



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, February 15, 2007**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, February 15, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

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*Prayers*

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## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)  
[*English*]

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### FINANCE

**Mr. Brian Pallister (Portage—Lisgar, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions, both honour and some regret, that I present today, in both official languages, two reports, the first being the 11th report of the Standing Committee on Finance in relation to Bill C-253, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (deductibility of RESP contributions).

This report was made necessary by the need to delay the consideration of Bill C-253 and we are asking for an extension to do so because of all the urgent business, such as income trust discussions, that has been before the finance committee over the last number of weeks.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 12th report of the Standing Committee on Finance, relating to Bill C-305.

[*English*]

The report deals with the exemption from taxation, 50% of United States social security payments to Canadians residents. Again, this report was made necessary because of the ongoing incredible workload of the finance committee and the need for us to have an extension to deal with this until a later date.

**The Speaker:** Pursuant to Standing Order 97.1(3)(a), two motions to concur in these two reports are deemed moved, the questions deemed put and the recorded divisions deemed demanded and deferred until Wednesday, February 21, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

#### HOLIDAYS ACT

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-403, An Act to amend the Holidays Act (Flag Day).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce an act to amend the Holidays Act. This private member's bill seeks to declare February 15, Flag Day, a national statutory holiday.

I think we should be celebrating the birthday of Canada's first very own flag that was first flown over Parliament Hill on February 15, 1965. What better way to celebrate than to declare Flag Day a national statutory holiday.

February is one of the few months of the year that does not have a national statutory holiday, something I hope to change with my Flag Day bill. Canada does not have a single day off between New Year's Day and Easter. Many comparable industrialized nations enjoy more holidays year than we do. Hard-working Canadians need a mid-winter break. I think it is time we celebrated this special day with a national holiday.

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

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#### EXCISE TAX ACT

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-404, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (natural health products).

He said: Mr. Speaker, this bill is a very short bill. It simply would provide an exemption from the GST for natural health products, as defined in the regulations.

I would just note that a survey from March 2005 indicated that 71% of Canadians have used NHPs, 77% of Canadians believe NHPs can be used to promote health and 58% believe they can even be used to treat illness.

The bill would simply help people who are promoting their own health by taking vitamins and using nutritional products.

I note that the new food guide includes a recommendation of vitamin D to help with bone metabolism and calcium absorption. Vitamin D will even help in the mitigation of multiple sclerosis. Folic acid is well-known for reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease. A simple supplement like chromium can help with blood sugar metabolism.

The bill would help Canadians, who are investing in their own health, to accomplish that objective and would probably help the government accomplish its objective of reducing wait times because people who are healthy will not be in the wait lines.

*Business of Supply*

I hope all members will find this an interesting bill and support this project to help all Canadians live a healthier life.

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

\* \* \*

●(1010)

**CHINA-TIBET DIALOGUE**

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am seeking unanimous consent from the House for the following motion. I move: That, in the opinion of the House, the government should urge the government of the People's Republic of China and representatives of Tibet's government in exile, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet's historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

\* \* \*

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place in the usual manner between all the parties and I believe you would find consent for the following motion. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on the opposition motion in the name of the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, 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, February 20.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Wascana have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the 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)

\* \* \*

**PETITIONS**

## CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituent, Mr. Jim Sexsmith, who has worked very hard to gather 43 signatures to support his petition to change the definition of registered party from those which have had nominations confirmed in 50 electoral districts to replacing 50 electoral districts with 231 electoral districts.

I commend Mr. Sexsmith for his energy and passion on such issues and for his service, dedication and concern for our country.

## CRIMINAL CODE

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to present two petitions to the House.

The first petition is from constituents in Sarnia—Lambton requesting Parliament to consider restoring to the Criminal Code the prudence it held prior to 1968 by removing the words “after becoming a human being” from subsection 223(2).

## REMEMBRANCE DAY

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by over 1,000 constituents, supports Remembrance Day as a national holiday.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Question No. 169 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 169—**Ms. Jean Crowder:**

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government issued in the constituency of Nanaimo—Cowichan since February 6, 2006, including the 2006-2007 Budget and up to today, and, in each case where applicable: (a) the department or agency responsible; (b) the program under which the payment was made; (c) the names of the recipients, if they were groups or organizations; (d) the monetary value of the payment made; and (e) the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office has contacted all departments and agencies to ascertain whether they have the electronic capacity to search for and sort financial information such as funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees by federal electoral riding. The results of the survey indicate that the majority of departments and agencies do not have this capacity. A manual search would require an inordinate cost and length of time. For this reason, the government is not able to provide a comprehensive answer to this question.

[English]

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski:** Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

●(1015)

[English]

**BUSINESS OF SUPPLY**

## OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.)** moved:

*Business of Supply*

That, in the opinion of this House, the government is failing to act in accordance with the democratic and open values expected of its office by imposing a narrow minded, socially conservative ideology as reflected in its approach to the judicial appointment process to dramatically increase the influence of right-wing ideology in the judiciary, its refusal to honour Canada's international obligations under the Kyoto Protocol including a refusal to act immediately to introduce regulations under the Canada Environmental Protection Act, its misconception that Canadians don't want or need a dramatic increase in child care spaces on a national basis, its budget spending cuts directed at aboriginal people and silencing advocacy work done on behalf of women and the most vulnerable Canadians even in the face of budget surpluses, its failure to protect and promote linguistic and cultural diversity, and its undemocratic assault on farmers who support the Canadian Wheat Board.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

We have a motion in the House today that calls on all of us to take a hard look at the government's record. It is a moment to ask some questions. What is the big picture? Where is the Prime Minister taking the country?

The official opposition is concerned about the direction the government is taking and this is the day on which the House of Commons gets to call it the way we see it.

We on this bench start with the standard that we set in government. We have been nation builders. We create the institutions that make our country strong: the Canada pension plan, old age security, employment insurance, medicare, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Kelowna accord and a national child care program, that is until the Prime Minister scrapped both of them.

[*Translation*]

Thanks to Liberal leadership, Canadians benefited from sound public finances and enviable economic growth. The contrast between the Liberal record and the record of this minority government is striking.

This government has no plan for economic growth, no plan for employment, no plan for post-secondary education and no plan for investment in science and research. That means no plan for Canada's future. That means no plan to help Canadians succeed.

This Prime Minister is governing only to win the next election. He has forgotten his country's future, and the future will judge him.

[*English*]

The government just does not understand that we cannot have a successful and united country unless we have a just society and a just society is one that offers everyone in Canada an equal chance.

[*Translation*]

Canadians have built a society with less poverty and less crime, a society that sends more young people to college and university and fewer to prison.

[*English*]

Canadians have abandoned the 19th century notion of a single dominant culture in favour of a constitutional and institutional framework that promotes a bilingual and multicultural diversity of peoples, including our aboriginal fellow citizens.

We on this side of the House have come to see that our differences are our strengths, unlike the Conservatives who see differences as wedge issues to exploit.

● (1020)

[*Translation*]

Thanks to the Liberal governments in the 1990s, Canada has had a budget surplus for a decade now. All Canadians should be proud of what we have accomplished together. These achievements are now threatened.

[*English*]

After just one year in office, the government has shown its true colours. The Prime Minister is turning back the clock on the social reforms of the last 30 years. It is not surprising that the Conservative Party decided to drop the word "progressive" from its name. That means we are no longer faced with the conservatism we know but with an ideological conservatism, a movement conservatism that will take Canada backward.

Bit by bit, the Prime Minister is shaping Canada into his vision and it is less progressive, less fair, less just and less equal. He cut funding for women's advocacy groups, and he was wrong to do so. If we want Canadians to have an equal chance, we need to do more to reduce economic and social inequality between the genders and not less.

In the last election, the Prime Minister told Canadians that our court system would protect them from the Conservatives if they pursued an ideological agenda.

[*Translation*]

But then he cut the court challenges program, the very program that funded a number of important cases that sought to advance equality rights. Abolishing this program is a serious step that directly reduces Canadians' ability to defend their charter rights.

[*English*]

The government also wants to appoint socially Conservative judges and rig the judicial appointment process to shift our courts to the right. Just yesterday, the Prime Minister told the House that he wants to choose judges on the basis of whether they support his criminal justice agenda. This fails to respect the separation of powers that is the basis of Canadian freedom. Governments pass laws, judges enforce and interpret them. One branch does not seek to bend the other branch to its will, except under the present government.

I again urge the Prime Minister to reverse the changes he has made in the way the government selects judges. I urge him to stop trying to politicize our judiciary.

The Prime Minister has even politicized the issue of equality in our country. He tried to reopen the same sex marriage debate and most Canadians regard this as a settled matter. We need to ask why a sitting Prime Minister would want to put into question the equality gains made by his fellow citizens.

*Business of Supply*

The Conservatives have also cut funding for adult literacy programs, calling such programs “repair work after the fact”. For the government, adults who cannot read do not count.

[Translation]

This government inherited a \$13 billion surplus, but still made \$1 billion in cuts, mainly at the expense of those people who need help the most. These Conservatives have promised to cut another \$1 billion before the next budget. What other social programs will be axed? When will it be enough?

[English]

This is a government that has plans to build more prison cells instead of child care spaces.

This is a government that has scrapped the historic Kelowna accord between Canada and its aboriginal citizens. For this government it appears to be acceptable to break faith with aboriginal Canadians once again.

[Translation]

Yesterday evening, this House adopted Bill C-288, which requires the government to step up to the plate and introduce a plan to achieve the Kyoto protocol targets. Instead of a plan, all we are seeing is fear and denial. This is not leadership. This is not governance. It is shameful. We need action and a comprehensive sustainable development plan, with accountability and targets, and we need it now.

[English]

This is a government obsessed with cutting taxes, not tax cuts that create jobs or enhance Canadian competitiveness or make it easier for Canadians to make ends meet, but tax cuts which weaken our capacity to build a just society for all. The Conservatives will strip back the government until the cupboards are bare in Ottawa and across the country, and that will weaken Canadian citizenship and it will weaken the national unity of our country.

The Prime Minister will try to hold onto power by using so-called wedge issues in the hopes of dividing Canadians. When will these politics stop? Canadians do not want a country where the values of a right-wing minority are imposed by stealth on a progressive majority. Canadians sense the reactionary drift of their government. They can feel the daily descent of their country into a place where opportunity is shrinking.

This is a progressive country, a place held together by faith in compassionate, smart and accountable government, and we are not going to get compassionate, smart and accountable government from a party that loves power but actually dislikes government.

We are not going to get national unity from an ideologue. We are not going to get the country pulling together under a party that governs for its base and not for all the people.

[Translation]

I urge all the opposition members to vote for this motion and send a clear message to this Conservative government and the people of Canada.

[English]

Let us declare that it is the opinion of this House that the government is failing to act in accordance with the democratic and open values expected of its high office. Let us draw a line in the sand. Let us say together that enough is enough.

• (1025)

[Translation]

Enough is enough.

[English]

My fellow parliamentarians, this country deserves better.

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member made reference to the just society. I now want to go through a few things. Pierre Trudeau was the person who brought in the War Measures Act and imprisoned hundreds of innocent Canadians without reason.

It was Mackenzie King who interned thousands of Japanese Canadians and took away their property rights and every civil right they ever had. It was Mackenzie King who rejected German Jewish refugees who sought refuge in Canada.

John Diefenbaker brought in the Bill of Rights, the first recognition in this country of protecting fundamental individual rights. John Diefenbaker gave aboriginal people the right to vote almost 100 years after Americans were freed from slavery.

I would also point out to the former professor from Harvard that it was Earl Warren, a Republican who was appointed to the Supreme Court of the United States, who finally brought sanity to the segregation laws in the United States and struck down its segregation laws.

The professor can try to be a professor to people in here, but he obviously was seeking refuge from this country for 30-plus years, from Liberal rule and so on. For him to come back here and lecture us about what a just society is leaves a lot to be desired.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, I am slightly surprised by this line of attack. In this House there has been consistent bipartisan support for the rights and freedoms of Canadians. The member refers to the legacy of Mr. Diefenbaker. That is a tradition that is held in respect on this side of the House.

It therefore seems strange that he should cast aspersions on the record of Prime Minister Trudeau, a man who commands the respect of all Canadians and left as his legacy a Charter of Rights and Freedoms of which all Canadians can be proud.

**Mr. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my colleague's deliberations. I find the motion very difficult to understand, first of all because of the number of priorities. We saw this with the last government and the last leader it had, when they had a very difficult time trying to come up with the priorities.

Now we see a supply day motion coming into the House in which we have the same sort of situation, where the hon. member talks about judges, the environment, child care, aboriginals and the Wheat Board. I have a difficult time with a motion like this, but let us just take these one at a time.

*Business of Supply*

First, on the environmental record, the hon. member talks about all the good things that the past government did, but the record is 35% more emissions than when Canada signed the Kyoto accord saying we would reduce them. We can compare that to other industrialized nations, such as the one south of the border, whose record is much, much better than ours.

The member talked about child care. Not one new child care space in 13 years was created by the previous government.

When it comes to aboriginals, we still have third world conditions on aboriginal reserves in this country after 13 years of Liberal government.

When it comes to the Wheat Board, I do not hear the Liberals advocating that the Wheat Board should be in control of the barley and wheat grown in Ontario or Quebec, so I am—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. We do have to give the hon. member some time to respond before time runs out. The hon. deputy leader of the opposition.

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff:** Mr. Speaker, the member opposite has raised issues about the environment. Last night, the House passed by an overwhelming majority a motion that asked the government to get serious about Kyoto. This side of the House is not going to take lessons in environmental compliance from that side of the House.

Everything we have heard from that side of the House has been one long excuse about why the Conservatives cannot do anything. They have been in office for a year. That is the point of this motion: to draw attention to the fact that after their year in office we are still awaiting serious, reliable, credible, deliverable action on the environment.

The hon. member brings up the issue of child care. This seems to me to have been a tactical mistake on his part. That is the charitable way to put it, because I was in this place when specific promises were made to Canadians that the government would create actual child care spaces. Unless I have missed something, my fellow members, I see no child care spaces at all delivered by the government.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I feel privileged to be able to discuss this motion introduced by the official opposition. To my mind, the points and themes raised in the motion are subjects at the heart of our society and our Canadian values.

With respect to judicial selection committees, my colleague for Etobicoke—Lakeshore spoke of changes the Conservative government has made that enable it to put in place the only plan it has managed to develop.

In a matter affecting all Canadians, the government's plan is to ensure that our judiciary becomes ideological, that is, that the judiciary share this government's ideology. I am not alone in saying this; all the members of the Liberal caucus and all the country's legal experts, the Quebec Bar and the Canadian Bar Association say so, too. The Prime Minister himself has also said so.

Indeed the Prime Minister finally put his cards on the table yesterday during question period. He proudly affirmed that his intention was to appoint judges who shared his intransigent opinions respecting justice.

He clearly stated the reason why he changed the composition of the selection committees created for the first time in 1988, under the leadership of the Right Hon. Brian Mulroney; this gives him full power to ensure that the candidates qualified for appointment to the judiciary share his ideological point of view.

The Prime Minister admitted with great pride that this is a point of view based on law and order, the limitation—indeed, restriction—of judicial discretion, the increase in the crown prosecutor's discretionary power, and the assurance that all scientific facts pertaining to our Criminal Code and its effectiveness with respect to sentencing should be completely discarded.

[*English*]

The dress has been taken off and we now get to see the ugly face of the Conservative Party which is now in power.

The Prime Minister was very proud to announce that he had changed the composition of the selection committees. What was the composition prior? There were seven members. One member came from the judiciary, three members came from the legal profession, and three members from the community at large appointed by the government. Each of the seven members had a right to vote. The government has now removed the right to vote from the judge who chairs the committee, added on a fourth so-called member from the community, and in so doing ensured that its appointees have the majority vote on the committee.

That was not sufficient. Under the previous system for the selection of judges, the JACs, as I have heard the Minister of Justice refer to them, the judicial advisory committees, were required to evaluate potential candidates and to actually label them as highly recommended, recommended, or not recommended.

The government, I guess, is so afraid that it does not have enough individuals who share its ideological bent who would meet the designation of highly recommended that it has now wiped out those designations and now it is a pass or fail.

This is clearly unconscionable. This is what we call lowering the bar. Our judiciary is heralded throughout the world for its excellence, independence and impartiality. By removing the designations, highly recommended, recommended and not recommended, the Conservative government is ensuring that Canadians will no longer have the guarantee that those appointed to our judiciary are highly recommended. They will not know if a person received one point above the passing grade.

There are parents today who are arguing with their provincial governments in an attempt to change the evaluation and the school marks system of pass or fail because they have no way of judging exactly how well their children are doing. This is happening in Quebec now. Now we are seeing this neo-conservative government lowering the bar. But that is not all.

*Business of Supply*

My colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore made the point that the Conservative government is not willing and not interested in governing for all Canadians. It is only interested in governing for those who share its own ideological bent. What better way than to look at what the government has done with programs, plans and agreements that the previous Liberal government had negotiated and signed following widespread consultation, whether it be the Kelowna accord or the early learning and child care agreements with 10 provinces and two of the territorial governments.

Just on that last issue, the government said by scrapping those agreements and by instituting in place of those agreements \$100 a month per child under the age of six, which would amount to \$1,200 a year, this would provide choice to families who choose to have one of the parents stay at home, and choice to those families who decide to have only one of the parents work full time and the other one possibly work part time.

In fact, as is the case, and the Conservative government has shown it over and over again, it did not tell all of the truth. It did not tell all of the facts to Canadians. That \$100 a month, or a total of \$1,200 a year, is taxable. The Conservatives neglected to put that in big bold print in those ads they took out in major national newspapers.

● (1035)

They talked about \$100 a month per child, and we had to go down to the bottom of the page and in minuscule letters we had to use a magnifying glass in order to determine that it was taxable. Guess who is going to have to give back the most? It is the poorest families, not the richest families.

I ask members, how more ideologically bent can a government get than to design a program that is in fact not to help families have real choice? If we want families to have real choice, then we ensure that families have access to early learning, for instance in play groups. For those individuals who are private providers who wish to upgrade their skills, we ensure that when they are taking care of children in their homes or in the children's homes, they have the proper training and skills. Whether it is just to babysit a couple of hours or not, the spaces must be there. They must be created and that has not been the case.

● (1040)

[*Translation*]

I will conclude by saying simply that I have rarely seen a government develop all its policies and programs from an ideological point of view that excludes, rather than includes, the most vulnerable.

I am ready to answer questions, if there are any.

[*English*]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am just wondering if either the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore or the one who just spoke can tell us if there is a typo here because everything that is being referred to are failures of the former government.

On the judicial appointment process, for instance, Allison Hanes reports this morning:

In 2005, the government named at least nine loyalists to the bodies that help choose federal and provincial superior court judges, including a president of the federal Liberal party's B.C. and Manitoba wings, a contender for the presidency of the Nova Scotia branch, a former Newfoundland Cabinet minister and unsuccessful provincial candidate.

That is just on the judicial process. As far as Kyoto, the Liberals did not follow any of it and we are 35% below the levels that we should be. It is this government that created child care spaces. They created none. As far as aboriginals, it is this government that has provided a \$3.7 billion increase over two years, more than four Liberal budgets altogether, and as far as an assault on the farmers being undemocratic, it is the former government that put farmers in jail related to the Wheat Board.

Also, would the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore be willing to apologize, because in the litany of things he said the Liberals did, much like Al Gore said he invented the Internet, he said that unemployment insurance was created by the Liberals. That was actually brought in by R.B. Bennett in 1935. He also took credit for creating the health care system. My dear friends in the New Democratic Party I am sure took tremendous offence to that because in fact it was Tommy Douglas who first brought that to the Canadian scene.

Would the Liberals be willing to acknowledge some of these? I am sure they were honest errors. Would they be willing to acknowledge them, including the typo that it should be the former Liberal government that is referred to in this motion?

**Hon. Marlene Jennings:** Mr. Speaker, I love the question that was just asked. It allows me to straighten out the facts.

The fact is that it was a Conservative government that abolished and scrapped all of the early learning and child care agreements signed with the provinces. Is that not interesting?

I would assume that members from Saskatchewan in the Conservative Party who are sitting in the House would have been protesting their own government because that meant cancelling the full universal pre-school program for all four-year-olds in the province of Saskatchewan.

The program was there. The money was there. The spaces were going to open in September 2006. It was because the Conservative government scrapped the agreement with Saskatchewan that those spaces did not materialize.

Let us talk about Alberta. We want to talk about choices for families. Yes, there are families that choose, if there are two parents, one parent chooses to stay at home. Many of those families and parents also wish their children, notwithstanding that one of the primary caregivers is at home, have access to early learning. Early learning is given at community centres, for instance. If the mom wishes and if she is the parent at home, she can get instruction, and share with other parents her experiences and benefits from it. The children are provided with early learning development.

Alberta was focusing primarily on training. Why? It was because almost 80% of early learning and child care is done in the private sector. Guess what? The operators who provide that early learning and child care in the private sector were welcomed. The Liberal government's agreement with the Government of Alberta would have meant that the operators of schools would have access to funds in order to be able to go back to school and receive training. Then they could qualify themselves as regulated child care space operators. There would be the understanding, yes, that parents have much more confidence in a place that knows public health requirements and such things like exercise, nutrition and the training of those workers.

No, there was no typo and is no typo in the official opposition's motion. It is that Conservative government that destroyed Kelowna, that destroyed the early learning and child care agreements, and that is destroying the independence and impartiality of our judicial system. The next thing is the Conservatives will have elected judges. Would that not be a nice sight?

• (1045)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture.

I am pleased to rise to speak in response to the motion presented by the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore. I note that the motion says specifically that the government is being criticized for “its budget spending cuts directed at aboriginal people”.

As I begin, there is no doubt that aboriginal policy is one of the most difficult areas of public policy in our country today. There are many areas that we can legitimately debate in the House. However, I do not think that budget spending cuts directed at aboriginal people is one of them because there have been no such budget spending cuts.

In fact, I am proud to point out that quite apart from cutting government spending directed toward aboriginal people, the government's inaugural budget in May 2006 provided for a total of \$3.7 billion of additional funding over two years in support of aboriginal people and northerners.

The \$3.7 billion by comparison is more than the previous four Liberal budgets had contained in total. It is hardly fair to say that there have been budget spending cuts directed at aboriginal people. To miscast the debate is simply not fair and I intend to speak to that.

[*Translation*]

This government has demonstrated time and time again to the members of this House that it is determined to improve the living conditions of aboriginal peoples.

[*English*]

Backed by the budget resources sanctioned by Parliament, this new government has been implementing a vigorous and tightly focused approach to dealing with aboriginal issues, the challenges that aboriginal Canadians have faced for far too long and the 13 years of inaction on the part of the previous government.

### *Business of Supply*

Our new approach has been based upon four elements, but only one goal, and that is real tangible improvement in the lives of aboriginal Canadians provide motivation and structure to what we are doing.

[*Translation*]

We have discussed this approach several times before the House. First of all, we are in the process of investing immediately in the urgent problems that are undermining the quality of life, such as unsafe water and inadequate housing. Next, we will also be introducing legal frameworks to promote programs for responsible, transparent governance. Furthermore, we are entering into agreements with aboriginal groups in order to resolve grievances and promote good governance.

[*English*]

Let me reiterate that this approach has been resourced by Parliament in last year's budget, and I will detail the disposition of this funding for the benefit of the House.

The budget, which presented to Parliament last year, allocated \$3.7 billion for aboriginal and northern programs, including \$3.2 billion alone for aboriginal investments. It includes funds for initiatives and priorities that are essential for healthy and sustainable aboriginal communities. I refer to areas such as housing, water and education.

In particular, a \$400 million fund was set aside for northern and off reserve housing. Today houses are being constructed in Nunavut, for example, as a result of this. We see real improvements for the quality of life for aboriginal peoples. Much work is left to be done, but we have made progress.

To move to specifics, the budget committed a full \$450 million to investments that will have an immediate and positive impact on the lives of Canadian aboriginal peoples. The money will be allocated to investments to improve water, housing on reserve, education and supports for aboriginal women, children and families.

The requirement for safe drinking water and adequate affordable housing I think is self-evident to all Canadians. However, the government also recognizes that it is through education and training that aboriginal people, youth in particular, can live prosperous lives either on or off reserve.

What is more, it is through an educated and employed population that healthy, stable communities are developed and sustained, and women play an integral part in the strength of the cohesiveness of the family and the health of the community. I think all fair commentators would observe that the government's agenda with respect to aboriginal women has been one that is noteworthy and very positive.

• (1050)

[*Translation*]

Additionally, as much as \$300 million has been allocated to housing improvements for aboriginals living in off-reserve communities.

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Up to another \$300 million will go toward affordable housing in the three territories, \$200 million of which will go to Nunavut where the need is greatest and \$50 million each to the Yukon and to the Northwest Territories. Earlier I had referenced \$400 million. It is \$300 million in northern housing and off reserve housing.

Needless to say this funding will address the needs of and will be of benefit to both aboriginal and non-aboriginal northerners. There is more.

An additional \$500 million will be devoted to community development, including that of aboriginal communities for the north, with which my colleague across the way is well familiar. These are the first nations that are affected by the Mackenzie gas project, the Inuvialuit, the Deh Cho, the Sahtu and the Gwich'in.

The goal of this funding is to support regional projects that will help alleviate socio-economic impacts on communities affected by the planning, the construction and the operation of this pipeline, which is so essential to our country's future.

These budgetary commitments speak to the determination of the government to address the needs of first nations, Inuit and Métis in Canada and to support them in the building of a healthy and prosperous future.

However, we also recognize, in terms of the way forward, that we also have to acknowledge the past. To that end, one of the first things we were able to achieve as a government was to negotiate a residential schools settlement agreement and to devote \$2.2 billion to provide financial recognition of the often negative impact of the residential school experience. This will be buttressed by support programs to help former students, their families and their communities and to build a better future for themselves. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is an important part of that.

I would also like to add, with reference to aboriginal languages, that Canada's new government is committed to delivering real results for the preservation of aboriginal languages. We believe that language is a vital component of first nation, Inuit and Métis identity and an important part of Canada's heritage.

I want to emphasize that although the previous government had designated \$160 million over 10 years ostensibly to support aboriginal languages, implementation of that fiscal framework was never completed and none of those funds were ever accessed by aboriginal communities, not one cent.

On the other hand, this government recognizes that aboriginal languages need stable funding so they can be protected and preserved. Therefore, we are providing long term funding of \$5 million per year for the aboriginal languages initiative, to which the Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Status of Women has spoken. This supports the preservation, the revitalization and the promotion of aboriginal languages. We are committed to develop a long term plan for the support and the maintenance of aboriginal languages. The Minister of Canadian Heritage and the Status of Women and her colleagues in the aboriginal community will develop a new and better approach that meets the needs of our aboriginal people.

Canada's new government has not cut spending aimed at aboriginal peoples. In that sense, the motion put forward by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore is simply incorrect. It is erroneous. Quite the contrary, we have developed, implemented and resourced a disciplined and focused approach to the resolution of the issues that challenge aboriginal people and communities in Canada.

The first inaugural budget of the government provided significant new funds. No budget cuts were contained in that budget. We have pledged to make progress by working in partnership with aboriginal people. We can point with pride to the results that have been achieved.

•(1055)

*[Translation]*

We are committed to making progress by working with aboriginal peoples and we can take pride in the results we have achieved.

*[English]*

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest and with some incredulity as the minister outlined the efforts of his department to address aboriginal issues.

Let us be clear about this. The issue of the \$3.7 billion includes the residential schools agreement, which was negotiated by the previous government and ratified by the Conservative government. It is not part of the regular operating dollars of the Department of Indian Affairs. Therefore, that is misleading to the public and to aboriginal peoples.

The minister speaks with great enthusiasm about his efforts to remedy the wrongs for aboriginal women. While I support very much his interest and commitment to it, I question the manner in which he is going about it. The other night in the House we heard one of his colleagues disparage the whole consultation process. I am curious to know why Bill C-44 was introduced without any consultation process, dealing with the repeal of section 67 of the Human Rights Act.

I am interested in his response to the fact that the Ontario chiefs have withdrawn from the matrimonial real property consultation process. I am interested in how he reconciles his desire for human rights for aboriginal women, without his real willingness to address the issues of housing, child welfare—

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

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, first, dealing with the residential school agreement, it brings to mind the old saying that victory has many fathers, failure is an orphan.

It is very interesting to see the attempt on the part of the former government to claim credit for the residential school agreement. That agreement was finalized, following extensive negotiations among myself, the National Chief of the AFN and respected members of the former judiciary. I recall being there. It was an agreement that this government resolved. To the extent that the former government wishes to take credit for it, that should provoke incredulity, about which my friend has spoken.

However, let us come to really what the government has faced and the motion.

No budget cuts have been directed by the Conservative government toward aboriginal Canadians. None whatsoever. There was a very substantial budgetary increase of \$3.7 billion. My friend says that \$2.2 billion relates to the residential school agreement. Fair enough, but it is part of the budgetary allocation of the Government of Canada and it is more than the previous government did in the four budgets.

What the previous government specialized in, with respect to the dire circumstances of aboriginal people, were empty promises, rhetoric, no delivery. That is the case whether we look at housing, or water, or the circumstances of women on reserve or the rights of women. Year after year of defalcation, the Liberals failed to deliver to aboriginal people. That is why we have the circumstance in our country, which I, as minister, and the Prime Minister are trying to address.

With respect to women's rights, I implore my friend to get on board, to help in terms of the building of the Native Women's Association of Canada, ensuring they have proper funding, in terms of repealing section 67. She says that there has been no consultation. This has been under discussion in Canada for 31 years. Now, that might not be enough consultation for the Liberals, but it is quite enough for this Conservative government to move forward. There will be further consultation at committee.

Matrimonial property is another case. This has gone on for over 20 years. The previous government allowed it to continue. We are dealing with the issue.

• (1100)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here again today.

Most Canadians have seen our Conservative Party ads that are on across Canada. They talk about the fact the new choice for Liberal leader is in fact not a leader at all, and I think the chaotic nature of this motion will probably demonstrate that to Canadians. The motion is all over the place. It includes about half a dozen different things and I think demonstrates again how hard it is for the leader to set priorities. He does not seem to be able to do that.

Even on the issue I am going to talk about today, I think he has demonstrated that he cannot focus on what he said he would do. He promised before the new year that the Liberals were going to be asking a question on the Canadian Wheat Board every day. I think we have had about two of them since we have come back. Obviously someone decided they were going to tack the Canadian Wheat Board onto the end of this motion, but we in the Conservative Party have a far greater commitment to agriculture than that. I want to talk about that this morning.

I want to talk about grain marketing. On this side of the House, we believe that western Canadian grain farmers should have the freedom to choose how they market their grain, with the Canadian Wheat Board as one of the options in the marketing of that grain.

### *Business of Supply*

The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food last fall announced that we would hold a plebiscite on the marketing of barley. That plebiscite is now under way and, let me ask members, how much more democratic could the process be than what we have put in place? Not only are we consulting those who are most affected by not having marketing choice, but we are giving them clear options to choose from.

I want to talk about the options that western Canadian farmers are being presented with in the plebiscite that we are setting forth now. The minister made a commitment that the plebiscite would be based on a very clear question. He listened to people's suggestions on what that question should be. Many producer organizations, members of Parliament from both sides of the House, provincial and local leaders and individual farmers were able to offer their views on what should be the content of the plebiscite questions.

After consideration, the government decided that producers would be asked to select one of the following three options. The first option on the ballot will be: "The Canadian Wheat Board should retain the single desk for the marketing of barley into domestic human consumption and export markets". It is fairly straightforward. The second will be: "I would like the option to market my barley to the Canadian Wheat Board or any other domestic or foreign buyer". That is straightforward as well. The third will be: "The Canadian Wheat Board should not have a role in the marketing of barley". They are three very clear questions.

There are people who say that western Canadian farmers are not capable of understanding those three questions. Of course, we are not the people who say that. We believe that our farmers are intelligent people and good business people. They can look at those three questions and know clearly what they are saying and what they are about.

The three options are clear. They are simple and to the point. Farmers are more than capable of expressing their preference for the option of their choice. For the farmers who want to maintain the monopoly, the question is there. For those who want to see the Canadian Wheat Board out of the picture, the question is there. For those who want the option to use the board when they want to market directly nationally or internationally, that option is there as well.

I want to talk about voter eligibility, because it is something people need to understand. The minister has said repeatedly that the plebiscite would be based on a broad base of voters. Each farm operation, whether a single producer, partnership or corporation, will be eligible for one vote as long as it has produced grain during the last year and has produced barley in at least one of the last five years between 2002 and 2006 inclusive.

This attempt was to make sure that we are dealing with actual farmers, with people who are currently farming and who have grown barley in the last five years. If producers sold barley to a feedlot, produced it for use on their own farm, or sold it to the Wheat Board, they are eligible to vote. Active farmers who intended to produce in 2006 but were unable to do so, for some reason beyond their control, will still have the opportunity to obtain a ballot by contacting the election coordinator at the website: 2007barleyvote@kpmg.ca. They have until March 2 to arrange to get that package.

*Business of Supply*

Those packages were mailed out February 7. The voting will continue until March 14. We are actively and positively encouraging barley producers to participate in the plebiscite to make sure their voices are heard.

Let me be clear about the government's intentions with the Canadian Wheat Board, because there have been some misconceptions about it. We believe it should be there as a marketing option for producers. We believe it should remain in place and continue to market on behalf of those who want to sell their grain through the board.

Our commitment to the barley and wheat producers of western Canada has been to give them the opportunity to seek out the best possible return for their product, and to give growers the chance to succeed and the freedom to make their own choices on how to produce and market their crops, whether that is through the Wheat Board or some other mechanism.

To get there, we need to meet the producers' needs, maximize their returns, maximize their choices and give them the options they deserve. That is what the barley plebiscite is all about.

• (1105)

This is quite a contrast to what we have seen in the past in the way that the Liberals dealt with western Canadian farmers when they wanted some changes to the system. I would like to take a few minutes this morning to tell members what happened when farmers in western Canada attempted to get some choice.

The member for Wascana has been involved in this issue for a long time. He was actually a minister at the time when five departments and agencies coordinated in an attempt to squelch and just basically squash the position of western Canadian farmers. Farmers were being faced with the possibility of having to deal with multiple government agencies at once. There were RCMP raids in the middle of the night on farmers' homes. I know of one story of a couple who had come home from the hospital when the RCMP raided their home in the middle of the night trying to confiscate their equipment. It was a terrible time for western Canadian farmers. Agencies such as the RCMP, customs, justice, Revenue Canada, and the Canadian Wheat Board all ganged up on individual farmers.

What was interesting was that farmers had enough guts to push back, particularly on the member for Wascana. They actually went to court and the courts ruled in their favour. That same day, the member for Wascana, as the minister, changed the regulations so that farmers were again in violation of the law. Most Canadians know that this action culminated in dozens of farmers being locked up in jail because they were trying to sell their grain and take it into the U.S. market.

It was a terrible time in western Canada. The Liberal government punished these farmers almost to the point of destroying them. I had the opportunity to be in Lethbridge on the day the farmers went to jail. It was a horrible sight, something I never want to see again. Women and children were crying as their husbands and fathers were being taken away. It was clear that even the law enforcement officers who were being forced to uphold the law that day thought it was basically a sham. It was an embarrassment, and it comes back onto the shoulders of the previous Liberal government.

All farmers really want is choice. They want to be able to do their own business and to be free to make their own business choices as they grow their grain and bring it to market. They want to have the opportunity to make a good living on the farm. They believe they are capable of making the decisions that will help them do that.

It is a great time for a plebiscite. We think this is the time for farmers to step forward and say they want choice. This is the time for farmers to say that they want the ability to run their own businesses as they choose. We have made democracy the centrepiece of our approach to marketing choice for western Canadian wheat and barley growers. We think that is very important for them.

We have been clear from the beginning that we believe in giving producers a choice. That is what a democracy is all about: having a voice in the decision making process.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a number of questions that I would like to ask the hon. member, but I know time is limited so I will ask two of them together and ask him to reply to both of them at the same time.

He finished his comments by talking about the respect the government shows for democracy. That may be a debatable topic, but I will not get into that now.

I would ask the hon. member how he interprets the results of the Canadian Wheat Board producer-director elections in his own constituency, where the producer-director elected in that area of southwestern Saskatchewan and southeastern Alberta has been elected and re-elected several times. In fact, he holds the position in complete opposition to the position taken by that member of Parliament. It would appear that farmers in that area have expressed their view specifically on Canadian Wheat Board issues by repeatedly electing and re-electing the director in that area who supports the single desk. I wonder if the hon. gentleman could explain that contradiction.

My second question is this. On the barley plebiscite and the middle option, option (b), that he described earlier in his remarks and that purports to put forward the dual marketing proposition, can he assure producers that when that option (b) refers to the Canadian Wheat Board it is the Canadian Wheat Board that farmers know today with a single desk? Or is it some other concoction that is not properly named the Canadian Wheat Board in that middle option? I think that point of clarity is extremely important, because what that middle option purports to say is that we can have the open market and we can have the single desk together at the same time. I would be grateful if the hon. gentleman could clarify the point of whether or not under option (b) there will be any single desk.

• (1110)

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, the member should be embarrassed, he really should. He was the minister in charge of the Canadian Wheat Board. He knows full well for single desk and choice that if we have choice the single desk is not in place, because by definition it cannot be.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Thank you for confirming that.

**Mr. David Anderson:** He does not seem to understand that yet.

I want to point out first of all that he should be apologizing to western Canadian farmers for the fact that he was the minister in charge of the government file when farmers were locked up and put in jail.

We do not have a lot of time here, but I would like to direct him to a blog and “The Truth About Marketing Choice” at marketingchoice.blogspot.com. There, the member would be able to see answers to many of his questions, including the fact that if we bring in a voluntary wheat board, the Wheat Board will be one of those options; clearly, if we have a voluntary marketing system, we do not have a single desk. By definition, we do not have that. The member knows that, he understands that, and so do western Canadian farmers.

In terms of the three questions that we brought in, it is interesting that those questions are similar to the questions the Canadian Wheat Board asks on its annual survey. Last year's annual survey showed that 54% of farmers, even on wheat, wanted choice. They either wanted the board out of marketing wheat all together or they wanted a dual market. The majority of producers of wheat and the vast majority of producers of barley have indicated over the past few years in Canadian Wheat Board surveys that they want choice. We would like them to have that opportunity.

That is the best I can say about it, but I again would direct the member to “The Truth About Marketing Choice” at marketingchoice.blogspot.com. He will be able to get a lot of information about this issue so that he can understand it a little better.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of the motion that was put forward, I will ask a very brief question. The issue has to do with whether or not all Canadians, particularly those who are most vulnerable and most in need in our society, are being properly cared for and included in the priorities of the government.

The government cancelled or cut \$18 million from national literacy programs, \$55 million from student summer programs, \$45 million from affordable housing programs, and \$10 million from the Canadian volunteer program. There are ample examples of these kinds of things, but I think these four speak for themselves. Can the member explain to Canadians why we are cutting funding for programs and services for the most vulnerable in our society?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Speaker, I think the member is aware that we are not cutting funding to any of these areas. What we have done is move them from advocacy to direct programming so that the people who are most impacted by these situations are able to benefit from the programs, rather than have them go to people who just want to talk about them.

Obviously that is something that drives Liberals crazy, because if there is one thing they love, it is to talk about things and never do anything. That is not the way we do things. We are going to move. We are not going to just talk about things, as they have done for 13 long years.

### *Business of Supply*

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1115)

[*English*]

### CHINA-TIBET DIALOGUE

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I am seeking unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should: urge the Government of the People's Republic of China and the representatives of Tibet's government in exile, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet's historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward-looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House has heard the terms of motion. Is there unanimous consent of the House for the member to move the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the House that I will share my time with the hon. member for Trois-Rivières.

It is with great sadness that I rise in the House today because, in many regards, the motion before us forces us towards a sad conclusion. My speech here this morning will focus mainly on the part of the motion that deals with the cuts made to Status of Women Canada.

For the past several weeks, the Standing Committee on the Status of Women has been hearing from representatives of women's groups directly affected by these cuts. These women's groups have made remarkable progress in achieving gender equality within our society for the women of Quebec and Canada.

These women have travelled from across the country to try to convince the government to reverse its decision. What is most shocking about these cuts is that they have been made deliberately.

The Minister for the Status of Women even stated—she had the audacity to say—that 12 of the 16 Status of Women Canada offices were being closed because the employees in those offices provided too much support to groups that lobby for women's rights rather than focussing on providing direct services to women.

*Business of Supply*

First, I would remind the minister that direct services fall under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. Second, it is extremely pernicious to do this sort of thing. It shows very little respect for women who are fighting to obtain their rights.

I fail to understand. Every day, it seems, this government tells us that Canadians are important to it and that it wants what is best for them. But every day, it seems, as a result of ideological decisions, the government makes them more vulnerable. I can not understand it. Women represent 52% of the population. Women all across Canada are protesting these cuts. To date, there is perhaps one group that I have heard of that was in favour of these cuts. That group is REAL Women of Canada.

I remind members that REAL Women of Canada represents 50,000 people while we represent 52% of the population, that is almost 18 million women. Consequently, 50,000 people out of 18 million is a very small number on which to base the policies that affect all women.

In addition, Gwen O'Reilly of the Northwestern Ontario Women's Center tells us that the cuts affect all the groups in communities that benefited from the services that were previously offered: francophones, aboriginal people, rural residents, and women's groups working on issues of poverty, violence, access to justice and employment.

Yet, in December 2005, the Prime Minister made an election promise to respect and promote the human rights of women.

Where is he now? When do we hear him standing to speak out against the decisions of his ministers? Women know that he is not listening, as Mrs. Day of CFAIA put it so well.

Clearly, this government is very hostile toward women who form groups to defend and promote the principle of equality for women. The closing of 12 offices is an extreme measure to ensure that women's organizations can no longer participate and make their voices heard in the development of public policies.

It is shameful to treat women this way, to try to muzzle them and to try to ensure that women will no longer have the chance to be heard in defence of their rights. It is shameful. I would even say that by changing this program into a program of services to individuals, the government wants to make women even more dependent.

The women of Quebec and of Canada do not need charity. That is what the government is now doing by changing these programs; it is offering charity. For too long, women were under the thumb of the Church. Everything they received was given as charity; they had no rights; they had to bend to the will of people who decided what rights we were entitled to.

Now, women have come into their own. We have developed tools and programs to ensure that all women have the same rights, that all women will have access to equality and that all women will have access to equity.

• (1120)

These budget cuts are designed to ensure that we will return to the middle ages and that women will become "real women". That may be the Prime Minister's position. In my opinion, real women are

persons unto themselves and REAL Women of Canada does not represent all Canadian women and especially not me. I consider myself to be a real woman and I believe that I have the right to express my disagreement when I do not agree with the decisions made for me and not by me.

As I was saying, Quebec and Canadian women do not need charity. We thirst for justice, equity and respect. Even though the Prime Minister and the Minister of Status of Women are trying to silence us, we will be heard. We will continue to speak out until the Prime Minister, his Minister of Status of Women, his cabinet and his members have understood and reinstate the programs and tools needed to attain these objectives of respect, rights, justice and equity.

[English]

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague made an excellent speech. She laid out some of the difficulties women face in Canada, especially in dealing with some of the harsh cuts that have been made by the so-called new government. My question deals with remote and rural parts of Canada where services are somewhat limited in any extent.

An office in Thunder Bay was closed as part of the cuts to the Status of Women organization. While that office was quite removed from my riding, it provided service to many communities, such as, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake and Kenora. People in those areas needed the services of this office. It was actually an anchor for them to know that in some way the government was reaching out to them and was going to be involved in some of the difficult issues the member mentioned. I wanted to bring that to the attention of the House and the member.

Although the challenges are great for women in many parts of the country and the urban areas have difficulties, imagine the difficulty for people in small remote sites all across northern Ontario. Women needed and relied on the resources that were provided through these offices. Those services need to come back. Those who live in some of the remote sites feel a sense of desperation and face a challenge. They relied on these services.

I would like to know if the member is aware of some of those situations.

[Translation]

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. As I said earlier, we heard from women from all regions of Canada. Yesterday, we had a woman from Yukon who travelled for a whole day to get to the committee meeting.

Whether from New Brunswick, Yukon, Alberta or British Columbia, women from all regions have told us the same thing: in many cases, cutting these programs will force their organizations to shut down. If that happens, women will no longer have access to services that were vital to ensuring that they obtain the rights and other services they are entitled to.

*Business of Supply*

•(1125)

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague. She spoke with her trademark sense of conviction. As she said, deliberate cuts have been made to women's programs.

The other issue we are all very concerned about is the Conservative government's cuts to the summer career placement program. The Conservative government made dramatic—and I do mean dramatic—cuts to these programs.

What are my colleague's thoughts on this? It will have a terribly negative impact on an entire segment of the population: the next generation, the future. Obviously, I am talking about our young students.

**Ms. Nicole Demers:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question.

What I find really appalling and distressing is that the government does not see fit to hold consultations before making decisions. All of the programs they cut were useful and produced very good results.

All of the young people who went through these programs are now working for companies. Thanks to the summer career placement program, these young people provided services to society through the community organizations they worked for. The experience opened their eyes to other perspectives and realities. It helped them to understand that work is important and that it can be rewarding and stimulating.

Now the government wants to pull the rug out from under them by cutting the summer career placement program. Young people need this program so they can integrate into society and learn that work means more than earning a living; it also means getting involved in their society and their world.

**Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to talk about the part of this motion concerning the Conservative government's misconception that Canadians are not in favour of increasing the number of child care spaces on a national basis.

Let us not forget that supporting families is essential. In Quebec, three family support initiatives are the pillars of our program to help families. These three initiatives are financial support for families, increased number of child care spaces and the implementation of the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan.

This support is intended to promote equality between men and women, so that equality will no longer be a right, as it is today, but a fact.

All governments must truly commit to supporting families. Need I remind this house that 74% of women who have children under the age of six are in the work force? Need I remind this House that women are the heads of single parent families, the poorest families in our society? They need this support.

This support is necessary and part of it is the balance between work and family life. This work and family balance can only be achieved if the child care network is effective, financially accessible and available—in other words, it needs to be a top-notch child care

network. When all these conditions are met, parents can satisfy their desire to have children.

The Canada-Quebec agreement on child care services and early learning was signed on October 28, 2005. This is a good agreement. The Bloc Québécois asked for it for years. We finally got it after a tough fight.

Unfortunately, one of the first things the Conservative government did when it came into power was to end this agreement and dig in its heels to oppose this way of doing things that was so appreciated by the majority of parents in Quebec. No one was complaining about this agreement. It truly gave the Government of Quebec the latitude to focus on its own jurisdiction and provide top-notch child care services.

The government responded with its new policy. Its right-wing vision—which we are seeing more frequently—does not meet the expectations of most Quebecers; it only satisfies a small minority of people.

When the Canada-Quebec child care agreement ends, there will be a shortfall of \$269 million a year for Quebec. This will further accentuate the fiscal imbalance. Our needs still exist in Quebec and the money still remains here in Ottawa.

After being elected, the Conservative government announced an annual allowance of \$1,200. This allowance does not equal child care, and it is taxable. When the time comes to fill out their next tax return, Canadians will let us know that this amount is taxable.

For parents who are less well off, this diminishes the chances of receiving help from other levels of government. This amount is therefore further reduced.

The Bloc Québécois proposed that this \$1,200 be given in the form of a refundable tax credit. This would have cost the government no more money and would have helped families that are less well off. The government ignored this proposal, which upset many taxpayers. More right-wing bills!

However, the Conservative government must acknowledge that it made a big mistake in cancelling this agreement. Quebec's family support program—although not perfect and constantly evolving—is valued by Quebecers. It has even been recognized by the OECD. As I already mentioned, Quebec families are supported through comprehensive, harmonized measures, policies and programs.

•(1130)

I would like to remind the members that it is up to Quebec to set its own standards. We must respect its jurisdiction and allow Quebec to retain complete control over education and child care issues.

It is clear that Quebec is satisfying expectations. Thanks to these measures and according to the latest statistics, the number of births rose gradually between 2003 and 2005 from just under 74,000 to just over 76,000. The rate of increase accelerated in 2006; the most recent estimates indicate that there were 82,500 births in 2006, the most recorded in Quebec since 1997.

*Business of Supply*

It appears that when we support women and families and provide a fair and accessible child care system, we can increase the number of children, who are certainly our greatest treasure.

In 2003, Quebec's goal was to create 200,000 more child care spaces. The province met that goal.

The Bloc Québécois will support today's motion because the Conservative government is imposing an ideological agenda that is too socially conservative, pigheaded, and not in line with what the people want. Child care services are a right, not a privilege. The women of Quebec and Canada are clamouring for it, and they expect their governments to support them. To ensure our children's future, we must provide quality child care services as part of an education system that is worthy of a developed country like Canada.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that has seized the House in the last couple of days has to do with the appointment of persons to committees to recommend the appointment of judges. Indeed, yesterday there was an admission by the Prime Minister that his ultimate intent is to appoint judges who are sympathetic to his particular view of the world.

Does the member think that this intrusion on the judiciary and the imposition of the executive in terms of affecting the character and makeup of the judiciary is an inappropriate approach to the criminal justice system?

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, this approach is definitely inappropriate. We must realize, and this pertains particularly to my comments regarding child care, that this right-wing government is concentrating on law and order. It is intent above all on imposing the will of a more right-wing and centralist state.

I believe that this desire to appoint judges who will endorse the government philosophy is truly unacceptable meddling in a political system that has a clear separation of legislative, judicial and executive powers.

[English]

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, on another issue, with regard to the Kyoto protocol, yesterday the House passed Bill C-288. The bill basically commits to meet our undertakings under an international agreement to which we are a party.

The Conservative government eliminated every reference to Kyoto from its websites. It has constantly indicated that it does not support the protocol and that it is not interested at all in trying to meet the targets under that protocol.

Quebec has shown some leadership in terms of climate change initiatives. I wonder if the member would care to comment on why it is important for Canada to make commitments as outlined in the Kyoto protocol in the best interests of the future generations of Canada.

[Translation]

**Ms. Paule Brunelle:** Mr. Speaker, the environment file is definitely complex. We managed to reach a consensus on a protocol such as Kyoto, a major global agreement, and then Canada reneges

on its commitment. It seems to me that this is something that should never happen.

I believe that Quebec is doing the right thing by attempting to reduce greenhouse gases. With hydro electricity, Quebec has developed a truly clean energy resulting in a great deal less pollution and damage. The Conservative government should consider this in the set of measures it adopts.

[English]

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians who may be watching this debate must be very frustrated listening to members of each party criticizing members of other parties. We have a blame game going on. I think the experience of life for many Canadians is one of a deterioration of their standard of living and a nervousness about their future and their children's future.

However, I do not want anyone to get me wrong. There is certainly lots of blame to go around and much of that has been put on the table this morning.

Canadians have real concerns about their day to day lives that they want to see their government address. I want to touch on a few of the issues that have been brought to me by my constituents in Parkdale—High Park in Toronto.

The first concern is on the issue of child care. I have been campaigning for a national child care program since before my children were born. My youngest son is 21 years old and we still do not have a national child care program. However, during that time we have seen a generational change where in the 1970s only about one-third of mothers with children under the age of five were in the paid workforce and now we see almost three-quarters of mothers with children under five in the paid workforce. We have seen a massive social change during this period.

Successive federal governments have failed to address this change. Canada is one of the few developed, industrialized democracies that does not have a national early learning and development program for its children.

I have campaigned for many years in my community on the need for a national, not for profit, good quality child care program that puts the needs of our kids front and centre. It would not replace the role of parents. It would embrace the role that parents play and try to help them in every way possible.

Unfortunately, governments after governments have squandered the opportunity. Even when we had successive balanced budgets and successive majority governments, especially by the previous Liberal government, there was too little too late. There was a kind of deathbed conversion to the issue of child care that, unfortunately, squandered the opportunity.

To now see the current government roll back the baby steps taken by the previous government in terms of provincial agreements on early childhood development is, quite frankly, shocking. For the government to replace that with a kind of taxable baby bonus and to tie that up in a bow and pretend it is child care, people do not buy it.

Mr. Speaker, I neglected to say that I will be splitting my time with my colleague here.

*Business of Supply*

For the government to pretend that what is being offered to parents is a baby bonus, is quite a dissimulation. We need to recognize that the majority of parents are facing a difficult reality today. I know that in my riding the child care fees go anywhere from \$800 up to \$1,400 for a child and yet the waiting lists are long. In some child care centres hundreds of kids are on the waiting lists. Parents are at their wits end trying to deal with the situation.

Child care is an urgent crisis and I do not think Canadians care which party deals with it, they just want it dealt with. They want the blame game to stop and they want parties to get on with representing them here in the House of Commons and make progress on the things that affect their daily lives.

In my community there has been a real deterioration and a growing poverty. Studies have called it the growing gap. We see people who increasingly are working for very low wages. Housing costs are skyrocketing. The average cost of renting an apartment in my riding is about \$1,000. People simply cannot afford this. Transit costs a lot. People need to travel great distances to get to work.

• (1140)

We know that in the 1990s there were massive cuts to social spending and most of that money was never restored. Welfare rates were cut, the national housing strategy was cut and people with disabilities and mental illness were left to fend for themselves.

Many university students in my riding have massive student loans and incredible debt that weighs on their shoulders when they finish university. Many graduates start out really terrified because many of them cannot get a job. Even after they graduate, it could take a number of years to find a job with a sufficient income to pay down their incredible debt.

Our cities, where 80% of the Canadian population lives, are stretched to the limit. The cost of services are being downloaded onto our cities. They have a \$60 billion infrastructure deficit. They lack a national urban transit strategy, which is something for which I have been calling for some time. They are struggling to pay for things through property taxes, things that ought to be paid for through our income taxes. This has had the inevitable impact of a deterioration in our quality of life, especially our environment with the growing smog in our urban centres, and the deterioration of our water systems. My riding borders on Lake Ontario.

I think what Canadians need to judge all representatives by, especially governments now and past, is not what they say, especially when they are in opposition, but what they do when they are in power.

The challenge for the current government is to use this opportunity today to make, what I think has been a deteriorating situation in our country, it better, certainly not to make it worse.

One of the very bad decisions being made by the government is around politicizing judicial appointments. This is very dangerous. We have seen south of the border what happens when judicial appointments are politicized and how very dangerous that situation can be.

Last night, I joined a number of members from this House to celebrate the successful outcome of the Maher Arar and Monia

Mazigh situations, who, unfortunately, were the victims of a climate of fear created after the September 11 attacks and the casting of a net so wide that it began to undermine our democratic rights and freedoms. It was, in part, because of a courageous judge who spoke the truth and cleared Mr. Arar's name, that ultimately led to his exoneration and finally to a public apology by the Prime Minister. Hopefully, the family will now be able to get their lives back on track.

However, that case hit home once again the importance of an independent judiciary and the importance of having our fundamental human rights and our democratic rights protected at all costs.

We also have great concern with the government cancelling the court challenges program. It is a very small amount of money in a multi-billion dollar government. It is only \$5 million to ensure that those whose rights are supposed to be protected under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms actually have access to the necessary legal processes to have those rights defended.

When a francophone, a woman, a lesbian, a gay, a bisexual or a transgendered person, a person with a disability, a first nations person, whoever a person is, does not have access to the halls of power, to have the court challenges program as a safety measure to ensure their rights are protected is fundamental. I see no justification for the complete elimination of this program. I find that very troubling. Because so many disadvantaged people have had to seek their rights through the courts, I believe this is a provision that must be enshrined.

• (1145)

I have spoken out many times against the cuts to women's programs and literacy programs. It is important that these programs be restored and that opposition voices be guaranteed in our country. It is a sign of maturity and security on the part of a government when it not only allows opposition voices but in fact encourages and fosters opposition voices. That is a sign of a healthy democracy.

As Canadians listen to these debates, they expect us all, whatever party we are in, to do better and to act on behalf of the good of all Canadians.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the member a very simple question. Why is her party supporting the government when it was the Conservative government that cut 125,000 spaces? It promised 125,000 child care spaces over a period of a year and none were created. It cut the Kelowna accord. It promised to put money in the hands of Canadians, saying that they would receive \$1,200, when in reality the money is taxed and they will only receive a fraction of it. It also cut funding for students.

Why on earth is the NDP supporting a government whose policies are diametrically opposed to the roots of where the NDP has come from and what the NDP is supposed to stand for?

• (1150)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I need to ask the hon. member what he means by supporting the government. On every confidence vote in the House, the NDP has voted against the government. I personally took on the Prime Minister and challenged his choice of a representative to head up the appointments commission and led the motion to have that appointment defeated.

Certainly I and my caucus have been challenging the government. What is the matter with your party?

**The Deputy Speaker:** I would caution the hon. member. The proper language would have been to ask what the matter is with his party, unless you are referring to my party, which I did not think you were.

The hon. member for Mississauga South.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the member began her speech talking about blame. She seems to have a problem with that.

With regard to her principal point on child care, the fact is that \$3.5 billion of funding was cancelled by the Conservative government. It was an agreement negotiated with the provinces that came up with \$100 a month per child under six, which is taxable, but that just puts money into the hands of persons who may not even need it. It is not even based on the ability to pay or the need. It creates no new spaces, therefore it creates no choices, and the whole issue was about creating choices. If there are no new spaces, there are no choices.

The government also promised to give tax credits to businesses to create child care spaces in business and industry. We have heard nothing from the Conservative government about whether it has done anything or whether there is any interest and yet it was going to provide spaces.

On that issue alone, the Conservative government deserves to be blamed for breaking promises. It said that things were going to happen and that spaces would be created. The member must admit that here today and condemn and blame the Conservative government for breaking a promise to Canadians with regard to creating child care spaces so that our children can have a good head start.

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, when the government introduced its program, I stood in the House and predicted that no child care spaces would be created. We had the experience in Ontario with a

Conservative premier who promised a very similar program and the result was that not one child care space was created.

I absolutely do condemn the government on that, just as I am highly critical of the previous government, which had majority after majority, surplus budgets and had the money to bring in a sound, national early learning and child care program but wasted the opportunity.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on the environmental issue, I ask the member, how can her party get into bed with the government whose plan is actually going to do very little or nothing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions? Why does she not work with the Liberal Party and support us in our endeavours and plans to actually reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the short term?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Speaker, I agree that under the previous government it was unfortunate and terrible that there was a missed opportunity, because after signing the Kyoto agreement, in fact our environmental record deteriorated. Our record is now worse than that of the United States. It was a phenomenal embarrassment and a betrayal of the confidence of Canadians.

Everyone is concerned about the environment. All political parties say they want to take action. The challenge for us as elected members of Parliament is to see how we can come together and take advantage of the opportunity of a minority government to finally get some concrete measures in place to deal with the environmental challenges that we are facing.

• (1155)

**The Deputy Speaker:** Before I call for resumption of debate, the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park did indicate that she was going to be sharing her time with her colleague. She never actually said who the colleague was. I am going to assume that it is the member for Surrey North and recognize the member for Surrey North on resumption of debate.

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to share the member's time.

When I talk to people in the constituency of Surrey North, which I have the privilege of representing, they talk to me about the things that matter in their weekly lives which is really what matters to most of us. People talk to me about being concerned about affordability, about being able to afford things for their children for school. Many of them despair of ever being able to afford to send their sons and daughters to anything past high school, the trades, apprenticeship, college, university. They know there is a growing gap between what they have and what other people have. They see that growing gap and it frustrates them and they do not understand it. They expect their elected representatives to do the job we were elected to do which is to represent them.

As I look at today's motion put forward by the Liberals, there are some comments I would like to make.

*Business of Supply*

I am very concerned about child care and child care choice. I have spent most of my paid and unpaid adult working life, which is longer than I might even want to say, looking for child care opportunities for families, not just child care during regular workday hours, but child care that is within the reach of everyone, regardless of what they do for a living. I still do not see that.

I was very disappointed. I worked with the Liberal government in the early 1990s, from 1991 to 1996, looking at universal child care and a national child care initiative. If that had worked and had been in place, we would not be standing here now saying that the lack of child care is the crisis that it is, because it would have happened. It would have had roots and would have been in place. It would not have been something that could have been so easily cancelled by the current Conservative government.

When the Conservative government cancelled the national child care strategy, it also sent a message to provinces about the lack of importance of child care. What the Conservatives did was not child care choice. One hundred dollars a month before taxes is not child care choice. No one would deny that parents could use an extra \$100 a month, or whatever it is after taxes, to provide support for their sons and daughters, although they must be under six years old. After a child reaches six years of age, what does the child care choice become? It does nothing for child care. It creates no spaces. It trains no child care providers. It speaks not at all to the needs of a child over the age of five. I would hope that the Conservative government is not suggesting that children who are six, seven and eight would provide their own care. This really has created a crisis across this country.

I was very interested in the cancelling of the Status of Women offices. One of the best pieces of research I have ever seen done by that office was about how to get more women into government. From looking at the Conservative caucus, I would have thought that the Conservatives would want that research to continue. Surely the Conservative Party more than any other party in this House could use that research about how to have more women elected as part of that party. That was very puzzling. I hope it does not mean that the Conservatives do not want more women as part of their caucus. That was the research that was going on and they certainly could use that assistance, I would suggest.

People in Surrey North are very concerned about the affordability of housing. The amount of CMHC money going into Surrey North this year is \$48,000 for the entire constituency. That will do some rent subsidy I am sure, but it is not going to get housing for the homeless and it is not going to help with affordable housing for people in any significant way. If people do not have a safe home, they cannot raise their children in safety.

• (1200)

Speaking of safety and the cutting of child care, the Conservatives talk a lot about crime but they do not talk very much about the prevention of crime. Anybody knows that child care and good early childhood initiatives and interventions would make an enormous difference in preventing children from getting into crime and making those very bad choices that lead them down that road. The Conservatives are at the other end around punishment, but they

have cut off the avenues of preventing the crime in the first place by cancelling the child care initiatives. In many ways that is a travesty.

I have noticed the Conservative government reaching out into the ethnic community. Every time I turn around there are Conservative members at events in my riding. I know the Prime Minister has been there. But on truly embracing cultural diversity, where are the centres on credentialing? Where are the centres where physicians, nurses, teachers, engineers and accountants can have their credentials from other countries assessed? We welcomed those people to Canada to address skills shortages because they had those degrees.

I have a motion on the notice paper, but I do not know how quickly it will come forward. The motion talks about seniors from other countries, in particular, India, who cannot collect the seniors pension even if they are citizens in this country. They live in poverty. They cannot collect a pension because we do not have a signed treaty with that one country. Many people from India have contributed to our country, but they cannot have a seniors pension for 10 years, even though they are working, contributing and volunteering in their communities, because India is not one of the, I do not know, 112 countries that have signed a treaty. That has been raised with the government on a number of occasions and there has been no action on it.

I agree with my colleague who just spoke, that people who elect us to come here judge us by what we say and what we stand for. People will judge governments in power by their actions, not by what they say they are going to do, not by what they say they care about, but by what they do.

I do not see the kind of action that will make a difference for the people I have the privilege to know and to work with in Surrey North. A post-secondary education is no closer for the children of those people who cannot afford the still very large tuition fees. Many people want their sons and daughters—many daughters, I hope—to go into apprenticeships and work in the trades because they can make a good living. We have a huge skills shortage in British Columbia because of the building boom. Their sons and daughters cannot take advantage of that opportunity because it is too expensive and there has not been enough money put into the post-secondary education envelope and student loans for those people to afford it.

People just want their lives to be a bit better. They want to have a bit of hope for the future, just like all of us do. They want to know they are doing the best they can for their children. They do not expect miracles. They do not expect to be rich. They do not expect special privileges. They just expect to live safely in their communities with access to the kind of resources that their families might need. That is not what they are seeing. That is how the government will be judged.

There are some missed opportunities, as I said, with child care. The child care initiative could have had deep roots if the Liberal government had moved on it when it was first discussed. I do not know when it was first discussed, but when I first started discussing it with the federal government was in 1991. It would have had deep, deep roots in the community by now and would have created more spaces.

*Business of Supply*

The issue around protecting and promoting linguistic and cultural diversity that is in the Liberal opposition motion is an important one. We cannot just go into communities that have contributed to this country at the last minute, whether they are Asian, South Asian or whatever the country of origin is, and try to make friends without addressing the things that those people have said are important: the seniors pension for people in the South Asian community; credentialling for people from every community.

People ask what we do for foreign trained physicians in Vancouver, British Columbia. Mostly we just let them drive taxi cabs because we do not have a way that they can be credentialled, even though the federal government encouraged them to come. It said we needed physicians. It said we needed accountants. It said we needed engineers. But there they are, driving taxi cabs. There is nothing wrong with driving a taxi cab, but they want to use the skills in the profession for which they were trained.

• (1205)

There have been many missed opportunities by the previous government and there have certainly been choices made by the Conservative government that will not give more hope, a better life, and a little bit of hope for the future to the constituents of Surrey North. It will simply reinforce for them that there is indeed a growing gap, that they are at the bottom of that growing gap, and that they are not going to be able to provide the kind of future that they want to see.

My constituents do not care who we are here. They do not care what colour hats we wear. They just want us to do our jobs, make their families safer, and let them provide good lives for themselves and their families.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have listened with great interest to my hon. colleague and I know that she has a sincere interest in all of the topics that she covered. However, I listened to her speak about the investment that our party, the Liberal government, had made in child care, and her question was why we did not do it sooner.

I would point out to her that we had a \$42 billion debt that we had to deal with when we became government. Then we had a deficit that we needed to pay down, and that happened with the help and on the backs of Canadians right across this great country.

Make no mistake. There was pain and there were worthwhile social programs that could not be invested in until we got our fiscal house in order. Once we did, our government brought in agreements with every province and territory. We had a pan-Canadian child care system that was going to go ahead, that offered real choices to Canadians, not just working families, because we were investing in programs in the community that at-home parents were also able to access. It was a far more comprehensive program than what the government has offered, which is a taxable amount of \$100 a month per child up until the age of six.

My hon. colleague also talked about the need for social housing. I know that in Kitchener Centre and the Waterloo region, we have invested at the local level in ensuring that social housing is being built. The supporting community programs initiative that was brought in under our Liberal government was investing in partner-

ship with agencies at the community level to ensure that we were addressing those needs.

My question to my hon. colleague is this. Why, when all of these important things were in place, when we had the Kelowna agreement signed, and I would underscore her comments that we are judged by our actions not just our words, did the NDP decide to pull the plug on all these progressive social investments, these programs—

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. The hon. member has had a couple of minutes to ask her question. The hon. member for Surrey North.

**Ms. Penny Priddy:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by the hon. member about the debt that the Liberals inherited. Having been the health minister and held several other portfolios in the province of British Columbia, I know that there was a debt. I know that there was a great deal of pain paying off that debt because we felt that pain in British Columbia as we watched our health care transfer dollars go down as we picked up the deficit that was created, and we were not able to spend money in other areas as a result of that. I do appreciate that the debt needed to be paid off.

I have 10 babies a day born at Surrey Memorial Hospital. That is almost 4,000 babies a year and they do not understand about debt. All those babies who, during that time, missed out on having early support, early intervention, and support for their moms at home or child care choice do not understand that. It should always be a choice and we should support parents regardless of what that choice is.

We have a whole generation of children who missed out on that kind of support, for which we will probably be paying \$125,000 a year in the prison system while that debt was being paid down. I would suggest that while the debt needed to be paid down, it did not need to be completely done on the backs of the health care system and all of those children who missed out on opportunities during that time.

I watched our health care system for two years as health minister and two years as the minister for children and families, and watched those tremendous missed opportunities for a whole generation really of children for whom we will pay that price.

I agree that the debt had to be paid down, and the member can blame whomever for that debt, but during that time, we had a whole generation of children who missed out on opportunities. People missed out on having good opportunities for health care, and health care under medicare, a publicly funded, maintained, accessible, and universal system which the Liberal government found itself seemingly unable to address at the time.

• (1210)

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to split my time with my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca.

I welcome the opportunity to speak today on the motion presented by our distinguished colleague, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

*Business of Supply*

Today we are debating a motion that goes to the heart of what I think troubles Canadians very much. We are discovering what I think people knew or at least had an inclination, but are now finding confirmed, that the party that forms government in Canada across the aisle is a narrow-minded, meanspirited, ideological-driven government whose primary objective is to emasculate the role of the federal government, and in doing so cause Canadians to be disconnected from their national government and I would say from each other.

It occurs to me that the government loves power but hates government, especially good government. There was a time in Canada when we had two major parties in the House of Commons, the Liberal Party and the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada, with varying philosophies but in general recognized and continued the social infrastructure of Canada of which Canadians are proud.

There was a time we could count on reasonable and fair government, whether it was our party or the Progressive Conservative Party. Ours was better, but at least we knew that Canada would not be dismantled while the PCs were in power.

Canadians knew they could count on a moderate government, one that acted in the national interest and that despite our differences would attempt to do what was right.

A few years ago the member for Central Nova killed the Progressive Conservative Party shortly after saying that he would not. The current Conservative Party is obviously not progressive. I suspect most of my colleagues on the other side would be offended to be called progressive. In fact, they are regressive in every sense of the word.

I would like to speak to this motion today specifically on the issue of skills development and education and to a part of Canada that I think the government forgets and that is the people of Canada and in particular, the most vulnerable people in Canada.

I asked a question this week of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development on why he and his government slashed \$55 million from the summer career placement program or as many of us know as the summer grants program. Since its inception in the mid-1990s it has employed hundreds of thousands of students across Canada. It was also a program that helped many worthwhile community organizations, not for profits, to obtain a little extra help from students who brought their energy and talent to organizations that in most cases actually related to their field of study. To many students these summer jobs represented the only chance they had to earn some money and to help pay their way through university or community college.

The response we got was no response. Instead, we got non-answers while students and community groups are left to wonder what will happen. There is still no information available on the HRSD website, directing students or community groups as to what will happen with what is left of that funding. It is a disgrace.

There is no legitimate reason why this important program would be slashed except in the case that the government does not believe in helping students or that the government does not believe in continuing Liberal programs, even Liberal programs that most of its members would concede work.

We know that students were not the only Canadians who were victims of the government. Last year in my community of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour the recipients of grants from the student summer career placement programs were the East Dartmouth Boys and Girls Club, the Cole Harbour Boys and Girls Club, Dartmouth Public Housing, the MS Society of Canada, Regal Road United Baptist Church, Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Dartmouth Day Care.

Every single grant in my riding went to a not for profit organization. There are no Exxons here, there is no GE, and there are no large companies benefiting from this program. That was one of the reasons that was used when the program was virtually dismantled in the fall.

Study after study has suggested that one of the great challenges facing Canada is the shortage of skilled labour to meet the demand of the labour market. Yet sadly, at least nine million Canadians suffer from lack of literacy, unable to obtain the necessary training and skills needed to compete for those jobs.

It is shameful that those who are illiterate, the vast majority of whom happen to be poor, have been singled out, targeted by the government with millions and millions of dollars taken away from literacy funding.

The money allocated by the previous government did not go to pay big salaries. It did not go to pay for huge administrative costs. The money for literacy went to help ordinary Canadians who could not read or write. The funding was beginning to make a difference where individuals were obtaining the reading and writing skills necessary to get a decent job and in doing so, providing for their families and making a contribution to their communities.

● (1215)

The Movement for Canadian Literacy could be days away from closing down permanently. Ann Marie Downie, who runs Literacy Nova Scotia, has told me that her organization and the other 30 community organizations that work with her to provide training to learners will probably have to close their doors maybe within months, but certainly within the next year. Why then would the government cut funding to literacy?

Next up on the chopping block is the \$5 million cut to the Status of Women. For some reason the \$1,000 a day limo minister of heritage decided that cutting support for women's organizations was in the best interest of government.

The history of the women's movement in Canada is one of hard work and dedication to equal rights, the inclusion of women and their equality in the charter. This work continues to seek greater equity in Canadian society for women and yet the funding was cut. It makes no sense. Again, I would suggest the Conservative government loves power but hates government.

*Business of Supply*

While the Conservatives have slashed social programs that are valued by Canadians, they have undertaken what can only be called a massive orgy of pork-barrelling. Since they have come into power they have hired friends, party hacks, and major contributors to their right wing party. In Atlantic Canada, it seems every new senior official appointed to the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency has been a Conservative, and yet they have the temerity to lecture others about accountability.

Their blatant stacking of the judicial committees threatens not only the independence of the justice system, but it is an attempt to go after the charter, a document that has always made elements of that party uncomfortable, including its leader, the Prime Minister. The Conservatives have stacked the judicial committees for no other reason than to appoint right wing judges that will render the charter hollow. That is their goal. There can be no doubt.

Today in James Travers' column in the Toronto Star, and he is certainly far from being a card carrying Liberal, he suggests that:

Woven through its declared willingness to ride roughshod over Parliament is the same single-minded determination that is driving its attempts to add partisanship and ideology to the appointment of judges. Both are risky steps in the wrong direction... Reversing the trend away from a politicized appointment process by loading the screening committee is as damaging as what it's doing to Parliament. Along with raising the U.S. spectre of mixing personal beliefs with legal competence, it erodes public confidence in an independent judiciary.

There are a lot of comparisons between the Conservative government and the government in the United States right now under President George Bush. Canadians are beginning to realize that the current government in many ways is in lockstep with the right wing values of its republican friends to the south.

Whether it is cuts to students, women's groups, literacy, court challenges program, or the assault on the charter, we now know that in May 2005 the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada was replaced by a narrow, right wing party that seeks to eradicate the role of the Canadian government and unravel what Canadians feel brings them together.

I would say that generations of Canadian governments, Progressive Conservative and Liberal, have focused on building a stronger, united Canada. Today's government is focused on creating a reduced and divided Canada, a Canada where the federal government abdicates and off-loads its responsibilities to the most vulnerable, and those members do not want to talk about it.

Canadians do want to talk about it. They want a generous nation, a big nation, a strong nation, a nation that knows that we are stronger when we take care of the most vulnerable, and make them part of the success and the future prosperity of Canada. That is what the Liberal Party believes as well.

• (1220)

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about a particular issue that is at the forefront of many Canadians' concerns and that is the environment. I would like my colleague to clarify something.

We get criticized for the rise in greenhouse gas emissions under our watch by 27%. That is true. We could have done a better job. What is not known is that our economy grew by 47% over the same period of time as a result of wise management. This drove our

unemployment levels to the lowest levels in more than 30 years. Yes, our greenhouse gas emissions did go up, but not nearly as much as the increase in our economy.

I wonder if my hon. colleague would elaborate on the fact that we implemented a number of programs under the previous prime minister, including a very large sum of money for alternative energies, and also the EnerGuide program, which was an outstanding program that enabled homes to be built better thereby dramatically reducing our dependence on fossil fuels.

I wonder if he could shed some light on the fact that those programs were implemented by us, but the Conservative government has taken those programs, watered them down, renamed them, and suddenly claimed to be green.

**Mr. Michael Savage:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is very apparent to Canadians, certainly the people who watch the debates in House of Commons, that the commitment Canada has to the Kyoto protocol clearly is absent in the government.

The initiatives that the Liberals took while in government, in particular the Montreal conference for which our now leader was responsible, showed that Canada was a leader in the world's environment.

I will take one program about which I have some knowledge from a previous life. It is the EnerGuide for houses program and specifically the part of the program that went to the lowest income families. It was gutted by the government last year. The Conservatives have reintroduced some of these programs and they re-gifted them as new Conservative initiatives. However, the EnerGuide for low income houses was a program in which I was involved when I worked at Nova Scotia Power. In fact, we were the delivery agent for that program.

Nova Scotia Power provided that program free of charge to Nova Scotians. Those who spent a lot of money on fuel and polluted the environment would have the corporation go in, do an assessment and make recommendations to them. These people were the lowest income Canadians, the people who could least afford \$2,000 or \$3,000 to renovate their homes in order to save money and help the environment. The program helped those people the most.

When it gutted the program, that was an example of the kind of narrow social exclusionary practices of the government. It was not helpful to individual Canadians. Nor was it helpful to the collective of Canada or to the entire world, as we went about the job of trying to ensure we had an environment that was sustainable for generations to come.

**Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to outline what the Conservative government has done to our country because we have never seen anything like this before.

A large social engineering project is occurring, masterminded by the Conservative government, and it is below the radar screen of many Canadians. The implications of this are quite enormous. Although much of the package sounds good, it goes against common good public policy.

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It is not only retail politics trumping fact based public policy, it is much more than that. It is seeding a rigorous social Conservative view in politics, education and the bureaucracy. It is a marriage between social Conservative religious groups and one political party, the Conservative Party.

All people have an absolute right to believe in whatever they want. Indeed, any religious group can lobby any political party or government as hard as it wants. However, we draw the line at responsibility. A government is responsible to ensure that religion and politics are separate. This is an unsaid but widely accepted viewpoint of most Canadians. Out of respect for people's religious views, we do not marry or mix religion and politics. However, that is not what has occurred.

I will speak about the implications of this in a moment. The fact is it will affect and has affected everything from Parliament to the courts, to the media, to education and to the bureaucracy. Parliament has largely become, at least within the government, a dictatorship where power has been centralized within the Prime Minister's office, ignoring good advice from bureaucracies, his own MPs and cabinet.

It must be an unsatisfying and soul destroying experience to be members of the government now and to be seen as little more than potted plants, not listened to or respected by the Prime Minister. This is a very dangerous situation for all who voted for individuals and expected their members of Parliament to advocate for them in a constructive way in the House.

The courts have also been changed, as we saw recently. The current grouping, in terms of deciding who will be judges, has changed quite significantly and has been stacked with individuals who reflect the social conservative values of the Prime Minister.

The media is in the hands of a small number of people. I know this is not a very satisfying situation for many journalists. That does not have anything to do with the government, but having media centralization in a small number of hands stultifies different viewpoints and does not allow the Canadian public to see the breadth of views out there. It is not a healthy situation for strong public discourse.

The implications are quite serious, and I will go through some of them.

The first is the loss of democracy. We have a situation where the power is controlled by and large within the Prime Minister's office and the hands of a very few. We know that party would have supported Canada joining the U.S. in the war in Iraq. Imagine if the U.S. invades Iran. If the U.S. were to ask the government to join in that fight, what would it do? Would it support it? If it did, it would be a devastating.

On cuts to the poor, the government does not even pretend to advocate for the poor. It raised the income tax rate on the poor and dropped the basic personal exemption. As a result that, the poorest in our society have been hammered and have less money in their pockets now than ever before. The discrepancy between the haves and the have nots are widening.

On child care, as colleagues have mentioned before, \$3.5 billion have been cut. In my province of British Columbia as well as in all

other provinces it has had a profound impact on child care workers, spaces, parents and families. They do not have the choice that the party across the way professes to give Canadians.

Furthermore, the \$1,200 child care benefit is taxed. Because of that what ends up in people's pockets is a fraction of that \$1,200. In fact, it amounts to about \$2 a day. That is not child care, those are not spaces and that is not a choice. The 25,000 spaces that were promised by the government so far amount to zero.

On the issue of human reproductive technologies, another board has been stacked by the government, filled with people who are anti-choice. The implications of this in terms of embryonic stem cell research are devastating for our researchers. As a result, Canadian research into embryonic stem cell activities will be crushed and the ability of our researchers to engage in the lifesaving research required to deal with diseases, such as cancers, will be snuffed.

● (1225)

On the issue of productivity, the government has been silent, riding on the wave of the Liberals, who created a healthy economy for Canada.

On health care, we fought hard to keep the needle exchange program in Vancouver. Did the government extend it for three years as had been requested? No. It extended for one year in a sudden death decision. This is a research program that saves lives and money and reduces crime. However, because of an ideological approach, the government has not extended the program past the one year, a program that has proven to save lives. In fact, the government has ignored the facts in *The Lancet* and other world renowned medical magazines.

The Prime Minister's foreign affairs platform can basically be described as improving Canada-U.S. relations. What happened to the rest of the world? Clearly, Canada-U.S. relations are exceedingly important, but the world is a lot bigger than this continent.

Where is the government on the Sudan? It is missing in action. Where is the government on the Middle East? Quite rightly, it supports Israel and its peace and security, as we all do. However, where is the government on the crisis in Gaza? It rightly removed funding from Hamas, but it is nowhere in being able to alleviate the catastrophic situation taking place on the ground in the Gaza Strip. People dying of preventable causes right now.

Afghanistan is one of the most egregious situations that has taken place while the government has been in power. The public, and unfortunately members of our beloved military, believe the government is doing things in their favour. What they do not know is the government has used our troops as a political pawn for its own political benefit.

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The government gave the House 48 hours to make a decision, which was the most important decision that any of us had to make, on whether to put the lives of our troops on the line for our country. Yet, the public does not know that.

The government got it wrong. It did not have the development package correct. It did not have the political package correct. As a result and as we see from Senlis Council briefings and other people on the ground, we are losing the war in Afghanistan. Why? The government does not have a plan for dealing with the poppy crop. It does not have a plan for training the Afghan national police. It does not have a plan for dealing with the insurgency coming from outside. As a result, our troops, which are bleeding for our interests and those of Afghanistan, do not have the backup they require to do the job.

Political solutions are required to deal with Afghanistan and the government is missing in action. It did not get it right when it rammed this through Parliament and it does not have it right now. It is leaving our troops bereft and on the side to do the hard work without giving them the backup on the ground. That is reprehensible.

The government needs to listen to the solutions that are being offered. They would make that mission a success and would allow our troops to be safe and get out by 2009, with respect to the combat aspects.

I might add that the poppy crop eradication process taking place right now is going to dramatically increase insecurity for our troops. Therefore, I demand that the government speak to the United States and the United Kingdom and stop this plan. The farmers have said that if we take away their poppy crops, we will destroy their ability to provide for our families and because of that they will join the Taliban.

Why does the Prime Minister not pick up the phone and speak to President Bush and tell him to stop? Why does he not do the same for Mr. Blair? If it that does not happen, the attacks against our troops will increase. I demand that the government do this, and do it now.

I know government members do not have the power because the Prime Minister controls everything, but I encourage them, within their caucus and publicly, to speak out on the good public policies they would like to have their government adopt in the interest of their constituents and in the interest of our country.

• (1230)

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont.

I appreciate the opportunity to set the record straight. Unlike the motion by the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, I will be brief and I will stick to the point.

The omnibus motion before the House today is reminiscent of the Liberal Party of the past. It is an indication of what would come should the Liberals ever have the opportunity to form government again. It should remind us that that party is a party in disarray, a party that cannot pick priorities and a party that is obviously facing division within its own ranks. The motion touches on Kyoto, day care, agriculture, justice, linguistic duality, the Wheat Board and the

Status of Women Canada. It is the latter that I will discuss this afternoon.

For months now, the opposition has been attempting to mislead Canadian women about what has been happening since we formed government. There has been a great deal of discussion around the renewed terms and conditions of the women's program and the new criteria for funding. We believe advocacy has a role to play. Canada's new government believes that now is the time to act and we want to focus taxpayers' dollars towards action. We have the studies; we know there are problems. Instead of wasting time discussing the issues, our government is looking at tangible ways in which we can make a difference now.

For example, the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is dealing with matrimonial property rights for aboriginal women. Our government increased funding to on reserve family violence shelters by \$6 million. As well, the minister announced \$450 million for improving water supply and housing on reserve, education outcomes and socio-economic conditions for aboriginal women, children and families, real money in the hands of organizations that are on the ground working to make a difference.

In terms of human trafficking, the former minister of citizenship and immigration developed a program to offer victims temporary visas. Human trafficking is on the rise and the majority of those trafficked are women. They are brought to this country and are forced into a life of prostitution. Instead of being treated as criminals, our government will issue temporary resident permits for up to 120 days and will provide the necessary health care required free of charge.

Women's issues are issues that all Conservative MPs and cabinet ministers are concerned about, not just one minister, all cabinet ministers. The Minister of Human Resources and Social Development announced \$4.48 million to help retrain women on social assistance in New Brunswick. This three year pilot project called Partners Building Futures will help women on social assistance get the training necessary to find jobs.

As well, the minister has introduced legislation, Bill C-36, that will make it easier for Canadians to access the guaranteed income supplement. The guaranteed income supplement pays out \$6.2 billion a year and goes to 1.5 million low income seniors who are mostly women. This is real change that will affect people right where they live in our communities across our nation.

In one short year we have introduced the universal child care benefit to help women and their families in their homes. We have implemented patient wait time guarantees for prenatal aboriginal women. We have expanded eligibility for compassionate caregivers, most of whom are women. We have introduced pension splitting for senior citizens. We have targeted tax cuts like the GST, the textbook credit and the credit for families with children involved in physical activity to ensure that families are supported. This is real change, ideas and policies that are making a difference in real Canadian women's lives.

This government is committed to action in terms of women and justice issues. There are stories in the paper every day about repeat offenders, men who have abused their wives, children or girlfriends, who are back on the streets putting lives in danger because law enforcement does not have the necessary tools. Domestic violence is an issue that this government takes seriously.

• (1235)

The Minister of Justice has brought forward tougher legislation. We need effective sentencing where dealing with sexual predators and repeat offenders is addressed. We need to end conditional sentencing and raise the age of protection. This is critical.

Canada's new government believes in supporting programs that have a direct impact on women. We believe in putting money into the hands of groups that will help women in their communities.

In October 2005 Canada was cited by the United Nations committee on human rights as failing to adequately address the high rate of violence against aboriginal women. These women and their children deserve safe communities. This is why Canada's new government has committed to the multi-year funding of \$1 million a year until the year 2011 to the Native Women's Association of Canada. The Sisters in Spirit initiative addresses the high rates of racialized, sexualized violence against aboriginal women. This project will have a direct benefit on the lives of aboriginal women in their communities.

There is no simple answer. The economic security of women can be traced back as a root cause of the problems women face on a daily basis. We need to ask how we can work together to alleviate these problems, and how we can work with the provinces to better provide services for women. That is one issue which the status of women committee is addressing as we speak. The committee is taking a look at the economic security of women all across our nation.

When a woman faces domestic violence, what can we do to help her get herself out of that cycle of abuse? How can we help women to get out of these situations, to find jobs, build homes, be self-sustaining? We need to let women know that there are other options enabling them the opportunity to change their lives.

The idea that this government is trying to silence women or their advocacy groups is completely ludicrous. I would like to put our partisan political differences aside and work with all members of this House to ensure that we are making a difference in the lives of women all across Canada.

It is imperative that action replace words. It is imperative that problems are solved so women in their daily lives, in their homes and communities all across this nation can get the assurance and support that they need.

It is a pleasure to be here today working with our government in terms of putting words into action.

• (1240)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague opposite for her comments, but I have a bit of difficulty on the whole concept of action and words.

We know there have been no additional child care spaces created under the Conservative government. We know that 45% of the

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female prison population is aboriginal women. We know that violence against aboriginal women is preponderant in society.

We also know that change comes about because research is done, advocacy is undertaken and government policies change. We know that under the Conservative government, the tools for advocacy, the tools to move forward on equality-seeking matters have simply been eliminated for equality-seeking groups.

I also want to indicate that the member opposite cited all that was being done for aboriginal women, such as matrimonial real property, but I am wondering if she is aware of a statement issued yesterday by first nations women which said:

First Nations Women Chiefs and Councillors are mad as hell with Crown government interference in our lives and we're not going to take it anymore.

What real change is happening? To my mind, moneys have been taken away and misinformation is being put out in terms of opportunities to access money. Offices are being closed. We heard yesterday that women cannot access staff in order to put in applications for money. We hear about all of the programs that are being eliminated. I have a real difficulty in hearing about change taking place.

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Mr. Speaker, I have to note that members opposite had 13 years to solve the problems. We hear every day in the House of Commons how things are not being done. In reality that is not true. In reality this government has provided \$100 to parents who have children under six years of age. The parents can use that \$100 for what they need in their homes. The government has provided tax credits for people whose children are enrolled in sports initiatives. We have put millions of dollars into shelters. We have done many things. In one short year, we have done more than what the former Liberal government did over a period of 13 years.

It is embarrassing to the Status of Women to hear of all the studies that have been done with no action or problem solving following those studies.

This government is taking action. We are getting the job done.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech. She spoke of many studies and cuts made to women's programs.

I would like her to comment on another study, the one pertaining to the very dramatic cuts the Conservative government announced to the summer career placements program. This program's usefulness has been clearly demonstrated; it has been a great help to our young people in preparing them for a future in non-profit, municipal and other organizations. We are talking about the future of our young people. I would like her to comment on why the Conservative government wants to practically abolish this program that is working so well.

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•(1245)

[English]

**Mrs. Joy Smith:** Mr. Speaker, the \$5 million is not a cost cut at all. It is a cost savings. That money is put directly into programs for women. There have been many studies.

What we are saying is we know what the problems are and we have to take action and make things happen.

When we got into government we found out that only 31¢ of every dollar was actually being given to women on the ground in communities. Yes, that number is being increased. We are making sure that the full dollar of every dollar works for women across Canada.

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to the motion of the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, particularly with respect to plans for child care. It gives Canadians who are following this debate a chance to see whether the new member brings a new and fresh perspective to the tired old policy that Canadians rejected a year ago last month.

The Liberals first promised in their 1993 red book to deliver a child care plan. Canadians waited. And they waited. I do not know where the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore was for the past 13 years, but Canadians like us waited 13 years for Liberals like him to tell us what their plan was. When the Liberals finally got around to telling us the plan, they got it wrong in the eyes of Canadian parents.

Before the last election, Canadian parents said they were looking for choice in child care. What did the Liberals offer? A cookie-cutter approach to child care.

Canadian families are diverse. The Liberals ignored our diversity. Some families are looking for spaces like the Liberals promised, and we will begin delivering in the upcoming fiscal year. Many others only need access to part time child care. Others are looking for flexibility of care to meet their rotating shifts. Still others want to stay at home or have a trusted family member or neighbour care for their children.

The former Liberal government's child care plan offered these families nothing. Under the Liberals, only a select group would benefit. Anyone looking for something other than a regulated, nine to five, child care space got nothing. Regular Canadian families got nothing from the Liberals.

That was the old Liberals' plan. Since then, we have had an election where that plan was up against our plan for choice in child care, and it lost. Since then, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore came back to Canada. Since then, the member had a chance to listen to families in his riding, families who do shift work and families from China and India who have more than one generation under the same roof and prefer having grandparents help raise the kids.

The member has had time to listen to Canadians who looked at the child care options they were presented last election, Canadians such as Kate Tennier of Advocates for Child Care Choice, who was quoted in the December 5, 2005 *National Post* as saying, "You might have a perfectly good grandmother or neighbour to look after your children, but you are forced into regulated day care" under the Liberals' plan.

What new plan does this new member bring us? The same old tired Liberal child care plan that Canadians said they did not want. Rather than rejuvenating the Liberals with fresh ideas, it looks like the old Liberals were able to get to him and make him sound just like them. Too bad it does not sound anything like what Canadians sound like.

In fact, the most recent statement of what Canadians want in child care comes from *Today's Parent* magazine. *Today's Parent* polled Canadian parents. Results were published in this month's edition and they show a mere 16% of parents looking for child care spaces and the Liberal plan. They show that 38% prefer to have a parent stay at home and 17% use relatives. These families want support too.

Conservatives are listening to Canadians. Only the Conservatives offered Canadian parents for their choice in child care. The good news for Canadian families is that we did not take 13 years to do it, like the Liberals did.

The new government's choice in child care plan will see an investment of over \$12 billion over five years. The Liberals promised less than half that. The new government delivers support directly to families for their choice in child care. The Liberals transferred less funding to provincial bureaucracies, with no accountability measures for what the money should deliver.

In fact, the shortcomings of the Liberal plan were so stark that they led no less than former Liberal deputy leader Sheila Copps to comment, "The last agreement actually saw some provinces rake in millions in cash without creating a single new day-care space". That is from the *Calgary Sun* during the election campaign, in its issue of December 7, 2005.

The new government's plan has two parts: the universal child care benefit, which delivers \$100 a month to every child under the age of six for the child care of choice, and the child care spaces initiative that is set to begin delivering spaces in the upcoming fiscal year, as promised.

We have delivered on the UCCB. Over \$1.4 billion has gone out to 1.4 million families on behalf of 1.9 million children. That is more benefits to Canadian families in half a year than the Liberals would spend for an entire year.

Just as we have met our commitment on the universal child care benefit, we will deliver on our child care space initiative, but Conservatives recognize that a plan for child care spaces has to be better at meeting the needs of Canadian parents than what the Liberals had planned. The Liberals wanted to fund day care providers. We want to fund children.

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• (1250)

Conservatives recognize that Canadian parents with young children are involved in all kinds of work environments and situations, not just nine to five, five days a week, with evenings and weekends off. Our plan looks for options for Canadian parents who are working shifts and on weekends. We want spaces that are flexible for the needs of farm families and parents who work in fisheries. The standard nine to five child care that the Liberals had planned is not suitable for them.

Last year's budget set aside \$250 million a year beginning in fiscal year 2007-08 to support the creation of new child care spaces in communities across Canada. We want these spaces to answer the real needs of Canadians. We have taken the time to hear their concerns and get their ideas.

In the meantime, we have provided the provinces and territories with \$650 million to help in the transition to our new child care policy. We have consulted with the provinces and territories on our plans for child care spaces. Together we will find a child care solution so that Canadian families can balance work and family life as they see fit, no matter where they live.

These are the initiatives we promised Canadians in the last election. They are initiatives we promised in the Speech from the Throne last year. They were included in last year's budget. We are delivering on these promises.

I urge hon. members to join me in voting down this motion.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my Conservative colleague on getting a jump on his election speech. It is clear that he is planning to criticize the Liberals and play up what his party has done. But I believe that a responsible government should stop talking about other parties and talk about what it wants to do.

In his speech, he referred to 37% or 38% of Canadians. Those figures certainly do not include Quebec. He could never say that in Quebec, because we have a very good child care system.

What is more, the \$1,200 parents receive annually is not a complete gift. Much of it comes back to the government in taxes. The member spoke of choice, but this amount does not give parents the choice of child care in the evening, on weekends or when they want it. Child care centres do not exist simply because the government is giving people money for child care. That is the big problem.

Quebec already has child care centres. The government is giving us \$258 million. That hurts the province, because the money is being given to the people, who are not necessarily paying for child care.

Since Quebec already has a child care system, how is it that he did not support it earlier, when the other provinces considered it a model system?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that I did not door-knock in Quebec. I door-knocked in my riding of Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont and talked to the families there. What I

heard over and over again was that they were concerned about a fundamental unfairness in the Liberal plan, which would basically send all of the money to fund one option, to fund what I would say is perhaps an ideologically based option, to use terminology that the Liberals seem to favour using right now.

What I heard at the doorsteps is that people want something that is fair for all parents, whether they send their kids to a nine to five day care system or choose to raise their kids at home or have a neighbour or grandparent watch them.

I will focus on and reiterate what we have accomplished. As I said in my speech, there are 1.9 million children, through money being received by 1.5 million families, receiving \$100 per child under the age of six. Those families now are able to make the decision that they feel is best for their own families.

That is what my constituents asked for. I cannot speak to what the constituents in the hon. member's riding asked for, but I am responsible for representing the wishes of my constituents, and they asked me over and over again for fairness in the child care system.

• (1255)

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very interested in this debate today, especially with regard to women. I did not get an opportunity to ask a question of the previous presenter from the government side, but she talked about options for women to change their lives if they were in violent or abusive situations.

I know that her colleague who just spoke would want to tell us about what the government is doing and what those options are, because from my perspective what I have seen in my community is cuts to services for women. The \$100 a month for child care really is not a child care program. It is a nice family bonus, but it does not do anything to create child care spaces. I also just heard that the unanimous voices of the First Nations Women Leaders Forum in British Columbia are calling on the government for systemic change to stop the cycle of abuse and poverty.

Would my hon. colleague comment on what the government is doing with options for change for women?

**Mr. Mike Lake:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned child care spaces. As I mentioned in my speech, last year's budget set aside \$250 million a year, beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, to create child care spaces through the child care spaces initiative.

One of the things that Canadians have seen with the government in our first year of running things is a consistent approach to following through on our promises, to fulfilling our promises and doing what we said we would do.

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

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Today I rise to speak about the last year, one long year in which we are beginning to see the impacts of the decisions of the new Conservative government. We now can see the Conservatives importing their narrow minded and ultra-conservative agenda for the people of Canada.

This is not something that we see only with the government's actions in the House of Commons. We are actually witnessing the impact of these decisions on the day to day lives of hard-working Canadians. I see this every day in my own riding of Newton—North Delta.

Eliminating child care spaces, summer job programs for students, national literacy programs, programs designed to improve the advancement of women in our society, and legal help for those trying to defend their charter rights: these are only a few examples of the government's disconnect with the values and dreams of the majority of Canadians.

The Conservative government looks at the federal budget like a ledger, as simply numbers on a page that can be crossed off if the title does not fit the narrow vision of the Conservative Party. Of course, if this is reflected in the polls they will change their strategy until a majority is in hand, but they will never change their minds when it comes to Canadians. The Conservatives will re-announce the previous Liberal plan with a new blue banner and a catchy phrase. It is very simple for them, really, as if it is some sort of a game.

This is not a game. These numbers are not just abstract accounting notes. They reflect the efforts of this country to make the lives of ordinary Canadians better. They reflect the Canadians who try to find early learning and child care spaces for our children. They reflect the efforts of teachers to help Canadians read and write. They reflect the advocacy efforts of women trying to break glass ceilings. They reflect the work of committed Canadians trying to exercise their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They reflect the efforts of this country to make itself a better place for its citizens.

I am afraid that the impacts of what the Conservatives are abandoning will only get worse. This country has achieved landmark child care agreements with every province and territory, but what does the Conservative \$5 billion cut across this country really mean?

Let me tell members that Child Care Options, in my riding of Newton—North Delta, is having its entire funding slashed. This is a direct result of the government's heartless treatment of our children. Who is going to answer the more than 30,000 inquiries that the Child Care Options agency receives every year? It will no longer be there to help parents in my riding find child care spaces and early learning opportunities.

Furthermore, Surrey's teen parent program that supported young parents who want to complete their high school education has no idea how it will survive these cuts.

It gets worse. The Conservative government also cut \$18 million in literacy funding that is badly needed in my riding of Newton—North Delta. I will never understand how this program does not fit even the narrowest of conservative beliefs, but apparently it does not.

These programs not only help those individuals who are learning to read and write, they strengthen the social and economic fabric of entire communities, the small communities in British Columbia that need this help very badly. The Conservative government obviously believes that this is pointless.

● (1300)

The Conservative government has continued this social policy rampage by turning back the clock on women's equality. It has shut down the Status of Women Canada offices across the country. It has removed the word "equality" from the mandate of its women's program and it has cut \$5 million from Status of Women Canada. This important avenue for the achievement of women is being destroyed, and I would say that it is shameful.

The Conservative government is cutting \$55 million from the youth employment services. It will save \$10 million with the elimination of the international youth internship program and another \$10 million with the elimination of the Canadian volunteerism initiative.

Those cuts will have a devastating impact on students and young people in my riding of Newton—North Delta.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Conservative government's agenda is its cancellation of \$6 million for the court challenges program. The Prime Minister's chief of staff is on record questioning whether this program should exist. His opinion obviously won out in the backrooms of the Prime Minister's Office.

I guess some organizations should be viewed with more suspicion, at least from the Conservative Party's perspective. The government needs to stop groups that may use the court challenges program to advance equality and language rights under the charter. Those suspicious on the Conservative list include but are not limited to: Alliance for Equality of Blind Canadians, The B.C. Human Rights Coalition, the BC Coalition of People with Disabilities, the Canadian Association of the Deaf, the Canadian Council for Refugees, the Canadian Women's Health Network, The Canadian Hearing Society and even the Brain Injury Association network are on the Conservative Party's hit list.

The court challenges program was responsible for allowing deaf people to fully participate in Canadian society by mandating translation services in sign language so they could interact with the government. This success alone is enough to justify the continuation of the program. Those are only a few examples.

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This will be a country where a young mother will not be able to find a child care space or even afford one if found. It will be a country where this mother will have vastly reduced access to literacy and adult education programs. It will be a country where job opportunities through youth employment programs will not exist for this mother. It will be a country where, if this mother's rights are violated, she will have no access to the court challenges program.

I suppose the Conservatives believe that ignorance is bliss and that the ignorant will vote Conservative. However, I, along with the Liberal Party, will work to stop this from happening, even if the NDP continues to support this ultra-conservative agenda.

• (1305)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague from Newton—North Delta to elaborate on the truly drastic, draconian cuts the Conservative government has announced in the summer career placements program. He alluded to them.

I would like to know whether my colleague shares my opinion and that of my Bloc Québécois colleagues on the devastating impact the cuts will have on our young people and their future. This program enables young people to embark on a career path, and these dramatic cuts will make it much more difficult for them to find jobs in the future.

[*English*]

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, when I went to the University of Calgary I remember how important the summer program was to obtain the necessary experience to be successful in the workplace. By cutting these programs, we will be affecting the most vulnerable in our society. It is probably because the Conservative government thinks that these students do not work.

I will keep on working hard for all the students in my riding. Many of the students at Kwantlen University College are affected by this program, which I personally think is a shame.

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Newton—North Delta talked a lot about child care. I somewhat agree with him that the Conservatives have not done anything to create child care spaces. All we have heard so far is their promise that in the coming year they will create some spaces. They seem to be following along the same lines as the Liberal Party in that respect.

I have been an advocate for child care for over 20 years. I have done a lot of lobbying and did call on the previous Liberal government to deliver on the national child care program that it promised in 1993 under Jean Chrétien's leadership. However, even after the Liberals won majority after majority and had a surplus of billions of dollars, no national child care program was delivered.

Why, in the face of all that, did the Liberals wait until the last minority Parliament to introduce a national child care program?

• (1310)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal:** Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the hon. member is well aware that the previous government made a landmark agreement with all the provinces so children across this

country could take part in the early learning and child care program. I will elaborate on this a bit.

This is not just about child care. It is also about early learning. My son will be turning three this coming Monday. When it comes to child care, I am fortunate to have my parents at home. Every medical study has shown that early childhood learning is what counts for children between the ages of three and six. The \$100 benefit really becomes \$70 in my case even though I have not applied for it. The \$100 is taxable.

I would request the hon. member to keep on working for the future. It was the Liberal Party that brought in the landmark agreements. We should keep on working to ensure that every child, irrespective of where they live, will be able to take part in early childhood learning.

**Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion before the House. I will concentrate on the egregious cut and elimination on human rights and justice issues.

[*Translation*]

In particular, I would like to start with the elimination of the court challenges program.

I am from Moncton, New Brunswick. It is the cradle of Acadia and its capital. We have many Acadians who speak French. It is very important to emphasize that Acadians know what it is like to be a minority.

Of all the obligations of members of parliament, the most important and vital is to protect human rights, civil rights, the rights of individuals across the country. Throughout Canada we have minorities with religious and language rights.

Moncton, New Brunswick has a long history of fighting for the minority rights of Acadians.

[*English*]

The story really starts in the 1700s when the Acadian people settled most of the parts of what is now New Brunswick and what was then Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia was split into two parts, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, with New Brunswick being the better part, seeing no members from Nova Scotia near me.

What happened is that the Acadian population in 1755 was put to an egregious deportation in the time of colonial wars, which we will not get into, but essentially they were from that time forward treated as second class citizens in the region.

*Business of Supply*

It was a long time from 1755 to 1960 but in 1960 the first French Acadian premier of a province that is 33.5% bilingual, or French and Acadian in population, was elected. His name was Louis J. Robichaud and he instituted a program of equal opportunity.

I will paint a picture of New Brunswick in the 1960s. French, a language spoken by one-third of the population, 40% in the city of Moncton, was not spoken at municipal hall meetings nor spoken in the provincial government. This was long before Pierre Trudeau's visionary Official Languages Act and, I might add, in a brief moment of non-partisanship, long before the vision of Progressive Conservative Premier Richard Hatfield of New Brunswick who brought forward the official languages act at the provincial level in the 1980s. It also was long before 2002 when the city of Moncton, where the largest number of Acadians live in the province in one place, became officially bilingual. This is a continuum from 1755 to today.

What is important to remember is in New Brunswick in the time that I grew up, notwithstanding the great numbers of population who were French speaking Acadians, they had very few schools. They were fighting to keep their own hospitals. I will keep it at schools and hospitals because the other pillar I believe of social justice requires that we look at the judicial system.

The judicial system, because it was more federally regulated than the other two pillars that I wish to delve into, was very much ahead of its time with respect to according linguistic rights to the French speaking minority.

In the realm of schools let me paint the picture that many French speaking Acadians in New Brunswick were told. They were told that they would not go to school but that they would learn a trade. The schools in the area of Moncton, in southeastern New Brunswick and in other parts of New Brunswick did not have sufficient spaces for francophones until equal opportunity and Louis J. Robichaud.

Hospital care was not what it should have been either. It was primarily religious in nature. It eschewed public funding and did not get the public funding it deserved. With time and, I will say, with the progressive measures of people like Richard Hatfield, following on Frank McKenna as well, measures were adopted to certainly visit égalité dans ce secteur.

This drives me to the main point of how the cuts with respect to linguistic minorities in this country are absolutely shameful. The Conservative government should be ashamed of turning the clock back on the advances that have been made over time, particularly with respect to minority rights. With that I am speaking about the wholesale elimination of the court challenges program.

It can be asked, "Isn't that just a fund", as the Conservative hyperbole would lead us to believe, "that funds lawyers to fight cases and otherwise increase their income?" No, it is not. I will give two good examples of what the fund is about.

•(1315)

[*Translation*]

First, it helped to ensure the survival of Montfort hospital in an area where the minority population required health care. This

program provided funding for the new school L'Odyssée, which will open its doors in Moncton, New Brunswick.

[*English*]

These are but two examples that I hope bring home to the Conservatives the importance of the court challenges program.

The Montfort Hospital we do not have to speak about in great detail. It was a very well publicized case with the Mike Harris government. There are vestiges of the Mike Harris legacy in this House and in the government. We see it with the discussions and in the cuts that are made with respect to how government operates today. It is very much like Mike Harris in Ontario.

I will not go into a complete brief of that. There is not the time, but there is time to explain that the Mike Harris government and many of the people who represent the Ottawa region in this House for the other side were all in favour of closing a hospital that served the needs of a French-speaking minority in this region. That was unacceptable.

The challenge was put under the court challenges program and it was won, legally and then politically. That is an important process to remember. Often the political battle is won after the legal battle is won. This may be another non-partisan moment where I say all governments are going to comply with the law, which is why we are so confident on this side that Kyoto will be implemented by the government because it will obey the law. The law told the provincial government of Ontario at the time that it must keep the Montfort Hospital open and it did.

Let me explain the other case that is real and has a connection to the elimination of the court challenges program.

A group of people in Moncton, New Brunswick decided, because of their growing numbers, that they deserved a school for their school-aged children, grades one to nine, in Moncton. They filed the brief against the provincial government. They started the action. The action was never pursued because when it was publicized and a copy was sent to the provincial government of the day, it agreed to build the school.

This program does not challenge the federal government, as the former minister of justice suggests. It challenges other levels of government that have less open laws toward minorities, and it should have been kept. It is there to protect people who cannot protect themselves. It is there to encourage municipalities, boards, agencies and commissions, and even provincial governments, to do the right thing.

*Business of Supply*

These are two cases that exemplify the reason why the elimination of the court challenges program is an unacceptable measure. It shows the meanness, the narrowness, and the unconstitutional posture of the government. It shows that it is just Mike Harris writ large, on the blanket of this country, and right-thinking Canadians will not stand for it.

It is why I am very proud that our leader and other members of this chamber have risen today and said this is enough. There is no vision that includes everyone in Canada on that side. We will take the time it takes in this House to show to Canadians that the vision from that government is not a vision that will sustain a country. It may sustain pockets of people who think like it does, but it does not sustain a patchwork of Canadians who deserve equality rights for minorities and a better country in the future.

• (1320)

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe for his words here today.

The hon. member was talking about minority rights. When it comes to the francophone community, I totally understand where he is coming from because his province has a bilingual culture. However, I was also listening to the Bloc members and these days there are other minority languages as well. How is it going to impact those programs? Could the member elaborate on this?

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I did focus on official languages. It is where I come from. It is what I have lived as a municipal politician for some time. However, I do understand the growth of minority communities, in general, in Canada, and I do understand that there are language needs that surpass the Official Languages Act, but are nevertheless met with the Canada Health Act.

We were quite gratified to meet officials in western Canada who provide, in British Columbia, for instance, at the provincial level, services in health and education in many languages. If those were to be denied, the court challenges program would be in place to guarantee that a member of a British Columbia Sikh community, for example, who was denied health care in his language so that he could understand what the doctor was saying to him and the doctor could understand what he was saying, could use it if it was egregious.

I compliment the Government of British Columbia but I do not think that is the case. But if it were, if it were flatly denied by policy, by a government agency, board, commission, then the court challenges program would have been there to respond to the needs of all minority populations in this country.

What a shame that the Conservative government does not care about the Acadians in Moncton, New Brunswick, and it does not seemingly care about the Sikh community in British Columbia. What a shame that it just does not care.

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to challenge him on that, and for the member who asked the question before, when he full well knows that there is a lot of support for the Conservative Party by Sikh members in the province of British Columbia. That was evidenced by the fact that prior to his election there was a member who had a great deal of

support from the Sikh community, and I expect after the next election that will be the case again with a Conservative member from this side of the House for that particular riding.

Certainly, minority communities all across our country, and increasing numbers in these days, support the government. They come from parts of the world where they understand what it means to have solid values. Often they line up more with small “c” conservative values. They are hard-working, industrious and entrepreneurial people. They come into this country and they have a value base. They have a work ethic that is very much in sync with the goals and the aspirations of all Canadians that this party clearly supports.

I would ask if the member might be more accurate on the record, a little more charitable actually in his remarks, and acknowledge the fact that this party does in fact have the support of a lot of immigrant people and ethnic communities across our country instead of putting the misinformation as he did in the manner before? I would appreciate that correction, please.

• (1325)

**Mr. Brian Murphy:** Mr. Speaker, I am always wanting to be charitable to another member of the House of Commons, but in this case I must disagree with my friend and perhaps underline to him that there is a word called “minority” and there is a word called “majority”.

His argument seems to be that if they get the most votes, they can make the laws they want. That decries the whole aspect of minority rights. Even though I was elected by a majority of people, I still have a duty, an obligation, and a moral responsibility to take care of the minority who did not vote for me.

It is the same with respect to relations in the multicultural community. That he has some supporters from the multicultural community is not the point. Do the multicultural communities he represents support his government's decision to eliminate the court challenges program?

I can tell him that in the fall I was in Saskatchewan and Alberta, which to my knowledge has no Liberal seats now. The francophone communities in Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba, it was part of our official languages trip, were unanimously against the government decision to eliminate the court challenges program. So, I am not sure where he gets his information.

I do wish to be charitable to him. I could suggest a list of reading material which would perhaps illuminate for him the concept of minority rights. That is the charity.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to this interesting debate on this Liberal Party opposition day.

In the past few hours I have been re-reading the Liberal Party opposition motion. This is nothing short of a motion of defiance. I would say we are on the brink of having an election, judging by this motion. There is so much to criticize about this government that has been in power for a year and a few weeks.

*Business of Supply*

I want to start with the opposite of what my colleague from Moncton said. In other words, I will start by talking about court challenges. I sat on the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights and we heard from representatives of Canada's linguistic minorities. They explained to us the importance of this right to bring a challenge in the courts and what a small portion of the federal budget this right represented, compared to the impact it will have on the stakeholders.

It is devastating. I hope that someone from the other side of the House will listen. What this government did by cutting this program, that barely cost anything but gave rights to the communities, is devastating. I am talking about francophone communities outside Quebec and, of course, anglophone communities in Quebec. With respect to francophones outside Quebec, just one example will suffice to show this House the importance of the court challenges program. I am talking about the Montfort Hospital.

We heard from people representing the hospital. They explained that the few thousands of dollars they received allowed them to appeal to the Supreme Court. The minister, who was President of the Treasury Board, but has since changed portfolios and is now the Minister of the Environment, said that he was proud to announce to the representatives of the Montfort Hospital that they had won. I find this outrageous and hypocritical. I could use other words that are unparliamentary, but I will let you use your imagination. These people had to fight the government, but they managed to win their case before the Supreme Court. If the government, represented then by the now Minister of the Environment, had truly been in agreement, then it should have just reimbursed all the legal costs.

I think that the court challenges program must be brought back in as soon as possible because it is critical to the survival of cultural minorities in this country. Over the next five or six years, several francophone communities could disappear if they do not get the rights they have a right to—pardon the redundancy—to file appeals with the courts.

Let me go a little farther with that and talk about this government's hypocrisy—yes, hypocrisy—with respect to the summer career placement program. I live in a region called Abitibi—Témiscamingue that I am proud to have represented for nearly two and a half years now. We never thought that the summer career placement program was a social assistance program for students. We still do not think so. We fought for it and we asked for a program that would bring students to our regions, keep them there, and enable them to pursue their studies in areas that interest them.

Last year, I saw students in pharmacy, accounting, administration, tourism and more come back to Abitibi—Témiscamingue to spend the summer there rounding out their studies.

● (1330)

I just do not understand. Nobody, not even the minister, has been able to explain to us why they are cutting such an important program. Even if they tried, they could not find a better way to score a direct hit on Quebec than to cut the summer career placement program.

Why? Because unfortunately for young people from Abitibi—Témiscamingue, there is no pharmacy school in Abitibi—Témisca-

mingue. Unfortunately for us, forestry engineers are still being trained at Université Laval. Same thing goes for mining engineers and everything that has to do with tourism development. They get their training somewhere other than Abitibi—Témiscamingue. Young people from our region who want to further their education in those sectors have to go to university or even CEGEPs or vocational schools outside of our region. For example, the closest veterinary school is in Saint-Hyacinthe.

The summer career placement program provided an opportunity to bring first-, second- and third-year students back to the regions, where they could find a job in their field of interest, such as with farmers or veterinarians, or even in accounting firms in the regions. Thus, students were able maintain a link to our region. By cutting this program, the government is forcing our students to stay in Montreal, Quebec City, Saint-Hyacinthe, Jonquière, or elsewhere in Quebec, rather than returning to our region for the summer to develop their skills.

We are preparing ourselves for the worst in our regions. We will fight this. I also hope that someone on the other side of the House will become enlightened, whether by the Holy Spirit, Mohammed or Buddha, and understand how important it is for the regions to preserve the summer career placement program. It is essential for our regions. If the Conservatives fail to understand, they will be reminded once again during the next election, certainly in Quebec and likely in other areas across Canada.

If that were the only issue, we could probably accept it once again, but there is something else. I would like to talk about the judiciary. Let me just mention what the Prime Minister said yesterday in the House. It was rather strange. Yesterday, in response to a question asked in this House, the Prime Minister said that they want to make sure that they are bringing forward laws to make sure to crack down on crime and make our streets and communities safer. So far, I think everyone can agree on that. Where he went wrong is when he said that they want to make sure that their selection of judges is in correspondence with those objectives.

I call that profiling. That is what the government is doing. This is condemned by the Barreau du Québec and the Canadian Bar Association. The government is telling us, quite openly, that there will be profiling. This is unacceptable, completely unacceptable.

● (1335)

I know, because I have sat on judicial selection committees. What we want to know about future judges is whether they can hand down a judgment and whether they can do so independently of political and public opinion. This is an essential quality that we look for in judges.

With the announcement the Prime Minister made yesterday, we think that this will no longer be the case. The risk is that candidates for judgeships in the highest courts—the Federal Court, the Federal Court of Appeal, the Superior Court of Québec and the Court of Appeal—will be asked whether they are willing to be harsher, lean more to the right and enforce more strictly the legislation we could adopt. This legislation has not yet been adopted.

*Business of Supply*

Given what Canada is going through at present, it is a good thing that this government does not have a majority. It is a good thing. I hope that Canadians and Quebecers will understand that if an election is held, this government must not be given a majority.

If you look closely at this government, it is easy to see that it is a right-wing government modelled on George Bush's government in the United States. That is very dangerous for us. We have only to look at the role right-wing ideology is playing in judicial appointments.

The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights was told that the government wanted to have police officers on selection committees and was asked why appeal court judges were on the committees. We believe, we hope and we know, because we have frequently pleaded before them: judges are independent and want to stay that way. Judicial independence should be a priority when judges are appointed in this country.

That is not all. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard, who just a few months ago was the Prime Minister of this country, the member for Wascana, who was the Minister of Finance in the former government, and the member for Fredericton, who was the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs until the election, came to testify before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, on which I sit as the Bloc Québécois critic. They came to testify. We asked these three guests specific questions about the Kelowna accord.

I will repeat the question I asked the three guests.

As far as the \$5.2 billion is concerned, for implementing the Kelowna accord and allowing the aboriginals of this country to take just a small step toward catching up with the rest of Canadians, we had asked whether this money was in addition to the money the Department of Indian Affairs already had. The response from the three guests, the hon. members for LaSalle—Émard, Wascana and Fredericton, was “yes”.

● (1340)

This government has not respected an agreement signed between nations. The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard was then Prime Minister and he did not sign the Kelowna accord as the member for LaSalle—Émard, but as the Prime Minister of this country. As for Phil Fontaine, he signed as Chief of the Assembly of the First Nations of Canada. It was nation to nation and when we look at the documents, this is precisely what was set out.

There is therefore a \$5.2 billion shortfall. This money was earmarked in the budget and was withdrawn and transferred elsewhere by this government. The residences in the aboriginal communities of this country are currently still in the 19th century. We all know how cold it is outside. This evening, when I go back to my riding, I will go by an aboriginal community in the La Vérendrye wildlife sanctuary. In this community, which is called Kitcisakik, people still get water with a pail. In Winneway, an aboriginal community in Témiscamingue, there is so much mould on the walls of a number of the homes that they have to be destroyed.

There is a shortfall of \$5.2 billion, which was allocated and which will not be there to help the aboriginal communities make up for lost time.

One thousand homes were to be built for the Inuit and the aboriginal peoples of this country, and that will not be done. Knowing that the birth rate among aboriginal women of this country is 3.4 per woman, we realize that there is currently a population explosion. If nothing is done, there will be major health problems.

How is it that today, in 2007, aboriginal communities have the highest rate of tuberculosis in Canada? That is unacceptable. That does not make sense. This government must absolutely listen to reason and realize that it is headed down a dead-end street. It must get back to reality and realize that the first nations need additional monies to survive.

To conclude, I will say that we will be voting in favour of the Liberal motion because the one thing we want is for this government to understand that it can no longer continue down the path it has taken. This has to stop. It must rethink its decision and understand. There is no way we are going to allow right-wing judges, with a conservative ideology, to be appointed in this country. There is no way. There is no way we are going to axe programs such as the summer career placement program. That is unacceptable.

I think it is totally unacceptable for the \$5.2 billion earmarked for aboriginal peoples to be reallocated. This government must be made to understand that we can no longer tolerate this situation.

● (1345)

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the member for his support for the motion and his participation in this debate.

I would like to know whether he is aware of any reason other than pure far right Conservative ideology to explain how, on the same day that a budget surplus of \$12 or \$13 billion is announced, a \$6 million program is cancelled that makes it possible for disadvantaged people in our society to enforce their rights and go to court to have the court decide whether, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, they are entitled to services? We are talking about education for francophones outside Quebec, for example, in the Maritimes, in Nova Scotia, where I live.

In my day, we had English-language schools. They were called French, but they were English. The teachers were francophone, but all the books we had to read were in English. The administration was francophone, but the classes were taught in English. After grade 12, when I went to a French-language university, I was at a disadvantage, in terms of language, and that was very difficult.

Statistics in Canada tell us that in the Atlantic provinces, particularly for minority language groups, the literacy rate is very low. On that same day, not only was \$6 million for the court challenges program taken away, but funding for literacy was also cut.

In addition, jobs are also being cut for young students who are now in universities and schools and preparing for their future. They are losing their funding, as are women who want to enforce their rights. At the same time, this government says that it supports the Charter of Rights, but it supports it by taking away the oxygen it needs to survive.

*Business of Supply*

I would therefore ask the member whether he knows of a reason to explain this other than far right Conservative ideology.

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

I find it hard to imagine that this government can have gone this far. I can understand that we have to pay down the debt because we must not leave it to our children and grandchildren. I completely agree with that. We are told that budget surpluses are expected and that the plan is to apply \$8 billion to the debt. But when we have \$13 billion, I find it hard to understand that we would not take a little of it to help the people who need it most.

Not only do I agree with the member, but I would add that we must not let the Conservatives get away with this. We must absolutely ensure that they understand that the rest of Canada does not agree with them.

They say that they want to abide by the Charter of Rights, and I agree with them entirely. Why then have they abolished the Law Commission of Canada, a commission that provided the government with very thoughtful legal opinions about a whole range of situations and issues? That has been cut too. This is unacceptable. The member is perfectly correct. This right-wing ideology has to stop. They have to understand that this cannot continue.

• (1350)

**Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments, his support and his party's support for our motion today.

I was interested in his comments about the aboriginal issue. During the election campaign, the Conservatives promised to honour the Kelowna accord. Budget 2006 gave the Conservative government its first opportunity to clearly demonstrate to aboriginal peoples that they were a priority. However, the Conservative government reneged on its electoral promise by cancelling \$5.1 billion in funds allocated to health care, education, water and economic development.

I believe most Canadians would agree that the Kelowna accord is very important to the future of aboriginal people and Canada.

Does my hon. colleague agree that the government should honour this accord and do more for aboriginals in Canada?

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer as follows. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development quietly let me know that they did not want to recognize the Kelowna accord because nothing was signed and the government was not committed. We suspected—and I still suspect, with all due regard—that they do not want to recognize the Kelowna accord because it comes from the Liberals.

I would go further, though. If only they had made the same \$5.2 billion available, in whatever form they wanted. They can call it the Calgary accord or the Kashechewan accord, if they want. That is what we criticized the government for. It is not true that the government has invested more money than would have been spent under the Kelowna accord. We have all the figures. This \$5.2 billion is what the aboriginal peoples were supposed to receive.

That is what is unacceptable and that is why our aboriginal peoples in Quebec and Canada and our Inuit in the far north now find themselves in need. Even their basic needs are not being met. There will be lawsuits coming up in regard to health care. The department is going to have some serious problems over the next few months.

[English]

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal motion speaks to the frustration the Liberal Party has sitting in opposition in a minority Parliament. It speaks to my frustration as well in a minority situation. Quite clearly the rules of Parliament are still colonial and do not allow this assembly to truly act democratically. If the government knew that in the case of a non-confidence motion a new arrangement could be struck between the other parties as to the government's future, this would put a lot more pressure on the government to deal with issues correctly. Sixty-five per cent of Canadians did not vote for the Conservatives. They voted for a much more progressive agenda.

Does my hon. colleague not agree that the rules of this House should allow for a democratic process when a government falls and allow choice for another government?

• (1355)

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my hon. colleague across the way. However, I am not sure that it is up to me to say whether the rules should or should not be changed in regard to the current situation.

What is important, I think, is to remind the House—I was going to say the court and I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I have been conditioned and it shows. After all, I was a lawyer for 25 years. What is important, though, is that this government is a minority government because we can control it in committee and tell it that what it is doing does not make any sense. Most of all, we can prevent legislation from passing, as we just saw at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. Just for that we could keep this minority government and continue controlling it for a while longer.

The Liberals, though, are not any better, if they are preparing to return to power. Positions will have to be taken. When agreements are signed nation to nation, they will have to be respected. That is why aboriginal peoples have been so angry for the last six months.

[English]

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to a very important motion. It is a motion that really speaks to the track record of the Conservative government since being in power for the last year. This motion speaks to the fact that the minority government has failed. It has failed when it comes to the issue of the environment. It has failed to provide leadership when it comes to the issue of health care. It has failed to provide leadership when it comes to an issue that is important to so many families and parents across this country, and that is the issue of child care.

Being the social development critic, I have had the opportunity to meet with numerous child care advocacy groups and Canadian parents. I have listened to Canadian families and the struggles and challenges they face on a daily basis because the government has neglected its promise and commitment to create child care spaces.

The Conservatives promised over 125,000 child care spaces, spaces that they would create for Canadian families, and that they would invest in early learning and childhood development. We have seen that the government has broken its promise because it has delivered zero of 125,000 spaces. It is unfortunate that child care centres, child care advocacy groups and parents are now struggling to find out what they will do on April 1 to ensure that children actually have the very best.

Earlier this month we heard from child care advocacy groups. They provided a report card for the Prime Minister and the Conservative government. In a number of different areas child care advocacy groups gave the government a failing grade. On universal child care the Prime Minister was provided with a grade of F. The report stated that the Prime Minister has trouble understanding some basic concepts, and his major term project, the universal child care plan, is certainly not child care because it is certainly not a plan and it is certainly not universal.

I am sure that many Canadian families and parents are going to be in for the shock of their lives when they file their tax returns because they will realize that the \$1,200 a year child care plan by the Conservatives is actually taxable. Many Canadian parents and families will have to give money back to the government. They are going to have to give almost \$31 a month per child back to the government.

**The Speaker:** I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but as she knows, we have to proceed with statements by members. She will have seven minutes and a bit remaining in the time allotted for her remarks, which she will be able to resume a little later this day.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

### STAR OF MILITARY VALOUR

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday, Sergeant Patrick Tower, who served at CFB Wainwright, will become one of the first ever recipients of Canada's Star of Military Valour.

In true soldier fashion, Sergeant Tower insists that he was just doing his job when he led two of his comrades through 150 metres of enemy fire to help a group of Canadian soldiers who were pinned down and had suffered heavy casualties.

Later that day Sergeant Tower learned that four soldiers, including his best friend, were killed during the battle. His courage and selfless devotion to duty figured significantly in the survival of the remaining platoon members.

A soldier since the age of 17, Sergeant Tower is proud of his troops, his country and his mission and he humbly points to those who did not come home as the true heroes.

### Statements by Members

However, when heroes do manage to come home, like Sergeant Tower, it is a privilege to recognize and thank them for their service to Canada, to peace and to democracy, and I am humbled to do so today.

Thanks and well done Sergeant Tower.

\* \* \*

● (1400)

### MAKING KENORA HOME

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize the Making Kenora Home organization. Mike Aiken, Nan Norman, Selen Alpay and the Harbour Town Centre have worked tirelessly to bring awareness to the poverty issues in the Kenora area.

This week has been deemed Poverty Week in Kenora, where individual community organizations and businesses have come together to raise money and educate about poverty and homelessness.

Yesterday marked the Wear Red for Poverty Awareness Day, where people all over the city wore red to make the statement that we must find solutions to help these people who are living with these challenges.

I congratulate the Making Kenora Home organization for its efforts and I applaud everyone who participated in these events.

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[Translation]

### MICHAËL BOISSONNEAULT

**Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me pleasure today to welcome Michaël Boissonneault, the winner of the first "MP for a Day" contest for political science students at the Cégep de Victoriaville.

As part of the Canada-Quebec politics course, participants were asked to examine Quebec's traditional demands vis-à-vis the federal government. Michaël submitted the best presentation on this topic, taking care to give equal weight to all demands.

This non-partisan contest is intended to encourage young people to consider a career in politics and helps make them aware of the realities of parliamentary life, as well as enhancing the image of politicians and politics in general, all the while, of course, leaving young people to form their own opinions.

I would like to thank Jean-François Léonard, professor of political science and geography at the Cégep de Victoriaville, with whom I launched this contest. I also want to thank la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste du Centre-du-Québec and La Capitale Centre-du-Québec for their contributions to a scholarship of \$550, which was awarded to Michaël, a young man with a promising future.

*Statements by Members*

[English]

**ADVENTURER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate two extraordinary individuals from my riding. Colin Angus and Julie Wafaei have been awarded the National Geographic 2006 Adventurer of the Year Award for their two year human powered world circumnavigation. The team used zero emissions travel to highlight issues of global warming and to inspire others to use non-motorized transportation.

Colin and Julie completed the expedition last May, 720 days of travel. Colin travelled 43,000 kilometres by rowboat, bicycle, canoe, ski and on foot, a journey that voyaged across three continents, two oceans and seventeen countries.

Julie travelled with him for most of that expedition, including rowing 10,000 kilometres unsupported across the Atlantic Ocean, making her the first woman to row across the Atlantic from mainland to mainland and the first Canadian woman to row across any ocean.

Congratulations Colin and Julie on receiving this award and on highlighting the issue of climate change.

\* \* \*

**ACADEMY AWARDS**

**Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Oscar nominee, Ms. Torill Kove. Born and raised in Norway, Ms. Kove moved to Canada in 1982.

*The Danish Poet*, Torill's latest film, is a co-production by the National Film Board and Norway's MikroFilm. It is Miss Kove's second Oscar nomination and the 69th nomination for the National Film Board of Canada. This week the film won a Genie for best animated short film.

Torill's first professional film, *My Grandmother Ironed the King's Shirts*, co-produced by the National Film Board of Canada and Studio Magica of Oslo, won numerous international awards and was nominated for an Oscar as well.

Other Canadian Oscar nominees are: Ryan Gosling, best actor; Paul Haggis, best original screenplay; Paul Massey for sound mixing; and *Water*, a film by Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta as best foreign film.

Congratulations and good luck on Oscar night.

\* \* \*

**OCEAN RANGER**

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate a sad anniversary.

Twenty-five years ago today, 84 lives were lost at sea after the *Ocean Ranger* capsized in the icy waters of the North Atlantic. February 15, 1982, will be a day long remembered by all Canadians and particularly by Newfoundlands and Labradorians as this happened on the southern Grand Banks just off our coast.

Tragedies at seas are not something new to my province. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for over 500 years have been

making a living from the resources of the ocean. The *Ocean Ranger* tragedy and the men whose lives were lost on that fateful night will be forever etched in our memory.

By remembering those who lost their lives, we honour both their courage and their families' pain. In the wake of this tragedy, advances in technology and training have helped us reduce the risks taken by those who venture into our oceans, but there will always be danger and there will always be brave men and women willing to meet it.

I invite my colleagues to honour the crew of the *Ocean Ranger* with our thoughts and prayers and to pledge vigilance for those who today follow their passion and seek their livelihood on the high seas.

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● (1405)

**OCEAN RANGER**

**Mr. Fabian Manning (Avalon, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, 25 years ago today, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada were awakened to the tragic news of the worst offshore accident in Canadian history.

In the early hours on February 15, 1982, during a major storm that brought 100 knot winds and 65 foot waves, the offshore drilling rig the *Ocean Ranger* sank beneath the waves. All 84 crew members lost their lives that fateful morning and the families and friends and communities of our province were changed forever. It was indeed a dark, sombre day in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Today we stand in the House, from coast to coast to coast, and remember those brave pioneers of our oil and gas industry and express our sympathies and prayers to the loved ones who were left behind. Brave men is what they were, those who faced the icy winds, knowing as they left those sheltered coves that they may never return again.

May their souls rest in peace.

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[Translation]

**MAHER ARAR AND MONIA MAZIGH**

**Mr. Marcel Lussier (Brossard—La Prairie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, Quebecers and Canadians of the Muslim faith or of Arab origin reaffirmed their commitment to creating a better society by contributing to its sociocultural and economic development.

The community paid tribute to Maher Arar and to his wife, Monia Mazigh, as part of a parliamentary evening to recognize their struggle to obtain justice and reparation from the Government of Canada.

*Statements by Members*

In recent years, a number of disturbing events have created situations that we can unfortunately associate with terms such as “Islamophobia” or “Arabophobia.” The members of the Arab and Muslim communities of Quebec and Canada declare their firm resolve to promote peace and to contribute to building a society based on the values of solidarity and social, economic and cultural prosperity.

The Bloc Québécois joins with the Muslim and Arab communities in paying tribute to Maher Arar and to Monia Mazigh.

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[English]

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, recent actions by the Liberal Party have Canadians questioning Liberal motives: 261 days wasted by the Liberal dominated Senate on a bill limiting Senate terms, a principle the Liberal leaders stated his agreement with; continued obstruction of common sense crime legislation that the Liberals claimed to support during the last election campaign; and now an extremely disconcerting turnabout on the Anti-terrorism Act, a move that has been questioned by prominent Liberals like Anne McLellan, John Manley and even their current human rights critic.

The Liberal Party, in its desperation, has developed a strategy not of principled opposition but of obstruction and confusion. It is like a stalker at a sporting event, running around in no particular direction with no purpose other than to distract the public from the action on the field, drawing attention to itself with no awareness of its own glaring inadequacies.

I am a little nervous about taking this analogy any further, so I will conclude by pleading with the Liberal members to stop flopping around and start cooperating, at least on the issues that they have professed to support.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOUR**

**Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Fédération des travailleurs du Québec, or FTQ, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this week.

Since its creation in 1957 under the impetus of Gustave Francq, it has been and remains today the largest labour union in Quebec. The FTQ has always defended the rights of individual workers fighting for social justice, in the interest of promoting the values that we are proud to share.

I am delighted to stand behind this progressive organization and its 500,000 members. Together, we will continue to defend the social, economic, cultural and political rights of workers in Quebec, who contribute to the prosperity and dynamic nature of our economy.

As the official labour critic, and on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and the Liberal Party of Canada, I would like to congratulate the FTQ and its president, Henri Massé, on reaching this important milestone.

●(1410)

**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Beauport—Limoilou, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today's opposition motion really serves as a scathing indictment of the 13 years of Liberal government.

The Liberals ratified the Kyoto protocol knowing full well that Canada would not be able to meet the Kyoto targets.

In their first red book, the Liberals promised to create a national childcare program. They delivered nothing in 13 years.

As for judicial appointments, Benoît Corbeil, former president of the Quebec wing of the Liberal Party, stated that anyone who aspired to a judgeship or any other plum position had to be friends with the members of the Liberal Party of Canada.

The motion presented by the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore bears witness to the desperation of the Liberal Party, which is completely out of new ideas and innovative solutions.

The federal Liberals refused to act. The Bloc Québécois will never be able to act. We, on the other hand, are taking action.

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[English]

**JUSTICE**

**Ms. Penny Priddy (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, last month I joined the member for Toronto—Danforth in Surrey to announce the NDP strategy for getting smart on crime.

Some crime is down in Canada, but violent crime is increasing at an alarming rate. It is time for a new approach. Hard-working families in Surrey deserve to feel safe on their streets and in their homes.

Getting smart on crime means focusing on the three Ps: prevention, policing and punishment.

Prevention is important to stop crime in the first place. It costs a few hundred dollars to help a youth in Surrey get a summer job. It costs \$150,000 a year if that same youth gets involved in a gang instead and gets sent to prison.

Adequate policing is crucial. We need to ensure that the Surrey RCMP has the people and the resources it needs to keep our street safe. When a person commits a crime, there should be appropriate punishment. This guiding principle is needed to protect our community from those who would prey upon it.

Many politicians talk about getting tough on crime, and I agree, but not with oversimplified answers to complex questions.

I am proud to be working toward real solutions for making Surrey safer for everyone.

*Oral Questions***NATIONAL FLAG DAY**

**Mrs. Susan Kadis (Thornhill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, with great pride I rise to mark the National Flag Day of Canada. Chosen by Parliament in the time of Lester B. Pearson, today is the 42nd anniversary of the first hoist of the maple leaf emblem over the Peace Tower on Parliament Hill.

This moment in our rise from colony to nation is one in which all Canadians take pride. Around the world the maple leaf is a symbol of justice and hope because Canada is a new nation, an immigrant nation, where peoples of all national origins have united in a peaceful and tolerant society.

For our soldiers killed in action, the ultimate symbol of respect is to half-mast our national flag. On this Flag Day, when we have cause to reflect on a year of sacrifice, I call on the Conservative government to reverse its disturbing decision to cease this practice.

To honour all fallen Canadian soldiers, the government must obey the dictates of decency and honour and order the flag half-masted whenever one of our own is killed in action.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]**QUEBEC FILM FESTIVAL**

**Ms. Diane Bourgeois (Terrebonne—Blainville, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in February 2007, we celebrate the 25th anniversary of *Rendez-vous du cinéma québécois*, a festival which supports and promotes Quebec film in Quebec, Canada and throughout the world.

Over the past 25 years, we have discovered and enjoyed the quality and diversity of a truly national film industry in Quebec which has produced shorts, feature films, documentaries, animated movies and art and experimental films.

On behalf of my Bloc Québécois colleagues, I would like to pay tribute to those who work in this vibrant industry.

This major Quebec film festival takes place at a time when we are exploring new avenues for the financing and development of the Quebec film industry. We expect the federal government to do its share and to show a real interest in this industry, which is an important component of our culture and an incomparable tool for promoting it worldwide.

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[*English*]**CHINESE CANADIANS**

**Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as elected officials we must endeavour to always provide Canadians with accurate information so they can make informed decisions. We may have differences of opinion, but we must always speak the truth.

Sadly, it has been recorded that the Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) has more than once misled the House and Canadians.

He has misled the Chinese Canadian community by stating that I was not telling the truth about the legal advice given by the

department on the head tax question and that I opposed the head tax apology even after the fact.

The Secretary of State (Multiculturalism and Canadian Identity) must come clean and apologize to the House, to Canadians and in particular to the Chinese-Canadian community for misleading them.

\* \* \*

● (1415)

**ANTI-TERRORISM ACT**

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just when Canadians wondered if the Liberal leader could be any less reasoned or coherent in his policy direction, several high profile Liberals have come out to denounce the hypocritical and reckless position on the Anti-terrorism Act.

The Liberal member for Mount Royal has stated publicly that he not only opposes his Liberal leader on this issue, but reinforces the importance of the extension of the act. Former MP Anne McLellan, responsible for the original act, has even stronger criticism for the new leader, saying:

I am in a sense perplexed as to why at this point you would take these important tools away from law enforcement—

Another former Liberal deputy prime minister, John Manley, continues the onslaught of criticism by saying:

—cabinet and Parliament got the balance right in 2001-02. And I do not believe that anything has changed to make that balance inappropriate today.

Will the new Liberal leader recognize the gravity of this issue, heed the advice of his Liberal colleagues, and ensure that Canadians have the protection that they deserve?

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**ORAL QUESTIONS**[*English*]**JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS**

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has finally admitted that he is stacking the judicial system to suit his right wing ideology. Yesterday he told the House that he wanted to make sure that the selection of judges adheres to his right wing agenda.

How can Canadians trust the Prime Minister to respect their rights and values when he admits that he intends to manipulate the judge selection process?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has made it very clear to Canadians that we want to see a strong, in fact, a stronger criminal justice system that strengthens, supports and protects our children, our streets and our communities.

In that regard, the former minister of justice announced that when we set up independent committees for advice on judicial appointments, that would include, for instance, the perspective of the police, the law enforcement perspective.

I understand that the leader of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party do not like the police, do not like a law enforcement perspective. It is important that we move in this direction and get away from the soft on crime policies.

[Translation]

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The Leader of the Opposition has the floor to pose his next question. Order, please.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion:** Mr. Speaker, our party has the utmost respect for the Canadian police force, but it also has great respect for the independence of judges. That is what is at issue.

The Prime Minister's admission caused an outcry across Canada.

All the experts condemn his ideological leaning: former Chief Justice Claire L'Heureux-Dubé; Stéphane Rivard, president of the Quebec Bar; Parker MacCarthy from the Canadian Bar Association, the Canadian Judicial Council, and so on.

Will the Prime Minister stop imposing his ideological choices? Will he restore the independence of the judicial advisory committees?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the leader of the Liberal Party respected and trusted the police, he would support the decisions of this government to have the police perspective within our independent committees to provide advice on judicial appointments. On the contrary, the leader of the Liberal Party is opposed to that.

[English]

That is not the only criminal justice reform he opposes. The leader of the Liberal Party has teamed up with the Bloc to fight against mandatory prison sentences for gun crimes. He has teamed up with the Bloc to oppose legislation to crack down on dangerous offenders. His soft on crime policies are wrong for this country.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

#### AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister is busy rigging the courts, thousands of jobs are being lost in our auto and manufacturing sectors. His government is doing absolutely nothing to help Canadian workers.

If the Prime Minister does not share his industry minister's appalling indifference and laissez-faire, where is his plan to help our auto workers?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course now the leader of the Liberal Party, having raised the subject of crime, would like to change the subject. I am not surprised that he would like to change the subject because he is not just soft on crime.

For the first time in history we have a leader of the opposition who is soft on terrorism. He is refusing to take the advice of Bob Rae,

#### Oral Questions

John Manley and Anne McLellan, and to back the anti-terrorism provisions that his own government put in place.

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#### JUSTICE

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, instead of posturing on the subject of crime, this side of the House would like to be smart on crime.

The government has displayed astonishing arrogance toward the institutions of our country. Its attempt to change the rules for appointing judges demonstrates a lack of respect for the judiciary. As for Parliament, last night the Minister of the Environment called a bill passed by the House a joke. The court system should not be manipulated and no bill passed by the House of Commons is ever a joke.

When will this arrogance stop? When will the Prime Minister begin to show respect for the institutions—

**The Speaker:** The right hon. Prime Minister. Order, please.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party would like to claim that the policies of the previous government that saw such a rise in gun, gang and drug crime were somehow smart on crime.

I would like to know how he explains today the report that under his government the National Parole Board awarded more than 100,000 pardons over the past six years, including two for murder convictions.

That is not smart on crime.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are trying to have a serious debate on crime. We do not want demagoguery and manipulation of the facts.

This government has no plan for the environment. It has no plan for the economy and it has no plan to help less fortunate workers. Furthermore, it has no plan to address crime.

Why is its only plan to ignore the Constitution and consolidate the powers of the Prime Minister?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Liberals mumbled something about being smart. I will tell members what is not smart, it is their constant criticism over the last week with respect to police officers being on a judicial advisory committee.

I want to know what they have against police officers, and I want them to not just say it here. Go back to your riding and tell police officers why you do not want them to be part of the process. Go ahead.

*Oral Questions*

**The Speaker:** I remind the Minister of Justice that he must address his remarks to the Chair.

The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS**

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the last election campaign, the Prime Minister told voters that they had nothing to fear from a Conservative government because there will always be, and I quote, "a Liberal Senate, a Liberal civil service, and courts that have been appointed by the Liberals", that would prevent him from exercising absolute power. And then yesterday, the Prime Minister confirmed, in this House, that he was now going to be interfering in the process of appointing judges so that he could have a judiciary that shares his values.

Will the Prime Minister admit that what he really wants is for his supposedly new government to appoint judges who think as he does?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have stated that the objective of this party is to make our communities and our streets safer and more secure for our children.

To that end, the government has created independent committees to provide advice about the appointment of judges. The committees will, for the first time, include the police perspective. It is important to have different perspectives. That is an important perspective.

I understand that the Bloc Québécois does not support attacking crime, but I think that Quebeckers and other Canadians support that policy.

•(1425)

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the antigang bill was proposed by the Bloc, while the Conservatives had nothing to say. The reverse onus for property acquired through crime was proposed by the Bloc, and they had nothing to say. The new provisions to combat street gangs were proposed by the Bloc, and they had nothing to say.

Will he admit that while the Liberals were motivated by partisanship, they are motivated by ideology, and that they will lose public confidence? The public wants an independent judiciary, not George Bush-style control.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is the Bloc's ideology alone that is opposed to mandatory prison terms for crimes committed with firearms. It is the Bloc's ideology that is opposed to tackling repeat offenders and the most dangerous criminals in this country.

The Bloc Québécois is soft on crime. The Bloc's ideology is not a position that is supported by the people of Quebec.

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just admitted that he wants to do judicial profiling. According to the Quebec bar, he will now be choosing judges based on criteria that should ordinarily disqualify them.

Does the Prime Minister not agree that by acting in this way, he is undermining the credibility of the legal system, which is based on judicial objectivity and impartiality? What meanspiritedness.

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have indicated that we have added police officers to the judicial advisory committees. These go in conjunction with representatives of the bar association, the judiciary, and representatives of attorneys general and the law societies. We think this is a positive addition.

If the member wants to talk about undermining, he is certainly undermining the police forces of this country and the wonderful job they do by continuously criticizing their addition to these committees.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Bar Association says that if people do not believe that judges are impartial, they will lose confidence in the legal system.

How can the Prime Minister compromise the entire justice system for the sake of his ideology?

[*English*]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I really cannot believe that the member for the Bloc Québécois is making a statement like that. The members of our police forces across this country are absolutely committed to the best interests of our judicial system. They play an integral part in the safety of our communities. They should be respected and applauded for helping out in this particular area.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada signed the Kyoto protocol 10 years ago. Parliament ratified it five years ago. Finally, yesterday, this Parliament adopted a bill requiring Canada to comply with the Kyoto protocol. This bill should have been adopted when the protocol was ratified, but because of the inaction of the Liberal Party, Canada has been very slow off the mark.

Why is the Prime Minister promising not to comply with a bill adopted by the majority of the people Canadians elected?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is the first in Canada's history to promise to create a system to regulate greenhouse gases and air pollutants for all industries across the country.

As for yesterday's bill, I can only say that this bill is meaningless. There is no action plan and no authority to spend to achieve the targets.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote something for members:

I remind the House that the motion was nonetheless adopted and that the government is duty bound to respect the decisions made by the House of Commons.

*Oral Questions*

Duty bound: that is what the current Prime Minister said in May 2005 when the Liberals refused to comply with the will of the House of Commons.

A majority of MPs expressed their will right here in the chamber yesterday and the Prime Minister is duty bound to respect it. Canada is a signatory to the Kyoto protocol and the Prime Minister is duty bound to respect it. Why will he not?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government has said it will bring in a national system of regulations for the control of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution. At the same time, we will do so in a way that preserves jobs and the health of the Canadian economy.

As for the bill yesterday, of course if and when that becomes law the government would respect it. I would just point out that the bill has no plan of action in it. The bill gives the government no authority to spend any money to actually have a plan of action.

I guess this is what the leader of the Liberal Party has come to. He failed so badly on his own plan that he is now asking us to produce one for him.

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**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the industry minister's think tank calls government investment in the auto sector an "ineffective subsidy program".

The last industry minister, now the trade minister, knew how to help out the auto sector. He was part of a Liberal government that invested over \$400 million in the auto sector because that was a Liberal government with a plan to help the auto sector. That plan was killed by the new Minister of Industry just as he is killing the auto sector in Canada.

Obviously the new industry minister does not know how to help the auto sector. Why does he not simply walk over and talk to the old industry minister?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after 13 long years those members did not produce any auto strategy. In fact, the Canadian auto industry is strong and better, and it is attracting mandates from the parent companies despite a worldwide restructuring situation.

Dennis DesRosiers of the automobile industry said in a recent study that Canadian auto assembly employment is up for the second year in a row, from 51,000 in 2004 to 52,000 in 2006.

It is a better investment climate in Canada. That is why employment is up.

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the former industry minister accurately predicted that "the auto industry would collapse under a Conservative government".

He also went further. He said that "if the Conservatives were in government today, there would not be \$5 billion of investments in the automotive sector in Ontario".

Why did the Minister of Industry kill that program on December 31 just when auto workers needed it most? Why is he allowing his right-wing ideology to kill real Canadian jobs?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Speaking of hypocrisy, Mr. Speaker, let me quote for the House something said by a member opposite in the *Ottawa Citizen*:

I believe we need to replace failed regional economic development programs and corporate welfare with dramatic corporate-tax reductions, because the market can pick winners and losers better than bureaucrats.

Who said that? It was not Adam Smith who said that. It was the hon. member for Kings—Hants.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. It is time to move on to the question. The hon. member for Newmarket—Aurora has the floor.

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, thousands of quality jobs are disappearing under the government and there is no plan to do anything about it. The Prime Minister recently boasted about his publicity scheme, Advantage Canada, which is nothing more than a pamphlet of platitudes. Nowhere in it does it lay out a comprehensive industrial strategy for a robust manufacturing sector.

Where is the government's substantive plan to address the manufacturing sector's decline and to support the thousands of jobs that are at risk?

• (1435)

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are doing very well in Canada in terms of attracting new mandates for the 12 auto plants in Ontario. That is a fact.

The facts are that the new Camaro will be built in Oshawa. The Challenger is going to be built in Brampton. The Fairlane will be built in Oakville. There is a new Toyota plant being built in Woodstock.

The hon. member should look at the facts and stop saying that the automobile industry in Canada is dying.

**Hon. Belinda Stronach (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, let us look at the facts. For the first time in 18 years, Canada has registered an automotive industry trade deficit of \$1.2 billion.

Mounting imports and declining exports have eroded the Canadian automotive sector.

Where is the minister's long-awaited plan for competitiveness? Canadian workers need it now.

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I do not know where the hon. member was, but I will not say anything. I do not know where the hon. member was when we deposited our budget last year, but this government reduced 29 corporate taxes to make Canada more attractive to businesses. This was in our last budget. We put forward Advantage Canada also. We have a vision. We want this country to be strong and to be competitive and it will be.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]***JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS**

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the frontal assault that this government is conducting on the judicial system is without precedent in Canada and the only rationale is its right-wing ideology.

How can the Prime Minister justify the fact that while his government advocates a laissez-faire approach and the free market in economic matters, as he showed in the Boeing case, when it comes to the judiciary, he advocates the very opposite, excessive government intervention?

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am not exactly sure where the hon. member was going with that one, but I can say that we are absolutely committed to the highest quality within our judicial system. We have appointed 51 judges up to this point. I believe all of them will stand the test of time. They are individuals prepared to serve their country. They have first-class legal minds. They are competent individuals and they will do an outstanding job, as will those we appoint in the future.

*[Translation]*

**Mrs. Carole Freeman (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister constantly repeats that he will respect the Constitution and rigorously respect the powers of the provinces.

How can the Prime Minister be believed when he says that he will respect the powers of the provinces when he is not even able to respect the independence of the judiciary, which is the very basis of democracy?

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no group of individuals who have been part of a political movement that has more respect for the Constitution of this country than the Conservative Party. People who have built this country, going back to Sir John A. Macdonald, have been affiliated with this political movement. I am very proud to stand with them and stand with their commitment to the Constitution of this country.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the government needs to understand that in basing the selection of judges on ideological criteria it is throwing itself down a new and extremely slippery slope.

Will the Prime Minister admit that he has decided to attack judges because of his inability to get his right-wing legislative agenda adopted in full? Unable to pass the legislation he wants, he is going to appoint the judges he wants.

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have indicated our approach to judicial appointments, but I have to raise this matter with the Bloc Québécois. When they get home to their ridings, they talk about how strong they want to be about fighting crime. I am asking

them to do something about it now. We have mandatory minimum sentences for people who commit crimes with firearms. This is being opposed by the Bloc Québécois. They should come clean with the Canadian people and get on board with our crime-fighting agenda.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in the United States, President Bush is nominating very, very conservative judges in order to further entrench his ideology. Here in Canada, the Prime Minister can appoint judges not only to the Supreme Court but also to all federal courts.

Does the Prime Minister not know that Quebeckers do not want the George Bush kind of legal system he is trying to institute? They will not accept it.

● (1440)

*[English]*

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am sure Quebeckers want judges who apply the law, and they want first class legal minds sitting in the judiciary.

Now the hon. member wants to become a champion of the Constitution. I hope he buys into all aspects of the Constitution of this country, which is one united country.

\* \* \*

**AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it was just two years ago that the jobless rate was at the lowest point in 30 years. Only 13 months later, what a sad commentary, with massive layoffs yesterday in the auto industry and the unemployment rate going up across the country.

What explanation does the government have for people in my riding who are losing their jobs? Where is the plan?

*[Translation]*

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said before, the automobile industry in Ontario is actually doing fairly well. The companies are able to compete on the international scene.

It is important not to forget that there was a net creation of 80,000 jobs here in Canada last month. Why? Because we tabled and passed a budget last year that was very competitive and helps our companies compete internationally.

*[English]*

**Hon. Garth Turner (Halton, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we know quite well that is no answer for Ford workers in Oakville or Chrysler workers in Brampton or any other people across the country who are facing plant closures.

Progressive governments know what to do. They know how to be innovative and competitive and give workers hope. Where is the hope here? Where is the plan? How can those members leave this legacy of layoffs, no matter how brief their watch is?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we need to realize that the decision Chrysler made yesterday to reduce its workforce here in Canada and in Ontario is part of a global restructuring. The decision had nothing to do with the policies of this government. To the contrary, this government's policies have resulted in more jobs being created in Canada since we came to power, companies being more confident, taxes going down and a favourable investment climate prevailing. Just last month, 89,000 jobs were created.

\* \* \*

[English]

### GOVERNMENT POLICIES

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this careless ideological government has no plan to invest in Canadian brainpower and no plan for competitiveness and productivity. Not only has it cut adult literacy services, which is unbelievable, and early learning for children, which is shameful, it has also slashed \$2.7 billion from students and hacked \$3.5 billion from workplace training.

Young Canadians are stifled and manufacturing workers are left jobless and stranded. Why does the government have no plan to invest in learning and knowledge?

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member is obviously very confused. He is fabricating all kinds of figures.

The fact is, and this is clearly on the record, under the previous government the Liberals cut \$25 billion out of the Canada social transfer, money that was designed to help the sick, the disabled, the elderly, the unemployed. That is the Liberal record. He should be ashamed of it.

\* \* \*

### THE ECONOMY

**Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the person who should be ashamed is the minister who called for deeper cuts in provincial transfers when he was a member of the Reform Party.

Right-wing free market theorizing is not going to help workers who have lost their jobs. This week alone 2,000 more have been sent packing by a manufacturing sector that has received nothing from the government. International competition is racing ahead. A GST cut just does not cut it.

Where is the plan? Where is the support for the thousands and thousands of workers who are feeling the wrath of Conservative indifference?

**Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in October we unveiled our economic plan for Canada called Advantage Canada, including the knowledge advantage that we intend to create for the people of Canada. It was well received.

Claire Morris from the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada said this:

### Oral Questions

The federal government clearly recognizes that a highly educated workforce and investments in research and innovation are fundamental to economic growth.

Our Advantage Canada plan is fundamental to knowledge generation and economic growth in Canada. It has been well received by the education establishment in this country.

\* \* \*

● (1445)

### ANTI-TERRORISM ACT

**Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians were shocked to learn that the Liberal opposition leader has changed his mind and now opposes extending critical anti-terrorist measures. B. C.'s solicitor general criticized the flip-flop. Even Bob Rae, recent leadership candidate and co-chair of the Liberal platform committee, has raised concerns that this will jeopardize the investigation into the Air-India inquiry.

Can the Prime Minister explain why these anti-terrorist measures are so important and how critical they are to investigations like the Air-India inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is no higher duty than the protection of our citizens from dangerous crime and terrorism. The leader of the Liberal Party and I know that both of our parties voted in favour of these anti-terror measures.

Bob Rae, a candidate for the Liberal leadership as we all know, has said that the opposition of the Liberal leader could well impact investigations into the Air-India incident. I know that other prominent Liberals have spoken out in favour of this, Anne McLellan, John Manley, the member for Mount Royal, the member for Etobicoke North. Yet the leader of the Liberal Party is being led by extremist elements in his own caucus. I would suggest that he get behind his own—

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

\* \* \*

### JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** I thought they were applauding for me, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister's assertion that he will be appointing judges based on their ideology as opposed to their qualifications has ordinary Canadians across the country outraged that the justice system would be so manipulated. It is an absolute principle that Canadian judges must be independent. It should be an absolute principle that judicial candidates be screened by a process that is non-partisan and independent.

Will the Prime Minister reverse course and affirm the independence of our judiciary?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the only people who are outraged are the Liberals who are not appointing any more judges these days.

*Oral Questions*

I can tell the House that the 51 judges we have appointed up to this point in time actually were recommended by the committees that were set up by the former government. We will continue to make those kinds of appointments. They will be good for Canada and good for our judicial system.

\* \* \*

### SECURITY CERTIFICATE DETAINEES

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the minister does not recognize the importance of the independent judicial system in this country.

We saw today what an independent judge does. He ordered the humanitarian release of one of the three Kingston hunger strikers. I do not expect the Minister of Public Safety to comment on the specifics of this case, but I do expect him to act responsibly.

An independent judge has made a determination that all people in this country should be held humanely. Will the minister set in place policy that will ensure that individuals confined under security certificates be treated humanely?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the security certificate process as introduced by the Liberals and supported by us has been held up a number of times by the Federal Court of Appeal. When people are detained it is under the most humane of circumstances and also in this case.

I will comment specifically because the judge has recognized that this individual is a person who is a security risk. That is why the judge has put 24 conditions on the individual's release, including being monitored by an electronic bracelet and he will not be released until he has agreed to all 24 of those conditions.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday we heard the voice of democracy; democracy has spoken. The government will now be forced to take concrete action so that Canada can meet its commitments to the Kyoto protocol. The government does not have the choice. It can no longer say one thing and do another. Either it complies with the law, or it decides to waste the taxpayers' money to defend itself in court.

Is the Prime Minister prepared to break the law, as his Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and his Minister of the Environment suggest? Is he above the law?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously the bill passed by the House yesterday has to get through the Senate. And the Senate's debates never move very quickly.

[English]

I will also give some other quotes. Tom Oleson of the *Winnipeg Free Press* said about the Liberal private member's bill, "The cynicism and hypocrisy of this is staggering", and I agree.

● (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the Minister that he will need more than a green tie and green underpants to convince us of his sincerity.

I am curious to know what the Prime Minister will say to the co-chair of his election campaign, John Reynolds, who said that denying the legitimacy of private members' bills was the mark of dictatorships.

Can the Prime Minister of Canada now decide which law he will respect and which one he will break? Is he going to throw away the foundations of our democracy and close down Parliament? Is he going to say that democracy is over; long live his dictatorship?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I remind the member opposite that of course Parliament has not passed his legislation. On this side of the House we say that when a bill clears the House of Commons it is one-third of the way to becoming law because it still has two-thirds of its route through the Senate.

Let us look at what else our friend from the *Winnipeg Free Press* said in referring to the Liberal private member's bill. He said the Leader of the Opposition's "record as environment minister was abysmally bad, earning him a reputation as the Dr. Doolittle of climate change", and I agree.

[Translation]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister told us that he did not care about judicial independence and that he was seeking to appoint judges who would follow his ideology. Now we understand the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and his Minister of the Environment when they say that the government will not be bound by the bill by the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier, which was passed in this very place yesterday.

Is the Prime Minister sweeping aside the will of Parliament because of his ideology, in refusing to respect a law that requires a plan for the Kyoto protocol?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we take great interest in the comments by the member opposite.

On this side of the House we are going to take meaningful action to fight climate change and not make empty political promises.

The bill that has come before Parliament gives no authorization for the expenditure of funds. It has no regulatory power. Quite frankly, those of us on this side of the House are not prepared, while the Senate takes its time to pass the bill, to wait another 60 days to get a plan. We have a plan and we are acting on it today.

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, someone once said, "I will always bear in mind that the people express their wishes as much through opposition as through the government". Do you know who said that, Mr. Speaker? The Prime Minister.

*Oral Questions*

Now, to deny the will of the House, his ministers mislead Canadians with talk of economic ruin. With its mechanism for a worldwide carbon market under United Nations rules, Kyoto is our best chance to tackle global warming as a global community through emerging global markets.

Why is it so hard for the Prime Minister to understand this?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was the member for Ottawa South who said that when Canadians see the cost of Kyoto, they are going to “scream”. It was the member for Ottawa South, the Liberal Party critic, who said that implementing Kyoto would cost \$40 billion. It would be very easy to make an empty promise and to simply snap our fingers and make the Kyoto targets.

An empty promise on the environment is something that is very well known in the McGuinty family because it was the member's brother who promised to close all five coal fired generating stations by this year and he has not done it.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the European Parliament deplored the passivity and complicity of European states with respect to the secret CIA flights.

The O'Connor report said that Maher Arar was taken to Syria after stopping in Maine, on one of the CIA's prison planes.

Can the government provide us with assurance that this plane at no time used Canada's air space to take Maher Arar to Syria?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure my colleague and all Canadians that the Canada Border Services Agency has looked into exactly that question. I have its report here.

All flight plans were provided to Nav Canada in all cases. The pilots submitted the list of passengers, their dates of birth, their citizenship, their place of residence, the reason for travelling to Canada and the declaration of all goods being imported.

As well, on the question of the European study, Canada's name does not appear in it.

• (1455)

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the first question related to Maher Arar. Was he in one of those planes—yes or no?

We know the CIA flight numbers and the number of flights that have overflown Canada. An investigation into the Canada Border Services Agency has shed some light on this.

When the government of Canada says that there was nothing illegal when those planes used our air space, are we to understand that in each case, the planes were not transporting prisoners, that is, they were empty? Is that really what we are to understand? Can he tell me—yes or no—whether Maher Arar was in the plane that flew over Maine, alongside the New Brunswick border?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was very clear, and I will repeat. All of the flights, all of the planes, have passengers. We have the list of their names and their reasons for travelling.

In Mr. Arar's case, we have no information or indication to suggest that he was in a flight that was in Canada. That was simply not the case.

\* \* \*

[English]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I just returned from a meeting of women chiefs and councillors who are outraged about a letter written by the Minister of Indian Affairs. In his ignorance, he claims when first nations children are removed from their homes by authorities it is because “those people who are supposed to love them the most have defaulted”. This is shameful.

The minister's responsibility is to work in a cooperative process with first nations to ensure protection of families and children, but instead, he insists on insulting us and blaming victims. Why?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear that I agree with the Assembly of First Nations that 9,000 first nations children in care are too many. It is clear, I have said, that children are apprehended, they are taken into care by those who wish to protect them when there are difficulties by their caregivers. Those I think are the facts.

It is illogical in the extreme to suggest that because too many children are being apprehended the cause is that not enough money is being spent on the apprehension.

The government is spending \$417 million on this program. We continue to work together with first nations to make sure that the system works.

\* \* \*

**GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS**

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in her recent report, the Auditor General looked at advertising campaigns and public opinion research projects to see whether the departments administering them were exercising adequate management and control. As members will remember, under the previous Liberal government, these proved to be very problematic and even scandal-ridden files.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services elaborate on the recent findings of the Auditor General regarding advertising and public opinion research?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. James Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me quote the Auditor General, “Given the serious weaknesses that we identified in our 2003 audit of government advertising activities, this year’s findings”—this year’s—“are good news”. She went on to say that Public Works has made good progress in ensuring that advertising and public opinion research contracts are awarded in a fair and transparent process.

Taxpayers deserve a government and an approach to contracting that is open, transparent, and gives value for taxpayers’ dollars. This Conservative government is delivering. We are fixing what the Liberals did scandalously wrong for 10 long years.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, CN added two more accidents to the string of mishaps that occurred in 2005 and 2006.

The government is still refusing to make the internal audit report public. For years, CN has refused to comply with safety standards, and people have died because of it. Even CN shareholders have denounced the company’s management practices.

When will the minister stop conspiring with CN bosses? Will he make that report public today so that we can find out the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

[English]

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that, like the Liberals opposite when they were in government, they are a year behind.

The minister actually issued a directive on July 24, 2006 for CN to submit an action plan. The action plan has been submitted and CN accidents are down by 25% over the year before.

The government has taken action where the Liberal government failed and the NDP never could.

• (1500)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that did not answer the question. I have three words for the parliamentary secretary, release the report.

The derailments yesterday show that the use of replacement labour is not a solution, another reason we need to have anti-scab legislation in this country.

Handing safety regulations to CEOs in the railway sector has been a total disaster and, unbelievably, the government now wants to do the same thing with the airlines.

What is the government hiding in the report? How reckless and irresponsible can the government be? When will the government stop protecting company CEOs and start protecting Canadians?

**Mr. Brian Jean (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are protecting Canadians and we have taken action on that.

The member knows full well that the release of the report is not up to the government. This government obeys the law. Unlike the previous Liberal government, where corruption and scandal took place, this government obeys the law and takes action for Canadians in the best interests of Canadians.

\* \* \*

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Haida and Taku River cases that the crown has a legal obligation for the duty to consult.

Yesterday, first nations women leaders said that they were as mad as hell with the crown’s interference and demanded to be included in the consultations.

This week the member for Portage—Lisgar mocked and dismissed the consultation process.

Will the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development apologize for this insult and the father knows best attitude his government holds toward aboriginal women?

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government is working together with aboriginal women, while the previous government, for 13 years, did absolutely nothing. If the hon. member wants to talk about the wrath of Liberal indifference, that was it.

Why does this hon. member not get on side? Why does she not stand up for residential school survivors? Why does she not stand up for the repeal of section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act? Why does she not stand up for matrimonial real property?

The Liberal Party is becoming a backwater of intolerance on these issues.

\* \* \*

**JUNO BEACH CENTRE**

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret’s, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Juno Beach Interpretation Centre in Normandy, France is an excellent facility that commemorates the role and the sacrifice of Canada’s military during the second world war.

A group of World War II veterans formed the Juno Beach Association and with their president, Garth Webb, they were the driving force behind the creation of the centre.

It is acknowledged as a forum for learning and building awareness of the role of Canada in the world.

Increased demand has created financial challenges for the centre. What is the government doing to assist in the operation of the only facility in Europe where Canada commemorates the second world war?

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Greg Thompson (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to pay tribute to our veterans, the corporate citizens and more than 18,000 individual Canadian donors who made the Juno Beach Centre a reality. They were determined to have a lasting memorial to honour the men and women who made remarkable efforts during the second world war. The centre was built on the Normandy coast.

Today, at Lester Pearson Catholic High School, the Prime Minister and I had a chance to recognize veterans like Garth Webb and, to show our unwavering support, we announced \$5 million in funding over the next decade so the Juno Beach Centre will never again be in jeopardy.

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**OCEAN RANGER**

**The Speaker:** Order, please. Following discussions among representatives of all parties in the House, I now invite all hon. members to rise and observe a moment of silence in memory of the 84 victims who lost their lives when the *Ocean Ranger* oil rig sank off the Grand Banks of Newfoundland 25 years ago today.

[*A moment of silence observed*]

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● (1505)

**BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, would the government House leader tell us what his plans are for the rest of this week and for next week, and for next week, specifically which days he would propose to designate as supply days?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today we will continue the debate on the Liberal opposition motion.

Tomorrow we will resume debate on Bill C-31, the voter integrity bill, with Bill C-35, the bail reform bill as backup.

Monday we will call Bill C-31, elections, if it is not completed tomorrow; Bill C-44, human rights; Bill C-11, transport; Bill C-33, technical income tax; Bill S-2, hazardous materials; and the statutory order. We have an ambitious agenda there.

[*Translation*]

Tuesday, February 20, and Thursday, February 22, will be allotted to the business of supply.

[*English*]

On Wednesday we will continue with the business outlined on Monday.

Next Friday, I will consider beginning the debate on Bill C-45, An Act respecting the sustainable development of Canada's seacoast and inland fisheries.

With respect to the debate on the statutory order regarding the Anti-terrorism Act, if an agreement on debate is not reached before February 28, certain provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act will sunset. It is the government's view that all members should be given the

opportunity to decide the fate of these provisions because they involve the safety of people they represent.

Recent events have made us aware that the terrorist threats continue to specifically target Canada, but if the terms of the law are not extended by March 1, the protections that we have in place right now will cease to apply.

If an agreement can be reached, I am prepared to call the motion sooner and sit as long as necessary on that day to bring the debate to a conclusion.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale:** Mr. Speaker, for the sake of clarity, could I ask the House leader, concerning the motion on the anti-terrorism provisions in the Criminal Code, did he say that he would be calling that on Monday or that the date when he would call it depends on further discussions with House leaders?

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Mr. Speaker, it is our hope to conclude an agreement with the other House leaders to determine what date it would be called, on the basis of a fixed debate, and to sit as long as possible to complete it.

In terms of scheduling it, it will be on the schedule every day but with a number of other matters as well. Our hope is that we will do it on the basis of an agreement.

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**ACADEMY AWARDS**

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place between all parties and I am sure you would find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That this House congratulates and expresses its support for *Water*, a film by Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta to be fully recognized as Best Foreign Language Film by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as this film is symbolic of Canada's diversity and rich multicultural heritage; the House also congratulates and expresses its support for full recognition by the Academy to the following Canadian nominees: Ryan Goslin, Best Actor for *Half Nelson*; Paul Haggis, Best Original Screenplay for *Letters from Iwo Jima*; Torill Kove for Best Animated Short Film for *The Danish Poet*; and Paul Massey for Sound Mixing for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*.

On behalf of this House, I wish them well.

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale 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—GOVERNMENT POLICIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

*Business of Supply*

**The Speaker:** When the matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale had the floor. There are seven minutes remaining in the time allotted for her remarks.

I therefore call on the hon. member for Brampton—Springdale.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in continuing my debate on this motion, I will talk about the Conservatives' inaction and about their failure in terms of the environment, in terms of child care and in terms of health care.

The government, since getting elected, has had no plan of action and no leadership when it comes to addressing the issues that are important to Canadians.

Before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Winnipeg South Centre.

When I was speaking previously, I was talking about child care and the fact that the government has failed to provide leadership. It has failed to have an action plan when it comes to addressing the issue of child care spaces.

I would like to give an example for the parents and families who are watching today. A two income family from Ontario, each of whom earns \$40,000, will be in for a shock when they complete their taxes. They will need to pay back almost \$31 a month per child to the government. That is almost a third of the money that Canadian families have already spent on child care. This tax grab of \$224 million is in addition to the \$400 million that the government has made by cancelling the young child supplement. This amounts to \$624 million that the Conservative government will be making on the backs of Canadian families.

It is unacceptable to think of the impact that this will have on low income parents. How will low income parents and Canadian families be able to provide for their children and invest in early learning and child care? In the long run, I believe it will be the Conservative government that will cash in on this particular deal.

We all know that last week, child care advocates, Canadian parents and families released a report card. I received many calls from my own riding of Brampton—Springdale and listened to the frustrations of parents who live in Brampton. I also listened to the frustrations of parents who live out on the west coast, the east coast and up north. They were all frustrated with the fact that there are simply no child care spaces because the government has failed to deliver spaces, despite the fact that it promised over 125,000 spaces.

In this report card that was given by child care advocacy groups, it spoke about the fact that when it comes to a parent's choice, the government would receive a D-minus, because the Prime Minister had sent cheques, as promised, but the Prime Minister actually ignored parents who said that they needed quality child care spaces.

When it came to balancing work and family, they gave the Prime Minister an F. They believe that if he had done his homework, he would have known that research shows that parents want quality child care, universal child care, accessible child care and child care that will ensure the very best for the future of this country.

It was quite interesting that when they came to access, these child care advocacy organizations gave the Prime Minister an incomplete. They said:

[The Prime Minister] uses scissors and words carelessly. He cut funds to child care and hasn't delivered promised new spaces.

Their overall assessment of the performance by the Conservative government and the Prime Minister was:

[The Prime Minister]'s work on child care has been Unsatisfactory. He has failed Canada's children and their parents.

Now we take a look at the Assembly of First Nations and their leadership action plan for children on the aboriginal and first nations community. Their vision was:

First Nations children must have an equal opportunity to grow-up with their family, in their community and in their culture. No First Nation child should have to forgo this opportunity as a result of poverty or an inability to access basic services.

First nation leaders need to make a difference for this generation of children and redress the breach of rights for children of generations past, but unfortunately, we know that the Conservative government has failed the children of the first nations community by cancelling the Kelowna accord and by cancelling investments in the area of health, of education and of infrastructure. It has failed the first nations communities all across the country.

● (1510)

Now let us talk about the issue of homelessness, another area where the Conservative government has failed to deliver. As a result of its inaction and the inadequate leadership that has been demonstrated, millions of Canadians who are homeless will be left out in the cold. Shelters are being left in the limbo. The homeless are wondering what they will do next. All of this because the government has failed to demonstrate leadership. It has failed to have an action plan because the funding is in limbo.

When we talk about homelessness and having affordable housing, the Liberal government put forward the SCPI program, which helped over 150,000 Canadians who experienced homelessness each year. The SCPI program was an essential tool and an effective approach to ensure that the needs of homeless people were addressed. However, at the end of the day, the Conservatives once again have failed to deliver. They have failed to ensure that these types of great programs can address the people who need it most, the homeless in our society.

The Conservatives have made numerous cuts. They have cut over \$1 billion to important social programs, important programs that matter to Canadians regardless of where they live. They have cut \$18 million to the national literacy program, \$55 million to student summer programs, \$45 million to affordable housing and \$10 million to the Canadian volunteer program.

We have to ask ourselves this. What does the minority Conservative government have against the most vulnerable in our society? What does the Conservative government have against the women in our country? What does the Conservative government have against children, seniors, visible minorities and first nation communities?

It is time for the government to step up to the plate and get the job done. Canadians are counting on them.

*Business of Supply*

• (1515)

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's comments, especially her last comment with respect to the work the government has done over the last year on aboriginal affairs. I would like to ask the member a question.

We did a lot of work together on the health committee in the area of understanding, from a health perspective, how we could ensure there was enough funding for the aboriginal community. As she knows, \$450 million was put into the 2006-07 budget, which included funding for social programs for women and children. A bunch of the categories also included ensuring that we provided opportunity for education for youth and for aboriginal housing, both on reserve and off reserve.

Could she comment on why she thinks that \$450 million, which was added to the budget in 2006-07 over and above what was already there, is not a good thing for the aboriginal communities across our country?

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, when we talk to the stakeholders across the country and the aboriginal community, there is a tremendous amount of frustration and disappointment at the fact that the Conservative government has failed them. It has failed them by not honouring the Kelowna accord. The Kelowna accord took many years to come into effect. It was in collaboration and cooperation with all the community leaders from the first nations.

The member for Winnipeg South Centre has done a tremendous amount of work in this particular area. The Kelowna accord would have provided on reserve investments in the area of health, education, ensuring that children from first nations communities would have the very best. However, because the Conservatives cancelled the Kelowna accord, first nations communities have once again been left in limbo.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, recently the Prime Minister received an F for child care and for failing ordinary families. Since 1993, we know there have been a lot of promises for families and children. Whether it was a national child care program or funding, there have been numerous promises and yet to date there is no national child care program. We have seen funding agreements and broken records. Unfortunately, starting on April 1 this year, \$650 million will be taken out of the child care plan.

Is it not time to invest in child care? Is it not also time to pass Bill C-303, the early learning and child care act, put forward by the NDP, so we can enshrine in legislation the concept of a national child care program that is accessible, universal, affordable and high quality? If we do this, every family that needs child care will be able to get it.

• (1520)

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, I know the hon. member has done work in this area. However, I find it quite ironic when she and the NDP speak about wanting a quality, universal, accessible, affordable child care plan.

When the Liberals were in government, we had put together an investment for an early learning and child care agreement. We had invested \$5 billion over five years to ensure that Canadian parents and families would have the very spaces they needed.

If my memory serves me correctly, the NDP was in bed with the Conservatives and ensured that this never came to fruition. Because the NDP did not cooperate with the Liberals, because it did not cooperate on behalf of Canadian families and parents, parents and families across the country do not have the child care spaces they need.

In moving forward, I hope the Prime Minister, on behalf of every child in Canada, will step up to the plate, show some leadership and put together a plan of action to ensure that children in our country have the child care spaces they need.

The Prime Minister talks about the \$1,200 that he has given to Canadian families. Many of them in the next month are going to be in for quite a shock when they realize that the \$1,200 is taxable and they are going to have to pay the government back. I do not know anywhere in the country where one can get a child care space or child care for at \$3 a day. This is not a child care plan. We need some action and we need some leadership.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am choosing to speak primarily to two areas of the motion. I do believe the government has failed to act. The two areas that I will focus on are aboriginal affairs and the Status of Women. During the previous election campaign, the Prime Minister made clear promises to honour the Kelowna accord and the CEDAW declaration, which promotes equality of women. He broke both promises.

As we all know, budget 2006 presented the Conservatives an opportunity send a strong signal to aboriginal communities that they honoured them, celebrated them and valued them. From the outset, they have done nothing but insult the aboriginal people, beginning with their refusal to honour the Kelowna accord. It is clear that the issues surrounding Canada's aboriginal peoples are not of primary concern to the government.

We know Kelowna was an important initiative. It was an initiative that was built on relationships among the Government of Canada, the leadership of first nations and the leadership of the 13 provincial and territorial governments. We had 18 months of consultation and 28 round tables, dealing with issues of housing, water, education, economic development, governance, capacity building, all of which the Prime Minister, in a radio ad during the election campaign, promised to honour. As soon as the time came for him to show that he meant what he said, it was gone.

I have to underline that we all know this money was booked. The Department of Finance confirmed it. The former minister of finance confirmed it. The commitment to aboriginal people is, at best, tepid.

In addition to program cuts, the Conservatives have abandoned the aboriginal procurement policy. They have abandoned, as my colleague said, child care funding for first nations. They have eliminated the first nations' stop smoking program. Aboriginal language funding, which the minister took pains to speak about this morning, has been slashed, and we have heard an outcry from aboriginal leadership across the country.

*Business of Supply*

In my own province the doors of Aboriginal Literacy have been closed and people have been laid off.

Capital projects have been cancelled. Capital projects that have been promised and designated for schools have been eliminated. Just this week I heard of a school in which the walls were caving. The teacher has chosen to have the class at home in the living because the school is not big enough or conducive to education.

We are hearing a lot of rhetoric across the way and we are seeing a lot of inaction, a lot of juggling moneys around to make it look like they are doing something, but not much is happening.

We hear much about how the government is the champion of human rights. This party will not take second place to anybody on human rights. The Conservative government not only opposed the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People, but it opposed it. Twenty years of work was done by our aboriginal communities to ensure it had a place at the United Nations and the government chose to lobby against it.

We now hear a great deal about the repeal of section 67 of the Human Rights Act. I want to make it clear I have sympathy for the intent and I support it. However, the government is going about it all wrong. The minister said this morning that the act was introduced 30 years ago and he said that he thought 30 years of consultation was enough. That is an insult to aboriginal peoples.

• (1525)

We know that it is a complicated issue. We know that it deals with the issue of collective rights versus individual rights. We know that it has many ramifications in first nations communities and as I said in question period, we have this attitude of father knows best and we will tell them and they will do it. Aboriginal women from coast to coast do not appreciate this.

I want to speak to the issue of women's programing. As I said at the outset, the Prime Minister, during the election campaign, along with other leaders at the request of women's organizations, signed a pledge that indicated that he would honour the CEDAW declaration to support women's human rights and agreed that Canada had to do more to meet its international obligations on women's equality.

What did the government do? Taking consultation from one particular group who I will quote from later, REAL Women, it determined that equality seeking organizations in this country have no place any more. Advocacy has no role. It is time just to provide services. It is a noblesse oblige charitable approach to women's issues. Women need the advocacy dollars. They need the support for equality seeking issues.

One of the presenters who appeared before the committee, Shari Graydon, President of the Women's Future Fund in Toronto, said:

John F. Kennedy once noted that things do not happen, they are made to happen. The equality gains that we've achieved in the last century, and there have been many, exemplify this. Governments didn't simply decide to grant women the vote, or declare us persons. Women's advocacy made that happen. Over the past 30 years the member groups of the Women's Future Fund have also made divorce and sexual assault laws fairer, improved the matrimonial rights of aboriginal women, secured maternity benefits, and fair pay. We lament that the current government doesn't wish to continue funding this work which benefits millions of Canadians.

Again, it is a striking example of how the Prime Minister, seeking election, will choose to do anything to get votes, but really dismisses it when it is time for reality.

I cited REAL Women and we all know it has a direct pipeline into the Prime Minister's Office and the minister's office. Its comments are that the cuts are only offensive to the special interest groups of feminists whose extremist views are not supported by mainstream women. Mainstream women include the YWCA, the University Women's Club, provincial councils of women across the country, and the National Association of Women and the Law. There is a whole host of women's groups that would not like to be categorized as marginal feminist groups and that is who the government chooses to listen to.

We have heard said that there are members opposite who indicate that the court challenges program cut was their favourite cut. How dare they? The court challenges program, which provided an opportunity for women, aboriginal people, and francophone Canadians to challenge inequities, to provide the resources for them to have someone speak for them in the courts, has not only been reduced but absolutely and unequivocally cut.

I will be supporting the opposition motion. I find it reprehensible that government members are choosing only to listen to and govern for that narrow majority who will see them re-elected. Canadians do not want this kind of government. Whether they agree with the government or not, they expect their government to govern for all Canadians. Even Conservative supporters would want the government to govern for all Canadians. What we have is a very narrow casting of policy development and program initiatives.

• (1530)

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my hon. colleague's remarks as she spoke continuously about all the funding that was cut to various advocacy groups.

My question for the hon. member is this. If these advocacy groups were Conservative in nature, if they were advocating for policies that were friendly to the government, policies that are for rural Canada, women's networks, for conservative issues, for child care payments directly to mothers, and to take the Liberal's favourite whipping organization, REAL Women, if REAL Women or organizations like that were funded, would the member not call for funding cuts to those organizations?

The opinion on this side of the House is that all advocacy should be done privately and not through taxpayers' dollars. I wonder why the hon. member supports government subsidies only for certain points of view.

*Business of Supply*

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This member does not support government subsidies for certain points of view. If the member looks carefully he will see that REAL Women have in fact received grants from Status of Women.

What I am speaking to when I speak to the issue of women is advancing the interests of women. Any groups, whether it is rural women, northern women, urban women, whoever, that have identified an issue that is required to be advanced, researched, lobbied, or taken forward on behalf of women, I would support it, whatever the interest group.

Let me give an example of my own community where we heard a presentation yesterday about the women's health clinic. The women's health clinic is not ideologically driven. The women's health clinic looks at the indicators of poverty as it affects women's health and a major study has been funded by the Status of Women. That program received research. It developed advocacy and much of its findings have been integrated into provincial policy development and I dare say, federal policy development.

The issue is advocating on behalf of the best interests of women wherever they live and whoever they are.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there was an international report released this morning from a group called Social Watch, a coalition of 400 non-governmental organizations from 50 countries. What it found is that between 1997 and 2003 Canada's economy was the fastest growing among G-8 countries, but the problem is that there has been a decline in the quality of life for middle income people. Poverty is rising among children and new immigrants, and it is very difficult for the middle income earners to afford post-secondary education for their kids.

Federal spending stands at 11% of the economy, down from 16% in 1993, well below the national historic average. Only 38% of unemployed workers received government benefits, down from 75% in the early 1990s. More than 1.7 million households live on less than \$20,000 a year and most are very precariously housed. They do not own their own home and spend more than 30% of their income on rent. This is during a time when we were having an economic boom.

During the nineties there were steep cuts when the Liberal government was in power. What have the Liberals done to our economy and what are they planning to do? They have wrecked the middle class dreams of having a good standard of living with the steep cuts in the mid-nineties.

•(1535)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, the member knows full well that the reason we are in the financial situation that we are at this point is because the Liberal government responded to the \$42 billion deficit that it had inherited from the Conservative government when we took office. The member knows full well that we would not be in a position to put in a national child care program or the Kelowna program if those actions had not been taken at the time.

I challenge the member to talk about her party's role in destroying and not allowing the child care program and the Kelowna accord to take root, so that low and middle income families and women could benefit from them.

**Mr. Rob Moore (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the somewhat rambling motion put forward by the deputy leader of the opposition. This motion illustrates that the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore is just as challenged at establishing priorities as his current leader as well as the previous prime minister from LaSalle—Émard, well known for his almost 200 most important government priorities.

Among a myriad of issues, the motion before us today attacks the government on the process of appointing judges. The party opposite would like to divert the attention of the House from the real issues to an academic discussion of a process which has existed for years.

This is a desperate attempt to distract Canadians from the fact that the Liberals are in the process of rendering this country vulnerable to future attacks by terrorist organizations by gutting key provisions of the Anti-terrorism Act. This, one day after we learned of an al-Qaeda directive to focus terrorist attacks on Canada's resource base, presumably the oil fields of the west and the Atlantic offshore oil platforms.

I cannot understand why the Liberals would want to hide from this irresponsible and short-sighted position, but the House should not just take my word for it. Let us hear from some prominent Liberals quoted in recent media reports on this very issue.

Former Liberal deputy prime minister, justice minister and public security minister, Anne McLellan, speaking of the provisions in the Anti-terrorism Act that are set to expire, said:

They were not created in haste, if what that means is that we did not think about them carefully, craft them carefully...The Supreme Court has ruled that investigative hearings are constitutional. I am in a sense perplexed as to why at this point you would take these important tools away from law enforcement...and there is absolutely no evidence they've been used at all, and certainly nobody's used them in an abusive way.

Another well-known Liberal, deputy prime minister and chair of the cabinet security committee, John Manley, said, "The most important responsibility of government is the preservation of order and the protection of its citizens." I agree that one of our highest responsibilities as a government and as a Parliament is the protection of Canadian citizens. He went on to say:

And the most important civil liberty is freedom from fear of harm on the part of the civilian population, without which our other liberties mean very little.

The anti-terrorism law did not violate the Charter of Rights as some have claimed. If ever needed, it may be key to protecting our citizens from serious harm, enabling them to enjoy the rights that the Charter guarantees them.

*Business of Supply*

I have just one more quote from one time Ontario NDP premier, federal Liberal leadership candidate, and the chair of the former government's review of the Air-India tragedy. Bob Rae had the following to say about the provisions that are due to sunset. For those who are watching today, they are due to sunset unless the House votes to continue these provisions contained in our Anti-terrorism Act. Bob Rae said:

I certainly think the impact on Air India has to be considered as we go forward and I would hope that people would take that into consideration.

With these criticisms coming from within their own ranks, it is easy to see why the Liberals are asking the Canadian people to look away from their irresponsible choices and attempting to fabricate news on the government's judicial appointments with the mock self-righteous indignation that only Liberals can muster.

There was a very interesting article in the news today discussing the Liberal Party record of using judicial appointments to reward political staff and party bagmen. I invite all my colleagues to read the article and I would welcome a fulsome discussion of its content.

I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore for providing me the opportunity to highlight our government's impressive track record in addressing the criminal justice concerns of Canadians.

I should add that I will be splitting my time with the member from Mississauga.

On the issue of the judiciary, the Minister of Justice is committed to appointing the best and brightest legal minds in the country to serve on the bench.

The member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore uses terms “neo-conservative” and “right wing”. What I find remarkable is that just over a year ago the Conservative, Liberal and NDP campaign platforms all called for tougher sentences for violent crimes, mandatory minimums for gun crimes, and a crackdown on organized crime and gangs.

• (1540)

It is important to remember that each and every member of the three federalist parties, the NDP, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, was elected to the House with a mandate to get tough on crime and specifically to introduce tougher mandatory minimum sentences for those who use a firearm in the commission of a crime against another Canadian.

What do we have a year after the election? We have Bill C-10 which is before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights right now. While the Conservatives are holding up their end of the bargain by introducing and supporting the bill, we see the NDP and the Liberals seeking to gut provisions of that bill that would bring in tough sentences for people who use firearms. Cities, towns, villages, police, victims groups and everyday Canadians across this country are calling for these measures and we see the Liberals and the other opposition parties failing to support them.

Canadians have a right to feel safe and secure in their communities. In fact, safe streets and secure communities have been touchstones of Canadian society since Confederation. Of course we all know, unfortunately, that in recent years this hard won

reputation has been put to the test by rising rates of crime, particularly involving guns, gangs and drug activity. Our government promised to tackle this problem head on and that is exactly what we are doing. Since taking office last year, we have brought forward no fewer than 11 new legislative proposals that will help reduce crime and create safer communities.

With the support of all parties in the House, we brought into force Bill C-19 which creates new offences that specifically target street racing. We also passed legislation to strengthen the Proceeds of Crime (Money Laundering) and Terrorist Financing Act. These changes will help to ensure Canada continues to be a global leader in combating organized crime and terrorist financing.

Our government has committed further to provide \$20 million over two years to support community based programs that provide youth at risk with positive opportunities and help them make good choices and avoid the culture of guns, gangs and drugs.

We have made some progress, but there are still nine bills in Parliament that the Minister of Justice is committed to bringing into force. Among other things these bills would restrict the use of conditional sentences and impose mandatory minimum penalties for gun crimes.

The first bill dealing with conditional sentences was Bill C-9. Again we witnessed at committee opposition members who were elected with a mandate to get tough on crime acting to gut this bill. This means that people who are convicted of luring a child, arson, auto theft, among other things, are going to be able to serve their time in the comfort of their own homes rather than serve time in prison.

We also have legislation to ensure tougher sentences and more effective management of dangerous offenders, including imposing stricter conditions on repeat offenders to keep such criminals from reoffending.

We have introduced legislation to strengthen the law against alcohol and drug impaired driving and to protect youth against adult sexual predators by raising the age of consent, the age of protection in fact, from 14 to 16 years. I believe there is a broad consensus among Canadians that raising the age of protection is the right thing to do. We know it is strongly supported by many who work with youth or advocate on their behalf.

*Business of Supply*

Moving forward we will also focus on other initiatives that will improve our justice system. For example, we will continue to work toward establishing a victims ombudsman's office. I should add that as we hear testimony before the justice committee on any number of these bills, it is often the victim who is the forgotten voice in all of this. It seems that when an incident takes place too often the focus is on all areas but the perspective of the victim. It is time that we restored a role for victims in our justice system.

Our last budget committed \$13 million per year until 2010 toward these types of initiatives. The government also committed to develop a new strategy to deal with illicit drugs. The strategy that we will introduce will put greater emphasis on programs that will reduce drug use and help Canadians, particularly our youth, lead healthier and safer lives.

I could go on and on but I see that my time for debate is almost up. My point is that government is representing the concerns of Canadians and communities large and small. I am proud of our commitments in the field of justice and even more proud of our record for carrying them out. This is what Canadians expect of us and this is what we deliver.

● (1545)

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the hon. member's speech from two locations, and I cannot say that it improved in either location.

I want to remind the hon. member that his government is a minority government, and in fact, was elected by a little more than a third of the electorate. The result of that is that his government cannot govern as if it has a majority. On this fearmongering on crime which seems to be the favourite touchstone of the Conservative government, he should recognize that the majority of Canadians also want their say on what the Criminal Code looks like.

From our part, there were 11 bills before this House, six of which we agreed to. The rest of those bills were sent to the committee for more study, some of which are incoherent and will not emerge from the committee.

Will the hon. member recognize that in a minority government he has to work with all the parties who collectively represent all Canadians, and that his party does not and cannot speak for all Canadians?

**Mr. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, what is unfortunate for Canadian voters is that the party that I represent, the Conservative Party of Canada, is the only party that is committed to following through on its commitments when it comes to criminal justice. It is unfortunate because the Liberals and the NDP both were elected with a clear mandate. I could read from their election platforms. The Liberals called for a doubling of the mandatory minimum sentences. The NDP called for an increase in the use and the terms of mandatory minimum sentences, as did our party, the Conservative Party. Yet when it comes time to put the rubber to the road, when it comes time to actually get something done, when it comes time to live up to our commitments that we made to the voters, our party is delivering.

I wonder, when the member goes back to his riding, if he does go back to his riding, whether his constituents are telling him to take a soft on crime approach, the way his party's members on the justice

committee seem to advocate, or whether they would appreciate a tougher on crime approach, an approach that respects the victims, an approach that respects public safety.

What we clearly have here is a situation where all federalist parties represented in this House were elected with a mandate to get tough on crime and unfortunately, as I said earlier, there is only one party that is delivering. That is the Conservative Party of Canada.

It is time for the hon. member and his colleagues in the Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party to get their act together. They should stop obstructing justice reforms in this country. They should get with the program, get with Canadians and get tougher on crime.

● (1550)

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, when the Liberals were in power, they did not honour laws and directions that were passed by this House of Commons.

I note that the House of Commons supported an investment of 0.7% of the GDP in foreign aid. This was an action that was ignored by the former prime minister. The House approved a better, more comprehensive and generous package for widows of firefighters, yet again we did not see any action. The House also supported the implementation of the refugee appeal division, and that was also ignored by the former government.

Surely the Conservatives will not follow the lead of the Liberals and instead will honour the Kyoto agreement and our obligations there. The NDP is pushing for hard caps on polluters, mandatory limits on auto emissions, and stopping the subsidies to the oil and gas industry.

When will we see results on the environment and when will that get done?

**Mr. Rob Moore:** Mr. Speaker, I tend to agree with the hon. member that the Liberal record on this and many other files is an abysmal one, but this party, this government, prides itself on keeping its commitments.

That is why when we said we would introduce legislation to get tough on crime, we did just that. That is why when we said we would introduce legislation to bring accountability to Parliament and accountability into electoral financing, we did just that. That is why when we said we were going to bring in democratic reform in the way the Senate operates, we have done that. We are taking action on the environment as well.

I urge the hon. member to certainly look at what was promised in not only the Liberal Party platform but also in her own NDP platform when it came to criminal justice issues. I urge her to look at what was promised in the platform and then have a conversation with her colleagues in the NDP and in the Liberal Party. I urge her to ask them to get with the program and support protecting Canadians and getting tougher on crime.

**Mr. Wajid Khan (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, members of the House, it is with pleasure that I rise before you today to speak to the motion of the hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

*Business of Supply*

The Government of Canada recognizes diversity as a fundamental and enduring characteristic of Canadian society. This country represents a coming together of many peoples who have learned over time to respect and mutually accept each other. This is what sets Canadians apart.

Almost 20 years ago, in 1988, the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney implemented the Canadian Multiculturalism Act, making Canada the first country in the world to adopt official legislation related to multiculturalism.

Today the Canadian approach to embracing and managing diversity is a distinguishing characteristic of our country. The government actively aims to foster social cohesion and to build an inclusive society that is open to and respectful of all Canadians no matter their ethnic origin, race or religion.

Canada has a solid legal framework that supports the principles of diversity, multiculturalism and the rights of all individuals. The Government of Canada is fully supportive of these principles. We believe this foundation enshrined in our Constitution helps ensure Canadians are protected from racism and discrimination.

We will continue to address emerging issues so that all Canadians have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential. We are working to strengthen the bonds of trust and loyalty, to build a strong Canadian society which recognizes and promotes its shared values in Canada and internationally.

Through the multiculturalism program of the Department of Canadian Heritage, the government is working to build connections across diverse communities, connections that translate into cross-community and cross-cultural commitments to principles of freedom, mutual respect, and respect for the law. These principles are the foundation that enables diversity to flourish in Canada.

The Government of Canada has built relationships with a large number of ethnocultural communities and organizations to strengthen the social cohesion and the inclusive society that we are committed to foster.

Departments and agencies are working together to help ensure Canada is an equitable society. An example of such an initiative is the Cross-Cultural Roundtable on Security, in which the Department of Canadian Heritage is working with the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness to ensure that security measures which are essential to public safety do not have an adverse effect on our ethnocultural communities.

The round table engages Canada's diverse communities in an ongoing dialogue in matters related to national security. It provides a forum to discuss emerging trends and developments arising from national security matters. The round table also provides insights on how national security measures may impact Canada's diverse communities and promotes the protection of civil order, mutual respect and common understanding.

This is a very important role because, as we all know, there are challenges associated with preserving human rights and civil liberties in this time of heightened security. I think we could all agree that we must continually work to achieve a proper balance

between preserving those rights and freedoms and ensuring a safe and a secure society for all our citizens.

Canada is recognized worldwide as a nation where the principles of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law are respected and practised. Nations from around the world look to this country as a model of a healthy, well-functioning pluralistic society.

An example of this international recognition can be found in the Aga Khan's decision to partner with Canada to establish a new Global Centre for Pluralism in Ottawa and also in His Holiness the Dalai Lama's decision to locate his international centre for peace and education in Vancouver.

• (1555)

The Global Centre for Pluralism, to which our government has committed \$30 million, will promote pluralism internationally as a means to advance good governance, peace and human development. It will support academic and professional development, provide advisory services and support research and learning in developed and developing countries. This is just one example of how we are proud to share our experiences and success with other nations.

The government is moving forward to provide an additional \$5.9 million annually over the next five years to the multiculturalism program's budget of \$13 billion. This additional funding will allow for improved targeting of programs to address issues and challenges ethnocultural and ethnoracial communities are facing today. It will allow us to do more by paying a particular interest to issues such as marginalization of ethnocultural and ethnoracial youth, labour market integration of foreign trained professionals, and ethnocultural and ethnoracial official language minority communities and the ability of these communities to work effectively with the federal government.

We will increase our outreach efforts to vulnerable ethnocultural and ethnoracial communities across the country to help them address these emerging and critical issues. Through the inclusive institutions initiative, we are encouraging federal institutions to take action to create a level playing field for Canadians of all ethnocultural and ethnoracial backgrounds. This initiative of \$12.5 million over five years will provide matching funds to federal institutions to develop tools for building internal capacity to respond to ethnocultural and ethnoracial diversity and support community based projects.

On the issue of historical recognition, this government did the right thing when the Prime Minister, as promised, made a formal apology on June 22, 2006, in the House of Commons on behalf of the people of Canada for the Chinese head tax. This action was long overdue. It recognized a historical wrong that had a profound impact on the Chinese Canadian community, a community that has made a great contribution to the building of Canada.

This government also announced that it would make symbolic ex gratia payments of \$20,000 to living head-tax payers and to the spouses of deceased head-tax payers in order to give deeper meaning to the apology. We have followed up on our promise to put this symbolic payment program into place quickly.

In addition, the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women announced two programs designed to commemorate the historical experiences of all ethnocultural communities that have been affected by immigration restrictions or wartime measures such as internment. We want to educate Canadians, particularly youth, about these experiences and to highlight the contributions of these communities to Canada.

The community historical recognition program will make available \$24 million for community projects and initiatives. As well, the national historical recognition program will devote \$10 million to federal projects and initiatives that will ensure the experiences of these communities become known as part of the official story of Canada.

We have been consulting with the Chinese Canadian community, the Indo Canadian community, the Ukrainian Canadian community, and the Italian Canadian community and will continue to meet with communities that have been affected in order to ensure that these events of the past, which are so out of keeping with our present-day values, are widely known and never repeated. The government is also consulting with other communities affected by past wartime and immigration restrictions in order to recognize their historic experiences.

We will continue to work together toward common goals to build a strong and inclusive Canada. One of these common goals, as stated by the Prime Minister, is the full participation of all Canadians. Our government is fully committed to achieving this goal.

It is clear to me that programs and initiatives that eliminate racism and discrimination, support full participation and make institutions reflective of the diverse population they serve, are crucial to creating a more inclusive and respectful society, one where every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, colour or religion, contributes to building a greater Canada.

This is the Canada we are building, a Canada where multiculturalism and respect for diversity are fundamental characteristics and values.

• (1600)

[Translation]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Bourassa should know that two more members want to speak and that only five minutes remain for questions and answers.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will leave them 30 seconds each.

[English]

I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Mississauga—Streetsville, my former colleague.

### *Business of Supply*

[Translation]

Given that he talked about national security, I would like to ask him a few questions. As defence critic, I am very interested in this issue. Apparently, he knows what he is talking about with respect to Pakistan and Afghanistan. He has travelled a lot, but we know very little about that.

I have two questions for him. First, given that he took the time to write his speech, did he also write his report? Second, will he be tabling his report as special adviser?

I was once the special adviser for Haiti. I was never afraid to appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, and not once did I refuse to do so. I also drafted reports on several occasions.

Is my colleague ready to table his report and appear before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade to prove his credibility?

[English]

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I compliment my colleague on his work in Haiti.

The circumstances in the Middle East are very different. The complexity of the situation in the Middle East has been an ongoing problem for many years. The report was requested by the Prime Minister. I did the traveling. I met with people: government officials, representatives, NGOs and civil society. Many of them spoke with me in confidence. I intend to hold that confidence. At the same time, this report was requested by the Prime Minister. He has received that report. He has said that in the House and he has said it many times outside the House.

I would be happy to discuss some of these things with my colleague, but they will not be related to the report.

• (1605)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** The hon. member for Bourassa is rising on a point of order.

**Hon. Denis Coderre:** Mr. Speaker, since I am a member of the Privy Council and I should have access to some of the documents, is the member willing to show me his report or table it in the House? Everyone wants to know what he has done.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I would advise my hon. colleague across the way that there is no precedent for a special adviser to table a report in the House.

The report was requested by the Prime Minister. He has received it. He has accepted it and he has—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. This is developing into a point of debate, not a point of order. We will get back to questions and comments.

I recognize the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, there is a rumour in town that the Conservatives are starting to behave like the Liberals when the Liberals were in power. They make announcements, make promises and talk about all sort of things, but they do not deliver. I do not know whether this is true or not, but let me ask.

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A year ago the Prime Minister promised that he would set up a foreign credentials agency to help immigrants get productive work. I have not seen much action, but there is a lot of talk. The Conference Board of Canada says we are missing \$5 billion worth of earnings because all these immigrants are underemployed.

There also have been promises to shorten the waiting list for immigrants who are sponsoring their parents. I have not seen much action yet.

What is it? Is this all talk and no delivery?

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad the hon. member asked me this question. In only one year, the Conservative government has cut the \$975 right of landing fee in half and has spent \$53 million on the action plan against racism. The action plan addresses the gaps in law enforcement and workplace discrimination and integration. The action plan promotes an institutional change within public institutions and removes systemic barriers.

The government has invested \$18 million in the foreign credentials recognition program and has established a foreign credentials referral office through CIC and HRSD. The office will support faster integration and increase the participation of qualified international trained workers.

The government has also invested \$307 million in new immigrant settlement funding.

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague what he thinks about the importance of the Anti-terrorism Act and seeing it extended.

**Mr. Wajid Khan:** Mr. Speaker, the Anti-terrorism Act was brought in for a reason by the Liberal government years ago. There is a sunset clause. I was the chair of the subcommittee on Bill C-36. At that time, the deputy prime minister, the minister of public safety and I had many conversations. They were not prepared to make any changes. They supported the act as it stands today.

I do not know why they have had a change of heart. Under the current circumstances I think it is important—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Malpeque.

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

I am pleased to speak in support of the motion today, because what we are seeing is an ideologically driven Prime Minister imposing his will on Canadian values and Canadian institutions. In fact, in the process, he is destroying many Canadian institutions.

**Mr. Bradley Trost:** It's called principle.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** I hear some heckling on the other side, but talking about the Conservative Party—

**Mr. Bradley Trost:** Are you going to ignore the plebiscite results?

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** —there is no longer a Conservative Party in this country. The Conservative Party was lost with the backroom deal of MacKay and the present Prime Minister.

•(1610)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order. The hon. member for Malpeque is being called to order. He has much experience in this House and knows that we do not refer to other members by their names but by their constituency or their title.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, might I say the backroom deal by the current Minister of Foreign Affairs and the current Prime Minister?

If one is looking for the most dramatic example of the government's contempt for the common and acceptable practices of what governments are expected and obligated to do, one need only look at how the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and specifically his parliamentary secretary have conducted themselves with respect to the Canadian Wheat Board.

The Canadian Wheat Board is a Canadian institution, respected abroad as a reliable marketer of high quality wheat and barley and supported in Canada as a marketing agency that empowers farmers in the marketplace through single desk selling.

The government has attempted, through threats, intimidation, voter list manipulation, the firing of directors and the firing of the chief executive officer, to get the Prime Minister's ideological agenda across. He just does not like the Wheat Board because it markets collectively on behalf of farmers.

In terms of the CEO, he was doing his job. He was abiding by the wishes of the board of directors, who are elected farmers, farmers elected by farmers. In fact, the CEO had just recently had his mandate renewed. To put it simply, he was offered a choice by the Government of Canada. The choice was this: obey the law and lose his job or break the law and keep it. Some choice. It was the choice that Adrian Measner, our CEO, was offered.

Let me go back to Mr. Measner's statement of December 5:

I have been asked to pledge support for the government's policy of eliminating the single desk, barring which I will be removed from my job. It would seem to me that opposition to the single desk should be far better grounds for my dismissal than unwavering support for the laws of Canada.

Here we have direct manipulation by the Government of Canada, direct manipulation coming right out of the Prime Minister's—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. I would like to suggest to the hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt that he make notes of the questions he might want to ask, and then, at the time for questions and comments, he will be the first to be recognized. Meanwhile, I would like to listen to the hon. member for Malpeque.

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**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it was direct manipulation out of the Prime Minister's office to fire a CEO who was respected around the world. As a result, Canadian farmers have been injured.

However, the impact on democracy is the fact that there were farmers electing directors to a board. They recognized the CEO. They re-implemented him as a CEO for a \$6 billion corporation, but because of orders from the PMO, the man was fired. That is an affront to a democratic institution.

The government has flatly refused to respect the demands and wishes of western grain farmers, as expressed through their organizations and the elected process set up under legislation in 1998. Worst, it has undermined and manipulated the right to democratically decide the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. It is costing economically and it is costing us dearly.

I have talked in the House before about Standard & Poor's lowering the credit rating of the Canadian Wheat Board. In its two page document it names the new Government of Canada as responsible for that lowered credit rating not once, not twice but eleven times. It says:

Since then, the government has banned CWB from advocating on its own behalf—

The Government of Canada put a gag order on a democratically farmer elected board. It has terminated the employment of the Canadian Wheat Board's president and CEO. That is a terrible deed.

It goes on to say:

—Standard & Poor's expects that government support of Canadian Wheat Board will continue to deteriorate as long as the current government lasts.

We are seeing an ideologically driven Prime Minister forcing his will on a democratically elected farmer institution that has been in place for three-quarters of a century, that markets on behalf of farmers and that brings an increased economy of roughly \$622 million annually, according to studies. We are seeing the Prime Minister imposing his will against that agency just because he does not like it. That is an affront to democracy.

Has the government demonstrated a contempt for western grain farmers in Canadian institutions? Absolutely.

In the course of the Wheat Board director elections this past fall, the minister decided that he should manipulate the election. First, he had the gag orders, then he changed the voter list, taking 16,000 farmers off of it after the election was underway. In spite of those threats and undemocratic interventions by the Government of Canada, farmers returned a majority of pro-board directors in the election. Four out of five of the elected producers were in fact strong supporters of single desk selling.

However, it gets worse. We in the House have been long calling for a clear vote on the future of the Wheat Board on barley and wheat. In fact, the farmers put forward what they believed should be a ballot with a question on it that was clear, concise, direct and not confusing. It passed the agriculture committee, was debated in the House and on December 12 of last year, in a vote of 165 to 121, the majority of members in the House voted that the government place before western grain farmers the question for which farmers had

asked. What did the minister do? He ignored that. He showed contempt for the House. It goes on and on.

He now has put before farmers what I would call a fraudulent question. I will quote from a Winnipeg pollster that calls the plebiscite that the minister is holding now "bizarre".

Scott McKay, president of Probe Research, said the language the Conservatives are using for the three options on the barley vote are not only inconsistent but also far from neutral...

"These people are extremely incompetent or they are diabolical", McKay said of those who designed the ballot's wording.

● (1615)

There is no question that the ballot itself probably comes out of the Prime Minister's Office because he wants to manipulate that to get the answer he wants.

To sum up, the Canadian Wheat Board is a farmer run organization. It was set up in 1998 with a board of directors and five appointed directors. Farmers are supposed to be running that agency. The Government of Canada never intervened before with directives, but the current government almost, on a weekly basis, sends directives to that marketing institution.

There were five government appointed directors on that agency, appointed for their expertise in marketing and international business. What did the government do? The CEO was fired because he did not agree with the Prime Minister. He agreed with and supported the farmers. The other four have been fired. One vacancy was up, the rest were fired and ideological people, who do not like the Wheat Board, were put in their place. Is that called democracy? I certainly do not.

However, the Prime Minister seems to stop at nothing in terms of getting his way. We have seen gag orders, fired directors, appointed ideologues, a fired CEO, a propaganda campaign and now a question that is unclear. The government should get back to democratic principles and accept the will of the House and the question that it has directed toward the government.

**Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, a couple of comments for people watching and following *Hansard*, who may not be totally aware of the history of the Wheat Board. As I stated in the House the other day, I am a fourth generation Saskatchewanian. My family still owns the land my great grandfather started to farm and my dad is still cropping it this year.

People should know that when the monopoly power of the current Wheat Board was put into place, it was not voted in by farmers. It was put in during World War II by the government to lower the price of wheat, something the hon. member should have noted.

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The other point the hon. member should also note and remember, particularly coming from a party that has been hostile to agriculture, its elimination of the Crow rate being one example of that, is that when farmers took the freedom to sell their own wheat what did the hon. member's former government do? It threw them in jail because they took the wheat they had grown and harvested, the wheat that they were unable to sell to the Wheat Board in some cases and tried to sell it to willing customers. That is the hon. member's agricultural policy, throwing farmers in jail.

If farmers are so strongly supportive of the hon. member's party, why has it been a complete disaster in the Prairies, election after election for the last 50 years? In my riding, in nine out of the last ten elections the Liberal Party has finished in third place. If the hon. member supports western farmers and is speaking for them, why is his party so soundly rejected by the Prairies?

• (1620)

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, if there is one thing about members on the government side, they never let the facts get in the way of a good story.

That party talks about law and order. I ask the former minister of justice this. Did the people who were jailed break the law of the day? Yes, they did. Conservatives talk about law and order. They are importing American justice into the country, not to deal with the cause of the problems, but because they think it is popular to do. Let us get some law and order and we will build a few more jails. Will that deal with crime? No, it will not. The fact is crime is a lot higher in the United States. The system the Conservatives are trying to import is not working.

In terms of the jail issue, those people broke the law. Farmers were supposed to market through a single desk selling agency, which study and study has shown benefits farmers in the amount of \$622 million per year.

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very conscious of the fact that the member for Malpeque has chosen to concentrate his speech on his concerns about the Canadian Wheat Board. That is fair enough. He has the perfect right to do that. My party shares many of those concerns.

It is not surprising to me that he has chosen to focus only on the very last line of the motion, which concerns the Canadian Wheat Board. Let me reiterate the serious the problems with the Canadian Wheat Board, problems that have been created by the government.

My question arises out of the gist of the motion in its entirety. As I read it, it could just as easily have been a motion about his government and its failure to deliver. Now that the Liberals are in opposition, in the penalty box, they are raising objections toward the current government. No wonder Canadians get a bit confused.

My specific question is around the whole issue of the manner in which the former Liberal government is now accusing the Conservative government of its mishandling of judicial matters, and it arises from the mishandling by his government of the whole post-9/11 security, civil liberties and human rights challenges in terms of an appropriate balance.

The member for Malpeque was a member of the cabinet and he was responsible for—

• (1625)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Order, please. The question period for this segment has ended. However, I will allow the hon. member a short moment to respond.

**Hon. Wayne Easter:** Mr. Speaker, if we look back at the history of the previous Liberal government in dealing with the tragedy of 9/11, somewhere close to \$9 billion was spent on security matters. I really do believe that we did find the balance between civil liberties and public security and we did it in a democratic fashion by consulting with people, not in an ideologically driven way as the current government is doing.

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member who just spoke. He is probably the most knowledgeable member in the House on agricultural issues, so when he speaks, he speaks with a force of authority that very few members in this House can enjoy.

I want members to remember three numbers. The first is \$25 billion. The second is \$5 billion. The third is \$0.5 billion. I know that by the end of my speech members will appreciate those three numbers.

The figure of \$25 billion represents the biggest single loss to unit holders and shareholders on a Canadian stock exchange in one day. The figure of \$5 billion represents the cost of a one per cent reduction in the GST. The figure of \$0.5 billion represents the alleged tax leakage from income trusts. These three numbers represent the ultimate in incoherence and incompetence of any Canadian government, save except possibly the Mulroney era, but even the scandal plagued Mulroney government did not sink to that level of incompetence and incoherence.

The Conservative government has no plans. Whatever plans it has on the environment and on the economy and on social economy, it really is not sharing with anyone else in this chamber or in this country. Members of the government, frankly, would not know a plan if it kicked them in the backside and that is clearly demonstrated by those three numbers.

Regarding the \$25 billion, members will recollect that during the election, the neo-conservatives said they would not tax trusts. At every whistle stop across the country, the Conservatives said that they would not tax trusts. On every occasion, the current Prime Minister and the then finance critic said exactly the same thing, in spite of the serious questions raised about tax leakage in the Department of Finance paper in 2005.

Instead of waiting for all of the evidence, he made this promise, and to the everlasting dismay of thousands of hard-working Canadians, they relied on that promise, to the detriment of their portfolios. Some even were telling me that they bought based upon the promise of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

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The current Prime Minister and the then finance critic made their promise in spite of being fully briefed by the Department of Finance prior to their making that promise, yet they made that rash and reckless promise in the face of very difficult evidence. The consequences were predictable and the consequences were devastating, and that \$25 billion is irretrievably gone.

Having gotten themselves inside the doors of power, they are now faced with the discipline of power, but for the first while, they frankly ignored all of the advice the Department of Finance would give them on various issues. If the Department of Finance said that a GST cut was not a very good idea, they ignored that. If the department said that tax credits would result in an incoherence and an inconsistency in the income tax system, they decided to ignore that as well.

When the department said that the best thing to do was broad-base tax relief so that all Canadians received the same relief, that thresholds move up and rates move down, they instead raised the rates and then went on this propaganda campaign and said that they had lowered the rates. They demonstrated a unique technique, unique to the government, namely, take a lie, repeat it over and over until it takes on the force of truth.

Incoherence mounting on incoherence mounting on misinformation; plans are not part of the lexicon of the government. The budget is generally written by the last guy out the door of the finance minister's office. This is, frankly, retail politics run amok.

● (1630)

What do we have? We have a Prime Minister and a Minister of Finance who make reckless promises that cost hard-working Canadians \$25 billion, compounded by a \$5 billion GST cut, which absolutely no one noticed and which every thinking person says is absolutely stupid. This is further compounded by cheap tax credits that introduce an unparalleled level of incoherence into the system and leave everyone bewildered.

The only ones who are really happy about this level of incoherence in the system are tax accountants who have to sort out for ordinary Canadians what credits they can and cannot claim.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance are in serious need of adult supervision.

Having ignored his department for the greater part of the year, the finance minister, however, yields to the siren song of tax leakage. This is a minister who blew five billion bucks on GST in a heartbeat against the advice of every economist in the country, and now starts to go down the rocky road of income trusts.

This is a file where the evidence is highly theoretical, frequently ambiguous and often contradictory, just perfect for the bull in the china shop finance minister that we have. And boy, did he really take to it, destroying \$25 billion in an afternoon. It would take a whole herd of bulls several years to be as devastating as that bull was in one afternoon.

He ignored the evidence of the so-called tax leakage and ignored the issue of whether it was from flawed modelling. Instead of isolating the leakage, which frankly is primarily with non-residents,

he decided to take a sledgehammer to the sector regardless of the consequences.

He ignored the advice that an entity tax judiciously applied to the point of leakage would probably address the major part of the issue. For some bizarre reason he decided to exempt real estate trusts from his bull in a china shop treatment, but ignore other sectors that have legitimate claims to differential treatment.

What quickly became clear at the hearings is that the minister had done no market analysis. Nothing. He had no idea of the consequences of his action. He did no study. He phoned no one. He was completely surprised, like all other Canadians, that this was going to cost Canadians \$25 billion. He had nothing.

Then when the committee asked for the basis for his analysis, he sent out blacked out documents so no one could make any kind of a reasoned analysis as to whether, in fact, he knew anything or if he did know something, on what basis he made his decision.

The finance minister was as surprised as everyone else that he blew \$25 billion on the basis of an alleged \$0.5 billion tax leakage. Does this make any sense? First, he has a questionable grasp on the truth. Second, he destroys. Third, he turns around and then he says he is sorry, he is really sorry that he destroyed all these hard-working Canadians' savings. It gets worse.

In order to help the Canadians devastated by this bull in the china shop, the Liberal Party offered up a solution this week, led by the hon. members for Saint-Laurent—Cartier and Markham—Unionville and suggested a way in which two-thirds of the value could actually be restored to Canadians. The finance minister would have none of it. As he said this morning, he is not interested. He would rather devastate Canadians' savings than admit that he might have made a mistake.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance pride themselves on their image of decisiveness. Well, they made a decision and they got it wrong; they got it decisively wrong.

Remember, \$25 billion, \$5 billion, \$0.5 billion. He blows \$5 billion in a heartbeat, destroys \$25 billion in an afternoon, and worries himself sick over \$0.5 billion. It is incomprehensible, it is incoherent and it is idiotic.

● (1635)

**Mr. Mark Warawa (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, my question relates to the motion which is being debated today. I find it interesting that there are 10 different topics in the motion. It refers to the judicial appointment process, Kyoto, regulations on the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, child care spaces, aboriginal peoples, advocacy for women, vulnerable Canadians, budget surpluses, linguistic and cultural diversity, and the Canadian Wheat Board. There is nothing in there about income trusts.

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Did the member's leader have difficulty in setting the priorities by having so many different topics in the motion? If he did have difficulty setting priorities and had 10, why was the member's issue of the income trusts not included as one of the 10? Why is this an 11th issue that is being discussed?

And is the member not aware that it is illegal to divulge insider trading information and the RCMP gets involved?

**Hon. John McKay:** Mr. Speaker, the beauty of the Conservative government is that it is so target rich in that there are so many things that it has done wrong in its short, nasty and brutish little life. The income trust file was one of the glaring big ones, the whopper of all whoppers. It is really hard to figure out what lie in Canadian history has cost Canadians \$25 billion. It is hard to imagine anything bigger. I do not know economically if all the 10 that have been put together add up to the same amount of money that the finance minister and the Prime Minister destroyed in an afternoon.

It is a paramount example of incompetence, incoherence and idiotic public policy.

**Mr. Joe Comartin (Windsor—Tecumseh, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this motion, and in particular to address my comments to the conduct of the Conservative government with regard to judicial appointments. I would like to give the House a bit of history.

In the last Parliament a subcommittee was set up under the justice committee to investigate the methodology used for judicial appointments, not Supreme Court of Canada appointments but all other federal court appointments. A motion was brought forward by the Bloc Québécois which was prompted by a comment by a federally appointed judge in the province of Quebec.

The judge made a statement saying that lawyers who were sovereignists should not be considered for appointment to a federal court bench. That, quite frankly, was scandalous, but it seems a pattern that the Conservative government is prepared to emulate.

As a result, fairly extensive investigations were carried out over a period of six to eight months. An interim report was issued and we were working on the final report when the election intervened.

Those investigations found that there was still an element of partisanship in the committees that screened judges for federal appointments. I have to say with no equivocation that there was no suggestion along the lines of the statement made by the judge in Quebec. The ideology was considered by those screening committees. It was found that partisanship was still intervening to some degree.

Debate has gone on in the House and around the country over the Conservative government's determination, and the Prime Minister's determination in particular, to politicize our courts. The Prime Minister is determined to make it a condition of appointment that one has to be "a strict constructionist" of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and of the Constitution and, and this is the most offensive part, that the candidate must support the initiatives of the government. That is as offensive as anything can be to the democratic process in this country.

We have pillars of democracy in Canada. The House is one of those pillars. Elected representatives are significant pillars, but so is

an independent judiciary. It must be as pure as we can make it. The judiciary has to be absolutely independent.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that he is prepared to undermine that pillar. We are in a situation where we simply cannot tolerate that position. Every member in the House, including every member of the Conservative Party, should appreciate that. The government should alter its course in this regard.

We are at a very severe risk of politicizing the judiciary. It seems to be the clear intent of the government. There are some 13 screening committees across the country. As a result of the government's approach to appointments at the screening committees, we are also at a high risk of politicizing police officers and police associations across the country.

I am just being reminded and I apologize to the House for this, but I intend to share my time with the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, who will be addressing the House in her usual eloquent fashion but on a different topic.

Going back to the politicization of police forces, what is being seen by the general public is the Conservative government lining up police agencies across the country on its side by appointing them not only to the screening committees but by making their vote the determining vote.

● (1640)

What used to happen before, if there was a tie, the judge who was on the committee would be the one casting the deciding vote. The government has taken that vote away from the judges only in the situation where there is a tie. Before, they had a vote on all occasions. Because of the structure where there are four government appointments and three that come from other sources, the law society, the bar association and the judiciary, the balance is now swayed in favour of the government appointments and the police officer representative is the one who has the balance.

I am going to conclude with these comments. The Prime Minister and the government should be ashamed of themselves for doing this because we cannot afford as a democracy to have our independent judiciary undermined.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Windsor—Tecumseh for sharing his time with me on this important matter. I too will be speaking in favour of this motion. I am going to address two parts of the motion. I want to talk specifically about budget spending cuts directed at aboriginal people and I also want to touch briefly on child care spaces.

With respect to budget cuts affecting aboriginal people I want to reference two documents. There has been much discussion about the appalling state of poverty for many first nations, Métis and Inuit people. In a document entitled "Federal Government Funding to First Nations: The Facts, the Myths and the Way Forward", I want to highlight the fact that in this document it says that funding for core services such as education, economic and social development capital facilities and maintenance has decreased by almost 13% since 1999-2000.

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This document was written in 2004 so it is not talking about the current fiscal situation. We are all very well of the fact that there has been a 2% cap on spending for first nations people. That cap remains in place despite the fact that this population is growing much faster than the national average in many first nations communities.

In addition, to highlight the situation around poverty for first nations communities, the Assembly of First Nations is currently conducting a Make Poverty History: The First Nations Plan for Creating Opportunity. I will not quote from all of this document, but it clearly outlines the challenges facing first nations communities.

It talks about the fact that one in four first nations children live in poverty compared to one in six Canadian children. About one in three first nations people consider their main drinking water supply unsafe to drink and 12% of first nations communities have to boil their drinking water. Mould contaminates almost half of all first nations households.

In terms of the overall health and well-being of the communities, applying the United Nations human development index would rank first nations communities 68th among 174 nations. Canada has dropped from first to eighth due in part to the housing and health conditions in first nations communities.

Those numbers are shocking. We have recently seen international organizations coming to Canada to highlight the desperate conditions on some of the reserves. I would argue that it is well past time for the House to come together and address in a meaningful way the conditions in many first nations communities.

I also want to speak about child care, specifically the lack of affordable quality child care spaces that have been created in this country. Many of us in the House know that there is currently a campaign called Code Blue for Child Care.

Certainly, in my province of British Columbia many child care activists have been writing, emailing, phoning and marching to raise awareness of both the federal and the provincial politicians about the state of child care in British Columbia. I know it is the same in other provinces, but because I am from British Columbia I specifically want to talk about it.

The Code Blue for Child Care campaign is a nationwide campaign which attempts to have federal-provincial-territorial and other local elected officials work with the child care community to ensure that child care plans are being developed that address the needs in our communities.

Code Blue for Child Care is campaigning for four key areas. It is looking at restored multi-year federal funding so that provinces and territories can put in place systems that work for their communities. It is looking for federal child care legislation that lays out the principles of a pan-Canadian strategy.

On that point, in the previous government after many years of not moving forward on the national child care strategy, finally there was some movement. However, under the Liberals we failed to enshrine that in legislation when we had the opportunity to do that. Under the Conservatives we saw whatever gains we had made being stripped away and replaced by a program that is not creating child care spaces.

● (1645)

In addition, Code Blue talks about effective income support for families, in addition to quality child care and dedicated capital transfers for community based child care services.

The Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada had some very harsh words for the current state of child care in this country. Its press release states:

The child allowance isn't child care and there is no plan. A plan would have to include standards, and goals and timelines for building and sustaining a range of flexible high quality early learning and child care services throughout Canada. It would include complementary and equitable family supports. The Conservatives have not put forward any plan, nor provided the right kind of support to families.

It goes on to say:

The Conservative government betrays its ignorance about early learning and child care services. The goal of a system of high quality services is to provide warm, stimulating and developmental environments for children through programs that are responsive and caring—a far cry from institutional care.

I want to read from an article that appeared on February 14 in the *Lake Cowichan Gazette*, which is in my riding of Nanaimo—Cowichan, because I think these are the words of the parents who are relying on child care. It states:

Scheffer and other parents who use the Kaatza Day Care are concerned, though, about cuts in provincial funding by \$2 per day per [child] aged three to five and \$4 per day per child for children under three years old.

The reason that article is important is it is just as we feared. When the Conservatives brought in their \$100 a month for parents, we feared that there would be a clawback in some of our provinces, which is exactly what has happened in British Columbia.

The article goes on to state:

The cuts are slated for the end of March in response to the loss of \$455 million in federal government funding. Instead, the federal government is providing \$100 a month per child under six years old.

Day cares and preschools are a stepping stone to elementary school, says mother Belinda Waller, as well as helping children feel comfortable when they are away from parents and family and make them realize there are safe places they can go to play and learn in a healthy environment.

"If the government proceeds with the proposed funding cuts we will lose our child resource centre that directs parents to these safe centres....," said Waller. "To the leaders of our country and province, I say shame on you for attacking our most vulnerable members of society and our future, our children!"

That is a direct quote from a parent who has a child in a child care centre that provides that quality, affordable child care that is so important.

The article continues to state:

She added that children not only learn from their families, but also from their peers and "the wonderful trained child-care providers".

Brenda Montgomery, who also uses the Kaatza Day Care Centre, agrees. She said that without licenced child care in Lake Cowichan, she would not have been able to move to the community.

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"I did not know anyone when I moved here, so would not leave my child in unlicensed care," she said. "I want my child in an early learning environment with qualified staff who understand the developmental needs of children and can apply it. As a single parent wanting to be a productive, taxpaying member of society I require affordable, quality child care for my daughter."

Currently, the Kaatza Day Care Centre is licensed for 20 children three to five years old and eight spaces for children under three. There's a long waiting list for under three spaces, says Wendy Fetchko, head supervisor at day care centre, but an application with the provincial government has to go on a waiting list until local day care spaces close, at which time the government would consider funding new spaces at 2005 levels.

This is a community that I am talking about. These are people living, working and paying taxes in our community and they want regulated, licensed, quality, affordable child care for their children.

If we agree that children are one of our most valuable resources, surely we should be ensuring that we are providing the kind of services and quality day care spaces that are so important for those children's well-being.

•(1650)

**Mrs. Betty Hinton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the concerns that were expressed by the member and I need an explanation on a couple of things or perhaps she could correct the information she just put forward.

The government has honoured the one year arrangement that the previous Liberal government put in place for child care. We honoured that up front and we gave one year's notice to be certain that no one would be unaware of it.

As to the other statement that she made, I happen to know it is completely incorrect. Having spoken to the MLAs in my area, there has been no clawback in B.C. funding. In terms of people in low income families, the B.C. government will not claw back again now. Therefore, it will not make any difference to low income Canadian families who are living in British Columbia.

Regardless of what the letter may say, the woman who wrote the letter has every right to express her opinion but if she is basing it on misinformation that could have been given to her by this particular member of Parliament, the member has an obligation to make certain that the lady who wrote to her understands that there was no clawback in B.C. and that the new program that will begin in March will be the perfect opportunity to create 25,000 new child care spaces every year for the next five years, for a total of 125,000 spaces.

I would urge the member opposite to encourage the people in her riding to spend the kind of time and energy in cooperating with businesses and corporations to create these new child care spaces, rather than doing the kinds of things that they are doing now, which is not helping children, parents or existing child care centres.

•(1655)

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, just to be clear, I was not quoting from a letter. I was quoting from a newspaper article that appeared in the *Lake Cowichan Gazette* on Wednesday, February 14, 2007. The newspaper reporter talked about the cuts in provincial funding by \$2 per day per child aged three to five and \$4 per day per child under three years old.

I have a couple of points around this. First, I wonder where the plan was to create child care spaces. We do not see a plan to create child care spaces. We do not see new child care spaces being created.

We know that the \$100 a month is taxable. We know that, on average, parents will end up with \$80 a month and many parents are in a position where that does not remotely cover the true cost of child care.

I would argue that what we have been asking for is a national child care program with concrete funds assigned to it, time lines attached to it and involvement from the child care community to ensure the plan is adequate. I would argue that is what we have always asked for and promoted and we will continue to advocate for it.

**Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am glad that we are spending a lot of time talking about the child care issue because it is extremely important, but a matter that the government just does not seem to get.

The member is quite right about the \$100, especially when it is paid across the board but has no relevance to whether there is a need by someone. As a matter of fact, I suspect that this might be more successful a venture if the benefit were income tested or means tested. It would allow that pie to be paid to a smaller number of Canadians in need.

I wonder if the member agrees that this may be an ill-conceived plan that the Conservative government has put forward.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, I think we all would agree that giving people \$100 a month will create affordable, licensed, quality child care spaces in this country is a bogus notion. I would argue that we need to continue to support a national child care act.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and Minister for la Francophonie and Official Languages, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to discuss the Liberal motion and comment on the completely mistaken reference it contains regarding Canada's linguistic duality.

I would like to reiterate the government's very firm commitment to the Official Languages Act and our unfailing support for linguistic duality throughout Canada. I also wish to talk about the achievements and policy and program directions that the new government has and continues to put forward with a view to advancing the equal status of both official languages and enabling the country to take full advantage of the riches afforded by this linguistic duality.

There is a consensus on official languages, namely that the country's linguistic duality is an essential component of the Canadian identity and an extraordinary asset for all of society. A recent CROP poll indicated that over 80% of Canadians share this opinion, which shows the great popularity of this Canadian value.

The government has taken a clear position in favour of the Official Languages Act. We are making sure that English and French have the same status regarding their use in all parliamentary and governmental institutions. We support the development of official language minority communities and we will help them to contribute fully to the prosperity of our country. We are promoting the full recognition of English and French throughout Canada.

We have demonstrated our support for linguistic duality on numerous occasions. Indeed I would remind the House that we contributed to the adoption on November 25, 2005, of the Act to Amend the Official Languages Act, which reinforced Part VII of the act. This part states the commitment of the Government of Canada to foster the development of official language minority communities and to promote the full recognition and use of both official languages. A collective resolution by the caucus brought about the passing of this bill.

May I recall that this act was passed in spite of the opposition of the Bloc Québécois, which claims to be the great defender of francophones but which refused to support this positive measure for francophones outside Quebec?

I would also like to mention the personal and complete commitment by the Prime Minister himself to official languages, particularly the French language, which he uses frequently.

The government's support for linguistic duality as a foundation of Canadian society remains unequivocal. I wish to add that, for us, this support includes the recognition of the Quebec's key and crucial role in the vitality of the French factor in this country.

Furthermore, we are committed, unlike the previous Liberal centralizing government, to practising an open federalism that recognizes the unique place of a strong and dynamic Quebec within a united Canada.

[English]

We have five priorities on our government's agenda that will enable us to come closer to our ultimate goal of building a stronger, more secure and better Canada. In my view, I cannot imagine a strong Canada without the contribution of our official language minority communities, big or small, located across Canada.

• (1700)

[Translation]

I now want to mention the policy and program directions that the minister has brought forward in carrying out her mandate and point out the many accomplishments over the last year.

We have many challenges to meet in maintaining and further enriching the impressive heritage bequeathed to us by former generations.

For instance, there is education, where we need to redouble our efforts in order to ensure that young francophones not only start their educational paths in French but complete them in French as well.

That is why we have signed bilateral education agreements with all the provinces and territories worth a total of \$1 billion over four years. These agreements will enable young people from minority communities to go to school in their own language. In addition, they

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will help all young people in Canada to learn their other official language.

Thanks to these agreements, the official language minority communities are able to implement programs adapted to their realities. Young people receive an education in their own language and attend schools managed by their community. They flourish in their own language from a very young age while developing an even stronger sense of belonging to their community.

In partnership with the provincial and territorial governments, we also announced the construction and renovation of community spaces in New Brunswick, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Northwest Territories.

We count on immigration as well to ensure the demographic and economic growth of our communities and country.

In the last budget, our government announced an additional \$307 million for immigrant settlement in Canada. We also brought forward measures to establish the Canadian agency for the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials. This will also help the French-language minority communities.

The issue of official languages requires the involvement of many different partners and that is why we have paved the way for open, respectful cooperation with all levels of government and organizations from all sectors.

I believe that this spirit of cooperation that the government is fostering among the various official language stakeholders was very present at the Ministerial Conference on the Canadian Francophonie, which was held last October and co-chaired by the Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages. At this meeting, along with the ministers from the provinces and territories, we decided to focus our action on young people.

Young Canadians are open to linguistic duality and all its advantages. They are more and more bilingual, mobile and attuned to the new technologies. They represent our future, a future full of promise.

Our support for the communities could be seen as well in the creation of the Assemblée franco-ontarienne and our \$660,000 grant to the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada to organize its 2007 summit of francophone and Acadian communities.

• (1705)

[English]

We have signed a cooperation agreement with the anglophone community sector in Quebec. We want to maintain an open and honest dialogue with this community which contributes significantly to Quebec's national and international reputation.

We must not forget that the needs and the challenges of anglophones in Quebec are different and varied. Moreover, members of this community are models of bilingualism. This is why we must continue to work together to highlight our linguistic duality across the country.

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[Translation]

We have also signed important agreements totalling nearly \$64 million over four years for minority language services. Together, these agreements will allow members of official language minority communities to strengthen their ties and ensure that their voices are heard, loud and clear.

This is what can be accomplished by cooperating, not only with federal partners, but also with other levels of government and with the private sector, and by developing ways to focus on the economic, cultural and social benefits of linguistic duality.

The new government's cooperative approach has also proven itself in other areas, particularly in health care. In this area, innovative partnerships have been created with minority francophone and anglophone communities, and this is producing tangible results.

In summary, the new Government of Canada intends to defend bilingualism with passion and heart. We want to work to increase equality between the two official languages in all federal institutions, to reinforce minority official language community vitality across the country, and to make sure that the two major linguistic communities in Canada understand and mutually enrich each other better.

Unlike the previous government—I am referring to the corrupt Liberal friends of the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore—and unlike the members of the Bloc who can do nothing and will never be able to do anything, we took action and we continue to take action to demonstrate, once and for all, the strength of Canada's linguistic duality.

**Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague's presentation. Her rhetoric was very nice and she read the text well. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect between what she said and what is really going on.

First, one of the things this government did recently was cut the court challenges program for linguistic minorities in Canada. Basically, the government is telling minorities that if they think their language rights have been violated, they can just deal with it themselves because the government will not be giving them any money and will not help them defend their rights.

Second, we recently learned that senior army officers will no longer be required to be bilingual. I find that completely unacceptable. I would like to know what my colleague thinks about that. Does she think it makes sense that our senior military officers do not have to be bilingual?

Third, we have recently seen that the government cannot even offer services in French to parliamentarians here on the Hill. Many government ministers do not have a single person on staff who can answer our questions in French. Some of these departments are very important. People in our offices—members who have francophone staff here—have all experienced that. They cannot find a single staff member in a minister's office who can speak French.

Does the Conservative Party member agree that rather than trying to teach the Liberals a thing or two—we all know they did not do their job—her government should set an example? Should the government not require all senior military officers to be bilingual? Should it not reinstate the court challenges program for linguistic

minorities? Should ministers not set an example in their own offices by offering services in French to those House colleagues who need them?

• (1710)

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, to hear a Bloc member defend la Francophonie to that extent will always fascinate me because we know full well that the Bloc voted against Bill S-3.

And to see to what extent they just talk and talk will always fascinate me. When it comes time to take action, to stand up and speak loud and clear for la Francophonie, they are simply never there. They voted against Bill S-3. They voted against francophone minorities outside Quebec. What can they add to this? They have never supported la Francophonie outside Quebec. Every time we had a vote on this, they voted against.

[English]

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member talked about linguistic duality, but a growing number of Canadians have neither English nor French as their first language.

When children are hungry, they cannot learn. Yesterday another report came out on child poverty, UNICEF report card number seven, "Child Poverty in Perspective: An Overview of Child Well-being in Rich Countries". Canada is doing very, very poorly. Canada ranks second last in all OECD countries.

A percentage of young people aged 13 to 15 reported being overweight. The new health commissioner said that today's overweight teenagers are tomorrow's heart attack victims. Partially it is because they are missing their breakfast and there is not a decent lunch program in schools.

Would the hon. member support a national health and nutrition program for every child under 18 in schools and community centres? This would be based on a flexible, made in Canada community development model, building on the existing knowledge base of local organizations and parent groups so kids would not be hungry and would have decent, healthy, nutritious meals in schools. Then they could learn properly, whether it is English, French or any other subject.

[Translation]

**Mrs. Sylvie Boucher:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform my colleague from the NDP that literacy has never been cut in official languages.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** It being 5:15 p.m., pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the opposition motion are deemed put and a recorded division is deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, February 20, 2007, at 5:30 p.m.

• (1715)

[English]

**Mr. Rob Merrifield:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent of the House to see the clock at 5:30 p.m.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau)** 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

[*English*]

### KELOWNA ACCORD IMPLEMENTATION ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-292, An Act to implement the Kelowna Accord, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed without debate to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

**Right Hon. Paul Martin (LaSalle—Émard, Lib.)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** All those opposed will please say nay.

### *Private Members' Business*

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** Pursuant to Standing Order 98, the recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, February 21, 2007, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

**Mr. Paul Szabo:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. We have had discussions with the Chair in the past about the anomaly of the third hour of private members' business being report stage and third reading. The members should be aware that what they have just done is eliminated one hour of the two hours of debate on an important item, being the plight of aboriginal Canadians.

It is outrageous that this has happened. I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House to proceed with the debate at third reading.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Royal Galipeau):** I thank the hon. member for Mississauga South. It is my understanding that he has already had discussions with the Speaker on this matter. The decision of the House stands. The vote is deferred until February 21, as stated earlier.

[*Translation*]

It being 5:20 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 5:20 p.m.)

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