



CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Tuesday, May 1, 2007**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 1, 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

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on International Trade in relation to Canada's trade policy. Pursuant to Standing Order 109, a government response is requested.

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### CANADIAN SUSTAINABILITY ACT

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-437, An Act to develop and implement a National Sustainable Development Strategy, create a Green Fund to assist in its implementation and adopt specific goals with respect to sustainable development in Canada, and to make consequential amendments to another Act.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be seconded in the introduction of Bill C-437, the new national sustainability act, by the member for Hamilton Mountain, who is a long time environmentalist and is very active in the environmental movement. I am happy that she is supporting me in this endeavour.

The proposed national sustainability act draws on the work of Dr. David Suzuki and the Suzuki Foundation. He put together, working in close collaboration with environmentalists who work for his foundation, what is essentially a blueprint for how with a national sustainability strategy we can have an overall environmental component to all governmental policies.

This bill for a national sustainability act talks about comprehensive national sustainability goals, measurable targets and the preparation of a single, integrated national sustainable development strategy. It would include the appointment of a cabinet committee on sustainable development and also would ensure and bolster the work of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Develop-

ment. This bill for a national sustainability act essentially takes us light years forward in having environmental policy as part and parcel of all of governmental plans.

It is not surprising that this bill comes from the NDP. The NDP has shown environmental leadership through our leader, the member for Toronto—Danforth and, as a result, this is another component to the overall thrust of the NDP to put the environment first and foremost in this Parliament.

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

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### PETITIONS

CANADIAN FORCES

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition signed by 4,179 Prince Edward Islanders concerned about events relating to friendly fire incidents in Afghanistan. Because of the nature of these unfortunate incidents, the integrity, professionalism and reputation of members of the Canadian Forces have been called into question.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon the minister and the Prime Minister to take immediate action to ensure that members of our Canadian Forces be given the full respect they deserve, that they are not treated as common criminals, and that all efforts be made by the Canadian government to protect the reputation, livelihood and mental health of those individuals when such incidents occur.

LITERACY

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table two petitions today on behalf of my constituents of Hamilton Mountain. The first petition is especially timely, as I had the opportunity on Saturday to participate in the regional spelling bee organized by the Afro-Canadian Caribbean Association in my hometown of Hamilton.

The petitioners are in support of a bill I had the privilege of seconding last year, Bill C-276, An Act to amend the Excise Tax Act (literacy materials), which was brought forward by my good friend the NDP finance critic and member for Winnipeg North. The petitioners share our belief that literacy is a necessity and therefore must not be subject to taxes.

*Business of Supply*

In our knowledge-based economy, the bar is constantly being raised higher on the basis of skills needed to access decent jobs, to function in daily tasks, and to participate in social and political life. Despite our technical sophistication, nearly 50% of Canadians still have difficulty working with words and numbers. It is in everyone's interest to raise Canadian literacy rates. For many Canadians, the added cost of the GST can be a real impediment. There are far too many barriers to literacy already.

The petitioners point out that removing the GST on books and audiovisual materials for literacy training in fact complements existing tax relief given to organizations that conduct literacy work. They call on Parliament to immediately pass Bill C-276.

● (1010)

## EXCISE TAX ACT

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with another bill that I had the privilege of seconding last year, Bill C-275. The petitioners share my belief that taxes on feminine hygiene products are discriminatory. Charging GST on feminine hygiene products clearly affects women only. It unfairly disadvantages women financially solely because of our reproductive role.

The petitioners know that this would benefit all Canadian women at some point in their lives and would be of particular value to women with lower incomes. If a proper, gender-based analysis had been done when the GST was introduced, this discriminatory aspect of the tax would never have been implemented. The petitioners urge Parliament to remove the tampon tax by giving speedy passage to Bill C-275.

## SENIORS

**Mrs. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions for the Government of Canada regarding seniors. The signatories wish to remind their government that the unification of seniors with their families through immigration is a core aspect of forming strong and vibrant families and communities. Newcomer seniors currently suffer discriminatory eligibility criteria within Canada's income security program. For example, there is a one year residency for some, while others have a 10 year requirement. Canada's old age security, guaranteed income supplement and social assistance programs are age, capacity and needs-based programs, not individual contribution-based income security plans.

The petitioners call upon the government to amend the Old Age Security Act, regulations and policies to eliminate the 10 year residency requirement for OAS and GIS; waive the enforcement of sponsorship obligations through government cost recovery schemes as a condition of financial support of genuine immigration breakdown involving a senior; establish a nominal public transit charge for all seniors in Canada, like the \$45 per year charge for B.C. seniors; and provide government funding to support more ethno-specific affordable housing for seniors who need and desire it. I support this petition.

**The Speaker:** The hon. member knows that whether she supports a petition or not is irrelevant and that she is not supposed to indicate that in the course of presentation of petitions. I would urge her to comply with the rules the next time she does this.

The hon. member for Vegreville-Wainwright.

## AGE OF CONSENT

**Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present, on behalf of the good people of Lloydminster, a petition which states that the protection of children from sexual predators must be a top priority of the government. They note that studies show that 14 year olds and 15 year olds are the most vulnerable to exploitation, including recruitment from pimps.

The petitioners call on Parliament to enact through the Criminal Code an act to protect these vulnerable members of our society, and they ask that this Parliament raise the age of sexual consent from 14 years to 16 years of age to help protect our most vulnerable.

## CHILD CARE

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pride that I present a petition in some numbers from the people of the great city of Prince Rupert, British Columbia. The petitioners call on the government to rectify the drastic and increasing shortage of child care spaces in this country. The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the fact that there is a critical shortage of affordable quality child care spaces in Canada and that parents cannot work or pursue educational opportunities without child care. This is a strong petition that communities across our great land have been receiving, particularly the northwest.

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## 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, I ask that all questions be allowed to stand.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1015)

[English]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.)** moved:

That this House apologize to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools for the trauma they suffered as a result of policies intended to assimilate First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, causing the loss of aboriginal culture, heritage and language, while also leaving a sad legacy of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

*Business of Supply*

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is an honour for me to stand today before this House to put forward a motion to offer an apology to the survivors of the Indian residential schools. It is my sincere hope that this motion asking Parliament to offer an apology to these survivors helps to facilitate the healing process, which has taken much too long to complete.

In her book, *Long Shadows: Truth, Lies and History*, Canadian author Erna Paris examines the manipulation of history, using examples from all over the world, and how countries shape historical memory in the aftermath of tragic events. She argues that decisions made by those in power cast long shadows into the future and that countries must confront these painful historical episodes in order to resolve them and heal as a nation.

The process of reconciliation and justice is necessary to heal, but it can be difficult for a country to confront these painful episodes of the past. It is often easier to purposely forget unpleasant or distressing things, sweep them under the rug, so to speak, and move on.

Whether the sorrow involves a group or a nation, a national collective amnesia is often seen as the simplest solution; however, this does not work. Time and again, history has provided us with examples of nations trying to reinvent themselves after such dark and tragic periods in their history.

Canada is learning this lesson firsthand. Injustices of the past do indeed cast long shadows and always have a way of humbling a nation.

I applaud and deeply respect the survivors who persisted in telling their stories and reminding Canada of its long shadow.

Many positive steps have been taken in recent years to help reconcile the Government of Canada's past actions regarding the residential schools. However, a full apology is still missing.

A critical aspect of facilitating the healing process is to admit that a wrong was done and to apologize. Without an apology, healing is never completely achieved.

I stand here on behalf of my people, who suffered unspeakable abuses because of federal government sanctioned residential schools.

I stand here for my community, Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan, and all first nations communities in Canada.

I stand here for the Métis and the Inuit, nations proud of their cultures, heritage and languages, nations whose suffering concerning residential schooling has often been ignored or overlooked.

I stand here for the countless parents who stood by watching powerlessly while some stranger, aided by the force of an unjust law, took away their children, took away their heart and soul, and took away their future.

Once taken away by strangers, separated from their own brothers and sisters, they would be made into strangers themselves, strangers to their parents and strangers to their own culture and their own language. Many of these children would eventually become strangers to their own identity.

I stand here for numerous victims whose stories will never be told, whose remains are scattered across our land in unmarked graves, scars on the land and even larger scars on our nation's psyche.

Many died in those schools because of illness and mistreatment. Many of the survivors witnessed scores of their contemporaries never making it home from these institutions. The survivors' lives have been marked by the tragic and unpleasant living memories of not only their own abuse, but also of the images of children who died. According to some reports, students in the early to middle part of the last century often had to help bury their classmates, their friends and their relatives.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, children buried children.

Above all else I stand for the children, now our elders, who have been denied their culture, their parents and the innocence of childhood, children who were made to feel inferior mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually, children who were degraded and forced to live in unsanitary conditions that were criticized even for that period in time.

This motion, which fills me with pride to present today, also strikes a chord deep within me. It speaks to my people, who are again struggling to reassert their voice and reaffirm a heritage and a culture that have withstood terrible attacks, but I am also deeply proud of how strong first nations, Métis and Inuit people are. There is a strength and a resilience that will ensure they prosper far into the future.

It is not only the ties to my culture that make this motion so significant. It is that my own family has withstood this attack, an attack on our unity, our values and our identity as a family.

● (1020)

At the heart of this issue are people: regular people, average people and everyday people. We can call them whatever we want. They were parents who were forced to lose their children and their children were forced to go to these schools. They were parents who were not informed of the fate or the status of their children for weeks or months at a time.

This motion is for them, the strongest words I can offer. We offer these words to console them for their incredible loss, but to also offer them hope for a future based on truth and reconciliation as we seek to overcome the past.

With this apology, we hope to offer another necessary step at healing the collective intergenerational trauma that has lingered to this day. This is the legacy of the residential school era, but do Canadians truly understand? I think Canadians want to understand.

We have to ask ourselves if, as a country, we told the truth to Canadians. It is a tragic story. It is not pleasant and it is difficult to hear, but hear the truth we must, and it must begin with this government. We must confront these painful episodes of the past with the highest level of respect and honour.

*Business of Supply*

According to an article in *The Globe and Mail* in July of last year by John Ibbitson, the Prime Minister delivered a speech in the United Kingdom in which he lauded British legacies of common law, parliamentary democracy and an open economy, declaring that “much of what Canada is today we can trace to our origins as a colony of the British Empire”.

It is unfashionable, the Prime Minister acknowledged, to speak of colonial legacies as anything other than oppressive. He said, “But in the Canadian context, the actions of the British Empire were largely benign and occasionally brilliant”. British magnanimity, he argued, ensured the survival of the French culture and British approaches to the aboriginal population, “while far from perfect, were some of the fairest and most generous of the period”.

I am not sure how the francophone community feels about the statement of British policies protecting the French culture, but I know for a fact that aboriginal people would not be too impressed with his assessment of past colonial practices as fair and generous.

The policy of the federal government at the time was to assimilate and to have Canada rid itself of its Indian problem. In 1914, a department official who was later put in charge of Canadian Indian policy, a man named Duncan Campbell Scott, stated in a report that it was quite within the mark to say that 50% of the children did not live to benefit from their education. Students died in massive numbers, due in large part to tuberculosis. I do not think this was seen as fair and generous then or now by aboriginal people or by Canadians.

To me it appears as though there is a disconnect between the version of history put forth by a Prime Minister to a foreign audience that British approaches to the aboriginal population were some of the fairest and most generous of the period. This greatly diverges from the version of history put forth by the testimonials of the survivors, federal government departmental officials from the time, and the extensive work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, among others.

This disconnect is precisely what Erna Paris wrote about. That is how the past is managed by those in power today to suit present day needs. I have to ask whose perception and whose needs the Prime Minister's statements suit. I can say that they are not tailored to suit the truth.

In some quarters and in some places, there is an unresolved struggle for the truth, a struggle concerning who gets to decide what actually happened in the past and who gets to decide how the tales are told. There has been recent exposure in the media about the lack of records of the fallen children from the residential schools and how countless forgotten victims are buried in unmarked graves. The loss of their stories is a loss of our history, and further weakens our ability to reconcile these past injustices.

The federal government has woven a version of past events which fits the perception it wants Canadians and the world to see. The government wants, as Erna Paris stated, to shape the historical memory of this period to minimize what actually occurred.

●(1025)

It is within this context that this government unequivocally stated that an apology is not necessary, suggesting that the settlement is enough. I ask myself, “Why the double standard?”

Suggestions have been made that, “Aboriginal people should get over it” and “What else do they want?” These statements are another form of abuse. I hope that these statements come from misunderstanding and not from a more sinister place.

I have seen and I have heard of survivors who received the advance payment. They simply turn it over to their adult children, saying that they were sorry for screwing up their lives, that they should have been stronger while in the residential schools, and that they should have been better parents. They blame themselves. They were children.

What is so difficult to understand? Simply, an apology would represent the manifestation of listening and hearing the truth, and understanding the hurt caused. An apology would say that Canada cares, that Canadians care, and that we are sorry.

But there are supposed barriers to this apology. Let me address some concerns I have heard regarding whether an apology to residential school survivors is necessary.

First, some would argue that the churches were the ones to blame and that government was an impassionate observer, simply an entity that provided funds.

Yes, the churches had a culpable role, but the Government of Canada cannot deny its role in the residential schools era. The Government of Canada acted as both the funding entity for the system and the provider of the overall policy guidelines that attempted to educate and colonize a people against their will.

Worse still, government inspectors and officials knew for decades about the inhumane conditions at these schools, including disease, overcrowding, hunger, disrepair, yet little was done to rectify the situation, and for many it was too late.

Second, I have heard that some people believe an apology had already been given. This is not the case.

It is true that the former Liberal government issued a statement of reconciliation in 1998. This was an important milestone, an important acknowledgement of the abuses that had been suffered and marked the beginning of the process that led to the Indian residential school settlement. However, it was not an apology.

The third reason not to offer an apology, which was offered to me when I asked, was that it was a legal issue. However, the minister has now stated he is not refusing to apologize because of any legal issue.

Finally, I have heard that since an apology was not part of the Indian residential school agreement, it should not be given. This is a rather absurd argument to make, for many reasons.

First, it has been recognized that in 2005 the federal government and the Assembly of First Nations had agreed that there should be an apology. The deputy prime minister at the time stated:

—there is a need for an apology that will provide a broader recognition of the Indian Residential Schools legacy and its effect upon First Nation communities [once the agreement was finalized].

With the Conservatives becoming government, it fell to them to honour this commitment by the Government of Canada to issue an official apology.

First nations, Métis and Inuit people have since, collectively and individually, called for this apology. The Conservatives have refused to uphold this duty and have denied that there is even a need for an apology. The Indian Affairs Minister went so far as to say that since the goal of the schools was to educate aboriginal children there is no need to apologize.

Again, we have an example of how this government is trying to reshape historical memory to suit the needs of those who are in power at the expense of all. Not only is this remark ignorant to the realities of the residential school era, it also demeans and disrespects those who survived, and those who did not.

I hope the minister finds his comment to be personally regrettable, as it is simply not true. I hope he respectfully withdraws his remarks and reconsiders the need for an apology.

The residential school agreement was the right thing to do. The minister and the government can take all the credit in the world for it, it does not matter to me. It was simply the right thing to do.

• (1030)

First nations, Métis and Inuit people sacrificed much to establish this country that we are all very proud of and call home. Canada is a country that attempts to be the most humane and generous in the world. People come to this great land to experience Canada's compassion and are proud to become new Canadians. It is ironic that the compassion that this country is known for, compassion first extended by the original peoples of this land, will not be extended to them by this government.

It is simply about this: an apology to residential school survivors for the calculated, intentional government policy of the day that specifically targeted children in order to undermine forever first nations, Métis and Inuit languages, traditions, beliefs, spirituality, family and community ties, in effect, to paraphrase a senior government official of the day, to rid Canada of its Indian problem.

Now I know that many of the examples I have given and the language I have chosen sound harsh and some would suggest that I crossed the line. Perhaps I did. However, historical records have not been all that accurate in documenting this aspect of Canadian history. Also, I am shocked that the federal government would want to reshape historical memory minimizing the impacts of the residential school era.

If it were not for the survivors demanding to be heard, if it were not for the groundbreaking work of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, if it were not for the outstanding work of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, many of these harsh truths would remain swept under the rug.

The reasons for an apology are clear. The Government of Canada cannot deny its role in establishing and sanctioning the residential

### *Business of Supply*

schools. Until an apology is made, this dark period in time will continue to cast a long shadow that we cannot run away from.

I humbly ask all members of this House to support my motion apologizing to the survivors and calling upon the government to move forward with an apology to all residential school survivors past and present. Let us remove the long shadows of injustice.

I hope the government will join me in offering this apology. I extend it to the Conservatives as an offer of partnership and respect. In the Cree language there is a phrase that I want to repeat.

*[Member spoke in Cree]*

*[English]*

Roughly translated this talks about respect between peoples, respect of our pasts, respect of our histories, respect in a deeper meaning than we probably even understand right now. This is what the survivors are asking for, respect for the experiences they went through and an apology.

**Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are not proud of our history in our dealings with the first nations community. It is something we in the House have indicated that we do not condone. I hope we have learned from our history so that these things never happen in the future.

There is a first nation community within my constituency. I meet with band members when I have the opportunity. I was on the regional treaty advisory committee for several years. Chief Robert Louie and some of the other band members are very progressive in the Okanagan. They are some of the most progressive bands in Canada. I applaud their initiatives for providing safe drinking water, clean and affordable shelter, education and economic opportunities and, something we all hope to foster, development within the first nations as they continue to be a big part of our future, as they have been in our history.

I listened to the member opposite this morning and there was indeed an apology issued. I would like to read for the House the aboriginal first nations National Chief Phil Fontaine's acceptance of the 1998 statement of reconciliation:

It took [the government] some courage to take this historic step, to break with the past and to apologize for the historic wrongs and injustices committed against our people. It is therefore a great honour for me, on behalf of the First Nations, to accept the apology of the government and the people of Canada.

Last week in my office in Ottawa I had a meeting with Richard Jock and some of the other members of the AFN. We continue to work on fostering relationships with our first nations community.

I would also like to point out to the House that since then, many churches, the institutions that actually ran the schools, have made formal apologies and have gone to the brink of bankruptcy to pay compensation.

In December 2006 Phil Fontaine commented on the residential schools settlement agreement. That agreement was concluded by this government under the excellent leadership of the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. Phil Fontaine said:

We have in this agreement recognition that harm was done to our people and that those who harmed our people are prepared to accept their responsibility.

*Business of Supply*

These comments allude to the fact that our government is very sensitive to this issue and is getting the job done. The Liberals did not get the job done on the residential schools settlement. They also seem to be denying something they did. In 1998 Jane Stewart, then minister of Indian affairs, issued a statement of reconciliation titled "Learning from the Past", in which she declared:

To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.

That sounds a lot like an apology to me. I ask the member opposite, does that not sound like an apology to him?

• (1035)

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, publicly and officially the Government of Canada issued a statement of regret. Parliament and the Prime Minister of this country have never formally said, "I am sorry". The Assembly of First Nations is meeting in Winnipeg today, as I understand it. It is calling on the government to formally apologize to the residential schools survivors.

It is easy to blame the churches. As I mentioned in my speech, the churches had a culpable role, but very clearly it was the federal government which drove the policy. It was federal government policy that put forward the concept that these people be civilized against their will.

To this day this House, the Prime Minister and the government have not formally said that they are sorry.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, seeing as some of the other parties are not rising to ask questions, I am happy to ask the member a second question on behalf of the government.

In his speech the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River claimed that he himself perhaps had crossed the line in some of his statements in relation to the government. I would ask why he would be ascribing blame to the government in the language that he has.

For over a decade and a half, the government of the day was his party. The Liberals had many opportunities to move forward on so many first nations issues but they did not. Why would he ascribe so much of the blame to the Conservative government when, upon gaining office, one of the first things the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development did was finalize this agreement?

**Mr. Gary Merasty:** Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting question in that it speaks to the lack of understanding and lack of knowledge about the real history of this country. It suggests that perhaps the members across have never had the opportunity to truly learn about what occurred at the residential schools. That is unfortunate.

Yes, I was worried about crossing the line, but the small sampling of what I talked about was nothing compared to the pain and suffering that those people went through.

In May 2005 the Assembly of First Nations and the Government of Canada signed an accord to reach an agreement and to move forward. Six months later they reached a settlement that called for a national apology, but it was not ratified because of an election.

I am trying to make this issue as non-political as possible. It has taken way too long for us to get to this point. As I said, the Conservatives across the way can take all the credit in the world for ratifying the residential schools agreement. I bow before them and thank them. However, the government has not apologized. It was clearly called for. Whether it is this government or a future government I will ensure that I keep the pressure on. That is the simple reality.

• (1040)

**Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in beginning I dedicate my words to something that has previously been written in this country by one of my favourite authors, Aritha van Herk in the book, *Mavericks*, where she wrote:

Demolished by diseases like smallpox and tuberculosis, struggling with byzantine and ridiculous rules, fighting to stay alive, Alberta's First Peoples have enacted an astonishing feat by refusing to fade away and vanish. For all the deliberate or accidental attempts to erase their presence—

I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter before the House today. I hope in my comments to raise our discussion beyond partisanship to frame a debate that will carry Parliament and indeed this country beyond partisanship and the pointing of accusations. For the sake of all of us, for the sake of Canada, I hope that we can all rise to the level of that requirement. I hope that we all avoid crossing the line. In dealing with this sad chapter of Canadian history, we will all require that. Both aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians will require that we do that. At the end of the day, the truth and reconciliation commission that is so fundamental to the process in which we are now engaged will require us as parliamentarians to rise to that level.

I observe, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu did in a previous context, that neither genuine repentance nor atonement on the one hand, nor forgiveness on the other is possible in the shadow of partisanship.

I begin therefore by saying that the government will support the motion of the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. The House should apologize and I am confident at the end of the day that this House will apologize.

The obligations on the other hand of the executive branch of government tied inextricably to the terms of the residential schools agreement and to the eventual results of the truth and reconciliation commission require some discussion in the House. I propose to deal with that in my comments.

It is important that the historical record reflect accurately upon this matter. I have not been in the House for much of my life, but I have been here for three years at this point. I am somewhat taken aback at how quickly revisionism has taken over what has transpired with respect to the residential schools matter. While partisanship can be forgiven in that I suppose all members of the House from time to time seek refuge there, the revision of Canadian history is an entirely different matter which I am not prepared to countenance in this House.

*Business of Supply*

It is this government that brought an end to the denials of the past. It is this government that executed on May 8, 2006 the residential schools agreement, negotiated after much effort with the lawyers involved on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations, the class action plaintiffs representing some 12,000 individuals in this country, the Assembly of First Nations and the churches of Canada.

An apology on the part of the House of Commons is necessary and the truth and reconciliation commission, of which I intend to speak, will deal with this in some detail. However, as we begin, I have been reading a book entitled *A National Crime* by John Milloy. In asking why the House of Commons should apologize, I would simply quote from the introduction, which in part is a conclusion of the book. Mr. Milloy asks:

How did this happen? How were responsibility and Christianity perverted?

He concludes as follows:

—one conclusion becomes unavoidable: despite the discourse of civil and spiritual duty that framed the school system, there never was invested in this project the financial or human resources required to ensure that the system achieved its “civilizing” ends or that children were cared for properly. Nor was there ever brought to bear the moral resources necessary to respond to systemic neglect or to the many instances of stark physical abuse that were known to be occurring. Furthermore, it is clear that throughout the history of the system, the church-state partners were aware of these sorrowful circumstances and, moreover, that they came to understand the detrimental repercussions for all Aboriginal children of their residential school experience.

• (1045)

That in summation encapsulates what we will probably hear more of from the truth and reconciliation commission over time.

All of this began in Canada many years ago. This school system was conceived in the period leading up to 1892, was brought to fruition in the years thereafter and was not entirely dismantled in this country until the last 1970s.

The apportionment of blame and responsibility in that context is one in which many Canadian governments have a responsibility to share. This system was conceived and carried forward under successive Canadian governments for close to 100 years, so it is part of our collective history. This sad chapter of what happened in our country is something that we will collectively need to come to grips with and, to return to my comments, it is something that we will only come to grips with if we do so in a fair way, without accusations, recriminations, and without the pointing of fingers in that respect. The truth and reconciliation commission, which I wish to speak to at this point, will be fundamental to all of that.

The history of this matter is that there were approximately 130 residential schools in this country operated by four major church denominations, the Anglicans, the Presbyterians, the United Church and the Catholic Church. The total attendance at these schools was over 150,000 aboriginal Canadians. There are 80,000 aboriginal Canadians alive today who attended these schools. The descendants of those people number somewhere between 250,000 and 350,000 Canadians.

In 1990, the first lawsuits were filed against the Government of Canada in respect of this matter. In 1998, as my friend has pointed out, in a statement of reconciliation Canada acknowledged its role in the Indian residential school system. In 1998, much was accomplished with the creation of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation,

which had a \$350 million endowment and \$40 million in additional funding provided thereafter. This foundation administered in excess of 1,300 individual community projects to come to grips with this chapter in Canadian history.

In 2003, a national resolution framework was launched to contribute to reconciliation but at that time the matter continued to move forward in this country by way of litigation, class action lawsuits between first nation claimants and the Government of Canada. At that time, an alternate dispute resolution was put in place.

In the 38th Parliament of Canada, which is where I am concerned about some of the revisionist history that has taken place here, the Conservative Party was in opposition. I would point out for the record, for posterity if I may, that the Conservative Party not only has led the way on this matter by finalizing the agreement of May 8, 2006, but the Conservative Party, together with the other opposition parties in the House of Commons at that time, fundamentally drove the process that led to the residential school agreement.

One need look no further than the report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which was finalized on April 7, 2005 with the cooperation of the then opposition parties in the House of Commons, the Bloc, the NDP and the Conservative Party. At the end of the day, it was opposed by the Liberal government, opposed by the Liberals at committee and during a concurrence motion that passed by one vote in this House of Commons. If we wish history to be clear, one need only look at the report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development of April 7, 2005.

At that time, the state of affairs in this country was that we had an alternate dispute resolution process which had been the subject of continuing pressure and questioning in question period because it had been disclosed that of every dollar spent in dealing with the claims of people who had been wronged by the residential school system, 80¢ was spent on bureaucracy, civil servants, lawyers, experts, adjudicators and only 20¢ made its way through to the victims of this sad chapter in Canadian history.

• (1050)

At one point it was a celebrated case that disclosed these facts. The system was so hamstrung with rules that an elderly woman in her eighties had taken her ADR case forward and it turned out that her allegation of physical cruelty was that she had been confined in a closet, as I recall, for three days with her sister. Her claim was disallowed on the basis that she had not been confined solitarily. That is the sort of thing that was going on only three years ago in this country before this government concluded this agreement.

The April 7, 2005 report of the standing committee left nothing to the imagination. It documented the failings of the process at that time, the absence of any even-handed process; the absence of adequate compensation, terming the compensation to be grossly inadequate; documenting that “the process was proceeding too slowly allowing too many former students to die uncompensated”; and that it used a dispute resolution process that was disrespectfully humiliating and unfeeling and which revictimized former students.

*Business of Supply*

I recall being in committee when members of the Conservative Party pointed out to the government at that time that they had never in their time in the House of Commons as members of Parliament heard testimony as moving as what they heard in the work leading up to this report.

It was pointed out at that time that there were high structural costs and an egregious burden of proof and that it was a process that students did not trust. The committee, at the end of the day, in a report that was quite straightforward and was three pages in length, expressed its regret at the manner in which the alternate dispute resolution process was being administered and provided eight very straightforward recommendations at that time.

The first was that the government proceed with urgency. The second was that it terminate the alternate dispute resolution process. The third was this. If one wants to find the source of the residential school agreement that today provides some hope for this country and some reconciliation of where we are going to go, it lies in the third recommendation of the report, which is as follows:

That the Government engage in court-supervised negotiations with former students to achieve a court-approved, court-enforced settlement for compensation that relieves the Government of its liability for those former students who are able to establish a cause of action and a lawful entitlement to compensation.

For the first time, a recommendation from the House of Commons, approved in a concurrence proceeding, that there be court supervised negotiations with former students, court approved and a court enforced settlement. At the end of the day that is exactly what this government did on May 8, 2006.

In addition, there were comments with respect to legal fees. A recommendation was made that there be an expedited settlement of those claims involving aggravated circumstances, such as sexual and severe physical abuse. Again, at the end of the day that is precisely where this government has arrived at.

However, I wish to emphasize in particular Recommendation No. 6:

That the Government, to ensure that former students have the opportunity to tell their stories to all Canadians in a process characterized by dignity and respect, cause a national truth and reconciliation process to take place in a forum that validates the worth of the former students and honours the memory of all children who attended the schools.

Therein lies of the birth of that concept as a way forward for this country. It is a concept that I feel strongly about. A little known matter in this House is that I spent some time in South Africa in the days after apartheid as South Africa moved from apartheid to its current form. I was a constitutional adviser to an organization there that was dealing with the dismantlement of the apartheid structure.

•(1055)

I watched as the truth and reconciliation commission that was struck in South Africa unfolded. I watched how it assisted South Africa in coming to grips with a very sad chapter of its history. I became a believer in the importance of that kind of an approach as a method for this country to come to grips with the sad chapter of Canadian history, a forum that would allow all Canadians, but in particular first nations citizens who had been victimized by this process, an opportunity and a way to come forward to tell their stories to ensure that their stories were recounted and recorded in Canadian history and a method, at the end of the day, for all of us to

come to grips with a chapter in Canadian history that belongs to no single party, to no single government, but to all of us as Canadians as a result of 100 years of history.

In the days following that, Mr. Frank Iacobucci, a former justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, was appointed as the government's representative and the search for a court supervised settlement process began and an interim agreement was announced, as I recall, on November 23, 2005, having been concluded on November 20, 2005.

That, of course, was in the shadow of the election of December 2005. During the election, the Conservative Party indicated at that time that it would be supportive of such an agreement provided two conditions were met. The first was that the final agreement needed to be concluded, and the second was that court approval needed to be secured. Neither of those steps had been taken in February 2006 when the Conservative government was elected.

I can assure the House that although the residential school matter was not, strictly speaking, the responsibility of the Minister of Indian Affairs, in the days following the formation of the government, responsibility rested elsewhere in the government. I took the completion of this agreement very seriously and I can tell the House there were extensive meetings in my office with Mr. Justice Iacobucci and Mr. Phil Fontaine with the Assembly of First Nations and we struggled to bring this to a close. We struggled to bring the resolution of the terms of the agreement such that it could be taken forward for a court approved process.

There were extensive negotiations dealing with a number of outstanding difficult questions at that time: how to arrive at a final agreement, how to ensure adequate financial provisions were made in budgetary sense for this agreement and how to arrive at an agreement that would be in the best interests of all Canadians. The Minister of Canadian Heritage, I should say for the sake of the record, was very involved in this at that time.

At the end of the day, the agreement that has been concluded required extensive work over the last year to complete. The court process involved proceeding forward with nine jurisdictions to secure court approval. That process is not entirely finished at this stage. It has been approved by all nine jurisdictions but the terms of the agreement provide for an opt out period. The essence of the opt out period is that if an adequate number of first nations claimants decide that they do not wish to be part of this agreement, then the agreement is voidable at the option of the government. Therefore, the legal process is not yet completed and is moving forward.

The agreement, as everyone knows, is a very fair and generous agreement, one which I take immense personal satisfaction in as a Canadian in seeing come to fruition and one in which this government takes pride. It provides, importantly, for a truth and reconciliation commission that will be established together with a research centre with a budget of \$60 million and a five year mandate. The government is currently engaged in the process of selecting the three commissioners, one of whom must be an aboriginal Canadian.

*Business of Supply*

It is my sincere hope, as happened in South Africa, that this matter will be dealt with, that the whole issue of apologies, the whole issue of how this country is to find a way forward will be dealt with by the truth and reconciliation commission, that it will be dealt with in a manner that speaks to the dignity and the integrity of the Canadian people in wanting to come to grips with this chapter of our history, and that the executive branch of government will need to see that document because the full history of this will not be disclosed. We will not have explored the full depths of the history of the residential school agreement of this chapter of Canadian history until the work of that commission has finished.

●(1100)

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the hon. member for his dignified statement, but I have three questions.

Having told us that his party will support the motion put forward by my hon. friend, could he clarify whether this amounts to a government apology or merely parliamentary support for a motion introduced by the other side of the House? I was unclear as to what the intention of the government was in that respect.

I ask this question because I have been in the House on numerous occasions in which the minister has been asked directly whether the government and the Prime Minister will apologize about this matter, and an apology has not been forthcoming. Therefore, I need clarification as to what the minister has just told us.

I ask this furthermore because the government has been very quick to apologize on other matters, such as the Chinese head tax, but has been, I think it is fair to say, curiously resistant about a public apology in this crucial matter of our history. Therefore, I am unclear and would be grateful for the minister's clarification.

Finally, would it be fair to say that this commendable action by the minister to support the resolution of our side of the House would not have occurred at all had we not presented this motion? It seems to me that he should clarify what the government's precise intention is. Is this a government prime ministerial apology, or simply support for an opposition motion? Exactly what has he told us this morning?

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his thoughtful comment and his gracious response.

What I have indicated to the House is that the government is prepared to support the motion put forward, calling upon the House to apologize. As I have said in my comments, I anticipate that the House will apologize. I anticipate that the motion will pass successfully. I acknowledge it is a motion brought forward by my hon. colleague.

In my comments I have tried to indicate, however, that the position of the executive branch of government is a separate issue. We are in the midst of the implementation of the May 8, 2006 agreement, an agreement which is still very much before the courts and which still requires the completion of the opt-out period, in respect of which advertisements are currently taking place in major newspapers across the country.

I have also indicated that I attach enormous significance to this. I have personally believed, from the time I became involved in this chapter in Canadian history as an opposition member in this House, that the truth and reconciliation commission is the key to the way forward for us as a nation. It is there that we will come to grips with what happened. It is there that we will come to understand the damage done to aboriginal people and to the country by the misguided efforts that were undertaken.

I have looked to South Africa as a comparison. I note in that context, and have noted previously, that when the reconciliation commission completed its work, it called, in one of its recommendations, for an apology by the government at that time to those people who had perpetrated violations of human rights.

It seems to me that the task at hand as a nation is, in a non-partisan way, to move forward, to try to really understand this chapter of Canadian history, to look at the damage that was done to our first nation and our aboriginal people and to do it with a reconciliation commission, which will consist of three very respected Canadians. In fact, we have just now embarked on the process to select those Canadians to ensure that they are beyond reproach, that they are people who are nationally known for their integrity, for their commitment to this beautiful country of ours and people who will get this right.

My hope is we will better understand what needs to be done through the work of this commission. The government looks forward to receiving the recommendations of those parties of the commission after they have completed their work. To be fair, only at that time, once the full facts are known, can the full response from the Government of Canada, at the executive branch, be offered.

●(1105)

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I guess it is difficult to hear this sometimes, and people will argue that it is revisionist. It has to be understood that for the most part of written history in the country aboriginal people did not control the pen. The statements I talk about are statements from survivors, from past victims. If it is indeed an accusation of revisionism, then I guess so be it.

The question I have is the minister made a curious comment of "until all the facts are known". The facts are known. The facts are in black and white. They are written in some cases in blood by many of those people who appeared before these various bodies to talk about their experiences.

I would ask the government to proceed with an apology and still proceed with the truth and reconciliation. The government should take lessons from the truth and reconciliation process in Africa and other countries and improve upon it in our country. I distinctly and truly believe the facts are there.

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, with respect to revisionism, this is a sensitive topic for me. I believe the way we are dealing with this currently as a nation speaks well of our system of government and, frankly, of this Parliament and of this House of Commons.

*Business of Supply*

I am concerned that we not get into accusations on this. Frankly, there are members in every single party in the House of Commons that deserve some credit for bringing this matter forward through the resolution of the May 8, 2006 agreement.

As I pointed out in my comments, it was really only through the efforts of all three opposition parties in the 38th Parliament that this matter was forced through to a completion. There are several members in the House that deserve some share of credit for that. I do not want us to go too far down the road of revising Canadian history. I wish those facts to be known.

With respect to my colleague's statement that the facts are known, I respectfully say that all of the facts are not known. If they were all known, we would not be investing \$60 million as a nation in a truth and reconciliation commission with respected Canadians who will travel the country and speak to everyone who wants to speak with the commission over a five year period.

Once those facts are known, I think there will be recommendations clearly that come forward at the time from the commission. The executive branch of the government at that time will have a heavy responsibility to follow through with what I hope will be the closing chapter of this era in Canadian history and deal with the recommendations.

I would be very surprised if those recommendations did not deal, as the South African commission did, with the context and the concept of an apology.

•(1110)

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister on some of the comments he made, particularly where he asked that this very sensitive and important issue be dealt with in a non-partisan way. He suggested that we not point fingers and that we get on with some constructive positive action. He suggested that, indeed, the House might support the resolution. I believe a majority of the House will support the motion. It will be interesting to see if the government caucus will at the end of the day support it. I hope that they do.

The minister talked about us being careful not to cross the line and to be non-partisan. Yet in his speech in some places he was very partisan in pointing a finger at the previous government, particularly where he got into a description of the form of dispute resolution mechanism.

Would the minister share with me what he meant by not crossing the line?

**Hon. Jim Prentice:** Mr. Speaker, I refer the hon. member to the April 27 report of the previous standing committee, which I think is a seminal document in terms of the steps by this Parliament to come to grips with the issue and to search for a way forward.

At the time, the very concept that we would move forward with a court endorsed omnibus settlement was something which had not been contemplated in a serious way within Parliament or government. I did not wish to be partisan in any way in my comments. I certainly have the capacity to be quite a bit more partisan than anything I might have said, but I tried to be as statesmanlike as I could.

I point out that many people were involved at that point in time. I do see what has been achieved here. We are not finished, but I do see it as a measure of the success that we can have in our country moving forward.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform you that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from Laurentides—Labelle.

I am pleased to speak to the House today on residential schools. This will allow us to move things forward for the most affected parties, namely, aboriginals, Inuit and Métis, who, not all that long ago, were referred to as Indians and were seen as somewhat different from us.

I am familiar with residential schools, although not as much as the people I will be telling you about today. Nor were my experiences the same as theirs. I believe I know a little about these institutions from having attended them throughout my childhood, since I was an orphan. The family that raised me could not find the means to give me what they considered a reasonable education on their own. They therefore went to the local bishop for help. At the time, that was the only way to get any help.

I still remember returning to school every September, at a residential school not far from Quebec City, where I would stay for the entire school year, that is, from September of one year to the end of the following June. I am originally from Bas-du-Fleuve, more specifically the Matapédia valley. Of course, the return trip home would have been too expensive for the family that raised me. I swore to myself at the time that my own children would never go to such a school, because every time I went home, I felt like I had new parents and new siblings whom I had to get to know all over again during my summer holidays, which were always too short. I think this could be described as "learning the hard way".

When I was 13, two months shy of my 14th birthday, I went to work in Abitibi. I did not see my parents again until 10 years later. My first job was loading planed wood onto rail cars. My partner was an Indian, as they were called at the time. He was the kind of man who never raised his voice. Around four in the morning, working a shift that had started at six the night before, when he saw that I was having a hard time handling 8 x 8 x 16 lumber, he would take one end of the board to help me, then load his own, and that went on until six in the morning. I worked at that job for five months, and I never heard him complain. He had been working there for eight years. He had gone to a residential school until he was 15. He did not live with the other employees because he had a little camp on the river. It was not until I went to visit him there that I began to learn about his life story.

*Business of Supply*

When I moved to Val-d'Or, I drove a taxi a lot. Nights and weekends, I often drove one or two aboriginal families who were taking their children back to the residential school near Amos. They spoke French to me, but among themselves, they spoke Indian. To me, Cree and Algonquin were the same language. However, when they cried as they left their children behind, no translation was necessary. The residential school was not very far from their reserve. It took about an hour and a half or two hours to get there, but they had other children and could not afford the trip except to go back for their kids the following summer.

At the time, it seemed obvious to me—and I kept thinking about it because it was so striking—that while I could not understand them on the way there, I had no trouble understanding them on the way back because they were speaking French. Please understand that my pleasure at hearing them speak French was not selfish. From my perspective, I thought that since the English had forced us to speak English, it made sense for them to learn French. My thoughts on the matter were well intended.

Nevertheless, when they arrived at their reserve, it was astounding to observe the parents translating what the children were saying to the grandparents. At that time, my first thought was that the poor old folks had not been lucky enough to learn French like the young ones. Perhaps we were also an oppressed people at that time.

• (1115)

It was not until many years later that I truly understood the magnitude of what I had experienced, even though I counted some aboriginals among my friends.

In the 1980s, I played hockey with one of these friends, who had attended the Canadian junior training camp. I liked to tease him because he did not want to go out for a beer with the others; quite often I would have a soft drink with him. One evening he said I should help him to find some courses in Anishinabe and Cree. I was incredulous. He said that his entire education had been provided at an Indian residential school and that they had taken away his language, his culture and his family. He could not read or write in either Cree or Anishinabe. Therefore, he had no access to his history and his culture.

It was at that moment, I think, that I understood the scope of the experience without even knowing the other abuses suffered. It is somewhat embarrassing to admit this kind of thing. I have come to understand, since being elected, that I did not yet know everything. Today, I am even sure that had he not been aboriginal, he would have been a member of the Canadian junior team because he was really good.

I still see him. In fact I saw him not too long ago when we got the first nations pavilion on the Val-d'Or campus. It was really something to see the look on his face. It was a look of complete satisfaction and hope. He knows that the university will train first nations teachers in their language and their culture. I know that he will try to be there, maybe not to teach—although you never know—but rather to learn to read and write in his mother tongue, Cree, and in the language of his father's side, Anishnabe.

Have they suffered? I think so. Have they healed? I do not think most of them have. I am not an expert, but to hear them speak, if they can learn to master their language, it would be a positive step.

The Bloc will support this motion that the House apologize to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools for the trauma they suffered as a result of policies intended to assimilate first nations, Inuit and Métis children, causing the loss of aboriginal culture, heritage and language, while also leaving a sad legacy of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

• (1120)

[*English*]

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for his great speech. I think he did an outstanding job highlighting some of the experiences back in his era and talking about the people he met.

He also heard the minister speak. I am wondering what his opinion was of that speech.

The House will hopefully express its support for the motion. Does he feel also that perhaps the government, somewhat separate from the House, the executive arm, would also proceed with an apology?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Speaker, it was my understanding that the minister said he intended to issue an apology, but I am very disappointed with the timing of that apology. We are all familiar with the abuse that was inflicted.

The government must admit that it also acknowledges that abuse because it is compensating the victims. In other cases that have already been heard, before awarding compensation, the government apologized.

Personally, I believe the government should apologize immediately, and not wait a year or two, or wait to be defeated, only to say that it should have apologized at that time.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I too would like to compliment the member on his speech. I wonder if he could draw the connection between culture and language. With the children being forced to abandon their language, could he comment on how important that is to culture?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Yvon Lévesque:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that if we cannot read what the history books have to say about the history, customs and traditions of our nation, that nation's culture will be lost.

It is by studying another culture, one that is different from our own, that we learn about that culture. I experienced this first hand, because I left the countryside to go to school in the city, as a white person, of course. When I went back home, I spent my summer holidays getting to know my parents and siblings all over again. These people face the same problem, because they are not even able to read the books to find this information. It is criminal.

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps (Laurentides—Labelle, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for sharing his time with me so that I can speak to the motion we are debating today, which I feel is of crucial importance to a country like Canada, which claims to be one of the most morally advanced countries in the world.

The Bloc Québécois members support the motion calling for an apology, which the victims of residential schools and their families have been awaiting for so long.

The Bloc Québécois therefore supports the motion by my Liberal colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

We must not kid ourselves: the final Indian residential schools settlement agreement was nothing but a salve on the wounds of broken lives. It was a great day for the victims of residential schools and for all those who cherish justice, respect and compassion. But it will not make up for the ravages that many native people will never get over. However, the Bloc Québécois was firmly convinced that the agreement was the foundation for restoring social justice and promoting reconciliation and healing.

Today's motion gives the Prime Minister the opportunity to apologize to the victims and their families on behalf of the Government of Canada.

It is important to remember that Indian residential schools were designed to solve the “Indian problem” by tearing aboriginal children away from their homes and families to prevent them from learning about their culture, their language, and the ties that bind them to the land. Many lived in inhuman conditions and suffered physical and sexual abuse.

During that period, from 1870 through the mid-1980s, the Canadian government also took away aboriginal women's status as Indians under the federal Indian Act, along with their right to live in their home communities, if they married a non-aboriginal man or a man from another community.

This policy resulted in the uprooting of tens of thousands of aboriginal women, jeopardizing their ties to their families and increasing their dependence on their spouses.

Even as the residential school system was being phased out through the 1960s, aboriginal children continued to be taken from their families by child welfare programs oriented toward putting children in the care of the state rather than addressing the circumstances of poverty and family violence that placed the children at risk—a problem that persists today.

The legacy of these policies has been the erosion of culture, the uprooting of generations of aboriginal women, the separation of children from their parents, and a cycle of impoverishment, despair and broken self-esteem that continues to grip many aboriginal families.

In 1996, the year the last residential school in Saskatchewan closed, the federal government's Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples concluded:

Repeated assaults on the culture and collective identity of aboriginal people have weakened the foundations of aboriginal society and contributed to the alienation that

drives some to self-destruction and anti-social behaviour. Social problems among aboriginal people are, in large measure, a legacy of history.

As a woman and the Bloc Québécois critic on the status of women and a member of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, the situation of aboriginal women concerns me very much.

A number of women representing aboriginal groups have come to the committee to describe the conditions in which they live. They cope with higher rates of poverty and violence than aboriginal men and non-aboriginal women do. They carry a double burden: they suffer all the inequities inflicted on all women, but they also have to deal with the disadvantages common to aboriginal peoples across Canada.

The following are a few examples to illustrate the seriousness of their current situation:

Aboriginal women are twice as likely as non-aboriginal women to live in poverty and are therefore particularly affected by the social assistance policies of the provincial and territorial governments; a disproportionate number of them—roughly twice as many as non-aboriginal women—head a single parent family; on the reserves, 32% of children live with just one parent, while this is the case in 46% of the aboriginal families living off reserve; aboriginal women are five times more likely to be victims of violence in their lifetime than any other woman in Canada.

• (1125)

A disproportionately high number of them work in poorly paid jobs. Aboriginal women with less than a grade nine education earn less than aboriginal men and non-aboriginal women. At \$12,300, the average annual income of aboriginal women is the lowest of any social group in Canada.

However, it is difficult, perhaps even impossible, to accurately quantify these data. Due to lack of funding from the Canadian government, few relevant studies and analyses are available.

All of this proves that the Government of Canada is acting completely irresponsibly toward this country's aboriginal people and, more specifically, toward aboriginal women. It is hard to believe that even now, in 2007, Canada is refusing to do its part to protect the rights of aboriginal women in Canada. It is even harder to believe that Canada is keeping this country's aboriginal communities in a state that looks a lot more like a humanitarian situation in a developing country than like something one would expect to see in the kind of rich, developed country Canada is supposed to be.

Yet solutions exist. While Quebec's aboriginal communities still have a long way to go, their progress sets them apart from those in the rest of Canada. In 2002, Bernard Landry's government signed the peace of the braves agreement. Twenty-five years before that, René Lévesque's government signed the James Bay agreement. These two agreements illustrate the Government of Quebec's level of respect for the aboriginal peoples living in the province.

Wendake in the Quebec City region, Essipit on the North Shore, and Mashteuiatsh near Lac-Saint-Jean have all proven that when governments give aboriginal communities the tools for development, success is possible.

*Business of Supply*

Unfortunately, there are still communities like Kitcisakik in Abitibi-Témiscamingue, where the situation has more in common with what is happening elsewhere in Canada: a deplorable lack of sanitation infrastructure, housing and jobs. The Conservative government's decisions are doing nothing to help aboriginal communities—least of all aboriginal women—take charge of their own future. The first thing the Conservative government did to show its disregard for first nations was cancel the Kelowna accord. Although the accord was just an agreement in principle, it was helping to repair the damage wrought by the growing quality of life gap between aboriginals and other Canadians.

Add to that the \$5 million slashed from the Status of Women Canada budget, resulting in the closing of 12 of its 16 offices as well as changes to eligibility criteria for the women's program. This has led to the exclusion of women's rights groups and women's lobby groups.

This program was the major source of research funding for native women's rights groups in Canada. The research sought to assess the extent of violence against native women, among other things. It will now be very difficult, if not impossible, for these groups to conduct research and produce such studies. The elimination of the court challenges program is another good example of the ideological blindness of this government and its inability to understand the issues affecting the most disadvantaged and minority groups.

By abolishing this program, the Conservatives hope to silence all those who do not share their neo-liberal vision. Next Thursday will mark the third anniversary of the publication of *Pay Equity: A New Approach to a Fundamental Right*, the final report of the federal Pay Equity Task Force. The recommendations of this report, tabled in May 2004, have never been adopted by the federal government. Pay equity is obviously not a priority for the Conservative government, which has deliberately chosen to ignore the report's recommendations, particularly the enactment of proactive pay equity legislation.

In conclusion, the Bloc Québécois endorsed the main recommendations of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples and the Erasmus-Dussault report, which set out an approach for self-government based on recognition of aboriginal governments as a level of government with authority over issues of good governance and the well-being of their people. The entire report is based on recognition of the aboriginal peoples as self-governing nations occupying a unique place in Canada.

• (1130)

We recognize the aboriginal peoples as distinct peoples having the right to their culture, language, customs and traditions as well as the right to direct the development of their own identity.

I will close by calling on this government to show more respect for the native peoples of Canada. It has made a financial atonement for the abuses they suffered in residential schools; however, the time for apologies has come. Human dignity cannot be bought with money.

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her comments, especially related to aboriginal women.

An aboriginal woman appeared before the committee and I asked her a question. I outlined the programs that have been cancelled for aboriginal people or that aboriginal people might have used and asked her if they used them, including the court challenges program, the aboriginal procurement program, the ANCAP program to reduce greenhouse gases for aboriginal people, the Law Reform Commission, the aboriginal non-smoking program, the Kelowna accord and the aboriginal justice strategy, all of which have been cancelled by the government.

I would like to ask the member if she feels the government, in light of all those cuts, has been supportive of aboriginal women.

• (1135)

[Translation]

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. The answer is no. A number of aboriginal women appeared before the Standing Committee on Status of Women. During this session, we are primarily dealing with the economic security of women. I was shocked to hear these women's testimonies about their lives and their poverty. One of them, from Nunavut, told us about the isolation and lack of housing they face. In this Canadian territory, the suicide rate is 18% higher than the national average.

After hearing the testimonies of aboriginal women, it is easy to see that the communities have been abandoned by the Canadian government.

**Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to thank my colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for her speech. I know she is very concerned about the fate of aboriginal communities, in particular the status of women, which she describes very well.

We know that Canada has a fiduciary responsibility for most of these communities. Having examined this issue, does the member understand the reasons why Canada did not take responsibility for the fate of aboriginal communities? Also, we have been aware of this situation since the 1950s and, even worse, Canada itself contributed to it by, for example, killing the dogs that served as transportation to get to work in northern communities.

**Ms. Johanne Deschamps:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. He answered his own question. I completely agree with the comments of my colleague from Chambly—Borduas.

[English]

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

*Business of Supply*

I want to begin by acknowledging the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for bringing this important motion before the House. With the long, sad and tragic history and the unimaginable consequences for survivors, their families and the communities, it is long past the time for the House and the government to issue an apology for the survivors of residential schools.

I also want to acknowledge and thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for his tireless work on the file on residential schools. He has been a tireless advocate and defender and champion of ensuring there was an adequate agreement on residential schools that moved in a timely fashion.

The one thing we do know is that residential schools were not just about the survivors. It was also about their families and their communities. In a book called *Journeying forward: Dreaming First Nations' independence* by Patricia Monture-Angus, she talks about the reality of residential schools and talks about it in a way that is respectful, to use the words of people who were involved. She says:

What would you do if you were a child being removed from your parents' arms? Would you scream, "Mom, help! Mom, help!?" What would you do if you saw your parents standing there helplessly? Would you feel, "They should have stopped them from taking me"? What would you feel if you had arrived in that big building where there were people speaking a funny language and when you spoke the language you knew, you were hit and told to speak in that strange language? What if your culture taught that your hair was part of your spirit, and the strange people cut off your hair...?

She goes on to talk about the fact that, just as these children were abused in innumerable ways in residential schools, when people came back to their communities it had a long-lasting impact on their families. She says:

In my opinion, there has been enough written that focuses on the specific harms, often cataloguing the crimes, inflicted on First Nations children. This very narrow focus operates to conceal the outcomes and impacts those schools have had on our families and communities. My point is not to minimize the harms done to individuals but to make clearly the point that these crimes are just a small portion of the actual impact. One of the things that needs to be considered is the simple fact that we did survive the genocidal educational attempts of Canadian authorities.

Those are very strong words but it is important to talk about what happened to children in those schools. The RCAP report eloquently lays out the challenges that were faced by first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples across this country for so many decades. In Volume 1 of the RCAP report, under "Looking Forward Looking Back, Chapter 10 — Residential Schools", it lays out the litany of not only physical neglect, but emotional and spiritual neglect as well.

The RCAP report states that there were:

—systemic problems, particularly the lack of financial resources, the persistence of those problems and the unrelieved neglect of the children can be explained only in the context of another deficit — the lack of moral resources, the abrogation of parental responsibility. The avalanche of reports on the condition of children — hungry, malnourished, ill-clothed, dying of tuberculosis, overworked — failed to move either the churches or successive governments past the point of intention and on to concerted and effective remedial action.

The remedial action was not only around righting the wrongs and ensuring the children were well cared for and returned to their parents so that culture and language could survive but also around the sexual and physical abuse that many of those children suffered. Part of the remedy must be an apology.

In the section entitled "Discipline and Abuse", the report goes on to state:

The basic premise of resocialization, of the great transformation from 'savage' to 'civilized', was violent. "To kill the Indian in the child", the department aimed at severing the artery of culture that ran between generations and was the profound connection between parent and child sustaining family and community.

Finally, part of what is before the House today is a need for a profound apology by members of the House and certainly from the government.

The report concludes by stating:

Rather than attempting to close the door on the past, looking only to the future of communities, the terrible facts of the residential school system must be made a part of a new sense of what Canada has been and will continue to be for as long as that record is not officially recognized and repudiated. Only by such an act of recognition and repudiation can a start be made on a very different future. Canada and Canadians must realize that they need to consider changing their society so that they can discover ways of living in harmony with the original people of the land

• (1140)

I would argue that until we have a heartfelt apology from the very root of our being, first nations, Métis and Inuit people cannot get on with claiming their space as the original inhabitants of this land.

As well, we talk often about first nations, but it is very important that we also talk about Métis and Inuit peoples as well, because they were also a part of the residential school system. The RCAP report talks about how the things that happened in the south also happened in the northern part of this country. The RCAP report states:

In the north, as in the south in the days before integration, the government with its church partners presumed to stand in the place of the children's parents, taking children into residential schools so they could "face the future in a realistic manner"—that being "as true Canadian citizens". Unfortunately, the record of this national presumption, whether traced in the north or the south cannot be drawn as a "circle of civilized conditions".

I would suggest that there is not one member in this House who would willingly give up his or her children to live in the conditions that first nations, Métis and Inuit children lived in.

When it comes to the Métis peoples, there have been lengthy discussions around the inclusion of Métis people. In fact, the current Prime Minister made a promise to take action around the Ile a la Crosse school. I have a number of letters here, which I of course will not read because it would take far more than the 10 minutes allotted, but I want to read just one for members. It says:

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

During the election campaign, while [I was] listening to the MBC radio station, your Conservative Party advertisement stated that if your party was elected and formed the government that you would include the Boarding School at Ile a la Crosse in...the compensation package dealing with the Indian Residential School Survivors.

I am from the village of Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan, and attended the Ile a la Crosse Boarding School for 10 years...

Therefore, although we absolutely need this apology, we also need action on other matters facing Métis people, Inuit people and first nations people in this country to ensure that we make an attempt to right some of these wrongs. Certainly one of them would be recognition of schools such as Ile a la Crosse and Timber Bay for the Métis peoples.

*Business of Supply*

In the context of the schools, I did hear the minister get up and say that the government would support an apology by the House, but we also feel that it would be important to have the Prime Minister apologize as a representative of the sitting government, although I am not optimistic, given the minister's quote in the *Globe and Mail* from March 27, when he said:

I've said quite clearly that the residential school chapter of our history is one that was a difficult chapter. Many things happened that we need to close the door on as part of Canadian history, but fundamentally, the underlying objective had been to try and provide an education to aboriginal children and I think the circumstances are completely different from Maher Arar or also from the Chinese head tax.

Whether it was an attempt at assimilation or an attempt at genocide, or a misguided attempt to educate people in a way that the people of the day would not have imagined educating their own children, surely Canadians owe an apology to first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in this country.

As well as looking at the issues around the need for an apology, we also need to take a look at the additional supports that are required in order for first nations, Métis and Inuit communities to truly heal. I would argue that we need to ensure funds are in place for such things as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which supports that healing in communities. We know that many communities have moved on and have healing programs in place that are truly helping communities recover, but we must continue to work with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples to develop and design programs that meet communities' needs to have that healing truly take place.

In conclusion, I encourage each and every member of this House to support this motion and call on the House to issue that apology quickly.

• (1145)

**Mr. Gary Merasty (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party for supporting my motion this morning. I want to applaud her on the content of her speech. It is indeed sad when we revisit many of these stories.

My motion definitely talks about an apology from the House, but I am hoping as well, and the minister said, that perhaps eventually the government and the Prime Minister will apologize, although I am not so sure if I am optimistic myself.

He did speak about the truth and reconciliation process. I am just wondering if you have any thoughts on the truth and reconciliation process itself and how it can be better adapted in this instance.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order. I remind the hon. member that he should direct his questions to the hon. member through the Chair, not directly to the member.

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member's question points out, the truth and reconciliation process is also an important part of the healing that needs to take place. I would argue that the truth and reconciliation process must be developed and designed in full and complete consultation with first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

A truth and reconciliation process that travels across the country and hits the major cities will leave out many people on rural and remote reserves. For example, some people in my own area of

Nanaimo—Cowichan live on small islands, and elders would have a great deal of difficulty even travelling to Vancouver for a hearing.

Any attempt at a healing and reconciliation process must be respectful of the challenges confronting many first nations, Métis and Inuit communities. I would also argue that the process must be available in many languages, because we know that many elders still speak their mother tongue. We must make sure that the information and the process itself incorporate the languages of birth.

• (1150)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, a previous speaker talked about the court challenges program being used by aboriginal people to defend their rights. When the Conservatives were asked yesterday why they cancelled the program, a member of the status of women committee said that we should not be funding a program that helps small special interest groups defend their rights.

Does the member believe that aboriginal people are an interest group and defend their rights over the majority of Canadians? Does the member think that women are a small minority of Canadians?

**Ms. Jean Crowder:** Mr. Speaker, first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples are absolutely not small special interest groups in this country. They are the original inhabitants of Canada.

The court challenges program was one of the few mechanisms that provided people an opportunity to challenge some of the more egregious violations in this country. It is a sad statement that it is no longer a remedy for people.

With reference to women being a special interest group, I would like to tell my colleague that we represent over 51% of the population and we should probably have more access to things like the court challenges program.

**Mr. Tony Martin (Sault Ste. Marie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important issue in the House.

I first want to thank the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for bringing forward this resolution challenging all of us in this place to come forward and issue a collective apology to our first nations with respect to the residential school situation that we are still trying to resolve in this country.

I also want to thank my own colleague, the member for Nanaimo—Cowichan, for the excellent work she is doing to try to move this item forward and get justice done in this country for all of the really important people concerned.

In my own community of Sault Ste. Marie, there is an elderly gentleman named Fred who walks his bike around town, winter, summer, fall and spring. We can see Fred walking his bike, with his belongings, around the city of Sault Ste. Marie. Fred is a survivor of residential schools. Fred has become a bit of an institution in our city and is much loved by everyone.

*Business of Supply*

On the day the agreement on residential schools was signed, not that long ago, I was on my way to a luncheon with the Shingwauk survivors of residential schools in my city, who have been meeting for a number of years now to keep themselves together and to provide support as they, in partnership with all of the other survivors across the country, interacted and spoke with government to try to find resolution. They were having a luncheon on this particular day, pre-set by some number of months. They meet regularly, but on that day they were going to be celebrating the agreement.

That day, as I drove down Queen Street to the luncheon, I saw something that I had never seen before. Fred actually was riding his bicycle. That is how important this agreement was to him and to the folks he was going to be joining for lunch that day. All of them there, Fred included, told me that without an apology from the government for the wrongs that were done to these wonderful, noble people, this journey would not be complete.

Therefore, I think it is very important that today we in the House, both in participating in the debate and in the vote that will take place soon after, together send a message to our first nations people that we are sorry for the damage that was done, for the wrong that was imposed, and indicate that we want to move forward from here in a way that speaks of further growth, development and partnership that reflects a respect for the culture, the history and the traditions of our first nations people.

In my own community, the obvious example of a residential school was of course the Shingwauk Indian Residential School experience. It is interesting, because the Shingwauk Indian Residential School reflects the wonderful history, tradition and past of our first nations people, building and living out their vision of what it is to be fully engaged and involved in their land and in this country, in partnership, in many ways, with the new arrivals, as they reached out to share, to include and to work them with in order to protect a way of living that they knew was vital and valuable and that they wanted to pass on to future generations.

• (1155)

Chief Shingwauk was chief of the Ojibwa. He was loyal to King George and fought along with the British army in many engagements. He fought alongside Tecumseh against the Americans in the war of 1812. He represented the Ojibwa in signing the Robinson-Huron Treaty in 1850. This treaty set aside, for example, the Garden River Reserve for Ojibwa in my riding. That school closed in 1970.

Children of Shingwauk Alumni Association estimates that there are approximately 2,000 survivors in the Algoma Manitoulin region who are waiting for this apology today and, in fact, a more formal apology from the government itself in the not too distant future.

The Shingwauk alumni council emphasizes that all the elements of the comprehensive strategy are equally important and must be fully developed and fully implemented. It says that a full and formal apology, a settlement package for all former students, a revised ADR process that will address serious abuse, long term community based healing programs, resources and means to support survivor based organizations, a truth and reconciliation process involving all Canadians, a nation-wide education strategy, commemoration and

other identified elements are appropriate. However, central to all of this is this full and formal apology.

They are not the only ones calling for this apology. Church groups, which were involved in this very damaging and difficult time of our history, are calling for an apology as well. In fact, as we speak, a meeting is going on in Winnipeg of chiefs. They are discussing this very issue.

Three Protestant national churches have called for a full national apology by the Canadian government: the Anglican, Presbyterian and United churches. Reverend James Scott, the United Church's general council officer for residential schools, said:

It is a living legacy, the pain is in the present. Apology can be a significant step toward healing our broken relationships.

He also said:

It is completely unacceptable for the [the Prime Minister's] government to use the fact that an apology was not part of the Settlement Agreement as an excuse not to apologize....After all, the Common Experience Payment, which is a central component of the Agreement, recognizes the systemic harms that were inherent in the education policy of operating residential schools.

In a letter to the minister in August 2006, the United Church's then Moderator, the Right Reverend Peter Short, wrote:

It is our concern that the Agreement, which attempts to address the harm done to former students, will seem hollow and disingenuous if a national apology does not accompany its implementation. Indeed, we are aware that from the standpoint of those most affected, those with whom we are attempting to set things right, an apology is central to the true spirit of reconciliation.

The United Church went on to say:

We believe that a national apology, partnered with the Settlement Agreement, will be a historic step toward closing this tragic chapter of our past and fostering a new and positive spirit in which to work together with all Aboriginal peoples towards a more just and promising future.

In the last year or so I have crossed the country meeting and talking with people and looking at the issue of poverty. Overwhelmingly, most everywhere I went, the face of poverty was aboriginal, a situation that should not exist in a country as wealthy as ours. With our resources and intelligence, it is a situation that should not be allowed to exist.

I also discovered, as I crossed the country and looked at the terrible reality of poverty in so many of our communities, and the aboriginal face of poverty, was people were yearning, calling and hoping for a vision. They told me that they wanted the government to put forward a vision, a vision of our country consistent with our history and our efforts to combat the geography in which we live, the weather with which we deal and the distances that often come between communities, a vision that talks about sharing, caring and about community.

• (1200)

I suggest today that we will not get to that vision of a caring, compassionate and wonderful country rooted in community until we right the relationship with our first nations people. In my view the beginning of righting that relationship is an apology, which must come from the House and from the government.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for outlining so well the real essential element of an apology for aboriginal people across Canada. I come from a riding where over 50% of the population is first nations, aboriginal people, Inuvialuit and Métis. Many of those people attended residential schools and many suffered grievously.

The issue of compensation goes only so far in their quest to return to normality with a healthy and self-fulfilling lifestyle. Residential schools impacted so many aspects of people's lives, including people's parenting skills. Residential schools affected their ability to understand how to raise their children in the future. It was a terrible impact when people were taken out of their homes and put into an institutional situation for most of their formative years.

I had the opportunity to attend a conference a month ago, led by aboriginal people in Yellowknife, on the question of fully restoring sanity and prosperity in these people's lives. Does the member think an apology by the House will do it all? Do we need an apology from the highest minister in the House directly on this issue?

• (1205)

**Mr. Tony Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I do not think an apology will do it all, but it is an essential beginning and a foundation piece for all the other important work that we will do as we try to right this relationship.

As I crossed the country, I talked to people. They spoke so very passionately about the need for a vision for our country, from which we seem to have strayed. They spoke about the very wonderful history rooted in community, caring, compassion and the development of things such as our health care system, our education system, the Canada pension plan and employment insurance. These plans were all put in place to ensure that nobody was left behind, that we looked after each other.

The one thread in all of this, which still does not fit, is how we treated our first nations people. The conclusion I have come to, in answer to my friend's question, is unless and until we get to fully and completely righting that wrong relationship with the people who were here and who were stewards of this land before we ever arrived, that we will be unable to get to this important and doable wonderful vision which we could have for our country. That righting of a relationship starts with an apology. Righting that wrong could set us again where we were a few years ago, at the top of the heap on the index of human development, about which the United Nations is concerned.

Then we can lead the world in a way that we look after each other and, in particular, those who are most at risk and marginalized.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Churchill.

First, I congratulate the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for bringing forward this very important motion to the House.

I also congratulate the Liberal leadership. As members know, it is an opposition day. We could have chosen any of many topics, but to pick a topic that deals with some of the most injured and downtrodden in our society is very admirable. It is quite a contrast to what we heard yesterday from a Conservative member who

suggested that we should not pay for the disadvantaged to fight for their rights under the court challenges program.

The road to hell is often paved with good intentions. I am sure there were some people who thought the residential schools would help Indian and Inuit people get an education and learn English, the language of the world, so they could get on and prosper. However, this is a case where the end does not justify the means. The horrific ends, the harm and injury that resulted for those people was not proper.

I am sure everyone loves their children. I know the Minister of Indian Affairs and the parliamentary secretary have children. I know many members of the House of Commons have children. I ask everyone, including the thousands of people who are watching on T.V., to think of their children for a moment. I ask them to think about what they might be doing and how important it is having them at home. I ask them to think about their relations with them later in the day, their interactions and the fun. Then to think about hearing a knock at the door by someone who has come to take the children a long distance away, for a long time.

Some people complain if their children's school is a kilometre away. What if the school was 100 miles away and they did not see them for most of their formative years?

While the children were there, they were not allowed to speak English or French, their language was taken away. When they finally came back home, they were speaking a different language. What type of parenting skills would be needed? How would they even deal with them? People who have been involved with children who speak a different language know how difficult it is to try to parent them even if they have not had all those years of parenting skills. What kind of parenting skills are those children going to have, having never seen parents, having spent their formative years in an institution? When they go to raise their kids, what type of horror shows will we see because of the legacy that was brought on not by some strange institution but by their government, the Government of Canada?

I ask everyone to think again of their children, who they love so much. What if they came back home with a terrible disease like tuberculosis, which so many of those children had? What if they came back and they had been abused? Would this not be the gravest of injuries, resulting from the actions of a government that should have been there to help? In the worst of all conditions, think of those children who did not come back at all, the many who died of tuberculosis and other diseases in the residential schools.

*Business of Supply*

Are we talking about a few people, such as those who live on a particular street or in a particular neighbourhood? No. We are talking about an estimated 80,000 Canadians, who are alive today, from every province and territory except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and PEI. Let us think about all the residential schools. Are we talking about three or four residential schools? No. We are talking about 130 schools.

This is a monumental personal injury to our first nations people.

• (1210)

Canadians do great work overseas and we should invest even more in that work, but it is inconceivable to me how a Parliament that thinks that is so important could ignore such a great wound at home to the first peoples of this great nation and not deal with it, as they have requested.

I want to speak for just a moment about agreements with the Crown. I am not sure the new government has this understanding. When the Crown of Canada makes an agreement, it is not an agreement with an individual party, a different political party or the government of the day, it is an agreement with Canada and Canada should honour those agreements long into the future.

The Kelowna accord, for example, was an agreement with the aboriginal leaders of this country, the premiers, the government of the day and with the honour of Canada. In the future one does not break such an honour. That is the same as the apology that Canada promised as part of the agreement on the residential schools settlement.

Some people might think money is the only important thing and an apology is insignificant. I have seen the experiences of many aboriginal people in my riding and I speak for the whole north. Having been the critic for Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, there are many aboriginal people, Inuit, Métis and first nations, that were involved in the residential schools. Many of them have come into my office and expressed how important this is.

I want to pay tribute to a great Canadian, the Hon. Jane Stewart, the former Liberal minister of Indian affairs. She made a statement of reconciliation in 1998. I experienced the tears and how important that was to the aboriginal people of this country. It was not taken lightly. It was a major stepping stone. However, it was not made by the Prime Minister.

To express how important it was, years later I was at an event that the former minister attended. She was no longer in government but had attended this social event with aboriginal people. She received a standing ovation because she meant so much to them years later. How often does a former minister of Indian affairs get a standing ovation years later?

I want to speak briefly about the healing foundation. In the settlement that the Liberal government negotiated, there was more money for the healing foundation because the settlement did not heal everything. That will come into effect in November or December maybe, but I implore the government to ensure there is transitional funding from now until then to ensure some of the great healing organizations can carry on.

I have seen many of these people in my office, as I said, and I spoke with a lawyer on the weekend who deals with these cases. He said that any member of Parliament who is considering voting against this apology should hear the stories of the pain and suffering of the many people who have been in his office.

An agreement was reached. As everyone knows, the Liberal government reached an agreement on November 21, 2005. It was not a government-driven agreement. It was based on the request from the Assembly of First Nations, which is why I think it was so successful. It had many of its items in it. It included, of course, the apology in a letter from the deputy prime minister.

I attended a great celebration that was held and once again I could see the tears of the people in that room because a great step had been taken for the first peoples of Canada in reconciliation. When one talks about great chiefs in the history of North America, National Chief Phil Fontaine is at the top of the list. I saw such a man in tears. I have to congratulate the member for LaSalle—Émard and those in government at that time who contributed to that great agreement. Now, Chief Fontaine is asking for an apology. I do not think it is too much to ask of Parliament.

• (1215)

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member for Yukon's very thoughtful and moving speech.

The member for Yukon has an extraordinary awareness of and a sensitivity to the issues which affect Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis. He is constantly alert to issues which affect Canada's first peoples.

I would like to ask him about an apology. My riding of Brant includes the most populated first nations community in Canada, the Six Nations of the Grand River, some 22,000 individuals. I consider it an extreme privilege to represent these good people from Six Nations.

I have not heard aboriginals or non-aboriginals say that the government should not apologize for one of the most dishonourable deeds the government was ever complicit in. Not a single individual has said to me that we do not need to apologize, or maybe we should not apologize, or maybe there are complications. Every last person with whom I speak says that we should apologize, that it is the honourable thing to do. There cannot be forgiveness unless there is an apology. We cannot move forward unless there is an apology.

I am wondering if the member for Yukon, whom I greatly respect, has heard similar comments from his constituents.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I have not heard from anyone who does not think this is very important and should be done.

We have to remember the part that aboriginal peoples played in building this country, in building the stewardship for thousands of years before we arrived. They joined us in wars. We have to remember those who were not respected for their contributions to this great nation and those great peacemakers among the aboriginal people who helped the settlers and helped us build this country.

*Business of Supply*

I am speaking of great peacemakers like Phil Fontaine. We should have great respect for those individuals. The least we can do as Parliament is unanimously vote for this apology that the first nations have asked for and have the Prime Minister provide an apology as well.

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my question deals with the truth and reconciliation commission that is being established.

Residential schools are part of the terrible legacy that we have to deal with in terms of our overall treatment of first nations, be it our failure to live up to treaty obligations, be it the lack of support for the development of their structures, or be it their tremendous struggle to establish their own opportunities in the north.

Does the member agree that we need to have northern representation on the truth and reconciliation commission in order to ensure that the stories that are more unique to the far north of Canada are truly represented there?

● (1220)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I have no disagreement with that. Such a commission would put the people of Canada in touch with the spirit, souls and the wounds of aboriginal people. Canadians are very compassionate people, but if they have not heard firsthand about the actual situation, the actual events that occurred, from a survivor, then they cannot have compassion for the situation. The commission would go a great way toward building understanding among our first nations people and those who came later.

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for putting forward this motion today because it is indeed for me a special honour to speak to the motion today.

I represent a riding in which thousands of survivors have lived and thousands of survivors have passed on. Indeed, as a first nations individual myself and a daughter of survivors, I feel a deep privilege today to speak to this motion.

I think it is a great opportunity first and foremost to pay tribute to the legacy of strength, resilience and I would say spiritual tenacity of survivors who have made this day possible. They did so by allowing us not to forget their experience and allowing us to ensure that we in the House of Commons as parliamentarians, as representatives of our ridings, both for the aboriginal and non-aboriginal people in our ridings and indeed for all Canadians and I believe for the world, do not forget this tragic and devastating chapter in the history of our country.

I say so with an absolute conviction because it is the strength and the courage of survivors I believe that has made the whole residential school compensation package a reality and it is their courage and conviction which has made it an issue, indeed, that we are talking about today in the House in terms of an apology coming from the House.

I think that the issue of an apology, where the government of the day should take the lead and take the cue from parliamentarians, is mandatory as part of the healing and reconciliation process. That needs to occur in this country for us to be able to stand in truth of the commitment we have to human rights in this country, as Canadians

and, as we often claim, as leaders and champions of human rights in the world.

I would like to especially acknowledge certain individuals because I am very proud to say that the current National Chief, Phil Fontaine, who has been absolutely central to this process is from my riding. He has been active on this issue for almost 20 years now and in 1990 he came forward as a survivor and shared with Manitobans initially and shared with the country his experience. I believe that it was the courage of our National Chief, Phil Fontaine, that has been instrumental in helping this issue move along at the political level.

I would also like to acknowledge elders from my riding, Elmer Courchesne and Kenneth Young, who have also been key supporters of the first nations effort to ensure that this issue is made a political issue and that the compensation package remains a priority.

● (1225)

I would like to acknowledge the role that first nations people from all over the country have played in terms of making the compensation package a reality. The current government likes to take credit for the compensation package as it is. I applaud the Conservatives for moving forward on the residential schools compensation package in a non-partisan way. That was the right thing to do. It was certainly what we needed to do as a country.

The residential schools compensation package occurred because of the commitment by first nations individuals. My colleague has shared with us what an extremely painful experience it has been for first nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, and not only those who survived the devastation of having to leave their communities and families. They were only children. They were in an institution that was foreign to them. Often they were the victims of an effort to eradicate their culture, and they were also victims of horrendous types of abuse. Sadly, that experience was not uncommon.

The dispute resolution process began with the previous Liberal government. It became apparent to the government and was made very clear by first nations, Métis and Inuit people that it was not a reconciliatory process. It was not a process which would allow the victims and the country to move forward in terms of truth and reconciliation. It is an understatement to say that the individual claims were moving at a snail's pace. Out of the thousands of claims that were filed, literally less than a hundred were settled over several years.

It is because of the injustice of the process that the previous Liberal government engaged with the Assembly of First Nations to ensure that a just and fair process would be put in place and to ensure there would be fair compensation. It was because of this cooperative nature that in May 2005 the previous deputy prime minister, the hon. Anne McLellan, communicated to national chief Phil Fontaine that a political agreement would be struck for a new residential schools compensation package. The agreement would include the common experience payment, an alternative payment program and the truth and reconciliation process that we have heard about today.

● (1230)

Also, the former Liberal government had within that commitment, a commitment for an apology. I commend the House and I commend the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River—

*Business of Supply*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** Questions and comments. The hon. member for Toronto Centre.

**Hon. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech and also for the elegant and powerful voice she brings to the House on behalf of the aboriginal peoples of Canada. She is a remarkable representative of such an important part of our community. When she speaks on this matter, she speaks with authority.

Having listened to the debate, I am reminded of the powerful testimony of the effect of aboriginal schools on people in the wonderful work by Tomson Highway, *Kiss of the Fur Queen*. Mr. Highway is a constituent of mine and a very respected member of our community. When he describes the suffering of his people and his personal suffering, we can understand that, just as we can understand in this House when members, like the last member, speak and allow us to see these issues through the lens of their own experience.

I would like to ask a specific question about the relationship between compensation and an apology. It seems to me that the Government of Canada has now accepted the compensation issue. It seems to me that churches like the Anglican Church of Canada, which was led by great primates like Ted Scott, Michael Peers and Archbishop Hutchison have accepted not only the issue of monetary compensation, but a responsibility and apologized.

Now that that matter is not there, and as the government has accepted the responsibility to compensate, why would it not make sense for the government to also take the step, being a human step, of apologizing on behalf of the Government of Canada? We, the members of Parliament, I am sure will adopt this resolution tonight to do that very thing in the House of Commons. Perhaps the member could provide her view.

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for mentioning an important, artistic contributor to this country, Tomson Highway. His home community is in my riding.

There are many people from my riding with whom I have a dialogue. I have been raised with a deep understanding of the residential school experience. I am well aware of the trauma and the intergenerational impact. Certainly, from our elders and our artists we hear about the experience. As the member said, this is a human step, this is part of the human process. It is part of a healing process. It is difficult for me to understand how it is that the government can justify not making an apology.

I heard the minister today say that after a fact finding exercise of the truth and reconciliation process the facts would be presented to the executive and at that point they would decide.

We also heard the minister in the past month say publicly that an apology was not necessary, that this process was a matter of trying to educate people and that the residential school system was an effort to educate children.

I shared this with one of the prominent academics from my riding. She did her Ph.D. work on residential schools and her own residential school experience. I shared with her what was happening in the House today. Today as we speak, a national residential school survivor conference is taking place in Winnipeg. Professor Young

said she felt that this was belittling. It belittles the process. It belittles the motion. It belittles the truth and reconciliation process.

It is beyond my comprehension. Certainly, I do not think we have had a fair answer from the other side of the House as to how the Conservatives justify that decision.

• (1235)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak in support of the motion of the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Peace River.

Under the watch of Canada's new government, the Indian residential schools settlement agreement received its final court approval on March 21. This historic agreement will foster reconciliation between aboriginal people who resided at these schools, their families and communities, and all Canadians.

It was the current Minister of Indian Affairs who challenged the former Liberal government to take real action on achieving resolution to this sad chapter in Canadian history. It is that minister who has shepherded the agreement to where it is now.

I believe that it is most important at this time to take all the steps necessary to ensure that the agreement is implemented as soon as possible so that former students and their families who decide to remain in their settlement may benefit from it. That is why we are working hard toward the implementation of the settlement agreement, which includes elements such as the truth and reconciliation commission, a common experience payment, and funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

While I agree that this specific initiative requires immediate and sustained attention, I also believe it is essential to look beyond this one issue to the wider array of challenges that face all aboriginal people and communities in Canada. I can point with pride to the significant progress that Canada's new government has made in working in partnership with aboriginal groups and it is making progress in these areas to address a number of challenges.

For instance, let me discuss Bill C-44, an act to repeal section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. The bill was introduced in the House on December 13 last year and is currently being considered by the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, of which I am very honoured to be a member. Bill C-44 would end an exemption included in the original legislation when it was put into force 30 years ago, a measure designed to be temporary. Here we are 30 years later and this temporary measure remains in place. This needs to change.

In order to investigate and adjudicate alleged acts of discrimination, the Canadian Human Rights Act established two bodies: the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal. Over the past three decades the Canadian Human Rights Act has served to strengthen democracy in this country. Unfortunately, not all Canadians enjoy access to the legal instruments provided by the Canadian Human Rights Act.

*Business of Supply*

Section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act states:

Nothing in this Act affects any provision of the Indian Act or any provision made under or pursuant to that Act.

This simple sentence effectively denies some Canadians access to the remedies granted in the Canadian Human Rights Act. Section 67 shields the Indian Act and any decisions made or actions taken under the Indian Act from the application of the Canadian Human Rights Act.

Under section 67, potentially discriminatory decisions made by agencies mandated by the Indian Act, such as band councils, school boards, as well as the federal government itself are exempted from the Canadian Human Rights Act. These decisions often touch on crucial aspects of day to day life, such as education, housing, registration, and the use and occupation of reserve lands. In effect, section 67 puts into question our claim to be a fair and egalitarian society.

As a consequence of this exemption, individuals, mostly residents of first nation communities, have had limited recourse under the Canadian Human Rights Act should they feel that their rights have been violated. This fundamental injustice is a blemish on Canada's democracy. Section 67 clearly permits discrimination against particular groups of citizens.

The exemption creates an odd irony of sorts. Legislation designed to promote equality effectively sanctions discrimination. Under section 67, thousands of Canadians cannot fully avail themselves of the legal instruments that combat discrimination. What is particularly unsettling is that section 67 affects many of Canada's most vulnerable citizens, the residents of first nation communities.

• (1240)

Support for the repeal of section 67 comes from a wide variety of groups, including the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, which called for the repeal of section 67 in its 2005 report on matrimonial real property on reserves, "Walking Arm-In-Arm to Resolve the Issue of On-Reserve Matrimonial Real Property".

Support for the committee's position on the matter at that time was based largely on the testimony of representatives of several key groups, including the Native Women's Association of Canada. Over the years, calls for the repeal of section 67 have come from several other groups, including the Assembly of First Nations, the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples and the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

It is a simple issue of human rights. Canada must not perpetuate the discrimination inherent in section 67, and nothing will change unless action is taken. The time has come to ensure that all Canadians are treated equally before the law. Bill C-44 proposes a fair, realistic approach to ending nearly three decades of sanctioned discrimination. We must seize the opportunity before us and ensure access to full human rights, ensuring that those rights are provided to all.

Now is the time to act and to end the injustice that was created as a so-called temporary measure 30 years ago. The repeal of section 67 is just one of many examples of Canada's new government's commitment to resolving the challenges that face aboriginal people

in Canada and to improving the quality of life in aboriginal communities.

The member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River has touched on a subject of equal importance today: the fair and expedient implementation of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. It is through this agreement that the healing and reconciliation needed will in fact be fostered.

As I stand in support of the member's motion, I urge his party to stand up for the rights of all aboriginal Canadians and support human rights on reserve. I urge the party opposite to support Bill C-44. Aboriginal Canadians are counting on us to do the right thing. They have waited for far too long to have this injustice corrected. It is time to act.

We have a choice. We can delay and study and then further delay, but 30 years have passed. Recently the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples appeared before the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and stated its absolute and unequivocal support for the repeal of section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. It went on to say:

The fact that the Indian Act has substantially escaped human rights scrutiny for three decades is unacceptable in a country that is otherwise held up throughout the world as an example of successful and prosperous democracy.

Therefore, while I agree with the motion before us today, we cannot afford to hide behind more words. Now is the time for meaningful action, and our minister has shown over and over that we are getting things done for aboriginal Canadians.

• (1245)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for supporting the motion. I do not have a question, so he can respond how he wishes, but I want to put on record an excerpt from a March 27 letter from the Anglican Church of Canada to the Prime Minister. It states:

On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I am writing to convey to you my strong disappointment and sadness at your refusal to offer an apology to Aboriginal Canadians who are former students of Indian Residential Schools, and to their families, as reported this morning in *The Globe and Mail*.

The writer goes to talk about an apology made by the former primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, in 1993, which stated:

I accept and I confess before God and you, our failures in the residential schools. We failed you. We failed ourselves. We failed God. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we were part of a system which took you and your children from home and family. I am sorry, more than I can say, that we tried to remake you in our image, taking you from your language and the signs of your identity. I am sorry, more than I can say, that in our schools so many were abused physically, sexually, culturally and emotionally. On behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada, I offer our apology.

The letter states:

Mr. Harper, I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to refuse an apology to [Indian Residential Schools] former students and their families.

I want to congratulate the Anglican Church for its statement.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I will just remind the hon. member that even when we are reading letters we do not use proper names of members but their ridings or titles. I know that usually he is very good about it.

The hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Harold Albrecht:** Mr. Speaker, it is clear that this government is working on behalf of aboriginal communities all across Canada. We have had a number of initiatives that the minister has worked on to effect the positive changes that are necessary.

It is also clear that in the past different aboriginal groups have accepted the fact that this settlement does in fact indicate that we have accepted our responsibility. I will quote Mr. Fontaine. After the December 2006 compensation deal, he said:

We have in this agreement recognition that harm was done to our people and that those who harmed our people are prepared to accept their responsibility.

We can see that it is clear.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of today's motion from the Liberal member.

Canada's new government has always been and will continue to be committed to a fair and lasting resolution to the Indian residential schools. We are determined to move forward in this partnership with aboriginal communities nationwide toward a better quality of life and a brighter future.

One vitally important means of making this progress is through greater economic development opportunities in aboriginal communities. This government has always said that there is no single catch-all approach to addressing the issues in aboriginal communities, and the question of economic development is no different. Each community must follow its own path toward improved economic and social well-being, collaborating with those partners who can help it reach its goals.

In order to better assist communities in searching for and securing their own economic future, this government has brought together the expertise of Aboriginal Business Canada, or ABC as it is commonly referred to, and the economic development programming function of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, to form a new unit. This will improve the coordination of programs across the country to better support aboriginal business development.

The match is appropriate. ABC and INAC programs have already complemented one another. Aboriginal Business Canada provides the financial and other supports to individuals at community based firms, as well as to aboriginal business development and financial organizations, while INAC programs work more broadly with the community at the community level by funding the business plans and feasibility studies needed to launch successful projects.

This amalgamation of functions is a timely one. Aboriginal entrepreneurs operate a growing number of businesses in a full range of economic sectors. They are more willing and better able than ever before to initiate new partnerships on these projects and in these programs.

We currently find ourselves at an historic crossroad. A booming economy and a youthful aboriginal population are presenting unprecedented economic opportunities for aboriginal people. It is incumbent upon this federal government and the provincial governments, as well as aboriginal business people and organizations, to ensure that aboriginal communities are able to make the most of these opportunities.

A generation of baby boomers is beginning to enter its retirement years and Canada faces a potentially lengthy period of labour shortages, particularly in the skilled trades. This shortage, combined with the close proximity of many aboriginal communities to major resource development projects, provides the preconditions for robust economic development in these communities and among these individuals.

We firmly believe that these conditions must be fostered and supported by real resources. That is why budget 2007, introduced in the House on March 19, committed \$105 million over five years to the aboriginal skills and employment partnerships. This includes \$35 million in the first two years. As a result of this investment, an additional 9,000 aboriginal individuals will receive skills training and an additional 6,500 will secure sustainable skilled jobs.

We know that with the guidance of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board we will be able to make important innovations and improvements in aboriginal economic development in the years ahead. In fact, just last Friday, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development named Chief Clarence Louie chairman of this board. There is no aboriginal leader in Canada today who is better known for his commitment to aboriginal economic development.

The national board will be re-energized as a result of the appointment of this exceptionally qualified chair and the other outstanding five new members of this board. This government is anxious to work with them to pursue economic measures that will benefit all aboriginal people in Canada.

As we also know, progress can be made. Indeed, we are already seeing it happen. In the Northwest Territories, the Aboriginal Pipeline Group owns a significant share of the Mackenzie gas project, the largest development ever proposed in the north. From the Nisga'a in the west to the Membertou in the east, communities are ensuring a prosperous future by taking advantage of economic development opportunities. This surge benefits all Canadians, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike.

• (1250)

Recent examples of the federal government's support for economic development in aboriginal communities are numerous. From making investments that strengthen the tourism industry in Yukon to forging aboriginal employment agreements with leading private sector firms such as Siemens, Capital Health, the city of Edmonton, the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union and the Trucking Human Resource Sector Council, we have worked with our provincial, territorial, aboriginal and other business partners to fulfil our pledge to bolster entrepreneurship and economic growth in aboriginal communities.

Robust economic opportunities help to provide a solid foundation on which thriving communities are built. They are the basis for business development, the impetus for skills and job training initiatives, and the way forward toward a self-reliant, meaningfully employed population. Aboriginal people in this country are ready, willing and more than able to grasp these opportunities. I am proud of the government's progress thus far, working in partnership with these people to access these jobs.

*Business of Supply*

We are happy that the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement has happened. It received final court approval on March 21, 2007. It will bring a resolution to this unfortunate chapter in history, but we also know and acknowledge the necessity for looking to the future and working with aboriginal people to build strong and flourishing communities.

Economic development is a key means of accomplishing this. AFN National Chief Phil Fontaine recently pointed out that the first nations population is “a huge untapped resource”. This government agrees. That is why we are pleased with our budget 2007 investment of \$105 million over five years, which will more than double the size of the aboriginal skills and employment partnership initiative.

As everyone in the House can see, Canada's new government and its partners are making progress along this road in working together to create the conditions for economic success. That is why we are looking forward to even more achievements.

I would encourage the members opposite to support these initiatives, much like they supported the budget in which our government announced \$2.2 billion for addressing the legacy of residential schools.

• (1255)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments. I certainly agree that on this side of the House we are supportive of the motion to issue an apology for the survivors of the residential school situation.

However, instead of continually looking back, I think what we really need to do now is begin to look forward. I think the member addressed that beautifully in his comments.

I am certainly aware of a number of different initiatives with first nations groups that are making significant strides in improving their own economic situation. I have heard of the Membertou group in the east. I know of groups in British Columbia that have had great success.

I wonder if the member would have any specific examples from his more immediate area in northern Alberta in terms of situations that he might be able to point to where success is being achieved by simply removing some of the obstacles that are in the way of aboriginal groups finding a way out of their own difficult situations.

**Mr. Chris Warkentin:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his work on this file as he sits on the committee and works to find solutions to some of the issues that come before that committee.

The question is with regard to the aboriginal communities in terms of the geographical area of my constituency. As many of the members of the House will know, I have great oil and natural gas reserves in my constituency. Obviously that makes for a number of things, and we do have a need for skilled tradespeople and labourers to work in our communities.

We have identified a number of roadblocks for aboriginal people in our constituency. Quite frankly, we have zero per cent unemployment as far as the general population goes, but unfortunately that is not the case in some of our aboriginal

communities. We want to ensure that they can become part of this great success and this economic boom we are experiencing.

I have been working with the local college, Northern Lakes College, which reaches out to aboriginal people. I met with college officials just recently to discuss some of the things that have held them back. I am working with our provincial counterparts to try to reduce some of the things that keep individuals from remaining in school once they do enroll. On that front, we are working to try to resolve that.

However, certainly there is no question that if we can just get over some of the hurdles in terms of providing education and trades training to these individuals, they will be more likely and better suited to be able to take advantage of some of the economic opportunities we are experiencing.

**Hon. Raymond Simard (Saint Boniface, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the hon. member for Kenora.

I would like to take a second and recognize our critic on this file, our colleague from Winnipeg South Centre, and our colleagues from Churchill and Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River who have also been doing a phenomenal job on a very important file.

I am pleased to speak to this motion regarding the residential schools situation in Canada. It is obviously a very important issue in Manitoba. I believe Manitoba is probably one of the provinces that was the most negatively affected of all the provinces in this country.

It is important to understand the history of residential schools and why Canada's new government should apologize.

The Canadian government played a prominent role in the development and administration of residential schools since 1874 by funding them under the Indian Act. Many churches had a significant role in operating these establishments. These churches are today taking their responsibility and have apologized for their role and they have all chastized the government for not doing the same.

In 1920, Canada amended the Indian Act by making it mandatory for children between the ages of 7 and 15 to attend residential schools, mostly for 10 months at a time. The conditions were often quite appalling and the government had a direct responsibility to improve these conditions. However, it did not make any improvements in 1909, despite Dr. Peter Bryce's report of a high number of children's deaths.

In fact, Bryce, the general medical superintendent for Indian and Northern Affairs at the time, whose reports did not even get published until 1922, stated that between 1894 and 1908, 35% to 60% of students had died in residential schools in western Canada alone. That is quite an appalling figure. These deaths were mostly due to poor living conditions, physical abuse and psychological abuse that led to suicide and other repercussions.

In the nineties, many survivors' testimonies began to surface and we heard unimaginable horror stories that contributed to the loss of aboriginal culture.

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I will briefly tell the House of one survivor's experience but to please keep in mind that I have chosen the least disturbing and traumatic experience to share today. It is the story of Flora Merrick who attended the Portage la Prairie residential school in Manitoba where she stayed for 11 years. She states:

We were treated worse than animals and lived in constant fear...I cannot forget one painful memory. It occurred in 1932 when I was 15 years old. My father came to the Portage la Prairie residential school to tell my sister and I that our mother had died and to take us to the funeral. The principal of the school would not let us go with our father to the funeral.

My little sister and I cried so much, we were taken away and locked in a dark room for about two weeks...I became a totally humiliated, confused, subjugated person.

The effects of these experiences on the victims as well as on their descendants are incredible, a vicious cycle that constitutes the legacy of residential schools. This legacy is comprised of multi-generational trauma which occurs when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation, thus perpetuating abuse. They are also referred to as intergenerational impacts that are passed along through generations.

If the survivors are seeking a formal apology, and if they need it for their healing process, why not provide it? The compensation alone, as it will be mentioned time and time again, will not heal all of these negative effects and besides, it is a matter of principle and honour that the government may know nothing about.

We hear much about the physical and sexual abuse endured by the survivors of residential schools but what about the neglect and the unsanitary living conditions that created the spread of diseases, such as TB, and resulted in thousands of deaths, unreported deaths and unmarked graves? Many have disappeared, and that is unacceptable. Many are living with painful memories and both emotional and physical scars that have negatively impacted their lives, and that is unacceptable. Many survivors live with the shame and guilt that is not theirs, and that is unacceptable.

I am convinced that monetary compensation will not appease the pain and anger but an apology from the government could go a long way toward providing some closure to this sad period in our history. The Conservative government should issue an official apology and fulfill the commitment made by our previous government to reconcile with aboriginal peoples and admit the errors of past governments.

The previous Liberal government did not ignore all of the aforementioned issues. In 2005, we signed an accord with the Assembly of First Nations that recognized the need for reconciliation and healing. We went further, six months later, to reach a settlement intended to compensate the victims, which the Prime Minister has decided to implement, with a slight change, that of not apologizing.

• (1300)

We believe that the government's refusal to apologize demonstrates, yet again, the disrespect and betrayal of first nations, Métis and Inuit peoples; an unjust and dangerous Conservative trend that began with the cancellation of the Kelowna accord.

As we remember, all provinces and territories had agreed to the Kelowna agreement, which was clearly outlined and defined by the Liberals, with the help of the aboriginal communities, but that the Conservatives failed to implement. The Kelowna accord would have

narrowed the gaps between aboriginals and the rest of Canadians with respect to health care issues, education, housing and drinking water issues, and providing economic opportunities.

Now the Conservative government is refusing to apologize. This lack of courtesy, this inaction and stubbornness seems to be, in my opinion, the ultimate proof of the government's lack of consideration for the aboriginal peoples.

Although the Minister of Indian Affairs claims that the agreement negotiated by the previous government did not call for an apology, he should recognize that, in principle, the Liberal government did agree to it. However, this should be irrelevant. The Conservatives should take all the facts into account and just do what is right. Surely they must realize how important it is to formally apologize to the aboriginal peoples on behalf of all Canadians. They must show respect and compassion. The Prime Minister's stubbornness needs to stop.

The contradiction is quite remarkable. The Conservatives are willing to agree and pay out the Liberal compensation initiative but they are not willing to agree to an official apology.

As we all know, compensation is money given for suffering or loss. The Liberal government negotiated a compensation package as a part of its Canadian aboriginal action plan and offered the statement of reconciliation acknowledging the Canadian government's role and offering an apology to those who suffered in residential schools.

The next step is an official apology for the systematic wrongs and the permanent, long term damage done to our aboriginal peoples. The Canadian government is one of the culprits. We have claimed responsibility for a damaging policy and now it is time to take the next step and apologize. How can we say that we did it without saying that we are deeply sorry for what we have done?

The current Minister of Indian Affairs has also been reported as saying:

...the underlying objective had been to try and provide an education to aboriginal children and I think the circumstances are completely different from Maher Arar or also from the Chinese head tax.

I would like to point out to the minister that removing children by force from their homes and families does not seem to be nurturing or educational. The schools should have been closer to home. The children should have gone home more often. Siblings should have attended the same institution. The children should have been able to speak their mother tongue outside of class and, at the very least, express their culture without fear.

Those are but a few examples of what should have been the case.

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It also seems a bit odd to have had those children do more labour than school work. In fact, they engaged in the schoolroom for only half a day. The children were responsible for the complete maintenance, cooking, cleaning, laundry, groundskeeping and farming, of the school for the remainder of their day. This is especially true of the 1950s, a time when residential schools were even more underfunded and relied on the forced labour of the pupils they were supposed to educate. Those chores could have been learned at home.

What about pride, social skills and the sense of belonging? Were those part of the curriculum as well?

The Conservatives need to stop lying to themselves and recognize that the underlying objective of residential schools was to assimilate and not to educate and, for that alone, they should apologize.

According to the 1857 Gradual Civilization Act, which implemented the system, the schools' purpose was to "take the Indian out of the Queen's Red Children". In my opinion, that stated mission had serious flaws and racist undertones. If that is not worth apologizing for, I do not know what is.

As to the minister's inability to comprehend comparisons between this issue and that of Maher Arar or of the Chinese head tax, he should only know that in all these cases the state recognized its role in these tragedies and acted responsibly to mend the situation and reconcile with the victims.

If that is still too difficult for him and his team to grasp, they should just take our word for it and apologize or, better yet, they should listen to the aboriginal citizens they represent. These people are asking their Prime Minister to apologize.

The national first nations leader, Phil Fontaine, is also demanding an official apology to the survivors of Indian residential schools.

I would suggest that our Conservative colleagues across the way rethink their position. Well, actually the Prime Minister does all their thinking for them so I would ask the Prime Minister to review the abuse and the improper treatment imposed on our aboriginal peoples and offer a formal apology.

I certainly assume that the House will take its responsibility this evening and apologize, and the Prime Minister, in a minority situation, should take his lead from a Parliament created by Canadians.

• (1305)

**Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to the debate today, we cannot help but be sympathetic to the horrific things that have gone on. The residential schools is one issue but a variety of things have gone on in the last 100 years that many of us as Canadians are not necessarily proud of. I do not think asking for an apology from the government is a big thing. I think, in many ways, the current government and the previous government moved to try to correct some of the injustices.

I think the words "I am sorry" from parliamentarians and the government is a big thing for a lot of the victims and families that continue to suffer, as my colleague has pointed out.

I would ask my colleague a question about the ongoing future of many of these young people who continue to struggle and who I see

in the city of Toronto and in the area that I represent. What else can we be doing to try to overcome the horrific injustice that happened to many of these families?

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, the first thing is that I am hearing, in a lot of the speeches from the other side, about what they are doing for the aboriginal community financially. The debate today is not about investing so much money. It is about an apology.

I agree with the member. The government does have a responsibility to apologize when people are wronged, whether it is in the present or the past. Hopefully, that is what this Parliament will do this evening.

I think there are very important programs. In the city of Winnipeg it is a huge issue right now. There are aboriginal people with fetal alcohol syndrome and children are being abandoned. I think this is a legacy of what we have created over the years.

I think all governments in the past, including our own, are guilty of not having done enough. We need to listen to what the aboriginal people have to say, and the Kelowna agreement did exactly that. It was us listening to what they wanted. That \$5 million agreement was a major step toward finally respecting the needs of our aboriginal communities.

I believe that a return to the Kelowna accord, with all it was doing in health, economic development and education, is the way to go. I do not think we can forget the question of the aboriginal situation in urban areas. We talk a lot about reserves but I can say that the aboriginal situation in urban areas is very severe and I hope that we will deal with those issues as well.

• (1310)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I want to read one more small paragraph from the letter I quoted about 20 minutes ago from Andrew Hutchison, the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, to the Prime Minister.

The Anglican Church of Canada was complicit in implementing the policy of assimilation. A total of 26 Indian Residential Schools were run by the Anglican Church, functioning as an agent of the Government of Canada. We are ashamed of this part of our history. In 1993 our former Primate, Archbishop Michael Peers, offered an apology on behalf of the whole church for the harm done by the residential schools system. Here is an excerpt from that apology.

I would appreciate it if the member would comment on what I just read and, if the member did not finish his speech, he may have other things that he wants to comment on.

**Hon. Raymond Simard:** Mr. Speaker, I think that is very important. I was very much involved, not in the negotiations, but in the discussions. In my riding of Saint Boniface, a lot of the churches were in Saint Boniface. It is interesting to hear that some of the first people to accept that they did do inappropriate things were the churches.

*Business of Supply*

I had discussions with the Oblates in my riding. It is important to note, however, that not everybody is guilty. The churches were hired to do a job and it is important to note and to put it on the record that a lot of people were there for the right reasons and doing the right thing. I know a lot of good people who dedicated their lives to the aboriginal community and did a fantastic job. I know Chief Fontaine says that as well.

I believe the churches were there in a secondary role because it basically was the government that organized all this. If all the churches have enough heart and integrity to apologize, and I believe they all did individually, for the wrongs that were caused, then it seems to me that the government should certainly take a lead from that and not be afraid to apologize.

We know the Prime Minister has a difficult time apologizing but I think he would be seen as a bigger person if he did apologize. We are hoping that during the vote this evening the Prime Minister will apologize to these people who are such an important part of our communities.

**Mr. Roger Valley (Kenora, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to this motion.

I would first like to take a moment to thank the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River for the initiative and his relentlessness in demanding that the Conservative government fulfill the commitment to apologize to the survivors of the residential schools.

In November 2005, the Liberal government reached a historic agreement intended to begin the healing process for the survivors. This agreement was comprehensive. Compensation for survivors, the creation of a truth and reconciliation process, and funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation were the pillars of this agreement, but most importantly for the survivors, whom I have had a chance to meet, was the inclusion of an apology.

Someone in this cold heartless government needs to sit and hold hands with the elders as they recount their painful stories. They believe that we can start over. They want to start the healing and they want to move on. They deserve what was promised, a simple human apology from the government, acknowledging their pain and suffering, but the Conservative government has backed away from this important part of the agreement. It has refused to apologize.

I would like to share with members of this House the experience I have had conveyed to me by my constituents. I have had the opportunity to sit down with many of the survivors who have relayed to me their stories of being taken away from their families, from their communities, from their culture, and from the only way of life that they knew, to be brought to these residential schools without fully understanding what was taking place. In some cases, children would have been taken from some of the remote reserves, never having been exposed to too much beyond their own communities, and this only added to their trauma.

In the Kenora riding, there are a number of large communities that are in the northern, fly-in area of my riding, and I will mention some of these now to explain later. There is Sandy Lake with Chief Pardemus Anishnabie, Bearskin Lake with Chief Rodney McKay,

Big Trout Lake with Chief Donnie Morris, and Pikangikum with Chief Charlie Pascal. Many of these people know the pain first-hand.

Most of the reserves in the riding would have been a distance from town in the southern part. The remote reserves are accessible only by air, so though it may have been possible for parents in the south to visit the school and visit the children, if the schools would allow it, it was almost impossible for the parents of the remote reserves to visit, only adding to the anxiety of the situation.

It is difficult for me to imagine my children living apart from me, much less forcibly removed from my community or my home. Not having a say in their education or their well-being, and not being able to visit them would be extremely painful. If we can recognize that a policy such as this would be wrong today, why is it impossible for the government to acknowledge that it was wrong in the past?

The government would have us believe that an apology is not necessary because the children would have benefited from the education that these institutions provided. This is only another example of the pattern of blatant disregard and misunderstanding that the government has toward aboriginal people.

The first example of this pattern came when the government cancelled the historic Kelowna accord. This accord gave hope to aboriginal Canadians that they were going to be a part of Canadian society and that the gap between first nations and non-first nations Canadians could some day be narrowed. First nations people were hopeful for their children's futures, very different from the experiences that they had to endure themselves.

Residential schools survivors were placed in institutions of sickness. The government would rarely provide enough resources, so that every child would be provided with the basic necessities and hunger was common. So not only were these children taken from their families, they were placed in unhealthy, overcrowded institutions.

How could the government not acknowledge that these well documented conditions existed? By not apologizing, it is doing just that. It is saying to the survivors that their experiences did not matter, and this is shameful.

I would say to the government that the residential schools were more than boarding schools. They were a place where the government carried out its policy of assimilation and the destruction of the aboriginal culture, a culture that existed and persisted long before the Europeans arrived on this continent, and with a relatively short timeframe, the Government of Canada sought to destroy it.

I have always found it ironic how the Government of Canada thought it was necessary to educate aboriginal Canadians, considering the vast knowledge that aboriginal Canadians had to offer us. Take the environment as an example. Sustainability is a word that we have been hearing a lot of in the recent years. The environmental degradation of our planet has reached an alarming level, but sustainability is a concept that is a foundation of aboriginal culture. The need to respect the land is paramount. Non-native cultures are only waking up to this concept at a time when it is almost too late for us.

*Business of Supply*

We may have been in a different situation had we only listened to the knowledge that was being offered to us by the first nation aboriginal communities, but the government is incapable of listening to them, and that is the problem. If it would only listen to the survivors, it could not deny that an apology is necessary to start the healing process.

● (1315)

The government has decided to perpetuate the cycle of mistrust and that has been devastating to these communities.

This is a black mark on Canadian history, one that has left a legacy of despair and suffering for aboriginal Canadians. We need a government that is willing to move forward. We need a government that understands that to acknowledge the mistakes of the past it must take the first step and apologize.

Consider some of the situations some of these communities had to endure. Whether it was 100 miles away by road from the school or a 1,000 miles away by air, families were separated. Parents did not know how their children would fare. Communications were almost non-existent back in the days when this started, and for many in the remote sites, communication is still difficult.

These families who were separated need an apology. Really, this is what started the era of mistrust between some of these communities, the ones in the south and the remote ones in the north, and mistrust of the outside world and other religions. They did not know, everything that happened to them would be a problem. Communities started to split apart, some for religious reasons.

Today, as I travel in northern Ontario I can still see those divides over some of the issues that were created by residential schools. Nibinamik, Neskantaga and North Spirit are communities that split off from the original six large communities in the north and generally split along religious lines by some of the difficulties that they were trying to work through.

There are many instances where not only families were separated, entire communities were separated from each other as they fought to strive and deal with some of the situations. These communities, when we think of it, had been together for centuries. For literally centuries they had managed to co-exist, work together and live together. The residential schools have driven them apart forever.

The mistrust of the outside communities and some of the religions is very apparent in my riding. We have communities that only follow one religion and basically have split off from other communities, simply because of the pain and suffering through residential schools. Really, they are ready to start over. They need and want a process that will allow them to put this behind them and allow them to start the healing process. What they need to start this off is an apology.

What about today's problems? When we consider what is going on in some of the communities and some of the challenges they have of distance, geography and language barriers, now they have the challenge of generations that grew up in the residential schools and the damage that was done to the family unit.

Those children were taken out of their homes or close-knit communities. Now they are back raising their own families. It is not just a situation of one group, one generation, it is more than that. We

continue the problem every day as these former children of residential schools raise their own families. So many were damaged for life and the damage continues. We need to stop the damage. We need to start the healing process that we all talk about. We really need to have an apology from the government, so we could start moving the issue forward.

The children who came from residential schools were sent back to their own communities. They were further divided and it put more distance between them. Poplar Hill, North Caribou and Fort Hope were communities that split off because the children who came home to raise families in either community were damaged by the residential school issues. All of them, in every community, cannot understand the reason why the government cannot apologize.

There was an agreement put in place by the former Liberal government. We wanted to do the right thing. We wanted to make sure the process was followed, that the three pillars were followed. We wanted to ensure an apology was issued by the Prime Minister, so the residents knew that we were starting the process.

What do we have now? We have no apology. We have a process that is only partly completed and we have families, communities, elders, grandparents, and leaders of the community that see that the process will not be fully completed. They really want to hear that the Government of Canada is for them. They really want to know that the Prime Minister will apologize which will allow the process to start. We do not need any more problems. We need these families to make their futures brighter and their family lives stronger.

Now, when we actually finalize the Liberal solution to the dark days of residential schools, all we are asking for is one simple last thing for the Prime Minister to do, which is to apologize. Aboriginal Canadians were forced out of their homes, their communities. They were forced to go to a place they did not want to go to and forced to participate in something they did not want to do at the time. They are all asking the same question, what can we do now? We can apologize.

● (1320)

**Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the previous speaker's comments. One of the statements he made is that this government has shown a blatant disregard for aboriginal people. I find that ironic coming from a member of the Liberal government that was in power for 13 years and could have addressed many of these issues.

I want the member to know that I requested to serve on the aboriginal affairs committee out of a desire to see improvement in the lives of all of our aboriginal peoples. How can the member indicate that we have a blatant disregard for aboriginal people considering the number of initiatives that the minister has already implemented?

There is the home ownership concept where aboriginal people will begin to build their own equity and have a sense of pride in ownership and investment, and the initiative to reduce the number of high risk communities. Recently, we received a report that showed that the number of high risk contaminated water communities has been reduced from 197 to 93 in the space of one year. There is the initiative to implement Bill C-44 which will end 30 years of discrimination on reserve.

*Business of Supply*

There are these and many others I could outline indicating our support for aboriginal peoples. How can the member honestly say to the Canadian people that this government has shown a blatant disregard for aboriginal peoples?

**Mr. Roger Valley:** Mr. Speaker, the disregard is shown very clearly in many ways particularly in the programs the government cancelled, especially the Kelowna accord. That was a major step backward for all aboriginal Canadians.

I find it amazing that my colleague tries to take credit for reducing some of the backlog in the water issues, something the Liberal government worked on. In my first 18 months here I had the opportunity to bring many of those issues forward. A lot of the issues the government takes credit for were in the process before.

I applaud the government for every effort it takes to make communities better, but it has to be inclusive. It cannot pick and choose what it wants to do. It has to do it for everyone. I appreciate any steps forward. I know the member works hard on the aboriginal affairs committee. I appreciate that kind of work, but we have to take everybody forward. We have to involve everybody.

The first step is to apologize, put the issue of residential schools firmly and finally behind us, and start the healing process.

• (1325)

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to read another compelling paragraph by the Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada, Andrew Hutchison, on March 27 in a letter to the Prime Minister. It states:

The Anglican Church of Canada has been participating in the current Alternative Dispute Resolution Process. We have been sending a church representative to ADR Hearings in the role of listener, to hear and receive the story of the survivor, and to offer an apology on behalf of the church. We have learned that for many survivors, the apology is at least as important as the financial compensation, if not more so. People whose lives have been shattered through no fault of their own, are immensely helped by having their suffering acknowledged and validated, and by hearing the words of apology.

I wonder if the member would care to comment.

**Mr. Roger Valley:** Mr. Speaker, that says a lot. It says that while an apology is not the biggest word we could use, it is a beginning to the end. We can see how really important something can be. We just heard mention that financial compensation is not the answer. The answer is a simple human apology to start this process.

I believe, as I stand in the House, that this issue is not going to be closed until there is an apology issued. At some point, some day, an apology is going to be issued. We hope it will be tonight by the Prime Minister of Canada. If not, it is going to take another elected government to make that apology, and that will happen because that will be the beginning of the end and the beginning of the healing process.

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, I know the member has something else to say, so I will let him say it.

**Mr. Roger Valley:** Mr. Speaker, I just cannot fathom why we cannot move forward. We all know how difficult constituency work can be in our ridings. People understand what is coming forward on the matter of the residential schools issue. We have to tell them that everything is going to be done and resolved but that we cannot get an apology.

I look into these faces every time. I have one of the largest populations of first nations in my riding. It is a common issue that is saved for the end of meetings by the elders. They want to know when Canada is going to step up to the plate, end this, and apologize through the Prime Minister.

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today I would like to begin with a story, but first I want to talk about what happened in the 1960s.

In 1960, I was living in Amos, where I am from. It is a small municipality that, at the time, was the regional centre for education. In Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Amos was where students went to learn the liberal professions. They were going to be lawyers, priests, notaries and so on.

Not far from Amos was the little town of Saint-Marc-de-Figuery. Around the 1950s—I am not sure of the exact date—the federal government decided to build what we called the Indian residential school there, on the edge of a lake.

We here are all young. We can remember when, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, we played with the Indian children, and that was okay. Near Amos there was an Algonquin village called Pikogan. We wondered why the Indian children were taken to the residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery instead of to Pikogan, close to Amos, which also had schools. We did not know. I did not know.

But not knowing is no excuse for not acknowledging today what happened at that little residential school. This is what happened there.

At the residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, the students were Indians. They were called that. They were even called redskins. They were taken from Obidjuan, an aboriginal village closer to Lac-Saint-Jean. At the time, the Grand Trunk railway connected Cochrane, Ontario, to Quebec City and Montreal. The railway passed through the Gouin reservoir, where the Algonquin people fished and hunted.

What happened in the 1950s and the 1960s? At the end of the summer, someone from the Department of Indian Affairs would travel by train, arrive in the villages, collect the Indian children and take them to the Indian residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery.

They even collected the Indian children from Pikogan, an Algonquin village five kilometres from Amos, and took them to the residential school so that all the Indians would be cared for and educated at the same place and in the same way.

What happened to the Indian children when they were taken to the residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery? I can attest to that, because I saw it. We were young. At that time, in the 1960s, I was in scouts. We would go to the residential school to see the Indians and talk to them about scouts. When we arrived we saw that they were all Indian children. They all had black hair and it was short. The first thing that happened when they arrived at the residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery was that their hair was cut off, under the pretext that they had lice.

*Business of Supply*

•(1330)

Their heads were completely shaven and kept that way for the entire school year. These children were taken to the residential school in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery in August or September and they stayed there until the end of the school year. That was where they were educated.

Here is what used to be done. First their hair was cut. Then their traditional clothing was taken away—because the authorities at the time felt this needed to be done—and they were given white man's clothing. What else happened? They were prohibited from speaking Algonquin. I am talking about the residential school that I knew, the one in Saint-Marc-de-Figuery, near Amos. Their Indian clothing was taken away and they were formally prohibited from speaking Indian, as it was called at the time. They had to speak French. All the classes were in French. They were taken away at age five or six from the Obidjuan community or whichever community they were from along the railway line. There were Indians in Senneterre, Amos and all over. The Algonquin were taken to these residential schools to be educated. Their hair was cut, they were prohibited from speaking their language and, most of all, they were prohibited from thinking like Indians. From the age of five they had to think like white people because apparently we were intellectually superior and we, the whites, had to educate them.

I hope the picture I have just evoked here in this House—a picture that is true—will call to mind certain events that happened in Europe just a few decades ago. I would not go so far as to use the word “genocide”. I will not use that word, although I could not be blamed for thinking it. In fact, the Kistabish, the Mohawks, the McDougalls I now know have all lost their language and their culture. They were subjected to things that I will not describe here in this House, horrible things, such as rapping their knuckles because they ate with their fingers.

When they were in their communities for the entire summer with their parents and elders, they learned to hunt and fish. They learned how to gut a fish, how to trap a rabbit, hare, deer or moose, or how to feed wolves, because they learned from the wolves where to find the deer. Yet, they lost all of this as soon as they went to the residential school.

I am sure you can imagine what happened. The children were five, six, seven or eight years old, and we know this happened every year. What happened? Horrible things happened in that Indian residential school. Here in this House, I will not talk about the sexual assaults endured by the Kistabish, the Mohawks, and the McDougalls, and I could name others. They went through some tremendous difficulties, which they hid for the most part. They could not talk about it to their parents.

What did Jackie Kistabish say when she returned to Pikogan? She said everything was fine, that it was not so bad. Her mother and grandmother were surprised to see Jackie or my friend Kistabish come home with their hair cut up to their ears. That was not the aboriginal way. At that time, they typically had long hair, although the children lost their hair in September. Their hair was cut off or shaved. When they returned home in June, they did not even understand their parents and, worse, their parents did not understand them. That is the worst of everything that was done.

I am talking about children of five or six, but this went on for about 10 years, until they were 15 or 16. They lost their whole culture, say the Anishnabe Algonquins from Pikogan and Winneway and Lac-Simon and Obidjuan.

•(1335)

I could name them all, and I will tell you why. I grew up to become a criminal lawyer. It is strange, but my clients included the Kistabish, McDougalls, Mohawks and many others. They wound up in court, and no one could understand why they had become alcoholic and violent. They could not go back to their home communities, places like Pikogan, Obidjuan or Pointe-Bleue.

Some time ago, I asked a question of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights. I received the answer today. These are recent statistics. In 2001-02, 738 aboriginal people were admitted to penitentiary to serve sentences of more than two years; in 2002-03, there were 775; in 2003-04, 752; in 2004-05, 802; in 2005-06, 891. These individuals are generally in their thirties and are serving their first sentence. Why? Maybe because they were unable to live in their home communities. Imagine their parents. We are talking about the 1950s and 1960s. These people were deprived of their rights and their culture. They were no longer able to communicate with their own parents because they were forbidden from speaking their own language.

Since 1876, 150,000 aboriginals have experienced what I just described and suffered the hell that was residential schools. Today, there are just 87,000 survivors of these residential schools. Unfortunately, they are disappearing at an average of 30 to 50 a week. Today these people are 70 to 75 years old. Some, but very few, are slightly younger at ages 55 to 60. Most of them are between 65 and 85 and they remember.

I have had the opportunity to meet with a number of these seniors—because they are seniors now—and they congratulate this House for taking provisions to resolve the residential schools issue by financially compensating the communities, and more specifically the aboriginals who experienced this hell. However, I think we need to go further. I am making an appeal in this House today. I am asking that we stop thinking in terms of political parties. Indeed, I am from the Bloc and yes, there are Liberals, our friends the New Democrats and the Conservatives. However, in light of this terrible experience aboriginals had, I think we could pass the motion today.

•(1340)

The motion of the Liberal member for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River asks that this House apologize to the survivors of Indian residential schools for the trauma they suffered as a result of policies intended to assimilate first nations, and so forth.

In my speech, I do not want to blame the government for its inaction nor blame the previous government, which may have done nothing for 13 years; that is not what we are debating. Today, the issue is that the first nations experienced horrible things on our soil. We must not only recognize that fact and compensate them for it, but I believe we should also apologize. We did not know. We did not think this was going on. We never believed that this could have gone so far.

*Business of Supply*

Unfortunately this went as far as complete assimilation of a people and as far as offensive sexual assault against children between the ages of 5 and 10. One of them told me that at the Indian residential school he saw a young boy—whom I will not name, but whom I know personally—leave the brother superior's room bleeding from a place that decency prevents me from naming in this House. But we are old enough to understand that what he experienced was appalling. This went on night after night for days and months.

How do we think these people survived for all these years? For they are people, despite the fact that for many years, right into the 1950s, some believed that Indians were not people.

Enough is enough. The Bloc Québécois and I think that the House should say enough is enough.

Apologizing will not erase what happened, nor will it make these communities forget what they went through. Suicide rates are high. One man told me that his father committed suicide and that he did not understand why until his mother told him what his father had told her—until his mother told him that his father had gone to the Saint-Marc-de-Figuery Indian residential school.

This kind of thing happened all over Canada. We have to acknowledge it, and I believe the day will come when Canada will admit that it made a mistake. Canada must apologize for what it did to the first nations, and I think the time to do so is now.

I think that with all due respect, the first nations now have everything they need to take charge of their future and to grow. The Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, of which I am a member, is studying bills, such as Bill C-44. It is not perfect, but are working to improve it.

We acknowledge the rights they have won. They had to fight the government for their rights.

I will end by saying that overall, the report submitted to the committee was based on recognizing aboriginal peoples as self-governing nations that occupy a special place in Canada. However, before we can truly acknowledge that, the House must apologize sincerely to residential school survivors for the trauma they experienced.

• (1345)

[English]

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for his impassioned speech. He obviously has a lot of personal experience on this dark chapter of Canadian history. I thank him for what he has presented today.

As people in the House realize now, the Minister of Indian Affairs indicated this morning that members of the Conservative Party would support this motion. This is an excellent step that we are taking today.

Does the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue feel that the Government of Canada, subsequent to the 2006 election, has not

acted with haste on this important topic? Have we not taken the agreement, which negotiated by a previous government, and ratified it as soon as possible? Would he not agree that this action was taken as quick as possible?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I do not wish this House to politicize the extremely sensitive issue of residential schools.

I agree that the previous government and the current government did take steps to acknowledge the facts. We worked for that. It was the first nations in particular that forced the government to realize what happened in Indian residential schools. I do not want this issue to be politicized. As an aside, I did not even know that the Chinese had to pay a head tax to enter Canada.

With regard to the first nations, I did not know what went on when I was young and went to the Indian residential school to see the young Indians whose hair had been cut and who spoke French.

This matter must not be politicized. Let us acknowledge that action has been taken. There is one step that must be taken and that is a sincere acknowledgement of the abuses perpetrated. Perhaps an apology from this government is required, but what I think the first nations are waiting for is an apology from the House.

• (1350)

[English]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue for an excellent well-thought out speech with lots of experiences. Because he is a lawyer, I will quote from a court. However, before I do, I want to congratulate the churches. I think all of them have apologized for these harmful actions in which they were complicit. They are doing their best to try to help out with the healing.

I will quote one last paragraph of the speech by Andrew Hutchison, Primate of the Anglican Church of Canada. In this paragraph he notes that it is not only his church that has asked for the apology. He states:

Noting that we are not alone in requesting that an apology be made, I quote from the judgement issued by the Honourable Chief Justice Brenner, in the Supreme Court of British Columbia: “[35] Although I am making no order and am issuing no directions, I would respectfully request counsel for Canada to ask that the Prime Minister give consideration to issuing a full and unequivocal apology on behalf of the people of Canada in the House of Common.

Does the member believe that it is only the members of Parliament in the House of Commons who would like this apology, or are there other people who have asked for the apology?

[Translation]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I will answer this question in general terms.

*Statements by Members*

I believe that everyone who, in their soul and conscience, saw what the aboriginal peoples experienced and who were at the Indian residential schools with them should apologize. I am probably one of the first to say that we did not know. I think that the Canadian scouting movement should also ask itself some questions, but I do not wish to assign blame. Quite often, it was not even known that the young Indians had their hair cut or that they were rapped on the knuckles for speaking Algonquin, Cree or other languages.

Yes, I believe that the religious communities such as the Oblates or the Anglicans, as well as all those who, directly or indirectly, knew or should have known what was happening in these residential schools, should apologize to Canada's first nations.

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, from the member's input at aboriginal affairs committee, I know he is a very passionate fighter for aboriginal rights and understands aboriginal people.

Could he shed some light on the importance of language in relation to culture. Some people might think that forcing them not to speak their language in residential schools was helping them learn a language that would allow them to get on in the world? However, language is integral to culture. Some people do not understand that.

Could the member comment on the connection between the language they were not allowed to speak and its relationship to their culture and souls?

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, I can talk about this subject, because when it comes to language and culture, I know what I am talking about. This is the only political comment I will make today. In Quebec, we are threatened by the 350 million people around us who speak English. I respect them, but we are nevertheless in danger.

I remember the Algonquins very well. The Algonquins of Pikogan come to mind, but I could also be talking about the aboriginals from Obedjiwan and the Innu, who were also rapped on the knuckles to teach them right from wrong when they were children. As soon as the priest heard the word "meegwetch", they would get the strap, even though he did not understand what it meant. That word was not understood.

These children would spend their summers with their parents on the banks of Grand Lac Victoria. Obviously, when children of five, six, seven or eight years old are taken from their land, put into a residential school, and forced not only to learn French but, above all, to learn the history of Canada, which, at the time, described all Indians as bad, this would be hard, and very painful. Some people had a very hard time getting over their experiences, and some are still having difficulties today.

Indeed, a culture can be lost, especially when young children are taken away and forced to go through what these kids experienced, that is, being assimilated from the age of five, six, seven or eight. This is where we must absolutely recognize our error, admit that Canada made a mistake and apologize. It is the first thing that is needed to begin to mend our relationship. With such an acknowledgement and a sincere apology, I think our relationship with Canada's first nations will never be the same.

● (1355)

[*English*]

**Hon. Larry Bagnell:** Mr. Speaker, the key people are those who were in the schools, but a number of them have passed away. Does this issue extend beyond the 84,000 who are still alive? Were the parents who did not have their children for the most formative years of their life affected? Were the children of the people who went to residential schools affected? They never saw parenting skills used because they were not at home with their parents, so they would be inadequately equipped to be parents to their own children today.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Marc Lemay:** Mr. Speaker, the answer to this question seems obvious.

Yes, it had a significant impact. I was talking to the Kistabish family, who did not understand why the father had committed suicide at such a young age. It did not make sense. I explained earlier that once the children were able to speak with their mother, they finally understood the truth. It is true that the children of these children have problems and will have problems. However, if they are able to at least visit their parents' graves, it will be a step in the right direction.

\* \* \*

[*English*]

#### REPORT OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I have the honour to lay upon the table the report of the Auditor General of Canada dated May 2007 with an addendum on environmental petitions from July 1, 2006 to July 4, 2007.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(3)(g), this document is deemed to have been permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

#### NATIONAL MIDGET HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

**Mr. Brian Fitzpatrick (Prince Albert, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past Sunday the Prince Albert Mintos won their second consecutive National Midget Hockey Championship. This is the first in the history of this national tournament. In the past five years teams from the Prince Albert constituency have won this championship three times, another remarkable feat. In 2002 the Tisdale Trojans were victorious.

This was also a great day for Saskatchewan. Since the inception of this tournament in 1978, a Saskatchewan team has won this tournament 11 times, not bad for a province with less than one million people.

Once again, special congratulations to the players, coach Tim Leonard, the organization and the fans. This is truly a proud day for the city of Prince Albert and a proud day for Saskatchewan.

*Statements by Members*

● (1400)

**YOUTH EMPLOYMENT**

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, students and employers alike are concerned about the changes brought in by the minority Conservative government to the student summer employment program.

Young people in my riding of Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte and across the entire country are very upset that \$65 million has been cut from the program. They are also very upset that the Conservatives are prioritizing areas of high crime over areas such as my Newfoundland and Labrador riding of Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte where crime is appropriately low.

Employers are deservedly upset that any company with 50 employees or more need not apply.

Some of the best experiences that young people from my riding have come to enjoy have come from working with community weekly newspapers as junior reporters and publishing assistants over the summer months. Because these small community newspapers are part of a larger chain, they will not be able to provide this experience in the future.

This is just wrong. The federal Conservative government and the minister should fix it and fix it now.

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[Translation]

**ALLERGY AWARENESS WEEK**

**Mr. Christian Ouellet (Brome—Missisquoi, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a significant portion of Quebec's population suffers from a number of allergies, to a greater or lesser degree.

These allergies may come from natural sources, such as plants and animals, or from chemical products. We also know about the danger associated with food allergies, such as allergies to peanuts and certain fruit, that can result in death. Other people have so many natural and chemical allergies that they are considered hypersensitive and suffer serious chronic health problems.

In my riding of Brome—Missisquoi, I gathered a group of about 40 hypersensitive people who shared their concerns with me as well as their initiative to have hypersensitivity recognized as a chronic problem. One of their demands is for access to healthy housing.

In light of Allergy Awareness Week, let us be sensitive to the hypersensitive.

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[English]

**INSPIRING YOUTH FOR CHANGE**

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand today to summarize a declaration by the group, Inspiring Youth for Change, whose mission is to educate and inspire other youth on the fate of their future. Earlier today my NDP colleague and I joined members of the group at a press conference to help spread their message. They are here with us today. I quote from the group's declaration:

We know that the situation of our planet is urgent.... We want change and are willing to make the necessary commitments and sacrifices to our lifestyle and social structure to ensure a sustainable future.

We, the voters of tomorrow....will support those who promote social, environmental, and economic justice....Within a single generation, we could steer the earth towards a more just future. Let that generation start now.

[Translation]

As hon. members it is our duty to listen to young people. They are our future and they will reap what we sow. It is time to take action.

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**LOTBINIÈRE—CHUTES-DE-LA-CHAUDIÈRE**

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was a great pleasure for the municipality of Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage to receive the Prime Minister of Canada in front of a Conservative audience of more than 400 people.

My Conservative colleagues from the Quebec City area and those from the new official opposition at the National Assembly were also there in large numbers to attend this gathering with our leader.

Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière is part of the foundation of the Conservative Party of Canada in Quebec. It is a riding where people are proud to live in a community that wants to grow through sharing, generosity and hard work, like the builders of our country.

It is in this same spirit that each person contributes, in their own way, to real change. For the first time in at least a generation, Quebecers have a real choice.

Our Prime Minister said there is nothing more precious than the family farm. It truly represents all the values on which our region was built in order to build a better country.

Our government is producing results and working for the good of families, taxpayers and everyone who works hard in all the rural regions of Quebec. April 28, 2007, was a historic day for my riding. Once again, we wholeheartedly thank our Prime Minister for his generosity.

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[English]

**RUSSIAN SPEAKING CONGRESS OF CANADA**

**Hon. Ken Dryden (York Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the board of directors of the Russian Speaking Congress of Canada is here today. I am hosting a reception for them just outside this chamber right after question period.

I am proud to represent in York Centre the largest Russian speaking community in the country. They came to a place so much like home, the same climate, the same landscape, even the same favourite game, and to a country which today admires Ovechkin and Malkin just as we once did Tretiak and Kharlamov.

They are here as extended families. The oldest, veterans of World War II, were critical allies who fought Hitler on the eastern front and suffered losses far greater than all the rest of the allies combined. It is their great gift to Canada, their new country. The cold war made us forget that contribution; we must not.

The youngest of them now in school and their well educated parents, all with dedication and ambition are doing spectacularly well.

The parents, their great learning and training not yet acknowledged in Canada, are not yet able to make the contribution to this country they would like to make. All they need is a chance.

The Russian—

• (1405)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for St. Catharines.

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#### INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

**Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today, May 1, is International Workers' Day, known as Labour Day in many countries around the world, a day celebrated to recognize the achievements and struggles of working people and their families.

We are committed to a more productive, safer and healthy workplace. Together we must work toward more responsive workplaces for the evolving needs of workers and employees in the 21st century.

As this day follows closely after the National Day of Mourning, I encourage employees and employers to be careful and attentive in the workplace.

Recently in my hometown of St. Catharines, an accident at the Port Weller dry docks took the life of crane operator Mike Damiano, a good man who is now mourned by his family and his friends.

It is our personal and collective responsibility to take the time to stop and solve dangerous situations in the workplace.

International Workers' Day acknowledges the contribution that workers make to improving not only Canada's economy but our society.

Together we are building a workforce for the future that embraces all citizens and maintains Canada's high standards of living in today's global economy.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### RENÉ MAILHOT

**Mr. Maka Kotto (Saint-Lambert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a man of integrity has passed away. From geopolitical strategy issues to international conflicts, from his masterful understanding of forgotten wars to concern for the plight of the victims in Darfur, Iraq, Rwanda, Congo, Chechnya, Palestine, Israel or anywhere else in the world on the brink of chaos every day, nothing eluded his mind or his conscience.

#### Statements by Members

René Mailhot, his roots in Gascony, grand master of international political news, has left us. With his ability to distill complex issues into simple terms and to educate people thoroughly, he awoke the conscience of millions.

All of Quebec shares in the deep sorrow of his family and colleagues.

The Bloc Québécois salutes his memory. May he rest in peace.

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[English]

#### GUN CRIMES

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, gun crimes with restricted weapons or guns used by gang members are an increasing problem in our cities and communities.

Yesterday we tried to debate a very important bill, a bill that establishes mandatory minimum sentences for serious offences involving the use of a firearm. This bill fulfills one of our campaign promises. We were not the only ones who proposed such changes. In the last Parliament the justice committee supported my private member's bill regarding mandatory minimum sentences.

In the last election the Liberals promised to double mandatory minimum sentences for violent gun crimes. They have since broken their promises and during committee they, along with the Bloc, gutted the bill. Yesterday they backed away from a full debate on the bill. Perhaps they were scared that their flip-flop on this issue would be brought up.

Do the Liberals not think that the safety of Canadians is important? When will the official opposition start listening to Canadians and start passing our justice legislation?

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#### SPOUSAL ABUSE

**Mr. Sukh Dhaliwal (Newton—North Delta, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to pay homage to a woman whose courage is a model for victims of spousal abuse across this country.

It was not that long ago when Ms. Ghuman, the victim of two gunshot wounds, was fighting for her life. Now she is getting her life back together and speaking out for young South Asian women who may not be ready to break their own silence on this hidden poison in our communities.

I ask the government to join with me in recognizing Ms. Gurjeet Ghuman's heroic efforts to bring this issue to the fore. I urge the government to do more through status of women funding to meet spousal abuse head on in our communities.

\* \* \*

#### LIBERAL PARTY CANDIDATE

**Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Nepean—Carleton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, some months ago the Liberal leader caved under pressure from the fringe elements in his party and voted to kill his own anti-terror legislation.

*Statements by Members*

The fringe element of the Liberal Party is only getting stronger though. Farhan Mujahid Chak, the Liberal leader's Edmonton campaign manager, accuses Israel of rape and murder. He says that Canada's new government is involved in a conspiracy to destabilize Poland. On the question of terrorism, he asks, "Am I in a position to morally judge suicide bombers?" His answer, "In some ways, we are not."

What was the Liberals' response to Chak's outburst? They made him their Edmonton candidate.

Now that Chak's comments are known, why will the Liberal leader not fire him? Is it because he secretly agrees with those views, or is it because he is too weak to stand up to the loony left in the Liberal Party?

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●(1410)

**BERTHA WILSON**

**Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we pay respects to a Canadian feminist heroine. In 1982 Bertha Wilson became the first woman to serve in the Supreme Court of Canada.

Justice Wilson began her legal journey in 1956 in Halifax, as a 31-year-old law student at Dalhousie. Unbelievably, she was told at the time to go home and take up crocheting. Undaunted, Justice Wilson went on to entrench women as full and equal participants in Canadian society.

Justice Wilson was named to the Supreme Court the same year we enacted our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, a happy convergence. Bertha Wilson embodied in her decisions and dissenting opinions the spirit of the charter. She was the voice of the charter.

Today we celebrate Bertha Wilson's precious legacy, her redefinition of self-defence from a woman's perspective, her bold decisions granting women their fair division of property.

On behalf of all Canadians, we salute Bertha Wilson's vision, courage and wisdom as we reap the benefit of her many contributions and achievements for a better Canada for all.

\* \* \*

[*Translation*]

**QUEBEC SCENE FESTIVAL**

**Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, from April 20 to May 5, a gigantic festival known as Quebec Scene is being held in the national capital region. I wish to congratulate the National Arts Centre of Canada for this initiative, which is part of a series of biennial festivals that explore Canada's vast cultural scene.

During the first week of Quebec Scene, we were able to enjoy, among other presentations, a new dance by the famous dance troupe, La La La Human Steps, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra and, last Saturday, to relive the emotions of the characters from *Starmania*, this time in a symphonic setting, a stirring, moving and dazzling show.

Kudos to Heather Moore, the producer of Quebec Scene and, above all, thank you to the 700 artists, musicians, actors, authors,

dancers, directors and creators who will be thrilling us throughout this festival.

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**INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY**

**Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, today, May 1, is International Workers' Day. The whole world stops for a few moments to show its respect for workers and to highlight the merits of the multitude of men and women who toil day after day earning a living.

They do every job imaginable: selling, writing, speaking, listening, sewing, shovelling, fixing, inventing, and they often do it for 40 hours a week, 48 to 50 weeks a year, for sometimes 45 years of their life.

They contribute their intelligence, strength, judgment, integrity, talent, devotion, energy, time and creativity. It is because of them that our society runs so smoothly. They are an essential part of our economy, and without them nothing would be possible. We owe them our thanks, our gratitude and our respect for all that they do.

Today, we take a few minutes to honour them and thank them.

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[*English*]

**THE BUDGET**

**Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, while Rome burns under the watch of the defence, environment and foreign affairs ministers, let us not forget the domestic discontent still bubbling over the budget.

The government's fiscal plan has opened up wounds that were painstakingly stitched together with the surgical removal of the letter P from Canada's once proud Progressive Conservative Party.

Atlantic Conservative members are feeling the heat over the government's punishment of the region in its latest budget.

The foreign affairs minister has blindly decided to follow his leader, but many of his Atlantic caucus colleagues are flirting with principle. They might even do the right thing. They might vote against their own government's budget. This would send a message, a message that Atlantic Canadians are dying to hear.

The Conservative caucus must be left wondering how the Prime Minister can narrow the widening chasm between Progressive Conservative and his Reform Party.

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●(1415)

**LEADER OF THE GREEN PARTY**

**Mr. Gary Goodyear (Cambridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Green Party leader and de facto deputy Liberal leader, in her attempt to smear the government, has stooped to a new low, a low that is unbecoming a Canadian political leader.

*Oral Questions*

In a speech, Elizabeth May said that the Prime Minister's position on climate change "represents a grievance worse than Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of the Nazis". That is outrageous and ridiculous.

How dare the leader of the Green Party compare a Canadian public policy to one of the most tragic events of the 20th century? Such flippant remarks, only weeks after our country observed Holocaust Remembrance Day, underscores the lack of understanding Elizabeth May and the Green Party have on this issue.

Canadians call on the Leader of the Opposition, who admires Ms. May so much that he will not even field a candidate against her, to condemn her statements. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, if you would give the member the floor to condemn her statements.

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## ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

### AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, does the Prime Minister still have confidence in his Minister of National Defence, yes or no?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have said repeatedly that it is the Leader of the Opposition in whom I lack confidence.

What leads me to that conclusion today would be reading a copy of a letter I received from Ed Morgan, the national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, noting that his colleague, Elizabeth May, has diminished the Holocaust, used the Nazi analogy that is demagogic and inappropriate, while belittling Canadians of faith.

The Leader of the Opposition hitched his wagon to this individual. I hope he will distance himself from those kinds of remarks.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister should be able to say if, yes or no, he has confidence in his Minister of National Defence. The entire nation wants to hear the answer.

The last time the minister was allowed to speak was in an elevator. Now the Minister of Public Safety is inventing policy in an elevator. Maybe we should get the Prime Minister in an elevator to get an answer from him.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all ministers serve the government with distinction. He will know that the Minister of National Defence has served his country with distinction for virtually his entire adult life, including in a uniform in the Canadian Forces.

I think the Leader of the Opposition should be able to say that he believes that diminishing the Holocaust and using Nazi analogies are inappropriate. I would like to again give him a chance to distance himself from these remarks by his colleague, the leader of the Green Party.

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, to speak about the credentials of the minister is not enough.

Does the Prime Minister still have confidence in his Minister of National Defence, yes or no?

[*Translation*]

I suggest that the Prime Minister should no longer have confidence in his Minister of National Defence. He was wrong about the Red Cross, wrong about the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, wrong about the alleged new agreement with the Afghan government and wrong about the treatment of prisoners.

Will the Prime Minister fire his Minister of National Defence and give our soldiers a better minister?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously I have confidence in the Minister of National Defence, someone who has served as a member of the Canadian Forces.

It is no small matter to diminish the Holocaust or use Nazi analogies, as the leader of the Green Party, Elizabeth May, has done. The Canadian Jewish Congress has denounced this. I hope the Leader of the Opposition will—

● (1420)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

[*English*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, changing the channel will not work.

The Prime Minister and his ministers have persisted in their denials that the government had any specific knowledge of allegations of torture. Then yesterday the Minister of Public Safety admitted that the government did know about specific allegations of torture and that Correctional Service Canada officers in Afghanistan had told him last week. We have a startling new admission.

When is the Prime Minister going to end these obvious fabrications, fire his incompetent Minister of National Defence and appoint somebody able to get some control over this ridiculous spectacle?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the problem once again is that the opposition continues to have its facts wrong.

The deputy leader has just claimed there is some new allegation here. I am reading quotes from *Hansard* last week where the Minister of Public Safety said exactly that Canadian corrections officials had been in prisons in Afghanistan, had heard some of these allegations, but had not seen any evidence to substantiate them.

It is right on the *Hansard* record of April 26. The member should actually listen to something that is being said in the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Public Safety called the detainees "cold-blooded murderers", ignoring the Geneva convention provisions on presumption of innocence. Canada must protect the detainees, no matter what the government thinks of them.

*Oral Questions*

Does this government believe that the fundamental guarantees of the Geneva convention can simply be ignored?

[*English*]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the constant practice of the member from Harvard from Etobicoke is to take something that was said and twist it and torque it into something else. I never said that all the suspects who were captured were cold-blooded murderers. I did say that Taliban terrorists were cold-blooded murderers, but I did not say that all the suspects in jails were that.

Is the hon. member saying that he supports Taliban terrorists? Is that what he is saying? That goes in line with his leader supporting the comments of Elizabeth May.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, in 2006, Human Rights Watch sent NATO members a report confirming the use of torture in Afghan prisons. A 2006 report produced by senior officials in the Department of Foreign Affairs came to the same conclusion. Yesterday, the Minister of Public Safety said that two correctional services officials had provided statements from detainees who claimed to have been tortured by Afghan authorities. In light of this evidence, will the Prime Minister stop transferring detainees to the Afghan authorities, and will he call for an independent inquiry?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week, here in the House of Commons, the Minister of Public Safety said that Correctional Service Canada officials who visited a prison in Afghanistan heard detainees make allegations.

However, there is no proof confirming the allegations. As we just said, the Afghan government is committed to investigating the matter, and the Government of Canada will help with the investigation.

**Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is saying that the Afghan authorities will investigate the allegations, yet the Afghan police are the ones suspected of using torture to make detainees talk. That is like putting the fox in charge of the henhouse.

Will the Prime Minister stop transferring detainees to the Afghan authorities, and will he demand an independent inquiry?

• (1425)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have an arrangement with the Afghan government and with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission concerning the transfer of detainees. We are reviewing these agreements, but so far, they seem to be working the way they are supposed to.

As we said, the Afghan government is taking its responsibilities seriously. It will investigate the allegations and will accept Canada's help in this matter.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after spending more than a week denying the allegations of torture of Afghan prisoners, yesterday the government, in the person of the Minister of Public Safety, acknowledged that it had been informed of two instances of torture. There are two reports: one sent to the former

Liberal government in 2002 and one sent to the current Minister of Foreign Affairs in 2006.

Does the Prime Minister acknowledge that by denying the truth so often, his government is showing how little interest it takes in protecting the prisoners? Will he admit that he is not complying with the Geneva convention by leaving the Afghan authorities to take sole responsibility for—

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Public Safety.

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, last week I indicated that our corrections officers had heard allegations of torture in two cases, but there is no proof.

Our officers are there to observe and help improve conditions in the prisons. We have already seen improvements. We have to take things one step at a time, but we have seen improvements.

**Mr. Claude Bachand (Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, we now know that legal action is being taken against Canada here and abroad, with more to come, to prevent future transfers of Afghan prisoners.

According to many experts, the federal government no longer has a choice, in light of the repeated violations of the Geneva convention. It must stop prisoner transfers.

Why does the Prime Minister have to wait until the courts force his hand in order to comply with the Geneva convention, which Canada signed?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, prisoners' rights are extremely important to us. In addition, the head of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces said that it was preferable for the Afghans to continue developing their ability to receive and handle prisoners, and that is exactly what is happening. It is happening very quickly, but it is happening now.

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with respect to the transfer of detainees in Afghanistan, yesterday, the Prime Minister refused to provide answers concerning the agreement with the Americans for prisoners captured at sea.

After denying it for many days, the Minister of Public Safety finally said that he had received reports from our experts, our correctional officers, about torture in Afghanistan.

Why are detainees still being transferred? Why does the Prime Minister not stop these transfers immediately?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety admitted these things last week during question period in the House of Commons. He said that officials from Correctional Service Canada had passed on these allegations, but that there was no proof.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of National Defence has been caught repeatedly misleading the House on this whole affair of the transfers.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has so many different positions on this, it is impossible to know where he stands, despite the warnings from Human Rights Watch and his own department.

*Oral Questions*

Now we have the Minister of Public Safety who first tells us that there are no reports of torture and then turns around a couple of hours later and tells us that there are.

This whole fiasco has reached the point where the Prime Minister has to take some action.

Why does he not shuffle the whole bunch out of there and put some confidence in his cabinet for a change?

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Once again, Mr. Speaker, all I can do is quote exactly what the Minister of Public Safety said last week. He said that corrections officials were in these prisons in Afghanistan and had not observed torture, had received some allegations but saw no evidence that those allegations were correct.

That was revealed last week in the House. The opposition members have their facts wrong. I would love to shuffle them around but it is not within my power.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have been trying for the past two weeks to get clear answers to straightforward questions. The government, however, prefers to change its story from one day to the next.

I would like to ask the Minister of National Defence a very simple question. How many prisoners has the Conservative government handed over to Afghan authorities?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. Minister of Public Safety has the floor. Everyone would like to hear his response. The minister has the floor.

[*English*]

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is interesting here is that when I published the fact in February that we had corrections officers in the prisons in Afghanistan, the opposition members were not even interested and never asked a question.

When I was in Afghanistan myself and was talking to the media there and talking about the hard-working corrections officers there, they never asked a question.

When I talked in the House of Commons about our corrections officers and how they had talked to two individuals who talked about allegations, there was not a question.

However, when the opposition read one snappy little headline yesterday that this was the first time anybody had known about this, they all leapt at it.

Why do they not try leaping for the truth?

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Lucienne Robillard (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government is incapable of answering this question, even though it claimed to have access to everyone being held by Afghan authorities.

The government has had a full week to conduct its research. Can the government inform this House and Canadians at this time?

I repeat my question. How many people have been transferred to Afghan authorities? Where are the prisoners? How are they? What is their condition? Who has spoken to them recently?

[*English*]

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the numbers of prisoners and the details about prisoners are operational matters and are not revealed to the public.

However, if the previous Liberal government wants to admit how many prisoners it transferred, we are quite open to hear it.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the secretary general of NATO himself admitted that he is taking the allegations of torture in Afghan prisons very seriously.

Meanwhile, this government continues its parade of ministers, each one telling a different story, depending on that day's preferred cover-up.

My question is for the Prime Minister. According to the Conservative government's logic on this file, does he now believe that the secretary general of NATO is listening to the Taliban or will he too finally start to take these allegations seriously, fulfill his obligation and ensure that the Geneva convention is respected?

[*English*]

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our military takes its role very seriously on the ground in Afghanistan. It is working incredibly hard and doing an incredibly good job, and that includes conforming with international law.

We believe that things are working very well on the ground.

**Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, these are serious allegations. Unfortunately, even the Minister of National Defence seems to have gone AWOL. Maybe his staff will send another inspired e-mail to the press today.

Canadians are demanding a straight answer from the government and they are wondering why NATO is taking these allegations more seriously than the collection of ministers across the floor.

When will the Conservative government drop the tired, Bush-style rhetoric, be accountable and work with NATO to determine the truth of the allegations and to ensure that we always comply with the Geneva convention obligations in Afghanistan?

• (1435)

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have stated, our military personnel on the ground ensure that they conform with international law.

The NATO commander, as the member so often likes to refer to, has said that he sees no specific evidence to these allegations. Yes, there are general allegations, but there are no specific allegations.

*Oral Questions*

There is an arrangement with the government of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. They are investigating and we are assisting in that investigation.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Yvo de Boer, responsible for the UN's Kyoto protocol effort, said that Canada can still achieve the Kyoto protocol targets by adopting the principle of an international carbon exchange.

Since credits based on intensity targets have no real value internationally, will the Minister of the Environment act on the UN representative's suggestion for a carbon exchange and, accordingly, set absolute reduction targets?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud of having a real plan for reducing, in terms of absolute figures, greenhouse gases by 20% in the next 13 years. This is one of the highest percentages any country in the world is prepared to achieve in order to reduce global warming.

We are taking action. The previous government and the Bloc Québécois did nothing for 13 years. Now is the time to take action and we are taking action.

**Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that when we talk about a carbon exchange we are talking about private sector money and not public money.

By digging in his heels and rejecting an international carbon exchange, does the Minister of the Environment realize that he is harshly penalizing manufacturing companies, which will be denied access to a potential market of \$70 billion to buy and sell their carbon credits?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, I read an article in *La Presse* by André Pratte, who cited biologist Claude Villeneuve, who said that, "Canada cannot achieve the Kyoto targets in the Kyoto reference period. Anyone who tells you otherwise is a dreamer". The Bloc Québécois is a bunch of dreamers. This government, this team, is taking action while the Bloc Québécois is still trying vainly to produce real results for Quebeckers.

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**BULK EXPORT OF WATER**

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, Quebec and the provinces have laws that protect their water resources and prohibit the bulk export of water.

Can the government confirm that, through its jurisdiction over international trade, it intends to ensure that no trade agreement will reduce the ability of Quebec and the provinces to protect their reserves of fresh water?

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler**

**Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that under the International Boundary Waters Treaty Act, it is against federal law to export bulk water in Canada. The government is committed to maintaining water in its natural state. Water in its natural state is not subject to NAFTA or World Trade Organization strictures.

[Translation]

**Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, although there has been a proliferation of reassuring statements by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Prime Minister's spokesperson regarding the bulk export of water, it should be known that, according to NAFTA, everything not explicitly excluded from the agreement is presumed to be included.

Does the government not find it important, given this principle, to have a formal agreement with its NAFTA partners to expressly exclude water?

[English]

**Hon. David Emerson (Minister of International Trade and Minister for the Pacific Gateway and the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is already Canadian law and it is built into the NAFTA that water in its natural state is not covered by the NAFTA, full stop. It is not covered.

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● (1440)

**AFGHANISTAN**

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is simply missing the point when it comes to allegations of torture among Afghan detainees. The purpose of respecting the Geneva convention is to protect human rights, including those of Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan.

Does the government honestly think Canadians are buying its Bush-style "if you are not with us, you are against us" tactic?

When will the government realize that it cannot pick and choose which human rights are to be respected and stand up for the Canadian Forces serving in Afghanistan?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, does the hon. member not understand that Canadians continue to be offended by members of the opposition, continue to be offended by their insistent repeating of the Taliban allegations as though they are the gospel truth?

They might want to consider giving our Canadian brave men and women the benefit of the doubt.

**Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the reputation of our soldiers in Afghanistan is above reproach. Unfortunately, the government seems to be doing everything in its power to jeopardize our soldiers and Canada's reputation with a new and less believable story every day.

How can this House continue to have confidence in the Minister of National Defence when he will not even stand in his place to defend the soldiers he represents?

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we have said several times in this House that the Government of Canada has an arrangement with the government of Afghanistan and with the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. They are investigating these general allegations and we will insist on being part of this investigation.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for the last week, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and other government officials have responded to opposition questions about torture of detainees by saying that we are listening to the Taliban.

Is the U.S. state department the Taliban? Is Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch the Taliban? Is the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, the UN Commission on Human Rights and our own foreign affairs department the Taliban? Is the government disputing these reports?

When will the government stop blaming others and act responsibly?

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member has specific evidence for these allegations we would be happy to receive it. I do not know why he would continue to hold onto it if he had something that our brave Canadian men and women and the Afghan police have no evidence of whatsoever, with no specific evidence to support any of these allegations.

I do not know how often those members have to hear a NATO commander say to them that there is nothing to back up the allegations. We will continue to work with the Afghanistan government and the Afghan human rights commission to investigate these allegations.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the secretary of state should stop reading scripted answers and answer the question. There have been over 100 questions regarding abuse of detainees—

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

**The Speaker:** Order. The hon. member for Mount Royal has the floor to put his question.

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

**The Speaker:** Order. We cannot waste time. We have to get on with the question.

We all have our texts, but we must have some order. The hon. member for Mount Royal now has the floor and we will have some order.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Speaker, I was referring to the member's own scripted answers.

There have been 100 questions put this week to the government about the abuse of detainees. The answers have been contradictory, uninformed, misinformed and dissembling, preferring to blame the opposition rather than implement the Geneva convention and protect the rights of our soldiers and the detainees, so my—

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

**The Speaker:** I think we are going to have to guess at the question.

The hon. secretary of state.

• (1445)

**Hon. Helena Guergis (Secretary of State (Foreign Affairs and International Trade) (Sport), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, mirror, mirror on the wall. It is typical of the Liberal Party to try to run from their own words and from their own actions when they very clearly have stood in this House and many times in front of the media and have taken the Taliban's words as the truth. They have chosen to believe the Taliban allegations without having an investigation rather than taking the good word of our great Canadian men and women—

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

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Sarnia—Lambton.

\* \* \*

**CANADA-U.S. BORDER**

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Canada-U.S. border is a part of everyday life for the residents of Sarnia—Lambton. This includes recreational boaters who enjoy cruising on the St. Clair River.

Can the Minister of Public Safety please let the House know whether the federal government is doing anything to ease travel for low risk cross-border marine travellers while ensuring the security of our borders?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Sarnia—Lambton is always bringing forward good proposals related to her constituents and especially cross-border issues. The NEXUS program allows people to get pre-clearance or pre-approval for rapid crossing at border points. I would encourage constituents in her area to do that. This is a program that has been developed in Canada in conjunction with the United States.

Boaters who have approval on the NEXUS program would be able to cross the border with just a phone call and by identification of their number with the NEXUS program. It is a great initiative. I am glad the member is concerned about it and wants to see it grow.

\* \* \*

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General today reported that a Norad computer retrofit had cost more than double its estimates, more than \$156 million, and it is years overdue.

What is the Minister of National Defence doing to dig us out of this boondoggle?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Norad complex in North Bay is very important to the defence of Canada, and the initial stage of this redevelopment has been successful.

However, if the member really wants to know where the money was wasted, she had better check the years. It was wasted under Liberal rule.

*Oral Questions*

**Ms. Dawn Black (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, with allegations of torture in Afghanistan and massive cost overruns at Norad, this minister has lost the confidence of this House and of all Canadians.

When will the Prime Minister do the right thing and replace him?

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that was a pretty convoluted question. However, I think the member was asking about the Norad system.

The Norad system, as I said, is up and running at this moment, but a lot of money went under the bridge. Yes, it is nearly twice as expensive as originally planned, and this mismanagement was under the Liberals.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, after failing to defend his green plan, the environment minister has returned to making things up as he goes along. Yesterday the minister suddenly announced that his green sham contains a \$100 to \$200 a tonne carbon tax for industry.

Today the health minister tried to prop him up by claiming that allowing absolute emissions to increase will—wait for it—save lives, but there is not a shred of evidence to support any of these claims.

Before the minister presents his regulations for cabinet approval, he is required to prepare and produce a formal impact statement. Will the minister table his department's analysis immediately? Or does he have one?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I will table is a press release put out this afternoon by the B'nai Brith, which says:

The evoking of the Nazi era by the Green Party leader in order to score political points is insensitive to those who lived through this dark time.

We are also concerned by Ms. May's reported remarks, which suggest that fundamentalist sects of the Evangelical Christians are somehow awaiting the destruction of the environment and the world with glee.

These comments are deeply offensive. Not only is it time for the leader of the Liberal Party to disassociate himself from these outrageous and offensive remarks, but he should call on the leader of the Green Party, his own candidate, to resign.

• (1450)

[Translation]

**Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of the Environment announced that he wants to impose on Canadian businesses a carbon tax of \$100 per tonne, or maybe \$200 per tonne, or perhaps an amount in between the two. It seems that he is panicking and making it up as he goes along; he sounds desperate.

When making last week's announcement, how could the minister forget the most important measure of his environmental plan? Will he admit that he only thought of it at the last minute or is he making it up, as usual?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I was speaking of the consequence if industry were to choose not to abide by the new tough regulations that the government has brought forward.

There is also a consequence when the leader of the Liberal Party endorses a candidate for Parliament who makes offensive comments, not only about the darkest period in human history, but also about evangelical Christians. It is time for the Liberal leader to stand in his place, do the right thing and demand the resignation of his candidate in Nova Scotia.

[Translation]

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, this government's laissez-faire plan to deal with global warming is being treated with sarcasm at home and abroad. David Suzuki called it a fraud and others fear that Canada is joining the gang of environmental rogue states.

The executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change confirmed that intensity targets cannot decrease greenhouse gas emissions. When will the government bring back Bill C-30 and give Canada a real plan to tackle climate change?

[English]

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, where all parties can agree on important elements of Bill C-30, on issues like energy efficiency, biofuels, important measures on indoor pollutants and provincial equivalencies, we are happy to work with the members of the party opposite.

But it is time for the Liberal members opposite to stand up against outrageous, hateful, meanspirited comments made by their candidate running in Central Nova. It is inexplicable how they could not stand up against people who bash Christians and evoke Nazi era atrocities. It is disgraceful. It is outrageous. It shows what that Liberal is made of. He—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis.

**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the executive secretary was also surprised that Canada suddenly started setting targets significantly below our Kyoto commitments. There is not a single Kyoto obligation this minister has not already broken. He will not meet the Kyoto targets and he will not meet the Kyoto timelines.

When will this minister be honest with himself, with Canadians and with the international community and admit that he has no intention of living up to our Kyoto obligations?

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what we have an intention of doing is bringing forward a real plan to finally reduce greenhouse gas emissions in this country. We have a plan to finally do what the Liberal Party could not accomplish.

I know it is hard to make priorities. This government is making priorities. We are reducing greenhouse gas emissions. We will do so by more than any other country over the next 13 years. We will turn the corner. We will ensure that Canada begins to make up for ground lost under the Liberal Party.

*Oral Questions*

[Translation]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, a halfway house in my riding, located very close to an elementary school, houses Clermont Bégin, a sexual predator whom the National Parole Board still considers very dangerous. My constituents are worried.

Setting aside the fine work being done by the staff at this halfway house, does the Minister of Public Safety think it is right that a facility like this, located fewer than 300 metres from an elementary school, is housing sexual predators?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is a good question. I share my colleague's concerns. At this time, a group of people are conducting a review.

I have also indicated that I do not like to have this type of prisoner living in a facility located close to a school. I have given instructions that leases should be terminated in such situations.

\* \* \*

●(1455)

**CRIME PREVENTION**

**Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, this government is as slow to deal with crime prevention as it is to address post-sentencing measures. In Quebec, a large number of proposals were submitted to the crime prevention fund and were approved by the federal-provincial committee in charge, which means that, at the time, the proposals met the criteria. Nevertheless, the minister withheld his decision for months, for more than a year. The minister is much quicker when it comes to calling for harsher sentences.

If he really believes in preventing crime, then how can he justify taking so much time to address these promising initiatives, effectively killing them?

**Hon. Stockwell Day (Minister of Public Safety, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I indicated that we want programs that work, programs that are proven. That is why we have a review process.

A few months ago, I was pleased to announce a number of programs in Quebec. These programs have a proven track record when it comes to lowering the crime rate, especially among youth. We announced such programs in Quebec, and we will continue to do so.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the industry committee was warned that deregulation would result in higher phone rates for rural and small-town Canadians. The minister disagreed. He said that "deregulation will...benefit...consumers" and "will result in better prices".

The minister was wrong. Yesterday the CRTC confirmed that deregulation will drive rural phone rates higher. Why should rural and small-town Canadians pay more for their phone services? Why should they pay for the minister's mistake?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be very clear at this time in the House. It is very simple. What we did was put customers first. That is our priority. We have deregulation in urban centres. For the rural centres, it still will be under the regulations of the CRTC. It is very important to be precise.

As the hon. member must know, because of the decision made by the CRTC and because it can be appealed before me, I will not comment for 90 days.

\* \* \*

**JUSTICE**

**Mr. Merv Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to Canadians, our government brought forward numerous bills aimed at cracking down on crime.

Yesterday in the House we were debating Bill C-10, the bill to establish mandatory minimum sentences for gun crimes.

Will the Minister of Justice update the House on the status of Bill C-10.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as part of the government's crime fighting initiative, we brought forward Bill C-10 for debate yesterday, a bill that would give a five year mandatory minimum sentence for people who commit a serious crime with a gun.

At the first opportunity, the Liberals interrupted with a three hour motion that made it impossible to discuss that important piece of legislation.

When will the Liberal Party figure out that it will take more than a press release or a press conference to get tough on crime in this country? I want to know that and I think the people of Canada deserve the answer to that.

\* \* \*

**OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY**

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, day after day, ordinary Canadians are waking up to find that their lives are getting more expensive all the time.

Most recently, across the country gas prices have skyrocketed. In British Columbia, prices are reaching the absurd level of \$1.25 per litre. This is the result of gouging by American refineries.

It is important to note that the minister is supporting big oil and speculators in New York and Chicago at the expense of ordinary Canadians.

When will the minister actually regulate energy prices and stand up for fairness so that ordinary Canadians have regulations that protect them, as opposed to the big oil industry?

**Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, first, it is important to note that the price of gas is based on market conditions.

*Oral Questions*

However, our government has taken some action. We committed \$2 billion in the recent budget for a biofuels initiative and we brought in incentives for Canadians to purchase fuel efficient cars.

It is very important to note what two economists, Don Drummond and Mark Jaccard, have said. I am not sure whether it is the sixth, the seventh or the eighth Liberal plan, we have lost track, but in one of the recent Liberal plans it said that the price of gasoline would rise by over 60%.

• (1500)

**Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, what is not a market condition is the government's promises. It promised to stop the GST on gasoline after 85¢, another broken promise while standing down for Canadians.

It is not just the gas issue that is affecting Canadians. Now the CRTC is piling on. It has announced that it will increase the price of pay phones by 100% when using cash and by 300% when using cards.

Why is it that every time the minister says that he is pro-consumer, Canadians must open up their wallets? Why does he not actually do something to lower prices for consumers for a change?

[Translation]

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we are listening to Canadian consumers and we are listening to Canadians. Seven out of ten Canadians support the telecommunications reform we proposed. We are acting in Canadians' best interests.

With respect to the CRTC's decision, it may be appealed before the government. We will comment in due time.

\* \* \*

[English]

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY**

**Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the minister has cut the community access program, which connected rural and small-town Canada to the world, and now the government's deregulation scheme is raising phone rates in Canada.

Will the minister restore CAP funding? Will he take action to ensure that rural and small-town Canadians do not pay more for their phone services? Will he implement a national broadband strategy or fully explain to the House what exactly he has against Canadians living in rural and small-town Canada?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of Industry, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to state in the House that we did not cut the CAP funding. We are funding it for another year. It is a very good program and it is very important for rural Canadians. We listen to rural Canadians.

\* \* \*

**HEALTH**

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it has been 15 months since Canadians decided to choose a Conservative government to provide the leadership they desired and deserved.

One very crucial area where the government has demonstrated the importance of innovation and leadership is health research.

Could the Minister of Health inform the House what our government is doing to support health related research in Canada?

**Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, health research is absolutely fundamental to this country.

The following are some examples of additional funding in the budget: the Canadian Institutes of Health Research received an extra \$37 million; Genome Canada received an extra \$100 million; and the Canadian Institute for Health Information received an extra \$22 million.

Heather Munroe-Blum, a very esteemed researcher, principal and vice-chancellor at McGill University, said, "Your government has consistently expressed its conviction that Canada's future health and prosperity will require significant and sustained investment. You have acted on that conviction".

She said that the government was getting it done for Canadians.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SERVICE CANADA**

**Ms. Louise Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, for a few months now, the regional Service Canada office for Bas-Saint-Laurent in Rimouski, has been under interim management out of Gaspé.

There is no indication that the minister responsible for Service Canada plans on changing this situation. Does the minister intend to leave the Rimouski regional office without management, or does he have other plans, such as the elimination of jobs, the reduction of services or who knows what?

[English]

**Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Service Canada network is actually expanding across Canada.

However, with respect to her particular question, I am happy to receive any information that she has and I will get back to her.

• (1505)

[Translation]

### PRIVILEGE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Mario Laframboise (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit a question of privilege concerning the intimidation by the director general of Civil Aviation, Merlin Preuss, a senior government official, towards witnesses that the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities would like to hear in the context of its study of Bill C-6.

Greg Holbrook, the chair of the Canadian Federal Pilots Association, appeared before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities on February 21, 2007. A few days before Mr. Holbrook's testimony, Merlin Preuss called Mr. Holbrook's office and had a telephone conversation with Kathy Marquis, Mr. Holbrook's assistant, regarding the testimony that he was about to give before the committee. In an affidavit, a sworn statement, Ms. Marquis said that, during the telephone conversation, Mr. Preuss said to her:

[English]

Tell him that if he plans to have any Transport Canada employees with him, I will have an issue with it.

[Translation]

Additionally, regarding the telephone conversation, she also said:

[English]

My clear impression from the words and tone of Mr. Preuss' communication was that he wished to discourage Transport Canada Inspectors from testifying before the Standing Committee.

[Translation]

This is extremely disturbing, because under the circumstances, I believe that it constitutes a breach of parliamentary privilege. I would like to bring to your attention citation 865 in the 6th edition of *Beauchesne*, which reads as follows:

To tamper with a witness in regard to the evidence to be given before the House or any committee or to endeavour, directly or indirectly to deter or hinder any person from appearing or giving evidence is a breach of privilege. Corruption or intimidation is not an essential ingredient in this offence. It is equally a breach to attempt, by persuasion or solicitations of any kind, to induce a witness not to attend, or to withhold evidence or to give false evidence.

The situation is especially disturbing since this is not the first time Merlin Preuss, a senior official, has behaved in this way. As proof, I have attached two documents: an e-mail dated March 7, 2007 addressed to "DL OTT civil aviation group" regarding a study by the Auditor General—in this case, the Auditor General was asking officials for information—and a letter dated July 10, 2006 to Pamela Sachs of the Canadian Union of Public Employees concerning an appearance by officials before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities.

Chapter 3 of *Marleau and Montpetit*, which pertains to privileges and immunities, states on page 88:

—the intimidation of a committee witness was also found to be prima facie contempt by Speaker Fraser on December 4, 1992. The matter was referred by the House to the Standing Committee on House Management for consideration...In its report, the Committee reaffirmed the principles of parliamentary privilege and the

### Privilege

extension of privilege to witnesses...“The protection of witnesses is a fundamental aspect of the privilege that extends to parliamentary proceedings and those persons who participate in them. It is well established in the Parliament of Canada, as in the British Parliament, that witnesses before committees share the same privileges of freedom of speech as do Members—”.

A few lines further on, the committee's report states:

“The protection of witnesses extends to threats made against them or intimidation with respect to their presentations before any parliamentary committee”.

This is essentially what Mr. Preuss has tried to do to various potential witnesses before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and people whom the Auditor General has asked for information.

On page 863 of *Marleau and Montpetit*, chapter 20, “Committees”, it says:

Tampering with a witness or in any way attempting to deter a witness from giving evidence at a committee meeting may constitute a breach of privilege. Similarly, any interference with or threats against witnesses who have already testified may be treated as a breach of privilege by the House.

Mr. Speaker, I would draw your attention to this breach of my parliamentary privilege. I would also draw your attention to the fact that I am raising this matter at the earliest opportunity. I am aware that the facts I am alleging go back two months. Please allow me to explain myself.

Following the aforementioned events, the committee discussed the matter and passed a motion to call Merlin Preuss before the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities. Mr. Preuss appeared before the committee twice. The first time was March 28, 2007, and the second was April 23. The record of the evidence heard at the April 23 meeting was provided to the members of the committee this morning. I felt it was necessary to have a record of all of the evidence given by Merlin Preuss, a senior official, before raising my question of privilege. As such, I did so without delay as soon as the evidence became available.

If you should find a prima facie case of a breach of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

• (1510)

[English]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the question of privilege raised by my friend. I am unfamiliar with the particular circumstances in question, which were new to me, or the individuals in question. We would certainly appreciate an opportunity to investigate the matter a bit further before we comment and would like to reserve that opportunity to do so.

**The Speaker:** That is fine. I am quite prepared to defer consideration of the matter to a later date.

[Translation]

I thank the hon. member for Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel for raising the issue. We can continue our discussion of this matter at a later date.

*Points of order*

[English]

**POINTS OF ORDER**

BILL C-415—CANADA LABOUR CODE

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is a point of order regarding Bill C-415, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (replacement workers).

I would first like to point out that bills to ban the use of replacement workers have been introduced six previous times since 2004, and defeated twice. In this Parliament alone, it is the third attempt at similar legislation, and the House has already voted against this idea.

Given that this bill is virtually identical to Bill C-257, with only one new clause and one new subsection, I would ask that you, Mr. Speaker, clarify two points.

First, I would ask for you to clarify whether it is in order for Bill C-415 to have been introduced. Standing Order 86(4) provides that the Speaker is responsible for determining whether two or more items that are similar can be placed on notice.

Mr. Speaker Fraser stated, on November 2, 1989, that a bill would not be placed on notice if it had the same purpose as another private member's bill before the House and if it met this purpose by the same means as that other bill.

Bill C-257 and Bill C-415 clearly have the same purpose, namely to ban the use of replacement workers. They also seek to meet this purpose by virtually the same means. They both amend the Canada Labour Code and are identical apart from one clause and one subsection. They contain the identical paragraph in their summaries, stating that their purpose:

—is to prohibit employers under the Canada Labour Code from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out.

Since Standing Order 86(4) does not specify that bills must be identical but they must “so similar as to be substantially the same”, I submit that Bill C-415 is so similar as to be substantially the same as Bill C-257, and I would ask that you, Mr. Speaker, clarify this issue for the House.

The second issue on which I request your ruling is whether this bill can be called for debate and vote. Marleau and Montpetit indicate at page 495:

A decision once made cannot be questioned again but must stand as the judgement of the House. Thus, for example, if a bill or motion is rejected, it cannot be revived in the same session.

Allowing Bill C-415 to proceed to a vote would be inconsistent with this rule and with the rule of anticipation. As Marleau and Montpetit note, at page 476:

—two bills similar in substance will be allowed to stand on the *Order Paper* but only one may be moved and disposed of. If the first bill is withdrawn, the second may be proceeded with. If a decision is taken on the first bill, the other may not be proceeded with.

On November 7, 2006, respecting Bill C-257 and Bill C-295, you ruled that the second bill could not proceed because:

—a careful examination of both bills reveals that they have exactly the same objective, that is, to prohibit employers under the Canada Labour Code from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees who are on strike or locked out.

There we were dealing with a question of similar legislation. Bill C-295, Bill C-257 and Bill C-415 are aimed at the same objective on replacement workers.

I would argue to you, Mr. Speaker, and suggest to you with respect, that your ruling on November 7, 2006, applies equally in this case to Bill C-415. You indicated that you were at the time ruling on the issue bearing in mind Mr. Speaker Fraser's ruling of November 2, 1989.

I reiterate that Bill C-415 has exactly the same objective as Bill C-257, which the House rejected at report stage on March 21. As a result, allowing Bill C-415 to proceed would mean that the House would reconsider its decision with respect to Bill C-257.

The purpose of Bill C-415 is exactly the same as that of Bill C-257, namely to prohibit employers under the Canada Labour Code from hiring replacement workers to perform the duties of employees during a strike or lockout.

Bill C-415 seeks to do so by the same means as Bill C-257, namely by amending subsection 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code.

Members opposite may suggest that the bills are not similar and that Bill C-415 differs because it refers to the preservation of essential services during a strike. However, I submit to you, Mr. Speaker, that is not the purpose of the bill. The purpose of the bill is to ban replacement workers.

The apparent difference from Bill C-257 is not in fact a material one. Bill C-415 would not create a new category of essential services. Nor would it designate a group of workers to perform this work. Rather, it simply recasts as “essential services” existing provisions in the Canada Labour Code, which obliges services to be maintained during a strike or lockout in order to “prevent an immediate and serious danger to the safety or health of the public”.

● (1515)

Since Bill C-257 would not have affected these existing protections in the code, simply adding a provision about essential services to Bill C-415 does make it substantively any different than Bill C-257.

Therefore, the purpose of both these bills is simply to ban the use of replacement workers. As I have already indicated, Bill C-415 does not alter the means to use to achieve this purpose which is primarily by amending section 94(2.1) of the Canada Labour Code.

*Privilege*

By allowing Bill C-415 to proceed, Mr. Speaker, you will be asking the House to revisit its decision on Bill C-257, which is not permitted. I submit that it should not be called for debate or for a vote and would ask that you rule on that question.

**Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have two very short points that may be helpful or not helpful, depending on the outcome.

First, Bill C-257 is not now on the order paper. Bill C-415 is. Therefore, there is not, on the face of the order paper, a conflict between these bills.

Second, you will probably be aware that the private members' business bundle of which Bill C-415 forms a part is still yet to go through a private members' business subcommittee, a procedure that would look at all private members' business for votability. It might be that your decision could await the outcome of that procedure, which I believe is imminent. I do not believe that any of these new bills in the private members' business envelope will be coming before the House in the imminent future. They will come at a later date.

**The Speaker:** I thank the government House leader and the hon. member for Scarborough—Rouge River for their submissions with respect to this bill. I will look into the matter and get back to the House in due course with a decision on it.

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**PRIVILEGE**

## MINISTERS' RESPONSES REGARDING AFGHANISTAN

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am rising in response to the question of privilege raised by the hon. member for Mississauga South on April 26. The member suggested that I should have provided the information that was given to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on April 25 earlier that day in reply to oral questions or perhaps earlier in the week in reply to oral questions.

The member alleges:

—there appears to be some indication that the misinformation to the House may have been deliberate and in fact has breached my privileges and those of other members of Parliament.

I submit that there was no misinformation to the House and no privileges were breached.

On April 25, I was informed that military representatives of the Canadian Joint Task Force Afghanistan had made contact with the regional director of the National Directorate of Security in Kandahar province, General Quyaum. In that meeting the NDS provincial director informed our representatives that he agreed to provide Canadian officials full access to detainees transferred by the Canadian Forces without any caveats.

This arrangement was accepted by our representatives who subsequently inspected the detention facilities.

It has always been my intention to be open and transparent with Parliament and the public. During the question period of April 25, I responded to two questions: one requesting the cessation of the

transfer of detainees and the other regarding the Strategic Advisory Team and its knowledge of the Afghan justice system. I answered both of these questions to the point and based on facts.

On leaving the chamber, I proceeded to my appearance the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. During my appearance I had the opportunity, in response to a question, to inform the committee that a new access arrangement was in the process of being struck.

I have not provided any misinformation to the House with respect to this matter and there is no evidence that any member's privileges have been breached. In fact, in the spirit of openness and transparency I informed Parliament of this news while it was in the development stages.

● (1520)

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on some of the procedural aspects of the question of privilege that were raised by the member for Mississauga South on April 26, 2007.

I believe the Minister of National Defence has answered in terms of the factual issues and set those clearly on the record. In terms of the question of timeliness, I think that matter is now entirely clear.

There are still some other procedural issues that I would like to pursue further. I submit that this is not a valid question of privilege. At most the member may have a grievance. However, he has not demonstrated that the information provided by the minister has in any way impeded or obstructed any member of the House in the performance of their duties.

In order for there to be a valid question of privilege, there must be evidence that the minister intended to mislead the House.

Page 234 of the second edition of Joseph Maingot's *Parliamentary Privilege in Canada* states that before the House will be permitted by the Speaker to embark on a debate on a question of privilege, there must be:

—an admission by someone in authority, such as a Minister of the Crown...either that a Member of the House of Commons was intentionally misled or an admission of facts that leads naturally to the conclusion that a Member was intentionally misled...

I submit that the member has not provided any evidence to this effect. There is no evidence that any minister has misled or misinformed the House at all, whether deliberately or not.

In fact, what we hear from the statement by the Minister of National Defence is that his facts are entirely accurately.

Citation 31 of the sixth edition of Beauchesne's provides a lengthy list of issues that are not questions of privilege. Some of these include:

A dispute arising between two Members, as to allegations of facts, does not fulfill the conditions of parliamentary privilege.

Further:

The failure of a Minister to answer a question may not be raised as a question of privilege.

*Business of Supply*

And Beauchesne's cites a Speaker's ruling from October 30, 1969, which states:

The question has often been raised whether parliamentary privilege imposes on ministers an obligation to deliver ministerial statements and to make announcements and communications to the public through the House of Commons or to make these announcements or statements in the House rather than outside the chamber. The question has been asked whether Hon. Members are entitled, as part of their parliamentary privilege, to receive such information ahead of the general public. I can find no precedent to justify this suggestion.

Those are three elements that are relevant.

I would also note that Marleau and Montpetit state, at page 433:

The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue.

I would go further and add that the Speaker is not responsible for the quality of the questions either. In this case it is the question and the point of order from which the problems arise.

To conclude, I submit that the member has provided no evidence that the Minister of National Defence or any other minister has infringed the privileges of the House.

Mr. Speaker, as you can judge from question period last week, members may be in a debate over facts. None of this would constitute a basis for a prima facie question of privilege.

**The Speaker:** The Chair has heard the arguments advanced by the Minister of National Defence and reviewed the arguments advanced by the member for Mississauga South initially in this matter and I have heard now from the government House leader.

I am satisfied that in my view there has not been a case of a breach of privilege as laid out in the arguments advanced to me. Accordingly I am not going to proceed further with this and there will be no motion permitted at this time.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1525)

[English]

### BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

#### OPPOSITION MOTION—INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Brampton—Springdale.

I rise to speak on the motion presented by my colleague, the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, which indeed calls on the House to apologize to the survivors of the Indian residential schools.

I want to advise the House that yesterday I attended the residential schools survivors conference and workshop in Winnipeg. Over 1,500 survivors from across the country gathered together to prepare to move forward. Aboriginal leaders from across the country all called for an apology for the residential schools legacy.

One of the speakers characterized the need for an apology in the following context. He said his perception of it is that aboriginal peoples in this country are still in bondage and an apology is necessary for the final redress from this bondage. He spoke of the need for more than a physical release, but the need for a spiritual release and with a spiritual release an apology is needed in order to forgive. I bring this to the attention of the House, so that members have some understanding of what is happening.

The legacy of the residential schools, we all know, is a shameful part of this country's history. Over the years aboriginal children in the tens of thousands endured years of abuse and neglect. These children were physically, sexually and psychologically brutalized. The Canadian government aimed to eliminate aboriginal peoples' cultures and language. The government aimed to assimilate first nations, Inuit and Métis children.

Apologizing to the survivors of these residential schools is simply the right thing to do. What we have heard here today is that members opposite will vote for today's motion, and for that I am thankful and commend them, but that no apology will be forthcoming until the executive branch determines in five years that this can be done.

This meanspirited Conservative government's refusal to apologize now to the victims of the tragedy is simply incomprehensible. It is part of a pattern the government has established as it continues to show its lack of concern and, I would say, lack of compassion toward aboriginal issues. This pattern started with the cancellation of the Kelowna accord.

We have heard the minister give two main messages in regard to the residential schools legacy and why it cannot be honoured. First, he says that there cannot be an apology because there was no agreement to apologize by the Government of Canada and, second, he cannot apologize because the purpose of the schools was to provide an education to aboriginal children. Given that, there is no need to apologize because it was simply education.

I have a lot of difficulty with that. In reference to the first issue, let me say to the minister that at one level he claims that he negotiated the agreement. What he actually did was conclude the final agreement that was agreed to by the previous government in a residential schools political agreement signed on May 30, 2005.

What he ratified was a court determined settlement, which cannot dictate an apology, but the residential schools political agreement, and I am going to ask for it to be tabled in the House so that all members have it, says clearly:

Whereas the Government of Canada is committed to a comprehensive approach that will bring together the interested parties and achieve a fair and just resolution of the Indian Residential Schools legacy, it also recognizes that there is a need for an apology that will provide a broader recognition of the Indian Residential Schools legacy and its effect upon First Nation communities;—

The minister cannot play with semantics both ways. He cannot say that he negotiated an agreement and there was nothing in it, when in fact he really did not negotiate the agreement. It was done by the previous government and it is clearly stated for all to see.

*Business of Supply*

• (1530)

The minister has to take responsibility. It is not a political party that negotiates with the Assembly of First Nations. It is the Government of Canada. It states quite clearly here, and as I say, I will table this document for members who have not had an opportunity to look at it before.

We have heard the minister speak at length saying that an apology is not necessary because the schools were “set up to provide an education to aboriginal children”.

Let me give the House some background on what was said in a sessional report in 1897 by the Indian commissioner who spoke about the residential schools system. He said:

This branch of the Indian service has ever been recognized as one of the most, if not perhaps the most, important feature of the extensive system which is operating towards the civilization of our native races, having its beginning in small things [...] until today the Dominion has had at its command a system which provides for its Indian wards a practical course of industrial training, fitting for useful citizenship the youth of a people who one generation past were practically unrestrained savages.

A second Indian commissioner said, in the year 1896:

The year just passed has shown the department that the sun dance has become an Indian ceremony almost, if not quite, of the past. For a long time the department's policy has been in the direction of suppressing it by moral suasion, and step by step, it has been robbed of its most revolting ceremonies—

He went on to say:

The policy of the department, as to the retention of pupils, has been that boys should remain at the industrial schools until...their characters shall have been sufficiently formed as to ensure as much as possible against their returning to the uncivilized mode of life.

The Indian affairs minister has said an apology is not necessary because of education. I am not sure that many people today would view that as the purpose of education. He said that the implementation of the re-announced \$2.2 billion residential schools agreement is fair, generous and compassionate. He is right. The minister is commendable. The agreement is commendable, but without a national apology, the compassion is missing and it fails to put an end to this terrible chapter in Canadian history.

The previous Liberal government committed to apologizing to the survivors, as I indicated, in this agreement in principle, in the public statements made by the minister, the deputy prime minister at the time, and in *The Globe and Mail* at the time. An apology is a simple, important step toward ending this sad legacy in our country's history. It would cost nothing and it goes a long, long way to help the survivors in their healing process.

I guess one could ask why the government will not stand up and apologize right now. The churches involved in the tragedy have apologized. They have realized the wrongs they have committed. The United Church, as we have heard, has found it “completely unacceptable” that the government did not include a separation agreement. A Roman Catholic administrator, along with a bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario, found it “totally incomprehensible” that the government would not offer an apology. The Anglican Church of Canada has also come out to express its “disappointment and sadness” that the government will not apologize for the legacy of residential schools.

I believe that Canadians across the country want their government to apologize. It is through their government that the people give voice to this. The churches are sorry, but for some reason that none of us can understand the government is not willing to give a formal apology.

In recent reports, we have seen archival records that show that as many as half of the children who had attended early years of residential schools died of tuberculosis.

• (1535)

The government had been warned that the inhumane living conditions these children had to endure helped lead to the spread of the disease which caused the death of these children. Despite the evidence of the government's knowledge of this injustice, this current government refuses to apologize. Again I ask, what will it take to get this government to apologize to the legacy of residential schools?

We know that the survivors are dying at a rate of as many as five a day it has been estimated. How much longer will it take for this meanspirited government to apologize? The minister wants to wait for the conclusion of the truth and reconciliation commission before determining whether an apology is necessary. I submit we all know that this apology is necessary. Do not use smoke and mirrors to avoid it.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, after listening to the member for Winnipeg South Centre speak about the time that she was in government that negotiated this settlement, I have to ask the question: Why did the Liberals wait until they had lost their political power in a minority government? Why did they wait so long to the end of their tenure before bringing this about to the point where they actually could not complete this important agreement?

In fact, we had to and we did with haste. We did it immediately upon taking power. But unfortunately, the Liberals did wait so often on matters that related to aboriginal people right until the end of their tenure because, in my opinion, they did not really care about it. They really did not, and so I have to ask the question: Did we not act? Did we not move forward as soon as possible? What fault can the member find with the actions that we have taken? We brought forward this agreement. We ratified it. These are the things that are called upon us as a government to do. We have acted in good faith toward the first nations people who were affected by the Indian residential schools.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Again, Mr. Speaker, another misrepresentation of the truth. This political accord was signed May 2005. I hardly think that was at the end of the last mandate. The previous Liberal government was clear and articulated unequivocally its willingness to give an apology. If members read the former deputy prime minister's comments in *The Globe and Mail*, she said at the time that the government was waiting for the appropriate time and the appropriate place.

*Business of Supply*

It is to the great disadvantage of aboriginal peoples from coast to coast to coast that the previous Liberal government, which did so much for aboriginal people around this country, was defeated because this current government took its sweet time in negotiating and coming upon this, and only did it because of the pressure exerted from this side.

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all members of the House identify with the hurts of first nations people related to residential schools.

I hear the member acknowledging that the government members are going to support this motion and yet she stands in her place and has the audacity to declare that the parliamentary secretary who asked the question made a misrepresentation. She stands in her place and declares some fabricated notion about a date some five years in the future when she alleges the executive may decide to apologize.

There are people in the House who want to exploit the hurt of first nations people for their own political purposes and I think they are as bad as the separatists who would take “la belle province” and replace it with “je me souviens” in order to exploit an ancient hurt to advance their own political purposes.

What gives the member the right to stand in her place and exploit the hurt of first nations people? Does she not know the government apologized in 1998? The churches apologized and what gives her the right to exploit the hurt of the first nations people?

• (1540)

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Whatever right I have, Mr. Speaker, comes because of the representations of aboriginal people who come to me on a regular basis to ask me what I can do to ensure that an apology will be forthcoming from the government. They come in large numbers because they do not believe it.

When the member opposite talks about five years, the truth and reconciliation commission has a mandate of five years and my understanding is that the minister this morning said that he will only consider an apology after the truth and reconciliation commission reports. So that is where the five years comes from.

I suggest to the member opposite that he meet with some of the survivors, that he listen to some of the stories, that he hears the pain, that he hears from the leader yesterday who spoke about the suicide of a child and blamed himself because of his legacy from the residential schools and his inability to respond to his child. So, I have the same right or a greater right because of the number of people who have come to me and who have spoken to me.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla (Brampton—Springdale, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we are here in this House today to discuss an important motion, a motion which impacts thousands of aboriginal Canadians across this country.

The motion asks for the House to apologize to the survivors of Indian residential schools for the trauma that they have suffered as a result of policies intended to assimilate first nations, Inuit and Métis children causing the loss of aboriginal culture, heritage and language while also leaving a very sad legacy of emotional, physical and sexual abuse. An apology is the right thing to do.

We must ask ourselves as parliamentarians, why are we here today discussing this motion brought forward by the Liberal Party? We are

here in this House discussing this Liberal opposition day motion because the Conservative government has refused to apologize to the thousands of survivors who were affected from the trauma, suffering and embarrassment when they attended residential schools. These survivors deserve an apology.

It is unfortunate that since taking office the Conservative government has actually turned its back on aboriginal Canadians across this country. The Conservatives did it when they cancelled the Kelowna accord. They did it by refusing to apologize as a government to the survivors of those who attended residential schools.

We all know the facts. The residential schools were places of disease. They were places of hunger. They were places where there was overcrowding and there was despair. Many children died as a result of the suffering, the trauma and the embarrassment that they had endured.

It is unfortunate that the government has refused to step up to the plate. Since forming the government, the Conservatives have refused to show any leadership. They have refused to take action and actually do the right thing and apologize to the survivors.

During the Liberals' time in government a new era of cooperation began between the first nations and the government with the establishment of a new aboriginal affairs cabinet committee and a secretariat, as well as a Canada aboriginal peoples round table process. The process was actually based on overarching principles of partnership and of respect, of working in collaboration and in conjunction with each other to address some of the issues. All of those concepts seem very foreign to the Conservative government.

In May 2005 the previous Liberal government and the Assembly of First Nations, the AFN, took an important step in recognizing the need for reconciliation and healing. They signed an accord that outlined their joint commitment to compensate for abuses in the Indian residential schools.

We have seen the leadership that was provided by former prime minister Paul Martin. There was leadership provided by Phil Fontaine—

• (1545)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I remind the hon. member that the previous prime minister is still a member of this House and we cannot refer to him by his proper name.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, my apologies.

This cooperation between the former Liberal government and the AFN culminated in a formal agreement. It included a national apology. It included a compensation process for victims of sexual and physical abuse. It included a lump sum payment for former students. It included a truth and reconciliation commission with national and regional processes, as well as funding for an Aboriginal Healing Foundation. It was a step in the right direction to overcome this black mark in our history.

*Business of Supply*

In November 2005, while continuing to build on the principles of partnership and respect, the former Liberal government successfully brought together Canada's first ministers and aboriginal leaders in Kelowna, British Columbia. They signed the Kelowna accord. This historic \$5 billion investment included money for education, included investments for housing and infrastructure, included investments for health care, included investments for economic opportunities for the aboriginal and first nations communities, and included investments for relationship building and accountability.

In addition to the Kelowna accord funding, a variety of funding mechanisms, initiatives and resources were provided to ensure that we would provide compensation for the direct benefit of former students and toward a fair and lasting resolution of the legacy of Indian residential schools. There were investments to ensure that aboriginal communities would benefit through such things as early learning and child care programs and housing on reserves. We ensured that we would build relationships to allow aboriginal and first nations children and young people the opportunity to go to school, to get post-secondary education. We ensured that the aboriginal communities would share in the gas tax revenues and that we would invest in aboriginal businesses and housing.

The initiatives were many, but unfortunately, one of the first acts of the Conservative government was to turn its back on aboriginal Canadians by ripping up the Kelowna accord. The Conservative government failed as a result to invest in health care, to invest in education, to invest in opportunities for aboriginal Canadians.

The after-effects of the suffering that has been endured by the survivors of Indian residential schoolchildren continues to plague aboriginal people in this country.

I was born and raised in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and as such, I have seen and heard stories first-hand from some of the survivors. I have seen the impact on the survivors as a result of their being in the residential schools. Each and every one of them has been impacted. This painful legacy continues to affect over 80,000 survivors in this nation to this day.

For many of those who attended these schools, the scars from the emotional, physical and sexual abuse remain. They suffer from shame and embarrassment, and nightmares. We only need look at some of the challenges that plague the aboriginal communities across the country to realize that. There is widespread alcoholism, drug abuse, violence. There are high suicide rates in these communities. These are issues the survivors are still struggling with as a result of the impact of the trauma that they suffered in residential schools.

What is more, the policies of assimilation that were adopted by many of these schools have resulted in diminishing important cultural traditions that the aboriginal community had. It has diminished valuable aspects of the aboriginal culture, heritage and language. Rather than encouraging a sense of pride and confidence in their cultures and the traditions of their communities, their experiences at these schools have resulted in their being demoralized and ashamed of their culture and traditions.

A simple apology is not a lot to ask for, but for the survivors of the residential schools, it is an integral part of their healing process.

● (1550)

After much stalling by the Conservative government, and after much persistence by some of the opposition parties, the Conservatives finally agreed to implement the \$2.2 billion residential school agreement that had been reached by the former Liberal government. The government still refuses to issue a national apology. The Minister of Indian Affairs claims that after the truth and reconciliation commission he may decide to issue an apology. That will be five years from now.

I would urge the government to do the right thing, to show some leadership and to take some action. I urge the government to stand in the House and support this important motion. I urge the government and the minister to do the right thing and apologize to all survivors of residential schools in this country.

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I grew up in Winnipeg too and I have lived around aboriginal communities all my life. The motion calls on the House to apologize. I believe we have said that the House is certainly prepared to do that; certainly we are.

The Government of Canada has apologized. It apologized in 1998. Apparently that apology is not good enough for the member and I can understand that. It was an apology from the Liberal government at the time and I probably would not be satisfied with that either.

I would like to point out that it would appear that all of these troubles started on January 23, 2006, but they have been going on for quite a while. I think if people were to look at the record they would find there are probably more years of shame under a collection of Liberal governments than there ever have been under a Conservative government.

I would like to ask the hon. member, does she acknowledge the fact that the Government of Canada apologized in 1998? Does she understand that the House, and not the Government of Canada, is being asked to apologize? We are willing to go along with that. Does she acknowledge that there is enough shame to go around on all governments throughout the history of Canada on this whole file?

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, if we were to go down memory lane the hon. member would realize that in 1998 it was actually a statement of reconciliation. It was an initiative that was undertaken by a former Liberal government.

We must realize that the new Conservative government is now in power. It must do the right thing and honour an agreement that was made between the AFN and the previous Liberal government. It must do the right thing, honour that agreement in its entirety and issue an apology on behalf of the government.

If the minister were listening to the survivors of these schools and to aboriginal Canadians he would realize that all of them want him to keep his word. They want him to have the integrity to do the right thing and apologize on behalf of the government, which is the Conservatives.

*Business of Supply*

If the Liberals were in government, they would be issuing an apology. The Liberals would honour their word.

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my riding in northwestern British Columbia is about 35% first nations. Many, if not all, families in my region are touched by this issue. They are either descendants or people immediately affected by the travesty of residential schools.

One of the things that Canadians find most distasteful about politics is when serious and complex issues are brought in for partisan reasons and when attacks are made at a partisan level.

In the debate today, and I will cast aspersions in both directions on this, there is a temptation within the political sphere to continue to attack an opponent while using an issue which should never be used for such purposes.

The fact of the matter is in this country today first nations people are surviving the effects of residential schools under a burden which under no circumstances should we ever find tolerable.

We in this House need to seek substantive improvements in the quality of life for first nations people from coast to coast to coast, particularly those that were most affected by this tragedy in our collective national history, not any one party's, but our collective national history.

I would ask the member to speak for a moment on the need for that type of depth in the debate.

**Ms. Ruby Dhalla:** Mr. Speaker, I could not agree more with the hon. member. It is really important that all parliamentarians put aside our partisanship and do the right thing and issue an apology to the survivors who have suffered the physical abuse, the trauma and the embarrassment.

I can say that having been born and raised in Winnipeg and having attended school in an inner-city neighbourhood I have heard some of the stories first hand. Some of the parents of children with whom I went to school went to residential schools. Their stories are absolutely heartbreaking.

When we speak in the House today it is with that passion and that voice. Many of the members on this side and on all sides of the House have that same passion and commitment. That is why it is important that all of us work together to ensure that the government and the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development step up to the plate and do the right thing and issue an apology. It is a matter of integrity and ensuring that we close one of the darkest chapters in our country's history.

• (1555)

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Nanaimo—Alberni.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the motion put forward by the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

I will begin today by saying that the government agrees with the member opposite. We must address the sad legacy of Indian residential schools. We have stated this on many occasions already.

That is precisely why we are working toward the implementation of the settlement agreement that includes elements, such as a truth and reconciliation commission, a common experience payment, an independent assessment process, commemoration and funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, which received final court approval on March 21, 2007, will bring resolution to this sad chapter of our history. This historic agreement will foster reconciliation between aboriginal people who resided at these schools, their families, their communities and all Canadians.

This agreement is a crucial milestone. We cannot move forward without addressing the past and it is crucial that we move forward. We need to take positive, concrete action to address the challenges that confront so many aboriginal people and communities in this country.

We are committed to making consistent progress in the areas that have the greatest impact on improving the quality of life of first nations people. It is particularly important that we place a special emphasis on improving the lives of children. As the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs, this is an issue that is close to my heart.

For example, on April 27 in Calgary, Alberta, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development was pleased to announce a new partnership with the province of Alberta and the Alberta first nations that will see significant improvements in child and family services for first nations in Alberta.

Based on the Alberta response model, this new approach to child welfare in first nations communities will provide families living on reserve with better access to community resources to help them before a crisis occurs.

The Alberta response model stresses prevention by intervening early and making community resources available to families in difficulty. When children need to be removed, we must ensure they are placed in a safe, nurturing environment, in permanent homes, preferably with family members in their own communities.

This approach sets a high standard because it is based on ensuring stability and permanency for the child. It also has been recognized as an innovative approach to delivering child welfare services to first nations children. The Alberta response model has already proven successful with the number of children in care having decreased by 22% since its introduction in 2004.

In addition to delivering better results for first nations children in Alberta, this partnership serves as a model for other provinces and first nations agencies. Our government looks forward to having exploratory discussions with provinces, territories and first nations organizations that are seeking to introduce enhanced early prevention programs to their child and family services on reserve.

Children are the future, in first nations communities as in everywhere else in society. We have a moral duty to protect them and to work together to ensure they enjoy a safe, secure home environment.

*Business of Supply*

However, we also recognize that support and services must be there when women and children are obliged to leave that environment.

Last fall, this government provided an additional \$6 million to the family violence prevention program to help ensure that the network of shelters, primarily for women and children who are trying to escape family violence, are better equipped to serve women and children on reserve.

Among our various initiatives on childhood health and well-being, Canada's new government has committed \$65 million to the aboriginal youth suicide prevention strategy.

● (1600)

In the area of first nations education, we have made major progress. In December of last year, this House passed historic legislation, at the centre of which was the agreement signed in July 2006 by Canada, the province of British Columbia and the First Nations Education Steering Committee. This agreement is truly groundbreaking, since it will not only create better learning opportunities for first nations students in British Columbia but also offer a model for improvements to first nations education in other provinces.

Because we know that education is one of the foundations for social and economic success and is an area in first nations communities where new investments can truly make a difference, we recently announced the investment of more than \$50 million in school infrastructure projects in first nations communities across the country.

Those are some of the initiatives and systematic reforms that directly benefit first nations children. However, this government recognizes that children are also affected in one way or another by the pressures that face their families and communities. For this reason, Canada's new government recognizes the need to act on the wider issues that have a real impact on the day to day lives of aboriginals.

Therefore, we have taken action to advance legislative solutions to two important issues: discrimination permitted under section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, and on reserve matrimonial real property. Bill C-44, introduced last December, proposes to repeal section 67 which currently prevents first nations citizens from bringing forward a human rights complaint. We believe that aboriginal citizens are entitled to the same access to rights protection as every other Canadian citizen.

This government also strongly believes that aboriginal women should have access to the same rights as every other woman in Canada when a relationship breaks down. That is why the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development completed a consultation process and intends to bring forward legislation to resolve the difficult question of matrimonial real property this spring.

There can be no question that this government is acting vigorously and in partnership with first nations, Inuit and Métis to build a more hopeful future for aboriginal children across the country.

Through the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, we have come to terms with the past and, through our initiatives to

further the interests and well-being of aboriginal women and children, we are looking to the future, a brighter and more positive future for the first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague opposite did not speak to the issue of an apology but he did give us a listing of what his government has proposed over the past number of months.

As he has identified all of the initiatives being put forward, could he speak to the consultation processes that have gone on with first nations people, both in arriving at the legislation and the projects where moneys have been deemed appropriate?

We know that the Kelowna accord was a comprehensive, integrated approach that came about after 18 months of consultation, collaboration and building a new relationship with aboriginal communities across the country. I am interested in knowing, in the list of many initiatives that he has identified, what the processes of consultation have been. Have they been more than a telephone conversation or, as one member of the community said to me, a discussion in the airport? Could he describe the consultation processes?

● (1605)

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Mr. Speaker, of course there is a process that we follow and the consultation happens at the committee level where we have witnesses come forward to speak to issues.

The member opposite talked about the consultation that took place prior to the Kelowna first ministers agreements and the leadership of the first nations community. This government acknowledges the priorities set out by those consultations. We have moved on some of those priorities, such as the housing needs, and we are spending over \$1.1 billion to address housing needs. This government is definitely listening to the issues of first nations people.

**Hon. Anita Neville:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, am on the aboriginal affairs committee and I was interested to hear the member describe representations to the committee as consultations before announcements are made and before programs are implemented.

If that is his view of consultation, I need some elaboration from him. What we are hearing is that while dollars are being announced, and sometimes they are being redirected from other projects to other priorities, there is no meaningful consultation with the communities before this happens. It seems to be what I have described before as a father knows best approach to determining where and how the moneys should be spent.

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Mr. Speaker, when the former prime minister was a witness at the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs discussing Bill C-292, one of the statements I made was that leadership was about knowing when the talk stops and the work begins, which is one thing our government has moved forward. We are getting the work done. We are taking action to address those needs that were addressed in those negotiations, those discussions, that led up to the meeting in Kelowna.

*Business of Supply*

I would just say to the member opposite that the evidence is there. The proof is in the pudding. We are getting things done for aboriginal people. For instance, with regard to the issue around water quality, we inherited a situation where over 200 communities were on water advisories. We cut that in half within a year. I think that is a great accomplishment that the minister and his department have managed to accomplish over the past year.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, could the member indicate if there was any delay on behalf of the government on implementing this important agreement upon taking office as some of the members opposite seem to have indicated?

**Mr. Colin Mayes:** Mr. Speaker, no, there was not. It is interesting how the previous government had 13 years to deal with this issue and implement the settlement and yet, within weeks of our new government coming into power, we moved forward with that obligation.

I commend the members opposite in the previous government for putting together that settlement agreement but the fact is that it was this government that implemented the agreement, moved forward in allocating the moneys and has already started sending out the settlements to—

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

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in response to the motion by the hon. member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

First, I would like to congratulate the member for Okanagan—Shuswap for his contribution to the debate. He is the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. Not only is he well informed on the issues, but I know he has a heartfelt and deeply felt concern for first nations peoples.

Also, for their contributions, I would like to compliment the member for Kitchener—Conestoga and the member for Peace River, who spoke earlier in this debate.

Canada's new government is committed to improving the quality of life for first nations, Inuit and Métis. In order to achieve this goal, action must be taken on many fronts and with many partners. Action must involve not only planning for the future but reconciling with the past.

Earlier in the debate today, the member for Yukon read into the record a letter of apology from a church official. It seems to me that true reconciliation is a spiritual journey, even as forgiveness is a spiritual exercise. I have the greatest respect for a former member of Parliament, Elijah Harper, who in his day started a process of healing and reconciliation.

In response to the member opposite, the member for Winnipeg South, who suggested that I need to talk to some of the people who have been hurt by the residential school experience, I want to say for the member that I have heard the cry of persons separated from their communities and cultures.

I have heard the cry of desperation of elders today in many communities as they see a new generation of young people plagued with suicide, depression, substance abuse and hopelessness. In fact, in response to a challenge from a member of a band council, I spent two nights and three days in one such community. I just hung out with them to better understand life on the reserve.

We are all involved in a journey of reconciliation. Let us all walk softly and learn to listen to the heart.

The Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement received final court approval on March 21, 2007, barely five weeks ago. We are confident that this fair and honourable agreement will foster healing and reconciliation between aboriginal people who attended these schools, their families, and all Canadians.

We also know that we need to look ahead to the children who are the future of these communities, but the quality of education that has been available in on reserve schools is often inadequate and first nations students suffer the consequences.

This is a state of affairs that had to be addressed. On this front, I would like to elaborate on the measures described by the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

In December last year, the First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act, Bill C-34, was enacted. This was landmark legislation in many ways. It enabled first nations in British Columbia to take a significant step forward toward a brighter future.

The provisions in legislation allow first nations in British Columbia, in partnership with the province, to take control over and assume greater responsibility for primary and secondary schools in their communities. The legislation offers first nations an effective mechanism to improve educational outcomes of students attending on reserve schools in the province.

Access to this mechanism is entirely optional. No first nation will be forced to use it. Any first nation that chooses to do so, however, must ensure that its schools meet specific educational standards. As I am sure my hon. colleagues recognize, standards are essential to effective accountability.

The act requires participating first nations to ensure their schools meet provincial standards and to make it easier for students to transfer from one educational system to another. Eventually, differences in the quality of education provided by on reserve and public schools should disappear.

Although it will take time for all on reserve schools in British Columbia to attain provincial standards, first nations are working hard to achieve this goal. Leading these efforts is the first nations education steering committee, or FNEESC. In the past few years, FNEESC has devised a method to measure and assess performance of on reserve schools.

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The First Nations Jurisdiction over Education in British Columbia Act articulates a new approach to on reserve education. This approach was designed by first nations to address the challenges facing on reserve schools in British Columbia. Although the legislation applies only to on reserve schools in B.C., it also stands to influence the course of first nations education elsewhere in Canada. It may in fact inspire first nations in other regions of the country to devise appropriate solutions of their own.

• (1610)

The agreement that is at the heart of this legislation was signed in July of last year by Canada's new government, the province of British Columbia and FNESEC. It proposes an administrative model that will foster improved educational outcomes. This model will engage first nation communities in education and lead to more relevant curricula.

The agreement is complicated, but its significance is straightforward and yet momentous for first nation students. Simply put, it will enable them to acquire a quality education that will meet provincial standards and also will have cultural depth and resonance. Not only will students be equipped with the educational tools they need to enjoy a prosperous future, but they also will be firmly grounded in their culture and heritage.

The First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education in British Columbia Act is the product of an initiative led by first nations to address the particular circumstances of on reserve schools in British Columbia. It is a prime example of the success that can be achieved by governments and first nations working in partnership toward a worthwhile end.

First nation students in British Columbia will reap the benefits of this approach. It is hoped that more first nations across the country will follow suit with their own strategies. We have often stated that only by working in partnership with aboriginal people and communities can real progress be made.

In my own riding, the vanguard of a new generation of educated young first nation individuals are already coming back to their communities to strengthen a new generation of leadership. Malaspina University-College in Nanaimo has a total student body in excess of 10,000 students and one of the largest aboriginal student populations in the province.

Quality education is at the heart of what makes individuals and communities strong. It is a basic requirement for prosperity and self-sufficiency. Canada's new government is determined to continue working with our partners, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, to promote the means for improving the quality of education available to aboriginal people. It is one of the basic and essential components of quality of life.

With the final court approval of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement in March, we have moved toward reconciling with the past. With the First Nations Jurisdiction Over Education in British Columbia Act, we are looking to the future. Canada's new government is confident that, working with our partners, yet more progress can and will be made.

• (1615)

**Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear the member end his comments by speaking to the residential schools agreement.

He spoke about the B.C. education act at some length. That act went through this House very quickly and was supported by all parties. It is a good model of education that has been worked on for many years in British Columbia and was a cooperative venture. Unfortunately, there has been no funding attached to it. There are many concerns around that.

I will ask the member about one of our very real concerns. Does the member see this as a template for education across the country? Or does he believe that education agreements should be developed appropriately with individual jurisdictions to meet their needs and requirements?

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, the member sits on the Standing Committee for Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development and I know that she does have a heart for the issues relating to first nations.

The question of education in British Columbia was worked out in cooperation with first nations representatives, leaders, chiefs from many bands, regional chiefs and provincial authorities. Certainly it was the choice for the community of first nations in British Columbia, of whom we have a very large representation. I have a large representation in my own riding.

They recognized the need for an upgrade in the standards. The province of British Columbia is very much engaged and is willing to take on responsibility and, in partnership with first nations, expand bringing the standards of the province into first nation communities. I think it is the right kind of partnership. Certainly it is for British Columbia, but again, that was a decision that was entered into willingly by the first nations representatives and provincial representatives.

Inasmuch as the provinces bear the responsibility for the education of the rest of the community, it seems like a very good and workable model. Other communities will have to appraise it for themselves and willingly enter into such agreements if they seem appropriate. Personally, I hope this model will work in many other jurisdictions.

• (1620)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have spent time working with this member and he clearly has a large heart for the issues that face first nations people, Métis people and Inuit people in Canada.

I would like to ask the member about his thoughts in relation to the truth and reconciliation process that has been undertaken and will be initiated in the near future. I know that he is quite a knowledgeable individual in relation to other jurisdictions. Perhaps in relation to South Africa he could speak a bit about how this process has worked in other jurisdictions.

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. James Lunney:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has a wealth and depth of experience in these matters. I would not by any means put myself forward as an expert on these issues, but I certainly have taken an interest in genuine reconciliation. In South Africa, there certainly is a model of what people went through.

I do not know if the circumstances are exactly the same here, but I think we have been on our own spiritual journey in Canada with our first nations people. I certainly want to acknowledge, as I did earlier, Elijah Harper and the leaders from the first nations community who went through that process of bringing politicians and non-aboriginal communities together to address some of the hurts of the past.

I know there is a tremendous movement among first nations who have a genuine heart for an expression of forgiveness for things of the past, who want to put some of those issues behind and find and embrace together a future in which we can all walk together in a different way.

I like that concept of learning to walk together. I think that first it involves a sensitivity in recognizing past failures, but it involves having a genuine heart to listen, to engage and to help one another. Frankly, I think that is what good neighbourliness comes out of. A good community can be built that way. It is a dynamic for which I am not sure government has all the tools to employ, but I am hopeful.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand (Brant, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Etobicoke North.

I am pleased to speak in support of the motion brought by my colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River.

The House of Commons, Canada's body of elected representatives of all Canadians, is asked to apologize to the survivors of Indian residential schools.

The House is being asked to apologize to the survivors of the trauma which they suffered as a direct result of policies whose purpose or intention was to assimilate first nations, Inuit and Métis children. The apology is for causing the loss of their culture, their heritage and their language. The apology is for leaving a sad legacy of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

An apology is entirely appropriate and is ethically and morally the right thing, the proper thing, to do.

For several decades, the Government of Canada was complicit, with certain churches, in implementing a policy toward aboriginal children and their parents, which was cruel, mean-spirited, racist and contrary to the principles which govern our nation, and certainly contrary to the moral and ethical fibre which Canadians of good conscience possess.

I was pleased to hear earlier today the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development say, "The House should apologize and I am confident at the end of the day that the House will apologize". I am confident at the end of the day that the House will apologize.

He was further correct when he stated, in response to a question, "Frankly, there are members in every single party in this House of

Commons that deserve some credit from bringing this matter forward through to the resolution of the May 8, 2006 agreement".

As was the Minister of Indian Affairs, as well as the now Minister of Natural Resources and the now Minister of Revenue, I was a member of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. I heard stories from survivors, which were jarring in their impact and absolutely convinced me that the manner in which young children were treated was despicable and remains, arguably, the largest single blight on Canada's essentially unblemished record as a beacon of decency toward and respect for all citizens.

I have the privilege of representing the most populated first nations community in Canada, the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Within my riding of Brant was a residential school, the Mohawk Institute. I have spoken to many survivors of that facility.

The Mohawk Institute was one of several residential schools for Indian children in Canada and was part of the Indian education system administered by the Department of Indian Affairs.

The Mohawk Institute was founded by the New England Company in the period 1828 to 1834. The New England Company was originally known as "The Company for Propagation of the Gospel in New England and the Parts Adjacent in America". Its mandate was to propagate the Christian religion to and among "heathen natives" and to civilize, teach and instruct the said heathen natives and their children.

The New England Company operated the Mohawk Institute residential school until 1922 with, financial assistance from the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1922, the company entered into a lease agreement with the Department of Indian Affairs, whereby the Department agreed to continue and maintain the institute as an educational institution for Indian boys and girls.

Paul Dixon is a survivor of the Mohawk Institute. Paul Dixon tells his story:

I remember getting on the bus the first time we were taken to the Mohawk Institute Residential School in Brantford, Ontario. I was six years old and had no idea where we were headed. Some of the kids only had an apple or a sandwich for the 24-hour journey. We were hungry, and some kids were crying; it was very sad right from the beginning....

My father was told by the Indian Agent that their welfare and family allowance would be cut off if he didn't allow his children to go. He was also coerced into sending us to learn the white man's way when he was told by the Indian Agent that if he didn't, we would have no future...

● (1625)

I learned in residential school to love and trust nobody. That's what they taught me by how we were treated. The only time I told my mother I loved her was on her deathbed, which is something I regret to this day.

When you go through something like that you become very scared of intimacy and sharing your feelings....

I didn't know right from wrong as far as sexual abuse. How was I supposed to know what an adult can and cannot do to me as a child? Keys were thrown at us, we were beaten with thick black straps along with fists.

Paul Dixon now has three children of his own. As he says:

I always tell my children I love them. I get pushed away because I want to kiss them, even if they're no longer kids. I want to make sure they feel loved like every child should.

*Business of Supply*

Paul Dixon is only one of many survivors or victims of residential schools abuse at the Mohawk Institute in Brantford. The school was a place where large numbers of native children were brought to live, to work, ostensibly to learn, while being cut off from their families and their first nations communities. The children lived in an atmosphere of intimidation, brutality and fear and they were forbidden in any way to maintain their native culture.

They were taken from their homes and dealt with, often in a very harsh fashion, by total strangers whose intention was to turn them into non-natives, non-aboriginals, non-first nations, non-Métis, non-Inuit, in other words, to turn them into persons completely different from their genetic makeup, completely different from their culture, completely different from their traditions, completely different from their parents.

It is entirely appropriate that the House and the Prime Minister apologize to the still living survivors or victims of residential schools. As was noted by Dutch physician Paul Boese, "Forgiveness does not change the past, but it does enlarge the future".

Without a proper, dignified, formal apology provided by the House and our Prime Minister, on behalf of all Canadians, to the victims who were wronged and treated dishonourably, we cannot in good conscience ask them to forgive the Canadian government for the manner in which they were treated.

We need to move on in our relationship with survivors of residential school abuse. We need to apologize to them, to reach out to them and to verbalize in as sincere and profound a fashion as possible that we are sorry for what happened for those decades. We need to understand that the past cannot be changed, but that reconciling ourselves with the past will in fact enlarge our future together as people who share this part of God's earth.

I commend my colleague, the member for Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, who has brought forward this motion, as well as my colleague, the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore, who seconded the motion.

I hope all members of the House will see fit to join in apologizing to survivors of residential schools.

• (1630)

**Ms. Tina Keeper (Churchill, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, my colleague's speech resonated with me. The story that he shared with us from one of his constituents is a story not unlike many other survivors. In fact, my family has those stories as well.

Does the member believe in the commitment that not only the House, but the government and the Prime Minister should indeed apologize? Through the comments of the minister and the parliamentary secretary, does he understand clearly why the government made the decision not to make this apology to first nations, Métis and Inuit survivors of residential schools?

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, hopes springs eternal and I hope that in the fullness of time this motion will pass and the Prime Minister will see fit to apologize to survivors and victims of residential schools. In my view, there is absolutely no rational or logical reason for such an apology not to come from the Prime Minister, not to come from the government.

I do not think we need to overly legalize this situation. Constituents in my riding are telling me, overwhelmingly, that they want the government to apologize to survivors and victims, that they want us to move forward together.

I hope the Prime Minister, as with the Chinese head tax, will see fit to apologize to Canada's first nations, Inuit and Métis peoples.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the presentation of the member opposite obviously comes with a lot of emotion and interest in the issue. Clearly, members of the Conservative Party are going to support the motion. That has been stated already today. It is going to be a great day to see the House formally adopt the motion today.

However, in his speech commented on how the past could not be changed. I agree with him on that. He also said that we must move forward with reconciliation.

Does he believe the truth and reconciliation process, which was negotiated in part by the former government of which he was a part, is a step forward in what he called for in his speech?

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, the truth and reconciliation commission is a significant component of an overall resolution of this dark chapter of Canada's past, but it is no more or less a component of the resolution than a formal dignified apology by the Prime Minister of our country to survivors and victims of residential schools.

• (1635)

**Ms. Tina Keeper:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to once again comment on my colleague's speech. He talked about his constituents. Indeed, I am sure all of us have constituents who have been survivors of the residential school system.

Part of what we are talking about is the truth and reconciliation process in addition to the residential school compensation package, as was negotiated by the past Liberal government. Part of that commitment from the past deputy prime minister, on behalf of the Liberal Party and the past prime minister, was—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I am sorry, but I will have to go back to the hon. member for Brant because we are out of time.

The hon. member for Brant, a very brief response.

**Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:** Mr. Speaker, the truth and reconciliation process is a significant component of the overall resolution, but I hope that within not so many days the Prime Minister will be on his feet formally apologizing on behalf of the Government of Canada.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Centre, The Budget.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke North.

**Hon. Roy Cullen (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in the debate today on a motion proposed by my Liberal colleague from Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River. The motion reads:

*Business of Supply*

That this House apologize to the survivors of Indian Residential Schools for the trauma they suffered as a result of policies intended to assimilate First Nations, Inuit and Métis children, causing the loss of aboriginal culture, heritage and language, while also leaving a sad legacy of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

It is somewhat reassuring to hear that members opposite, and hopefully all members of this House, will support the resolution, but the question has arisen as to why the Prime Minister and his government will not apologize, as my friend from Brant mentioned, for this serious blight on the reputation that Canada has in the world for its stance on human rights.

In fact, we have observer status in the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, an assembly that focuses on human rights, democratic institutions and the rule of law. It is unfortunate, however, that when we have these debates from time to time, members from legislatures in Europe cite Canada's treatment of its aboriginal Canadians, and not in a very positive light, I must say.

It is timely and in fact it is never too late, but the Prime Minister and the minister should apologize to our aboriginal Canadian friends for this terrible injustice that was done.

Some months ago, I thought the government was not apologizing because it was waiting for the residential schools compensation agreement to be finalized and that there would be legal issues, et cetera, but even that was a stretch. However, it is now clear that the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement has been finalized.

I, along with the deputy prime minister in the last Parliament, were involved in the negotiations on the residential schools agreement. One of the issues at that time was the status of the class action suits and the ability of individual aboriginal people to follow up, if there were so-called extra serious cases of abuse, whether they be sexual or physical abuse, and pursue their claims in the normal course of events through the criminal court system.

However, my understanding is that the class action lawsuits and those other individual matters were part of the agreement. Therefore, I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the Prime Minister or the Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs would not apologize to our aboriginal Canadian friends for this terrible thing that happened, which was a feeble, hopeless and obviously an unsuccessful attempt to assimilate aboriginal Canadians. It shows us what happens when people who are put in positions of trust, unfortunately, can abuse that trust. We have some horrific tales of physical abuse, sexual abuse and mental abuse in the sense of trying to deprive people of their culture, their heritage, their values and their pride.

I know that in negotiating the residential schools agreement, our government asked Mr. Iacobucci to work with the various stakeholder groups. I must say that he did a fine job because it was a very complicated file. There were a number of competing problems. For example, accountants were projecting the lower limits or the upside limits of what this compensation package would cost Canadians. Some of the upper limits were quite staggering in terms of their proportions. These were serious matters for a federal government to consider. There were also questions around how to value or put a price tag on physical or sexual abuse.

● (1640)

In the early days I know a grid was developed outlining certain categories of physical abuse and sexual abuse and wherever people fell on the grid they received a bigger compensation package.

As members can imagine, this was a horrific thing to try to actually implement. What was required was that unless aboriginal people who had been in a residential school could come forward and prove that they were at the school and renounced their claims, even in that process I should point out, they had to demonstrate what kind of treatment they endured. How embarrassing and humiliating to have to come before some official or panel and describe the physical or sexual abuse that they had to endure.

The government, in its wisdom at that time, decided to scrap this system and use a formula that was driven more by the number of years that people were in a residential school and that there was a prima facie statement that if they were in a residential school, they were probably subject to some kind of abuse and if the aboriginal Canadians could sign off on a package then they would be exempted from these testimonials of trying to demonstrate the kind of horrific treatment that they were subjected to.

Even that left itself open to some concerns. Some of the people who went to a residential school may not have been sexually or physically abused and did not feel that their culture or heritage was attacked or demeaned. In fact, we heard very few but we did hear the odd case where someone was prepared to say that. When a government is looking at protecting and preserving taxpayers' hard-earned dollars, that is an issue.

However, in the end everybody realized that this had to be brought to a conclusion. Many of the people who had been in residential schools were no longer with us. They had passed on. Some were around but they were getting older and if there was a compensation package, surely they should have the right to use that.

With those kinds of imperatives, I think everyone came to the table and Mr. Iacobucci did a fine job of negotiating a package that is estimated at some \$2.2 billion, not a small number by any stretch of the imagination, but totally justified in my judgment and totally appropriate.

Part of that agreement, which our government announced under the leadership of then deputy prime minister, Anne McLellan, included a number of things: a national apology, a compensation process, a lump sum payment, a truth and reconciliation commission and funding for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Finally the present government implemented the residential schools agreement that the former government had negotiated. It took the Conservatives some time to do that but they finally came out and did it, but it was sadly lacking with the apology, either from the Prime Minister or the minister, and this is something that is still outstanding. It takes a big person to apologize and I have to assume that as the Prime Minister of our country he must be a big person in spirit and, hopefully, he will not be so meagre in his good spirits that he would not apologize to these people who have suffered under the residential schools system.

*Business of Supply*

Hopefully we have learned from this and that we will never go back. I am very pleased that our government took the initiative to negotiate an agreement that finally was announced by the present government. However, what is missing and what I am hoping the Prime Minister does and what the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development does is apologize for this injustice that was done to our aboriginal Canadians.

● (1645)

**Mr. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I must tell my hon. friend across the way that we are not disagreeing with anything here. Everybody acknowledges what happened in the residential schools and everybody in the House knows it was a disgrace. It was a disgrace that spanned decades of Liberal and Conservative governments so we are not arguing any of those facts.

However, some of his comments, frankly, are fallacious, disingenuous and several other words that I am not allowed to say in this place.

Does the member not recall that under the Liberal government in 1998, the Government of Canada did apologize and that the motion before the House is in fact for the House to apologize? Why will he not just simply acknowledge those facts and quit trying to make a case that the Prime Minister and the government is somehow unapologetic because it is just not true?

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I work with the member opposite on the public safety committee and I know he is a man of good intentions and intelligence. I am quite sure that he would be fully briefed to the extent that one could on the residential schools file given his political adversary in Edmonton at the time but, nonetheless, I think he does make a point.

The motion does ask for the House to adopt the motion. I know we on this side will be supporting the motion but I am hopeful that the parties down the way will support it. I am confident they will but I am not sure what it would cost the current Prime Minister. As we have been told time and again, it is a new government. What would it cost to tell aboriginal Canadian people that it is not just a Liberal government that shares this apology, that it is the new government that also apologizes for this injustice?

I could be corrected on this but my understanding is that your party committed to that process so why can you not just live up to your commitments?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer):** I would just remind the hon. member to address his comments through the Chair, not directly at other members.

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the member a few questions but perhaps I will talk a bit about the comment the member for Etobicoke North made a little earlier in his speech.

In reference to various international bodies, he said that in his opinion the international community was not looking at Canada in a good light in relation to aboriginal matters.

I am not sure if the member is aware of what is currently going on at the aboriginal affairs committee but we have brought forward Bill

C-44, which would bring about the repeal of section 67 of the Canadian Human Rights Act. It would exempt first nations from falling under the Canadian Human Rights Act.

If the member could tell his committee members from the Liberal Party to get with the program and support human rights on reserve, perhaps the international view on Canada might be improved.

The member and members of his party continue to reference that somehow our government has held up this settlement agreement. Could he explain to me what holding up is defined as according to him because this is one of the very first things that we did as a government? If he could define that it would be appreciated.

● (1650)

**Hon. Roy Cullen:** Mr. Speaker, I am not on the aboriginal affairs committee but I have been told by my colleagues that they accept the proposal in principle but that there are still some important details to be worked out.

The parliamentary secretary says that the government was very quick to react. My recollection is that the election was some time in January 2006 and it was in May 2006 that the government finally came forward with the \$2.2 billion agreement which our government had negotiated.

If I had seen at the time wholesale changes, then I would have been more convinced that the delay was necessary. Nonetheless, I think one of the tragedies is the fact that the new government did not fund the Kelowna accord. We hear that it takes more than money but it also takes money to deal with these problems.

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am thankful for the opportunity to enter into this debate. Let me say at the outset that the social conditions of Canada's first nation, Métis and Inuit people is perhaps Canada's greatest failure and in fact perhaps Canada's greatest shame.

At the core and at the very foundation of these appalling social conditions we can easily trace these conditions back to the impact of this terrible tragedy in social engineering, the Indian residential school legacy.

I agree with the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations when he says that reaching a just and fair resolution and closing the book on this chapter in our history is a necessary prerequisite before we can move on with the other necessary changes and accommodations we will have to introduce if we are to elevate the social conditions and the living conditions of Canada's first nations people.

I spent a great deal of time working on this file on the aboriginal affairs committee as we dealt with witnesses after witnesses, trying to implore the Liberal government to do the honourable thing and come to a just resolution. A number of things will haunt me forever from my experience on that committee. There are things that I will never forget. I think I have gained some insight as to what a profound effect this period of history has had on the people on whose behalf we speak today.

*Business of Supply*

Let me give one example and I will not dwell on some of the horrific stories or the graphic illustrations that we heard. A woman named Flora Merrick from the province of Manitoba was a witness at our committee. She was 88 years old. She was making an application for compensation because of the abuse she suffered at a residential school.

She was nine years old when she ran away from the school to attend her mother's funeral. I am still affected by this today. She was caught, brought back to the school, beaten black and blue, and forced to stay in a closet day after day for as long as two weeks. This was her punishment for running away from the residential school to attend her mother's funeral as a scared nine-year old girl.

When she applied for \$3,500 in compensation the Government of Canada spent \$40,000 opposing her claim, saying that those were normal social conditions of the day, or those were cultural norms to use that level of discipline on a child.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to inform you that I will be splitting my time with the member for Vancouver Island North. I hope it is not too late to do that.

The Government of Canada was willing to spend \$40,000 when dealing with Flora Merrick's case to deny a claim of \$3,500 from a woman who suffered abuse because it was the cultural norm of the time. That led National Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations to ask: In whose culture is it normal to beat a nine-year old girl black and blue because she ran away from school to attend her mother's funeral?

We were dumbfounded. Our jaws dropped around the table at the Indian affairs committee. I will never forget this decent, humble woman, 88 years old, presenting before our committee and telling us this story.

Finally, some of us started to grasp the true impact of what went on in many cases in that school. I ask as well this question. In whose culture could it possibly be considered normal to treat children in that way? It is not any culture or society that I want to belong to.

Before I go too far, I want to recognize and pay tribute to some of the people who are diligently working to bring a conclusion to this sad chapter in our history. Mr. Bob Watts has now been assigned as the head of the truth and reconciliation commission which will be up and running in the near future, in short months. Charlene Belleau diligently worked for years organizing conferences and trying to get the public's attention to alert Canadians that this was not some failed attempt to provide education.

The history of the Indian residential schools in this country was cultural genocide, plain and simple. Let us not use the words "an attempt to assimilate". Let us call it what it was. It was to beat the Indian out of these kids. It went on for year after year. The Government of Canada knew, the Government of Canada directed it, and it contracted this work out. The sooner we all look at the truth of what happened there, the sooner both sides can begin to heal.

•(1655)

It is a necessary prerequisite not only for first nations people but I believe for white society to come to grips with our relationship with first nations. That is necessary.

I would also like to recognize an organization on Vancouver Island at Nanoose Bay called Tsow-Tun Le Lum Society. It is a residential school survivors treatment centre. I attended and spent time with some of the elders there, all of whom were survivors of the Port Alberni School, one of the residential schools with the most appalling history of pedophilia and sexual abuse. These survivors deserve our collective apology and that will never be enough.

A second thing that haunts me from my experience, and I still have a hard time thinking about it, is an image left with us by another elder, a woman, who told us that in her village they had decided they would not send their children to these schools any more. The children came back with stories of being beaten and abused. She said that they were not going to let them have their children any more.

When the RCMP came and literally ripped the children from their homes and seized them, the most memorable thing about that was the silence in the community, the eerie silence left behind when the children were no longer in the community, when no children were playing. There was no laughter, no children playing any more, just the sounds of the parents weeping as their children disappeared again because some of them knew the reality of what was happening in those places. They were chambers of horror.

Some were educational institutions; some were chambers of horror. Generation after generation, where the older brother would come home and tell the little brother how he was beaten and abused and the little brother would then get sent to this place. Imagine the fear of being sent to these places.

Father to son, generation after generation, year after year and people could not say no. They could not keep their children from going because the RCMP would come and rip them from their home and then there would be the eerie silence in the community with no children left in it.

The witnesses told us the third thing that I will share with you, Mr. Speaker, that will stay with me forever. They themselves bore intergenerational guilt for not knowing how to love their children, for not knowing how to hug their children or nurture their children because the intergenerational communication of those parenting skills had been interrupted by being ripped out of their homes and sent away for 10 years in a row.

Let us not forget, this was not summer camp for two or three months. This is all year, every year, for 10 years in a row for many of these children. They now do not know how to show affection or to nurture or to parent their own children. Their own children are emotionally starved, even though they have never seen a residential school. Their parents were damaged and that is the intergenerational damage that I see every day on the streets of the inner city of Winnipeg.

I represent the largest off-reserve population in Canada. I see it every day where dysfunctional people trace many of their social problems to the intergenerational damage caused by the residential schools.

*Business of Supply*

It costs nothing to apologize, but let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what professionals and researchers say. The co-author of a recent report to the World Health Organization says that acknowledging the wrongs done to aboriginal people would significantly improve their health. The world realizes that an apology is healing and that the truth must be revealed, that there must be truth and reconciliation.

Lisa Jackson, from the university's indigenous health unit who co-authored this report, says that the social factors stemming from colonization are very significant, including the federal government's refusal to apologize for the past.

Cash is one thing and giving people compensation to help them get on with their lives and deal with the damage they have incurred and suffered is one thing, but it is no substitute for an apology. I would be proud if we could be a part of that, resulting from the motion that we have before us today.

• (1700)

**Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the passion and the very personal, stirring stories that the member from the New Democratic Party told us today.

A lot of us know, from our own conversations and our own interactions on these things, something of the depth and serious darkness that happened in a lot of different situations. There were those who had some positive experiences, but the forced taking of children from their parents and the intergenerational breakdown that he alluded to was unfortunately too often the case.

I want to gently chide my colleague in the House today for specifically referring to that as genocide. I think he well knows the UN definition of genocide. It is a very precise definition. It is not to be used in the kind of free-handed manner that he used it here.

We do not in any way want to lessen the travesty that occurred in terms of the residential schools, nor do we want to play loose with the language and describe it as something which according to the UN definition is a different category.

I would ask for the member's response on that. I think he is probably a modest enough and a humble enough man to acknowledge that maybe he went a little too far at that point. We do not want to play loose with these words and in any way diminish the meaning of these words that are used on the international scene.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I will not modify my remarks one iota. The term "cultural genocide" is entirely appropriate. In fact, cultural genocide is a systematic pulverization of a people's culture. It is a methodology frankly.

Those who study these things can point out that there are deliberate steps to be taken. They can tell people what to do if they are trying to stamp out a people's culture. Missionaries are sent in first and their religion is undermined. Their language is outlawed. Their cultural celebrations and their dances et cetera are banned. Systematic and deliberate things can be done when the motive is cultural genocide. Everything to do with the Indian residential schools matches that prerequisite list word for word.

I have heard some people say, even in the course of this debate, that many people did get a decent education at these residential

schools, that not everyone was physically and sexually abused. I am the first to admit that. But let me also say that being torn from the bosom of one's family against one's will year after year does constitute abuse in and of itself. That is where the loss of language and culture should be compensated.

I cannot forget a story told to me by Matthew Coon Come, the former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations. On his first day at a residential school, he and his little brother, who was six years old, were sent into the showers. They had never seen a shower before and when the water was turned on they thought it was marvellous. It was fantastic. His little brother asked if he should wash between his toes. A priest swooped into the room and beat him with a stick for speaking in his own language.

They were not allowed to speak Cree at that school. On their first day they were beaten while standing naked in a shower, something they had never seen before. Imagine their fear. If that was not a deliberate attempt at stamping out language and culture, it was a graphic illustration, and it is important that we recognize it today.

• (1705)

**Mr. Rod Bruinooge (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg Centre has obviously spent a lot of time on the aboriginal affairs committee with the current Minister of Indian Affairs and other members of the House working on this important agreement.

I would like to ask him a quick question. Members of the Liberal Party have been saying all day that our government has been dragging our feet on this topic. With the House sitting for the first time on April 4, 2006 and this agreement being ratified on May 6, does he see that as dragging our feet?

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, in all fairness we have to recognize that it was a breakthrough, that the logjam finally broke when this agreement and this settlement was reached.

Many people worked for years imploring the Liberal government of the day to achieve some kind of just resolution package. Whatever groundwork was done under the previous regime, the logjam broke under the present regime. I will give credit where credit is due.

However, we are missing one key element that is just as important as the monetary package and that is the apology. If the Prime Minister cannot do it, then I think the Speaker of the House of Commons should do it on behalf of all members of Parliament.

**Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the member for Winnipeg Centre for sharing his time and for his very passionate and very moving remarks. They also moved me.

*Business of Supply*

I would like to also tell a story about why the motion before us today is so important and why it is important for the House to apologize to the survivors of Indian residential schools for the trauma they suffered, for their loss of language and heritage and culture as a result of policies intended to assimilate first nation, Inuit and Métis children.

I have for members a story of one first nation, the Wuikinuxv, a small nation on the central coast of B.C. in my riding. It is their story, but sadly it is also the story of so many first nation, Inuit and Métis people. I will be quoting from a letter I received from them a few months ago, because first nations are often denied their own voice and no one can claim to describe the situation at the schools better than the survivors themselves.

**This is their story:**

What I remember about the school was being hungry all the time.

We used to eat what was growing wild in the ditch or field just to get enough to eat.

We went to school half a day and worked half a day.

He was about 6'4" and 250 pounds. He would put all his weight behind hitting you.

The shoes were rationed and given out on specific dates—if you grew out of your shoes or they wore out and had holes you had to wear them.

My sense of family was lost.

We became strangers to our parents.

Violence was a way of life in the institution—we learned how to control through violence.

I would ask myself, what did I do to deserve this?

I was ashamed to be an Indian.

I survived on what my mother said, "Don't lose your pride and self-respect".

These are some of the recollections of a few of the men and women from our community who attended various residential schools in British Columbia during their almost century and a quarter reign.

The stories are recounted by men and women who are now in their 40s, 50s and 60s, but it should not be forgotten that these dark and haunting memories stem from the experiences of young children during their years at Residential School.

Even now, their memories are clear, vivid and detailed. There are no happy ones. Only a few people were willing or, rather, able to publicly share their experiences. Most people do not want to remember. It is important to note that what was disclosed at this gathering only touched the surface of what happened to the children, their parents, families and community.

Our community, the Wuikinuxv First Nation, is located at Rivers Inlet on the central coast of British Columbia. We are a very small, relatively isolated community with a population of approximately 300 people. This number includes any and all people who can trace their ancestry back to us.

Our language, Oweekyala, is part of the Northern Wakashan language family that also includes Haisla, Heiltsuk and Kwakwaka'wakw.

Prior to contact, our population was estimated at over 5,000, making us the most numerous of the Central Coast tribes. Our deep connection with nature and its abundant natural resources allowed us to prosper, acquire and distribute wealth; [it] was the source of our independence and allowed us to develop a rich and complex cultural heritage....

Times, however, have changed and numerous societal and historical events led to the rapid deterioration of our cultural heritage and identity.

In an effort to deal with what had become known as the "Indian problem", several pieces of federal legislation were passed from the mid-to-late 1800s dealing with the advancement and civilization of the Indians.

In 1863, St. Mary's Mission, the first residential school in B.C., was opened to begin the "civilizing" process....

In less than a century, our complex social system was decimated.

After thousands of years of development, we were left with only the vestiges of an ancient system that enhanced, protected and ensured our survival.

The legacy left by the residential school system has been particularly harsh on our entire community and, given our population and geographic location, difficult to withstand and overcome.

The near extinction of our language and the loss of our cultural identity and practices have left us at the brink of losing our entire cultural heritage.

The impact on adult survivors has been profound and its effects numerous and long-lasting. Many turned to alcohol to cope with and ease their pain; they've experienced intense feelings of isolation, felt lost and had no one or nowhere to turn to.

• (1710)

They've struggled through every aspect of their daily lives because of very low self-esteem.

Their years of being away from their parents and living an institutionalized existence left them without parenting and social skills.

Additionally, we are left to deal with issues such as apathy, dysfunction, trauma, multi-generational grief, family violence and break-up, suicide, abuse and alcohol and drug addiction as a result of generations of our people being forced to attend residential school.

At the Workshop held in September, the participants identified, through memory alone, 115 people who had attended residential schools. A couple of the participants were third generation attendees.

**This was from a band of only 300. The letter continued:**

Those who had not attended felt as though they had because of the intergenerational impacts they had suffered through, such as being taken into foster care where their situations and treatment [were] not much better than residential school.

It is very evident from their statements that at a personal level there is still a tremendous amount of emotional pain, sadness and anger attached to this issue.

One of the most compelling outcomes of the workshop was the identification that the rebuilding of our cultural heritage was essential to our individual healing needs, our overall community wellness and future development. Cultural renewal was seen to be an effective and holistic approach to addressing the Legacy and helping to facilitate healing and reconciliation.

The revitalization of all aspects of our cultural heritage will greatly assist in the restoration of our pride, power and self-esteem. Our cultural heritage includes our language, dances, songs, social practices, our potlaches and feasts, our totem poles and other artefacts, our sacred and cultural sites, our ancient knowledge and skills.

The return of our culture will provide us with a sense of identity and community. It will reconnect us with our past and provide us with a firm grounding in the future.

The people of Wuikinuxv want to be able to access and receive treatment, to heal fully and holistically, to restore their cultural heritage and identity, and to be adequately compensated for the legacy left by the residential schools system so they can begin the process of rebuilding.

• (1715)

*[Translation]*

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those in favour of the amendment will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Call in the members.

• (1750)

[English]

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(Division No. 167)

**YEAS**

Members

Abbott	Ablonczy
Alghabra	Allen
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	André
Angus	Arthur
Asselin	Atamanenko
Bachand	Bagnell
Bains	Baird
Barbot	Batters
Beaumier	Bélangier
Bell (Vancouver Island North)	Bell (North Vancouver)
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Bigras	Black
Blackburn	Blais
Bonin	Bouchard
Boucher	Breitkreuz
Brown (Oakville)	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Byrne	Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country)
Cannis	Cardin
Carrie	Carrier
Casey	Chan
Charlton	Chong
Chow	Clement
Comartin	Cotler
Crête	Crowder
Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)	Cullen (Etobicoke North)
Cuzner	D'Amours
Davidson	Davies
Day	DeBellefeuille
Del Mastro	Demers
Deschamps	Devolin
Dewar	Dhaliwal
Dhalla	Dion
Dosanjh	Doyle
Dryden	Duceppe
Dykstra	Easter
Epp	Eyking
Faille	Fast
Finley	Fitzpatrick
Flaherty	Fletcher
Folco	Freeman
Fry	Gagnon
Galipeau	Gallant
Gaudet	Gauthier
Godfrey	Godin
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gourde
Graham	Gravel
Grewal	Guarnieri
Guay	Guergis
Guimond	Harper
Harris	Harvey
Hawn	Hearn
Hiebert	Hill
Hinton	Holland
Hubbard	Ignatieff

Jaffer  
Jennings  
Kadis  
Karygiannis  
Keeper  
Khan  
Kotto  
Laframboise  
Lauzon  
Layton  
Lee  
Lemieux  
Lévesque  
Lunn  
Lussier  
MacKenzie  
Malo  
Manning  
Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)  
Mathysen  
McCallum  
McGuinty  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)  
Merrifield  
Mills  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)  
Neville  
Norlock  
Oda  
Owen  
Paquette  
Patry  
Peterson  
Picard  
Prentice  
Priddy  
Ratansi  
Regan  
Richardson  
Robillard  
Rota  
Russell  
Savoie  
Scheer  
Sgro  
Siksay  
Skelton  
Solberg  
St-Cyr  
St. Amand  
Stanton  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Telegdi  
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)  
Thibault (West Nova)  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Tilson  
Tonks  
Tweed  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Vincent  
Wallace  
Warawa  
Watson  
Williams  
Wrzesnewskyj  
Zed- — 257

*Business of Supply*

Jean  
Julian  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Laforest  
Lake  
Lavallée  
LeBlanc  
Lemay  
Lessard  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
MacAulay  
Malhi  
Maloney  
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)  
Masse  
Mayes  
McDonough  
McGuire  
Ménard (Hochelaga)  
Merasty  
Miller  
Minna  
Mourani  
Murphy (Charlottetown)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Ouellet  
Pacetti  
Paradis  
Perron  
Petit  
Plamondon  
Preston  
Proulx  
Redman  
Reid  
Ritz  
Rodriguez  
Roy  
Savage  
Scarpaleggia  
Schellenberger  
Shiple  
Simms  
Smith  
Sorenson  
St-Hilaire  
St. Denis  
Steckle  
Strahl  
Szabo  
Temelkovski

**NAYS**

Nil

**PAIRED**

Members

Bonsant	Brunelle
Casson	Emerson
Lalonde	MacKay (Central Nova)— 6

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## STATUS OF WOMEN

The House resumed from April 30 consideration of the motion.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion to concur in the 16th report of the Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

**Hon. Jay Hill:** Mr. Speaker, I think if you were to seek it, you would find unanimous consent to apply the results of the vote just taken to the motion presently before the House, with Conservative members present this evening voting opposed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this way?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Hon. Karen Redman:** Mr. Speaker, Liberal members will be voting in favour of this motion. However, I would like to point out that the member for Scarborough Southwest has left the chamber.

[Translation]

**Mr. Michel Guimond:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the Bloc Québécois will vote in favour of this motion.

**Mr. Yvon Godin:** Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP will vote in favour of this motion.

**Mr. André Arthur:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against this motion.

**Ms. Louise Thibault:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting in favour of this motion.

[English]

**Mr. Brian Pallister:** Mr. Speaker, I vote no to the motion.

**Mr. Art Hanger:** Mr. Speaker, I will be voting against the motion.

(The House divided on the motion, which was agreed to on the following division:)

*(Division No. 168)***YEAS**

## Members

Alhabra	André
Angus	Asselin
Atamanenko	Bachand
Bagnell	Bains
Barbot	Beaumier
Bélanger	Bell (Vancouver Island North)
Bell (North Vancouver)	Bellavance
Bennett	Bevington
Bigras	Black
Blais	Bonin
Bouchard	Brown (Oakville)
Byrne	Cannis
Cardin	Carrier
Chan	Charlton
Chow	Comartin
Cotler	Crête
Crowder	Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley)
Cullen (Etobicoke North)	Cuzner
D'Amours	Davies
DeBellefeuille	Demers
Deschamps	Dewar
Dhaliwal	Dhalla

Dion	Dosanjh
Dryden	Duceppe
Easter	Eyking
Faille	Folco
Freeman	Fry
Gagnon	Gaudet
Gauthier	Godfrey
Godin	Goodale
Graham	Gravel
Guarnieri	Guay
Guimond	Holland
Hubbard	Ignatieff
Jennings	Julian
Kadis	Karygiannis
Keeper	Kotto
Laforest	Laframboise
Lavallée	Layton
LeBlanc	Lee
Lemay	Lessard
Lévesque	Lussier
MacAulay	Malhi
Malo	Maloney
Martin (Winnipeg Centre)	Martin (Sault Ste. Marie)
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McDonough
McGuinty	McGuire
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Ménard (Hochelaga)
Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin)	Merasty
Minna	Mourani
Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe)	Murphy (Charlottetown)
Neville	Ouellet
Owen	Pacetti
Paquette	Patry
Perron	Peterson
Picard	Plamondon
Priddy	Proulx
Ratansi	Redman
Regan	Robillard
Rodriguez	Rota
Roy	Russell
Savage	Savoie
Scarpaleggia	Sgro
Siksay	Simms
St-Cyr	St-Hilaire
St. Amand	St. Denis
Steeckle	Szabo
Telegdi	Temelkovski
Thibault (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques)	
Thibault (West Nova)	
Tonks	Valley
Vincent	Volpe
Wasylycia-Leis	Wilfert
Wilson	Wrzesnewskyj
Zed- — 149	

**NAYS**

## Members

Ablonczy
Ambrose
Anderson
Baird
Benoit
Bezan
Boucher
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Carrie
Chong
Davidson
Del Mastro
Doyle
Epp
Finley
Flaherty
Galipeau
Goldring
Gourde
Guergis
Harper
Harvey
Hearn
Hill

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Hinton  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Khan  
Lake  
Lemieux  
Lunn  
MacKenzie  
Mayes  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
Oda  
Paradis  
Prentice  
Reid  
Ritz  
Schellenberger  
Skelton  
Solberg  
Stanton  
Strahl  
Thompson (New Brunswick Southwest)  
Tilson  
Trost  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
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Jaffer  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Komarnicki  
Lauzon  
Lukiwski  
Lunney  
Manning  
Merrifield  
Mills  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Pallister  
Petit  
Preston  
Richardson  
Scheer  
Shipley  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Thompson (Wild Rose)  
Toews  
Tweed  
Van Loan  
Verner  
Warawa  
Williams

## PAIRED

## Members

Bonsant  
Casson  
Lalonde

Brunelle  
Emerson  
MacKay (Central Nova)— 6

**The Deputy Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

Is there unanimous consent to see the clock as 6:30 p.m. so we can proceed with the adjournment debate immediately, and therefore adjourn the House earlier than we otherwise might?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1755)

[*English*]

## THE BUDGET

**Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in the House I asked a question of the Prime Minister, who had spoken so very eloquently about his budget being one that would bring peace to the provinces forever. That was not even close to the truth.

We have seen since then that many provinces do not agree with the budget, that many provinces have in fact spoken out very vocally against the budget. In terms of this peace forever more budget, four provinces are opposed to it and one province has even threatened to take the government to court on the budget.

I was a bit concerned about the flippancy with which my original question had been greeted. I wanted to ask the questions because the response from the finance minister about the lack of enthusiasm for his budget was a non-answer.

I and my fellow MPs in the Liberal Party are not the only ones who lack enthusiasm for this budget. On the very day the peace among the provinces budget was announced, many premiers let their anger at its unfairness be known. The Premier of B.C. accused the government of breaking promises with regard to the Pacific Gateway, for the pine beetle infestation and child care.

B.C. was so badly treated with regard to equalization payments that one had to wonder whether the B.C. Conservative ministers had any input into the budget. B.C. was denied equalization payments for the first two years because the federal government added property values to the formula. B.C. is known to have the highest property values in Canada.

Property values are no indicator of the province's wealth. Unless B.C. sells all of its crown land, the wealth is an illusion. As the premier of B.C. himself said, "property values in British Columbia went up by about 24 per cent last year".

Housing and homelessness are major problems in B.C., even though the government had nothing in its budget about housing.

The risk of flooding in the Fraser Valley is the highest in 200 years. The threat of flood could damage farms, livestock and homes, not to mention the public health risk of sewage contamination of drinking water. The province has put up \$33 million and municipalities have put up what they could afford. The dikes need to be raised and the riverbed needs to be dredged enough so it does not damage salmon habitat.

The Minister of Agriculture lives in that area, but there is nothing in the budget to assist with this urgent need for his region. He might as well be blind, deaf and dumb to the urgency of the situation. Once again, the government has left the province holding the bag.

British Columbia is not the only province affected. I want to quote what the New Brunswick finance minister had to say. He said:

If (the budget) was to fix the fiscal imbalance, as far as New Brunswick is concerned, I wouldn't give it a passing mark. I am a little disappointed considering how much money the federal government did have to work with in terms of addressing the various issues. And when we talk about the equalization formula, it represents approximately \$42 million more. That's far short from what we hoped to receive.

Lorne Calvert, the Saskatchewan premier, had this to say:

What we have here is a broken promise; what we have is a betrayal of a promise made to the people of Saskatchewan.

Rodney MacDonald, the Nova Scotia premier, had this to say:

It's almost as if they want to continue giving handouts to Nova Scotians rather than us keeping our offshore accord, and that to me is fundamentally unfair.

I am asking a question about the fact that this budget was supposed to be the end of fighting among premiers. This budget has divided Canadians. It has divided provinces and—

● (1800)

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

*Adjournment Proceedings*

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I understand that for electoral purposes it is the job of the opposition to try to stir up dissatisfaction with what the government does, but I think a few facts would be helpful in this situation.

It was not contemplated that every province would agree 100% with everything in the budget; that is not the way confederation works. Of course with respect to the fiscal balance and equalization, the provinces did not agree even among themselves about what should be done, but what the government did was to put the equalization program and the transfers to the provinces on a predictable, principled, sustainable, long term track that will give closure and certainty to this important aspect of confederation.

The member opposite shows a lack of understanding of the budget process when she says that certain moneys were not transferred for programs. In fact, the budget is for a two year timeframe. Some of these programs are over a longer period. These amounts that have been promised for things like fighting the pine beetle had been fully booked and will be budgeted on an ongoing basis on the life of the program.

With respect to property values, this was an important element of moving to a simplified system with a 10 province standard. It was recommended. We took the recommendations of the independent panel which was set up by the Liberals themselves.

British Columbia is the single biggest winner on the infrastructure front, which will help the province deal with issues such as the need for water and dikes and other infrastructure. The province will receive almost \$5 billion over seven years to deal with these issues. In addition, our total commitment to the Pacific Gateway will be \$1 billion. These are huge amounts, huge wins to deal with issues in the province of British Columbia, where my hon. friend comes from.

The budget also provides \$4.7 billion, almost \$5 billion, for federal support for British Columbia for things like health care and the social transfer.

Our commitment of \$1 billion to fight the pine beetle is fully booked. I might add, and the hon. member knows, that her own government did absolutely nothing when this problem came to the fore. In spite of pleas and cries from British Columbia to deal with it, there was nothing from the federal government under the Liberals. We put \$1 billion on the books to deal with that important issue.

British Columbia is a province that is an economic powerhouse. It has a strong economy that is getting stronger. It is a major trade route for emerging economies in the Far East and the Pacific Gateway. It will host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games which will have economic spinoffs.

People throughout British Columbia should be proud of their province, proud of this great country, proud of the fact that we are working together with British Columbia to strengthen its economy and contribute to its future. This is something to celebrate, not to decry and to try to cast a negative light on, because under our government, British Columbia has prospered and will continue to prosper.

I might point out that under the leadership of one of the member's colleagues, the member for Vancouver South, in fact for the province of British Columbia, times were not good under that leadership. The province had to rely on equalization—

• (1805)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. member for Vancouver Centre.

**Hon. Hedy Fry:** Mr. Speaker, that is hilarious and you do not have to take my word for it. I suppose the premiers do not understand the budget process either, because the premier of Newfoundland and Labrador had this to say the day after the budget:

The Prime Minister...came to our province...and he made a promise...that natural resource revenues would be removed from the equalization formula.... Yesterday, [the day after the budget] [the Prime Minister] told the people of Newfoundland and Labrador...that his promises...do not count.

Here is another promise. The government claims to be tough on crime. It promised 2,500 new police officers to municipalities across Canada. When they complained that there was nothing in the budget, the national security minister told them to go to the provinces, the same provinces that have been shortchanged.

The minister's response to the real needs of communities reminds me of Marie Antoinette's infamous response to the people of Paris when they were begging for bread, "Let them eat cake". It was that same kind of shrug, that insensitive answer that the Minister of Finance gave to my serious question.

When will the government turn off the smoke machine, turn down the carousel music and the laugh track—

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

**Ms. Diane Ablonczy:** Mr. Speaker, I would urge my friend opposite to consult with the people of her province about this budget, people like the chief executive officer for the Olympic organizing committee, who praised the budget and said it was a great reminder of how the Government of Canada along with the province of British Columbia are working together to guarantee Canadian athletes the support they need.

She should listen to the president of the Mining Association of Canada who called the budget "a huge boost to British Columbia".

Maybe she should read the *Vancouver Sun*, her own local newspaper, which heralded the budget and said, "it clearly has principles and a vision".

This is a tremendous budget for British Columbia. It is a tremendous budget for all the provinces. It is a tremendous budget even for the chronic perennial naysayers. I believe the member opposite will have a very difficult time explaining to her constituents and to herself why she intends to vote against such a good budget for her province and for this country.

**The Deputy Speaker:** It being 6:07 p.m., this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24 (1).

(The House adjourned at 6:07 p.m.)







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