



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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VOLUME 141 • NUMBER 036 • 1st SESSION • 39th PARLIAMENT

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, June 8, 2006**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, June 8, 2006

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

### TRADE

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to standing order 32(2), I have the honour to table on behalf of the Minister of International Trade, in both official languages, the seventh annual report on Canada's State of Trade, Trade Update 2006.

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### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I believe you will find unanimous consent for me to table a report from the Climate Institute entitled "First Progress Report on the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate".

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

### GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table in both official languages the government's response to 17 petitions.

\* \* \*

### AN ACT TO AMEND CERTAIN ACTS IN RELATION TO DNA IDENTIFICATION

**Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts in relation to DNA identification.

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

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

**Mr. Gerry Ritz (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present today, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-food. The committee studied the import of milk protein concentrates and has agreed to report on it today.

\* \* \*

### CONTROLLED DRUGS AND SUBSTANCES ACT

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-320, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (minimum sentence).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation deals with the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The reason for it is as a result of violations being taken lightly in our courts. It would add minimum sentences to serious violations of Schedule I and Schedule II drugs. This is something that will protect Canadians. It is something that I encourage every member of this House to consider as it comes forward.

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

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

## PETITIONS

### LAKE SAINT-PIERRE

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present to the House today a petition signed by citizens from various regions of Quebec, but concerning particularly the communities surrounding Lake Saint-Pierre, in the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé, which I represent.

These petitioners are calling on the government to take its responsibilities by acting on the removal of the 300,000 shells abandoned by DND in Lake Saint-Pierre. They remind this House that Lake Saint-Pierre was designated a UNESCO world biosphere reserve in 2000 and that these shells are preventing surrounding communities from safely enjoying the lake again and undertaking sustainable development projects.

I therefore table this petition in this House.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

## AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a number of petitions with respect to raising the age of consent from 14 years to 16 years. The petition asks that this government assembled in Parliament take all necessary steps to immediately raise the age of consent from 14 to 16 years of age. The petition comes from the communities of Estevan, Bienfait, Wayburn and area.

## AIRPORTS

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present five pages of petitions regarding the Toronto Island airport, given that it is heavily subsidized by taxpayers and has been losing money for at least 15 years.

Operating the airport is contrary to the vision of a clean, green and vibrant waterfront. These petitions call on the government to abolish the federal port authority, close the airport, and return the waterfront to the people of Toronto.

## CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a second petition consisting of seven pages concerning undocumented workers. Given that Canada has significant labour shortages, we need these workers. They are being exploited.

The petition calls on the government to stop deportations while a new immigration policy is being put in place and to establish an in Canada program allowing these workers to apply for landed immigrant status if they have been here a significant amount of time.

\* \* \*

● (1010)

## QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

## BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties and I believe you will find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the hon. member for Halifax West, all questions necessary to dispose of this motion be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred to 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 13, 2006.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Mississauga South have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ECONOMY

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.)** moved:

That, in light of the rapid increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, high global energy costs, the overhang from huge budgetary and trade deficits in the United States of America, the rise of new economies such as China, India and Brazil as major global players, and the unprecedented demographic change that is about to take place in Canada with the imminent retirement of the Baby Boom generation, in the opinion of the House, future Canadian economic growth and broad-based prosperity demand—in addition to a competitive tax regime (especially in relation to income tax rates and brackets) and the strategic positioning of Canada at the centre of global commerce and networks—focused and immediate investments by the government in:

(1) measures to reduce financial barriers that now stand in the way of students seeking greater access to post-secondary education, including most particularly grant programs aimed at offsetting the high costs of tuition;

(2) labour market partnership agreements with provincial/territorial governments to help promote a culture of lifelong learning and workplace skills development in conjunction with business and labour;

(3) targeted initiatives to strengthen skills, job-readiness and successful workplace participation among First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples—as envisioned as part of the Kelowna Accords—as well as among new immigrants, older workers and people with disabilities;

(4) a suite of measures, including more adequate support for the indirect costs of university-based research, for graduate studies, for Canada's three major granting councils, the Canada Foundation for Innovation and Genome Canada, to strengthen Canada's hard-won global lead in publicly-funded research and development;

(5) the accelerated commercialization of new technologies and the practical adoption of the best advanced technologies by Canadian business, industry and academia.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora.

One of the most vital roles of government is to respond to the challenges of its time, to empower Canadians to meet those challenges, to prepare the country through strategic investments and sound policy, and to show true leadership and a clear vision.

[Translation]

Over a decade ago, the government in place brought forward a bold, new vision for the future of Canada, one that provided the economic conceptual framework which governed policy decision making during a decade of progress and growth.

Canadians remember the daunting challenges facing their government at the time. Unemployment was above 10%. The national debt was nearly 70% of national revenue. There had been one deficit budget after the other for over a quarter of a century. A sad state of affairs was threatening to turn our country into an economic disaster.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

However, what a difference a decade makes. Today Canada has emerged as a global leader: strong, proud and prosperous. We now enjoy the best job creation performance of the G-7.

Since the deficit was eliminated, Canada has ranked first among all G-7 countries for growth and living standards. The average standard of living has risen faster in the past eight years than in the previous 18 and the incidence of child poverty in this country has declined.

Canadians are proud of their achievements, but it is not enough to sit on our laurels. It is time to build on our successes, not implement a handful of priorities that look more like an election platform than a path forward.

It is time to set out a real vision for the future and offer Canadians a plan to deal with the challenges that lie ahead. Since the Conservative government came to office, we have seen no plan, no vision for the future, not in the throne speech, not in the budget.

Nowhere have we seen measures to deal with productivity. Nowhere have we seen a plan to deal with the rise of new economies like China, India and Brazil. Nowhere have we seen a plan to deal with high global energy costs or the rapid increase in the Canadian dollar.

These are the responsibilities of this government. Without a comprehensive strategy to meet each of these challenges our country will be like a rudderless boat, doomed to flounder on the rocks.

The focus of the motion before the House today is to ensure we remain on a steady course and to ensure we take the measures which our future economic growth and broad-based prosperity demand. Canadians expect their governments to stand firm as unmistakable champions of balanced budgets, fiscal responsibility and declining debt.

•(1015)

[Translation]

Only then will we be in a position to continue enjoying the benefits of a healthy economy and general prosperity, increased employment and better jobs, higher disposable incomes, a better standard of living and a continually improving quality of life.

As a nation, we must continue to invest in the talents, brains and creative powers of Canadians and bring higher education and innovation to their highest levels ever, not only for economic reasons, but also to ensure that every member of society—students, aboriginals, people with disabilities, new Canadians and older workers—maximizes his or her potential.

[English]

We must achieve the smartest possible marriage between Canada's economic success and environmental sustainability. In the last few months, I have had the opportunity to see our country from a new perspective. It is a new perspective from this side of the House as well, as my hon. colleagues have laughingly noted.

As the Liberal critic for human resources and skills, I have had the pleasure of discussing the future with a wide range of Canadians. I

have met with student groups like the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations and the Canadian Federation of Students and with nurses, labour leaders, university presidents and others, and a clear theme ran through each of these discussions. The prerequisite for entry into the global economy of tomorrow is education, quality education that gives Canadians the skills not only to survive in a competitive world but to thrive in it, to seize their potential throughout their lifetimes.

I think we all agree on the importance of lifelong learning. It is important to individuals themselves to enhance their quality of life and their employment options. It is important to employers who want the well educated and skilled employees who will contribute to productivity and prosperity. A determined focus on the future, on preparing for the impact of demographic change and the rise of emerging economies, is absolutely necessary to allow Canadians to succeed.

Canada approaches today's world from a position of strength. We have the highest proportion of people with some form of post-secondary education, but here is the crucial thing that the government fails to understand: when we can identify a strength, when we can identify our competitive advantage, we build on it.

Rather than truly expanding access to higher education, the government has chosen to tinker around the edges of the tax system, with a minor tax cut here and a rebate there. That is a short-sighted approach. It does not come close to recognizing the potential of our greatest resource, our young minds. Too many Canadians, particularly those from low income or modest income families, are not pursuing post-secondary education because of high financial barriers.

Canadians need expanded access to higher education and real support for undergraduate students, more opportunities for Canadians to study abroad to learn about the world outside our borders, and more opportunities for foreign students to study in Canada and experience our country and our culture. We need to increase the support to graduate students in science, engineering and other disciplines.

Instead of a far-reaching vision that prepares us for the future, all the government has offered are tax credits for textbooks and tax breaks on scholarship income. These measures do not go nearly far enough. We see the same nearsightedness from the government when it comes to lifelong learning. It has walked away from labour market partnership agreements, agreements that would increase workplace-based and employer-led training and apprenticeships and that would improve literacy and essential skills, develop workplace skills and enhance workforce participation of aboriginal people, persons with disabilities and new Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

It is time for this House to look beyond just the next election, and to look to the future, to admit to and embrace the challenges and opportunities before us, to build on Canada's progress over the last decade and to ensure this kind of progress for generations to come.

The diligent work of the previous government has given this nation the freedom to plan and the strength to succeed, to improve access to universities, to promote a culture of lifelong learning, to live up to the Kelowna and Kyoto agreements, to strengthen Canada's hard-won global lead in university research and development, and to make Canada a leader in transforming R and D into new technologies.

It is time for the government to step up to show Canadians a plan for the future. We need a government that recognizes these clear objectives, that mobilizes Canadians to reach them, that is truly committed to a country of economic and technological excellence, a country of fairness and equal opportunity, a country that is ready, willing and able to take its place in an ever-changing world. We have yet to see that from the current government, and this is worrisome, because what is at stake is Canada's continued leadership in a new world of giants.

Therefore, I ask my colleagues to support the motion before the House today and call upon the government to take action today.

• (1020)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of empty rhetoric in the House this morning.

Tuition fees have almost tripled in the last 12 years and students now graduate with an average debt of at least \$20,000. The former Liberal government had nothing in its budget. In fact, the only section that it had was to give student loan forgiveness to students who had died. That is a really amazing policy. The former Prime Minister, on national TV in the CBC debate in 2004, said that he would restore the billions cut in the 2004 budget. Of course, that did not happen.

The EI fund has been taken away. It has been ripped off of workers instead of going to apprenticeship programs and instead of being given back to the workers who need employment insurance. The new immigrant settlement fund has been cut. There are computer scientists and doctors driving taxis. They cannot find jobs they want.

I want to ask the hon. member the following question. Which part of the policy and practices of the former Liberal government does the hon. member not support? Certainly in the last 12 years we saw a lot of talk but not a lot of action in any of these areas that are in front of us today.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague talks about empty rhetoric and then engages in a great deal of it. The fact is that we have taken action.

First of all, I should say that we really ought to be looking forward. The hon. member wants to look back and rehash the past. The fact of the matter is that her party never supported any measure taken by the previous government to get our finances in order, to get our economy stronger, measures that allowed us to have the strength we have today and that allows the present government to have a surplus of \$12 billion so that it can do the things it is not doing and

that we are still waiting for it to do. But at least it has the ability to do that because our economy is strong.

The member's party did nothing to assist that. It opposed every measure possible that the previous government took to get our finances in order, so how she can stand there and complain about that is beyond me.

The member talked about us doing nothing for students. She totally ignores, for example, the Canada access grants gave students \$4,000 a year for the first and fourth years of university. As we can recall, her party was opposed, I guess, to the proposal we brought forward in the election of extending that to all four years.

In fact, the measures we had in the economic update in November provided \$2.75 billion for education, but those members did not want to have that happen. They wanted to have an election instead and put a Conservative government in place. That was the choice. The Conservatives are obviously delighted about that, but it is remarkable to me that the NDP would be delighted about that also. That seems to me to be most peculiar in view of what they tout as their priorities.

I think we have certainly heard a fair amount of empty rhetoric in a very short time from my hon. colleague.

• (1025)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I find this motion brought forward by the Liberals very strange. It is clear that the motion encroaches somewhat on the jurisdictions of Quebec and the provinces. It deals with education, tuition and labour force training and development. All these areas are under Quebec's jurisdiction.

The motion says nothing about the role the federal government could play in areas such as the furniture and the textile industries. We know that the Liberals did nothing to help the textile industry during their tenure, over the last years, despite repeated calls for action from the Bloc. As for the furniture industry, there seems to be no plan to take action in that area. The motion is totally silent on the subject.

I would like my colleague to comment on that and to explain why he avoided dealing with the industries that are the most threatened right now in Quebec.

**Hon. Geoff Regan:** Mr. Speaker, the health and welfare of Canadians are really a federal responsibility. My colleague should know that. We have to take action in these areas. We have to take measures that will guarantee a strong economy in the future and good living conditions for our people. That is our responsibility as federal government. We are the government of the whole country, which includes Quebec and all the provinces.

*Business of Supply*

[English]

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, right now across our country there are Canadians at work in some of our most important industries: manufacturing, high tech, financial services, and resource management. There are Canadians who are recognized the world over as being at the top in their fields in mathematics, computers, and engineering. There are Canadian families enjoying the benefits of our strong economy, buying new homes in a time of low interest rates and finding good jobs that pay well.

For many this is a prosperous age, and Canada ranks among the world's leading economies, but let us look beyond our borders. In the city of Bangalore in India, new skyscrapers are jammed along the horizon, each filled with thousands of people at work in banking, high tech and research and development, jobs that used to be the privileged domain of the world's established industrialized nations and those of us who live in them. In China, new universities are being built by the dozens. Hundreds of thousands of new engineers and scientists are graduating. They are entering into a better paid, better educated workforce.

They and so many others have abruptly become part of the global supply chain for services and manufacturing and members of a burgeoning middle class. For China, for India and for other nations such as Brazil, this brings a tremendous potential for growth. It means the world is now their marketplace.

During the latter stages of the 20th century, even in the context of an evolving world, there were some things that stayed constant: the United States as the world's largest and most dominant economy and China and India as populous countries seemingly doomed to repeat the cycle of poverty.

Meanwhile, the baby boomers ensured for decades through demographic might that we had the resources to expand and support our social foundations, including medicare. The century has changed and so has the story. The baby boomers are retiring, which will put serious financial pressures on governments as they strive to protect social services.

Moreover, we are in the midst of a reordering of economic power. In a globalized world, that reordering will bring unprecedented challenges to all nations and certainly to Canada. We will need to move faster just to stay in the same place.

As for those Canadians at work today in our most crucial industries, will their jobs be protected? And those Canadians at the top of their fields, can they remain there? Will the next generation be able to reach those same heights? Will Canadian families be able to continue to rely on the tangible benefits that come from a strong and dynamic economy?

China and India are two great nations with 2 billion people and one undeniable message for the world: everything we know is about to change.

Let us think back to the mid-1990s. Then, the primary challenge facing the federal government was different but equally clear: deficit and rising debt, which threatened our national prosperity and held us back from achieving our potential. The government of the time made the right choice. It chose to attack the deficit, to fight it and eliminate

it. We dug ourselves out of that hole and all Canadians today are enjoying the benefits of that shared sacrifice.

Even as we marvel at the difference a decade can make in our national life, we need to be aware that a changing world is calling on Canada to make a new choice. Government cannot single-handedly prepare Canada for what is to come, but it has an obligation to do what it can. It has a duty to the Canadians of today, and to the Canadians yet unborn, to understand that the events of this time are no less crucial to the future success of our country than the battle to overcome the deficit.

The challenge is different and the choices are different, but what we do now will go a long way to determining to what extent Canada thrives in the 21st century. Economists have some pretty dull words for it. They talk about maximizing productivity and human capital. The terms we use are not important, but the truth they reveal sure is.

We are a country with a small population. Canada has 32 million people and we cannot afford to waste the potential of even one of them. For Canada to succeed, Canadians need to succeed. And for Canadians to succeed in our new world, they are going to have to be among the best educated and best trained on earth.

That is why government needs to lower the financial barriers to post-secondary education, countering high tuition with more grants, to make certain that more Canadians get the education they will need to compete for work and thrive on a global playing field.

That is why government needs to ensure that the youngest Canadians get the best possible start in life, with quality early learning, because everything in research tells us that an early start makes for more successful kids.

• (1030)

The government needs to invest in research and in our universities to ensure post-secondary education is valuable and that Canada stays on the cutting edge of ingenuity, pioneering, new technologies and medicines.

The government has an obligation to work with the provinces and the territories to help foster and support a culture of training and lifelong learning so Canadians have the talent and the ability to adapt and to seize the opportunity in new trends and areas, whether at the beginning or the end of their careers.

This need for skills training and development is especially great among immigrants who we need to succeed as new Canadians, and among aboriginals who, for far too long, have been denied the opportunity to share in Canada's success.

A focus on education, innovation, training and lifelong learning has to be our driving focus at the national level, the touchstone for our performance as politicians over the next decade.

*Business of Supply*

As a result of the choice the government made in the mid-1990s as a result of strong fiscal management, we have the means to make those kinds of investments. We have the freedom to think big and to make smart choices.

What is lacking is the political will of the government. In an era that demands that Canada takes two steps forward, we have a government that is taking a big step back.

The members across want to terminate the agreements on child care and early learning that we signed with all 10 provinces, agreements that would have provided funding to create a real choice in child care: affordable, high quality spaces with a focus on development and on ensuring our youngest Canadians, regardless of family income, get every chance to enter school, ready to learn and leave school ready to succeed.

The times are calling for a government with the foresight and the determination to invest in our collective future but what we are seeing is a government of tinkering and tax credits.

The Prime Minister will give us 80 bucks if we have a kid who plays organized sports. He will give us a few more bucks to help us pay for our tools or work clothes. It is not that the money is not welcome, it is that Canadians want more, expect more and deserve so much more from their government and for their country.

Canadians have big aspirations for themselves and for their nation. We learned in school that our country has accomplished great things and we want our children to grow up to see Canada do more great things and to accomplish them together.

When the Liberal government talked about child care and early learning it often referred back to the creation of medicare, which came into being in very much the same way: a series of agreements with the provinces.

The story of medicare is an integral part of Canada's history and of Canadian lore. It speaks to the values of fairness and generosity that have defined our country and to a sense of determination, a tribute to those who, throughout our history, have fought to overcome the challenges of the times and to make our nation a better place to live.

We need that kind of leadership, leadership that understands the value of action, not complacency, and a government that understands that Canadians want to help build a country, not just live in one.

The government and the Prime Minister have taken office at a time when Canada stands confronted by two challenges of such magnitude that they could easily come to define our new century: the rise of China and India as economic powers and the threats inherent in climate change.

Each challenge demands a prime minister who recognizes that Canada is bigger in its aspirations and richer in its potential than is reflected in the practice of modest ambition and custodial governance.

Each challenge demands a government willing to turn its gaze away from the Holy Grail of a majority government and to focus, not on tinkering and tax credits, but on guiding Canada's economic destiny and putting in place a long term plan that will ensure Canada's continued success.

The Canada that I love, that we love, is a progressive force that should lead change in the world, not resist it. On global warming, that means rallying the nations of the world, not turning away from them. On the new economy, it means making a priority of acting today to ensure we are competitive tomorrow.

Prosperity is not a birthright of Canadians. Our accomplishments are the result of the hard work and ingenuity of Canadians and the foresight and resolve of past governments. Our success in the decades ahead depends on the same kind of hard work, foresight and determination on the part of Canadians, on the part of business and certainly on the part of government.

If we all do our part and if government does its duty, then the world in the 21st century will have its own constant: the ongoing success, through change and in spite of challenge, of the great nation of Canada.

• (1035)

**Mr. Bob Mills (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is rather interesting that the member talks about vision, the 21st century and where we are going.

As she knows, my interest is in the environment. She should also know that we are 28th out of 29th in the OECD ratings. The fact is that we had 13 years of inactivity in the area of climate change and the environment. It is rather strange that within the year we will show some real vision and 21st century thinking.

It is rather amazing to hear her talk about the government, of which she was a recent member, and its great vision and so on. I wonder if she could tell me just one bit of environmental vision that she might have seen in the Liberal government of the past?

**Hon. Belinda Stronach:** Mr. Speaker, I talked about economic prosperity being linked with economic and environmental success. This is what we have to focus on. We must ensure we lay the foundation now, and not look backward, so Canada will be prosperous and successful in the future.

However, that does not mean it should be at the exclusion of the environment. I believe Canada can take a leadership role in the world. The two can be done hand in hand. We need to look, in a very broad way, at creating the incentives where not only the economy will prosper but enterprise and the environment will prosper. By doing it that way it will have a huge impact on achieving our Kyoto targets in the long term.

The great shame is that Canada took a leadership position in rallying other nations to sign on to Kyoto. Many will say that Kyoto is not perfect, but the good thing about it is that it did bring the world's attention to the issues of climate change and to make it a priority. The other shame is that the government has not recognized that and has let the momentum fall to the wayside.

*Business of Supply*

I am not saying that the government does not have some good initiatives but it is missing the big picture, which is unfortunate. We want to ensure the environment does not take a back seat. The government did not include the environment in its top five priorities, which does great injustice to Canadians.

• (1040)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I understand my colleague and her concerns about the economies of emerging countries, such as China. However, when the Liberals were in power, why did they not do something about the textile industry? That industry was affected by competition from emerging countries. Or how about bicycles? The Canadian International Trade Tribunal made a recommendation, so they could have acted to protect this sector, which was affected by the Chinese economy.

In the current motion, why do they not even mention these vulnerable sectors that are suffering because of serious competition from emerging countries?

Maybe they want to help, but the solutions they are proposing all interfere with areas of jurisdiction belonging to Quebec and the provinces.

[*English*]

**Hon. Belinda Stronach:** Mr. Speaker, if we understand how the global economy works, how business works and how competition works, we realize that we cannot change the global economy, nor can we turn it backwards, but we can create the foundation for greater success.

The Liberal government put forward a number of great initiatives and took the leadership on something I and many of my colleagues are very passionate about, which is education. We looked toward making education a top priority and worked with the provinces to address the challenges of globalization. Education means creating a culture of lifelong learning and developing a program for older workers who are affected by change. We were working very well with the Quebec government at the time to analyze the effect of our older worker pilot program. It is unfortunate that all of that has been dropped to the wayside. We put forward the biggest investment that this country has seen in education over a decade. We were on the right track.

It is unfortunate that in the November economic update that was not allowed to continue to benefit Canadians. It would have benefited hundreds of thousands of young people and older workers.

We signed labour market partnership agreements with Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. We were having good discussions with Quebec to do the same thing. That would have brought much needed investment dollars to those provinces to address the challenges of globalization and ensure people had the skills and the opportunities to learn those skills so that at the end of the day we could keep jobs here in Canada and in Quebec, which is so important.

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share my time today with the hon. member for York—Simcoe.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the motion before us today. I thank the hon. member for Halifax West for focusing the attention of Parliament on a matter of great national interest.

As the hon. member notes in the preamble to his motion, the Canadian economy is being profoundly affected by powerful demographic, continental and even global influences. When the economy is affected so are the lives of the people of Canada. The individuals and families who are the focus of my Department of Human Resources and Social Development are directly impacted by the economy.

I am also pleased to note that many of the measures he calls for in his motion, such as targeted investments, higher education, skills training and other measures to address Canada's labour shortage are already being put in place by Canada's new government.

However, where I differ with the hon. member opposite is in outlook. While he suggests that the demographic change that we are witnessing at home and the evolution of the global economy abroad will threaten Canada's livelihood, I prefer to take an optimistic view.

From a global perspective, Canada is in an exceptionally strong position, both economically and socially. The measures that our government is putting in place, many of them outlined in the recent federal budget, will only cement our leadership. We may call that a bright outlook but it is a realistic one too. International agencies are consistently forecasting that over the next two years Canada will be at or near the top of all G-7 nations in terms of job creation. Job creation is the underpinning of healthy communities and dynamic and successful economies.

I now want to mention the most recent employment numbers. According to Statistics Canada, we are enjoying the lowest unemployment rate in 32 years this spring. Joblessness remains strikingly low and booming economies across much of Canada are luring more people into the workforce. The result is that the proportion of Canadians with jobs, about 63%, has never been higher. This should be music to the ears of all Canadians and yet a pessimist might choose to focus only on the next challenging consequence to flow from this unprecedented situation of job shortages in certain regions, sectors and occupations, and it is true. The booming oil and gas industries of Alberta and British Columbia, along with the overall health of Canada's economy, are generating more opportunities than there are skilled people there to take advantage of them.

My government has opted for a positive response to develop and implement meaningful and effective solutions well before the challenges get out of hand. I would like to outline a few of the initiatives already underway or soon to be launched.

*Business of Supply*

Recognizing the importance of skilled tradespeople and the certainty of emerging shortages, we are consulting with the provinces, the territories, employers and unions on new measures to promote careers in the skilled trades. As a concrete and immediate contribution from the Government of Canada, budget 2006 announced a new apprenticeship incentive grant worth \$1,000 per year. Up to 100,000 people apprenticing under the red seal trades will stand to benefit from this measure during the first two years of their apprenticeship.

The budget also encourages employers to hire new apprentices through a special job creation tax credit. This credit is worth 10% of an apprentice's wages to a maximum of \$2,000 per year.

Also in the budget is our promised tools tax deduction worth up to \$500 a year. This is to help apprentices and tradespeople offset the cost of essential equipment that exceeds \$1,000.

● (1045)

Naturally, a thriving economy like ours also needs to plan and prepare for the future and that means investing in higher learning. To that end, budget 2006 showed our government's commitment to exempt all scholarships and bursaries from income tax. We believe that the kids earned the money and they should get to keep it.

It also introduces a textbook tax credit for full time and part time post-secondary students and improves access to student loans. Indeed, the expansion of eligibility for Canada student loans through a reduction in expected parental contribution will see the program receive \$15 million for 2007-08 and \$20 million per year thereafter just for this measure.

Moreover, we have undertaken to work with the provinces and territories to further strengthen post-secondary education infrastructure. Through the establishment of a post-secondary education infrastructure trust fund, \$1 billion will be transferred to the provinces and territories to support urgent investments in colleges and universities. Funding could be used to support the development of better classrooms and libraries, laboratories and research facilities and the purchase of new technologies and training equipment.

What is more, as the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, I have been mandated to initiate discussions with the provinces and territories on the overall objectives for post-secondary education and training, appropriate roles, and on developing a framework for ensuring measurable results and accountability in respect of funding support.

Such measures are important and indeed overdue. Even so, we also acknowledge that the rapid growth of the economy means that we will be hard pressed to meet the full range of labour force demand unless we take steps to look beyond our own borders. Recent studies have shown that immigration will account for all net labour force growth in Canada within the next 10 to 15 years and all net population growth in Canada within the next 30 years.

Immigrants have always enriched our country with their dynamism, culture and entrepreneurial spirit. As our home-grown labour pool continues to shrink relative to our needs, it is becoming ever more urgent that we make the most of everybody's skills. Currently, however, the qualifications of some immigrants are not

recognized in Canada. This prevents newcomers from contributing fully to our economic prosperity and to our social development.

Allowing this situation to persist would actually impede our ability to attract other skilled immigrants. That is why we have undertaken to consult with the provinces, territories and a wide range of other stakeholders on the creation of a new Canadian agency for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. The agency will facilitate the assessment of international credentials and experience in conjunction with professional associations, regulatory bodies and others and will help ensure that foreign trained professionals meet Canadian standards. I can assure members that we will move quickly to enable new Canadians to put their skills to work for their benefit and ours.

In summary, budget 2006 gives Canadians a detailed look at this government's plans. Those plans are expressed through targeted investments worth nearly \$9.2 billion over two years. There are supports for children, families, seniors, persons with disabilities, and communities. There are measures to promote economic growth and competitiveness through investments in post-secondary education, apprenticeships and skills development, and a broadened labour pool.

I am confident that the measures announced and planned by my government will put Canada on a firm track to prosperity and continued success in a competitive global economy. My confidence is bolstered by the broad based support that has greeted our budget announcements. In fact I am pleased that the members of the official opposition, indeed all members of the House, saw fit to unanimously support our government's budget earlier this week.

● (1050)

And so, I agree with the intent of the motion before us, immediate and targeted investments that will reinforce Canada's strong economy and safeguard our much envied standard of living. However, I would ask you to note, Mr. Speaker, that this government is already making these investments for Canadians.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for taking part in the debate today and appreciate her kind comments about the motion and her support, at least in principle, for the ideas contained therein.

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I wonder though, when she talks about support for students, because the government in its budget simply had an \$80 tax credit for textbooks and an exemption for scholarships. Most students do not have scholarships, unfortunately; I wish they all did. What about the real issue of access for low income and middle income people who cannot afford the high tuition costs these days? What about Kelowna? There was \$5 billion for Kelowna for things like skills and job readiness for aboriginal people and now it is gone. There is no support for that in this budget. Where is that?

This morning in the human resources and social development committee, a Conservative member of Parliament suggested to an official from the minister's department that the answer to unemployment in Atlantic Canada was to move the unemployed workers to Alberta. I want to ask her if that is government policy.

• (1055)

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has raised a wide range of issues. I am sure he has realized by now that our support for continued education after secondary education is quite broad. He mentioned a few of them. He mentioned the exemption from tax for those who win scholarships and bursaries. He always fails to mention our support for the skilled trades. I am not quite sure why, but whenever he talks about post-secondary learning, he ignores that sector. We have such a shortage in this country of those in the skilled trades that we must encourage that sector. The previous government did not. That is why I am so proud of our apprenticeship tax credits and the grants to help students.

Not every child should, or needs, or wants to go to university. There are many who do and we are going to be helping them. We also need to recognize there are skilled trades and those jobs need to be filled. In Alberta there is a huge shortage of tradespeople. That is why we are supporting them wherever they come from, domestic or offshore.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up with the Minister of Human Resources on that very issue.

Last week it was revealed that up to 60 foreign workers were doing tunnelling work on the new rapid transit line in Vancouver and that they were being paid as little as \$5 per hour, that they were working nine to 10 hour days and six days a week. That is in violation of all of our labour and employment standards. It is a wage rate that no Canadian would find acceptable and is in fact illegal under our minimum wage laws.

The other side of that is that Mark Olsen, the business manager of local 1611 of the Laborers International Union of North America said that he "has a stack of resumes of qualified workers who are experienced, willing and able to do this tunnelling work".

How can it be that the minister's department would give a labour market opinion allowing bringing in those temporary foreign workers to do work that Canadians are available and ready to do, and there is a whole stack of them waiting to do exactly this kind of work?

**Hon. Diane Finley:** Mr. Speaker, my department works very closely with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration to make sure that whenever foreign workers are brought in, several things happen. First, the employers must demonstrate that they have looked

on an extensive basis across Canada to fill those positions with Canadian residents. Second, they are obligated under law to treat foreign workers who are brought in in an equitable manner comparable to the way they would treat Canadians with the same pay and benefits.

**Mr. Peter Van Loan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in today's debate, because of course the Conservative Party has historically been the party of economic competitiveness and productivity in this country.

One can go back to the days of Sir John A. Macdonald who understood the importance of building the strong economic infrastructure necessary and put in place the policies that allowed that to happen so that Canada could become a strong growing economy. Of course in his time there was unprecedented growth in our economy. It is a tribute to the Conservative Party that it was able to, since its very inception, be the party of that kind of economic growth and prosperity.

In Ontario we saw the policies of Bill Davis who understood that the world was changing and that our education system needed to change. He introduced a system of community colleges that equipped us to meet the full needs of an economy, not just the very high end of post-secondary education, but a fuller range of skills and trades that needed to be accommodated. Those reforms were very forward looking and helped to make Ontario, and continue to keep Ontario, the economic engine of this country.

When this party was last in government, from 1984 to 1993, we again saw unprecedented response to the economic challenges in the world through the introduction of free trade, through the elimination of the manufacturers sales tax, and the introduction of replacement lower value added taxes to allow our manufacturing sector to compete. The result was that millions of jobs were created in the wake of that and Canada had an economic boom. In fact, whenever the time has come for forward looking economic competitiveness and productivity policy changes, it has been the Conservative Party that has provided those policies and those changes.

When we were in government last, the party opposite, the Liberal Party, opposed every one of those changes vigorously, dramatically, and with great theatre. Then once in power, it kept in place each one of those reforms. Why? Because they worked, because they were good for Canada, because they produced jobs, because they allowed us to be more economically competitive, because in fact they did herald an era of unprecedented prosperity.

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After 13 years in which the Liberals simply cruised and did not respond to the economic changes, we see today the need for new changes. Those new changes and policies are coming again from the Conservative Party. It is not surprising. We are a party that values individual initiative. We are a party that values economic growth. We are a party that values personal achievement. When we talk about things like higher education, which allows one to achieve those personal aspirations, we probably have never seen a party where so many people around the Prime Minister come from that kind of academic background to understand intimately the value of higher education and what it can do and the opportunities it can create.

Certainly that has been the experience of my own family who came here as immigrants. It was simply by virtue of that human capital they themselves had through higher education before and here that allowed them to achieve prosperity and take advantage of the opportunities that Canada presented. That is why these things are terribly important.

We see in our budget 2006 once again a commitment to those kinds of forward looking economic policies. Budget 2006 included several new measures designed to help students and their families take advantage of higher education. There is an expansion in the eligibility of the Canada student loans program through a reduction in the parental contributions starting in August 2007. There is also the textbook tax credit, something which I think is tremendously important. As well there is an exemption of all post-secondary education scholarship and bursary income from taxation. It used to be okay if we won the lottery we did not have to pay taxes, but if we won a scholarship, we did. That just did not seem fair to us.

Access to post-secondary education also means improving the capacity of learning institutions to support the growing numbers of students. Our budget commits up to \$1 billion through a post-secondary education infrastructure trust fund to enable provinces and territories to support urgent investments in post-secondary education.

These new measures are in addition to financial support for Canadian students that is already in place. Our budget will further enhance the Canada student loans program. It will provide welcome additional financial support to students and their families in financing the cost of post-secondary education.

Of course, important stakeholders, like the Association of Atlantic Universities, the Council of Ontario Universities, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada all welcomed these post-budget measures.

• (1100)

However, there is more than just post-secondary education. There is the fuller range of skills. One of our most important initiatives is that which recognizes the huge needs. Very serious problems emerged because of 13 years of inaction on the part of the Liberal government. One of those serious problems was the lack of skilled trades. We see this in Ontario. In my constituency of York—Simcoe construction is booming, yet qualified construction workers cannot be found. We see the same thing in Alberta and British Columbia.

We see in communities like mine and the greater Toronto area all kinds of immigrants who have come to our shores with education

and skills that are not recognized. People do not have the opportunity to utilize their skills. These problems arose during the 13 years of the Liberal government. It failed to do anything to respond to the changing economy. We will do something about that.

On training, we have introduced bold new policies that will stand up for the trades. An apprenticeship incentive grant will create apprentice opportunities. If we talk to people, the problem is employers do not want to create apprentice opportunities. We depend on employers to do that, but it cost them too much money. It was not economically worthwhile and, as a result, young people were denied educational opportunities. We have introduced an apprentice incentive grant of \$1,000 per year. This is a job creation tax credit to employers to create jobs. It will make it easier for them to do that.

The apprentice incentive grant is for the people choosing to enter a field of training as an apprentice. At the point in time, when one chooses to work at a grocery store, a fast food outlet or acquire further education and a skill, that \$1,000 can make a huge difference in making that decision. This will help us meet the need to for skilled workers.

In addition, a new tools tax deduction will provide \$500 for each individual who is in a skilled trade already, which will put them on a level playing ground with those who are self-employed.

These changes have been greeted by even the union movement. The Universal Workers Union, Local 183, said:

—this is a budget that not only recognizes the critical importance of infrastructure but also demonstrates an appreciation for the skilled working men and women who build our cities and communities.

It recognizes the value of it.

What about new Canadians who have come here with skills which are not recognized? We have introduced the concept of a credentials recognition agency, a national agency to put some heft behind it. Up until now credentials recognition had been handled by the provinces in a diverse, unfocused system that nobody recognized. Employers would look at the papers people brought from some credentials recognition agency, of which they had never heard, and would say that they did not believe the individuals had the skills or they would ask why they should believe that outfit.

By having a national credentials agency, we will put real weight and authority behind the credentials recognition. This will help doctors, engineers, people from all kinds of skills, even skilled trades, bricklayers and the like. This will provide a clear recognition that they have the skills and that they can be put to work right away and be placed in the economy immediately.

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What we see in common in all of these policies is a philosophy, a philosophy that we do not enhance economic competitiveness through big state, big government solutions. Guys named Lenin, Stalin and Mao tried that. It does not work. This happened in highly educated societies, creating economic disasters.

The way to do this is by allowing people individual choice and freedom. All our policies give people the freedom and choice to enhance their post-secondary educations, to continue their educations, to acquire the best skills and to get the opportunities that Canada has to offer. It gives individuals the chance to choose to enter a skilled trade. We should not compel, or force or tell them to try to shape society in a big state way. Give people the freedoms and choices.

When people are given choices and opportunity to improve their conditions and their society, they respond to those challenges. We are creating an environment where they can do that. We continue to have challenges. The challenges include the need to remain competitive in a changing global environment. We have changing demographics at home. We will continue to have to respond to that. We have to continue to make our tax policy competitive. Only then will we have a truly competitive and productive economy that will benefit all Canadians and support the generous social programs that help everybody.

The key to it all is to enhance individual freedom, to give people the chance to take advantage of all the opportunities Canada has to offer. By taking advantage of that opportunity, it will help to build Canada, as millions of immigrants through the years have done, to make our country the great place it is today.

• (1105)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am a little disappointed that the member did not address 80% of the motion, which is broken down into five areas. He did not talk about labour market arrangements with the provinces and the ways in which we can collaborate with our counterparts. He did not talk about the whole issue to do with our first nations people, the Kelowna accord, the research councils and the importance of research development and new technologies. He talked about philosophy.

The difference between Liberals and Conservatives is that we look at the investments down the road. We look at the things that build the foundation. The member may want to continue to repeat "13 years of inaction", but unemployment is at a 30 year low and the labour participation rate is at a virtual all-time high. What did his government do to achieve that? It opposed those measures during those years. In spite of the Conservatives, we did it.

The member talked about setting up a special agency for credentials recognition. This is exactly what we do not need. We do not need to set up more bureaucracy to deal with that kind of problem.

Professionals in medicine, engineering and bio-sciences all have professional credentials, which are established by their own jurisdictional bodies. They have to be consulted and we have to be absolutely sure that the credentials base set, which has been developed over all those years, continues to be respected. The issue has to do with people who come to Canada and seek positions in

those professions. They have to be dealt with at the point at which they apply for immigration, and that is where the problem is. We have a lot of people here now and we may want to deal with them. However, we have to deal with the problem when they come into the country, those who still look to Canada to automatically do it.

We do not need an agency to do that. Why does the member think we need an agency to do something that obviously has a solution, if the government would only take a decision?

• (1110)

**Mr. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, I wish the member had told his government what he just said today. He identified exactly what we said when we recommended the need for a credentials recognition agency. We have to reach back into the immigration process in credentials recognition.

As for creating a new bureaucracy, if the member for Mississauga South understood how credentials recognition worked, it is done by a myriad of agencies in each province. Some have one, some have four, some have an unlimited number. Some are private sector, some are government run. By having one that has real authority and is tied back through the immigration system, we will have the ability to make a real difference.

When in government, the Liberal Party had an approach to dealing with credentials recognitions. Every month officials from about 13 different departments had a meeting. I do not know how many years this went on, but the Liberals were in power for 13 years. I do not know what they did. Certainly no policy was developed, no decisions were made and no solution was found.

As a result, thousands of new Canadians came here. They were told by the Liberal government that they should come to Canada because they had skills and education that were valued and needed here, that our economy needed doctors or engineers, whatever it was. When they arrived on our shores, they were told that we did not recognize their skills. We told them one thing in their home country, when we encouraged them to come here, and when they arrived we did not recognize those skills.

We will change that so new Canadians can achieve their aspirations, become contributing—

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to reinforce that immigrants to Canada, whose credentials are not recognized and who are not in the workforce, need more than just credential recognition. They need positions in the workforce. One of the problems with our system lately is that we have a myriad of wonderful pilot projects, all working on that issue, but nothing has been put into place as an overall program for getting people into jobs that recognize their credentials. This is a pressing issue. Every day that passes makes it more difficult for them to take up work in their fields. We need to move on that quickly.

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I want to come back to the member's comments on freedom of choice around post-secondary education. The budget is a real failure around freedom of choice. The only real choice it offers students is to go further into debt. It opens up the possibility of increasing their student loans. We already know students are coming out with \$20,000 and more in debt at the end of their educations, which is totally unacceptable.

The other possibility was a tax credit on textbooks. That is great, but it will not enable one person to get a post-secondary education.

Neither of the main solutions that have been proposed really do anything to enable anyone in Canada to get a post-secondary education. When will the government take some real measures to reduce tuition, which is the barrier that Canadian students face when it comes to post-secondary education?

**Mr. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, one of the treasured things we value in our country is respect for the authority of our provinces, the differences between the provinces and the federal government, and the autonomy we grant to our academic institutions. As the member well knows, tuition is set by the academic institutions under provincial law. We are not in a position to directly influence that, and I know the member understands that.

The issue is, what can the federal government do to support these things? We are in discussions with the provinces, trying to find ways to deal with this complicated situation and draw the lines of responsibility more clearly. By doing this, we are confident that we will also create an environment where the provinces will be able to deal with these issues and give students a greater opportunity so they do not come out burdened by heavy student debt. I have always been troubled by the extraordinarily high student loan interest rates. They were almost punitive. A lot of assistance provided was provided at the back end when people graduated rather than at the front end.

Our government is looking at these are questions. We are looking at how we can improve the condition of students everywhere in Canada. We believe they represent a great human resource for the future and that is from where our economic growth will come.

•(1115)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion introduced by the Liberals.

This motion raises real questions. As the preamble says, current economic growth in Canada is quite fragile and this reverberates in most of the provinces. Alberta is a special case. It should not be included in the Canadian average, in order to get a real sense of the situation in Canada. Quebec is also affected by this fragility in growth, but also and especially by the fragility in the Canadian manufacturing sector. This is true for Quebec and Ontario.

On January 27, Statistics Canada issued a telling figure: from 2002 to 2005, some 149,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Canada. This is a 6.4% decrease. Two-thirds of these job losses occurred in 2005. Clearly there is a problem, but future difficulties are being downplayed. It is like the *Titanic* heading toward the iceberg: the tip of the iceberg is approaching in the distance, but no one is worried about it. If the Conservative government were not worried about this problem—I hope it is worried—it would come

across as irresponsible. It would be shirking its responsibilities. It has the means to do something about this. That is the type of debate we should be having. Unfortunately, and that is where the problem lies, the Liberal motion proposes solutions that infringe on provincial jurisdictions and ignores any solution that has to do with federal matters.

The Bloc Québécois, as defender of Quebec's interests and Quebec's jurisdictions and the interests of Quebecers, will have no choice but to vote against this Liberal motion. Again, the problem it addresses is real. I will list the proposed solutions. I will not read the motion; if I did, I would not have enough time left to explain the Bloc Québécois' positions.

The proposed solutions target education. Is there a more provincial jurisdiction than that? The motion refers to tuition, which is connected to education; labour market development—the labour market comes under provincial jurisdiction; training, another form of education; university research—the universities come under the provinces and form part of the education system; recognition of foreign degrees, which also relates to education; and professional associations, another provincial responsibility.

Aside from those pertaining to the Kelowna accord, the solutions proposed in the Liberal motion relate to areas of provincial or Quebec jurisdiction. At the same time, the motion contains no solutions that come under federal jurisdiction. That may seem troubling, but knowing the Liberals, it is not so troubling as all that, because we have seen them in action for the past 13 years.

This motion has a paternalistic ring that we drew attention to on numerous occasions under both Jean Chrétien and the current member for LaSalle—Émard. The message seems to be that the provinces, particularly Quebec, are unable to find solutions to the challenges of the future. They have to be taken by the hand and told what to do in their areas of jurisdiction. Quebec, whether under the Parti Québécois or the Quebec Liberal Party—I do not always agree with their solutions and will mention one later that I particularly disagree with—is well aware that it faces a growth and employment challenge.

In some areas, such as Gaspé, the unemployment rate is unacceptable. In others, such as Montérégie, Montreal and Lanaudière, shortages of skilled labour are restricting our economic development capacity. Quebec has an employment policy. We have local development centres and local employment centres. The structure is in place. What is missing is federal money.

The federal government, meaning the Conservative government, has only one responsibility to Quebec and the provinces with regard to their areas of jurisdiction—education, skills training, labour market development, labour policy and employment policy. The federal government's only responsibility is to correct the fiscal imbalance.

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• (1120)

The Prime Minister has made a commitment to correct it by February 2007. Unfortunately, I have to say that we were particularly disappointed in the last budget.

Despite the government's commitment to correct the fiscal imbalance by February 2007, we would have liked to see more investment than has been announced, particularly in universities.

I remind hon. members that professors, rectors, students and support staff in the university community, all across Canada, unanimously called for a reinvestment of \$4.9 billion per year to offset the underfunding of post-secondary education. What was announced in the budget? A non-recurring amount of \$1 billion. That is a long way from assuming responsibility for correcting the fiscal imbalance.

However, we shall let the government have its chance. We have been promised that, by February 2007, this problem will be addressed, this problem which is a federal responsibility and which was caused by the federal government, that is, the previous Liberal government. So we shall leave the federal government free to face this challenge I mentioned, namely to reduce unemployment rates in certain regions and tackle the skilled labour shortages in certain sectors.

I return quickly to this idea of the Liberals that the provinces are incapable of assuming their responsibilities. To refute it, I give the example of the accessibility of education in Quebec. When we look at the public funding of education, we see that there is more of it in Quebec than anywhere else in Canada. The Government of Quebec presently allocates 1.91% of GDP to university education, compared with 1.59% in the rest of Canada. Truly, what we have here is a societal choice. Public funding of education accounts for 7.5% of GDP in Quebec, versus a Canadian average of 6.6%. If we were to subtract the Quebec rate, the Canadian rate would be 6.4%. Quebec invests 17.4% more in education than the rest of Canada. That is the first element, the public funding of education.

As for tuition fees, there is no need for me to insist: they are the lowest in Canada. We care a great deal about this. This is an ongoing debate, but the consensus has always been in favour of keeping these tuition fees as low as possible. The reason for this is so that we can do precisely what the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs was saying, that is, give students a real choice as to their education and their career. Equal opportunity is achieved through modest tuition fees.

The third element is more generous financial assistance. We know that Quebec has a scholarships and loans program which, compared with what exists in the rest of Canada, is not extremely generous—that would go a little too far—but relatively generous.

As I was saying, we will be voting against this motion. Although it highlights a real problem, it falls short of the true responsibilities of the federal government in terms of finding solutions for strengthening economic growth in Canada and Quebec and for ensuring that the manufacturing sector plays its role in that growth and is sufficiently strong.

The real challenge, as we well know, is to achieve growth in an increasingly globalized world, while respecting the environment.

We need a strong manufacturing sector. I often hear certain people say that nowadays this accounts for only 20% of our jobs; well, it still accounts for 80% of our exports. As a small market—I am thinking of Canada, but this is also true of Quebec—we need to export to other markets. The American market is extremely important. We know that when it comes to job creation and the impact of investment, the manufacturing sector has a much bigger effect than the services sector, even though that sector also includes extremely promising industries that have to be developed. We cannot have an economy based solely on services, however. We need a manufacturing sector that will promote growth, that will stimulate job creation, and that will obviously have an effect on the services sector as a whole, whether it be services to businesses or to individuals.

We therefore need a strong manufacturing sector and we need investment. That is what is cause for concern. For a long time, we have been told—Mr. Dodge, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, has repeated this—that with a strong dollar, businesses will be able to invest, to import technology and modernize their production and the way they do things. Now we see that even though the dollar is worth more than 90¢ US, investment growth is very weak in Canada and Quebec.

• (1125)

In Quebec, investment will grow by less than 1% this year, at a time when profits in most businesses and economic sectors in Canada have surpassed historical averages. We had not seen this for years, but for a number of quarters now the profit portion of Canada's domestic product is above its historical average. So the profits are there. The dollar is strong, so we can import technology, machinery, ways of doing things, but it is not happening. We have to wonder what the reason is.

The question has been put to a number of employer representatives, and they too are wondering why Canadian and Quebec businesses are not investing up to the level that we might expect.

I will give a few figures so that we can see how serious the situation is. Canada is dragging its feet when it comes to research and development, and obviously Quebec is not receiving its share. Overall, Canada ranks 13th among OECD members when it comes to research and development. This is a fundamental component of investment, as we know, particularly in an economy that is increasingly globalized. In the G-7 we rank fifth—in other words, we're really bringing up the rear.

*Business of Supply*

Now, when it comes to research, Canada, without Quebec, spends 1.38% of GDP. As I said, we fall into the category of countries that invest very little in research and development. As I also said, when we add Quebec, we come in at about 2.26%. Quebec itself invests 2.7% of GDP in research and development. Canada is therefore lagging behind. Quebec has made a special effort, particularly under the Parti Québécois government. Mr. Landry, as minister and premier, did a lot to stimulate research and development. We have made a special effort in this regard, although the federal contribution to funding in this area has fallen over the last 30 years. That is true for both Canada as a whole and for Quebec.

In 1971, Ottawa's research and development spending accounted for 45% of the total in Canada. By 2001, it was only 18%. As I was saying, Quebec does not get its fair share. Overall, Quebec accounts for 26.6% of all research and development spending in Canada, but it receives only 23.8% of the federal funding, in comparison with 48.3% for Ontario. Insofar as the research done directly by the federal government is concerned—the research that it decides for itself—Quebec gets only 19.6% of the spending while Ontario gets 57.7%. Yet Quebec represents more than 23% of the population of Canada.

It is obvious that not only does Canada lag behind, not only does the federal government fail to assume its responsibilities in regard to research and development, but its policies also ensure that Quebec is systematically disadvantaged, especially when it comes to structural spending like that on research and development.

I will conclude with a final statistic. Federal spending in Ontario on research and development accounts for 80%, while in Quebec it accounts for 39.9%.

It is very apparent, therefore, that there is a concern because these efforts should be made on innovation, research and development, improving Canada's productivity and investment. That is not being done. Why? Because of the uncertainty.

Business people wonder whether they will have a market in five years, first of all because of the emerging economies. We already discussed that. It is not just a matter of clothing, textiles and furniture, although these sectors are obviously very hard hit by the competition from countries in south-east Asia in particular. It is true as well of communications equipment. China is becoming an extremely important manufacturer of computer technology. Brazil exports not only beer and samba but lumber as well. In aeronautics, it is a major competitor. We are all aware of the battle over regional jets between Embraer and Bombardier. India is very competitive in services. So there is this first factor, which is the ever increasing presence of emerging countries in world trade and on Canadian markets.

Second, there is the Canadian dollar. It is true in Quebec but everywhere in Canada too: people always want to know why the Bank of Canada is increasing interest rates at a time when inflation is within its target range and the Canadian dollar is worth more than 90¢ U.S. Maybe it is just because we like to shoot ourselves in the foot. I remember the recession of the early 1990s, which was entirely a product of the Bank of Canada and its monetary policy.

● (1130)

It seems that, unfortunately, Canada does not learn from past mistakes.

This has an effect on the American market. As I mentioned earlier, the job losses I referred to are largely due to the rise in the Canadian dollar by nearly 30 or 40% in 2005.

There is a third factor that concerns people, and that is the American economy. We can definitely sense that it is going to slow down. We cannot ignore this, since this building and growth boom cannot go on forever. The American population is not growing that fast. Residential, commercial and industrial construction will inevitably slow down. We must get ready for this, since 84% of Canadian exports go to the American market.

I have some figures to bring this home. In 1995, the net savings of American households were 7%; that fell to 1.7% in 2004; and it is currently negative, less than 1%. Not only are American households not currently saving, they are dissaving. Naturally, this has an impact on consumption. However, there is a limit. As individuals, we cannot continuously go further and further into debt. For the government, going into debt is altogether different. At some point, individuals will begin to save again. If they are saving, then unavoidably, they will consume less. What happens when they consume less? They import less. If they import less, this will affect the Canadian economy.

I hope the Conservatives are aware of this fact. I hope the finance minister, the industry minister and the international trade minister are starting to think of ways to counter this slowdown, which will have an impact on the Canadian economy.

We saw American protectionism first-hand in the softwood lumber dispute. We have also seen it in agriculture. It is increasing rapidly these days. Allow me to give an example. I do not disagree with the choice made by American senators and members of Congress. The Central American Free Trade Agreement was passed by just one vote in Congress. Recent surveys have shown that Americans are against this free trade agreement, and for good reason, because it is clearly a bad deal, but also for bad reasons linked to rising protectionism.

There is also the matter of emerging countries' share of the U.S. market. Here are a few little statistics, probably the same ones the Conservatives are looking at. In 1990, 19% of U.S. imports were from Canada, and in 2004, it was 17%. It has hardly changed, so why should we be worried? The trend is the same for Quebec. However, in 1990, 3% of U.S. imports came from China; in 2004, it was 13%. In 1990, 6% of U.S. imports came from Mexico; by 2002, that had dropped slightly to 12%.

We have lost some of the market share we should have had to other economies. I am talking about emerging countries, but I am sure the same thing has happened with industrialized countries.

*Business of Supply*

Naturally, there are the issues of energy and the looming shortage of skilled and unskilled workers. There is also the sense of abandonment felt by Canadian and Quebec manufacturers. I will be speaking about this in the time remaining.

Mr. Charron, CEO of the Quebec division of the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, spoke to us about how manufacturers feel abandoned, which in my mind is the case. The federal government has abandoned its responsibilities towards the manufacturing sector. This is the case across sectors. We have seen it in clothing and textiles. The assistance plan was merely a public relations exercise that was completely ineffective in terms of helping revitalize this sector, an extremely important one for the Montreal region and for Quebec. This was also the case for softwood lumber. Then there was the decision to ignore the recommendation of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal regarding bicycles and barbecues.

The time has come for the federal government, for the Conservatives, to send out a strong message. We want a very strong manufacturing sector in Quebec and Canada in order to be able to face the challenges of the future. This will require some action in these sectors.

To conclude, there must be support for modernization of traditional economic sectors, support for industrial research and research and development, measures enabling industries to exploit their capabilities in a highly competitive context, measures that will offset increased oil costs with the development of clean and renewable energy.

We must make this collective effort. Programs in support of older workers are also needed, in order to restructure traditional sectors requiring modernization.

• (1135)

There will be job losses, but at least we will be able to keep these sectors alive.

A collective effort of solidarity must be made; otherwise, not only will the Conservative government have abandoned its responsibilities, but there will be an increase in protectionism in Canada, Quebec and Ontario, placing everyone at a disadvantage.

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the interest shown by my colleague in this debate even though I am sad to hear him say that he cannot support the motion, which I find excellent.

He says that he is against the idea that the federal government should invest in research. However, he must recognize that, under our Constitution, it is the responsibility of the federal government of Canada to build the economy, to have an economic strategy as well as an industrial strategy for the country. He also talked about Quebec industries that need such strategies.

I hear a lot of complaints in his remarks. He is against a lot of things. He denigrated all the accomplishments of the Liberal government with regard to our national deficit, accomplishments that were aimed at ensuring a healthy economy and strong economic growth. Our investments in research conducted in our universities

and elsewhere are very important to our economy as an integral part of an economic strategy.

Is he really against such investments?

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question.

I agree completely that Canada should have a very strong industrial policy and a very strong international trade policy, and that the government should play a major supporting role in the industrial sectors and all businesses, but not by infringing on the provinces' areas of jurisdiction.

Certainly it can help the provinces assume their responsibilities regarding training and education by correcting the fiscal imbalance, as I have said. The federal government, in its own areas of jurisdiction, can do things for infrastructures such as ports, including the Port of Montreal.

We had a discussion at the end of the last session about the Pacific gateway. I find that very exciting, but I want to have an Atlantic gateway in Montreal.

The railways are in a pitiful state. They are the responsibility of the federal government. The government can invest there. Investments are also needed to comply with the Kyoto protocol.

It is the federal government's responsibility to support businesses internationally by providing them with information about emerging markets, and the risks and opportunities they may represent; it is responsible for being on-site, keeping an eye on things and helping foreign investment in Canada.

I am in favour of tax reforms, but not the generalized tax reductions being made by the Conservatives, who have announced that they will lower the tax rate from 21% to 19% by January 2010. I am in favour of targeted reductions and targeted tax credits to get businesses to do research and development, to invest, to modernize and become more productive, etc. So these reductions should be targeted rather than generalized ones, which, as we have seen, do not necessarily attract investments.

It is wrong to think that today's profits are tomorrow's investments and the day-after-tomorrow's jobs. This does not happen automatically.

As for public support for innovation, research and development, in the U.S. the government directly funds 80% of research and development. In Canada, the government does not even fund 20%. It funds 18%.

A program like Technology Partnerships Canada, which was dropped, should be put back in place in some form or another.

As I have said, under this industrial policy, reconversion programs for traditional, weakened sectors and for the workers in these areas are needed. I have talked about the Program for Older Worker Adjustment and there are other possible measures.

I agree with an industrial policy in Canada, but not by infringing on the provinces' jurisdictions.

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Joliette for his interesting speech, and I would like to ask him a question.

When we look at the Liberal motion, we see a lot of fine words, do we not? In my opinion, these are things that the Liberals could have done over 13 years.

Can my colleague from the Bloc explain to us why the Liberals did nothing?

• (1140)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, I agree completely with the hon. member. As I was saying, with their motion the Liberals wanted to intervene in fields of provincial jurisdiction. That was their aim. But they did not act in areas of federal responsibility. My colleague is perfectly right.

For example, in the apparel and textiles sectors, we had to have the Huntingdon tragedy, when six plants closed, to be entitled to a semblance of an assistance plan. Yet it was known for a long time that the Chinese quotas were going to disappear on January 1, 2006.

The Liberals are responsible for the fragility of the manufacturing sector. That is probably why they did not want to include in the motion the responsibilities that fall to the federal government. They are right. We have to ask them what they actually did, in their 13 years in power, to improve the rate of investment in research and development relative to GDP. We are still bringing up the rear. At every conference I attend, everyone says that Canada has to do more research and development. I have been hearing that for 15 years. We are still lagging behind. It is the federal government's responsibility to ensure that Canada is leading the pack on research and development.

The same goes for vocational training. That is a provincial responsibility, but the fiscal imbalance could have been corrected by the previous government. Let us hope that it will be corrected by the new government by February 2007.

It is the same thing again for industrial policy. We should have had an industrial policy that articulates sector development with regional development. The federal government has not been engaged in regional development for years. There has been a withdrawal of investment in social programs, with extremely harmful impacts in many regions.

For example, my region has lost \$29 million in employment insurance because the program's accessibility was cut back. As a result, economic activity in the region has slowed down. That is the fault of the federal government under the Liberal regime.

I remain hopeful that the Conservatives will take a more interesting direction, even if I do not believe they will.

[English]

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am interested in a few things. Some parts of the motion definitely have some merit. When it talks about “targeted initiatives to strengthen skills, job-readiness and successful workplace participation among First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and other Aboriginal peoples”, and also when it talks about “measures to reduce financial barriers that now stand in the way of students”, it has some merit.

The Government of Canada now is introducing new measures that provide strong incentives for employers to hire new apprentices, so it goes along with some of these things in this motion. There is an apprenticeship incentive grant, which provides grants to apprentices for the first two years. There is an apprenticeship job creation cash credit. Some of these kinds of things really mesh with the spirit of this particular opposition motion.

I have a question for the member opposite. The Canadian government now stands in a place where it is helping apprenticeship programs and creating grants and tax deductions for tools to help tradespeople with the cost of tools. Does the member not agree that this would attract more people into apprenticeship programs and support their training, which indeed is a good aspect of some of the good spirit of this motion?

Although there are some things in the motion that I have questions about, does the member not agree that the apprenticeship programs and the kinds of things that the government has put in place are very useful for apprentices in our nation?

[Translation]

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** Mr. Speaker, first I must say that we agree with everything the member said. However, some areas are the responsibility of the federal government while others are the responsibility of the provinces.

For example, learning programs are not a federal responsibility. In Quebec, we have a labour market partners commission, under the department of employment and social solidarity, that deals with these issues. So why add an organization in Ottawa that is totally disconnected from the reality of the labour market in the regions of Canada, particularly in Quebec, and that will impose standards that are not tailored to our needs? Adapting to the new global economy requires flexibility, and it is certainly not by centralizing and adding a new player, namely the federal government, that we will succeed.

The member is right concerning the tax deduction for tools. The Bloc Quebecois had been calling for such a measure for a long time. To my knowledge, we even introduced twice a private member's bill on the subject. Granting mechanics and other maintenance workers a tax deduction to cover the cost of the tools they have to buy, that is a responsibility that the federal government can take on.

As for learning programs, the objective is to transfer the money to the provinces so they can assume their responsibilities in the area of education. We already have some very good learning programs in Quebec. Unfortunately, all that is missing is adequate funding for education.

• (1145)

[English]

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Victoria.

I am pleased to speak to the motion today. I will focus on one line in the motion under (3), which reads:

targeted initiatives to strengthen skills, job-readiness and successful workplace participation among First Nations, Metis, Inuit and other Aboriginal peoples - as envisioned as part of the Kelowna Accords....

*Business of Supply*

One might wonder why it is that we are here today debating the motion when there had been an opportunity over the past 13 years to address some of the very serious issues that are facing aboriginal communities around education.

In a 2004 report from the Auditor General, she clearly outlined some very serious concerns around funding and the exact deliverables that were happening through INAC programs, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada programs. Some of it does come down to funding. I would argue that we have seen decades of either indifference or outright neglect when it comes to ensuring aboriginal communities, first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, have access to adequate funding and resources that ensure they have availability of education that will allow them to move out of some dire circumstances.

In a letter dated May 4, addressed to the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development from the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations, the First Nations Summit and the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, it reads:

The funds announced in your budget will do very little to remedy chronic underfunding or the crushing poverty and appalling socio-economic conditions of First Nations communities. True recognition, reconciliation and social justice with respect to lands, territories and resources, as well as social and economic programs, are becoming even more distant goals.

We have the situation where the previous Liberal government did not fulfill its responsibilities as outlined under any number of reports and initiatives, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People back in 1996. I have 12 different Auditor General reports that talk about a variety of aspects in first nations communities and now we have a Conservative government that has disregarded 18 months of work that resulted in the Kelowna accord and gone ahead with an agenda that is its agenda and not the first nations' agenda.

There are many reasons. I mentioned the 2% funding cap that has been in place since 1996 which has limited the ability of first nations communities to move ahead with initiatives they have developed and designed and which are important to their communities. However, there are also a number of other issues that the House needs to consider when we are talking about education in the context of the motion.

One of the issues before us is that the first nations population is one of the most rapidly growing populations in Canada, both on and off reserve. The first nations population will be the backbone of the workforce in many of our provinces. Half of the first nations people are under the age of 25 and the numbers are even higher in Inuit communities.

I referenced earlier the Kelowna accord and education was a prominent part of that accord. I want to talk specifically about the aboriginal affairs committee, which is currently dealing with education as one of its priorities. Chief Fontaine appeared before the committee this week and highlighted a number of points that he thought would be important for the committee to consider and for the government to consider when it is making decisions, not only about education, but about other issues.

When Chief Fontaine came before the committee yesterday he said:

I want you to apply a test of five criteria that the Assembly of First Nations has developed for successful policy development. Is there first nations leadership, national dialogue, independent first nations expertise, government mandate for change, and a joint national policy process?

• (1150)

In the context of this motion, perhaps we could adopt the five recommendations from Chief Fontaine and the Assembly of First Nations as a way of moving forward when we are examining, not only educational policies but policies in housing, in water, and many other aspects that are facing first nations communities.

Chief Fontaine went on to say:

—the process laid out in the political accord on the recognition and implementation of first nation governments, the proposal in our Accountability for Results Initiative, and the five tests in our backgrounder on joint policy development. If these items do not stand up to these tests, then I would ask you, respectfully ask you, to reject what you are hearing. On the other hand, if these tests are met, then I'm asking for your vigorous support so that we can establish sustainable solutions to these urgent problems.

In addition, the Auditor General outlined a number of factors that have been critical when she looked at what had been successful. I will not go into great detail about these factors but the Auditor General says that there are seven factors, the first one being the sustained management attention.

The second factor is the coordination of government programs. The third one is meaningful consultation with first nations. The fourth is developing capacity within first nations. The fifth is establishing first nations institutions. The sixth is an appropriate legislative base for programs. The seventh is the sorting out of the conflicting roles of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

The Auditor General has outlined some critical success factors. Chief Fontaine and the Assembly of First Nations have outlined five key tests when policy development is happening. In the context of this motion around education, I would argue that these are credible and important things that the government should move forward on.

I have talked nationally and now I will bring it back home for just one moment. In my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group is in the process of protracted treaty negotiations. On March 27, Mr. Robert Morales, chair of the chief negotiators of the First Nations Summit based in British Columbia, and chief negotiator for the Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group, wrote an article in the *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, issue 30.1.

The Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group is the individual Coast Salish nations, which is composed of the Cowichan Tribes, Chemainus First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, Halalt First Nation, Lyackson First Nation and Lake Cowichan First Nation.

In the article, Mr. Morales outlined a number of factors that the House should consider.

*Business of Supply*

First, under Canada's community well-being index, which is used to examine the well-being of Canadian communities, the six Hul'qumi'num communities scored between 448 and 482 out of 486 communities surveyed in B.C. Those kinds of numbers in this day and age in this country are shocking. It does speak to those years of inaction and inattention by the previous government. The current government has not developed an action plan in consultation with first nations that will address this very serious deficit.

Later on in the article, Mr. Morales talks about the many factors that impact on first nations, both on and off reserve, and on the Inuit and Métis' ability to move forward in this country. Some treaties have been negotiated but when it comes to Hul'qumi'num peoples they need the economic self-sufficiency. They need access to resources, to education and to adequate housing to ensure they can rightfully take their place in this country and not be living in the kinds of conditions for which we would be embarrassed and which have been embarrassing internationally.

We will be supporting the motion but it is unfortunate that we need to be discussing this when we had 13 years under the Liberal government to address these circumstances.

•(1155)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear the NDP will be supporting the motion today.

I have a number of questions and a number of concerns. My colleague said that the Conservative government failed to live up to the Kelowna accord and disregarded 18 months of work. The problem I have with that is that I happen to know that it was more than 18 months of work that led to the Kelowna accord.

I can recall at the first cabinet meeting in December 2003 that the then prime minister, now the MP for LaSalle—Émard, made it very clear that the grave problem we have in this country in relation to aboriginal people would be the top priority for him. My hon. colleague suggested that it was only during a period of a minority government when supposedly the NDP had more influence that there was a concern about this. The fact is there was a real concern before that. The Liberal government did a lot of work, particularly the member for Fredericton who was the minister of Indian affairs at that time, to achieve that accord. It was a very important accord.

My hon. colleague should also recognize that the NDP, in choosing to defeat the government last December and put in place instead a Conservative government, has played a big role, as I am sure most Canadians recognize, in killing the Kelowna accord and the Kyoto accord.

Earlier today, in the committee on human resources and social development, a Conservative MP said that the solution to unemployment in Atlantic Canada was to move them all to Alberta. Is that her view of what the solution should be?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, it is a bit disingenuous for the member to talk about the NDP bringing down the government when it was the Canadian people who voted the Liberals out. I need to remind the member that the former prime minister had committed to going to the polls within two months anyway. I wonder what miracles the Liberals thought they might actually perform within two months.

The other issue is that the Liberals had 13 years to address these problems. On May 12, the Auditor General provided the aboriginal affairs committee with a list outlining a litany of Auditor General's reports that talked about deficiencies in the way the government had been working with first nations communities. The work may have been going on for more than 18 months but the lack of results over 13 years in terms of making any kind of difference is shameful.

I would welcome this House reaffirming the Kelowna accord, which had different levels of governments at the table negotiating it: representatives from provincial governments, first nations' organizations and the federal government. When we are talking about the Kelowna accord we are talking about the honour of the Crown. I would urge the House to rethink its position around that.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to begin by acknowledging that both the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan and I represent ridings that are in the traditional territory of the Cosalish people.

I would like my colleague to comment on an aspect of the Kelowna accord, which often gets lost around here in debate, and that is the fact that there is a signed agreement between the first nations of British Columbia, the federal government and the province of British Columbia to implement the Kelowna accord, which is called the transformative change accord. Part of the actual structure of the document sets out defined goals and measurable outcomes.

We have heard in the past the Minister of Indian Affairs saying that he wanted to work toward an agreement that had measurable goals and definable outcomes. We have that already. We have a signed document that all of the first nations representatives, the First Nations Leadership Council, which is composed of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, the B.C. Assembly of First Nations, and the First Nations Summit, all signed onto. It is structured in just the way the Minister of Indian Affairs has asked it to be structured.

Does my colleague know why the government will not recognize this important agreement?

•(1200)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the transformative change accord was signed by three levels of government, the federal government, the provincial government and the first nations, was based on the fact that people thought in good faith that the event that happened in November, the very real attempt to close the poverty gap for first nations across this country, was a done deal. There were many witnesses to that agreement. The province of British Columbia moved forward believing that the honour of the Crown would be upheld and that the agreement would move forward in good faith.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Denise Savoie (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak on this motion put forward by the Liberals. I thank my hon. colleague from Nanaimo—Cowichan for sharing her allotted time with me.

*Business of Supply*

This motion touches on many of the goals we, in the NDP, have been proposing for a long time. In fact, that is the problem: it only touches on the issues. There is something disturbing in that because, with its eight-year run of record surpluses, the Liberal government could have afforded to put money where its mouth was, especially in the area of post-secondary education.

The tone of the motion, as it stands, seems to be one of resignation in the face of the astronomical tuition fees charged in some provinces. The reason for this might be that the cuts to post-secondary education imposed by the Liberals themselves are responsible for tuition fees skyrocketing. The average increase across Canada is 35%, and 141% in British Columbia, where I live.

Under the Liberals, the portion of the universities' operating budget represented by tuition fees increased from 20% to 30%. In the mid-1980s, the government covered 80% of the costs of post-secondary education, as compared to a mere 57% today. It is no coincidence that the chance of children from low income families getting into a post-secondary establishment is less than half that of children from high income families.

It comes as no surprise then that the number of students forced to work full time while studying full time increased by 130% since 1994. Tuition fees are simply too high. It is no coincidence either there is such a shortage of physicians. Under the Liberals, the average tuition fees for medical school have more than tripled, reaching \$13,000 per year.

[English]

This motion seems more than a little disingenuous. Having the Liberals call for investments to reduce tuition fees is a bit like the Grinch calling for investments in Christmas gifts in Whoville.

Nevertheless, this motion does speak to actions that the NDP values. I deeply believe in the importance of Canada's human capital. The G-8 ministers meeting on post-secondary education and skills training in Moscow highlighted its importance in building an innovative, prosperous society.

All G-8 education ministers agreed to four key objectives: advancing the education for all agendas, supporting the role education plays in empowering migrants and immigrants, developing skills for life and work through quality education, and building innovative societies.

One important aspect I took away from these meetings relates to the role of learning in promoting social cohesion and justice. I thought of the report by the Canada Council on Learning which gave Canada a grade of B- on its first ever composite learning index. This index goes beyond learning in terms of basic knowledge skills like reading and writing, and beyond tangible skills like trades. It speaks of learning to live together and learning to be, and I think the events in Toronto, the arrests of the 17 young people, really highlight the importance of these skills and of social cohesion.

This report also spoke of volunteering and community involvement, culture and physical well-being. All of these learning sets contribute to a socially cohesive and just society. What this means in a practical context to the individual Canadian and to Canadian communities is that for us to prosper in economic as well as social terms, we need to expand our concept of prosperity more broadly.

We need to include the families struggling to find decent housing and the aboriginal student who cannot afford tuition. When this motion mentions broad-base prosperity, it means including and empowering everyone, especially new Canadians.

It also means funding research in the social sciences and humanities at the same level that we fund health sciences and the sciences and technology in general.

Currently, social sciences receive 11% of overall research funding for well over 50% of total students. Whether it is understanding the intellectual development of children to improve our child care system, determining the sources of the terrorist mentality or improving our political system, our society clearly benefits from studying the humanities. I would have liked this motion to ask for equitable funding for all councils to account for the gap of funding to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council.

I would also like to speak to another deficiency. It is the need for an overhaul of our convoluted, inflexible student aid system. It desperately needs it. The Association of Canadian Community Colleges recommends, for example, transforming the Canada student loans program into a new learner support system guided by the principles of universality, simplicity and flexibility, and including a comprehensive low income grant program.

In addition to accessibility, quality of education is important. The student to faculty ratio rose by 26% under the Liberals and faculty salaries, as a percentage of university operating expenditures, fell by 29%. Class sizes are exploding and the quality of instruction is compromised. We are graduating more people with degrees, but we are not necessarily helping our broad-base prosperity.

• (1205)

Finally, I would like to touch on literacy which is inexplicably absent from the motion. Like the composite learning index, the modern concept of literacy extends beyond reading and writing which is required in order for individuals to be productive and well-adjusted members of our society. We all know the statistic that 42% of working aged Canadians do not have the literacy skills to function effectively in a modern society and economy. The number of Canadians with low literacy levels has risen from eight million to nine million in the past 10 years. That was confirmed this morning by the staff from Human Resources and Social Development Canada at the committee meeting.

I would have expected the motion, on the part of the Liberals, to finally recognize the role of literacy in a comprehensive learning strategy by including, for example, a pan-Canadian strategy on literacy, including multi-year stable funding.

*Business of Supply*

To conclude, I will support the motion because it does recognize the role of social investment in our country's prosperity. However, the flaws in the motion are the very flaws of the Liberal record. I hope that the new Conservative government recognizes this in moving forward in setting policy in these areas.

• (1210)

**Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I note in the member's comments some concerns around access to post-secondary education, particularly as it relates to tuition fees. I look back and see the commitments of this government with respect to breaking down barriers for post-secondary education. There are a number of initiatives, I believe, that actually speak directly to that point and in fact, speak to the point that was brought forward in today's motion.

Principally, looking at supports, we recognize that tuition fees specifically are not something that are in the federal government's jurisdiction but in the hands of the provinces. We can look at student loan programs this year that will effectively allow 30,000 additional students from middle-income families to receive eligibility for loans. There is another \$3.2 billion available in direct supports for students and families to seek access. That is of course on top of the \$15.5 billion that is already there in social transfers that go directly to the provinces.

Does the member not think that those kinds of supports would speak to addressing the issue of support for tuition fees?

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, indeed, there were some first steps in the Conservative budget, particularly as it relates to skills training, but it fell far short of a comprehensive strategy for skills training to prepare young people for the new economy, and to help older workers to become reskilled in new technology. It also fell far short of overhauling the loan and grant system of which I believe students are badly in need.

The Conservative government simply raised the ceiling on debt possibilities, so basically it simply allows students to get into deeper debt than they are in already. I do not see that as a great innovation. I think a broader and more comprehensive overhaul of the loan and grant system is what is needed at the moment.

There was also \$1.5 billion that was negotiated under Bill C-48 with the previous government. The intent of that was clearly to set money aside to reduce tuition fees and increase accessibility. This government has chosen not to apply the money to reduce student debt. It has simply put it to infrastructure. It is an important component, but it does not address the accessibility issue.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad my colleague mentioned as well the need for increased funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. As a matter of fact, I was at a talk this morning, sponsored by the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, on the important issue of racial profiling. It highlights some of the very important work that needs to be supported by the federal government.

I want to come back to her comments about literacy and the importance of literacy as a human capital issue, an issue that goes to the whole importance of social cohesion and justice in our society. I was shocked to hear that she heard this morning in committee that

the rate of illiteracy in Canada has actually risen over the past year. I wonder if she could comment further about that revelation this morning and about the situation regarding literacy in Canada.

• (1215)

**Ms. Denise Savoie:** Mr. Speaker, what we heard in committee this morning was in fact that low literacy levels have risen from eight million to nine million Canadians. In fact, in percentage in the past 10 years, it means that the rate of illiteracy in Canada has remained static. By illiteracy I do not mean that people cannot write their names or count to 10. I am talking about the ability to function in this economy of knowledge. This percentage has remained absolutely static, we are told by staff, in the past 10 years. It really begs for policies that will foster and nurture literacy, that will allow older workers to re-skill themselves to allow them to function at the level that they are capable of doing.

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the distinguished member for Scarborough—Guildwood, the gentleman who last night brought forward a great private member's bill that I hope the House adopts.

I welcome this opportunity to speak to the motion put forward by my colleague and good friend from Halifax West. For me there is no more important issue in Canada today than this one, the education of all Canadians at all stages of their life, but in particular, educating and preparing young Canadians for the globally competitive world in which we now exist.

The motion speaks to this in a way that has not been addressed by the government in its own narrow five priorities. In fact, it is staggering to me and I think staggering to a lot of Canadian families that education is not considered a priority by the government.

I have spoken on many occasions in the House about the value of investing in education and research and, in particular, investing in young Canadians. It is unfortunate that the recent budget put politics above policy. It seems that it is more important these days on the government side to be seen to be doing something rather than actually making decisions that would impact Canadians in a real and positive way.

The heart of the challenge that faces Canada, which is to increase productivity and to continue a standard of life for Canadians that frankly we have become accustomed to, is going to be, more and more, a challenge in a world that no longer offers a free pass to success.

As Jeffrey Simpson said recently:

The world out there isn't standing still. Only by improving the human skills of the population and making the investment climate more attractive can Canada compete better. By that standard, this [federal] budget is strangely irrelevant.

Other members will speak to the great success that we have achieved as a nation in the areas of research and innovation in the past seven or eight years. In fact, members of the government will no doubt agree with their own budget documents, which state the following on page 36:

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—the federal government has increased its support for post-secondary education research, with nearly \$11 billion in incremental funding. These investments have assisted Canadian universities in strengthening their research capacity and building a global reputation for excellence, which has helped reverse the “brain drain” and attract leading researchers to Canada. Canada now ranks first in the G7...in terms of research and development....

Of course those are not my words. Those are the words of the current government, which quite rightly applauds the work of the previous government on this issue.

In my capacity as chair of the government caucus on post-secondary education and research, I had the opportunity last year to travel Canada. I heard similar stories from coast to coast, stories of universities that were facing difficult times but were saved by these direct federal investments and that in fact have thrived under these investments.

These investments have had a huge impact in a positive way on our universities, a huge impact in a positive way on our nation and a huge impact in a positive way in our regions. For example, ACOA and the Atlantic investment fund have done a great job of building capacity in Atlantic Canada. These investments also have had a great and positive impact in our communities. In my own community last year, Research In Motion, RIM, announced that it would be setting up a plant in Halifax and it credited the ongoing commitment of the federal government to research and innovation as the key reason for its success.

The day after the Conservative budget was released, the *Globe and Mail* outlined how successful Canada's economy has been in the last number of years and also offered some free advice to the government. It listed the areas that were most important for investment in Canada if our success is to continue. The top two areas it cited were education and the environment.

We all know what the Conservatives have done to the environment agenda by eliminating the Kyoto protocol and going with its made in Canada solution, which is really no solution whatever, but like the government, I am not focusing on the environment. Unlike the government, I will focus on post-secondary education and research.

I want to talk about student access. Providing access is essential.

In a recent op-ed piece, Ian Boyko of the Canadian Federation of Students stated:

—the Government of Canada estimates that 74% of new jobs created this year will require post-secondary education. Sadly, the government today lacks its predecessor's vision for access to education.

I agree with the CFS on a wide range of issues, perhaps not all but most, and I have worked closely over the past couple of years with its leadership. It rightly points out that despite our efforts in the past, and some successes, we remain a nation where it is the case that access to education is still a national problem.

It is certainly a problem in my own province of Nova Scotia, which has the highest tuitions in the country. In the maritime provinces, student debt skyrocketed by 33% in five years. I am not advocating that the federal government has a direct role in setting tuition. To me, that is not the case at all.

● (1220)

However, the federal government does have a role, along with the provinces, in the area of student assistance. We can do this by implementing across the board grants that would bridge the opportunity gap between those who have and those who have not. These direct investments, along with other measures, would assist Canadians most in need.

When it comes to post-secondary education, we are talking about low income Canadians, persons with disabilities and aboriginal Canadians. Last fall I was very proud when the finance minister introduced his economic update, which included massive investments into direct student assistance. It included a number of elements: \$1 billion to the provinces and territories for post-secondary innovation; \$2.2 billion for student financial assistance, targeted to low income Canadians; and over a half a billion dollars to expand the Canada access grants for low income Canadians to cover all years of an undergraduate education. It included, and to me this is very important, \$265 million to assist Canadians with disabilities, as well as \$2.5 billion in new funding to sustain Canada's leadership in research.

There were a number of investments. Overall it was a \$9 billion package to invest in upgrading Canadian skills and capabilities. I think it was the single biggest plan for post-secondary education and research that has ever been introduced in Parliament.

That federal economic update was a sweeping plan for post-secondary education that built on Bill C-48 of last year, the arrangement between the government and the New Democratic Party that was included in the budget. Bill C-48, as many will recall, included an element of post-secondary education, and said that it was “for supporting training programs and enhancing access to post-secondary education, to benefit, among others, aboriginal Canadians, an amount not exceeding \$1.5 billion”.

The fall economic update went way beyond Bill C-48. It would have made a huge difference in the lives of Canadian students. Unfortunately, of course, it is gone, replaced by an election and a new budget that provides little if anything for most students, certainly nothing for students most in need. On the issue of accessibility, there is nothing.

In the finance committee last week when the Minister of Finance appeared, I asked him regarding Bill C-48 what happened to the money, what happened to the \$1.5 billion? His first response was that it was not \$1.5 billion, but a billion. I said, “No, I have it here, Mr. Minister”. I asked him if the investment in infrastructure, which is really all there is in the budget, was from Bill C-48 and if that equated to student access. His response was that it did. In my view and in the view of most Canadians, infrastructure does not equate to access.

We do need investments in post-secondary infrastructure and research. We have made them and we will continue to make them as a nation, I hope, although the budget of the Conservative government has one-tenth of the money dedicated to research that the economic update had.

*Business of Supply*

We need investments in research and we need investments in infrastructure, but one cannot suggest, based on any evidence that I have seen, that investments in infrastructure equate directly to investment in student access. A tax credit on books and scholarships simply makes no difference to those most in need, many of whom do not make enough to pay income tax anyway.

The evidence shows that federal education tax measures disproportionately favour high income earners and do not do enough to improve access to post-secondary education. The tax credit on books is \$80. As for \$80 for a student in my home province of Nova Scotia who is paying anywhere from \$6,000 to \$8,000 a year for an undergraduate degree, I would suggest that not only is it not particularly helpful, it is actually insulting.

We have come a huge way in Canada through direct federal investment in our post-secondary institutions. We have reversed the brain drain, built capacity and spurred economic growth. Our challenge now is to ensure that we do everything possible to ensure that Canadians have every opportunity to develop their skills. It will not happen through tinkering with taxes.

We have taken some steps, but now there is a confluence of events with the emerging economies, the productivity crunch, the investments made to date, and the massive surplus. It is time to take action. Direct support to students in need is good for students, but it is very good for Canada as well. I would say that it is absolutely vital. The government is asleep at the switch on this critical issue. It is time to wake up, follow the lead of the Liberal government and invest in our students now.

• (1225)

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a question about post-secondary education because I found his comments to be a little ironic. I know that the member is concerned about post-secondary education, but I find it ironic, given that the former Liberal government started racking up huge budget surpluses back in 2000, yet the Liberals took no initiative to deal with the crisis in post-secondary education, the rising student debt and the high costs of tuition. In fact after he was first elected, the first Liberal budget did absolutely nothing to address the crisis in post-secondary education. The only measure of assistance to students was assistance to dead students where it allowed for loan forgiveness.

It took until the dying days of the last government, with its economic statement which was not really even a budget, but was a pre-election goody package, to address some of these issues. In fact the Liberals' own timing was only a month or so before the election would have been called in any case as the former prime minister had announced.

Given the member's concerns, how disappointed was he in his own government that no action was taken despite the fact that there were huge budget surpluses and despite the fact that huge corporate tax cuts continued throughout the term after he was even elected?

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the member in committee. He is usually much better prepared than he is today in suggesting that we have not done anything for students. Really and truly it is not that hard to find out. There is the Canada learning bond, the millennium scholarships, increased education

credit, Canada study grants. We have done a number of things for students and they have been targeted at students who need assistance. What we have done on a more macro level in education is to go from the worst in the G-7 to the best in creating jobs for Canadians through innovation and research and reversing the brain drain. It is absolutely wrong to say we have not done anything.

We do have an issue now of accessibility. We addressed it last year. Bill C-48 took a little step, but it was enabling legislation. We followed that up with the economic update which had sweeping investments in students who most needed the help.

I have heard the NDP suggest that it was only a difference of two months. In that two months we would have passed the economic update. We would have helped the aboriginal Canadian students. We would have helped low income students. We would have helped students with disabilities. We would have had a review of the entire student financing. For the sake of two months, with NDP support, Canadians could have enjoyed their Christmas and we could have passed these massive investments for Canadian students and made a huge difference for those who need assistance.

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am always amazed to see such a motion being presented in the House. This motion is from the Liberal Party that, once again, wants to encroach on the jurisdictions of Quebec.

Post-secondary education is Quebec's responsibility. The Conservative Party has made some progress with regard to the fiscal imbalance by transferring money to Quebec and the provinces to increase funding for post-secondary education. This motion shows clearly that the federal government wants to interfere in the area of education, which is Quebec's responsibility.

I will ask my colleague a question. Why does the motion not say anything about the textile industry, for which the Liberals did very little while they were in power? Currently, industries such as the furniture industry are threatened. Competition from Asia increasingly reduces the ability of these industries to face this kind of competition.

Why did the Liberal Party not propose, in its motion, measures that the government could take in areas under its jurisdiction to help critical sectors of our economy?

• (1230)

[English]

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, universities across Canada, including in Quebec, have applauded the federal government's moves in the last number of years to invest in research and innovation. That is what has made a huge difference.

*Business of Supply*

He asked whether we should be bringing in a dedicated education transfer. It is something the government has promised. We have not seen any evidence of it yet or any money allocated to it. I would support a dedicated education transfer, but I would always argue that a dedicated transfer itself is like an empty glass if there is no money in it. Where is the money? If the money goes all to the provinces, that would do nothing to bridge the gap between the rich provinces and the poor provinces. Nova Scotia and other provinces like it would continue to suffer.

We have shown through research and to a limited way in direct student assistance that the federal government has a role to play in assisting Canadian students. Going forward I want to see that federal role continue because Canadian students need the assistance and they deserve the assistance.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the motion. It is an important motion and reflects a lot of thinking on the part of my colleague from Dartmouth. It reflects in some great measure his concern and abilities with respect to the post-education file.

I would like to make my observation with respect to the fiscal fairy dust that passes for economics in this particular government. The critic from the NDP will appreciate that this is fiscal fairy dust. The government simply spreads a little fairy dust around and says that up is up, up is down, down is up, 15% is actually bigger than 16%, 16% is actually less than 15%, and a base personal exemption of something like \$400, an increase in the base personal exemption is actually tax relief.

I am sure my colleague will join me in trying to root ourselves in reality. She will know, as do the rest of us, that in November 2005 the Liberal government actually reduced the base personal rate, the lowest rate at which Canadians pay taxes, from 16% to 15%.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you are an educated man and that you will appreciate that 16% is actually higher than 15% and 15% is actually lower than 16%. I see you nodding in the affirmative. That makes me question how you can continue to belong to that government.

The reduction was by way of a ways and means motion and was effective for the 2005 taxation year. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I know you have been a good Canadian citizen and have paid your taxes this year. You will recollect that on your income tax return there was a section with respect to the basic personal exemption and with respect to the 16% being reduced to 15%. In fact, it was highlighted in red. In the normal course of events that would have been enshrined in legislation. However, as we well know, the Liberal government was defeated and a new budget was introduced. In this wonderful little world of neoconville, where up is down and down is up, and lower is higher and higher is lower, Bill C-13 actually raised the rates that were set out in the ways and means motion.

I appreciate that 15.5% is actually somewhat more than 15% and somewhat less than 16%, but we are splitting hairs here. This is in fact a budget which raised the basic personal exemption and raised the base rate from 15% to 15.5%. It is a kind of nasty little surprise for Canadians. The surprises will just continue, but only in

Conservative fiscal economics, this fairy dust I was referring to. Only grade 3 dropouts actually believe that 16% is less than 15%.

Canadians are in for another little nasty surprise and that is with respect to the basic personal exemption or base personal allowance, as it is known, the BPA. Scheduled into the ways and means motion was a further reduction or in fact a rise of \$200 in the base personal allowance which was scheduled for 2006.

However, Canadians will find that on July 1 their pay packets will actually shrink. The base personal allowance will actually be wound back by about \$400 in order to fund the 1% in the GST cut. Will that not be a bit of a surprise? I cannot recollect in the election if the Conservatives actually campaigned on that point, that they would actually raise personal income taxes in order to be able to fund the GST cut, but maybe, Mr. Speaker, you have access to fiscal reality which maybe none of the rest of us have.

I want to set this out in a very clear and cogent statement by Dale Orr from Global Economics. You will know, Mr. Speaker, as does the NDP critic, that Dale Orr is no friend of the Liberal Party. I will quote him:

Budget 2006 claimed "about 665,000 low-income Canadians will be removed from the tax rolls altogether". About 350,000 of those 665,000 were estimated to be removed because of the "tax relief" on the Basic Personal Amount provided by Budget 2006.

● (1235)

Budget 2006 didn't really provide tax relief on the BPA. Budget 2006 actually caused the BPA to be only \$8,839 for 2006 when it otherwise would have been \$9,039.

That is a difference of a couple of hundred dollars.

Rather than the change in the BPA of Budget 2006 and removing about 350,000 Canadians from the tax rolls altogether, the change in BPA of Budget 2006 will actually cause about 200,000 Canadians, who thought they wouldn't be on the tax rolls in 2006...to be pushed back onto the tax rolls. What the Finance Minister did not say in presenting Budget 2006 was, "Mr. Speaker, with this reduction in the tax free amount from current levels, I have today pushed about 200,000 of the lowest income Canadians back onto the tax rolls".

That would not have been very nice. I agree with Mr. Orr in his analysis. It does not really have a nice ring to it and I did not see it in the budget speech. It was not one of those items in the speech or in the campaigning that led up to the speech, or indeed in the election campaign, that actually said that the government was going to shove 200,000 people back onto the tax rolls, people who had every reason to expect they would be removed from the tax rolls based upon the November update.

I always try to be fair, so the counter argument is the work related credit. Employees are going to get a credit come July 1. People who are employed will get the credit, but if people are not employed, if they are seniors, are self-employed, are about to be employed or about to be unemployed, the credit will be absolutely useless. We will see that rates go up and the base personal allowance will come down.

*Business of Supply*

Welcome to the fiscal la-la land of the Conservative Party. The choice is whether people want to have \$150 in their pockets in absolute terms from the November update, or whether they want to spend another \$150 or better on acquiring more goods and services in order to get back the 1% that has been promised. It is a strange set of economics. Personally, if it were up to me and I guess it is not, I would prefer to have \$150 in my pocket and forget the GST.

Why is this fiscal fraud important? I want go back to the motion, which states in part:

—in the opinion of the House, future Canadian economic growth and broad-based prosperity demand—in addition to a competitive tax regime (especially in relation to income tax rates and brackets) and the strategic positioning of Canada at the centre of global commerce and networks—focused and immediate investments by the government—

Without a competitive economy, wealth and jobs, all the rest is simply academic; it is entirely hot air. If we do not have a prosperous economy based upon knowledge and the hard work of Canadians, none of this stuff will be possible.

When one wastes scarce resources, one cannot do the necessary things one wants to do for planning. If the government is not prudent with the tax dollars which it is given by hard-working Canadians, then it will not be able to do anything, such as fund research institutions. The government argues that the private sector will magically pick up the slack. If that is true, then why was Canada dead last under the previous Conservative government and through the hard work of the Liberal government we became number one in the G-7 in research and development?

Researchers have options. Their research can be done anywhere in the world. One does not need a degree in economics to know that if wealth is not generated on the basis of brain power, there will be no wealth at all, because the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil will pick up the slack. One can ship a piece of lumber to China and have it come back as a piece of furniture cheaper, just because of the differential in labour cost.

The government has resisted the opportunity to have a universal day care system. Having a universal medical system in this country is worth, in the manufacture of a car, about the equivalent of the steel that is in the car. It is a huge competitive advantage. Having universal day care is also a huge competitive advantage and we have given up the opportunity to have that huge competitive advantage.

• (1240)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from the Liberal Party with great interest and I certainly want to agree with him that when we are looking at the Conservative fiscal policies, we have serious questions.

Whether I would go so far as to suggest that this is fiscal fairy dust, I think the term more aptly applies to the Liberals when they were in government and running the show. In fact, if fiscal fairy dust can be applied to the Conservatives at all, which I would probably be inclined to do, I think we could conclude that the Conservatives learned a great deal from the previous government. The Liberals were masters at fiscal fairy dust.

**Hon. John McKay:** Is there a question in there somewhere?

**Ms. Wasylycia-Leis:** Yes, there are many questions. Let us go back to a couple of years ago, when the \$1.9 billion surplus projected by the Liberal government turned out to be \$9.1 billion.

It seems to me, if we are looking at fiscal fairy dust, that is probably about the best example around. Or, we might consider the sum of \$80 billion in fiscal surpluses over a decade when the Liberals were in government because they were not able to accurately forecast the fiscal dividend and give Canadians a share of the surplus dollars that were available.

We might also remind Canadians that it was under the Liberals that we started seeing the balance shift away from the corporate share of paying for our budget to individuals. My question for my dear friend in the Liberal Party is this. How can he justify such hypocrisy?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, I take pleasure in answering my dear friend. I did not know we had become all that friendly, but after two and a half years on the finance committee, I guess we are in fact quite cozy.

The NDP members of course never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. They have this wonderful antagonism to prudence. They do not like to plan, to balance, and to forecast on the basis of putting in a level of prudence. In fact, the previous government did put a level of prudence into each and every budget, and thankfully for the last eight years we have actually run surpluses.

If we had not run those surpluses, we would still be in the same and possibly even worse shape, having a debt to GDP ratio of somewhere up around 70% as opposed to what it is now, which is around 40%. However, not the NDP members, they do not want to pay down debt when we have that opportunity.

With respect to the mix between corporate taxes and personal income taxes, in fact the share of corporate taxes has been rising as a percentage of GDP over the last number of years. It is a strange concept. When we create a competitive tax environment, Canadians get out and work, they actually generate wealth, and that wealth is taxed. It is better for the government. It is better for the citizens. The debt gets paid down and we are all better off. However, those notions are completely lost on the folks who are lost in fiscal la la land.

• (1245)

**Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thought that was a tremendous intervention by my colleague.

When we think back several years ago, I know the major concern that was shared across this country with regard to education, really lending itself to productivity, was the fact that there was an ongoing brain drain, and some of our best and brightest were going out of our country to seek research opportunities in the United States.

I know that the previous government had invested considerably in trying to maintain the best and the brightest here in Canada, and give them opportunities. For the most part there was significant progress made on that piece.

*Business of Supply*

Does the hon. member see the folly in the government's action or inaction in this past budget, where it is not getting out ahead of the trend, ahead of the curve, in preparing the country and preparing Canadians for what is further down the road?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, this is probably one of the greatest tragedies of the budget. If I were an exaggerating individual, I would say it is virtually criminal. Canada dragged itself from being virtually dead last in the G-7 for research and development to number one, and it was done primarily through the funding in foundations for innovation and things of that nature.

This is, at this point, the number one place in the world to do publicly funded research. I will share with my hon. colleague a conversation I had with the former president of the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto in particular, but universities generally across the country have benefited hugely. He said there were two things that reversed the brain drain and made it a brain gain. The first was September 2001 and researchers began to look at Canada as an alternative North American destination. However, the most significant of which was the funding of these foundations, so that researchers had access to a steady flow of capital in order to be able to do their thing. Therefore, U of T was able to be right in the game with the best of them.

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak in the debate on this motion today. I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Souris—Moose Mountain.

I would like to tell the member for Halifax West that I share his desire to ensure that our children, our students, our families and our country have the best possible prospects for the future. That is why I am pleased to be part of a government whose goal is to build a stronger and more united Canada.

It is often said that a government's first 100 days are crucial. I think we can say, in all humility, that we have successfully completed that important stage, and this augurs very well for the future. The people in my riding and elsewhere in Quebec tell us that it is very pleasant to see a government that keeps its promises at work. As a Quebecker, I also find it very interesting to hear the Prime Minister of Canada talking about open federalism as he does. Last month, for example, he said, and I quote:

That's what open federalism is all about—a stronger Quebec in a better Canada—and that is what this new national government intends to deliver. Open federalism does not seek to play favourites or stir up jealousies. Open federalism represents an opportunity to free Quebec from the trap of polarization.

That says a lot about the Prime Minister's intentions. It is not just his words that strike a chord in Quebec, the actions of the government he leads do as well.

In a short time, we have made an agreement with the Government of Quebec that will enable Quebec to play an historic role in UNESCO. Next, we also put an end to the softwood lumber dispute that had for too long paralyzed our producers and damaged our economy. That agreement will allow us to bring \$4 billion back into Canada, and will have positive effects in regions like the Gaspé, Abitibi-Témiscamingue or Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, where the

forestry industry plays a major economic role. In fact, everyone who sits in this House and who believes in the future of Canada cannot help but applaud results like these.

Speaking of the future, I would like to come back to the motion tabled by my hon. colleague. Today, he is asking what the government is doing so that the Canadian economy will thrive in the 21st century. If I understand his lengthy motion correctly, he is also asking what we are doing to promote greater access to post-secondary education and to help the work readiness of people like immigrants and older workers, who must overcome very specific barriers. The simplest answer I can give him is that we are acting, and we are acting responsibly and effectively and targeting our actions.

The budget tabled recently by the Minister of Finance is eloquent evidence of this. First, the budget proposes targeted measures so that the largest possible number of Canadians will be able to get a post-secondary education. Starting in August 2007, eligibility for the Canada Student Loan Program will be expanded by reducing the deemed parental contribution. This measure will enable about 30,000 more young people to get a post-secondary education at a college or university in Canada. As well, a new \$500 tax credit for buying textbooks will apply to all post-secondary students. And we will be eliminating the current \$3,000 cap on the amount of bursaries and scholarships a post-secondary student may receive without having to pay federal income tax. These tax measures will make life easier for hundreds of thousands of students in Canada.

However, we realize that education is a provincial jurisdiction. That is why, instead of establishing a new program that would create overlap, we prefer providing up to \$1 billion directly to the provinces and territories, to allow them to meet pressing needs in terms of post-secondary education infrastructure.

● (1250)

This way, students across the country can benefit from more modern classrooms, libraries, laboratories and research equipment.

This billion is in addition to the \$9 billion the government invests annually in post-secondary education and the \$1.7 billion it provides to support research carried out in post-secondary institutions.

Despite huge investments, the government is well aware that the provinces and territories are trying to find out how much money is available to them. That is why we plan to provide long term assistance for post-secondary education and training.

This year, we are already giving Quebec an extra \$850 million in equalization payments. Part of that amount is specifically earmarked for post-secondary education.

By helping our young people get an education, we are preparing the future of our country. But to really ensure the prosperity of Canada, every effort has to be made to curb the shortage of skilled workers.

In Quebec for example, the manufacturing sector has already started experiencing such a shortage.

*Business of Supply*

More than ever, our economic growth depends on our ability to face this challenge. One way to do so is by making sure that our young people turn toward skilled trades.

In this regard, a number of tax measures announced in the 2006 budget will help us move forward. I could mention in particular a new \$1,000 grant for first- and second-year apprentices; a new \$500 tax deduction for tradespeople to help them purchase tools; an increase in the \$200 limit on the cost of tools eligible for the 100% capital cost allowance, which will rise to \$500; and a new tax credit of up to \$2,000 for employers who hire apprentices.

These measures were welcomed by manufacturers. Richard Fahey, the Quebec vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said after the budget was tabled that these measures would make it easier to hire staff in the current situation of labour shortages.

We know very well, though, that this is not enough.

Over the next five years, 640,000 workers will have to be replaced in Quebec. Over the next decade, more people will leave their jobs than will enter the workforce. The resulting demographic pressures will magnify the problems that manufacturers are having with the recruitment of skilled labour.

We will therefore have to roll up our sleeves to ensure that the workforce continues to grow. One of the ways of doing this is through immigration.

Here too, though, things are not easy. It is unbelievable that in 2006, skilled immigrants still have to wait many a long year before being able to work in Canada at occupations for which they are more than well qualified and trained.

In order to fix this, we are going to create a Canadian agency for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials.

Since most regulated occupations come under provincial and territorial jurisdictions, we are going to have a major consultation process on the mandate, structure and management of this new agency.

In its budget, the government also announced an additional \$307 million to help immigrants get established and find work in their communities.

In conclusion, those are the measures, in short, that we have put forward since the new government was elected, barely four months ago. They will do a lot to change the lives of Canadians and ensure a vibrant Canadian economy.

This government was elected on a promise of real change and that is what we are working toward with vim and vigour.

•(1255)

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the member concluded her speech by talking about real changes. Personally I have to confess that I do not see any change.

I found it absolutely incredible that she should end on the matter of recognizing foreign diplomas, as if this were a given, just as the Liberals used to do. No account is taken of the areas of jurisdiction provided for in the Canadian Constitution. She probably knows that

the professional bodies are under the provinces and Quebec, and that the federal government, by putting in place the body she spoke of, is infringing on Quebec's areas of jurisdiction. This is exactly what the Liberals did when they created all sorts of bureaucratic programs and tools in the health field.

The expenditures of the federal Department of Health have increased tremendously, and the federal government does not provide any health services. This is another example of infringement by the federal government and of bureaucratic expenditures that are a waste of money.

I would ask the member to explain to me how the federal government will help us to have the foreign credentials of doctors, engineers and lawyers recognized by Quebec's professional bodies? Moreover this is a file on which Quebec has been working for many years.

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We are all aware that immigrants are highly qualified. We want to create an agency to help them. We know perfectly well that this is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, but we just want to put in place a structure to help them.

I also mentioned that we wanted to put in place a consultation process with all the provinces, including Quebec, in order to recognize the qualifications of these immigrants. They can help us build a very strong Canada and a very strong Quebec, because they are highly qualified. They are there to help us prosper as Canadians.

•(1300)

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Conservative member's speech with great interest. Like my colleague in the Bloc, I also found it to be empty in terms of action. It was very similar to what we heard from the Liberals for years. With every day that passes, it seems that the Conservatives are beginning to sound more and more like Liberals. They say a lot of words, a lot of rhetoric, make a lot of promises, but take very little action.

The debate today is about how our economy can be competitive in a world where China and India are gaining in strength and where we are facing some incredible obstacles such as the high dollar and a loss in the manufacturing sector.

What are the plans of her government for countering the impact of the high dollar on our manufacturing sector? How does the government intend dealing with the thousands of jobs that are being lost? How does the government intend training and educating the young generation to take advantage of new and growing opportunities in the future?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague asks what we will do for future generations. We want to educate them. We want to create structures so that young people can build a strong Canada and find solutions.

*Business of Supply*

In the past four months, we have found several solutions. We have just got here. We have done many things in four months and we will continue to do so. We want to go ahead, not stop, and find solutions so that our young people are proud of our Canada and so that they can find ways of succeeding in this world with the best possible tools that we can give them through education.

[*English*]

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, again, I did not hear a single specific suggestion on how we are going to ensure that the young people of today can access education to take advantage of the new 21st century economy.

How is the government going to allow for students to get into university or college when tuition has increased 100% and when many of them are dropping out of educational institutions because they cannot possibly manage to keep up with their payments and financial demands? What specific suggestions does the minister and the government bring to the table to improve access for students to college and university education?

[*Translation*]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, we have put effective measures in place. I think that \$500 to help every post-secondary student buy textbooks helps a bit. Making the first \$3,000 of bursary and scholarship income tax exempt is also important. What we want to do is help these children go further in life. We will keep doing it, and we are proud of it.

[*English*]

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to debate the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West. It recognizes that Canada's growth and prosperity are advanced by a number of key factors. Among these are measures to help newcomers and others integrate successfully into the workplace.

In citing various global and demographic challenges we face today, the motion reminds us that immigration must be a vital part of any plan devised to respond to them. It reminds us that when immigrants succeed in our society, we all succeed.

It is notable that the member for Halifax West's own party presided over a period when immigrants saw a marked decline in outcomes for their earnings and livelihood. At the beginning of the 1980s, two-thirds of skilled immigrants earned more than the Canadian average income within a year of coming here. Under the Liberal government, that 66% success rate fell to just 4%.

I would like to highlight a number of investments the government has made to assist newcomers in the workplace. They are precisely the kind of focused initiatives for which the hon. member calls.

First, Canada's immigration policy and immigration system is far more than a means of bringing newcomers to Canada. Getting them here is only one side of the coin, only one-half of the job. The other half is ensuring their successful integration once they arrive here.

The government has a fundamental role in helping newcomers adjust to their new homeland and ensuring they become productive and responsible citizens when they get here. It is not just to be in

Canada, but it is also about succeeding and making Canada a part of their home and also feeling part of Canada.

Our immigration system exists to serve the interests of all Canadians in all regions and communities, in all sectors for all Canadians. It is for this reason that we continue to work on a fair and sensible immigration plan that works for Canada. The government moved quickly, after taking office, to implement a number of specific immigration measures. These measures were needed immediately to advance an immigration program that would work for our country.

In addition, the new Conservative government has acted to bring forward measures that "strengthen skills, job-readiness and successful workplace participation...among new immigrants", to use the exact wording of the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West.

Canada's economy is strong and thousands of jobs are being created. However, there is also a growing concern that vacant jobs in key sectors in regions are not being filled as quickly as employers need or sometimes are not filled at all. The solution is not technological or organizational. It is more than that. It is people, our greatest human resource. People have to be the centre of this agenda. To be successful, we have to make full use of the diverse talents and skills of all members of our society. They need to be what they can be. They need to become what they can become and contribute in a positive fashion to our society.

It is obvious that Canadian employers must be able to draw on the full range of their employees' skills, including assisting with their employees' skills upgrading. They must also be able to hire the additional workers they need and to do so quickly in order to meet the demands of our ever growing economy.

As we all know, immigration has been a major part of our country's labour mix from the beginning of our history. It must continue to be part of our strategy in facing the future. Our governmental plan is committed to making this so.

Through our permanent immigration program, we select skilled workers who have the training, education, language skills and work experience that will help them to make a contribution to Canada's longer term competitiveness.

The provinces and territories play an important role in this. Quebec selects its own skilled workers while the provincial nominee program helps other provinces and territories support the immigration of individuals who have the skills and other attributes needed by most provinces. Manitoba and my home province of Saskatchewan have shown leadership in the furtherance of the program and in the use of the program.

*Business of Supply*

Still, there are urgent labour market needs that need to be addressed and they need to be addressed now. The temporary foreign workers program has been used to bring workers from other countries to Canada to fill jobs on a temporary basis when there is no one available to do the job in Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada is working closely with colleagues from Human Resources and Social Development to make this program work better for all Canadians.

● (1305)

Furthermore, the provincial nominee program could be used more extensively by the provinces and territories. We are prepared to work with any province that wishes to explore the greater use of this program.

In the recent 2006 budget, we delivered our commitment to cut in half the right of permanent residence fee from \$975 to \$490. This fee is a considerable burden for many immigrants at a time in their lives when every dollar counts. This fee reduction that we adopted would mean a \$1,000 saving for a husband and wife coming to Canada; \$1,000 they could use before finding that first job and money they could use to help start a new life in Canada. We said we would cut the right of permanent residence fee in half, and we did it. Budget 2006 delivers on that promise.

Budget 2006 puts an extra \$307 million in settlement funding for new immigrants. This is over and above other recent increases. This money would go to the heart of improving outcomes for immigrants and to giving them opportunities to add to the success of our country.

Our budget earned praise from the Canadian Immigrant Settlement Sector Alliance as the first major increase in funding since 1995. This funding would go toward language training, help with job searches, skills upgrades, suitable housing and other programs, things that would make newcomers successful and integrate successfully in our society and country.

Canada has a variety of existing programs to assist newcomers in settling into their communities.

The immigration settlement and adaptation program focuses on various needs, particularly during the first year, including orientation abroad and in Canada. Our host program connects immigrants with people in their communities who provide a personal touch in assisting them. Through the language instruction for newcomers to Canada considerable resources are allocated for the provision of basic language training to help newcomers integrate more rapidly into their new society.

As well, the minister recently announced that foreign students in our universities and colleges would be allowed to compete for off-campus jobs on a level playing field with their Canadian peers. We estimate approximately 100,000 students would be eligible to participate in this initiative in all parts of Canada.

This program would increase Canada's attractiveness as a destination for students. International students bring more than \$4 billion to our economy each year. We want to attract and retain these highly-educated people to Canada. The program would give international university and college students the ability to work off-campus and help them participate in Canadian society. This

would also allow foreign students to gain valuable Canadian experience that would benefit both them and us.

These are initiatives the government has introduced quickly in taking office. They have been introduced to make Canada's immigration program one that works better for Canada, one that would advance the objectives that are at the heart of the motion here before us.

These measures help to strengthen the job readiness and workplace participation of newcomers that is the very intent of the hon. member's motion. There are already programs in existence that realize these objectives, such as enhanced language training.

Through Citizenship and Immigration Canada's enhanced language training initiative, \$20 million goes toward an integrated service for immigrants that provides labour market levels of language training coupled with employment supports such as internships, skills and educational assessment, mentoring, workplace cultural orientation, preparing for licensing exams, and information on how to access professions. This is in addition to approximately \$130 million a year the government spends on basic language training.

In conclusion, I have provided an overview of the targeted initiatives taken to advance workplace participation among immigrants. Most of them are the result of the action our government has taken to improve our immigration program. These improvements are serving the interests of Canada by better serving the needs of newcomers and the requirements of employers in the workplace.

I am sure members would agree that these targeted initiatives fulfill the objectives of the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West.

● (1310)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for taking part in the debate on my motion. I enjoyed listening to his comments.

When we talk about post-secondary education, which of course is a fundamental element of any innovation or economic productivity agenda for this country, we must recognize that we are looking at a situation where the last government was putting \$2.75 billion into access to education and financial assistance for students.

What is the new government offering in its budget in return after that? It cancelled all that. It is offering an \$80 tax credit for text books. It is laudable that it is not going to tax scholarships, but of course an awful lot of students do not have scholarships. An awful lot of low income and moderate income students do not have scholarships. That \$80 is not going to go very far and is not going to help them pay their tuition in September when it is time to pay and start university.

*Business of Supply*

When I asked the minister this same question earlier and about the importance of post-secondary education, as usual she turns to skills training. It is important but it is an entirely different topic. The question on one hand is what is the government doing for real about access to education and why is it not really doing anything?

The other thing of course is that in relation to skills training, what has the government done? It has cancelled the labour market partnership agreements that the last government signed with Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Each of those provincial governments signed agreements that have been cancelled. It is a bit like Kyoto and particularly Kelowna.

This morning in the human resources committee, a Conservative MP said that the answer to unemployment in Atlantic Canada is to move unemployed people to Alberta. I did not get an answer to this earlier from the minister, but is that the government's policy on unemployment in Atlantic Canada?

• (1315)

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, first, that has little to do with immigration, but when we look at the budget and what we have introduced, we have over 24 tax cuts that will help every segment in our society. These tax cuts will reduce the tax burden of many Canadians, a tax burden that has increased year after year making it nearly impossible for Canadians to survive in Canada.

We have reduced the burden on many Canadians so that they can go forward and start working. We have helped every family that has a child under six by investing \$1,200 for everyone to have not only a relief in their tax burden but some money to help them to go forward.

We have helped families that want to be part of their child's education, to allow the child to make application for funding when we increased the amount of the income that can be considered by parents.

We have done a number of things that bring skills training to our Canadian people. We have also done a lot to bring people in who have skills. We set up the foreign credential assessment committee to ensure that the skills are appropriately matched.

We have also found that because there is such a demand for labour and skills training within our country, we are using every means we can to enhance that within our country and to ensure we can bring in others to make those economies, that are growing speedily, to have the people and the resources needed to continue to go forward in our country.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the backlog in immigration applications has gone up yet again. When the former government was leaving office, the backlog was around 700,000 applications. Now it is up to 826,000 applications, so it is steadily increasing and we have seen no progress.

In fact, the new Conservative government has cancelled the deathbed backlog money that the former government announced back in November of a \$700 million contribution to work toward reducing the pile from 700,000 applications down to 500,000 applications.

I would ask the parliamentary secretary, what is this new government's plan to deal with the backlog? We have not heard

anything yet. We have seen a cancellation of money but there is nothing in its place. What is it going to do about the huge backlog in immigration applications?

**Mr. Ed Komarnicki:** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that under the former Liberal government there were no increases in funding to the degree that we see in this particular budget and immigration levels were not increased as promised. The Liberals made significant promises and said they would attain certain goals, like 1% of the population. They had many applications come in but did very little to actually increase the intake into Canada.

We have taken an approach where we are going to ensure first of all that we have the capacity and ability to intake and process efficiently to ensure that can happen. We have added 33% or more to the existing budget and we are looking at not only efficiencies but also ensuring that those who arrive in our country are able to integrate into our society appropriately and become contributors in the way it was meant to be.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will share my time with my colleague and friend, the member for North Vancouver.

I would like to congratulate the member for Halifax West and thank him for introducing this motion. It is obviously a large motion, and it is also extremely inclusive. It has vision. I am especially proud to participate in this debate today because the day before yesterday, I reached a milestone in my personal life: I completed my studies for an executive MBA. That is exactly the kind of debate we are having today. We have to see and understand that our planet is a global village. There are some challenges related to globalization: productivity and competitiveness do not just affect the economy, they also affect society. We must have a vision that enables us to maintain our social conscience. I do not agree with Thomas L. Friedman, who wrote that *The World is Flat*. We have to protect our way of life. As the saying goes, we must "think globally, act locally".

Today, we must look at the facts and at what will happen between now and 2026. I was very proud to serve as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration under the Liberal government for two and a half years. The department is very important because it is very much the department of Canada. We had the opportunity to make a series of decisions that enabled us to chart a course for the future. My NDP colleague asked a question earlier.

• (1320)

[*English*]

It is a living thing, so we have to be very careful. It is an ongoing issue. We need to be vigilant and ensure that we do not create other burdens.

*Business of Supply*

However, by 2026 our demography will depend only on immigration. It is very important that any kind of decision taken for the future sends a clear message. If we need those people to help our own demography, we must ensure that we are choosing the right way to do so and the right process, and also to ensure that those people know that this is a great nation and that we will be there to help them at the same time.

[*Translation*]

It is urgently important to realize that, in the next five years, we will be lacking a million skilled workers. That does not mean, as some unfortunately suggested at the time, that we are not looking in our own backyard for the people we need. Despite all of the work we are doing, we unfortunately lack a million skilled workers.

So what do we do? I think we need to have short-, medium- and long-term vision. We must in fact ensure that we have a strategy, a policy that will enable us to respond to this particular situation, but we also have a duty to ensure that all policies are inclusive. Those policies must enable us not only to examine, in the medium and long terms, the ways that we assist our children and those who have to change jobs, but also to offer these transitional and educational tools, whether in the technical field or in post-secondary education, to prepare for the future.

We also have to realize that Canada is not just Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. We must have an urban strategy, and also a rural strategy. We must send a clear message that, when skilled workers are needed, the regions will be considered. We need regionalization and retention tools. It is not enough to send someone to work in a certain place; we must also find a decent way of doing so—this is a necessity—so that person can put down roots in an environment where it is good to live. We must be able to give that person the necessary tools to bring his or her family there, so they can put down roots in the community.

I have had some extraordinary experiences. I remember, as a minister, personally signing an agreement with the government of the Northwest Territories. We can have a selective immigration strategy that allows us to meet certain glaring needs. They have full employment in the Northwest Territories. The diamond industry is an exceptional industry. The diamonds of the Northwest Territories and northern Alberta will be legion, and will far surpass in quality those of South Africa.

However, there is one major problem. It is not just a matter of prospecting and mining, but we also need specialized tradespeople, the diamond cutters. We were unable to get them; there were none available locally. With certain immigration measures, in collaboration with the Government of the Northwest Territories, we targeted certain needs and went and found 13 diamond cutters. If I recall correctly, they came from Armenia.

At the same time—and this is why the motion also refers to aboriginal peoples—we wanted an inclusive procedure so that people could not only find an ad hoc response to a problem or situation, but also develop an inclusive vision for the future. That way, the local people could also eventually benefit from these newcomers, develop work procedures with them, and so develop the industry and technology of diamond cutting.

We created a training centre. If memory serves, even members of the aboriginal community were able to participate in it. We have this tool for renewal which allows us to develop a technology from which the local people can benefit.

I was speaking earlier about rural communities as compared to urban communities. It must be noted that 88% of new immigrants arrive in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver. More than 60% of newcomers settle in Toronto. There are problems and needs in Moose Jaw, Calgary, Kelowna, the Atlantic provinces. That is why we need tools for development and immigration policies that will enable every region to find not only a way of meeting demographic needs for the future, but also of responding to this competition and productivity.

Today, knowledge is wealth. Wealth is having people who are able to produce and to meet the challenges presented by South Asia, for example. If we do not have the tools we need, we will still be able to draw on old victories, but we will never have the capacity to grow and to flourish. That is why we need tools.

In committee, we met with the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development. She has a crucial job to do, the job of identifying and recognizing needs.

However, there is an exceptional program for temporary workers. People who are familiar with agriculture will know that in Quebec and Ontario, particularly, there are temporary six-month contracts. We have signed agreements with Guatemala and Mexico, for example, that allow those people to come here for six months to work, to harvest crops and do the packaging work. They then go back home, but they can come back.

We could do exactly the same thing for other occupations. We could admit doctors and health care professionals, obviously by agreement with the professional associations. For example, if we needed a doctor in Flin Flon, we could give a foreign resident a temporary contract. That person would bring his or her entire family, the person's qualifications would be recognized, and he or she would be accepted via a single window. The person would come to work for five years as a doctor in Flin Flon. At the end of the five years, he or she would be given permanent residence and the citizenship process would be expedited.

What would such a program do? It would mean that roots would be put down, that the community would be able to work and the residents would be able to stay in their own part of the country. The exodus does not consist of young people alone. Some people need specialized health care that is not available in some areas. They must therefore move to large centres to receive that care.

By adopting this kind of policy, I think we can get results.

Obviously, we will still have to work in cooperation with our partners. I was the first one to sign a unanimous agreement with all of the provinces and territories. We have always provided a warm welcome to immigrants. We need only think back to what was done by Clifford Sifton. We had never really had a federal-provincial conference with all of the partners. What we did was to sign a unanimous agreement.

*Business of Supply*

Regardless of what government is in power, regardless of what the Conservative government may try to do to pat itself on the back for coming up with the best inventions since sliced bread, there is no need to reinvent the wheel. All that needs to be done is to ensure that things are running smoothly. The ingredients are there; what needs to be done is to make the decisions and allocate the resources needed.

• (1325)

The motion by my colleague from Halifax West must be given broad support. This is not a matter of partisanship, it is a matter of making choices, as a society, for our country.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear my colleague's comments. He mentioned that the economy is a social issue. It is all well and good to say this from the opposition benches.

They could have taken action with respect to competition from Asia and the closing of industries—for example, the textile industry—by implementing POWA, which the Bloc Québécois has been requesting for years. These are social measures. Instead, the entire textile industry has been left to close, since the CANTex program did not meet the needs of the population.

I would like to ask the hon. member a question about a plan to help rural areas. In Quebec, there are CLDs that are very close to communities, and there are rural development budgets that are often too tight to support the industries and various projects on the go in the area.

Could the government not adapt its programs, such as Economic Development Canada, and decentralize budgets, such as the CFDC budgets, so that they may be more accessible to project developers in rural areas? Should it not also be supporting agriculture more?

• (1330)

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, I have a good knowledge of the riding of Berthier—Maskinongé. Being from Saint-Alphonse and a native of Joliette, I know the Lanaudière area quite well.

The member knows full well that my roots are there and that I am extremely sensitive to the need for a rural strategy. In my view, the government at the time invested in structural economic measures: the CFDCs, CEDCs and so on.

With competition and globalization, we have to make decisions that are sometimes difficult. Did we do enough through adaptation measures? Have some people paid a price for globalization? Most definitely.

I agree with the hon. member. We have to invest more, and we have to send a message that quality of life is also a rural concern. Every time we make a decision, we have to remember the people who live in the regions. That is why the government of the day increased CED's budget. Not only is it important to us, but issues of attitude and culture are important to us as well. We created a department to make sure we had the necessary tools. It is much more than an agency.

Unfortunately, the member's party voted against that bill. I know that this is not a partisan issue. I endorse some of what my colleague said: every time we take a position, we need to emphasize adaptation. There was the POWA for older workers. We need to

provide workers with tools, especially as our society becomes steadily older. There is no obvious solution. I agree completely with the hon. member that when we talk about employment measures, employment insurance, measures that will help workers adapt and transition to new jobs, we have to keep rural communities in mind, otherwise the whole country will not be reflected.

[English]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I know that the member was a former minister of citizenship and immigration.

The motion today talks about successful workplace participation and includes immigrants, but there is a huge group of people who work in Canada and contribute to the economy who do not have the proper documentation. They are undocumented workers. There has been talk in the past, certainly the former minister of citizenship and immigration, the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, talked about a regularization program being one of his six priorities as minister.

The first time the current Minister of Citizenship and Immigration appeared before the standing committee, I asked him what was under way at the department, what had been under way, was there a plan being developed around regularization, was any work being done, was there money being set aside in the budget. The new minister said that no, nothing had been done and nothing was under way.

I want to ask the minister why are we ignoring the important contributions by these 100,000 to 200,000 people in Canada? When will we see an important program to regularize their ability to participate in our workplace?

[Translation]

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for his extremely important question.

Unfortunately, the current minister has once again stooped to partisan politics.

I remember, I worked with some unions from the Toronto area at the time to see if we could take a look at the situation of undocumented workers. It is a problem. It is a situation. We put in place an adaptability pilot project together with the Department of Human Resources. Nonetheless, I think the concept, or the primary principle—to me anyway—must be known and must be the following: we live in an inclusive society. We are generous, but we need not be naive either.

In other words, as a Canadian citizen, and as the former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I would never accept having general amnesty measures put in place. We must find another solution.

[English]

As I was saying at that time, we should have our own clusters, take care of those issues one by one in a fast track situation. It is nonsense for those people who have lived here for the last 10 to 20 years, who have been working but are undocumented and there are some issues and some problems.

*Business of Supply*

That is the reason we wanted to create that template with some of the unions. It was to make sure that we identified them, but not in a way like delation. It was truly based on making sure that we take care of—

• (1335)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I am sorry, but the time for questions and comments is over. On debate, the hon. member for North Vancouver.

**Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West.

I will focus my remarks on the section of the motion that calls on the government to make focused and immediate investments to reduce financial barriers that now stand in the way of students seeking greater access to post-secondary education, including, most particularly, grant programs aimed at offsetting the high cost of tuition.

The critical importance of higher education is clear, not only for the economy but for individual achievement, advances in research and Canada's competitiveness in the knowledge based global economy.

Let us compare the current government's support for post-secondary education to that of the previous Liberal government. The differences are huge and highlight the divide between the two parties on this issue.

Liberals are committed to creating an opportunity for every Canadian to succeed by ensuring that Canadians of all incomes have access to first class education and opportunities. We were doing this by working with the provinces and territories to reduce financial barriers to post-secondary education through a range of grants, loans, tax and savings support programs.

The previous government contributed almost \$9 billion annually to support post-secondary education through programs and transfers to students, institutions, provinces and researchers. However, we were prepared to go further. A re-elected Liberal government was set to increase this very substantial commitment by more than \$4 billion in new resources over the next five years. I was proud of the measures in our election platform to increase access to post-secondary education. I would be happy to run on these policies again.

I will now outline the areas in which our party would have moved forward by increasing federal funding in the following areas.

First, the is fifty-fifty. A Liberal government would have paid one-half of an undergraduate's first year and graduating year tuition to a maximum grant of \$3,000 in any year or a total of \$6,000. This new fifty-fifty plan would have been available to any student pursuing a first degree or diploma from an accredited university, community college or other post-secondary program in Canada.

Qualifying students would have been those commencing undergraduate education beginning in 2007-08. The plan would have been delivered through the Canada student loan program. Currently, the governments of Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut do

not participate in this program, so we would have had to work with them on alternate payment programs.

However, by providing the first payment at the beginning of a student's post-secondary education, the fifty-fifty plan would have provided families and students with the incentive to begin undergraduate studies. The second payment would have provided an additional incentive for students to complete their programs.

Since the fifty-fifty plan would have been available only for study in Canada, it would have given young Canadians a further incentive to support schools in our country.

The fifty-fifty plan was expected to have a net cost of roughly \$1.9 billion to 2010-11 and \$600 million per year when fully phased in, by which time it would have supported an estimated 750,000 students each year.

An example of the potential benefits of the fifty-fifty plan in North Vancouver would have been to students wishing to pursue a career in the growing film industry in British Columbia, an industry that contributes over \$1 billion a year to the B.C. economy and over \$100 million per year to the North Vancouver economy.

The Capilano College Film Centre, for example, offers a wide range of full time programs that prepares students for a variety of career paths in the film production industry. The largest of these, the motion picture production program, now offers second and third year programs designed specifically for emerging entrepreneurial filmmakers. The program has existed for only eight years and is already producing festival worthy films.

The costuming for the theatre and film program and the cinematography program also both have second year programs in development. For those who seek entry level craft training in the film business, the film centre also offers courses in lighting, grip and set dressing. The film centre is also the home of the apprenticeship programs, run in conjunction with the B.C. branch of the Directors Guild of Canada.

Another area in which our party would have moved forward was expanding of Canada access grants. In the 2004 budget the Liberal government created Canada access grants to make post-secondary education more accessible for children from low income families, generally those with incomes below \$35,000 a year. The grant paid the first half of the first year tuition, capped at \$3,000. This benefited more than 20,000 students.

• (1340)

A Liberal government would have extended the Canada access grant to be available for up to the full four years of undergraduate study. This extension would have cost approximately \$550 million over the next five years and would have benefited a further 55,000 students. A student qualifying for a Canada access grant could not also receive the new fifty-fifty grant.

*Business of Supply*

A Liberal government would have launched a comprehensive review of student financial assistance programs. In collaboration with the provinces and territories and other partners, the purpose of this review was to ensure student assistance programs continued to make post-secondary education accessible, and to identify areas where more support was needed.

One key area that would have been studied was access for students from middle income families and students with dependents to ensure they did not face insurmountable financial barriers. The review would have examined a range of potential measures such as grants, loans and ways to improve debt management, including reduced interest rates.

A Liberal government would have increased by 50% the support currently being given to the most promising masters and doctoral students in science, engineering and other disciplines through Canada graduate scholarships. The Liberal government established these prestigious scholarships in the 2003 budget, to be awarded through national competitions by the granting agencies to ensure a reliable supply of highly qualified personnel to meet the needs of Canada's knowledge economy. Canada graduate scholars also help renew faculty at Canadian universities who will be the research leaders of tomorrow.

Just this week I received a letter from a constituent of mine who was recently awarded a Canada graduate scholarship. His story not only puts a human face on this excellent program, but highlights the important research that is undertaken through the assistance that Canada graduate scholarships provide. He says:

I am writing you this letter to show my appreciation of the federal government's commitment to health care and health care related research. I am a graduate student at the University of British Columbia working towards a PhD degree in the department of Experimental Medicine. I was recently awarded a Canada Graduate Scholarships (GGS) Doctoral Award. I am very excited at the opportunities this award has and will continue to give me as I complete my degree.

I am working on a project where we are trying to better understand the differences present in the airways of patients who suffer from Asthma relative to those that do not. The overall goal is to develop a better understanding of the disease such that new treatments and therapies can be developed to improve the quality of life of those who suffer from asthma. The travel portion of the award will also allow me to present my research at international conferences which will permit the sharing of ideas and not only improve my work but will showcase some of the exciting work taking place in Canada with the help of the CIHR.

Thank you again, sincerely,

Ben Patchell

PhD Candidate

UBC/James Hogg iCAPTURE Centre

Another area in which our party would have moved forward was through the creation of the post-secondary educational innovation fund. Through this program, a Liberal government would have provided \$1 billion to help modernize and improve post-secondary infrastructure, including teaching hospitals. The fund would have supported the acquisition of equipment, improved access for students with disabilities and enhance learning environments in northern and aboriginal institutions.

In the area of international study, and in order to create new opportunities for Canadians to study abroad and for more students to come to Canada, a Liberal government would have provided \$150 million over five years to assist with the extra financial cost that

international study entails. This initiative would have contributed to our objective of positioning Canada at the heart of global networks.

The Liberal Party's approach to post-secondary education was comprehensive and would have increased substantially the federal government's role in supporting students in all stages of post-secondary education.

The Conservative budget cancelled all of the above commitments made by the previous government, except the \$1 billion in 2005-06 for provinces for investments in post-secondary infrastructure. In total, the Conservative budget cancelled funding worth \$3.1 billion over five years, or over \$600 million a year, and replaced it with \$125 million a year for a tax credit for the cost of textbooks, providing only about \$80 a year for a typical full time post-secondary student, \$50 million a year for the elimination of taxation on scholarships and bursaries and \$20 million a year for expanded eligibility for Canada student loans.

The Conservatives have clearly abandoned a wide range of programs that would have considerably increased access to post-secondary education. I am happy to therefore support the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West.

• (1345)

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened quite closely to the comments made by the hon. member. He continued on at great length about the commitments that the Liberals were going to make. I hope members will forgive me if I do not hold my breath waiting for any Liberal commitment that will ever be delivered after the last 13 years.

When we think about what has happened over the last 10 to 13 years, we had continual cuts to our health and social transfer, the dedicated education transfer was cut. While the Liberals might talk about this tuition thing, they was treating a symptom. In fact, one of the reasons tuition has gone up so much is because of deferred maintenance on the buildings at these universities.

Could the hon. member to comment how that band-aid would help and why he did not come up with real programs over the last number of years when the Liberals had an opportunity to deal with that deferred maintenance problem?

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, during the last two years that I have had the privilege of being a member of the House, the development of the policies that the Liberal Party came up with and took into the last two elections, related to the commitments we made and the actions we took, were based on consultations and discussions with the various institutions.

*Business of Supply*

For example, I sat for a year on the finance committee. We heard very clearly from those representing the institutions of higher education, post-secondary education, on what they needed and, more particular, what they needed in terms of assistance to students in the areas of tuition and scholarship programs. It was that area to which we felt a high priority to respond. Those were the programs and the commitments we made. In fact, our fiscal update indicated exactly what we were going to do.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member for North Vancouver when he identifies education as a key issue in developing an economy that takes us into the 21st century. I also agree with him when he says we have to do more as parliamentarians and as a government.

However, the problems we face today in education were in large part created by the Liberals. We are dealing now with a decade of cuts to education, starting with the 1995 budget when his government took \$7 billion out of transfer payments. That had a huge impact on post-secondary education, and we still have not caught up to that point.

The suggestion by the Liberals to pay for part of the tuition costs in year one and year four is interesting, but it is an awfully small step given the serious situation. Four out of ten university students are unable to graduate on time because they have to drop courses in order to work. Sixty-six per cent of students are working an average of 19 hours a week. Three out of ten students resort to private bank loans or family loans because of inadequate government aid, and the stats go on and on.

The member cannot make up for past history, but is he at least prepared to commit his party now to reinstating the \$1.2 billion which would take us back to at least 1993 when the cuts began under his government?

**Mr. Don Bell:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member and I both sat on the finance committee. I think we heard the same entreaties to government to respond in these areas.

I was not a member of the previous governments at that time, but I know by reading and studying the history that they were faced with the problem of a huge and growing national debt, with growing annual budget deficits. A determination was made that, to provide the healthy economic basis for the social programs, such as education, which were necessary, it was important to get the fiscal house in order, and the Liberal government did that.

Yes, some difficult measures had to be taken to have that come about, but that laid the groundwork for ongoing reductions of the national debt, eliminating the deficits and having eight years of surplus budgets. In fact, we are the only country in the G-8 to do so, a record of which we can be proud and for which we are envied.

I cannot speak for my party, but from discussions I have had with my colleagues, their commitment, as is mine, is to do all we can to ensure, as we indicated in our previous programs, to support a very healthy education program, as we do with health and as we do in a number of areas.

● (1350)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this motion today.

When I started reading the preamble of the Liberal motion, I found it interesting because it states:

That, in light of the rapid increase in the value of the Canadian dollar, high global energy costs, the overhang from huge budgetary and trade deficits in the United States of America, the rise of new economies such as China, India and Brazil—

These are all important aspects of the new economic reality. I was hoping there would be proposals at the end that would allow us to push this government that chooses not to intervene in anything and allows the market to function.

We even heard the Minister of Industry say that with the tax cuts, small businesses will be able to pull through. In reality, in today's competitive market, even if we reduce the taxes of a company that does not pay any because it does not make enough profit, then we are not really helping.

In the Liberal motion, the analysis at the start of their depiction of the situation is very interesting, but their recommendations show that they still have the same old bad habits. They make recommendations affecting provincial responsibilities in the areas of labour force training and post-secondary education. It is too bad that they include this kind of recommendation. That will force us to vote against the motion. The Liberal Party still wants to interfere in matters that are none of its business. It is too bad because the greatest danger we face today is the Conservatives' *laissez-faire* approach to the economy.

I want to share my time with the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé, who will have the last 10 minutes.

**Mr. Pierre Paquette:** So we have two good speakers.

**Mr. Paul Crête:** Thank you.

So I had reached the greatest danger currently facing the Quebec and Canadian economies: the *laissez-faire* approach of the Conservatives. There has never been such a fine demonstration of this as the minister's appearance before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology. He came to tell us that many issues in different sectors will be decided by the market. The government has policies to lower taxes, but it does not want to do anything else.

I was at the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology just a few minutes ago, where we were being told once again that the aeronautics industry needs assistance programs, like the old Technology Partnerships Canada, to help industry do basic research or commercialize its advanced research. But all we heard today was silence.

*Business of Supply*

The Conservative government has quietly decided to allow the old program to end, without anything to propose in its place. We have no right just to let people wait. We need some news today because the investments made by multinationals and companies in these large industrial sectors are decided years in advance. In addition, the branch plants of the parent company in each country compete with one another and need the kind of clear messages that are nowhere to be found in the positions of the current government.

This is all the more the case in view of the fact that a two-tier economy is beginning to develop in Canada. There is the economy of the world of energy—the world of oil—where profits are very high and rising prices generate economic activity and even impact the value of the dollar.

Mr. Dodge, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, admitted in his presentation before the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology that the factor that is making the dollar rise most at present is the pressure on energy prices. When we have as we do today a dollar that is up to 90 cents, people like Laurent Beaudoin, of Bombardier, and Perrin Beatty, of Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, tell us that we must stop the rise of our interest rates because they are crippling the manufacturing industry in Quebec and Ontario, where these industrial sectors are the most concentrated.

The current non-interventionist attitude of the Conservative government will have its consequences. When the increase in energy prices slows down—this may happen in months or in years—it will be disastrous. The manufacturing sector will have disappeared. There will be a series of warehouses where people can go and get products made in the emerging countries and then distribute them. I can assure you, however, that a salary in a distribution company and a salary in a manufacturing company are not comparable. In the medium term, this will reduce buying power and will above all create unemployment among people who have dedicated 20 or 30 years of their lives to the economic activity of healthy businesses, and who earned their living from them.

● (1355)

And from one day to the next, they no longer have a job. We do not necessarily have proper training to offer them so that they can be reintegrated in the labour market. Often they can no longer be placed in other jobs. This is the situation facing us today. The Conservative laissez-faire industrial policy is the worst thing we could have in the present situation.

This sort of behaviour has been seen within the Quebec government, and the federal government should draw some conclusions from this. In fact, the Liberal Party of Quebec has adopted the same sort of attitude. It came to power three years ago, and decided to take the ideological approach of non-intervention. We saw private investment drop and we will see the same thing occur throughout Canada, if the Conservative Party continues to take the same tack.

In the coming days and weeks therefore, the government will have to listen to the demands of the manufacturers and the unions representing employees in the manufacturing sector. According to all the opinions we have, we must make sure that the Bank of Canada realizes that continuing to raise interest rates does not make any

sense. It cannot be ordered to do so; it is not up to the government to order it.

The federal government also has to assume its responsibilities in other sectors and offer businesses an assistance plan, such as accelerated depreciation. For example, when they buy equipment, they could obtain a depreciation tax credit. That way they would have a chance to be competitive, develop their competitiveness, and continue their operations in the markets.

We also need measures that would allow small and medium-sized businesses to organize so they can deal with the export markets and win clients there. We could also see if there are markets that are worse off under the new global competition and make use of the tools available—and why not?

We note that the government has decided to take no action in the bicycle sector, where the Minister of Industry himself is accepting the loss of jobs in his own riding, in Beauce.

He also accepts that jobs at Raleigh will be lost in the same way. That is totally unacceptable. We were not asking the government to impose these measures permanently; we were asking it to put them in place. The Bloc Québécois, the unions, the employers and the managers of these firms want action from the government in this direction. The government must use all of its economic development tools, instead of hiding behind a laissez-faire policy that is doing profound damage to the economy of Quebec and Canada.

This is the more tragic in that there will be a major impact on employment and available wages. People who want to support their families now no longer have the means to do so. The federal government must recognize the importance of taking action. It cannot hide behind Canadian growth, in the broad sense. Basically, that growth is being generated by the energy sector; it leaves behind, in the background, a whole range of industrial sectors that are needed in Quebec, in Ontario and in Canada.

For all of these reasons, we are asking the federal government to intervene, to act and to change its attitude so it can create the framework that our businesses need for their development. This is not a matter of engaging in extreme interventionism. It is just a matter of seeing that there are certain basic conditions that need to be established. And right now, we are not seeing this.

The Liberals' motion cannot achieve this objective. However, you may rest assured that the Bloc will move forward and continue exerting pressure to ensure that jobs in Quebec's manufacturing sector can be maintained.

● (1400)

[English]

**The Speaker:** There will be time for questions and comments following the hon. member's speech when debate resumes later today.

[Translation]

I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but the time has come for the Statements by Members.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***HEALTH**

**Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again this year I had the privilege of attending the Camrose Schizophrenia Society Walk and Run. This annual event is an important exercise for our community. It is heartwarming to see so many people showing their support. I found encouragement to bring their message to this House today.

I urge all MPs to promote awareness and understanding of mental illness. We can search the Health Canada website for the term "schizophrenia". We can get the information to share and assist Canadians who are confronting ailments that challenge us as individuals, families and communities, and even nationally. We can see the book written by Canadian families who contributed the benefit of their own experience and counsel.

Anthony Holler, president of the Camrose Schizophrenic Society, emphasizes that people afflicted often become marginalized by society. It is important for us to tell our constituents that it is not a preventable disease, that it is not about just passing through a difficult phase or time, that there is no cause for shame, and that it can be easier to deal with when we have the available information. Let us get the message out.

\* \* \*

**TRADE**

**Hon. Andrew Telegdi (Kitchener—Waterloo, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is fast tracking a Canada-Korea free trade agreement that it wants signed and in place this year. It is absolutely essential that this agreement contain terms and conditions that protect Canadian industry and Canadian jobs.

We have a huge trade imbalance with Korea, especially in manufactured goods, and particularly in the auto sector, where the ratio of imports to exports is 150 to 1 in its favour. Eliminating tariffs will not give us greater access to Korean markets that are protected by relationships among their government and the manufacturers and banks. It will in fact increase this imbalance and mean the loss of more Canadian jobs.

Our auto industry is facing difficult challenges related to the Canadian dollar and the financial crisis of North American automakers. We have lost 20,000 assembly and parts jobs in the sector since 1998.

We should only proceed with this bill if it includes absolute assurances of equality in both the value and the nature of goods exchanged between Canada and Korea.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***RENÉ BOUCHER**

**Mr. Robert Carrier (Alfred-Pellan, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to a great man from Laval who has done a great service for his community and recently retired from his position as carnival director for the Laval figure skating club: René Boucher.

The ice carnival he directed was recognized across Quebec and Canada and enjoys an excellent reputation. The best skaters in the world performed in this ice carnival. Brian Orser, Tracy Wilson, Toller Cranston and Karen Magnussen are but a few of the athletes who have thrilled fans and taken part in this famous ice show at the Laval Coliseum.

Mr. Boucher directed his last show on April 22 and 23, as part of the 40th carnival. I wish to thank those who worked closely with him, as volunteers like him, without whom, as he put it so aptly, there could have been no show.

The Bloc Québécois salutes him and says, "Thank you, Mr. Boucher, for the great job you have done".

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*[English]***CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising in the House today to speak against serious discrimination faced by many people who emigrate to Canada. Our country has signed reciprocal agreements with dozens of countries to make qualified new immigrants eligible for old age security immediately when they arrive in Canada.

If an immigrant comes from a country like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka or one of the many other countries that have not yet signed reciprocal agreements, they are forced to wait 10 years before becoming eligible for their pensions, even after they become Canadian citizens. This practice is unfair and unjust. Eligibility for old age security should be based on logical criteria, criteria that do not treat people differently based on where they come from.

I plan to introduce a motion in the House next session calling for an end to the discriminatory 10 year waiting period applied to some new Canadians. I hope all hon. members will join me in showing their support.

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**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Oshawa, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise in the House today, as the General Motors No. 2 plant in my riding of Oshawa topped the J.D. Power and Associates survey of automotive plants in vehicle quality.

For the second straight year, Oshawa No. 2 has topped this prestigious list, confirming its place as a world leader in the automotive manufacturing industry. It gets better. Not only did the plant win the gold award, Oshawa No. 2's production of the Pontiac Grand Prix was ranked in the same survey as having the highest quality production in the large car segment.

*Statements by Members***MARTINE TALBOT**

I would like to personally congratulate every assembler and manager at Oshawa No. 2 plant. This is a wonderful accomplishment for all the employees and General Motors and a proud day for Oshawa. I would like all parliamentarians to join me in congratulating every person at Oshawa No. 2 for their hard work and world leading manufacturing.

I thank Oshawa No. 2 for making everyone in Oshawa proud.

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● (1405)

**CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION**

**Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada has an estimated 800,000-person backlog in our immigration system and the wait time for citizenship in urban centres is close to a year. Not only is this important for my riding of Richmond, but it is also very important to the rest of Canada.

The previous Liberal government designed a multitude of efficient and effective immigration policies, allocated \$700 million over five years to reduce the application inventory, signed a \$920 million Canada-Ontario immigration agreement, and invested over \$2.4 billion in immigration policies in 2005 alone. It was a government working for Canadians.

The Conservative government has pledged that it would improve Canada's immigration policy, but instead it has cut the \$700 million in funding to reduce the backlog, has failed to formally ratify the Canada-Ontario agreement and has failed to allocate funds for the other eight provinces' immigration strategies. Shame.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**ATLAS OF CANADA**

**Mr. Christian Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I draw the attention of the hon. members of this House to the fact that the Atlas of Canada is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2006.

Over the past 100 years, the Atlas of Canada, which is produced by Natural Resources Canada, has provided snapshots of Canada's society, economy and environment.

The Atlas helps Canadians understand a variety of concepts, issues and decisions set in a geographical context, both locally and nationally.

Since an online edition of the Atlas was launched in 1994, there has been a thousandfold increase in the number of Canadians who have visited the [www.atlas.gc.ca](http://www.atlas.gc.ca) website to view maps.

I invite the hon. members of this House to join me in congratulating Natural Resources Canada and the Atlas of Canada staff on this important milestone in the remarkable history of an institution that has been inextricably tied to the advancement of Canada as a nation.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the day after Quebec's 10th annual Week of the Disabled, I would like to pay tribute to Martine Talbot.

She was born in Chicoutimi on February 15, 1952. At the age of 22, she became a paraplegic as a result of an automobile accident. Nevertheless, she decided to visit the west coast, from British Columbia to California, and then travelled to Mexico and Central America.

She has been involved in several wheelchair sports as both an athlete and coach. In 1978, she won two silver medals in swimming at the Pan American Wheelchair Games. That same year, at the Canada Games, she won four gold medals and beat two Canadian records in track and field and in swimming.

Today she works for the Regroupement des organismes de promotion de personnes handicapées de Laval. She is an accomplished woman, a mother and grandmother, doing exceptional work, and is considered a real Renaissance woman who has broken down many barriers.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates Martine.

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[*English*]

**BUDDIES**

**Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I recently visited the community of Kelvington in my riding. An exciting new program called Buddies is matching senior students with junior students, youth with seniors, and adults and youth with children to build mutually beneficial relationships.

Bullying has decreased as those involved have made a commitment to be kind and caring toward another person. This volunteer program has become so popular that over half the students in Kelvington High School are involved.

I want to thank the corporate sponsors for supporting the Buddies program: East Central Co-op, Kelvington Credit Union and V&S Esso. The schools, churches, seniors lodge and RCMP in the community, together with manager Debora Pauchay, need to be complimented for bringing this program together.

This pilot project in Kelvington, a community of 1,000 people, could be a model for other communities to use in reducing the problems our youth are experiencing.

Congratulations Buddies.

*Statements by Members*

● (1410)

**SMALL CRAFT HARBOURS**

**Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in a recent issue of the *Chronicle-Herald*, the leader of the NDP claimed personal credit for opening debate on a motion that led to the House calling for a \$15 million increase in small craft harbour funding. That member told a group of fishermen in Woods Harbour, Nova Scotia that the passage of the motion was thanks to the efforts of the NDP. This is just another example of a long list of Liberal measures that the NDP has tried to take credit for.

While the NDP leader was busy patting himself on the back, Canadians saw that the motion was introduced by the Liberal member for Cardigan. It was our Liberal member who was solely responsible.

This misrepresentation is nothing new for the NDP. After all, it is the party that abandoned child care, the Kelowna accord and Kyoto for the sake of a few more seats in the House of Commons.

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**GRASSLANDS NATIONAL PARK**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Grasslands National Park is in my riding. It is an example of a mixed grass prairie ecosystem that extends through much of Cypress Hills—Grasslands. For the first time in 120 years, prairie bison have been reintroduced by Parks Canada to Grasslands National Park.

Local ranchers are working with Parks Canada and other stakeholders such as first nations to give Canadians a native prairie experience unlike any other in Canada. The return of the buffalo establishes a grazing regime in the park that will complement local ranch stewardship and provide habitat for a large variety of wildlife species.

The Prairie Persists project, one of 11 ecological integrity projects undertaken by Parks Canada across our country, includes the release of the bison and the launch of the Prairie Learning Center educational initiative.

Grasslands National Park, the Chinook School Division and other educational partners are giving students the opportunity to go on site to learn about the native northern mixed grass prairie. This park is making a unique contribution to Parks Canada's mandate to protect and educate.

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**TEACHING EXCELLENCE**

**Hon. Bill Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a constituent, a friend and a mentor, Dr. Brian Keenan, professor of philosophy at the University of Winnipeg.

Dr. Keenan, who lives with his wife Jany in the Elmwood area of my riding, received the Robson award for excellence in teaching at the University of Winnipeg's annual convocation ceremonies on June 4. It was a well-deserved honour for someone who has taught philosophy at the University of Winnipeg with insight, humour and relevance for some 33 years. He earned a special place in the

memories of so many students as one who made classes something to look forward to and the year end party something to remember.

I am sure I speak on behalf of all his students, from those like myself who enjoyed his classes in the early 1970s to those who are freshly graduated, when I say congratulations to Dr. Keenan. I thank him for all the years of helping to sort out the truth, the false and the interesting claims that are to be found in the world views that compete for our intellectual loyalty. May he teach for as many more seasons as he wishes.

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**DARFUR**

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the crisis in Darfur which the United Nations called a humanitarian catastrophe even 18 months ago continues to worsen. Over one-quarter of a million people have been displaced in the last four months alone. Humanitarian workers are themselves the targets of assault and abduction. Government violations of international humanitarian law have actually escalated since the peace agreement was signed. We are on the verge of what UN humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator Jan Egeland called an "imminent and ominous loss of life".

Accordingly, I rise to commend the extraordinary contribution of one Canadian, Walter Arbib, who has donated \$430,000 to send much needed medical supplies to Darfur, facilitated by the Canadian Jewish Congress.

This singular act of compassion, care and commitment dramatizes the need for a multinational civilian protection force under the AU to stop the killing, to protect humanitarian aid workers and humanitarian assistance, to implement the international Responsibility to Protect, and to redeem our international honour as Walter Arbib's personal exemplary contribution has done.

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[Translation]

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT**

**Mr. Pierre Paquette (Joliette, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec joined other major pension fund managers on April 27 and signed an unprecedented declaration, a declaration proposed by the UN to promote the principles for responsible investment.

The declaration, signed in New York, sets out six principles accompanied by 35 possible actions enabling an institution to integrate environmental, social and good governance considerations into its investment activities.

These actions, developed over a one-year period by more than twenty institutional investors, touch on decision-making, active ownership, transparency and promoting these principles within the financial community. Possible actions include the filing of shareholder resolutions consistent with responsible investment principles as well as exercising voting rights that reflect such principles, as was done at the Bombardier shareholder meeting.

The Bloc Québécois congratulates the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec for this initiative, which promotes a long-term vision for sustainable and responsible investment.

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•(1415)

[English]

#### AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS

**Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, June is ALS month. The ALS Society of Canada, founded in 1977, is the only national voluntary health organization dedicated solely to the fight against ALS, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

The ALS Society is the leading not for profit health organization working nationwide to fund ALS research and work to improve the quality of life for Canadians affected by the disease.

I have a friend, Ben Lindberg, who has ALS. Imagine not being able to walk, write, smile, talk, eat and sometimes breathe on one's own, and yet one's mind usually remains intact and one's senses unaffected. This is what ALS is like for Ben and the 3,000 Canadians who live with the disease.

There is no effective treatment for ALS and no known cure yet. Eighty per cent of people diagnosed with ALS die within two to five years. Two to three Canadians with ALS die every day. Two to three Canadians are diagnosed with ALS every day.

Volunteers and staff of the ALS Society participate in annual fundraising events, including Walk for ALS, Hike4ALS and the Concert of Hope.

I urge all Canadians to donate to their provincial ALS societies.

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#### SOFTWOOD LUMBER

**Ms. Helena Guergis (Simcoe—Grey, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for too long the softwood lumber industry has faced uncertainty. While the industry has paid billions of dollars in duties and the courts have been tied up in litigation, thousands of families have lost their livelihood.

The Free Trade Lumber Council told committee that there had been at least 10,000 job losses during this dispute.

Earlier this week the member for Vancouver Island North told us how the softwood lumber dispute had been hard on the industry and resulted in many job losses in the region.

The Minister of International Trade has worked hard to resolve this dispute. The framework of a new agreement is being negotiated. We are bringing stability back into the lumber industry.

#### Oral Questions

I think it is most fitting that tonight the Minister of International Trade will be honoured as the 2006 Lumberman of the Year. Calling him the lumberman's lumberman, the British Columbia Wholesale Lumber Association is happy to bestow this honour upon him.

I join with all my colleagues in thanking the member for Vancouver Kingsway for his excellent work and dedication to our country and the forestry industry of Canada.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, condemnation of the government's environmental policy grows louder with each passing day for its abandonment of Kyoto and the environment. It has been criticized by scientists, by provinces and most especially by Canadians. Economists have now added their voices pointing out that abandoning the Kyoto protocol will be a disaster for the Canadian economy.

Clearly, the Prime Minister is not receptive to protecting the Canadian environment. Now it would appear as well that he is not interested in the economic arguments in favour of Kyoto.

Does the Prime Minister reject the premise that meeting our Kyoto objectives will bring substantial benefits to the Canadian economy as eminent economists assured him in a recent letter?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is actually our view that there are synergies to be had in environmental improvement as well as economic growth and development and I should add at the same time with energy security.

What I have said and what the government has said repeatedly is what we will not do and what the former government was planning to do, which was to send billions of dollars of taxpayers' money overseas to buy so-called pollution credits from other countries with no environmental improvements whatsoever in Canada. That is something we will never do. That is my stand.

[Translation]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, if the Prime Minister's reasoning made sense, eminent economists would never have written him an open letter stating that a made-in-Canada climate policy that does not take into account international cooperation is doomed to be ineffective both environmentally and economically.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to these eminent economists—not to his own yes-men, but to these economists—and to Canadians and follow through with Kyoto? That is my question.

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize that improving the environment will benefit the economy. That is why we allocated, for example, funds for renewable fuels and public transit in the budget. This will produce both economic and environmental benefits. I would add that I think this is why the official opposition supported the budget.

• (1420)

[*English*]

**Hon. Bill Graham (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is the best argument, and no doubt the reason the Prime Minister just gave is the reason the environment minister did not attend the annual smog summit in Toronto. Instead, the minister found time to speak to the Canadian Club where she attempted to lay the blame for abandoning the fight on climate change at the feet of the underdeveloped countries of the world.

We understand that this is an age-old Conservative reaction; when in doubt if they can blame the poor, that is a great out.

Was the minister's failure to attend the smog summit because she did not want to face an audience that would not accept the rhetoric, or is it because of the Prime Minister's and that party's rejection of the problems of our inner cities? Is that where it comes from?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me read a quote for the leader of the Liberal Party opposite:

The issue is climate change and the problem is threefold: those countries which have fallen behind on their targets, including my own; those countries that have not accepted the threat as a threat; and the major emerging economies who feel the problem is for others to solve.

That quote did not come from the environment minister. That quote is from a speech by the member for LaSalle—Émard, the former prime minister and former leader of the Liberal Party.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, according to a poll in Quebec, 79% of Quebecers prefer the commitments made under the Kyoto protocol to the government's position.

While the minister was pondering the idea of a useless Asia-Pacific partnership, she missed two deadlines at the United Nations. She has no plan and no timeline. Canadians are against it, economists are against it, the provinces and cities are against it, and Parliament is against it.

Will the minister admit that no matter what she proposes to replace the Kyoto protocol, she will never have the support of Canadians?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while the opposition plays politics with Kyoto, this government is actually cleaning up the air that Canadians breathe.

We do have support from the Clean Air Foundation which said yesterday that they are encouraged by our government's announcement on mercury, that it is an essential step to protecting people and the environment from an unnecessary exposure to this dangerous toxic substance.

Yesterday we announced a pollution prevention plan that will take 10 tonnes of mercury out of the air. This is something the Liberals sat on for years. Our government is acting in the best interests and the health of Canadians.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there is no plan. There are no timelines.

The Asia-Pacific 6 is disintegrating. The minister has missed two United Nations deadlines while she says she leads the process. Canadians disagree. Top economists disagree. Provinces and cities disagree. This Parliament disagrees.

Let me put this question to the Prime Minister. The global emissions trading market under Kyoto would create a new \$150 billion a year securities market. While the climate warms, why is the Prime Minister intent on leaving Canadian businesses out in the cold?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only party in the House that left businesses out in the cold is the Liberal Party of Canada. The Liberals did not put a plan in place, so that any businesses could take advantage of any kind of trading system. Instead, they set unachievable targets which meant that businesses and their government were going to spend billions of dollars in taxpayers' money overseas. This government will never do that.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a survey released today shows that 79% of Quebecers want the Kyoto protocol to be respected. But the Canadian government continues to distance itself from the Kyoto protocol and keeps saying that it will not be able to respect its commitments.

Will the Prime Minister drop his dogmatic approach to the Kyoto protocol and listen to the people of Quebec instead of his friends the oil companies?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is easy for the Bloc Québécois to support the Kyoto protocol when, after 10 years, there is no plan to achieve its objectives. Nonetheless, as I have said many times, this government has started to act by investing in public transit and in renewable fuels. I appreciate the support the Bloc Québécois has given for these initiatives since the beginning. I can assure the leader of the Bloc Québécois there will be more action by this government.

• (1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, when he said it was easy for the Bloc Québécois to support Kyoto, we do so because it is our responsibility to do so and it should be his as well.

It is all well and good to criticize the Liberal plan. The Conservatives did not agree with this plan and neither did we. They are now in government. Where is their plan? Where is the territorial approach Quebec has been asking for? What about joining 162 other countries in respecting the Kyoto protocol? That is what we are asking of his government, not empty words and a plan that has still not seen the light of day. Will he take action?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Bloc Québécois is talking about its responsibilities. It is the responsibility of politicians to take positions. It is our responsibility to take action. This government is taking action. The Bloc Québécois is not able to and never will be able to.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to remind the House that it is very important that we respect the decisions of this House regarding the Kyoto protocol, which the Prime Minister does not wish to do at this time.

The Prime Minister has adopted an environmental strategy that is proving to be a carbon copy of George Bush's strategy in terms of climate change.

Does the Prime Minister not understand the message that 79% of Quebecers are sending him, namely, that instead of copying George Bush, he should be trying to convince the American president to join the Kyoto protocol?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the truth of the matter is that thanks to the Liberal government being in power for 13 years the Bush government has done more on the environment than this country has for the last decade.

The Americans are outperforming us on pollution control. They are outperforming us on emission reductions. This government is going to ensure that we outperform not just the Americans but all of our counterparts.

[Translation]

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the more we listen to the environment minister, the more we are convinced that she is about to take our money and give it to the major oil companies as aid. This is the truth.

Why will the government not come to its senses and adopt a territorial approach that will allow Quebec, which wants to take action to respect Kyoto, to obtain its share of the envelope set aside in order to go ahead with its own plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Quebec?

[English]

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let us be clear. The only thing the member cares about is money. The environment is more than just about money. We are putting in place a national plan. We will not put in place territorial plans or regional plans. We are putting in place a national plan that will protect the environment for Canada.

[Translation]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, a report from the *Sedna IV* mission reveals that it now rains in Antarctica, the coldest place on earth. Over the past 50 years, temperatures there have jumped by 6° Celsius. Dangerous climate changes like this one affect the entire planet, and especially the poles.

Today the NDP presented several elements of an action plan. Since he does not yet have his own plan, is the Prime Minister

willing to immediately implement the greener homes strategy submitted by the NDP?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said many times, this government has begun to take action by investing in renewable fuels, in public transit infrastructures, and in those who use public transit. I appreciate the NDP's suggestions. It is proposing ideas for creating greener homes. I believe the NDP will be happy when this government announces measures in this area.

• (1430)

[English]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when will we finally see the plan that the Prime Minister talks about every single day while it is raining in Antarctica?

Is there no understanding that there is a climate crisis facing us; that these are dangerous levels of pollution; that we now have ocean waters off British Columbia becoming so warm that fish stocks are plummeting, according to his own department; that we have had nine smog days; and that in Oshawa the other day, the levels of greenhouse gas were double the permitted level?

My question is for the Prime Minister. How much more evidence does the Prime Minister need before he stops debating the science and starts getting down to action?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not think the alarmism necessarily helps the serious debate.

The government has moved forward on very meaningful plans to develop renewable fuel and include those in Canadian fuel content on the mandate of the government. We have also seen significant investments in public transportation toward those who use public transportation.

I note today there are some useful ideas in the green homes plan of the NDP. I think the NDP members will be happy when we come forward with our ideas in that area, and they will support them, just as they supported the ideas in our budget.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

## NATURAL RESOURCES

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Natural Resources claimed that the wind power production incentive was not cut from the budget. But what he was careful not to mention was that the credits not yet allocated have been frozen, which actually paralyzes the program and any action in this sector.

Why has the minister decided to create such uncertainty for this sector and to hang wind energy technology out to dry?

[English]

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are developing our plan. At committee earlier this morning, I asked the hon. member to bring forward his ideas.

### Oral Questions

I applaud the NDP members. I was quite surprised that after I asked them to submit their ideas and indicated that we were interested in talking to them, only a few hours later they actually came up with some suggestions.

We are moving forward with proposals that will have a meaningful impact on every single Canadian. We believe wind will play a future role in Canada's energy supply and we support that.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know what works. It was in our programs, but there is more.

The government pretends it wants to meet an ethanol target of 5%. However, we now learn that the government has let the ethanol expansion program die. There is no new funding for wind energy, no new funding for biofuels, and the government is cutting the EnerGuide home program.

Is this the government's only response to global warming, scrapping and freezing programs without one single new idea of its own, not one?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite wants to talk about the programs that were working for the Liberal Party, I do not know if he is talking about the sponsorship program or what he is referring to, the facts speak for themselves.

Greenhouse gases under the old Liberal government, the very old Liberal government, went up each and every single year it was in office for 13 years. We have done more in six months than that old government did in 13 years.

I want to remind the hon. member, on renewable fuels, that the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Minister of the Environment, and I met with every provincial counterpart, and we are moving forward to bringing real results to every single Canadian.

\* \* \*

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, for the first time in seven years, the smog summit in Toronto was without a federal presence. Where was the minister? As one newspaper described it, she was speaking to a blue chip luncheon crowd where she compared—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora has the floor. Her remarks seem to have created a bit of a sensation, but we will have to have some quiet so we can hear the question. The hon. member is about to pose a question and we will now have some order so we can hear it.

• (1435)

**Hon. Belinda Stronach:** Mr. Speaker, at the luncheon she compared doing a good job for the environment to earning a Boy Scout badge. We checked it out and it turns out that the Boy Scouts actually have a climate change program, which would put them light years ahead of this minister.

When will the minister follow the example of the Boy Scouts and introduce her climate change program?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we were happy, as the Government of Canada, to sign the declaration for the smog summit, but yesterday I was here in Ottawa speaking.

As I said, we took a big step yesterday to clean up the air Canadians breathe by announcing our new mercury strategy. The Clean Air Foundation was encouraged by our announcement and said that this is going to protect the health of Canadians. It is the first time in Canadian history that we have taken a step like this on our environment.

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, based on that answer, I do not think she is going to get a climate change badge to sew on her outfit.

If the minister really cared about air quality, she would have been at the smog summit yesterday in Toronto.

The minister claims to have a plan to deal with smog. Then, why did she decline to attend the obvious forum in which to share the details of this plan? Does she not care about air quality? Or, does she simply share the Prime Minister's low opinion of Toronto?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government is concerned about smog days in Toronto. That is why on June 1 we regulated the lowest content of sulphur and diesel fuel in Canadian history. That is why yesterday we took measures to introduce regulations that would eliminate 10 tonnes of mercury out of our environment. Mercury adds to blindness, paralysis and infant death. These are real results and real actions on the environment.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### GASOLINE PRICES

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the summer vacation season is approaching and bringing with it unjustified gasoline price hikes, despite a likely decline in the international price of crude oil.

Can no one in the government wake up and see that consumers are paying too much for gas, because the refinery profit margin that all the oil companies take is far too high and could go even higher during the vacation season?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said in this House last week, I am happy to see that the Competition Bureau has conducted six investigations in the past 15 years. Every time it investigated, it concluded that there was no collusion in setting prices.

Members should also note that in this House in 2003, the Standing Committee on Industry, Sciences and Technology investigated and issued a report that drew the same conclusion: there was no collusion in setting gas prices in Canada.

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the federal government has responsibility for competitive refining prices. That is where there is a fairly large problem that needs to be solved.

In any event, the industry minister has zero credibility when he talks about the price of gasoline. On January 19 on Radio-Canada he said that the price of oil is high because leftist environmentalists are putting pressure on the oil companies to prevent them from refining products and that he wished Quebecers would stop pointing the finger at the oil companies.

How can the government side with the oil companies rather than with consumers by making irresponsible statements like that?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to hear the Bloc Québécois ask this new government to regulate the retail price of gasoline. The Bloc Québécois should know that regulating the price of gas is a provincial responsibility. This new government will respect the areas of jurisdiction in Canada. That is what we promised, and that is what we are going to do. Unlike the Bloc Québécois, which is asking us not to abide by the Constitution, we intend to abide by our Constitution.

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**ARTS AND CULTURE**

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women does not have time to meet with the Quebec film coalition, which is asking the government to create a \$20 million emergency fund to help the Quebec film industry maintain the momentum it has gained over the past few years. Yet she herself recognizes that Quebec needs money to support the rapid development of its film industry.

If the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women recognizes that the Quebec coalition's request is justified, why does she not find the time to meet with them or the money to help them?

• (1440)

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we recognize the importance of the Quebec film industry. In fact, I have done more in four months than the former minister did in all of the last session.

I have met with over 50 representatives of the film industry. We have given options to one particular group that has asked for a meeting and we are waiting for a response as to time and date.

I will be meeting with representatives of the film industry tomorrow.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, there is always someone in worse shape than oneself.

The Quebec film industry is booming and creating a lot of jobs. Without the money the coalition is asking for, this growth will be stifled.

Will the minister improve the Canada feature film fund so that the film industry can get the money the Quebec coalition is asking for?

[*English*]

**Hon. Bev Oda (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the film industry in Quebec has had some success but we want it to become even more successful. We know it has received international recognition as well. The industry is facing challenges today because the previous government did not recognize how the media industry was changing.

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**HEALTH**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of Canadians are waiting hours to see doctors in emergency rooms and waiting months to see specialists. The Conservative government has absolutely no plan and it has invested no new money to achieve the wait times guarantee.

Now we learn the reason why the minister has been distracted. He has been busy trying to increase the profits of drug companies, like the one in which he has a 25% stake. Another Conservative minister and another conflict of interest.

Will the minister get out of the drug company business and start focusing on his real job, which is to address the health care concerns of Canadians?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must say how disappointed I am in the member raising this particular issue in this manner.

All of my colleagues have made disclosure to the Ethics Commissioner. They have followed the directives. They are in complete compliance.

We do not need any lessons from members of the Liberal Party on ethics or anything else.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let me remind the hon. member that it was the Liberal government that appointed the Ethics Commissioner who his government is hiding behind.

Double-talk and double standards seem to have become the hallmarks for the government.

The Liberal government was committed to health care, which is why we put \$42 billion into health care over 10 years. The Conservative government has not done this. There is no new money.

It is obvious and it is evident that the Minister of Health is distracted from doing his job.

When will the minister do the right thing, step up to the plate and sell his shares so he can continue doing his job on behalf of Canadians to address the concerns of health care?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a bunch of nonsense. If the member has any allegations that she wants to make, she should make them outside the chamber and in public.

The problem with the Liberals is that they are mad at ministers and members who are in compliance. However, when they were in office, tens of millions of dollars were lost, misplaced, paid to their friends and, until they were caught, they could not find a nickel. That is their record.

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us see if we can get an answer this time.

The Minister of Health has maintained his 25% equity shares in pharmaceutical giant Prudential Chem Inc.

Could the health minister, who is responsible for Canada's drug approval process, explain why he refuses to sell his shares in this company?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the member had trouble spitting that out. He almost choked on that question.

The minister, like all members of this government, is in complete compliance. We all follow the rules. We are not taking any lessons from the group across that could not follow the rules all those years.

• (1445)

**Mr. Anthony Rota (Nipissing—Timiskaming, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I choked because it is disgusting.

The minister knows that Prudential offers consulting services to other pharmaceutical giants that deal directly with Health Canada for drug review submissions.

How can the minister sit there and deny that he is in a potential conflict of interest situation? Will he do the right thing and sell his stake and will he table in this House the names of all Prudential clients that deal with Health Canada?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has done the right thing by complying with all the rules.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Liberal hypocrisy on Kyoto continues. The Liberals' last environment critic voted against Kyoto. Their current critic has admitted that the Liberal Kyoto plan is flawed and said that Canada would not meet its targets by the 2012 deadline.

While the Liberals continue their partisan spin on Kyoto, this government wants a real plan that will work for Canada.

Could the environment minister comment on the Liberal environment critic's statement and tell us of this government's plan for Canada?

**Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the hon. member on being part of a government that is actually open and transparent with Canadians when it comes to Kyoto and our environment.

The Liberals were going to buy billions of dollars in international credits from Russia and China when we have our own air and water pollution problems right here at home. This government has taken a stand. We have a made in Canada plan, not a Liberal paid for in Canada plan, and we will make Kyoto work for Canada.

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**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, new and disturbing allegations have surfaced in the Health Canada scandal involving the Virginia Fontaine Addictions Foundation. One of the convicted officials claims in a sworn affidavit that at least eight other Health Canada officials were involved but not prosecuted.

From day one, New Democrats have called for an open inquiry to get to the truth but the Liberals, already up to their necks in scandals, always refused.

Will the government now move quickly to get to the bottom of this sorry scandal and sordid chapter in our history?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Health Canada is very concerned about any misuse of public funds and we will use every available option at our disposal on behalf of the people of Canada to recover any public funds that are owed to the people of Canada by the Government of Canada.

New information has been brought to light as a result of the RCMP investigation and the resolution of criminal charges and we will move forward with dispatch.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response from the health minister. I sense that he and his colleagues are taking this very seriously, unlike the previous four health ministers who refused to address this matter.

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Winnipeg North has the floor.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to get to the bottom of this sordid scandal. Millions of taxpayer dollars were stolen. Two officials have been convicted. Questions and concerns still remain.

I would like to know if the minister is prepared to launch the open public inquiry that his colleagues called for when they were in opposition.

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her support. There is a lot of mess to clean up after the previous Liberal governments but I intend to move with dispatch.

*Oral Questions*

The hon. member has made an interesting suggestion, which I think she made in good conscience and good faith, and we will be examining all our options.

However, the one critical message I want to send to the people of Canada is that we will get to the bottom of this and we will restore faith in government on this side of the House.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Kelowna accord, as we all know, was signed after an 18-month consultation process. Yesterday, the national chief, Phil Fontaine, stated, "I want to be absolutely clear that there was an agreement".

On May 10, finance department officials confirmed that the Kelowna dollars were committed last November. The Minister of Indian Affairs now says that the money is not there. Only the Prime Minister or the finance minister can remove money from a sources and uses table.

Will the Prime Minister tell us why the money has gone missing and the Kelowna accord killed?

• (1450)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, false indignation appears to be the garb of choice for the Liberals these days on aboriginal policy. It is a bad fit.

The Liberals ran this country for 13 years and for 13 years they failed aboriginal Canadians on education, on housing, on drinking water, on treaty implementation and on accountability. They have been criticized by the Auditor General, by the United Nations and by Amnesty International.

They can be as indignant as they want but history will record the Liberal era as one of empty promises. What they really wore is shame.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, who wears the shame.

There is no question that the Kelowna accord money was booked. The former Prime Minister said that it was booked, the former finance minister said that it was booked and even finance department officials admitted that the money was booked.

Canada's aboriginal people now have confirmation that the Prime Minister willingly and knowingly killed the Kelowna accord.

Could the Minister of Indian Affairs assure the House that he will no longer pretend that the money does not exist as a way to deflect attention from the fact?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the latest iteration we have from the Liberal Party is a private member's bill that has no money either. It is just a continuation of more empty Liberal promises.

We intend to proceed with clear budgets, with accountability, with action, with results and with measurement. We will deal with the issues of aboriginal poverty that the Liberals did not address for 13 years, a 13 year record of shame and incompetence.

[*Translation*]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this morning, during a meeting of the Standing Committee on Human Resources and Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, the hon. Conservative member and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities announced he had a plan for permanently transferring unemployed people from the Atlantic provinces to Alberta. It is totally unacceptable for the government to make such comments, let alone think them.

My question is simple. How can the government justify such a radical policy by members of its caucus?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is such a complete and utter distortion of truth on what was said in committee that it is hardly worth answering.

The reality is that this government has taken more steps in recent days to help Atlantic Canadians stay in their region, work in their region and to raise families in their region. That is the record of the Conservative government in the short time it has been in office, unlike the record opposite that left Atlantic Canadians with little choice but to seek employment in other regions.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-Claude D'Amours (Madawaska—Restigouche, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not what we heard. There was a concrete plan. The minister can try to present the facts in a better light, but the fact remains that this is not the first time such radical comments, about the region I represent, have been uttered by hon. members of the government. It is clear that this government does not understand anything about the Atlantic provinces. It is even more obvious that they do not want to understand anything.

The government's objective seems clear: it wants to drive Atlantic Canadians out of their regions. Is that the Prime Minister's hidden agenda for dealing with the Conservatives' defeatist attitude toward the Atlantic provinces?

[*English*]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I represent Atlantic Canadians as well. I grew up and live in that region. What a complete misstatement of fact. That is not a policy, nor was it even an utterance of a government member. That is a complete distortion, a complete myth and a complete misstatement of fact, which is not uncommon or unusual coming from Liberal members opposite.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**HOMELESSNESS**

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, groups that assist the homeless are waiting impatiently to find out what the government's position is on federal funding for the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative, which expires on March 31, 2007. This is a major source of funding that the homeless cannot live without.

The program will end in nine months. Can the Prime Minister tell the poorest and least fortunate whether or not he will extend the SCPI program beyond March 31, 2007?

• (1455)

[English]

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has demonstrated its support by confirming the extension of the national homelessness initiative from April 1, 2006 until March 31, 2007 and by allocating additional funds of \$134 million, of which over \$20 million is allocated to the province of Quebec.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**LABOUR UNIONS**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, over a month ago, the United Steelworkers of Canada wrote to the Minister of Labour to ask him to urge the Mexican labour minister to support unionist Napoleon Gomez, who was removed from his position as general secretary by the Mexican government, contrary to the basic rules governing freedom of association.

Instead of sending a simple acknowledgement, which is what he did, should the minister not intervene with his Mexican counterpart and remind him that, under NAFTA, the rights of workers must be respected, including freedom of association?

**Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would urge my hon. colleague to exercise caution in her comments. In fact, the United Steelworkers of Canada believes that the Mexican government's action, when it relieved Mr. Gomez of his duties, was contrary to NAFTA under the International Labour Organization.

We in the Department of Labour are gathering information because we do not take such allegations lightly. We are in the process of confirming these pieces of information, which are completely contradictory depending on the sources. I would also encourage the member to be cautious since there will soon be an election in Mexico.

\* \* \*

[English]

**EMPLOYMENT**

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today in the human resources committee the hon. member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca asked about the measures being taken to help EI recipients find work in Alberta. The department responded that they

are not doing nearly enough. We now understand the true aim of the Conservatives' measly bus pass rebate: anything to get Atlantic Canadians, rural Quebecers or northern Ontarians on the next train west.

The Prime Minister and the Conservatives have no plan for rural and remote regions, but we are not waving the white flag. Will the Prime Minister admit that he still believes that Atlantic Canada, in his words, suffers from a culture of defeat, and apologize?

**Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague from Central Nova said, the presentation here is a gross distortion and a gross misrepresentation of what happened in committee this morning. I can assure the hon. member and the rest of the House that this government is looking at solutions for labour shortages in all parts of Canada. We are looking at a broad range of solutions for this.

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**VETERANS**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians and Newfoundlanders volunteered to fight in the first world war. The battle of the Somme in 1916 became one of the biggest losses of life in Newfoundland's history. It was a battle that claimed hundreds of lives.

Newfoundland continues to honour these war heroes and this year marks the 90th anniversary of that historic day. Could the Minister of Veterans Affairs tell us how Canada is participating in remembrance services to commemorate those who fought for freedom?

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, July 1 will mark the 90th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in Beaumont-Hamel. During the first world war, on the morning of July 1, 1916, the soldiers of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, in an extraordinary display of bravery and determination, advanced over open ground at Beaumont-Hamel into a relentless barrage of artillery and machine gun fire. It lasted only 30 minutes. Just 68 of the 801 soldiers answered roll call the next day.

In marking this anniversary, overseas events at the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial and other sites in France have been planned to honour the sacrifices and contributions of Newfoundlanders and Canadians who served in the first world war. The commemorative events in Canada will be focused in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Ottawa. Veterans Affairs Canada is working with the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that this anniversary of the Battle of the Somme is appropriately marked.

[Translation]

### NATIONAL DEFENCE

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this government talks about sovereignty for the north. However, the James Bay Cree continue to suffer as a result of contamination from abandoned radar bases. National Defence has abandoned these toxic disasters and the citizens of the north.

When will National Defence return to James Bay and assume responsibility for 50,000 barrels of PCBs at the bottom of northern rivers?

• (1500)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the issue of contaminated sites is part of the legacy that the Liberal government has left for succeeding Canadian governments. There are extensive numbers of contaminated sites across northern Canada.

Seventy per cent of the contaminated sites in fact are within the jurisdiction of my department. We are working on this. We are mindful of the environmental mess that has been left behind by the previous government and we are addressing it.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we are talking about 50,000 tonnes of military sludge sitting on the Winisk River. Thousands more barrels have already floated down-river.

I asked the former Liberal defence minister to help the people of our region and he could not run fast enough from his obligations, so now I am asking the government.

Will the government do the right thing? The province of Ontario is at the table. The Cree are at the table. That previous government over there was never at the table. Will the Conservative government do the right thing and clean up the mess that was left by the Department of Defence?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, neither I nor the Minister of National Defence are running from this issue. We are dealing with the issue. I had meetings dealing with this matter as recently as this morning.

We are on top of it. We will deal with it. We will continue to advise the House on the progress we make.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FIRST WORLD OUTGAMES

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a wave of panic and great uneasiness at the Prime Minister's Office these days.

July 29 will mark the opening of the first World Outgames, a major, inclusive event, where hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world will assemble.

My questions are straightforward.

### Oral Questions

Why does the Prime Minister refuse to attend the first World Outgames in Montreal this summer? Is he embarrassed? Is he afraid to be seen there? He can take someone along if he would like. Does he have something against the event? What is the problem?

[English]

**Hon. Michael Chong (President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government funds multi-sport international events in Canada. The Outgames in Montreal do not fall under the purview of that policy established by the former government, and therefore Sport Canada has not contributed funds to this event.

I suggest that the hon. member, if he wishes to support these games, can do so by attending these games himself in Montreal.

\* \* \*

### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, unlike past Liberal governments that believed a press release was actually a policy statement, I want to say that this government is making real progress on issues like agriculture.

The development of biofuels is a vital industry for the agriculture community and offers a new revenue opportunity for producers. I know that the Minister of Agriculture will soon be meeting with stakeholders to discuss biofuels. I wonder if he would like to update us on what he hopes to achieve at this important meeting.

**Hon. Chuck Strahl (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a follow-up from our federal-provincial meeting that we held a couple of weeks ago in Regina. On June 19 we will be bringing the industry leaders on biofuels here to Ottawa to discuss the biofuels strategy. We want to ensure that they are involved and that farmers are involved not only in the production of raw material for biofuels, but that they also have the opportunity to invest in the value added part of the industry.

At this meeting, we will be getting concrete ideas from industry leaders on how best to involve farmers and benefit rural communities in meeting our 2010 biofuels goal. Our biofuels strategy will be good for the environment and that is important, but just as important, it will be good for Canadian farmers.

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### PRESENCE IN GALLERY

**The Speaker:** I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Honourable Lü Congmin, Vice-chairman of the National People's Congress Foreign Affairs Committee and Chairman of the China-Canada Legislative Association.

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

*Speaker's Ruling***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as is usual on Thursday, I wonder if the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons can explain to the House his plan for the business of the House over the course of the next week or two. I wonder explicitly if he would be in a position today to indicate whether or not the government intends to seek any extension of the normal hours in the two weeks that are covered by that rule under our Standing Orders.

• (1505)

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today the House will continue with the Liberal opposition motion.

Tomorrow we are hoping to conclude the debate at second reading of Bill C-10, an act to amend the Criminal Code (minimum penalties for offences involving firearms).

When Bill C-10 is completed, we will begin debate on second reading of Bill C-14, an act to amend the Citizenship Act. That will be followed by Bill C-5 on public health.

I have good news for the hon. member. As I promised to indicate to the House earlier this week, it is the intention of the government to move forward tomorrow pursuant to Standing Order 27(1) seeking to extend the hours of the House for the end of June.

We will continue with the business of the House as stated and we will have other bills, such as the bills on bridges and tunnels, the defence justice system, the Transport Act, and emergency management. We should be quite busy, but I am glad that we will have the time, and we hope to get through all of these.

Thursday will be another allotted day.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## ORAL QUESTIONS—SPEAKER'S RULING

**The Speaker:** Order. I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on May 17, 2006, and again on May 19, 2006, by the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier concerning the tabling of the document referred to by the Prime Minister during Question Period.

I would like to thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for bringing this matter to the attention of the House. I also wish to thank the hon. member for Outremont for his intervention and the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons for his response.

In raising this matter, the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier stated that, in response to a question posed during Question Period on May 17, the Prime Minister had quoted from what appeared to be a cabinet document and that, according to the rules of the House, the Prime Minister was obliged to table the document.

[English]

On Friday, May 19, 2006, the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons responded to the point of order. He indicated

that the Prime Minister had not specifically quoted from any document. He clarified that the document in question was being used as a briefing note and that the rules do not require the tabling of briefing notes. The hon. government House leader further argued that the document was a cabinet document that could not be tabled because it dealt directly with national security measures that could jeopardize the safety of Canadian soldiers.

[Translation]

I have reviewed the *Debates* for May 17, 2006, as well as the tape of that day's Question Period. The video clearly showed that in responding to a question put by the hon. member for Laval—Les Îles, the right hon. Prime Minister did read from a document as the hon. members for Ottawa—Vanier and Outremont have argued.

[English]

There is a longstanding practice that any document quoted by a minister in debate or in response to a question during question period must be tabled forthwith if so requested. This practice is described on page 518 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* and I believe it would be helpful to all hon. members if I were to cite this passage:

Any document quoted by a Minister in debate or in response to a question during Question Period must be tabled. Indeed, a Minister is not at liberty to read or quote from a despatch (an official written message on government affairs) or other state paper without being prepared to table it if it can be done without injury to the public interest.

In addition to Marleau and Montpetit, this practice has been described in other procedural authorities, including various editions of Beauchesne and Erskine May. Indeed, the hon. government House leader quoted citation 495(2) of Beauchesne's 6th edition when he responded that the document could not be tabled because its contents concerned national security matters.

[Translation]

Moreover, this practice was upheld in 1983 when the Deputy Speaker ruled that he was satisfied, after hearing arguments, that the Minister of State (International Trade) could not table a document because it would involve some risk of security to the Canadian diplomatic communications service. This precedent can be found at pages 28627 to 28631 of the *Debates* for November 2, 1983.

In light of this precedent and the statement put forth by the hon. Government House Leader that the security of Canadian soldiers could be jeopardized, I must rule that the Prime Minister is under no obligation to table the document in question.

I thank the hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier for having brought this matter to the attention of the Chair.

The hon. member for Ottawa—Vanier.

• (1510)

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your ruling. I took note of it and I will certainly consult the sources to which you referred.

I have a question. How is the issue of security assessed? The government cites security as the reason why it is refusing to table the document quoted by the Prime Minister. How can one quote a document in the House—meaning that it is being read publicly—while claiming that it is an issue of national security?

Is this not contradictory? Would it not be necessary to establish a mechanism that would independently determine whether a document or part of a document—at least the part that was quoted—could be tabled without putting anyone in danger?

**The Speaker:** As the member for Ottawa—Vanier knows full well, it is not for the Speaker to answer questions. I am sure that he will read the ruling I just gave the House concerning this point of order as well as the precedent I cited. He indicated that he intends to read it. Perhaps that will be satisfactory to him and perhaps he will consider that the advice of the government House leader—to the effect that the document could pose a threat to public safety—is enough for the Speaker to rule on the matter. The precedent that I cited is the one that I am following today and on which I based my ruling.

In the case, it is not the Speaker's role to examine all documents or to answer questions regarding those documents in the House.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—THE ECONOMY

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Guy André (Berthier—Maskinongé, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today on the Liberal Party motion, which concerns the challenges posed by new foreign competition, especially from countries such as China, India and Brazil.

I would like to commend my Bloc Québécois colleagues who have taken part in the debate today, especially the member for Joliette and the member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, for their remarks and all their work on these issues.

Once again, we have proved that the Bloc Québécois is the party that best defends the interests of Quebecers.

The motion introduced today by the Liberal Party concerns the new economic challenges that Quebec and Canada must face, including the stronger dollar, the emergence of new economies such as China, India and Brazil as major world players and, of course, rising energy costs.

In response to these new challenges, the Liberal Party proposes a series of measures and programs. Two main thrusts emerge from the measures proposed by the Liberal Party in this motion. They explain why we cannot support this motion.

First—and this reflects the philosophy and approach of the Liberal Party—the motion urges the federal government to develop a host of measures and programs in areas that come under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces, such as education, labour market development, skills training—something we spent years fighting

### *Business of Supply*

for so that we could manage it better in Quebec—and university research.

These areas clearly come under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces. Education, for example, is not a federal but a provincial and Quebec responsibility.

Unlike the Liberals and the New Democrats, we believe that Quebec does not need the federal Parliament to tell it what priorities it should set for its education system. The only education-related challenge that concerns Ottawa is correcting the fiscal imbalance, for example, by increasing transfer payments for post-secondary education. The Conservatives have taken a step in the right direction, but there is still a long way to go before Quebec sees justice on this issue. Of course, it is out of the question that this transfer should be directed toward Canada's priorities, as the Liberal Party motion stipulates.

The second reason why we oppose this motion is that it totally omits the areas that actually are the responsibility of the federal government. I am referring in particular to the total lack of action to support the modernization of the traditional manufacturing sectors that have been hit hard by global competition.

It is just as disturbing to see that the Liberal motion fails to deal with the difficulties facing the manufacturing sector as it is to realize that the new Conservative government prefers not to take action to help this sector. It would rather leave these industries to their own devices and abandon them to unfettered competition.

But manufacturers need help from the federal government, all the more so that it now has the economic means to act thanks to the huge budget surpluses it has been accumulating year after year.

Our manufacturing sector is going through very difficult times because of the heightened competition from new powers, especially China and India, as I said earlier. Both the Liberals and the Conservatives know very well that traditional sectors such as textiles, apparel, furniture, the forest industry and bicycles have been badly hurt by the new economic situation. Yet they have nothing specific to propose to help these industries.

● (1515)

There have been heavy job losses in manufacturing since 2002. Between 2002 and 2005, nearly 149,000 jobs were lost in the manufacturing sector in Canada, two-thirds of them in 2005 alone. In Quebec in the same period, 68,000 jobs were lost in manufacturing.

Action is urgently needed. The riding I have the honour of representing, Berthier—Maskinongé, has a very large manufacturing sector, that of furniture. In this industry in Quebec between 2002 and 2005, the effects of globalization wiped out nearly 5,000 jobs.

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We, the Bloc Québécois members, cannot accept the government's willingness to stand by and do nothing while the manufacturing sector crumbles. What is the government waiting for? Is it waiting for our manufacturing companies to become just the museums of a bygone industrial age?

Several Liberal and Conservative members say that it is up to manufacturers to adapt to the new competition. We agree, but they need time and the means to do so. That is why, in the bicycle sector for example, we supported the advice of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal. It recommended that the federal government impose a temporary surtax on imports of inexpensive bicycles in order to give Quebec and Canadian manufacturers a chance to adapt to the new competition coming mainly from abroad.

Unfortunately, as did the Liberals, the Conservative government decided not to implement these recommendations. What about the Canadian International Trade Tribunal? What means will industries have at their disposal to face this competition from Asia? Nothing is said about that. The government does not make any proposal. It is total abandonment.

By refusing to help Quebec and Canadian bicycle manufacturers, the Harper government shows that it has absolutely no idea of the disastrous effect of its inaction on our manufacturers.

The furniture industry is another traditional sector that is seriously threatened by Chinese imports. To this day, the federal government has not taken any measure to help this industry adapt, even though it plays an important role in Quebec's economy.

The Bloc Québécois generally supports the statement made in the preamble to the motion. It is true that the rise of certain new economies represents a challenge for several industrial sectors. It is true that the increase in the value of the dollar reduces the ability of Quebec and Canadian businesses to compete. However, the Bloc cannot support a motion that, on one hand, proposes considerable interference in areas under the jurisdiction of Quebec and the provinces and that, on the other hand, totally abandons areas that are the federal government's responsibility, such as support for the modernization of the traditional economic sectors that are the most affected by global competition.

Let me say, in closing, that the Conservatives are not really doing any better. For them, it seems that there is no place for government intervention to help industry face its competition. It is total abandonment. They believe that the free market can solve everything.

We, in the Bloc Québécois, believe that the federal government has a role to play in areas under its jurisdiction by fostering the modernization of businesses, by supporting research—which has been the victim of drastic cuts over the last few years—or by using the trade tools at its disposal to give businesses the time they need to adapt.

• (1520)

There is more than Alberta's oil industry; there is also a manufacturing sector that is crying out for help and that needs temporary support measures to meet the new challenges brought about by globalization.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member raised a very important issue, which I think many members of Parliament have addressed. In my riding, I have the same issue with bicycle manufacturers that import and that manufacture their own.

I read the CITT decision recommending the surtax and I respected its analysis. I thought it was extremely well done. Quite frankly, I was very curious that today's government rejected the recommendation of the CITT. It is there do to the analysis and to make appropriate recommendations.

We have the other question to argue it from the other side, and the member may want to comment on this. A lot of employment is related to importation of bicycles and bicycle frames. Barbecues, et cetera from China also face an import surtax.

Maybe the issue is a little bigger and a little more balanced in terms of how we address cheap labour on imports and how we balance the need to sustain jobs in not only the manufacturing but also in the distribution, wholesale and retail of those imported products.

• (1525)

[Translation]

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to hear that my Liberal colleague is concerned about the Canadian International Trade Tribunal ruling on bicycles, given that when he was in power the Bloc Québécois placed tremendous pressure on the government to implement the Tribunal's recommendations. The Liberal government did nothing.

Naturally, now that it is in opposition, the Liberal Party seems to have a renewed interest in the matter and thus shares our disappointment in this regard.

In terms of the Asian competition, there are ways to keep our jobs. We must better support our companies. Some years ago, in the 60's and 70's, there was talk of the complete disappearance of the textile sector. At the time, some companies, with support, and modernization of technology and everything else, were able to meet the competition head on.

Recently, the lack of support has again led to the loss of several of our textile companies.

We have no other choice than to accept the competition. We are part of the free trade agreement and immersed in globalization. In the end, all that we are asking of the government is to have programs designed to help these companies be competitive.

The refusal of the Canadian International Trade Tribunal to help the bicycle manufacturers has an impact on other sectors of activity. For example, a few months ago a request by the furniture industry to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal was rejected because the evaluation criteria were not necessarily suited to its needs. The furniture industry—which wanted to apply to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal to obtain safeguards—did not proceed because the efforts of the bicycle manufacturers had cost \$100,00 in legal fees. Industry is wary of the expenses attached to making such applications.

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I believe that such mechanisms are necessary. They exist within NAFTA and we must be able to resort to them to save our jobs.

[*English*]

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, year after year the former Liberal government used to promise an industrial strategy. It promised it in election campaign after election campaign during its 13 years in power, but we never did see one. There was never a strategy overall to deal with the industrial sector in Canada.

Other ideas came from other corners of the House. The NDP came up with a green car industrial strategy that would have helped us keep industrial and auto jobs in Canada and would have helped stop the leakage in auto jobs. It would have helped us meet our Kyoto program.

Could the member comment on why the Liberals promised and promised an industrial strategy, but did not deliver it? Does he have any hope that the Conservatives will come up with an appropriate industrial strategy for Canada?

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé has the floor for a short answer.

**Mr. Guy André:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank my hon. colleague for his question.

We know, of course, that the Liberals abandoned the textile sector. There was a program, namely CANTex, but it was not suited to the new reality of the industry in terms of the emerging Asian competition. We just saw that the Conservative Party does not seem to be putting forward new assistance programs for industries.

Will the Conservatives act? I think that pressure will have to be brought to bear on the government for it to really understand the needs of the manufacturing sector. The government must also understand that the oil industry is not the only successful industry in Alberta.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Beauséjour, and it will be a great delight to do so.

Before I start, I sometimes wonder if the Bloc Québécois has a death wish. Last June it voted against things that Quebeckers believe in intrinsically. They believe in foreign aid, assistance for university students, supporting aboriginal people and the environment. Yet the Bloc voted against Bill C-48.

Then just recently, the Bloc voted for a budget that once again ignored all those things that were detrimental to students, foreign aid to aboriginal people and the environment. It keeps going down in the polls.

Today the Bloc members are suggesting, and hopefully we can change their minds, that they are going to vote against helping students, literacy, which is needed in this modern world, the Kelowna accord and modern research. We know lots of research is being done in Quebec. How can it keep denying Quebeckers the things they want and then expect to go up in the polls?

I want to talk today about building a foundation for a nation. Any party that wants to be in government should build the foundation upon which a nation can grow in this world. If we compare that foundation to the foundation of a house, the cinder bricks under the ground are not that exciting or newsworthy, but they are absolutely essential to a good structure, a solid house and a great nation.

The Liberals put a number of foundations in their platforms over the years. I will go through some of those. Many are lacking at the moment in any vision of the nation and we will be imploring people to take into account the foundations that are so important to building a successful country in today's shifting world.

It is even more important today because the foundations in the world are shifting not only because of the permafrost melting through climate change, but because the knowledge base upon which all employment and learning is based is shifting so quickly.

The very first base is child care, early learning and development at the early stages. Many scientists say that is the most critical stage in a person's life. If the options have been removed to get the development necessary so they can go on to all other stages in life successfully, one of the bricks of the foundation is missing. If one brick is missing, as we know, the house will start to tilt and fall over. To take out the \$10 billion that the Liberals put into that foundation of early learning so all children could get an equal chance and parents could have a choice in the development of their children is a critical mistake.

Supporting the environment is absolutely fundamental. There cannot be an economy if people cannot go to work because of smog. If their time is spent in hospitals and the hospital costs are so high that the government has to increase taxes, we are then not competitive and there are no jobs. The mass cancelling of the environmental programs, which happened almost by stealth by the letting them expire on March 31, is going to show in the long run damage to the economy and to the health of the nation. Hopefully that will be before the next election,

In the foundation of a house, no brick is more important than any other brick. Even the weakest bricks have to be strong. It is like a chain is only as strong as the weakest link. We have to help everyone wherever they are in the foundation. That includes aboriginal people. As people know, for years aboriginal people have been below the general population in many determinants such as deaths in child birth, levels of education, incarceration and health.

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Governments over the years have constantly put large investments into both basic services, the ultimate solution of self-government in land claims and healing with the residential schools agreement, so that base will not be another weakness, a foundation block that will crumble, causing the house to crumble. These determinants have been going up over the years with these investments. They have been improving, but there is still a great disparity.

● (1530)

When a historic agreement is made between the Government of Canada and the first nations people, where everyone worked together, the premiers, the first nations leaders who came up with the solutions and identified the problems, and it is broken, it breaks the great faith of the nation of Canada. It would have been so easy to have kept this historic agreement. That is going to be a very dangerous weakness in the foundation blocks of this nation.

I also want to talk about the labour market partnership agreements. The educational system, the training, the apprentices, everything is far more important today. Probably more pressure is put on today's students than ever before because the knowledge base keeps changing. They need more and more. We need to have lifelong learning, workplace training and all kinds of skills. In particular in Canada, unlike some European nations, we need special emphasis on skills. While we are doing quite well in university training, although I will mention some assistance problems in that area, we are lacking tens of thousands of tradespeople. We need investment in that area so we can catch up with the workforce.

The answer is not just to bring people from somewhere else to fill these jobs. It is not like 100% of Canadians are already employed. The first solution is to ensure that Canadians are skilled and trained for these roles. For people with disabilities, we have made great advances over the years by providing money for these them to be trained to get into the workplace.

The biggest opportunities in our country are for young unemployed aboriginal people. The Liberals were putting in place a special program to train them so they could fill that huge gap in the workforce. It would have taken a burden off any other programs.

Also when new immigrants come to Canada, they are not always job ready. They need advancement in skills or at least a coordination of skills with existing skills and language. We certainly need investment in those areas.

We need lifelong learning. It is no longer like the old days where we learned a trade in high school or trade school and then we were set for the rest of our life. We need constant learning and upgrading and we need some of that training in the workplace.

For all these things, we had set aside \$3.5 billion, a huge amount of money, to strengthen these skills, to get job readiness and to have successful workplace participation for first nations people, Métis, Inuit, aboriginal people and for older workers as well. We were working on a strategy for them. I know other parties agree that this is a very important dynamic.

For the indirect of costs of research, we need to keep up research in this knowledge based and changing world. We need to fund the increased costs of research, the three major granting councils, to keep our leading spot in the world. If we do not do this, we will fall

behind. We need to accelerate commercialization, and we made great investments in that area.

We were going to invest \$550 million in education for students so 55,000 more low income students could get into the system. For regular students, \$6,000 would have gone toward their tuition. For low income students, \$12,000 would have gone toward their tuition. As well, there was money for graduates, for students studying abroad and general improvements of the student funding systems.

In my last minute I will talk about the poor. Once again, for low income people, we have another potential weakness in the foundation of our house, a brick that could crumble and the whole house could fall. How are we going to strengthen a weakened block by increasing their income tax from 15% to 15.%, by lowering their personal deduction \$200, by taking away the basic low income young child tax credit and by taking away the EnerGuide program that would help them improve their houses so they would not have to pay the huge energy bills?

● (1535)

I am hoping that members will support this motion. It demonstrates that there are building blocks and foundations of a nation that need to be supported for people at all levels, from the highest education to the poorest and the most vulnerable.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague and I was intrigued with his early comments about the Bloc members and how he was very upset and could not believe that they were going to support the budget.

The last budget was a phenomenal budget. It was one that Canadians have really embraced. Even the latest polls show that over 70% of Canadians think this is a great budget. But it is more than that. This is a budget that this individual supported a few days ago and this House supported unanimously. I find it a little disturbing to see this kind of lecture coming from my hon. colleague who just spoke. I wonder if he would describe the contradiction.

● (1540)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, that was a very humorous remark. As everyone knows, there was a mixup in the House of Commons when one of the Conservatives unknowingly, and we are not blaming anyone, did not speak in the appointed speaking order and the budget was passed.

As the member knows, the Liberals voted strenuously against the budget and for very good reason. That is why I was so shocked that a party that is progressive like the Bloc would support it.

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How could anyone vote for a budget that would take \$12,000 away from low income students and give them \$78 for school books? I asked our college library and was told that every book is on average over \$100.

In fact, a Conservative member, when asked what we could do for low income people said that they could go back to school with the book subsidy.

How could anyone support a budget that took away greenhouse gas funding programs? The Conservatives cancelled a whole slew of them. We had 22 programs related to transit, wind energy, renewable resources, car emissions, and large final emitters. They took all that away when the world is in such crisis.

As the NDP leader said today, it is raining in Antarctica. In the north the permafrost is melting, the roads we depend on for business are melting, and there are climatic challenges around the world.

Finally, how could anyone vote for a budget when we had the greatest surpluses in Canadian history that could be shared equally among everyone? Instead of giving the tax breaks equally to everyone, and I have no problem giving them to everyone, the Conservatives took them away from the poor, increasing their tax rate from 15% to 15.5%, reducing the basic deduction by \$200, taking away the child tax credit, and taking away the assistance to help poor people make their houses more inefficient. That is shameful, and that is why I would have voted against the budget.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my Liberal friend criticize us for not supporting Bill C-48, the budget implementation bill.

I wonder where he has been for the past 13 years. During his 13 years as a member of the ruling party, he never recognized the fiscal imbalance. He never agreed to protect the aircraft industry on which Quebec relies heavily. All he has done is protect the automotive industry in Ontario. As a government member, he never tried to save our industries in the manufacturing sector, including those in the Eastern Townships, where 5,200 jobs were lost in a single year.

The member is really in no position to lecture me today.

He did not lift a finger either when we asked that the government unconditionally transfer the \$800 million for day care, since we have our own system which is working very well.

The Bloc Québécois will be opposing this motion. I would like to ask the member this. How will the motion put forward by the Liberal Party today prevent the centralizing government from interfering in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction? I would like an answer.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, it is no secret that we gave millions of dollars to the manufacturing industry in Quebec for various programs over the years.

However, if the only reason the Bloc would support the budget is the fiscal imbalance, what was in the budget on the fiscal imbalance? There was a promise to study it in the future. That is a great promise on which to support a budget.

In fact, the Conservatives aggravated the fiscal imbalance by taking away hundreds of millions of dollars from Quebec for the child care program that it would have received without this budget.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity to deliver a speech in this chamber with yourself in the chair. Therefore permit me to congratulate you on the honour you have been granted by the House.

I would also like to begin by congratulating and thanking the hon. member for Halifax West who has seen fit to table this important motion in the House today. Particularly because it is a personal interest of mine, I would like to thank him for the outstanding work he is doing on behalf of post-secondary students and institutions in Canada. As spokesperson for the Liberal Party, the hon. member for Halifax West has worked very hard to improve students' access to post-secondary education in Canada. Therefore I congratulate him and thank him for having tabled this important motion in the House of Commons today.

I believe that this is an important discussion. I have listened to the speeches of other hon. members today. This is an important moment for the House of Commons, because it is discussing an issue like the importance of a competitive economy in dealing with the new markets developing in the world, but also an issue that is close to me—as I was saying earlier—namely the role of the national government in helping students gain access to higher education in Canada.

I have always thought that Canada's future is in the hands of our educational institutions, whether elementary or secondary, which obviously lie within provincial jurisdiction, or post-secondary, for example, the colleges. Close to my riding, the New Brunswick Community Colleges do extraordinary work. As the member for Beauséjour, I am very lucky to represent the community of Sackville where Mount Allison University is located. The hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe and I share the major region of Dieppe, Moncton, Riverview, and it is my personal honour to specifically represent the Dieppe section and therefore the many students attending the Université de Moncton.

Here perhaps is an entirely appropriate example of the federal government's role in higher education, in that it can really touch the lives of students and families. For example, the children of francophone families outside Quebec have the possibility of going to the Université de Moncton. Over the years, the federal government has contributed a huge amount of money to the Université de Moncton in support of the official languages programs. Often in the same year it has contributed tens of millions of dollars so that the Université de Moncton and other francophone communities outside Quebec may have quality institutions of higher learning.

*Business of Supply*

We worked appropriately with provincial authorities to support institutions, such as the Université de Moncton and Mount Allison University in my riding. Not only did we try to support these institutions, but we also decided that it was important to support students. In the past, we gave money to some provinces, for post-secondary education, for example. Then some provinces—not just provinces run by Conservative governments—decided to reduce their income taxes. Right before an election, that is probably the kind of thing that would get some attention. So the provinces took the money the federal government gave them for education programs, for example, and reduced taxes.

I have always found such measures disappointing, because I have always thought that the federal government had an important role to play. I am one of the members of this House who will encourage the government to expand its role and increase its involvement in post-secondary education. This is not about interfering with provincial jurisdiction. That is not the issue. However, we do have to work with the provinces. For example, we have to help them financially so that our educational institutions, which are so important for our future economy, will be among the best in the world.

As I said, and as the hon. member for Halifax West pointed out in his speech earlier today, the former Liberal government decided to support students for very important reasons.

• (1545)

Even in my riding, when I attend graduation ceremonies at a number of post-secondary institutions—as I will be doing two weekends from now—I meet young people and I ask them what they plan to do next year. Far too often, a young person will say to me that they would have liked to go to college or university, but it is too expensive. They decide to work for a year or two, thinking they might go back to school the following year. Sadly, and far too often, young people do not go back. They enter the workforce with the potential and desire to pursue higher education, but their family does not have the means. Young people are not able to save enough money from well paying summer jobs. For all sorts of reasons, they do not go to college or university.

The motion before the House today encourages the government and hon. members to support the idea of a federal government commitment to reducing the barriers to higher education.

• (1550)

[*English*]

For the first time ever, students are facing a barrier to access post-secondary education. In the past, a lot of the discussion centred around financing of provincial governments in terms of education. I am one who believes the Government of Canada needs to get much more involved in directly supporting students with the cost of their post-secondary education. The motion speaks to that very well today.

It is no longer enough to offer students loans. The Liberal government had proposed major increases in student loan programs, but we also advocated a contribution, a grant, or a bursary that would help low income students. I hope to apply that program to other students because increasingly even for families with middle incomes, the cost of post-secondary education is now a barrier.

I mentioned a moment ago that there is nothing more disturbing to me as a member of Parliament than to attend a high school graduation in my riding and meet young people who have the ability and the desire to go to university or college, and decide that they cannot because of the cost, or they may decide that they do not want to graduate with a debt load that can be absolutely excessive. That is why the Government of Canada has a key role to play in directly transferring money to students to reduce the barriers to access.

For the first time in generations, I have grandparents talking to me about the cost of education for their grandchildren. It is very worrisome in an economy of increasing global competitiveness, when we are facing European countries with a very high level of education, that Canadians in many cases are not receiving the education that they desire and the education that they are able to achieve because of financial needs.

I would like talk about my own province in terms of some of the demographics. The member for Fredericton, for example, knows very well and has worked very long and hard on an issue in New Brunswick that was designed to lift up the young people of our province, and to lift up the economic future.

At a time when the nation's population is growing, the population of New Brunswick is shrinking. At a time when the average number of years of education is increasing, it is decreasing in New Brunswick, and the average age of the population is also advancing.

In my province if a person is getting older and less educated, it represents a very serious economic challenge. One that is faced by some of the global competition and the emerging markets that colleagues spoke about very well earlier today.

The member for Fredericton and members of Parliament of the Liberal Party from New Brunswick had worked on a plan in partnership with the provincial government to invest in education, to invest in training, and to make our province a living lab of interesting social policies and innovations. This opportunity was lost by a Conservative government that is more intent on cutting taxes for rich people than helping students. I find that distressing.

There is a great deal that could be done. The House has an important role to play and today's motion gives us an opportunity to reflect on these matters.

**Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member for Beauséjour about a particular program. This afternoon my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster, who is the NDP spokesperson for people with disabilities, and today's motion mentions people with disabilities, mentioned an initiative by the Muscular Dystrophy Association, a national wheelchair strategy initiative, which is intended to back up its belief that a wheelchair is a basic need for Canadians who require them.

*Business of Supply*

Right now there is a real patchwork of different programs across the country. In some provinces, and I think the member's own home province, it is very difficult for people who require wheelchairs to obtain them. Before the province will help, they have to rely on their own resources and all of their own savings, go to charities, or even hold a bake sale to obtain a wheelchair. We know how limiting that is in their ability to participate in the labour force and in the community.

The national wheelchair strategy that is being proposed would ask for national standards to ensure that the levels of service and funding provided to those in need of a wheelchair are consistent across the provinces and that there be federal transfer payments to enable all provinces to provide full funding for their residents' wheelchair needs.

I wonder if the member for Beauséjour, given the needs of people particularly in New Brunswick, might be able to support that kind of program as a way of ensuring the full participation of people with disabilities in our workforce and in our communities.

• (1555)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, at the outset let me say that I share very much the hon. member's view that the Government of Canada needs to do more to help Canadians with disabilities reach their full potential. Whether it is as participants in the workforce, in other social activities or in their own families, there are huge barriers in our society that persons with disabilities face.

I have thought for a long time that this probably should be the next major social policy innovation in our country, to reconcile ourselves with Canadians with disabilities.

Provincial governments have a patchwork of programs. My impression, as the member for Burnaby—Douglas said, is that my province of New Brunswick lags behind many others. It is certainly something that as a New Brunswicker I am not proud of at all.

The hon. member described a program where the federal government would directly assist, for example, in providing wheelchairs or other services.

A big issue in my constituency is access to community centres. Some little rural communities have one basic community infrastructure, a Lions Club, a golden age club, a senior citizens club, a Knights of Columbus hall that is not accessible to persons with disabilities. We do not have a federal program that could provide \$20,000 or \$30,000 to make it accessible, to work in partnership with the community to put a lift or an elevator in the local centre. It is a huge weakness in federal policy. I am not one who thinks we should hide behind jurisdictions. We should work with provinces and put up federal dollars. These Canadians in many respects are among the most disadvantaged in our communities, particularly in small rural communities like the ones I represent.

I find the idea of the member for Burnaby—Douglas very interesting. It is certainly one that I would be interested in supporting. I would hope that all members of the House would accept that we could do more to support these very worthy Canadians at a time when society could look at doing more.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague and neighbour two questions on perhaps gaps in his commentary.

Since we now know that the tax credit for buses was really designed as an economic development plan to send Atlantic Canadians to Fort McMurray, would he comment on that?

Perhaps he would also comment on something that dovetails with his support of post-secondary education and that is the growing gap between provinces on literacy. He knows well that regions of our province are suffering with 50% to 60% literacy rates when the national average is 73%. It obviously ties into economic development. I would be interested in his comments.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The member has half a minute.

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:** Mr. Speaker, half a minute to respond to the two very, very important points of the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe is not enough. Like him, I was appalled by the Conservative position that economic development should be found in a one way bus ticket or a one way U-Haul to western Canada or to some other economic region. It is an unacceptable policy that a member would suggest that today in a committee. I share the member's deep concern about that.

I think the Conservative government is intending to evacuate federal support for literacy programs. There is one in my community for a group that is looking at dyslexia in Kent County. We cannot even get an approval. It has been on the minister's desk for weeks. It is a very, very frustrating time. The Conservative government has no intention of supporting these worthy programs.

• (1600)

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton Centre.

I thank the House for the opportunity to speak to this important issue. The motion talks about something that is very near and dear to me and my constituents. There is no question that the number one issue in my riding at the present time is the lack of a labour force because of what is happening in Alberta.

My colleague was just explaining that a tremendous number of individuals from Newfoundland and Atlantic Canada are moving to Alberta to take the opportunity of having a great future in the oil patch. We like that. It is not necessarily that anyone has to come. The opportunity is there for people to come and we wish for them to exercise that because the need is great and the opportunity is equally as great.

*Business of Supply*

It is not a secret that because of the growth in the oil sector we have outstripped the rest of the country within the last 12 months as far as job creation is concerned. What we are seeing in the oil patch is something that we have never seen in Alberta either. We saw a boom in the oil patch in the 1970s but it was really a shadow of what we are seeing right now. When I go back to my riding and talk to people who have worked in the oil patch they explain how accelerated the demand is and what the opportunities for work are.

This is good news and bad news. We know that we need professional jobs not only in the oil patch, but in science and in technical services as well. We also need people in entry level jobs. In all those sectors we need to match the individuals who come to look for work with the opportunities that are there. That becomes the magic that would be the best result for everyone on both sides of this situation.

Alberta faces a significant shortage. How do we deal with it for the future of Alberta? Are we going through a bubble in the oil patch or is it something that is going to be there for a considerable amount of time?

When I look at Alberta's wealth and the opportunities there, it has nothing to do with Alberta. These are natural resources that have been there for many years and will be there for many more years. It is not only the 100 years of projected levels of extraction from the oil sands, but we are also looking at coal bed methane which is just starting and the projection is 635 years in that industry and another 800 years in coal.

Are they finite resources? Absolutely they are. Do they need to be managed properly? Absolutely. We need to make sure that we maximize our benefits and broaden the economic and social horizons in Alberta and across the country. All of Canada gains when provinces are strong. People in Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan, British Columbia or any of the other provinces where people are looking for opportunities can come and work and then go back to their respective homes after being fulfilled in the job. The wealth is really quite significant.

In Alberta and Canada in general we are facing a serious shortage of tradespeople. We cannot get them just from going to Atlantic Canada, Saskatchewan or any other place. We are going to have to do more. We cannot build a nation by just looking at our own national labour force. We have to go further than that. We have to make sure that we increase skilled labour from all sides. That is what we intend to do.

To excel in the global economy Canada needs a competitive edge. We need to create a climate that encourages investment and innovation. We also need to improve the skills of Canadian workers and promote lifelong learning. We also want to encourage more people to pursue a career in the trades by reducing the cost of apprenticeship programs. We have seen that in our budget. We are going to be talking about some of the things in the budget that address the problems. We have to take action to increase apprenticeship support and apprenticeship programs. We will consult with the provinces, the territories, employers and unions on new measures to promote the careers in skilled trades.

●(1605)

This is graduation season and many members of Parliament go to a lot of ceremonies to address the graduates. I have had the opportunity to address graduates right across my riding. I take note of what their plans are in the fall. Those plans have progressively changed over the last three or four years. More and more individuals are coming out of high school and deciding not to go on to post-secondary school. University has become a much less coveted place for them to go. Many are going into the trades. This concerns me to some degree because I am a great advocate of education, but I am also a great advocate of the right education for individuals so that they can provide for their families in the future.

Apprenticeship jobs in my riding and in Alberta in general likely outstrip most university graduate jobs. We have to look at how we are going to deal with this. We have dealt with this in our budget by allowing a tax credit of 10% for apprenticeship wages up to a maximum of \$2,000 per apprenticeship per year. The apprenticeship incentive grant is a cash grant of \$1,000 a year for the first two years of an apprenticeship program in one of the red seal trades. We are providing \$500 million over the next two years to boost the ranks of skilled trades in Canada. This will benefit about 100,000 new apprentices across Canada.

We know that the cost of tools is a barrier for many of those in a trade or those who are considering entering a trade. Our budget provides a tool tax deduction of \$500 a year.

Those are some of the things we need to do in order to deal with the massive shortage of skilled labour not only in Alberta but right across Canada.

Our government wants to increase access to post-secondary education as well. We know that in order to compete in the 21st century education has to be a strong component. The Conservative government is providing \$370 million of new investment to foster excellence and accessibility to colleges and universities. We are also eliminating the federal income tax on income from scholarships, bursaries and fellowships. This will benefit 100,000 students at a cost of \$95 million over two years.

We are also providing a textbook tax credit which will benefit about 1.9 million Canadian students at a cost of \$260 million over two years.

This government is expanding eligibility to the Canada student loans program by reducing the parental contribution requirements. This means another 30,000 Canadian students will benefit from this proven program.

These measures alone will not solve our skills shortage. Alberta faces a potential shortfall of 100,000 workers over the next decade. Forty per cent of manufacturers surveyed in Alberta are facing crippling production difficulties because of the lack of labour.

The Conservative government is going to make sure that our young people have better access to education. We are going to push for students in Canada to get an education, but we have to go farther than that.

*Business of Supply*

Immigration also plays a part. When people from around the world come to Canada we have to match their abilities to the jobs we are asking them to do. We are going to make sure that their credentials are good not only for them but for Canada. If an individual is trained in another country and we do not accept that training, we are not doing that individual and our country any favours. We have to understand that they have the ability. We have to recognize their credentials as soon as we possibly can so that new Canadian citizens can enter our labour force and become productive members of our society.

It is no wonder that this House voted unanimously for this budget because it is exciting. This is the most exciting budget we have seen in this House for many years, at least in the last five that I have been here. I am proud to be part of a government that has introduced a budget like this one, which deals with issues in a concrete way. These are not pie in the sky ideas. These are concrete ideas that will help Canadians, that will help our labour force. They will certainly help ridings like mine and in fact all the provinces to become stronger which will make a country that will be very strong into the 21st century and beyond.

•(1610)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I share the member's interest in the issue of skills training and it is good to encourage apprenticeship. However, the idea of giving employers a tax credit to solve the problem of skills is one that I am not convinced will do the job.

The previous government had signed labour market partnership agreements with the provinces of Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Ontario to help people facing obstacles to employment. However, a lot of unemployed Canadians cannot simply walk into the workforce and be ready for apprenticeship.

In fact, the new president of the Nova Scotia Community College, Joan McArthur-Blair, gave a speech in Halifax recently and said that the number one problem the community college faced in Nova Scotia was literacy. With those labour market partnership agreements, the previous government had committed \$3.5 billion over five years, which the new government has cancelled entirely.

What would those agreements have done? They would have promoted skills development in and for the workplace. They would have improved literacy and essential skills. They would have enhanced the workforce participation of aboriginal people, another group that definitely faces obstacles. They would have helped people with disabilities. They would have helped new immigrants. All of those groups face obstacles entering the workforce and what did the new government do? It took away the funding that would have assisted those people in getting ready for the workforce.

There is no guarantee or certainty in my mind that employers will hire these people and give them apprenticeships if we do not give them other assistance to help them prepare for that and help remove the roadblocks they face.

Does my hon. colleague not agree with me that supporting those labour market partnership agreements would have been a good idea? Should the government not look at doing this sort of thing in the future?

**Mr. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right in the sense that we need to do everything we can to reduce the barriers to higher learning for our young Canadians. I think those were the nuts and bolts of his question. However, on how we get there I think he is suggesting that this one vehicle should make that happen.

Illiteracy is something we have to fight. Every nation in this world has to fight it. An illiterate population serves no one. Education is mainly a provincial jurisdiction but we can do some things to help that out.

I had the opportunity to meet with a first nations group in my riding just recently and was excited to hear that it had taken the Alberta curriculum and designed a program through e-learning off their reserve and connected 17 other reserves to it. The result is that their program has a 75% completion rate. I would challenge any reserve population in this country to match that stat.

It is exciting to see that some of those ideas are out there and we are looking very seriously at them. That kind of innovation will help.

More than that, in the budget we made sure that immigrants coming to this country would get through the red tape and that the barriers to the labour force would be reduced. Do members realize that there are 13 different jurisdictions, 15 different regulatory professions and 400 different regulatory bodies that an individual faces when they come into Canada to get them from there into the labour force? We set up an agency to sit down with these individuals, catch them when they come into the borders and address their needs so they can get into the labour force as soon as they possibly can and become productive Canadians.

Those are some of the specifics that are in the budget, which is why the member likely voted for the budget. I applaud him for that. He did the right thing then and he should continue to do that, and we will have a great country.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The honourable member from Shefford for a brief question.

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief. I will have the opportunity to ask other questions later in the day.

I feel we are getting off topic. We are talking about education, but that is not the whole problem. Far from it. The problems experienced by industry are caused by competition from emerging countries, including China and other Asian countries.

What can we do to help these people? We need a policy to help companies be more competitive.

I would like to ask this question of the hon. member opposite. How does he perceive the Canadian industry that must face Asian competition? What measures does he propose to improve Canada's competitiveness with respect to Asian markets?

•(1615)

[*English*]

**Mr. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, we live in a competitive world and we need to be able to compete.

*Business of Supply*

As a government we can redesign the environment in which businesses work in order to give them the competitive advantage. We can do that by lowering some of the taxes, which is what we have seen in the budget. We have lowered taxes by \$20 billion to allow individual Canadians, businesses and corporations to compete.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Halifax West for raising the important subject of Canada's economic well-being.

We share the hon. member's belief in the importance of investing in Canada's prosperity for today and the future. The measures that we have introduced in budget 2006 were designed to promote today's economy and ensure a prosperous tomorrow.

The 2006 budget, in the words of Thomas d'Aquino, president and chief executive of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, commits "to developing a comprehensive, results-focused competitive agenda".

These glowing words of praise, I believe, result from the wide spectrum of investments the budget contains. It is a budget that recognizes everything from the importance of supporting skills development and learning; from apprenticeship to post-secondary education; from academic infrastructure to research and development; from youth to older workers to new Canadians. It is a budget for everyone.

However, I would like to focus on how it aids and supports the needs of my province of Alberta.

Canada is enjoying a 30-year low in unemployment rates. According to Statistics Canada, Alberta is well ahead of the rest of the country in employment growth, and that is no secret. This high employment rate is good news. The only flip side we are seeing is that employers are watching positions go vacant. There is no question that there is an urgent need for skilled workers.

This is especially true in Alberta where the oil industry is becoming increasingly sophisticated. There is a need for highly educated workers in research and development, as well as skilled workers on the ground, workers who require higher levels of familiarity with technology. Accompanying this oil boom are all the spinoff industries, especially construction where skilled workers are a necessity.

Having visited Fort McMurray recently with the hon. member for that riding, it was brought home to me how critical the situation is. The total revenues of the oil and gas industry in Alberta represent 6.1% of Canada's GDP at basic prices for 2004 and the industry is in desperate need for workers of all kinds.

Budget 2006 addresses those needs. We have targeted support for post-secondary education and university research in recognition of the important roles they play in increasing Canada's productivity and the standard of living of Canadians.

Our support measures, in the words of the hon. member for Halifax West, "strengthen Canada's hard-won global lead in publicly funded research and development".

The Association of University and Colleges of Canada has endorsed these budget commitments. The association's president, Claire Morris, said:

We are pleased with the budget's support for university research, as well as the government's recognition of the important role that research plays for Canadians. These increases in research funding underline the government's commitment to promote a more competitive, more productive Canadian economy.

The budget also supports a more highly educated workforce by directly helping students through exempting all scholarship and bursaries from income tax, providing a textbook tax credit and expanding eligibility for Canada student loans through a reduction in the expected parental contribution.

The budget also invests \$1 billion for provinces and territories to support much needed investments in post-secondary infrastructure and equipment. An institution, such as the University of Alberta, for example, could use this money to improve laboratories and upgrade testing equipment.

In my own riding of Edmonton Centre, the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology has an ambitious and very exciting plan for investing hundreds of millions of dollars over the next 10 years to catch up and then keep pace with the rapidly expanding technology and the ever increasing requirement for more skills in the workplaces of Alberta and the rest of Canada.

As I mentioned, construction is booming in Alberta and the demand for skilled workers is high. Our budget addresses this issue and we will be consulting with the provinces, the territories, the unions and the employers on new measures to promote careers in the skilled trades.

In fact, the measures that we have introduced have been so well received that rather than outlining them myself, I will quote directly what the business manager of Local 183, Tony Dionisio, said:

The cash grant of \$1,000 per year for the first two years of an apprenticeship program recognizes the importance of these programs to labour supply. ...The new deduction of up to \$500 for tradespeople for the cost of tools in excess of \$1,000... also indicates to us that this government recognizes the importance of construction to Canada's overall economic growth.

The budget also encourages the hiring of new apprentices by offering employers an apprenticeship job tax credit of 10% of the apprentice's wages up to \$2,000 per apprentice per year.

Once again I will use the example of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology. Its aggressive and forward looking approach to apprenticeship training has placed it at the forefront of this area in Canada. Seventeen per cent of all apprentices in Canada are trained at NAIT and this budget encourages that excellent performance and contribution.

• (1620)

I spoke of the changes in industries that require higher and higher skill levels. These demands sometimes displace older workers. While older workers perform well in the labour market, some face difficulties adjusting to new demands.

*Business of Supply*

We have committed to undertake a feasibility study of measures to help such workers, including the possibility of income assistance and retraining. Canada needs their talents and experience. Our government wants to see older workers continue contributing to the economy and their own well-being and is committed to looking at ways to do just that.

Budget 2006 contains important measures to upgrade the learning and skills of Canadians but even so, with our changing demographics and aging population, we face a skills shortage. Alberta alone faces a potential shortfall of 100,000 workers over the next decade and over 40% of manufacturers surveyed in Alberta are facing difficulties owing to labour shortages.

At the same time, we have skilled immigrants, both here and those waiting to come into the country, who can help to fill these requirements but are unable to do so because their credentials are not fully recognized. Alberta's petroleum industry, for example, attracts people from around the world whose skills are needed.

We have taken measures to address the situation of putting this untapped pool of skill and expertise to work for Canada. Budget 2006 announced the creation of the Canadian agency for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. We will be consulting with the provinces, territories and other stakeholders in the establishment of the agency so that new Canadians can put their skills to work.

Those are just some of the many measures we are taking to promote Canada's continued growth and success. It is a budget that inspires optimism. As the president of the Council of Chief Executives said, his organization looks forward to:

—working closely with the government...to shape a business environment that will inspire Canadian enterprises from coast to coast to 'go for gold' in global markets and will ensure growing prosperity and a well-being for Canadians over the next generation.

We welcome his organization's cooperation, as we do that of all Canadians, in making this a reality.

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member said that he had recently visited Fort McMurray with the member of Parliament for Fort McMurray—Athabasca and that there was a labour shortage there.

The member for Parliament for Fort McMurray—Athabasca happens to be the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. As the parliamentary secretary to the minister for communities, I wonder how he views the position that he took this morning before the human resource development committee suggesting that the Government of Canada should do more to encourage and allow Atlantic Canadians to move to Fort McMurray, Alberta to deal with the labour shortage.

Is that the policy of the Government of Canada? Does the member believe that is how we deal with unemployment in Atlantic Canada?

I did not hear the member mention first nation Canadians, as he talked about the need for more labour in Alberta generally but in Fort McMurray particularly, which is the fastest growing community in Canada in terms of young first nations students. He also did not mention the fact that the Kelowna accord had set aside \$1.8 billion for education over five years to deal with the very significant

problem and challenge of the first nations community, which would have benefited the country and the community. His government chose not to do that and I wonder how he would respond to that given the labour shortage in Alberta.

● (1625)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, on the first question, members on the opposite side have been using that all day. It is a completely disingenuous and twisted approach on what the member from Fort McMurray said. If that is the best they can do in terms of debate this will be like duelling with an unarmed man.

However, I am glad the member talked about the aboriginal situation because the government is in fact doing a lot for aboriginal students in Alberta and in the rest of Canada. Canada's new government is making significant contributions to aboriginal workplace participation, including a five year \$1.6 billion partnership initiative through the aboriginal human resources development strategy.

I can actually speak directly to the case of the aboriginals in Alberta. The oil and gas industry, which some members of the House like to criticize, is doing a tremendous job in bringing aboriginals into the workforce. Fully 12% of Suncor's workforce in Alberta is aboriginal. Other big companies, like EnCana, have gone out of their way to include aboriginals in their workforces and to give contracts to aboriginal companies.

NAIT has gone to the extent of equipping trailer trucks, 18-wheelers, that it takes out to the reserves in northern Alberta to teach aboriginal people, young and old, to give them opportunities to participate in the economy of Canada. This government and the Government in Alberta is doing a tremendous amount for natives across Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** I hope, Mr. Speaker, that I am allotted a little more time than when I asked my first question.

When the member says that it is disingenuous, is he taking Alberta as the standard of reference for industry? If so, I will point out to him that industry accounts for only 8% of jobs in Alberta. So, in terms of industry and competition, he did not pick the right jurisdiction. With respect to industry, Quebec and Ontario would be better choices. Enough with all the talk about Alberta. We have heard enough. Anyone serious about dealing with the real problem will look after industry, and, as I indicated, industry is mainly concentrated in Quebec and Ontario.

Therefore, as regards assistance for workers, I will raise two points, starting with the bicycle industry. The ruling party has left the workers in this industry in limbo, by stating that they get \$67 less on each bicycle they make. This is encouraging to consumers. But when we put forward a motion on gasoline prices designed to encourage consumers, this government again encouraged an industry which just happens to be based in Alberta. What a coincidence, because that is all we keep hearing about.

*Business of Supply*

Then, the government claims to help industries with a tax cut. I will point out that, in order to benefit from a tax cut, one has to pay tax to begin with. The fact is that many industries cannot benefit from a tax cut because they do not pay tax because they are not making any profits because the government is not looking after them.

My question is this: What will your government do for industry in Quebec and Ontario, so that these people can withstand the Asian competition?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

[*English*]

The fact of the matter is that Alberta is contributing to the industry in Ontario and Quebec. For example, between 2000 and 2020, the oil patch will add \$885 billion to the Canadian GDP. Suncor alone, one single company in Alberta, has 500 subcontractors in the province of Ontario and many more in Quebec.

They are creating thousands and thousands of jobs and providing prosperity for all of Canada because Albertans, like this government, care about all of Canada and we will do whatever we have to do to support this country.

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to comment that in my riding of Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, small to medium sized business is the backbone of the riding. Trades are a key component. There is indeed a critical shortage with respect to trades. I really like the Conservative position because it is very direct and very meaningful to business and to tradesmen themselves.

I want to ask the hon. member a question. There are a lot of trades in Alberta. What sort of feedback has the member received from business and apprentices, or people considering being apprentices, on the programs that have been put forward by the Conservative government?

**Mr. Laurie Hawn:** Mr. Speaker, I have a list of quotes that the member may be aware of. However, I do not have time to read them. Let me just say that people like Scott Macivor, chief executive officer of the Ontario Construction Secretariat, Leah Myers, president of Durham College, Peter Woodall, chair of the automotive and motorcycle programs at Centennial College in Toronto, and many people I have met in my own province of Alberta, are thrilled with this budget and what it means for apprentices in the workforce in Canada.

• (1630)

**Hon. Andy Scott (Fredericton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate. I thank the hon. member for Halifax West for his good judgment in bringing it forward at this time.

I see that the hon. member for Halifax West is discussing the contents of the debate with the parliamentary secretary for human resources and skills development even as we speak, so I extend congratulations for that level of cooperation, but I have to bring to the attention of the members on the other side the fact that the Conservative Party, when running for office, had committed to something pretty spectacular for students, that being a dedicated

transfer. The students interpreted that it could be as much as \$4 billion a year. That did not happen.

I have always been of the view that it would have to be a dedicated transfer to the provinces. Perhaps that will be the reason why the government will not end up doing that, but it speaks to the need to provide money to deal with the very specific question of access. I know that the Conservatives speak of the fact that they used the money available to them at year end, as a result of legislation last year, to do infrastructure investment. That is a good thing, but it certainly falls well short of what would have happened had they actually acted on the fall update, as was available to them.

The reality is that students in Canada need significant tuition relief. What was proposed in the last election by our party was that we would make available \$6,000 in tuition relief for each student. By comparison, what they got was in fact \$80 for book relief. My son at Acadia University in Nova Scotia advises me that this would in fact allow students to purchase half a book—if they could buy half a book.

Also, in the programs that should have come forward but did not and are necessary, according to the proposal by the member for Halifax West, is a proposal having to do with programs for first nations, Métis and Inuit Canadians. The reality is that \$1.8 billion was booked in the Kelowna accord to deal with education and that has been abandoned by the government. Anything else the Conservatives may say falls well short of what that would have been able to accomplish, not only in the context of resources but also in terms of the consensus that it arrived from.

Also, the programs for Canadians with disabilities would have been a wonderful opportunity to make a significant investment to allow for Canadians with disabilities to enter the labour market at a time of labour market shortages. It is the 25th anniversary of the International Year of Disabled Persons and I would have liked to see something in the budget on that. I welcome it being brought to our attention by the member for Halifax West.

Mr. Speaker, I am advised that I have forgotten to tell you that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Labrador.

In terms of access to post-secondary education, the government simply has failed, either to meet the commitments that it made or to honour the commitments that we made. Either way, students would have been a lot better off.

Having said that, I note that skills and skills development also have been mentioned. Again, let us talk about the Kelowna accord offering educational opportunities, both in post-secondary education and in elementary school programs, in which we had collaborated with the provinces to deliver education in the provinces to build a system that would have the kinds of results that were targeted over 10 years. All of that went for naught as the government has refused, so far, to honour that accord.

I bring to the attention of members the fact that in the fall we will be debating a motion that I am bringing forward to allow for families of children with autism to receive support from the government so that they can also contribute to their maximum ability in the labour force.

*Business of Supply*

The next item I would like to speak to has to do with R and D. My hon. colleague from Beauséjour mentioned that in my province of New Brunswick, the province is shrinking in regard to the position in terms of educational achievement relative to the national average, and the space is growing larger.

The reality is that the investment in Atlantic Canada in R and D by the federal government, while it has grown in the last 15 years from a little less than 3% to 5%, still falls short of what would be a simple per capita calculation. If knowledge is the basis of the economy of the future and our part of the country is receiving less investment than others, then we cannot expect to close the gap in terms of prosperity between our region and the rest of the country.

• (1635)

The reality is that on research, as was mentioned by the member for Halifax West in one of the earlier speeches from the government side, during the past 15 years Canada has in fact moved itself into the position of being the country with the most federally funded research in the world per capita. We do not compare with the rest of the world in terms of private sector investment, nor do we compare with the rest of the world in terms of other state investment, but at the federal level we in fact lead the world. This has meant that we have increased funding for the granting councils, for SSHRC and NSERC. The Medical Research Council became CIHR. We have done a lot of innovative things with regard to research.

In the research chairs program, we introduced the idea of a 6% set-aside for universities where the research share in the nation was less than 1%. It meant 120 research chairs for universities that otherwise would not have been able to acquire the same number of chairs necessary to move the region forward. That was not just for Atlantic Canada. That would have been for small universities across the country.

We also introduced the indirect costs program. I think the member for Halifax West identified the indirect costs program specifically. It is so helpful to small universities. If a small university has one or two or three scientists, the cost associated with supporting their work is almost the same as if the university has 25 scientists. The reality is that there has to be a way for the federal government to support those small universities to do the kind of research that is so important for the future well-being and prosperity of the country.

So for all those reasons, I want to commend the hon. member for Halifax West. I think this is one of the crucial issues facing the country in terms of equity, in terms of opportunity that would be available so that no student in the country who would otherwise be able to attend post-secondary education of any type, vocational, academic or otherwise, would be denied for lack of funds.

I think that is critically important, not just on the equity argument but also because it is in the long term best interests of the economy of Canada to have an educated workforce. Either way we look at it, the reality is that the member for Halifax West has brought to the House's attention a glaring omission. The reality is that it should have been there and it was not.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I notice that my colleague has chosen from the vast cafeteria of issues in the Liberal opposition day to speak mostly on post-secondary education.

I am glad that he seized on this, because I do have something that I would like his views of and his comment on.

It seems to me that just before I got into politics in 1997, it was the Liberals who changed the method of transfers to the provinces for health, post-secondary education and social welfare. They changed it from the former mechanism or vehicle to the CHST. At that time, that funding transfer went down from \$19 billion to \$11 billion. It was the most ruthless cutting, hacking and slashing in history of the Canada health and social transfer. It was a 40% cut.

At that time, the post-secondary institutions took a hit. They took such a blow that they are only now crawling out from under it. Only now are they back up to the level they used to be at in being able to provide reasonable post-secondary education.

In my own home province of Manitoba, the universities had no choice but to off-load that burden onto tuition fees and create an untenable situation for students. It created an unmanageable situation in that if we wanted to be ready for the next century, and if communities wanted to be ready for the next knowledge generation, all the kids could do was pay higher tuition fees.

Manitoba froze tuition in 1999. As soon as the NDP formed the government, it froze tuition fees. They are frozen to this day, seven years later, which is really tough. Frankly, it is not working well, because the infrastructure of our universities is crumbling. But we have decided to hang on and keep fighting the federal ruling parties of the day to make them give us our fair share of the Canada health and social transfer so that we do not have to watch the bricks and mortar of our of our universities crumble and we do not have to burden our kids with graduating with something the size of a mortgage.

It is the member's party that started this whole fiasco we have, this crisis in post-secondary education. I want to know how he justifies that in his own mind, because he was sitting around the cabinet table during that terrible time.

• (1640)

**Hon. Andy Scott:** Mr. Speaker, I will turn it right back to the hon. member and talk about disingenuous. If he cared anything for post-secondary education, he would not have pulled the plug on the fall update last year and those kids would have got the money. He ganged up with the Conservatives to bring the government to power, so he can answer for that.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one thing I have noticed in debate is that some members choose to talk about the budget in response to the motion as opposed to talking about the intent of the budget, which is to deal with, rather a piecemeal political expediency based argument to a vision argument, a long term strategy for Canada and the best interests of Canadians.

What the member talked about was extremely important in terms of adding to the strength that we have to build toward a secure long term future for Canadians.

Would the member care to comment on why it is important for us to be careful not to fall into the trap, like the Conservatives, of using political expediency with an eye on another election and instead governing on behalf of the best interests of Canadians by adopting a long term vision for Canada?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Andy Scott:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is right to point out the necessity of making the kind of investment that the member for Halifax West refers to in the motion, having to do with competitiveness, post-secondary education, and those groups in society that need particular investments, Canadians with disabilities, first nations, Métis, Inuit Canadians, so they can be part of the future of the country in a prosperous country.

There is a recognition that knowledge, skills, investment in research and innovation will be the critical investments in the future. It comes quite naturally that people will talk about those long term investments because at the end of the day, in many cases, it will require resources.

I mentioned earlier that we have moved the yardstick dramatically in terms of publicly funded research in Canada. In our case in Atlantic Canada, we have improved our percentage of national research from under 3% to just about 5%, and we are 7.5% of Canada, but that is not quite enough. Those kinds of investments require a vision to make that investment make sense. This vision is sadly lacking in the government.

**Mr. Todd Russell (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to this important and wide-reaching motion. I congratulate my colleague from Halifax West for his initiative in bringing it forward.

There are many important points to make, but I would like to limit my time to several of the issues that are most important for the people in my riding.

One of the things the motion calls for is labour market partnerships. Through the economic and fiscal update of November 2005, our Liberal government had committed \$3.5 billion over five years for a workplace skills strategy in partnership with the provinces. These labour market partnership agreements with the provinces would have promoted skills development, improved literacy skills and helped to bring aboriginal people into the workforce. Three provinces have already signed agreements, Ontario, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. I was hoping my own province would be able to do the same. But this initiative is now in limbo.

There was nothing in the budget, and the Conservatives will only say that the issue is part of the fiscal imbalance discussions with the provinces. Given that the Prime Minister's promise on natural resource revenues, also part of the so-called fiscal imbalance issue, has been demoted in his words "to a mere preference", I would be very worried if I were a premier who had counted on a labour market partnership agreement.

We have heard a lot of bluster today from the Conservatives. They say they are committed to post-secondary education, but their actions speak for themselves. Instead of providing help for tuition costs, they provide a tax credit for \$80 for textbooks. Instead of investing in post-secondary education for skills training, the Conservatives have cancelled \$3.1 billion in Liberal initiatives to make post-secondary education more affordable. Instead of investing in research, the Conservatives have further weakened our universities and research institutes by slashing research spending.

There are real dangers in this approach. They are troublesome indeed. Not only does it exasperate the regional disparities among the provinces, where some provinces are better able than others, through public and donor support, to fund universities, but it is also short-sighted on the global scene. Not only do Canadians have to compete for ideas with the U.S. and Europe, increasingly we have to watch the emerging economic powerhouses in Asia and Latin America. In Labrador we are already very sensitized to the fact that we live in a globalized world. Domestic, political and economic concerns have led foreign countries to pull back from their traditional military training in Happy Valley-Goose Bay at 5 Wing.

The fishery has faced major market pressure and competition from overseas, not only from Europe but especially from China. Our mining sector does rise with demand in China and India, but also faces stiff competition from Australia, Africa and Latin America. We ignore the challenges of a global marketplace at our own peril.

We have to invest in our brightest minds today so Canada will continue to be an innovative place to work and invest. We need to invest in technologies and research that will ensure primary industries, like those in Labrador, remain competitive and that we add value to our economy through processing and manufacturing. This would be progressive.

Instead, we hear just today that the Conservative government has a policy where it wants to ship our brightest and best to northern Alberta. This is a policy that has been advocated by the member for Fort McMurray—Athabasca and the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

On a lighter note, this would not be much of a solution because if all of us easterners went to northern Alberta, then there might be a few Conservative MPs who would find themselves on the unemployment line. That is for another discussion.

The motion also calls specifically for targeted initiatives to strengthen skills, job readiness and successful workplace participation among aboriginal peoples. My hon. colleague could well have had my riding of Labrador in mind when he drafted that part of his motion.

● (1645)

Tomorrow I will be attending the high school graduation in Sheshatshiu, one of the two Innu communities in Labrador. Too often we hear bad news about aboriginal communities, but Sheshatshiu is increasingly a good news story. This year's graduating class is one of the biggest in many years.

There is a real awakening to the importance of education and skills development among the Innu, Inuit and Métis communities in my riding. In recent years, we have seen increased participation in post-secondary education and the skilled trades. There are Inuit, Métis and Innu who have gone on to become nurses, doctors, engineers, lawyers, mechanics, carpenters and the like.

The development of the mine at Voisey's Bay has helped many aboriginal Labradorians enter the skilled trades. Not as many as I personally would like to see, but it is a start.

*Business of Supply*

There are other developments on the horizon in Labrador: a massive resurgence in the iron ore mining industry; potential hydro developments; and renewed interest in our proven uranium deposits. If aboriginal and other Labradorians are to benefit from these developments, we have to be in on the ground floor.

For aboriginal people, in particular, the Kelowna accord would have made great strides in this regard. On November 24, 2005, the hon. member for Wascana, then finance minister, committed and booked over \$5 billion in funding to meet the Government of Canada's commitments under Kelowna. Kelowna included \$1.8 billion over five years for aboriginal education initiatives.

The Conservative government has torn up that agreement and tossed it aside. The money that we had committed is no longer available. The government has done so over the objections of every aboriginal organization in the country. It has done so over the objections of the premiers who themselves signed onto the Kelowna accord. It did so with the complicity of the Bloc Québécois and the NDP in precipitating an early election. I wonder what the aboriginal people in the respective ridings of the members in those two parties must think about what they have been involved in.

The government has put into jeopardy the real progress that Canada and Canadian first nations, Métis and Inuit people were starting to make in terms of educational attainment, skills and employment. I worry about the repercussions of these cuts not only for today, but for the many years and maybe for generations to come.

Strong social programs, including education and training and a commitment to aboriginal peoples, provide the basis for long term, strong economic growth. Few places is this more true than in Labrador. However, the Conservatives have stuck to their fend for one's self ideology. It shows up time and time again in their budget and in their program cuts. They are turning their backs on people and regions, which can use constructive programs. We are looking for a hand up, but the Conservatives only see such programs as a hand out. It is disgraceful.

It is for these reasons that I would urge my colleagues to support the motion put forward by the hon. member for Halifax West.

● (1650)

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his contribution, particularly in an area which I think the majority of Canadians feel has been totally neglected and made a non-priority by the government. I am talking about our first nations people and the cancellation of the Kelowna accord. The Conservative government is denying that such an accord even exists, which is absurd.

Our first nations people should be addressed. There are some special circumstances and conditions which should be taken to address the skills and the job readiness for their workplace participation as well. There are enormous opportunities, whether they be in the petroleum sector, the mining sector or in other emerging sectors, such as diamond mines, which will require skills training, et cetera. It is absolutely beyond me that the Kelowna accord has not only been cancelled, but its existence is denied. An enormous amount of money was dedicated by the previous government.

This tends to paint a picture of a value and a vision difference between the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party.

Would the member like to comment on the deficiencies he sees in the Conservatives' cancellation and their denial of the existence of the Kelowna accord?

**Mr. Todd Russell:** Mr. Speaker, the facts are clear and they were again reiterated by National Chief Phil Fontaine yesterday. There was a deal.

One of the hon. members from the Conservatives asked if there was a signature page. The comment was also made that there was no signature page on the health accord, where we transferred \$42 billion, but we transferred that money. For a Liberal, a handshake is as good as a signature on a page and that is what was done in Kelowna. The National Chief said so himself. When we make a deal with aboriginal people, we uphold our deal with aboriginal people and other Canadians.

The Kelowna accord offered so much for national organizations. We heard in the aboriginal affairs committee from groups like ITK, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the Assembly of First Nations, and we are going to hear from the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Métis National Council next week. These organizations already consulted with their members at the local community level, and drafted plans to implement and put into force what was in the Kelowna accord, to meet the objectives and targets that were set out in Kelowna.

The Conservative government, with the help of the NDP and the Bloc, just pulled the carpet out from under aboriginal people. We were left with nothing but our plans, with no fuel to invigorate them or make them meaningful for our aboriginal people at the community level.

There are numerous opportunities for aboriginal people in all parts of this country and in all sectors of this country, but we cannot do it without the resources. Aboriginal people know what is best for themselves and that is what the Kelowna accord offered, an opportunity for aboriginal people to implement and construct the plans necessary, stemming from their own priorities, and implementing them in a way that was culturally sensitive so that we could meet those targets.

This is an opportunity lost. It was an opportunity where we could have bridged that gap, particularly in the labour force and marketplace. It is a sad reflection of the Conservative government's vision for aboriginal people and other Canadians who need it.

● (1655)

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Windsor West.

Although NDP members may support this motion, and I guess the question before all of us is how can we not support it, we need to go beyond this motion, with its fine rhetoric, wonderful words, list of important commitments and ask the following questions. Where have the Liberals been? How do they have the audacity and nerve to come to the House just a few short months after an election when people said they were sick and tired of broken promises and empty rhetoric?

*Business of Supply*

Let us not ignore the fact that we have before us a motion that is a shopping list of Liberal hypocrisy. Can we call it anything less?

**An hon. member:** Why are you supporting it?

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:** A Conservative member asks why we are supporting it. If one looks at the current situation and addresses the need for this country to be ready for the new 21st century economy, obviously the NDP believes, the Conservatives may not believe, in investing in our human resources.

We believe in investing in programs that will help Canadians access this new economy, not spending, as my friend from the Conservative side just said, willy-nilly for the sake of scattering tax breaks and tax credits, as the Conservatives did in its their budget.

We believe in spending according to the priorities of Canadians, so that they can help themselves and create an environment where young people can access education and training to build a future. We need to create economic growth that we all so desperately need, especially given the fact that our birth rate is not growing very much and accepting that we have a serious shortage of skilled labour, and that our dollar is now almost par with the United States, which is having a huge impact on the manufacturing sector.

We believe in strategic investment that grows the economy and at the same time helps people develop their full potential.

It is difficult to support a motion when we feel this frustration with a Liberal Party that feels it can change its spots or colours just like that, on a dime. Let us not forget, when we look at this motion, that it was only about five or six months ago that we were faced with the Liberal government's economic update.

If we look carefully at this motion, we will see that it is very similar to last fall's economic update. There have been years of surprise surpluses and the Liberals saying the cupboard was bare. Then, last November, when they knew an election was imminent and when in fact their own leader said he was going to call an election within two months, suddenly they were able to say the cupboard was no longer bare and provided us with a shopping list of goodies.

They served us up a virtual feast of program initiatives that they could not—

**Hon. John McKay:** You voted against it.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:** My colleague from the Liberals, a member on the finance committee who was formerly the parliamentary secretary, again comes forth with this tired old Liberal rhetoric of New Democrats voting against—

**Hon. John McKay:** Come on, you guys missed out.

**Ms. Judy Wasylcia-Leis:** What, an economic update? Was there a budget? Did I miss it? Were there some new initiatives that we had an opportunity to support with enough time to debate? I do not think so.

• (1700)

All we had last fall was an act of desperation to pretend to Canadians that there were some programs, some ideas that would actually deal with years of disappointment on the part of Canadians

and make up for the fact that these Liberals had totally neglected working families over a decade.

Let us be clear. The new suit does not fit. The Liberals would have us believe that they were just a cocoon, waiting to emerge as a beautiful butterfly, when in actual fact they are only the old dung beetle.

Let us be clear with what we are dealing. It is absolute hypocrisy on the part of the Liberals to come forward with a motion with a shopping list of items that they had 13 years to bring to Canadians.

I want to clarify for the Liberal members that we will not vote against the very ideas that we have been pushing forward for years. We will not vote against the need for investing in education for which the NDP has been calling for over a decade. We will not vote against a provision that recognizes that the Liberals cut the heck out of our social programs, beginning with the 1995 federal budget, all in the name of balancing books.

They were always telling us that they had to do this so that we could be stronger for it. They had to kill health care to make it better. They had to rip the heck out of our education system in order to improve it. It does not work that way.

The members are now beginning to be aware of the fact that we have to always be cognizant of our human potential. While we want to ensure balanced books, bring down deficits and bring down our debt, we do not want to drive people into poverty, hunger, desperation, isolation and alienation, because we are so fixated on the fiscal end of things we lose sight of the human potential of this great land.

Let us not forget the kind of human deficit that has been created by these Liberals over the last decade. They talk about how great the economy is, conveniently ignoring the fact that we have seen more children than ever go to school hungry. We are no closer to the 1989 Broadbent resolution to eradicate child poverty, then by the year 2000. Here we are in 2006 with the problem even greater than it was in 1989.

We cannot ignore the fact that there are hundreds and hundreds more food banks in our country today because Liberals chose to put their fiscal management issues ahead of any kind of human development.

We saw this country drop from near the top position in terms of the human development index to the bottom. We saw this country take a dive internationally, and even as recently as a couple of weeks a new United Nations reports shows just how deplorable is the situation.

The Liberal government had many opportunities to address these facts. I especially remember the question of aboriginal people and on-reserve housing. I was there when the Auditor General brought down her report and said that she had never had to write such a scathing report in all of the time she had been Auditor General. She pointed to third world conditions. She pointed to such deplorable conditions that we were the laughing stock of many countries around the world.

*Business of Supply*

It is very hard for us today to accept this kind of rhetorical message from the Liberals, when in fact they had a chance to do so much to make our world so much better.

I would like to now hand my speaking spot over, as I indicated at the outset, to my colleague from Windsor. I thank the House for the opportunity and appreciate the fact that we have, once again, had the chance to address the question of how to create a decent life for working families in the 21st century economy.

● (1705)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague suggested that she and her party wanted to ensure balanced books. I must say that I have seen no indication of that. Was she talking about the past 13 years? It was really 12 years, from November 1993 until January 2006. We keep hearing 13 years and it certainly is not 13 years but that is the interesting math of the NDP perhaps. She said that the NDP wanted to ensure balanced books when there was no indication, never any support from the NDP for any measure taken to balance the books, to make our economy stronger, to resolve the situation we had when our government took office in 1993 with the \$42 billion deficit left over from the Conservatives, with terrible unemployment and grave problems across the country.

We went a long way over that period to improve the situation by investing in R and D, by investing in a whole range of areas, but also very importantly by getting the country's finances in order, something the NDP refused to support over and over. What did the NDP members do? They traded these measures for 10 seats and a chance to allow the Conservatives to become the government.

If things were so bad over those 12 years or so, how did Statistics Canada find that the percentage of low income Canadians declined from 15.7% in 1996 to 11.2% in 2004? Poverty declined. How can she possibly say that the reverse happened?

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, here we go again. True to form, the Liberals just cannot get it through their heads that the Canadian people defeated them in the polls on January 23. Why? Because the Liberals chose to ignore the needs of working families; because the Liberals chose to put all their money into tax breaks for corporations; because they refused to put money into health care, child care and education.

The mover of the Liberal motion asked how could I talk about greater poverty in this country given the statistics. I will show him the statistics. I will talk to him about those statistics.

A recent report by Statistics Canada in fact showed that the disposable income inequality was virtually unchanged in 1990 compared to 1980, but grew sharply between 1990 and 2000. The result is a long term increase in disposable income inequality. During the same period the use of food banks increased 118%, so that today over 800,000 Canadians depend on food banks every month. I have already mentioned child poverty in relation to our 1989 motion.

The fact of the matter is that some people are better off. The wealthy in this country are more wealthy after years of Liberal government. The poor, the low income and working families struggle each and every day because the government has refused to invest in what is important, has refused to recognize that when a

family is in trouble and the roof is leaking, the leaky roof has to be fixed before the mortgage is paid off. That is what the government does not get. That is what the Liberals do not get and that is what the Liberals ought to do.

● (1710)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Vincent (Shefford, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the member for Winnipeg North. My question will be brief, as we are running out of time.

She said that the Liberals did not do a thing during the past 13 years, which is why poverty has increased.

Does my colleague believe that the Conservatives will do any better? I do not think so. I would like to hear what she has to say about this.

**Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis:** Mr. Speaker, the member is right.

It is true that the Conservatives made no promises to improve things for the poor. Under the Conservatives, there is no hope of creating equality in Canada.

I see that the Conservatives are really just like the Liberals. It's six of one, half a dozen of the other. That is the problem, and that is why we are having this debate today.

[*English*]

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the debate and points made by the member for Winnipeg North are well noted.

I want to focus on the auto industry in the context of today's debate. I find it ironic that the Liberals have a shopping list of things they want done in the motion, but they could never put that forth in terms of legislation when they actually had the power to do so. It is important to note the distinction that a motion discusses the principles of the House, whereas legislation would carry the day.

One piece of legislation I had been seeking since 2002, and which was promised by the then industry minister Allan Rock, and a previous minister, and then another minister from the Liberals, the member for Vancouver Kingsway, was an auto policy.

It is very important to note that we have a challenging environment in the auto industry. The assembly portion of auto manufacturing has declined in recent years. In fact there was a recent briefing with the department showing that the assembly component is substantially down in terms of the GDP revenue and the surplus that we would normally export to the United States in terms of the industry itself.

One of the most frustrating things in the current context in government is the fact that the member crossed the floor and is now the Minister of International Trade and we still do not have an auto policy. The Minister of Industry has been absolutely missing in action on many files including this one. In fact back in 2004, the then minister of industry who sat with the Liberals, and I plead with the audience to follow this ping-pong ball between the two parties, talked about having one within a couple of weeks but he never tabled it. At a subsequent industry committee meeting he did not table it when he had the chance to.

*Private Members' Business*

Why has the government not moved on an auto policy when it now owns the person who actually was supposed to be crafting one to begin with? If the Conservative government does not have one from him, why is it not holding him to account or getting the Minister of Industry to do something? That is important. The Conservatives brag about the minister's involvement in the softwood lumber sellout. They brag about his previous knowledge and his previous work as minister of industry in the Liberal government. They brag about the fact that he has delivered for Canada in that context. Putting that debate aside, why are the Conservatives not demanding the same expectations for our auto industry?

We had hearings today on auto manufacturing. Ironically the minister is once again involved in another issue that is negative to the auto industry, not only just in terms of not delivering on a promise, but now he is pushing a free trade deal with Korea. That is something the industry in Canada is against and something that our auto workers are against. We have had a briefing with the industry ministry on this subject and we know it is being offered up as a sacrificial lamb. That is unacceptable.

If the government wants to have an ounce of credibility, as it asked the minister to cross the floor, he should deliver the goods he was supposed to bring so that people of this country have some job protection.

• (1715)

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings. Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, June 13, 2006 at 5:30 p.m.

**Mr. Ken Epp:** Mr. Speaker, I think that you might find unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so that we could proceed with private members' business.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:30 p.m. so that we might proceed to private members' business? If there is no unanimous consent we will have to suspend the House until 5:30 p.m. Is there unanimous consent?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

### WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM ACT

**Mr. Steven Blaney (Lévis—Bellechasse, CPC)** moved that Bill C-286, An Act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act (protection of spouses whose life is in danger) and to make a consequential amendment to another Act be read the second time and referred to committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and all members of the House who are taking the time to listen to these remarks about

a bill that will have real repercussions on the vulnerable members of our society: women whose lives are threatened by their spouse or ex-spouse in cases of domestic violence.

The goal of this bill is simply to expand the existing witness protection program to include spouses whose lives are in danger.

I hope that this bill will receive the support of the members of this House. The bill was created due to an ugly reality, a reality that we would prefer not to see in Canada but that nevertheless exists, namely, domestic violence and its after-effects.

In my own riding, as in many others, there are organizations to help women in difficult situations. In my riding, the Jonction pour elle, in Lévis, is a crisis centre and shelter for women who are victims of violence. The centre welcomes women and children who are victims of domestic violence.

For such individuals, the Jonction pour elle—and other centres—represent a haven of peace and security. This bill is presented here today for such organizations, in order to give them the tools to help women even more—especially women living in poverty—when they are threatened by their spouse or ex-spouse. The goal of this bill is to say no to domestic violence and yes to respect, dignity and equality.

Violence is something personal that occurs in the privacy of our homes but can have a major impact on a woman's health and well-being. The measurable health-related costs of violence against women in Canada exceed \$1.5 billion a year. These costs include short-term medical and dental treatment for injuries, long-term physical and psychological care, lost time at work, and use of transition homes such as Jonction pour elle and crisis centres.

These women came to see me in my riding, at my constituency office. I was happy to receive representatives of Jonction pour elle, just as every parliamentarian is happy to receive representatives of agencies working to improve quality of life in the riding.

I told them I would be pleased to visit them and I asked them where their centre was located.

Pardon my ignorance, but I did not know that such shelters do not disclose the location where they help women, because women who stay there feel threatened by the violent behaviour of their spouse or ex-spouse. This was my first encounter with this reality: the location of these shelters cannot be revealed.

In other words, women also need protection. As I was saying earlier, the purpose of this bill is to allow these women, in extreme cases, to go so far as to change their identity, change their social insurance number and even move to another town. People do not make such decisions light-heartedly.

These are extreme measures, but in today's society, we must make them available in order to avoid unfortunate incidents such as the one that occurred in the riding of the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River. It was a very tragic story. A woman who felt threatened was unable to get proper protection and ended up in a coma. The person who committed the physical violence was released after serving a four-year sentence.

• (1720)

It is important that legal tools be provided for these centres that help women in need. That is why I am asking for the support of this House.

Let us review some statistics. Attacks against women by a spouse or partner are nine times more frequent than attacks against men. Spouses are involved in half of the homicides committed within a family. Unfortunately, the reality is that in our country, at this time, there are homicides and that half the murders of women are carried out by individuals known to them, hence the need to protect the potential victims.

Family violence is also a problem that can have lasting consequences for the individual and for society in general. In addition to the physical, psychological, social and economic impact on those directly affected, family violence has significant social and economic costs for health care systems, civil and criminal justice systems, housing and shelter services and community services.

Going back to the reality of the Jonction pour elle in Lévis, in the riding of Lévis—Bellechasse and Les Etchemins, last year, more than 131 people, including 69 women with their children, were sheltered in this centre. As I said earlier, for these women, the centre is a haven of peace, a place where they can feel safe and heal their psychological and physical wounds. Unfortunately, the centre had to refuse 139 requests last year. Clearly, there is a need in my riding, just as there probably is in other ridings. The purpose of the bill before us today is simply to provide a tool for protection. But the bill touches on a broader issue: quality of life in our family units. We need family units where people can thrive and feel respected. Spousal violence is truly the seed of destruction in our families, and it must be eliminated.

• (1725)

[English]

One-third of women, who were assaulted by a partner, feared for their lives at some point during the abusive relationship. Therefore, there are women whose lives are threatened by their previous or actual husbands. In almost two-thirds of wife assault cases, violence occurred on more than one occasion, so we can see there is a repetition pattern.

In total, in 2001 almost half of all female victims and a few male victims were killed by an individual with whom they had had an intimate relationship at one time, either through marriage or dating.

We can see the importance of protecting those women who feel that their lives are threatened as well as males in some cases.

[Translation]

I could go on at length, but I think I have covered the basics for the members of this House, who have granted me the time I needed

*Private Members' Business*

to explain this bill. In short, it seeks to amend the Witness Protection Program Act to include spouses whose lives are threatened. This bill, which my colleague from Prince George—Peace River has been introducing for six years, goes beyond partisanship.

I thank my colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for seconding my motion regarding the bill. In closing, I would just like to thank the members of this House for their attention, and I invite them to support this bill.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for his speech and all of the thoughts he expressed.

[English]

In the domain of justice, there are resources that probably need to be applied to such a program, if it were expanded. Has done any consultation with the various providers of these services, I think particularly of provincial governments and the like, to see if resources would be needed for this? If that is the case, does he think his bill inferentially calls for an expenditure of money or will there be an increased transfer in the fiscal imbalance talks to provinces to take care of his bill should it be successful?

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** Mr. Speaker, the member asked a responsible question. When we propose bills, we have to check the financial implications of those bills.

[Translation]

I would like to tell my colleague that consultations with the departments of Justice and Public Safety are now underway.

First of all, this is an existing program, and I have some statistics on it right here. For example, the total number of RCMP witnesses admitted to the program dropped by 45% from 60 to 34 in 2002 and 2003.

I think this is a program for extreme cases that affects very few people. But knowing that the program is available is effective at dissuading a lot of people.

I would like to reassure my colleague that this measure will expand the existing program, and we are doing the numbers. Early estimates indicate that any costs added onto the existing program will be minimal.

• (1730)

[English]

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, women in every riding across the country are going to thank my colleague for bringing forth this bill. Every person in Canada, no matter sex, creed or whatever, has a right to feel safe. The vulnerable need protection from society by government, and I applaud the member for bringing this forward.

*Private Members' Business*

Our government has made it very clear that we will get tough on crime. We will lock up those who commit crimes. As the saying goes "real time for real crime".

Does the member think his private member's bill will enhance what the government is trying to do in toughening up crime laws and protecting the vulnerable all around?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Steven Blaney:** I thank my colleague for his question.

I think that people will not necessarily remember who introduced this bill or who supported it, but I hope they will remember that all members of the House voted for it.

People will be able to say that the members of the 39th Parliament did the right thing for the safety of women in extremely dangerous situations.

In answer to his question, I would say that many measures must be implemented to ensure that women in Canada, as well as children and the elderly, have the basic social protection and safety they need to function. That is why I think that this is one element of the more comprehensive vision underlying our government's policies to promote safer, healthier communities.

[*English*]

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I too wish to commend the member opposite for his speech and for bringing forward this bill. The spotlight must be shone, on a very frequent and regular basis, on domestic violence and abuse.

I am pleased for my part to speak to the bill. I practised family and criminal law for some 25 years prior to being elected in June of 2004. I had occasion to represent literally hundreds of spouses who had been abused by their partners. I also represented, as a component of my criminal law practice, individuals who had been charged with domestic or spousal assault.

As I understand the rationale for the bill, it essentially seeks to provide spouses with an opportunity to avail themselves of the various protections provided by the witness protection program; that is, to provide them with that opportunity in the situation where their spouse is abusive.

The Witness Protection Program Act is quite broad in its definitions. For instance, the act currently states that it is:

An Act to provide for the establishment and operation of a program to enable certain persons to receive protection in relation to certain inquiries, investigations or prosecutions

Clearly, spouses are not in any way excluded from the definition section of the act and, as it currently stands, spouses would clearly fall within the category of persons who may seek assistance under the terms of the Witness Protection Program Act.

It is sad to say that I have received or heard of numerous complaints about the operation of the witness protection program. The complaints I have heard referred to funding shortfalls and the inadequacy of the protections within the act. Individuals who are registered with the program often encounter a variety of problems ranging from a difficulty or inability to obtain employment to difficulty in obtaining official or government identification.

With respect to the former problem, it is trite to say that it is difficult to obtain employment when one can furnish no references for the consideration of one's prospective employer. Nor can one provide that prospective employer with any type of work history.

I have also heard of situations which have resulted in the protected witness or person being not at all protected, given that the person who was dangerous to the protected person discovers the address or location of the protected person.

Although I appreciate that the imperfections of the current program should not, in and of themselves, derail a broadening of the program, it is important to consider carefully whether a seemingly already overburdened program can realistically deal with a new strata or category of persons who could become registered under the act.

Entering into the program has some short and long term consequences. Certainly more extensive or comprehensive measures should be enacted to ensure that persons wishing to enter the program are made aware of exactly what it is they are signing on to. There should be a requirement that the individual contemplating signing on to the program seeks independent legal advice so the short term and long term ramifications of entering the program can be clearly explained to that person by competent counsel.

As I understand the current situation, a large number of individuals, who are registered with the program, sincerely regret they ever entered the program. They claimed that they had no idea of what they were agreeing to and no idea as to the full scope of the program.

Unquestionably, the idea or concept of protecting abused spouses as much as possible is most laudable. It is trite to say that abused spouses and certainly abused children need as much protection as is possible. However, there is family or relationship dynamic between spouses which, in my view, distinguishes the spousal situation from the situation covered in the current Witness Protection Program Act; that is the typical situation witness and accused person.

A typical witness and an accused person, for instance, do not have children together, often do not have any degree of shared history and will have absolutely no incentive whatsoever to repair their relationship or to maintain a level of contact for the sake of children who, of course, do not exist.

● (1735)

In the typical situation in which there are children of the relationship, how appropriate would it be for the children to have no contact with their grandparents, that is, the parents of the abusive partner, if the relationship between the children and their paternal grandparents was positive and beneficial for those children? Certainly such a positive tie would be severed upon the entering into the program of the abused spouse.

What of the children's relationship with their father who, although clearly abusive of the mother, may otherwise enjoy a positive relationship with his children? If the abused partner, the children's mother, enters the program, how feasible would it be for the children to continue the positive relationship with their father?

I have been professionally involved in cases in which spousal abuse was present, typically abuse perpetrated by a husband against his wife. At times, the husband eventually curbed his abusive or violent tendencies, normally with the assistance of counselling and behavioural modification. In due course, typically after a separation of several months, the parties reconciled and the husband's abusive behaviour became a thing of the past. Essentially, the family members, including the children, were reunited. The husband returned to the family with a greater appreciation of his wrongdoing and with a renewed purpose to treat his partner with respect and dignity.

I appreciate that those are the success stories and that there are undoubtedly as many stories of failure, where the cycle of abuse continues. However, it is my current belief that an abused spouse is much more than simply a witness and that the remedies which our system should offer an abused spouse should be more helpful and more creative than the witness protection program, laden as it is with operational difficulties, lack of funding, et cetera.

Like the member opposite, I am familiar with a very well-regarded shelter for abused women in my riding of Brant. The management and staff of Nova Vita Women's Services provide caring, helpful shelter for abused women and children and also provide insightful programming for abusive males. In my view, such shelters and programming should be the focus of our efforts in dealing with the issue of domestic violence.

There should likely be separate legislation established that works within the proper jurisdictional framework to deal with cases of abuse where there is a need to provide additional protection, or even relocation, to a spouse whose life has been put in danger by her spouse. I would agree that in many cases there is a need to provide additional protection to a spouse; however, I do not necessarily believe that expanding or broadening the witness protection program is the best way to deal with this problem.

• (1740)

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first, I want to commend the enthusiasm of the new member for Lévis—Bellechasse, who has just found an important issue to which he thinks he has found a solution in such a short time.

The Bloc Québécois will support the bill in principle. We should, however, point out to the hon. member the many solutions he should apply to solve particular problems. The strategy he has chosen may not be the most appropriate, in our opinion.

The witness protection bill is a strategy that was developed to protect a small number of witnesses against very powerful criminal rings with considerable resources available to them to take revenge on anyone who betrayed them. This bill will extend that protection to a much greater number of individuals threatened by people who do not have the same kind of resources to make an attempt on their life.

It is very likely that the case assessment process is not appropriate, and the same with the proposed solutions. Also, it is obvious that costs will explode. Under the existing program, providing protection for a single witness can cost some \$400,000 a year. Did the member estimate how many people could have access to that program?

### *Private Members' Business*

Furthermore, to get into this program, people must appear before an RCMP commissioner in Ottawa. How are we going to ensure the same procedures for people in the Northwest Territories, Quebec, the Maritimes and everywhere else in the country? This does not seem to be the most appropriate way to reach the objectives set by the hon. member.

I also understand that he, too, has discovered what I discovered as a young member in the past, taking care of all sorts of problems in my riding, including the problem of domestic violence, namely, that shelters offering women a safe refuge often try to keep their location secret. Why do they try to keep it a secret? So that the husbands they are running from cannot find them. Why? Because they are afraid.

By the way, I am not sure whether any members have seen the Quebec film *The Novena*—it is quite sombre but was very well received. That shows the quality of the Quebec audience, which was able to appreciate a film of such depth. The film tells the story of a psychiatrist whose serious problems were set off by one incident, when one of her patients was killed by her husband while she was at a women's shelter. The psychiatrist witnessed the murder. This fear exists not only in the movies, but in reality, as well. This fear is everywhere.

Frankly, I hope that the hon. member will continue to take this issue as far as he possibly can. It is obvious that he is aware of the enormous risks facing women.

There are certain things he must also realize. I am pleased that he is thinking of measures to prevent crime for his first bill, rather than following the lead of the majority of his party, which cannot seem to find a solution to reducing crime apart from the deterrent effect. Furthermore, earlier he used the word “deterrent” himself. I found this word somewhat inappropriate, because it is a tool for prevention that the member wishes to put in our hands. He has within reach—as we all do—a proven tool for prevention. However, his party is about to sweep it under the rug.

• (1745)

I would like to point out to him that since the establishment of the gun registry, murders of women involving firearms—which is something that worries women's shelters that do not give out their addresses—decreased by 31%, whereas murders of women not involving firearms increased slightly, by 2%, during the same period. This may convince the member that there is something there to be studied. In addition, it will be much more difficult to apply section 111 or 112 of the Criminal Code if we abolish the gun registry. When women fear for their lives—or when other people, the police or family members, fear for the lives of a woman who does not dare press charges—they can go before the courts and request that the individual be forced to turn in any firearms they may own pursuant to these sections. But how can the police check whether or not the firearms have been turned in if the weapons are no longer registered, as proposed by the member?

If he uses logic, and I encourage him to do so, he will make his party see the preventive value of the gun registry.

*Private Members' Business*

Last week, we held a press conference with the president of the Montreal police brotherhood. He gave examples of instances where the gun registry was used to defend spouses and prevent crimes against these women, who were afraid that their husbands would do violence to them. He gave us one striking example of an instance where the woman knew her spouse had weapons, but she did not know how many. Thanks to the gun registry, the police were able to determine that he had a veritable arsenal. As a result, they did not stop searching until they were sure they had seized the entire arsenal. They would not have been able to do this if they had not had access to the gun registry.

The member's goal is a noble one. I respect him, and I encourage him. That is why we will support him, at least on the principle of the bill. However, if he wants to show us that he is really serious about protecting women, he should think about how applying the gun registry to long guns as well as handguns has provided protection for a number of women who needed it. That is one reason for registering all firearms.

He should also think about the practical applications of the legislative method he has chosen to use. It would entail a considerable budget increase. I expect that a lot more than 64 women would apply for this system. I am told there are currently only 64 witnesses who want this protection. He must also ensure that these women have easy access to these measures so that they can have this protection. In my opinion, this should be done through the local police. It would not make sense to force these women to move to Ottawa, or to a big city when they live in the country, in order to benefit from this program.

The intention is quite noble and the proposed provisions are generous. It is a credit to the hon. member. Nonetheless, I think he should consider another method rather than witness protection. That said, we fully agree with him that women should get at least the same protection as the witnesses who benefit from this legislation he wants to amend.

● (1750)

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the member for Lévis—Bellechasse for the work he has put into this bill. I agree with the points he raised, but I also have some problems with it. I think that the current legislation offers the same protection to spouses as it does to witnesses. They would be treated the same way under the existing legislation, which is broad enough to cover them.

[*English*]

If we were to actually look at the definition in the existing law of both who is a witness and the criteria for those individuals to qualify as witnesses and qualify for the program, in a large number of cases the victims of domestic abuse would qualify.

I am thinking that at some point the proposed bill could be ruled out of order as not accomplishing its intent, although extremely well-meaning on the part of the member, to provide additional protection within our government infrastructure for victims of domestic abuse.

Having said that, I would suggest to the member that there are a number of other programs that would be better equipped and better

designed, but underfunded, that could provide this kind of protection.

I have one final point with regard to my reservations on the proposed bill. I believe this would dramatically change things if we were to follow through on the principles enunciated by the member in his comments on the bill. I also wonder if it will survive the analysis, which I know the Speaker is making with regard to a number of bills, as to whether the bill needs a royal recommendation. My own analysis leads me to believe that it may very well need a royal recommendation and may not meet the criteria to go ahead.

Any number of other programs, at both the provincial and federal levels, also are badly in need of additional funding. We have heard from some members, including the member for Lévis—Bellechasse, about the existing residences and services that are available in their respective communities. The Windsor-Essex county area has a well-known safe house, Hiatus House, for women and children who are victims of domestic abuse and violence. This is a substantial institution but it lacks the funding to fully service its client base.

When we go back and look at the history of the transfer payments, we see that the funding shortages originally started with the Mulroney Conservative government back in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It continued under the Chrétien government and then under the former prime minister, the member for LaSalle—Émard.

If we were getting serious about dealing with the repercussions of domestic abuse and violence, we would be looking at this level of government to assist the provinces and local authorities in providing additional resources to deal with those repercussions, which basically means additional transfers from this level of government. It would mean replacing some of those social service dollars that were cut originally by the Mulroney government and then by the Liberal government, and which continue to this day.

In spite of some of the money that the government has put back, almost all of that money has been in the health field. Some of the money has gone toward education but little to none has been put back. The provinces have been struggling to find additional resources to offset that money and to meet with what one can only describe as a burgeoning need in this particular area.

● (1755)

I do not want in any way to demean the effort and the intent of the member, but a greater effort would be to pressure his government, his party, to move additional funds out of the federal coffers to the provinces for this particular need. There is a crying need for it, and there is no suggestion otherwise. He detailed that in some of his comments. I certainly can support him in that regard, but I have some serious difficulty as to whether the bill meets those needs to any significant degree.

At the present time the program costs in the range of \$400,000 or \$500,000 per witness. Given the number of domestic dispute victims in this country, there is absolutely no way the budget for the witness protection program will meet, other than probably less than 1%, the needs of victims of domestic abuse and violence. It is just not the right way to go. There are many better alternatives and a good deal of it comes down to funding.

*Private Members' Business*

I want to make one additional point. Rather than expend effort on dealing with the after-effects, we very much want to deal with prevention. It would be so much easier and cheaper if we could prevent domestic abuse and violence from occurring.

When we look at what happened through the 1990s in any number of provinces, because of problems at the federal level, the governments of the day cut money from them. Then, in some cases driven ideologically by some of the more right-wing provincial governments, a number of those programs that dealt directly with male violence in the domestic setting, counselling programs and prevention programs overall, were cut. A good number of the programs in my province of Ontario were cut completely because there was no funding for them. As a result we saw an upswing in the amount of violence that went on.

During that period of time, society was expressing its revulsion toward domestic violence. In popular culture, movies and TV programs, there was a great movement to express our abhorrence of domestic violence, whether that violence was toward the spouse or toward the children. At the same time, the social service programs that really could address the mindset that leads men, particularly or almost exclusively, to that kind of violence, were being cut right across the country. Again, some of it was ideologically driven, but most of it was simply that the provinces and the local authorities could not afford the programs.

Although I appreciate the intent that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse has shown in the bill, and quite frankly if it came to a vote we probably would be supporting it, I really doubt that if it ever got to the justice committee that the committee could adequately amend it to make it work. Our efforts need to be in other areas.

• (1800)

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the private member's bill brought forward by my colleague and compliment him and other colleagues for their hard work.

I would like to start by giving a summary of the bill itself. It states:

This enactment amends the Witness Protection Program Act. Its purpose is to extend the scope of the Witness Protection Program to include in this program persons whose life is in danger because of acts committed by their spouse.

Therefore, we are talking about other criminal acts committed by the spouse and not necessarily totally in relationship to the spouse.

This private member's bill proposed by the hon. member addresses one of the five priorities of our government, which is protecting families and communities. In budget 2006, we invested in this priority. We invested \$161 million to hire 1,000 more RCMP officers and for federal prosecutors. We have put in \$26 million for victims of crime. We have put in \$20 million for crime prevention.

There is a long history of spousal violence. I would like to give the House some background. In this case, the hon. member is addressing an important concern. That concern is violence against spouses.

According to the Government of Canada's 2004 general social survey, it is estimated that 7% of Canadians 15 years of age and over, in a current, previous or common law union, experienced spousal violence in the previous five years. That is a horrendous number.

This same survey indicated that the rates of those affected by spousal violence by a current or previous partner are 7% for women and 6% for men. This represents an estimated 653,000 women and 546,000 men.

Women were also much more likely to report that they were the targets of more than 10 violent incidents at the hands of their partner and more likely to state that they were injured as a result of the violence.

Female victims of spousal violence were three times more likely than male victims of spousal violence to fear for their lives and three times more likely to take time off from their everyday activities because of the violence.

It was three times more likely that females feared for their lives compared to men. There is little doubt that spousal violence deserves ongoing attention in this country.

It is then also worth considering the focus of the hon. member's bill. As Bill C-286 focuses on the witness protection program, I would like to take some time to provide the House with some background about it.

The RCMP has been involved in witness protection matters since the 1980s. However, it has only been since 1996 that the legislative program was introduced.

This act, called the Witness Protection Program Act, or WPPA, provides legislative authority for the Commissioner of the RCMP to introduce protective measures to any person who has given information or evidence, or participated in an inquiry, investigation or prosecution, and whose involvement in the aforementioned has resulted in that person requiring protection.

The existing objective and scope of the WPPA could not accommodate the addition of a new group of victims that have significantly different needs.

The current act is, however, sufficiently broad in its definition of "witness" to include any person who reports to police an assault, whether or not that person is the spouse of the alleged attacker. The current program also is designed as a law enforcement tool to assist in the fight against domestic and transnational organized crime and, increasingly, in the fight against terrorism and the maintenance of national security.

The witness protection program in its existing format faces many challenges. I think we have heard that from members opposite. The complexities associated with organized crime investigations and the very real threat to witnesses in national security investigations have challenged the existing program's ability to provide the required services.

There is no doubt that this bill would create an increase in the number of requests for admission to the witness protection program, which the Royal Canadian Mounted Police does not currently have the capacity to manage. Additional training would also have to be provided to officers working in these specific areas and cases.

*Private Members' Business*

●(1805)

Although many of the protectees currently within the witness protection program have aided law enforcement in the investigation of significant organized crime enterprises, a new reality within Canada demands that services be expanded to those persons who aid law enforcement with national security and terrorism investigations.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police witness protection program can and will provide protection to victims of spousal abuse where the threat is assessed to warrant that level of police protection. The RCMP has advised the government that there are a number of spouses currently within the program.

The new identities for victims of abuse is an ad hoc program managed by Human Resources and Social Development Canada, which works with victims of spousal abuse and can provide effective protection measures when necessary. New identities for victims of abuse personnel work closely with local police services and other service providers to try to ensure victims of spousal abuse receive the help they need.

As many of the services and responsibilities for victims of violence are within the purview of the province and territories, significant consultations would be required prior to moving forward with any initiative that may be interpreted as extending federal involvement in areas of provincial jurisdiction. In addition, considerable and meaningful consultation with these groups and organizations that provide services to the victims is essential. This is because it may be argued that many victims would express concern about being included in a program that is essentially designed to deal with criminals and that is not currently equipped to deal with the specific needs of a victim.

The idea of further support for victims of domestic violence is a worthwhile goal. However, consideration of any new initiatives to protect or support victims of abuse, particularly if this would entail an expanded role for the RCMP or the federal government, would require careful and extensive examination of the policy and legal issues involved as well as the resources available.

Before concluding on a specific policy direction, it would be necessary to consider the extent and degree to which the current witness protection program currently provides a framework for protecting victims of spousal abuse. Any such initiatives would also require approval from the House.

I thank the hon. member for raising this matter.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-286. The intent of it may be admirable. We all know of spouses who need protection in one form or another. Many organizations across the country and in my own province assist spouses who are having difficulty and need protection. Most of these cases involve women, but not all the cases with which we end up dealing.

As the individual before me said, the purpose of the bill is to extend the scope of the witness protection program to include persons whose lives are in danger because of acts committed by their spouses. Somebody can correct me if I am wrong, but in my reading of the bill it does not indicate if the acts are criminal or not. The

wording of the bill is very broad and that gets legislation in difficulty from time to time.

The Bloc critic said that the approach was basically the wrong vehicle to do what was intended here. I agree with that criticism. That member also mentioned the cost of implementing this kind of protection. We are looking at anywhere in the range of \$400,000 to \$500,000 per individual. I believe those kinds of dollars could be used in better ways than what has been proposed in the bill.

This is a poorly thought out proposal. Beyond that, there is the issue of the human resources that would be required to manage this kind of protection. Personnel are involved. I realize dollars are available, but what will the impact be on the RCMP? The government opposite has gone to great lengths to talk about increasing the number of police officers, and that is a good thing. It is following on what we did previously. The way the bill is currently designed could in fact draw down those numbers and the human resources originally intended would not be there.

Others have spoken of the difficulty of qualifying to get into the witness protection program itself. This bill would change the thrust of the program from the way it was originally designed to operate. In my former capacity as a minister, I looked at this program fairly closely. There have been lots of complaints about its operations, everything from not enough funding to the lack of support to build a new life and a new identity. That also is one of the difficulties in the design of the bill.

First and foremost, individuals suffer the trauma of facing the abusing spouses and needing protection from that abuse. Fear and intimidation goes along with that abuse. Then they are put into a program where they lose, to a great extent, their former identity. Where is the counselling that will be needed? It is not in the bill. Moneys would be far better spent in that area, although the government opposite seems to be more comfortable building jails and that kind of stuff rather than building infrastructure to deal with some of these problems. The government does not seem willing to put infrastructure in place that would assist those people who need counselling, protection and support.

●(1810)

One of the great criticisms of the current witness protection program is that individuals lose that typical history that they have with their identity. There is the inability to get a job because they have changed to a great extent their life. There is also the difficulty in terms of getting references. They do not have the history to get an identification.

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

**Mr. Wayne Easter:** I hear chirping from the House leader on the other side but that is not unusual in this place. The House leader and the Conservative Party do not like to face constructive criticism and that is what we are offering here.

We have said that the intent is fine, but the government tends to do everything through the criminal justice system whereas social programming works better and prevention works better.

I recognize it is a private member's bill and it will be really interesting when it comes time, whether the government will allow a free vote. The Conservatives talked about free votes, but we have not seen a free vote yet in the House. Maybe this one will entice them because I know for a fact that the justice department cannot be recommending that the government support the bill, but we will see what happens as we go down the road.

The fact of the matter is that the bill, while good in terms of its intent, can be approached differently. The witness protection program is not designed to deal with the problems that the bill is addressing. I believe that at the end of the day it would create more problems than it would solve.

The member has not put a cost on this and that needs to be looked at. What would be the total cost of the program? What would its impact be on policing? What would its impact be on the witness protection program itself? There are better ways to do this through social programming by a government that would have a social agenda rather than the kind of strict justice agenda we see being pursued by the government opposite.

• (1815)

**Hon. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I understand my time will continue when we resume the second hour of debate on this very important bill, Bill C-286, put forward by my colleague from Quebec, the member for Lévis—Bellechasse.

It is a real pleasure for me to speak in support of the bill, not only tonight but at the second hour of this debate. We have heard many reservations and concerns by members opposite from all three of the opposition parties.

This is a private member's bill. I know this because at one time it was my bill and I offered it to my colleague from Quebec, and he very graciously took up its cause. He was lucky and had his name

*Private Members' Business*

drawn on the private member's draw and was in the first number of MPs to have the opportunity to present a piece of legislation in this chamber. He chose this piece of legislation.

What nobler cause is there than the protection of those most vulnerable in our society? The reason my colleague put this forward is because virtually every day individuals are in danger.

The member for Malpeque, rather than listen, is now heckling me. I sat and listened to him while he made his outrageous comments about the legislation and now he does not want to give me that same courtesy.

I was referring to abused spouses and their children and the fact that they are in danger. There is not a day that goes by where we cannot pick up a newspaper and read about another tragedy that has befallen some family because of spousal abuse. Oftentimes it is not just the spouse. About 80% of the time where there is spousal abuse, it is the wife or the female partner who is abused. Oftentimes she loses her life and all too often the lives of the children are lost or damaged as well.

What nobler cause do we have as a government, as a society, to protect the most vulnerable? That is the purpose of this legislation. I know my time is up and I look forward to continuing my eight minutes when the debate resumes during the second hour.

[*Translation*]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

[*English*]

It being 6:18 p.m., the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:18 p.m.)



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