings forward is a provision that we have the status quo and that the status quo be maintained indefinitely. I cannot support that. I know many young Canadians who are looking for different investments from this government.

• (1610)

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot support this motion by the hon. member of the opposition for the good and simple reason that it demonstrates the opposition's lack of flexibility, which clearly reflects the blindness of the opposition members to the complex and changing realities faced by creators, artists and filmmakers.

Permit me first of all to remind the hon. members of the opposition that this government does not regard Canadian culture as a boring backwater, but as a myriad of facets and dimensions. For each sector of Canadian culture has its own unique richness, vitality and challenges.

The opposition motion in no way reflects the diversity and multiplicity of Canadian culture. I want to point out to the opposition that the national film industry is a linchpin of Canadian culture, and in that capacity it plays a leading role in the development of communities everywhere in Canada.

Canadians spend close to a billion dollars a year going to the movies, and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Canadians watch even more films in the comfort of their homes, and soon, wherever they want to watch them, thanks to the new mobile technologies. In surveys, over 80% of them say that they love our national film industry, and that our filmmakers have no reason to be jealous of anyone. We produce excellent films and have done so for decades.

This government believes in the importance of culture. We believe that each nation must have the capacity to express its identity and give free rein to its imagination.

The government therefore supports the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. That means we recognize that the governments of a great many countries, like Canada, actively support their cultural sectors, and notably the feature film industry.

That is also why we are determined to support our creators and those who make it possible for talented people and the next

generation of artists to recount and create our own uniquely Canadian stories.

In that regard, the opposition will be comforted to learn that the government intends to maintain the fundamental objective of its policies and programs, namely the creation and dissemination of Canadian content, particularly in feature films. The Canadian content requirements for access to public programs will be maintained. They are key to government support.

This government knows there is little interest in investing public money in the production of films that do not reflect Canadian realities and Canadian perspectives, or that do not capture our Canadian imagination. We want every facet of Canada brought to the big screen.

Canadian feature film policies, from script to screen, play a key role in making the Canadian film industry prosperous. For the federal government, Telefilm Canada is at the forefront of the support system for Canadian feature films. The provinces also make very significant contributions to film activities all across the country. Our government will be continuing the federal commitment.

However, there is room for improvement. The opposition motion is so narrow that it does not consider the complexity of cultural issues. The hon. members of the opposition would like to see no change made to their policies and programs. I would remind the House, however, that the Liberals were far from perfect, and the voters have given us the proof of that.

Above all, this government must ensure that public funds are invested in such a way as to maximize benefits to Canadians. Furthermore, public investment must be transparent and yield results. Statements of the results must guide the decisions of the government in the pursuit of public interest.

Like many, I am very proud of the heights reached by French-language Canadian film. Our fellow citizens have clearly indicated their great appreciation for our films. Box office receipts prove it. I am referring to such films as *Séraphin: Heart of Stone*, *Les Boys*, *Maurice Richard* and *C.R.A.Z.Y.* Many of these films were also well-received internationally, films like *The Barbarian Invasions*, *Seducing Dr. Lewis* and, again, *C.R.A.Z.Y.*

• (1615)

Canadians certainly like to travel, reflect and be entertained when watching films that appeal to them, that speak to them and are part of their passion. That is why, despite the exceptional success of our French-language films, the task is far from complete. We must keep up the good work and encourage success.

The opposition motion will not allow for the changes that will result in this expansion. The opposition must recognize that English-language Canadian films have not been as successful as the French-language ones. Our English-language films have a hard time drawing Canadians to the theatre. It is true that standing up to the Hollywood heavyweight is a huge challenge.

*Business of Supply*

The measures taken by the Liberals bore no fruit. It is up to our film-makers and the film industry to persevere and find success, because they are the ones who make the films and promote them. It is not the government nor Telefilm Canada. For these reasons, the government will support the English-language Canadian film industry in its efforts to improve its performance and to win over Canadians.

The success of the federal support will be measured by the ability of the Canadian films to get a significant market share and to keep it in both linguistic markets.

The market test shows the importance Canadians place on Canadian cinema and the role the government must play to support it. Without an audience, the cinema is nothing. Its vitality today and over the long term depends on its ability to attract a sizeable audience with a variety of films.

This government supports the growth of an open, tolerant and inclusive national identity. Our culture, our cinema, our films, all contribute to this. In fact, they play a key role. Our films nourish our imagination, change our perceptions and make it possible to share our experiences. Without audiences, this fundamental objective is beyond our reach. Our films must raise questions and bring us together in order to help us unite as a strong nation, proud of its achievements and confident in its future.

Yes, this government believes that our success must be popular, but also and most importantly artistic. This is why we make sure our filmmakers have the opportunity to give expression to their visions and to continue the avant-garde tradition of Canadian film, as represented by such unique works as the animation film *Ryan*. We have to support the whole of the film industry, with a view to the future. New talents must be welcomed, encouraged and not underrated.

Finally, I want to inform the members of the opposition of the technological challenge facing our film industry along with all the other cultural sectors, for that matter. It is clear from the rigid opposition motion that the Liberals still do not understand the significance of the changes affecting the cultural industries, our artists and our basic culture for all Canadians.

• (1620)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member finished off with the technological argument again. The member for Kootenay—Columbia had also argued that this is why those members were opposed to this motion. I am not sure that I fully appreciate what part of improving the technologies that make up our cultural diversity and uniqueness is at risk. I am not sure whether it has to do with our museums, literature, broadcasting policies, Canadian content or some of the other aspects that we are talking about. Perhaps this needs a little amplification from the member.

What exactly do technological changes have to do with protecting Canadian content and Canadian sovereignty?

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, first, change is always important, especially when it comes to technology and film. To be

competitive and develop some day on the international level, we need to take what technology can offer and examine it. We have to stop wearing a straightjacket. That is why I do not support the Liberal motion. It forces a straightjacket on us that stops us from going any further. We have to become competitive and show our culture to the whole world.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I think that we should target the development of the French fact in North America, especially in Quebec, in Acadia, among the francophones of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Franco-Ontarians, the Franco-Manitobans, the Franco-Saskatchewanians, the Franco-Albertans, the francophones of British Columbia, the Franco-Yukoners, the francophones of Nunavut and the Franco-Ténois to help them combat the ethnocultural assimilation that assails both Quebec—which accounts for only 2% of North America—and all these communities living under the yoke of anglophone provinces, which too often have abolished their schools, with the result that the French fact is now locked in a perpetual struggle to survive and recover lost ground.

So here is my question: why did the hon. member's government fail to meet the budget requests made by the ADISQ and the Canada Council as well as the Acadian and francophone communities of Canada for the very purpose of helping the French fact thrive and thus combat Americanization and the assimilation into English in both these communities and Quebec?

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, so far as I know, we have always fought for French, I myself in the lead, and I will continue to do so.

I am of francophone origin. It is important for me, therefore, to speak on behalf of francophones. Culture is very important to us; so we work together. That is why I will oppose the Liberal motion this evening. In my view, it does away with the aspect of helping French to flourish everywhere.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, because my colleague says she belongs to a party that will defend culture, I would like to ask her some questions. Why does she still have to fight? Why would francophones not be able to stop fighting some day? Why would the government not accept that Canada has two distinct cultures? With the aboriginal peoples, there are three.

We would not need to fight these battles. We would not need to ask for funding because it would already be available. Organizations like the ones that represent Canada's Acadian and francophone communities would not have to ask three levels of government for money.

I take the word of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and the Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, who says she has always fought for the French language. That means that she has had to fight. She also says that she will keep on fighting. Is she not tired of fighting?

And lastly, like her government this evening, she will say no to a good motion. On the one hand, she says she wants to fight, yet on the other hand, she says she will vote against this motion. I do not understand the parliamentary secretary's position.



*Business of Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The parliamentary secretary has five seconds to reply.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer my hon. colleague, for whom I have a great deal of respect: I have always fought, I am a fighter, and because French is very important to me, I will continue to fight with those people who do not understand that at some point we have to stop wearing a straightjacket.

That is why I will not vote for this motion: because I cannot move forward, and I want to move things forward.

●(1625)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Surrey North, Hepatitis C.

Resuming debate. The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

[*English*]

**Hon. Maria Minna (Beaches—East York, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time this afternoon with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Canada has both the right and the duty to protect its cultural identity. Last October, we had the pleasure of seeing a Canadian-led initiative on cultural sovereignty come to fruition as a binding international treaty, the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. This treaty recognizes the dual nature of cultural goods and services which have both an economic and a social value. It emphasizes the right of states to take measures in support of diverse cultural expressions.

I represent the riding of Beaches—East York, with a vibrant, diverse and growing arts community. I can say that this international agreement was a very important development for many of my constituents. Under the terms of this convention, cultural products will not be subordinated to commercial agreements, such as those of the WTO. This means that governments will be able to continue to support the cultural and artistic communities without fear of commercial reprisals.

Our representatives at UNESCO, led by the Liberal minister of heritage, Liza Frulla, worked long and hard to build international support for this treaty. It was a great day for Canada when this Canadian idea became an international reality. On November 23 of last year, the former Liberal government approved the treaty, making Canada the first country in the world to ratify it.

Canada must now build on this leadership, not only by working hard on the international stage to persuade other countries to join the convention so that it can come into force as soon as possible, but also by moving to protect and promote our own cultural industries here at home.

In addition to their enormous contribution to our quality of life and our sense of national identity, the cultural industries in Canada employ thousands of people. The Canadian cultural sector generates more than \$40 billion per year in economic activity and provides jobs to nearly 600,000 Canadians.

In order to help protect these jobs, we need to make sure that Canadian broadcast media remain in Canadian hands. The previous

Liberal government was firmly committed to maintaining existing limits on foreign ownership in the cultural sector. In light of conflicting reports from two House of Commons committees, we firmly reiterated that we had no intention to modify foreign limits on broadcasting or general content.

Our work on the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions has made it possible to keep this promise without fear of commercial reprisal. I hope that the current government will follow suit and maintain the current limits on foreign ownership.

It is not enough to protect our cultural identity or to set rules for a minimum level of Canadian content. Without the right incentives and investments, these rules will not have their desired effect of fostering the development of high quality Canadian programming. Canada's writers, directors, producers, actors, musicians and other artists are second to none, but the resources have to be there to allow them to practice their trades.

The approach of the previous Liberal government was to provide incentives to private broadcasters to invest in high quality Canadian content and to invest as a government in the development of Canadian programming. We need to continue as a country to pursue both of these strategies and to reinforce them as we learn more about how to make them effective.

Canadians are best served by a broadcasting system that offers an ample supply of high quality, distinctively Canadian content that enlightens, entertains and informs its citizens. We need to make sure that we are creating a climate that enables our best creative minds to flourish and to produce high quality, made in Canada television content.

A recent report prepared for the Canadian Film and Television Production Association showed that while broadcasters in Canada have increased their profit margins in recent years, these gains have not translated into equivalent increases in the amount these broadcasters invest in made in Canada television content. The study also showed that the profit margins of those who produce Canadian film and television content have decreased substantially.

This leads me to think that it is time to think about some changes to the policy framework for Canadian television content. Some ideas have been put on the table by stakeholders and they deserve careful consideration. They include: reinforcing compulsory expenditure thresholds, which would require conventional broadcasters to invest a certain amount in Canadian programming; raising the tax credit rate to 30% of producers' eligible expenditures; increasing the government's contribution to the Canadian Television Fund; and changes to the fund's eligibility criteria that would increase broadcasters' level of investment. These are all initiatives that I would be happy to support.

●(1630)

Any strategy to protect and promote our cultural industries in Canada must include strong and adequate support for public broadcasting. I am a strong believer in the value of a national publicly funded broadcasting network. Canada needs a strong CBC and I have consistently pushed for increased CBC funding.

*Business of Supply*

Among other things, the CBC plays a unique and central role in developing and promoting Canadian dramatic programming. In budget 2005 the Liberal government committed an additional \$60 million in 2005-06 to help ensure that Canada's stories reflect the ever increasing diversity of Canadian society and find their way into Canadian homes in the form of high quality programming.

The CBC needs stable and predictable funding, so that it can continue to operate at the highest level and continue to uphold the principles of Canadian content legislation.

I also support the CBC's proposed local and regional programming strategy. It is my understanding that the strategy as proposed would be implemented over three years with estimated costs rising to approximately \$83 million annually. This is not too high a price to pay for high quality public broadcasting coverage of local and regional news, culture and current events.

Closely related to the issue of CBC funding is the issue of funding for the Canadian Television Fund. The CBC and the CTF work closely together and can feed off each other's success. The CTF needs stable, long term, predictable funding and there should be an envelope of funds set aside within the CTF to support CBC projects as the Liberal Party proposed during the recent election campaign.

The previous Liberal government also announced in November 2005 that we would double federal funding to the Canada Council for the Arts to \$300 million by 2008. The Canada Council for the Arts provides the most efficient and fair way of ensuring that public funds get to where they can do the most good for artists and arts organizations across the country.

I was saddened to see that in the recent budget the new Conservative government has committed only \$50 million over two years to the Canada Council. This is only one-third of the increase we promised and without any indication of sustained funding at that level.

The development of the next generation of Canadian artists depends upon the level of support we offer to the Canada Council for the Arts. I urge the government to do better in this area because it is through arts and culture that Canadians reflect each other back to themselves. Without that a country has no soul.

I truly believe that without a strong cultural policy a country does not have a soul and that is how a country tells its stories, how it reflects itself, and how it communicates itself abroad and to each other. Without that it is woefully sad that this government has not decided to commit to culture in this country.

The CBC, as the House knows, is a public entity which I have supported for many years. I visited a few years ago a major arts promotion event in Acadia, in Atlantic Canada. I must say that as a Canadian I had never seen the kinds of things as the beautiful songs, culture and music that were presented to me entirely by Acadians. Actually, they were all New Brunswick performers. This was La Francophonie and it was absolutely fantastic. I had never seen such talent and energy. They could have been on any stage anywhere in the world and would have done just as well or outperformed anyone.

Canadians do not see this. We have to see this on CBC. We have to see this more in each other's houses across the country. The

different parts of Canada must be reflected as well as the different cultural entities in order to see the different ethnocultures that we have in this country, whether they be Italian Canadian, Portuguese Canadian and so on.

There are distinct cultures in the arts that are being developed in this country by these communities which are very distinct in themselves. Again, they have to be reflected and public broadcasting is the only way to carry these messages from one corner of the country to the other.

Therefore, it is fundamentally important for us to maintain strong Canadian content and strong Canadian public broadcasting in this country.

• (1635)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I very much appreciate the member's commentary. I know that she has always been a strong advocate of the CBC and cultural diversity. She comes from one of the most culturally diverse ridings in the country. As a matter of fact, the member, before being a parliamentarian, was the head of a major cultural organization which probably had some influence on the development of the convention, I would think, so I do want to thank her for her insight.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage said this morning that we have a public broadcaster that does not have the support of the public. I recall that when we had that last lockout at the CBC, Canadians made it very clear that they wanted the CBC back on the air. They made it very clear that they relied on the CBC and Radio-Canada for essential news about the happenings in their country, news that they could not hear from any other source.

I wonder if the member could share with us the expression of her constituents with regard to whether there is public support for the CBC and how this ties in very nicely with the whole aspect of protection of cultural diversity.

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians do in fact support public broadcasting.

In my riding alone, when there was talk of possible cuts to CBC, I was receiving close to 1,000 letters constantly. Some of my colleagues were telling me that they were getting mountains of communications, for instance, around that same time with respect to the gun registry. I was getting letters regarding the CBC. To me, it says something about its importance.

I was on the picket line a couple of times during the lockout because I felt strongly that there needed to be proper negotiations. I felt strongly that the CBC had to get back to work because Canadians relied on it for their information and for their cultural input.

We need to have radio and television programming that is able to reflect back to us what our nation is about, whether it is in the small regions of Ontario that private entities do not go to. That is why I support the regional programming that is being put forward by the CBC.

*Business of Supply*

There are fantastic regions within this country with a tremendous amount of capability to produce a tremendous amount of music, arts, dance, song, theatre and authors. It is absolutely phenomenal, but they need to be nurtured. If we do not nurture our own artists and our own cultural entities, and then expose them to Canadians across the country so that we can share and support them, then we have lost. We actually have no way of giving ourselves some identity and really express who we are to each other and to the world around us. Quite frankly, without that, we do not really have a face to our nation.

I thank the hon. member for the question because I believe that Canadians do support public broadcasting and, in particular, the CBC, and this is why I continue to fight for it and continue to support it.

**Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am an avid supporter of the arts in my own community. I am on the board of directors of the Sound of Music Festival, which is the largest outdoor music festival in Ontario. I have been working for a number of years to bring a performing arts centre to the city of Burlington and I have also been on the board of directors of the Burlington Art Centre.

Does the hon. member not agree that the motion before us today is really just the status quo? There is no chance for growth and no chance for enhancement. It is really just restating a position we are already at and does not move the arts and cultural agenda forward.

● (1640)

**Hon. Maria Minna:** Mr. Speaker, the motion says “maintain or expand”. He should read the motion. It is not talking about maintaining the status quo. It is talking about moving forward and expanding our commitment to Canadian culture.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first time speaking since the beginning of this Parliament, following the election earlier this year. I would like to begin by thanking the voters in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine for granting me the privilege and honour of representing them for a fourth term.

I am especially pleased to speak to the House today on the Liberal Party's motion on the ratification of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. One reason for my enthusiasm is the fact that I had the honour and privilege of accompanying the hon. Sheila Copps, then minister of Canadian heritage, to Cape Town, South Africa, in the fall of 2003 for a UNESCO meeting with our partners, the members, to discuss such a convention on cultural diversity.

Ms. Copps was also joined by the Quebec culture minister. As a Quebecker, I was especially proud to see both my federal and provincial ministers address their counterparts from other countries and highlight the importance of protecting cultural diversity by means of an international convention and ensuring that cultural goods and services do not become part of international trade or an international trade body. Both ministers highlighted the importance of cultural diversity in ensuring a country's cultural sovereignty.

Bearing in mind the question posed just now by a Conservative member to my colleague who spoke before me, I would like to read the Liberal motion:

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insist that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

I must say that our critic in this area, the member for Ottawa — Vanier, is quite concerned by the attitude of the current government regarding the protection of our cultural diversity, our artistic expressions and our artistic and cultural industries. We have no guarantees that the current government will protect, maintain and promote these industries, or promote cultural diversity.

For example, let us take a look at the CRTC, the central Canadian agency responsible for regulating and monitoring Canada's audio-visual sector. The Liberals continue to believe that the CRTC helps our national audiovisual system achieve its objectives. However, we believe that, in the current era, the CRTC must continually and systematically review its regulatory policies and regulations in order to assess whether or not they meet the established objectives and whether these objectives remain valid with the passing of time.

● (1645)

We Liberals, we in the Liberal Party in this House, have a Canadian content strategy. Our Canadian content strategy is to place more emphasis on high-quality Canadian content that is of interest to large French-speaking or English-speaking audiences, in which Canadians see themselves reflected and which embodies the full diversity of our country.

When we talk about the diversity of our country, we are also talking about linguistic diversity. Canada has two official languages. We are also talking about ethnocultural diversity. Canada has many ethnocultural communities, whose members come from virtually every country in the world.

We are also talking about our aboriginal people, the first nations. In almost all respects, Canada is the embodiment of the word “diversity”, at every level.

Our strategy is also to promote spending on Canadian theatre, children's programming, cultural programming and documentaries that reach large audiences, as a priority.

It also provides for giving the CBC/Radio-Canada specific funding to enable it to broadcast a wide range of programming, as it is directed to do by its mission, to serve the public.

And our strategy involves a number of measures for simplifying funding, to improve profitability and prioritizing.

*Business of Supply*

The Liberal Party has proposed that the CRTC be asked to prepare annual reports on what it has done to simplify its rules, regulations and decision-making processes. In addition, we, the Liberal Party, also want to look into the possibility of providing for financial penalties in addition to the methods now available to the CRTC to enforce the regulations governing the audiovisual industry. This is important because it is the CRTC that regulates the entire audiovisual aspect of the cultural industry, and so it would be reasonable for it to have the means to ensure proper compliance with the regulations by the industry and the companies that make it up.

In a letter dated September 30, 2005, the President of the Canadian Film and Television Production Association proposed a new policy framework for Canadian television content. Among other things, he called for structural changes to the Broadcasting Act; a revision of the CRTC's 1999 Television Policy to bring back mandatory minimum spending on programming by conventional broadcasters; an increase in tax credits to 30% of eligible spending by producers; a \$95 million per year increase in the government's contribution to the Canadian Television Fund; and adjustment of the eligibility criteria for the Canadian Television Fund to raise the level of broadcasters' investments in programs that receive funding from that fund.

This is one example. If the government adopted the recommendations made by the Canadian Film and Television Production Association, it would have another method of ensuring that Canadian cultural diversity, in artistic expression and in our cultural industries, not only is preserved and protected, but is also given the opportunity to grow, to develop, to expand, and to play an even more important role in our society and our economy, with all of the implications this would have.

• (1650)

I will close by saying that we also need financial support for the audiovisual industry in both official languages.

The motion is an important one. In my opinion, this motion would be supported by a large majority of Canadians in all ten provinces, including my own, and the three territories. I ask my colleagues to support this motion.

[*English*]

**Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Acadie—Bathurst.

I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to the motion. All members of the NDP will be supporting this motion, which deals with the ratification of the UNESCO treaty on the protection and promotion of diversity and of cultural expressions in Canada, an important convention.

However, the amendment put forward by the NDP member for Timmins—James Bay is the operative clause of the whole motion. It insists that the government also provide direction to trade negotiators to ensure that domestic cultural rights are not undermined in any trade talks. While we support the motion, the amendment, which directs our negotiators in terms of upcoming and ongoing trade talks, is very important.

I think a lot of Canadians may wonder what our Canadian culture, what we see on television, read in books and magazines and see in

shows, has to do with trade talks. We do not think of culture as a commodity, as a tradable item. The reality is there is a very strong interface between cultural, telecom and broadcasting services. In fact, there have been very serious concerns about whether our cultural rights and sovereignty will be traded away as they become part of larger trade negotiations now taking place under GATS. Many fear this will become a reality. I reference a briefing paper from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It states:

Culture is in need of protection in the trade negotiations because unrestricted competition in this arena would replace local and national cultural expression with powerful international media conglomerates....Culture and telecom are being treated very differently, as if they were distinct...This approach needs to be revisited, because in Canada these two sectors are rapidly merging and becoming inseparable. As a result, trade negotiations to promote more foreign involvement in the provision of telecom services, including foreign ownership, threaten our cultural expression.

We have the link between these two issues and how much our cultural sovereignty is now threatened by the negotiations under GATS. Therefore, the NDP amendment is very important if we are genuinely concerned about protecting and enhancing cultural identity in Canada.

This is a very broad area and it is something that we have spoken about a lot. However, over the last decade we have seen a significant erosion in Canadian culture in the institutions of public delivery and public funding. We have seen a significant erosion of Canadian ownership. There is always a looming threat of these massive conglomerates moving into Canada, commercializing our culture and Americanizing it. I think people are very fearful about the rapid pace at which this is taking place in Canada.

Much of this took place under the Liberal watch. I listened to the speeches of Liberal members who purported to protect Canadian cultural sovereignty. Yet it was under the Liberal government that so much was given away in terms of ownership and public funding.

People spoke today about the lockout at the CBC and the turmoil that our public broadcaster and those who worked for it went through. Why was that? For 13 years we had a Liberal government that did very little to protect those institutions by way of legislation to ensure Canadian content and ownership and most of all to ensure stable, long term funding.

• (1655)

Is it any wonder that we now are moving into a new crisis arena because our culture is being threatened in trade negotiations under GATS? The political talk is there, but we need to see strong institutions. We need to see the funding, the framework, the policies and regulations and the laws that will protect Canadian content.

I am proud to represent the riding of Vancouver East, which is home to many individual artists and community-based organizations. They give us the stories of our lives. They give us community expression and a vision of who we are. They speak to the experiences that we have both locally and nationally. These artists struggle to make a living. Many are working other jobs to support their creative endeavours and many are living below the poverty line. It breaks my heart to see individual artists and organizations surviving on so little. Yet they keep doing their work because they have a dedicated and strong commitment to Canadian artistic expression and our cultural sovereignty.

*Business of Supply*

I not only want to see the motion approved, but I also want to see an environment where we respect the rights and dignity of individual artists and organizations. I want to see support for the call from the Canadian Arts Coalition for a \$5 per capita increase for the funding of the arts in Canada. I want to see incentives for artists. They are jammed with enormous taxes on the little amount of income they receive. This is being done very well in the province of Quebec and we need to do it across the country.

I want to see long term stable funding for the CBC. Just a couple of days ago, a news advisory came out about the CBC's television design department being under threat of closure. Why is this happening when we are debating the UNESCO treaty and supposedly the idea that we support protecting and promoting the diversity of culture in Canada? Why would we close that department? It has had a long history of protecting and enhancing original programming in our country? This measly cost saving measure of \$1 million will have a significant impact on original productions in Canada.

The debate today is important. If we are serious, we need to pass the motion. We also need to ensure that the amendment put forward by the NDP is adopted. We need to give clear direction to the trade negotiators, who are acting on behalf of Canada, to ensure that they do not negotiate away our cultural sovereignty as part of so-called competitiveness.

I am glad to support the motion today, but it is just a first step. We need to do much more to ensure that we support our artists, our cultural institutions and bilingualism in public broadcasting. We need to support organizations like the CBC to ensure they are not threatened each and every year by what the government plans on doing. Otherwise we will find ourselves in a void. We will find ourselves in a country which has lost its identity, its cultural expression and its voice. These issues are important in protecting our identity.

• (1700)

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, how would the hon. member view the introduction of new technologies in terms of our traditional view of defending Canadian content? Specifically, I am thinking of the Internet and the international nature of it and the whole question of streaming broadcasting.

I assume that she would view the preservation of Canadian content by all means as important. However, there is a technological challenge. What are her views of traditional broadcasting of Canadian content and the importance of the public broadcaster and how that is now transformed by the challenges of new technologies?

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, it is precisely because of the reality of how technology is overtaking at a very rapid pace. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives' document talks about what the future looks like. It talks about the average house having one unit that has a radio, television, music, films, news, Internet access, e-mail and maybe things we do not even envision yet.

This is broadband and its capacity to send huge amounts of digitized material over a single network should tell us of the urgency of this issue of how the protection and enhancement of Canadian culture is related to these trade negotiations that are going on that are

based on telecom services and broadcasting services. These things now are very integral to each other.

It is a warning to us that unless we recognize that reality we will have given up our cultural sovereignty in the race to advance technology and so-called competitiveness that will leave behind cultural expression. I appreciate the member's question because it is precisely because of that point that we are urging our amendment today, which I hope the member will support.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I find myself in an interesting moment wanting to continue with the member's discussion point.

What direction will my hon. colleague's ideas in relation to technology eventually go? We know it is important for us as Canadians to continue developing our culture and to ensure it is competitive on the international stage. However, I am afraid that what she just suggested is the very slippery slope to approaching what we see in China, which is the complete control of the Internet and the suppression of all ideas that are against the state. That is what we would eventually have to do in order to achieve what she is talking about. How would she do what she is trying to do without going down that slippery slope?

**Ms. Libby Davies:** Mr. Speaker, I am rather aghast at the question. I cannot conceivably understand how the member would come to the conclusion that we are talking about some form of state control over everything so that Canadians would have no choice. In fact, the opposite is true.

What we need to do is recognize the reality of how telecom and broadcast services are now so integral to cultural expression and to recognize that we need to ensure that domestic cultural rights are not undermined in any of these trade talks that take place based on what Canada has signed onto in the UNESCO Convention for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

This debate is about protecting that diversity of cultural expression both here in Canada and for other countries that have signed on in other parts of the world.

I would argue that the member is very misinformed about what this debate is about or what the conclusion is. It is about protecting Canadian culture and allowing that diversity to happen so it is not completely stifled and overpowered by commercialism that is based on a profit system that is coming basically from the U.S. and from very large conglomerates that will control every system in Canada. That is what he should be worried about.

*Business of Supply*

●(1705)

**MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-2, to which the concurrence of this House is desired.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The House resumed consideration of the motion and the amendment.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst.

**Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on the subject of the Liberal Party's motion introduced by our colleague from Ottawa—Vanier. The motion reads as follows:

That, in view of the ratification by Canada of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, the House insist that the government, its departments and agencies maintain the program policies and regulations in support of Canada's artistic sector and cultural industries, in particular, by maintaining or enhancing: (a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting in both official languages.

I do not see how anyone could vote against such a motion tonight. I would find it hard to believe, what with everything that is going on and the amendment proposed by the NDP, which reads as follows: "that the government provide direction to trade negotiators to ensure that domestic cultural rights are not undermined in any trade talks". This will protect people working in culture and the arts.

By the way, I want to commend our Canadians and Quebeckers who work in arts and culture. Sometimes we do not commend or thank them enough. During festivals we are pleased to have them among us. When we want to unwind, we are glad they are there. We like to listen to them and see their works of art.

Take for example Donald McGraw, an artist from Pokemouche in the riding of Acadie—Bathurst, who has been working for 30 years and whose work has not really been showcased. Donald McGraw's biography was launched on the weekend. Some 400 people attended the launch at the Université de Moncton in Shippigan to recognize the artistic works of Donald McGraw. He painted the portraits of 12 aboriginal chiefs from New Brunswick. These paintings are exceptional. It is incredible. Sunday afternoon in Shippigan, those who attended the launch and saw Donald McGraw's art had tears in their eyes.

It is not easy for those who work in arts and culture. They work in the shadows and they work hard. Before the product is available on the market and they receive money, these people go through tough times. We must acknowledge this part of their journey.

These people do not have the right to receive employment insurance benefits. They are considered self-employed workers. They have asked for this right many times.

The Conservative government does not want to support this motion. I will quote the beginning of the speech of the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier:

Let us remember that it was last fall, on October 20, 2005, to be precise, that a very large majority, more than 100 of the eligible countries present, voted to adopt that convention. Only two countries voted against it, namely, the United States and Israel. All other countries present, including Canada, voted in favour of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

This sounds like the new Conservative government on the topic of the war in Afghanistan. This sounds like the attitude of the Conservative government toward not the Americans but to the Bush administration—because there is a difference between the Americans and the Bush administration. Now, when it comes to arts and culture, the government is again guided by the Bush administration, which voted against this.

●(1710)

I find that really regrettable. When we look at our television or we listen to radio or community radio, we find out about the needs of the communities.

People say we have to increase funding for community radio services, since they are present in the lives of people. They are really present at the grassroots. That is important. They are also present where arts and culture are concerned. They are everywhere and they have the good luck to work. These are not big national radio services that forget about us, like Radio-Canada, I might add, as I feel I must. Oh, sorry, that is Radio-Montréal. I have often said in the House of Commons that we used to call it Radio-Québec. One day, my friends from the Gaspé pointed out to me that it was not Radio-Québec but rather Radio-Montréal, since people in the regions were forgotten. Manitoba is forgotten, as are Alberta and Franco-Albertans.

By the way, we now know that there are a lot of francophones in Alberta, since nearly all the Acadians have gone to work there. So there are a lot of francophones in Alberta.

**Mr. Richard Nadeau:** A second deportation!

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** It is like a second deportation, on account of the economic situation. Since jobs are not being created in rural regions, people have to leave those regions.

As for Radio-Canada, I have a little example from the letters to the editor section of *L'Acadie Nouvelle*. A man has sued the all-news network, RDI en direct/Atlantique, which shows the news that we can see about 10:30 or 11:30 in Ottawa, Quebec time.

Let us talk about press conferences held in Montreal. Let us cite a few examples. On January 6, the news was interrupted to air a press conference of Quebec notaries about consent for organ donations. Imagine, the Atlantic news was interrupted to air a press conference of Quebec notaries concerning consent about organ donations. The national news had to be interrupted at this one short time in each day that belongs to francophones in the Atlantic provinces.

*Business of Supply*

On January 18, the news was interrupted to air a scrum by the head of the PQ to congratulate Stéphane Bergeron who had just been sworn in. Let me say that I congratulate him on winning his election in Quebec. The Atlantic regional news was interrupted to say that Stéphane had won his election. With all due respect for Stéphane, is it appropriate to interrupt the national news in order to announce such an item?

On January 20, the news was interrupted for the broadcast of the city of Montreal's budget. They interrupted the Atlantic news to report a budget in Montreal. Quebec news has never been interrupted to announce the budget of the city of Caraquet. The national news has never been interrupted to report the Shippigan budget. The news has never been interrupted to report the budget of the city of St. Boniface, Manitoba.

On February 2, the news was interrupted for a briefing by Jacques Parizeau, who was commenting on the election of the new Canadian Prime Minister. I could produce a longer list.

In its defence, Radio-Canada alleges a lack of federal funding. In my opinion, it must have a real plan and put it in place to ensure that the CBC or Radio-Canada reaches all the regions of the Gaspé, the North Shore, Acadia, Cape Breton, Quebec and Quebec City—because there is more than just Montreal—and support our artists and our culture, in addition to sending the message across Canada that there are people not just in Montreal, but throughout our beautiful country.

This evening, it is disappointing to see that the Conservative government will vote against a motion promoting culture. It is not a bill. It is a motion. It would give the government direction and support our culture, our arts and our artists. These people who entertain us in July and August, at the Festival acadien de Caraquet, for example. This town, with a population of some 5,000, will welcome many tourists and swell to a population of 25,000. In Tracadie-Sheila and throughout our regions, there will be festivities, as there are throughout the country.

● (1715)

The federal government has responsibilities. The new government is creating concern among the people who look after and represent the francophone communities. They will once again see good reasons for concern as they watch the government vote this evening against a motion that is full of common sense and supported by UNESCO. The Conservative government will vote against this motion. That is unacceptable.

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will allow the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst to go further into his exposé on national coverage. We should expect the entire nation to be covered and not just part of it.

Many times RDI has not only cut off the news or part of the news on the Maritimes, but it has also cut the segment of news on Quebec and broadcast press conferences on murders in the United States instead.

This too has happened many times. I do not know if you remember, but at one point there were two men who were keeping American police forces in suspense. They went around killing people, several times in several places. They committed murder day

after day. Of course it is interesting to know what is going on in the world, but it is important to know what is happening at home, in the Gaspé, on the Magdalen Islands, in Acadia and elsewhere.

I think it would be important to allow the hon. member to go much further into what he is denouncing today. Everyone in a way, including in Quebec, was penalized by this coverage. That is why it is important for everyone in this House to support the motion this evening.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his question.

I find it even more regrettable that the national news never talks about Canada's other provinces. When we listen to the national news, we do not hear anyone talking about Gaspésie. We hear about Montreal, then the United States, and then about war in other countries.

I congratulate the Radio-Canada journalists working where I come from. I can assure you that they do very good work. But the only stories of theirs that are aired on the national news are the ones where some tires are placed in the middle of the road and where the roads are burned up. Then we get on the national news. Everything that is negative gets on the national news as long as it is big.

In Montreal, if a cat crosses St. Catherine Street and gets killed, it will be on the national news. But we do not see anything from the rest of the country.

I have been critical of this since my election, and even since I have been watching Radio-Canada and listening to SRC radio, which I love. It is our radio, it is our money, it is the taxpayers who fund it. The government has a duty not to impose cuts on the CBC and Radio-Canada. It should give them money so that they can cover the regions, without having the excuse of budget cuts. When the United States is in the news for a whole day because some incident has occurred there, and we cannot cover the news in our own country, we have a problem.

That is where the government should do some soul-searching about the way it treats public radio in Canada.

● (1720)

[English]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague from Acadie—Bathurst spoke with great passion, but he also spoke with great disdain for a very viable industry in North America. It is collectively called Hollywood. Many Canadians have experienced success in that industry. In fact, the largest grossing film of all time had a Canadian director, Mr. James Cameron.

I refer to his comments regarding the film industry in the United States doing quite well around the world. He showed considerable disdain toward the success of the industry. My question would be, do people who purchase this media content do so freely, or is the money being stolen out of their wallets?

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, if the Americans want to come and see our beautiful country and make a movie, they are welcome any time and we will take their money.

Defending our culture is the responsibility of the government. I am sure it is the same for the Americans and good for them if they do it.

We need an industry that is not just in the big cities, but gives opportunities to rural areas as well. At the same time we need to protect our industry around the world, the same as the hundred countries that voted for the convention, except the Americans and Israel. They did not vote for it. Canada voted for it. The new government will vote against the motion tonight. What is wrong with the convention that the Conservatives cannot support it? They say they do not want to be blocking something and that we are going too far.

I cannot wait to see how far the Conservatives are going to go, how far they will support our cultural industry, how far they will support our arts industry, how far they will support our public television. I remember when the Reform Party was here, it argued against that and said it should be privatized. That is what that party said. There are still some former Reform members in the Conservative Party. That is why it is not called the Progressive Conservative Party any more and is called the Conservative Party.

I hope that time will tell us differently. I hope I am wrong. I pray to God that I am wrong. People are nervous about it. The Conservative Party could just join the Americans right now with the way they are doing it. Canadians have reasons to be worried about it. Time will tell. You have been elected and you are a minority government, but time will tell us what you are going to do. The onus is on your shoulders now.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I remind the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst to address his comments through the Chair.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** I could start again if you want.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** No, that is quite all right. In the interests of timeliness, we will move on to the next speaker.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier has placed a very interesting motion before the House today.

While today's motion touches on a complex issue, it does so in a somewhat imperfect manner. It assumes that the previous government's cultural policy was without fault and there is no need for changes. However, I would suggest something different of the previous government's policies and so would the voters of Canada, who just recently passed judgment on them.

The motion also shows an inability to grasp the magnitude of the changes facing Canada's cultural industries. The government will not be bound to outdated policies. We must have flexibility to address

the new demands of changing technology and world realities. While some would disregard these changes and new realities, this government will not be irresponsible. We will be vigilant and creative in protecting our culture. That is why the government backs the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

As the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier accurately infers in his motion, the UNESCO convention is fundamentally important to the sustainability of our cultural policies, but missing is one of the key points about the convention, that it gives Canada the flexibility to protect our distinct cultural voice. It was never intended to bind us to a set of specific policies.

Yes, we will create policies which protect Canadian culture in Canada and which will see that culture takes its rightful place on the world stage. Let me give the House an example of the kind of flexible policies this government supports.

Not long ago the government signed an accord with the government of Quebec on UNESCO. The accord gives Quebec a voice in UNESCO. It recognizes that Quebec has unique cultural interests. It is an example of the federalism of openness this government will practise. We realize that Canada's cultural identity will be best protected by many voices rather than by a single policy enforced from the centre.

But the hon. member might find these ideas somewhat foreign, since the party opposite, when in government, was more often in conflict with the provinces than willing to work cooperatively with them. That is hardly open federalism.

Let me now turn to some other details of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Many members I suspect will not know the central role Canada is taking in bringing the convention into force. It is important for all members to recall that the pursuit of the convention was supported by all sides of the House.

Canada was the first nation to ratify the UNESCO convention. I have spoken about the tools the convention gives the government to defend Canadian culture. I have said that the key to the convention is that it gives the government the flexibility to address new concerns as they arise.

The convention itself is based on two principles. First is the recognition in international law that cultural goods and services have both a social and an economic benefit. Second is that the governments have the right to put in place measures aimed at securing a diversity of cultural expressions. I do not see anything in those positions that suggests, as the motion as it is written does, that the policies Canada has in place are the only ones to be considered.

Let me say again to the House and to the hon. member that the UNESCO convention is about options and tools. Let me mention another of the tools the convention gives to governments. It recognizes in article 6 that governments have a legitimate role in supporting creativity, through measures aimed at facilitating the creation, production, distribution, promotion and conservation of cultural expressions.



*Business of Supply*

•(1725)

It is important for cultural industries and creators because it offers them an international environment that fosters a dynamic exchange of their works.

This will protect the many programs that the government has in place to support our artists and creators. These programs include the Canada Council for the Arts which, I am pleased to remind the House, received \$15 million in additional funding in the budget. This is a concrete contribution. This is not an empty promise aimed at little more than for political gain.

As I look at the hon. member's motion, I am somewhat taken aback by how timid it is, how little it thinks of Canadian artistic abilities. The motion seems always to call for restrictions and protection, but nowhere does it rise to a vision of the future, nowhere does it see a place for Canadian cultural to expand in the world.

One of the major principles in the UNESCO convention is that we should share our culture, the conviction that the world's culture will only benefit from diversity. The government will act to strengthen our cultural position in the world. It will not simply bolt the doors and live in darkness.

This motion carries with it a vision of stagnation. The hon. member wants to freeze our cultural policies in the past. By doing that, he will freeze our artists, and one thing that we do know about art is it cannot stand stagnation.

That is why I urge all members to oppose this motion and not deny the government the freedom guaranteed by the UNESCO convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions.

The government has proven its commitment to the arts. The government will continue to act to defend and strengthen Canada's arts community, to do what we need to create new policies where this motion ties us down to the same tired, old ideas of the party opposite.

It is a sad irony that the hon. member should present this backward-looking motion under cover of the UNESCO convention which does so much to free government to act.

Let me say again as I finish, that the motion, as written by the hon. member, would do nothing to protect Canada's culture and would probably do great damage to it in the future.

•(1730)

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the parliamentary secretary. She began by suggesting the motion was too timid, which would suggest also that there was really no reason to oppose it other than it could have been a little stronger. Then she began to suggest that specific components of the motion were restrictive or were going to produce stagnation. I am wondering, as I look at the bottom part of the motion in terms of:

(a) existing Canadian cultural content requirements; (b) current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector; and (c) financial support for public broadcasting—

Which specific elements does she object to and how would she replace them with words which would be less timid or stagnating or whatever else? Would she give us some specifics?

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, it is quite clear what I meant by stagnation. We cannot be protectionist with borders surrounding our cultural artists and creators. If we begin closing doors, we will not allow them to be free with their artistic and cultural work. We must recognize the realities of the new world and the new technologies that were mentioned earlier, new technologies and new delivery platforms.

We must believe that the Canadian cultural content requirements, as written in this motion, would limit the ability to ensure that the cultural content requirements could be adjusted to meet the changing realities of many sectors. These sectors are changing and they will have to meet the new realities.

I heard members speak earlier about the CBC and I thought that it, too, did have a place in our culture. Then in Saskatchewan in particular, when it did not broadcast the brier properly, it lost that respect. We thought nobody should take the brier away from our Saskatchewan viewers. Who did it? This CBC that we are trying to protect. We might as well have given it to CTV and let CTV show us how to broadcast a brier for the viewers.

So I do not really think that by having this motion to restrict it is the way to go. We have to show some innovative and new ideas. That is what we are all about. We have a vision and that is to cut loose.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat stunned by the words of my colleague from the Conservative Party. I say to myself that there must remain an old Conservative attitude, which for us Quebecers and for French speakers in Canada means a certain lack of respect.

What the motion proposes is a minimum. We are asking for a minimum of cultural content. We are asking for a struggle against Americanization, against assimilation, against the ethnocultural disappearance of the French language. We are asking for respect for the French fact from anglophones in terms of culture.

In the past, this party abolished French schools at the provincial level: in New Brunswick, for example, in Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan. It was not until 1995 that French schools once again became a reality in Saskatchewan, where I used to live. I am not surprised to see the Conservative Party here refuse something that is so essential to the struggle against assimilation.

What pride is there in criticizing a proposal that is actually looking ahead to make sure that the big American giant behind us, to the south of us, and everywhere, who is omnipresent, does not cause the Quebec identity, the Acadian identity and the identity of Canada's other nations to disappear?

*Business of Supply*

•(1735)

[English]

**Mrs. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Speaker, I take offence to the member's comments. I happen to do a lot of things in Saskatchewan with the Francophonie communities and I believe strongly in those communities. My daughter is enrolled in a five week class at a university this summer in Quebec. I have a lot of things going on this summer and so does she, but she is taking five weeks out of her time to learn French.

It is not the Conservative government that has been blowing it in Saskatchewan. There is another government in power that has not made sure we have good teachers in French, so that French is universally taught in our province. It is because our province has cut back on teachers and we do not have teachers accessible.

I take real offence to the member's comments and I hope I never hear those again.

**Mr. Gord Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise in the House today to address the issues raised in the motion now before us.

I sat here through most of the day and listened with interest to the many points the member for Ottawa—Vanier and his colleagues opposite have made. They told interesting stories and raised lots of red herrings, but I would like to get to the key issues that the motion raises.

I think those issues are simple. On one side we have the member for Ottawa—Vanier who believes in the old policy framework: old ideas from a generation of Liberal rule. There is nothing new in this document. In fact, it is all about rejecting the new and the innovative. It seeks to deny the government the tools it needs to build new policy and programs. It seeks to keep Canadian culture safe in its little corner. The member wants our culture to stagnate.

The government rejects those arguments. We are committed to generating new ideas that will allow Canadian culture to compete in the new media order. In the digitally wired world we need new policies and new programs to encourage our artists. The government is committed to making Canada's artistic and cultural sector more successful and more vibrant. We will not be satisfied with the status quo when there is so much more to do. The member's vision is locked in the past.

I listened to the success stories by the members opposite and I applaud our artists for them, but I do not want to stand in the House in five years and hear the same stories being told again. I want to stand in this place and hear stories of bigger successes.

Let me speak for a moment about what the government has already done. In the budget there were two major moves that would affect the arts. The first one is traditional. We provided \$50 million in new funding for the Canada Council for the Arts and the money will go to artists and no doubt it will bear fruit. I hope the member opposite will join me in applauding that commitment. The government received very good media for that move.

However, there was another initiative that did not get as much media ink. We made a tax change which means donations of publicly traded stocks will no longer be subjected to capital gains tax; tax

changes that will have a significant impact on theatres like the Thousand Island Playhouse in my home town of Gananoque in my riding of Leeds—Grenville.

I am sure the members opposite are shaking their heads. This is not the sort of move that the hon. member's motion even bothers to mention. Perhaps many are wondering what good some arcane tax change will do. Let me say that one change has already brought in an estimated \$60 million to arts organizations. Perhaps I should pause and repeat that figure: \$60 million in the few short weeks since the budget. In case some members need to be reminded, that is \$10 million more than the investment in the Canada Council for the Arts.

What hon. members may ask is, what is the likely bottom line on this move? In one year it is estimated that this simple tax change will generate between \$300 million and \$500 million more in donations to worthy organizations and none of it is tax dollars.

The government thinks that leveraging private money is both more innovative and more responsible than just spending. That is what I would call innovation. That is what I would call creating imaginative new policy tools. This is really going to help. That is what I would call responsible stewardship of public money.

Unfortunately, this is the sort of move that the member's motion would tend to discourage. It would tie the government to an old framework, the old status quo. Let me say it again, the old status quo is not good enough. We want to ensure money gets to our artists. We do not want our artists to remain dependent on government handouts. We do not want to support a huge cultural bureaucracy.

Canadians elected this government to deliver more and we will. All of my hon. colleagues would like to see policies in place that guarantee that Canada has a vibrant cultural landscape and that Canadian voices and music are heard and Canadian art is seen.

I say to the House, do not support a motion which seeks to deny the government flexibility in developing policies to support and nurture our cultural industries. The members on this side of the House support UNESCO and the convention on the protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions.

In fact, it was this government and this Prime Minister who made the historic move of allowing Quebec a presence at UNESCO. The Bloc and the Liberals both opposed the move to give Quebec an international role and to work cooperatively with the federal government.

This is the sort of imaginative and innovative policy the government has to be free to follow. On this side of the House we support our artistic communities and cultural industries. In fact, we believe in strengthening the opportunities for these sectors both at home and internationally.

*Business of Supply*

• (1740)

In many cases, the existing programs and policies are already out of step with the new realities of the cultural world. Experts tell us that the pace of change will only increase.

For that reason, we will need to develop and implement new policies. I believe the government can make things better. In order to support the artistic and cultural sector in Canada, we need to move forward recognizing the realities of the new world. We can strengthen the confidence of all Canadians giving them more than the old platitudes and rhetoric.

We on this side have always supported and continue to support Canadian content on our airwaves, in our broadcasts and across our cultural and artistic sector. What I cannot support is the suggestion that we need to maintain our roles as is. This is a recipe for Canada's artists to be bypassed by a world when direct downloading, file sharing and other new technologies make the old boundaries unsure.

We are committed to creating policies that will allow Canadians to take the lead in the new technologies and not get left behind. Regulation is only part of the story. We also need to address the programs that support Canadian culture and artists. The government is committed to working with artists and creators to ensure that the money we spend to support them goes to the people who need it.

Our government is implementing solutions, not just talking about them and not simple maintaining the status quo. The government is committed to ensuring we can improve Canadian access to the airwaves in the 21st century. We have to ask ourselves how Canadian content rules are affected by radio, over the Internet, direct downloads of television programming or the many other technical changes that are coming.

As the realities of these industries change we must examine and change our policies. The status quo is not good enough. We will build on our past successes. The government's vision is of a Canadian cultural community that grows and that does not rest on its laurels.

Maintaining current restrictions on foreign ownership in the cultural sector does not allow us the flexibility that may be needed in the new media world to take advantage of the opportunities presented by new technologies.

There have been calls for changes to the existing foreign ownership restrictions in broadcasting, particularly for cable and satellite service providers. The best way to ensure that there is Canadian content on the airwaves is not only through regulation, although regulation has its part, it is through ensuring there is a vital broadcasting system.

The government believes in finding a place for Canadian voices on the airwaves and we believe that those voices must be heard but there is also a place for healthy competition on the airwaves. We do not believe in monopolies. We believe in necessary government regulation but we do not believe all regulation is a good thing.

We want to encourage Canadian talent so that it wins a place on the world's airwaves. We will invest in artists to ensure they can reach a level of excellence that sees the world coming to our doors and to their doors.

We on this side support long term stable funding for the CBC. We believe that the CBC has to be relevant for Canadians. Our public broadcaster faces some fundamental challenges. I learned a lot about those challenges when I sat on the heritage committee in the 38th Parliament. These challenges have worsened by 13 years of cuts and neglect by the party opposite. The CBC will remain Canada's public broadcaster but it must cease to drift and it must plan ahead. We will ensure that will happen in cooperation with the industry and with the public.

I again thank the member for Ottawa—Vanier for presenting the motion. The debate has been very interesting and informative for all of us and for all Canadians. It has only made me more sure that the motion would lead to stagnation for Canada's arts.

We on this side have a new vision. We support our artists. We want artists to succeed. We will act rather than talk. We will innovate rather than accept that things cannot get better. That is why I cannot support the motion.

• (1745)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to make a short comment on the importance of the CBC to the north and ask a short question.

The Liberal government provided \$1 billion to the CBC. In my area it has been an instrumental public broadcaster. It gives a lot of announcements about NGOs. It has helped to promote many of the charities for which I have worked and it has helped local talent who in no other way would have a forum.

With great broadcasters, such as Les McLaughlin, great stories have been told of our history and culture in the north, stories of the first nations, the steam paddwheelers, the gold rush and on Robert Service. Sadly, Robert Service's mother died in France in the last couple of weeks. She was a wonderful lady and I pay tribute to her.

My question is related to the extension in the rural areas. Unfortunately, some areas in the north cannot be reached by broadcast signals and, in the harsh climate of the north, this can be very dangerous and critical as it relates to weather, ice breakups and things like that.

Would the member support the efforts of myself and Don Taylor, a former speaker of the Yukon legislature who lives in the bush and who has been trying hard for a number of years to ensure the service is extended around the Watson Lake area and in the rural parts of the north that cannot get the CBC signal at the moment? It would require that investment.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question because it goes to the heart of what the CBC is about, which is the stories in terms of television and radio. It has some excellent programming that otherwise would not be told. Extending the service to some of the more remote parts of Canada would definitely be an important part of that mandate.

I sat on the heritage committee last year and we heard from the president and various vice-presidents of the CBC a number of times. We asked them how much money they would need to improve the service but they could not really tell us. They obviously wanted more money but we needed to review it. That is an important part of where we go with the CBC and this government is committed to reviewing that.

Studies have been undertaken in the past but I do not think the CBC is serving Canadians as well as it might. We should get to the heart of what it should be doing, defining its role and ensuring it can do it well, and doing exactly what the hon. member on the other side is talking about.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Richard Nadeau (Gatineau, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague stated earlier that the Bloc Québécois was against Quebec's presence in UNESCO. Well, he was mistaken. I want him to know that. I would like to ask him the following question.

Why did they not apply the logic of the Belgian model? When the Flemish and the Walloons agree on a point, Belgium votes in favour of a position. When they disagree, Belgium abstains or simply does not take a stand. This is how we viewed Quebec's participation in UNESCO.

I will repeat my question. Why not go the distance to truly give Quebec a clear, distinct and specific voice within UNESCO, and not have it just sit on the sidelines?

• (1750)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is that Quebec did not want that power. We heard the Bloc and the Liberals say that they do not support Quebec having a role at UNESCO.

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, first, that comment is not true. The Liberals did support that and the Conservative government essentially officiated what we had started.

In response to the question from my colleague from Yukon, he recognized that CBC does not need less money. The sense of this motion is that in terms of public broadcasting in this country, we are recommending to the House that we do not offer less funding but that it is at least stable.

Since the member has recognized that the CBC does not need less, would he agree that at least that portion of the motion he supports?

**Mr. Gord Brown:** Mr. Speaker, I did not catch all of the question from the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier but we are in favour of continued support and working with the CBC to ensure that it does serve Canadians.

The fact is that much of this motion will stagnate culture in our country. We cannot support the motion because it does not allow for

that innovation. Had it allowed for that, obviously we would have had much more ability to support it.

**Hon. John Godfrey (Don Valley West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of the debate I was wondering why such a self-evident proposition as has been put forward in our motion would even need debate, but having heard the last two speakers I now realize why we need to do so.

As a former historian I would like to remind the House why we went into the cultural policies we have and then deal with the arguments presented, both by the parliamentary secretary for human resources and the member for Leeds—Grenville.

It is worth considering that the history of Canada was never a total accident. In fact, it was John Ralston Saul who reminds us that it was a “series of great strategic acts which have created Canada”, and those strategic acts extend to things like culture and broadcasting.

Some people have called these national projects the deliberate creation of a project that could not be done without all of society pulling together. Confederation would be such a national project. Other national projects would be the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway, the creation of the CBC in the 1930s, and the way in which the country came together to fight in World War I and again in World War II to defeat the enemy. A series of great projects existed after the war, the great infrastructure projects of the 1950s, with the creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway, the building of the Trans-Canada Highway, the microwave system, medicare and, in recent times, the great national project of building a human rights regime in this country.

The great national cultural project after the second world war had several components to it. First there was what happened to public broadcasting with the coming of television in the 1950s and the way in which the government initially responded by creating a televised component on the CBC. We then had the Massey-Levesque report in the early 1950s in which the whole nature of Canadian culture was surveyed and two challenges were identified: first, how to preserve a Canadian culture in the face of American competition so close to us; and second, how to recognize the diversity of that culture, le caractère bilingue et biculturel?

• (1755)

Out of that came deliberate government policy in the late 1950s, specifically the creation of the Canada Council itself which helped to shape the cultural landscape we have today. It was not done by accident. It was not done by the marketplace. It recognized the market failures of both of those.

I was going to add two other components. There was the creation of the CRTC to regulate all broadcasting in this country and telephony. Then I would add 1967 as a year in which we deliberately as provinces and as a national government created many of the theatres and cultural spaces that we still enjoy today, including of course the National Arts Centre here in Ottawa.

*Business of Supply*

Looking back on those heroic days we can say it has been a huge national success. Canadian content has flourished. Our popular music is flourishing, which was precisely possible because we created a space for Canadian artists on Canadian airwaves. It comes down now to such celebrations as the east coast music festival which will be known to many.

At the same time, it was important for serious music to be supported by the state, whether it was the creative act which the parliamentary secretary referred to as part of the UNESCO definition, which led to the support of composers like the late Harry Freedman, the late Harry Somers, John Weinsweig, and Alexina Louie, for example, but also the great artists who have been supported by the Canada Council over the years. I think of pianists like Louis Lortie and the tremendous singers who have been sponsored and supported by state sponsored organizations and cultural institutions, such as the great generation of singers we are enjoying these days from Isabel Bayrakdarian to Ben Heppner to Richard Marginson.

Theatre in this country has been enriched by the fact that there is a theatre section of the Canada Council. Theatres which exist in the ridings of most members present are not there by accident; they are there by an act of support. The symphony orchestras, the festivals, the ballets, the dance companies, the novelists who 40 years ago were not making their way internationally but now through support by the Canada Council are doing so. We are seeing the flourishing of the Cirque du Soleil which spawned its own theatre school.

There have been failures of course. We have had real challenges in the feature film industry outside of Quebec.

Here is the question: Do we need, as we propose, to continue to support Canadian culture and Canadian content as the motion suggests and do we need to continue to support public broadcasting and ownership rules and content rules for all the other broadcasters, or has the landscape sufficiently changed?

I would argue if I may divide that question in two that the great Canadian cultural institutions do need to continue. What does the Government of Canada do? It sponsors the great training facilities in this country like the National Theatre School in Montreal, the National Ballet School whose new building I happened to tour last Friday in Toronto, the Royal Conservatory of Music, the Banff School of Fine Arts. All of these are supported by the Government of Canada and without which we will not have the creativity called for in the UNESCO convention.

We need to support our other major cultural institutions, whether it is the theatre, the symphony, the opera, the ballet, the art galleries, the museums, the libraries because that is what civilized countries do. That is what happens in places like Europe which gives us the tremendous density of culture and the tremendous richness of urban life in those places. This is the price we pay, our taxation for civilization.

Canadian broadcasting is also something which will continue to need support in the face of the technological challenges which the members opposite have referred to. It is true that the Internet will be challenging, but I did not hear any answer about how that challenge would be met by the people opposite. We need to allow Canadians to

find themselves wherever they are and in whatever medium. If we allow the law of private broadcasting to dominate, the law of the marketplace, we cannot guarantee that success.

We need not only a place for Canadian content but also a place for unusual, challenging, experimental, and indeed, unpopular broadcasting. That is why we have a public broadcaster. In short, we need a space for Canadians to breathe.

• (1800)

Canada is a country which was created on purpose and which needs to continue to be created deliberately. If we are going to continue to protect cultural diversity, to protect Canadian culture, we have to support this motion.

When I consider the arguments of the parliamentary secretary, which I find passing strange, the notion that somehow or other freedom is limited by this motion, I ask, which parts of this motion limit the freedom of Canadian artists to be supported by their government, limit the freedom to have air time on Canadian radio stations? I do not understand how it limits in any way the ability of those artists to perform their art outside the country.

The parliamentary secretary said that we cannot be protectionist, that we cannot protect. Again I ask her, how are Canadian artists hindered by this motion? What gets in their way because we happen to protect them and nurture them until they are in a position to strike out perhaps in a commercial fashion? What are the restrictions that she can allude to in detail and precision that really are hampering our Canadian artists?

She suggested and I quote, I think, "this motion will limit our ability to meet new realities". How does that work? How does the nurturing and protection of Canadian artists limit their abilities in Canada or anywhere else?

The hon. member for Leeds—Grenville suggested that there was an incompatibility between the motion as presented and the new tax changes which have been brought in, in the latest budget, to encourage Canadian donors to be more generous with their stocks and be given favourable tax treatment in return. I would remind the hon. member that this was a policy which began with the Liberal government and which is not in any way inconsistent with the thrust of this motion.

I challenge the member for Leeds—Grenville to outline in detail how it is that this tax policy which encourages greater generosity on the part of Canadian donors is in any way constrained or restricted by Canadian content rules or foreign ownership rules. It simply encourages greater philanthropy. There is no connection. There is no decline of flexibility as he suggested.

The hon. member said that we cannot support things as they are, that we have to take a lead in new technologies. I would ask the hon. member to get precise information before we throw out the content rules and the ownership rules which deal with existing technologies. Before we throw the baby out with the bathwater, what exactly would we have to change? Until we know what that is, why would we not leave in place those things which have worked so successfully for us?

*Business of Supply*

I would raise the same point when he talked about Canadian content on the Internet. He said that we need to change policy. Fine, we will change policy, but until we change policy why would we fail to protect the existing instruments which have served us so well over the last 40 or 50 years?

The motion in no way limits the ability to change in the future, but we do not wish to change without knowing exactly what we are changing to.

The same is true of the remarks he made on foreign ownership. He said that there is no flexibility. Once again, why would we not leave in place foreign ownership restrictions until we know exactly what the import of changes would be? What is it we would lose and what is it we would gain? No flexibility is impaired by this until those changes are proposed.

What I see in this motion is quite simply the fact that it is a rather, dare I say, conservative motion. It is a motion which says that before the government does something radical and before it changes things, it should tell us what those things are. Do not simply ask us to take it on faith and throw away the very policies which have nurtured both Canadian culture and Canadian broadcasting for the past 50 years and simply trust the government. No, we will not.

● (1805)

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for taking us on a stroll down memory lane. Some of the comments and some of the questions he brought up are not even addressed in the motion. There is so much missing from this motion.

Having said that and putting that aside, there are a couple of things, item (a) and item (c), which I could probably go along with in the motion. Item (c) is a particular concern of mine, being from a rural riding in New Brunswick, where the CBC has a significant impact on the rural programming as well as in the francophone area of the riding.

[Translation]

This is very important for the Acadians and the Brayons in the northwest region.

[English]

For my riding, that is a very important deal.

When it comes to item (b), does the hon. member really believe that we can guarantee success? Does he also believe that item (b) is really the only way to ensure access to capital that will allow our cultural sector to grow?

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Mr. Speaker, of course nobody can guarantee success, that is true. What we can do is guarantee failure.

If we do not have some regime which says there is something more than the marketplace and something more than the American marketplace which will be reflected in our public broadcasting, and in our broadcasting system taken together, both public and private, I am not sure that the provision of capital by foreign investors will in any way guarantee Canadian content. Why should it? The people who would be investing, who would take a majority ownership position, would do so not for our sake, but for their sake. They would do so to maximize profit as that is their job, not to serve us in

any way, not to have any sense of the public commitment which is implied under the CRTC and the Broadcasting Act.

I cannot guarantee success but I sure can guarantee failure if we take the line suggested by the hon. member. I am glad he is on side for items (a) and (c). That is two-thirds of it and I am looking forward to his support.

[Translation]

**Mr. Raynald Blais (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to hear our Liberal colleague speak further about the importance of today's subject and the reason why we should absolutely not listen to what the Conservatives are saying, particularly the last item calling for guarantees. To ask for guarantees is to admit a certain weakness. It leads me to believe that action will never be taken on the pretext that—and it is indeed a pretext—we have no guarantees. Our main function is to act without necessarily having these guarantees. Otherwise, this could prevent us from taking action that would improve the situation of the French fact in North America in particular.

I would like to give my colleague the opportunity to further develop his arguments so that the Conservatives opposite will listen to reason and understand the real reason why we must support the motion put forward today.

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Mr. Speaker, we seem to have two opposing philosophies before us. I must say that the Conservative philosophy remains rather obscure for now, yet we can nevertheless make out certain aspects or hints in the comments made so far.

To answer my colleague, I would say that it is precisely because of this vagueness. We hear talk of new technologies and flexibility. We are told that it is old fashioned, as though it were outdated, although what we are not being told is what will serve to replace this system of protecting Canadian culture and French culture in Canada.

This is particularly important to Quebec. Quebec's situation is the same as Canada's, only even more so, I would say. It is precisely to protect the French language in Quebec and throughout Canada that such rules exist.

When I hear all of this rhetoric on flexibility and new technologies, I tell myself that these are only details. I have absolutely no faith in our future. For now, I remain conservative, as it were, in terms of the regulation and protection of culture, whether in Quebec or Canada.

● (1810)

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the past week a very prominent Canadian passed away. He would have been very interested in the debate this afternoon. Bernard Ostry was a public servant for a long time in Ottawa and in Toronto. He specialized in cultural policy. He was well known for his work in the areas of telecommunications policy and communications, culture and multiculturalism policy. National museums was also an area in which he worked. For a long time he was the head of TV Ontario. If he were still with us today, he would have been very interested in the discussion today.

*Business of Supply*

I want to pass on my condolences to his wife Dr. Sylvia Ostry and to his children Adam and Jonathan.

Given the outstanding contribution of Mr. Ostry to communications and cultural policy in Canada, could the hon. member reflect for a moment on the contributions of public servants to the development of that policy over many years?

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to do that and I would be pleased to do so with specific reference to Bernard Ostry, whose funeral I attended in Toronto on Friday. It was an extraordinary manifestation of a great life.

Here was a person who had done many things in the Public Service of Canada. He covered many dossiers, but culture and broadcasting were really his forte. His far-seeing vision of the impact of new technologies on public broadcasting in our country goes back to the 1960s and 1970s. Things that he wrote in 1975 have a prophetic air to them.

It is precisely because we have great public servants like Bernard Ostry, who served both the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario when he was head of TVO, and his wife Sylvia, who is the leading trade expert in the country and his children, particularly Adam Ostry, who works in the cultural field, that we have been able to have these deliberate policies. These policies have taken us forward. They have anticipated the changes which have come across in the multi-channel universe of over the air broadcasting in the early fifties. At that time, the United States had three channels and Canada had a couple.

We have gone through a total revolution. It is precisely because we have been well served by people like Bernard Ostry and the rest of his family that we have been able to anticipate change and introduce, in a thoughtful and intelligent way, the kinds of regulations which have allowed us to keep up and demonstrate the flexibility, which has been asked of us by the Conservative government. I ask the government to once again demonstrate flexibility and support this motion.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, during my colleague's speech, he mentioned a few ideas in relation to how current subsidies could not have a negative impact on any cultural sector. I want to point out one specific sector that I feel subsidies could impact in a negative way.

My colleague might be familiar with Telefilm Canada, which grew to some prominence under his regime. It has many requirements for filmmakers to receive subsidies. Many forms need to be filled out to get funding for a film. However, one requirement that is not asked for is quality of script. Almost any 100 pages could be submitted and funding would be received. This points out that if we want to simply push support in a certain area, there are times when that support will lose sight of the end goal.

● (1815)

**Hon. John Godfrey:** Mr. Speaker, I take the hon. member's point. In my historical overview, while saying we had huge success in some areas, and I outlined everything from classical music to pop music to art galleries and the rest, I did say that one of the areas which we have been less successful in is precisely the one the

parliamentary secretary referred to, which is the feature film business.

Why do we not have more Canadian feature films of quality? I totally accept the premise that quality is important. Why is there so little screen time? This has been a subject of a lot of consideration. Is it the distribution system? Is there some kind of monopoly which is organized by those who screen the films? Is it a plot or is it the nature of the film business, which is an increasingly international one? It is pretty hard sometimes to tell what a film is in terms of content.

I certainly accept the criticism because it is one I have made myself. This is an area where the nature of filmmaking has changed. It is worthy of those who happen to be lucky enough to be on the heritage committee to spend some time thinking about that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak today, even though the debate is coming to an end.

As industry critic, I have attended meetings of both the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology and the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage over the past few years. I realized there was significant concern that the government, Liberal at the time, now Conservative, might dismiss rules about foreign ownership in telecommunications, and in all cultural industries.

I think that the motion before us today is a heartfelt appeal from Parliament and from people who feel that danger is on our doorstep. The threat is related to the report on telecommunications released a month or two ago that suggested we do away with all of the rules governing foreign ownership controls in telecommunications. This would be very dangerous for Canada's cultural industry.

We must understand—and this is the part of the motion that I find most interesting—that if we want to throw out foreign ownership rules, we can only apply these arguments to physical aspects of the business. Telecommunications companies transmit and broadcast signals. In this sector, we cannot differentiate between the people who deal with medium and those who deal with the message. There is no difference between the medium and the message.

The best examples of this are American companies, which produce a lot of cable television and radio. For these companies, Quebec and Canada are small markets onto which they can dump their products at minimal cost. Our own companies cannot compete.

*Business of Supply*

We must therefore make sure that we do not adopt the recommendations on abolishing the rules governing foreign ownership in the telecommunications sector. The motion before us is a step in this direction. This pleases me and seems appropriate, especially since the motion begins with a reminder that Canada ratified the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. If that has any meaning, if Canada ratified a convention in order to put forward logical policies, then this motion must be passed today.

Throughout Quebec and Canada, people who do not share the government's views are making themselves heard. They realize that this is a minority government and that its positions on some issues do not enjoy a broad consensus or even majority support. The Kyoto protocol is one example, and today we have another example. The result of this evening's vote will be one of the decisions that people will have to answer for during the next election.

If the government decides to vote against a motion such as this one, if it decides to lift the rules on foreign ownership of telecommunications companies, if it ensures that our cultural industry is likened to any other sector where shoes or other products are sold, without considering the uniqueness of culture, it will have made a serious error.

I would like to talk more specifically about film, the subject raised earlier. A number of questions were raised regarding Quebec cinema. Why is cinema flourishing in Quebec? Why have we managed to develop a star system? Why do our films appear in the theatres and compete with American films? Why do our films attract as many if not more people than American films? It is because, in Quebec, we have developed a way to help the industry. We have not abandoned it. We did not consider it competition or just like any other sector. We did not say that people had to be left to produce films and the public would go to see Quebec films if they liked them, but if the public preferred English Canadian or American films they would go to see those. Instead, we created a structure and a means of support that took the situation and Quebec culture into account. In the end, it paid off.

In terms of Canada and the other provinces, they do speak the same language as the United States, but if the restrictions were lifted, things would be even worse. I think no more films would be produced in English Canada if a total invasion of this industrial sector were permitted.

● (1820)

When we have a motion like this one telling us that we have to protect current requirements for Canadian cultural content, maintain current restrictions on foreign ownership in culture, and continue to fund radio and television in both official languages, it is clear that these are essential elements of a cultural policy.

Obviously, Quebec has some huge advantages here and has taken on the responsibility of protecting Quebecers, the nation of Quebec, in North America and around the world. But as long as Quebec is part of Canada, we must ensure that Canada's policies recognize this culture.

We cannot go through two, five or ten years of deregulation, then realize what a devastating effect it has had on our production and try to go back and reinstitute adequate regulations.

Here is the best example I can give: for a very long time, when rules concerning French-language music content were proposed, there was a considerable uproar in Quebec. However, it was soon realized that, when music gets airtime and people hear it, they buy records. That also encourages people to make records, which then produces results for Quebec. The Cowboys Fringants, a band with roots in Quebec culture, received considerable support, which has led to results in terms of popularity and records sales. They would not be as popular without this obligation to include francophone content in music.

If it had been decided to promote only the listeners' favourite music, before gradually conducting surveys on the impact of what is happening outside of Quebec or Canada, we would have seen an anglicization of the air waves.

We see this in the danger presented by satellite radio. Regulation is inadequate in this sector and we can foresee the difficulty facing the market at the end of the day.

Therefore, the Bloc Québécois supports this motion. It seems to us, however, that Quebec will be much better equipped to defend Quebec culture.

The regulation of broadcasting and telecommunications is deemed essential, and it is believed that the most serious harm to Canadian content was caused by the Liberals when they approved satellite radio. It is quite paradoxical that the Liberal party is tabling today a motion that forces the defence and protection of cultural content given that, when in power, the Liberals had adopted measures having the opposite effect. However, if their move to the other side of the House has given them the opportunity to get back in touch with the people and to realize that such actions are necessary, such is the effect of democracy, which can lead to interesting results.

I hope that this evening, in this House, a vast majority will vote in favour of this motion. I hope that it will be reflected in the government's actions. Otherwise, this will be yet another instance where the people give the government a clear message that it has failed to respect the will of the majority represented here by the opposition parties.

● (1825)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It being 6:26 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

[*English*]

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.



*Business of Supply*

**Some hon. members:** No.  
**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.  
**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.  
**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And more than five members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Call in the members.  
 • (1850)  
**The Speaker:** The hon. chief government whip on a point of order.  
**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I think if you seek it you would find unanimous support for the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Is it agreed that the amendment carry?  
**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Speaker:** I declare the amendment carried.  
 The next question is on the main motion as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion as amended?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.  
**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Speaker:** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.  
**The Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.  
**The Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

• (1900)  
 [Translation]  
 (The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 10)*

**YEAS**

Members

- |                               |                        |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| Alghabra                      | André                  |
| Angus                         | Asselin                |
| Atamanenko                    | Bagnell                |
| Bains                         | Barbot                 |
| Barnes                        | Bélangier              |
| Bell (Vancouver Island North) | Bell (North Vancouver) |
| Bellavance                    | Bevilacqua             |
| Bevington                     | Bigras                 |
| Black                         | Blaikie                |
| Blais                         | Bonin                  |
| Bonsant                       | Boshcoff               |
| Bouchard                      | Bourgeois              |
| Brown (Oakville)              | Brunelle               |

- Byrne
- Carrier
- Charlton
- Christopherson
- Comartin
- Crête
- Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
- Cuzner
- DeBellefeuille
- Deschamps
- Dhaliwal
- Dryden
- Easter
- Faille
- Fontana
- Fry
- Gaudet
- Godfrey
- Goodale
- Guay
- Holland
- Jennings
- Kadis
- Keeper
- Kotto
- Laframboise
- Lavallée
- LeBlanc
- Lemay
- Loubier
- MacAulay
- Malo
- Marleau
- Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca)
- Martin (LaSalle—Émard)
- Masse
- Matthews
- McDonough
- McGuire
- McTeague
- Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)
- Mourani
- Murphy (Charlottetown)
- Nash
- Owen
- Paquette
- Perron
- Picard
- Priddy
- Regan
- Rota
- Russell
- Savage
- Sgro
- Silva
- Simms
- St-Hilaire
- St. Denis
- Stoffer
- Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)
- Thibault (West Nova)
- Tonks
- Vincent
- Wasylycia-Leis
- Wilson
- Zed- — 155

- Cardin
- Chan
- Chow
- Coderre
- Cotler
- Crowder
- Cullen (Etobicoke North)
- Davies
- Demers
- Dewar
- Dosanjh
- Duceppe
- Eyking
- Folco
- Freeman
- Gagnon
- Gauthier
- Godin
- Graham
- Guimond
- Hubbard
- Julian
- Karetak-Lindell
- Khan
- Laforest
- Lalonde
- Layton
- Lee
- Lévesque
- Lussier
- Malhi
- Maloney
- Marston
- Martin (Winnipeg Centre)
- Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
- Mathysen
- McCallum
- McGuinty
- McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
- Ménard (Hochelaga)
- Minna
- Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)
- Nadeau
- Ouellet
- Pacetti
- Patry
- Peterson
- Plamondon
- Ratansi
- Rodriguez
- Roy
- Sauvageau
- Scott
- Siksay
- Simard
- St-Cyr
- St. Amand
- Steckle
- Szabo
- Valley
- Wappel
- Wilfert
- Wrzesnewskyj

**NAYS**

Members

- Ablonczy
- Allen
- Ambrose
- Anderson
- Baird
- Bernier
- Blackburn
- Boucher
- Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
- Bruinooge
- Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
- Carrie
- Chong

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Clement	Cummins
Davidson	Day
Del Mastro	Devolin
Doyle	Dykstra
Emerson	Epp
Fast	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Goldring	Goodyear
Gourde	Grewal
Guergis	Hanger
Harper	Harris
Harvey	Hawn
Heam	Hiebert
Hill	Hinton
Jaffer	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
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## PAIRED

## Members

Bachand	Benoit
Finley	Lessard— 4

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

● (1905)

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Order. I would invite all hon. members who need to carry on conversations to use the lobbies on either side of the House so that we can move on with the adjournment proceedings.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

## HEPATITIS C

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on May 2 I asked the Minister of Health about his government's promise to

compensate people who were infected with hepatitis C through Canada's tainted blood supply. I hope the minister will be able to provide us with two detailed answers instead of the rhetoric that we heard last time in response to the question.

During the last election campaign the Conservatives promised they would “immediately compensate all victims inflicted through tainted blood products”. That included people who were outside the window from 1986 to 1990. That was more than four months ago.

I do not know what the dictionary definition of “immediately” is, but I expect if I looked it up, it would not be four months. Certainly four months was not the timeframe envisioned by the people who have hepatitis C, who were encouraged and perhaps voted for the Conservatives because they were promised that kind of assistance. Those people placed their trust in the Conservative government. They trusted that they would have resources to raise their families, to send their children to school, to pay the mortgage and maybe even go back to work. All those hopes have been dashed.

In question period the Minister of Health said, “We made a campaign pledge and we intend to keep it”. He assured us his government was moving with alacrity. That was four weeks ago. Both “immediately” and “alacrity” seem to have different definitions now.

It is time for direct answers to direct questions. The Conservatives said to the people with hepatitis C, “Trust us”. People believed that hope was just around the corner. The only thing that has been around the corner for some people is death.

The government promised immediate compensation. Why has that party not kept its word after more than four months in office? The Prime Minister, the Minister of Health and the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health have all said they consider this to be a top priority. People who have been waiting for four months do not feel that they are a top priority. When will the government take action?

Victims of the tainted blood tragedy continue to lose their jobs and their homes. With each passing day people are losing their lives. When will these people receive the lifeline they were promised?

**Mr. Steven Fletcher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to address the House on an issue the government takes very seriously.

I understand that the NDP has been supportive of the Conservative lead on compensating people who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood. We will address the needs of those individuals as quickly as possible.

As a government and as a society we have a duty to help victims of hepatitis C to ease the burden of that disease. For some, they may have this affliction for the rest of their lives.

Like many members of the House, I have been deeply moved by the heart-wrenching stories of personal suffering from these individuals who through no fault of their own have contracted hepatitis C through the blood supply.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

In fact, when I was health critic in opposition, I had a great deal of success at pushing for compensation for tainted blood. Unfortunately, the previous government did not listen. However, this government will act.

During the last federal election campaign we committed to the immediate compensation of all individuals who contracted hepatitis C from tainted blood as recommended by the Krever inquiry. As the Minister of Health has stated in the House, we fully intend to honour our commitment and compensate the pre-1986 and post-1990 class.

The Minister of Health initiated a policy review of the pre-1986 and post-1990 compensation file immediately upon the swearing in of the new government. Following the review, negotiations must take place between the two sides in order to reach a settlement agreement. I am pleased to report that the latest negotiating session took place only last week and will be continuing again shortly.

Both parties in the negotiations have agreed that the substance of the discussions would remain between them and stay at the negotiating table. I think we can all agree that this is the most effective way to move this forward. I must respect this agreement, but I can assure the House that significant work is underway at the present time to make progress on the final settlement agreement. Discussions are taking place and we will compensate the class as quickly as possible.

As much as I would like to provide some kind of firm date as to when we can conclude the negotiations, given the nature of the negotiation process, unfortunately I am unable to do so. However, I can assure the members of the House that the Government of Canada is ensuring that all necessary steps in this process, that are within its control, are completed as quickly as possible.

I think all of us want to move forward as quickly as possible. We understand that there are individuals and families involved who are waiting for an outcome. Once again, the Government of Canada is doing everything it can to reach an agreement as quickly as possible. As much as we would like to pay compensation tomorrow, we must let the negotiations take place. All parties are working in good faith to reach a compensation agreement as quickly as possible.

I reiterate that this is one of the Minister of Health's top priorities. I can assure the House that after 13 years of non-action we will see action with this Prime Minister's government.

•(1910)

**Ms. Penny Priddy:** Mr. Speaker, I have heard the parliamentary secretary for health speak very compassionately on many occasions about the plight of people with hepatitis C who have not been compensated. I know and I believe when he says how much he cares about that.

That makes me additionally disappointed that the government will not give direct answers to direct questions. The Conservatives made a significant promise to a group of innocent victims who suffer the consequences of a terrible tragedy each day of their lives. Time is running out.

What may have been a casual campaign promise for the Conservatives is a matter of life and death for people living with hepatitis C. Promising immediate action during the campaign, then dragging their heels for more than four months is outrageous and unforgivable.

Will the government tell us today when victims will begin receiving the compensation they were promised, and if the government cannot estimate how much longer it might take to keep the promises, will it explain to us why? At the minimum, will the government at least commit to providing interim payments to victims until the compensation plan is finalized?

**Mr. Steven Fletcher:** Mr. Speaker, when we look at the previous government's record, the hepatitis C victims were dealt with in an absolutely terrible manner. This should have been solved a long time ago, but the previous government refused to take action.

This government is working extraordinarily quickly to ensure that these victims are compensated. In Ottawa terms, we are working with an Ottawa nanosecond. It will happen immediately.

However, I understand why the victims are frustrated, but let me assure them that the Prime Minister, the Conservative government and the Minister of Health are committed to compensation as per the Krever inquiry. I remind members it was this Conservative Party that led the fight over the last 10 years.

•(1915)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** A motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24.

(The House adjourned at 7:15 p.m.)



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