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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, November 22, 2007

—

Speaker: The Honourable Peter Milliken

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, November 22, 2007

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*English*]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to four petitions.

While I am on my feet, I would like to draw to the attention of the House the significance of today. Today is, of course, as we all know, one day closer to the Saskatchewan Roughriders winning the Grey Cup.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the delegation of the Canadian branch of the Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie, concerning their participation in the meeting of the Bureau of the APF and the 23rd regular session of the APF in Libreville, Gabon, from July 2 to 6, 2007.

The Speaker: The hon. member has jumped ahead a little, since we have not yet announced the presentation of reports by interparliamentary delegations. However, I am sure that the members will not have a problem with the presentation at this time. It is now done.

* * *

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act (accountability with respect to loans).

He said: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to special order made previously, I would like to inform the House that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-54 was at the time of prorogation.

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

The Speaker: The Chair is satisfied that this bill is in the same form as Bill C-54 was at the time of prorogation of the first session of the 39th Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, pursuant to order made on Thursday, October 25, 2007, the bill is deemed read the second time, referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs and reported with amendments.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

[*English*]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Russ Hiebert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34 (1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, two reports from the Canadian branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association concerning the CPA UK Branch Parliamentary seminar held in London and Bristol, England, as well as Brussels, Belgium, from June 10 to 22, 2007, and the 32nd regional conference of the Caribbean, the Americas and the Atlantic region held in Grand Cayman Islands from June 24 to 30, 2007.

* * *

PETITIONS

CN LOCOMOTIVE ROUNDHOUSE

Hon. Carol Skelton (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, the people of Saskatchewan are very proud of all things, like the very best football team in Canada, but I also want to talk about something that is really bothering the citizens of the Biggar area, and that is the possible destruction of the railway roundhouse. We would like Heritage Canada to declare it an official heritage site.

I am honoured to present this petition on behalf of the people of Biggar and area.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

PASSPORT CANADA

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in the spring, I tabled a petition on behalf of the residents and taxpayers of Abitibi—Témiscamingue, Abitibi—Baie-James and northern Quebec in response to the minister's answer, which the citizens felt was unacceptable. The minister sees Passport Canada as a private company and not as a company that must provide equitable service to all Canadians.

I would like to table another petition from these citizens, calling on the minister to reconsider his position on having a passport office in northern Quebec.

[English]

TAXATION

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, divorced fathers help support and nurture their children. They have part-time custody, pay child support, and are not permitted to claim a child on their income tax returns.

I have 25 signatures on a petition from my riding who would like Parliament to amend the Income Tax Act to allow a divorced father who has part-time custody of his child and pays child support to his former spouse to be able to claim a child as a dependant on his income tax return.

•(1010)

The Speaker: Could we revert to first reading of Senate public bills? Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

CANADA-UNITED STATES TAX CONVENTION ACT, 1984

Hon. Peter Van Loan (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill S-2, An Act to amend the Canada-United States Tax Convention Act, 1984 be read the first time.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

* * *

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, the following questions will be answered today: Question Nos. 23, 24, 41, 45, 56, 79 and 84.

[Text]

Question No. 23—**Mr. Bill Casey:**

With respect to the Nappan Experimental Farm, located in the community of Nappan, Nova Scotia: (a) what are the near-term plans of the government for the downsizing or relocation of employees from this location to other research centres in Canada; (b) what are the plans of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) for the near-term, and long-term improvement of expanding or improving the infrastructure at the Nappan Experimental Farm; and (c) is the government considering closing or reducing the scope of the Nappan Experimental Farm and, if so, what are the details and plans of AAFC for community consultations?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's, AAFC, Nappan Research

Farm is in full operation with both animal and crop research underway. In June 2007, AAFC organized consultations through a workshop on priorities for organic agricultural research in the Atlantic region that was held at Nappan with representatives from the provincial governments of Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and organic producers from across the region. The consensus among participants was that an organic research strategy is needed, and Nappan could play an important role, as a certified organic farm, in this strategy that will seek to expand organic research in Atlantic Canada.

a) As part of that strategy, Nappan could become a hub for organic research undertaken by scientists from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and collaborating organizations or institutions. There are currently two professional staff located at Nappan, a soil scientist and a part-time livestock biologist. The soil scientist will re-locate to AAFC's research centre in Kentville, Nova Scotia in April of 2008 placing him within a group of professionals in complementary disciplines, thus facilitating research for the benefit of agricultural producers. The part-time livestock biologist will also likely relocate to the Nova Scotia agricultural college in Truro sometime in 2008. These relocations make good business sense in building critical masses of scientists that focus on specific research questions. In the meantime, a human resources plan will be developed to meet new proposed scientific directions for Nappan.

b) A full complement of technical and support staff remain in place at Nappan; a competitive process to staff a new herdsman position is now underway. The near term plans are thus to ensure the technical capacity at Nappan and support the concept of the farm as a facility to undertake integrated crop/livestock organic research. Meanwhile discussions are underway with the Atlantic provinces in the context of growing forward, the federal government's new agricultural policy initiative to define programs, roles and responsibilities to support agricultural innovation. These discussions will include resources such as Nappan.

AAFC has approved a number of health and safety projects that range from the repair of electrical distribution system to the replacement of feed mangers as identified by a Canadian Council on Animal Care report conducted in fiscal year 05/06. AAFC is also acting on a number of other issues as a result of a building condition report, and over the past three years the Department has spent approximately \$300K in infrastructure costs for the continued safe operation of the farm.

Routine Proceedings

c) The AAFC's science and innovation strategy seeks to build science and innovation capacity to create new growth opportunities for Canadian agriculture, and other sectors of the economy. AAFC is implementing the strategy, and exploring options and opportunities with provincial governments, universities, private sector and communities to position AAFC science activities and resources with a critical mass.

With respect to the Atlantic region, a university/industry/AAFC / provincial consultation took place on June 12, 2007 to discuss priorities for organic agriculture in the Atlantic region, including Nappan. Following these consultations, the Nappan experimental farm has been identified as a potential key research site for conducting an enhanced program with partners such as the Nova Scotia agricultural college in Truro, Nova Scotia, in organic research for livestock and crops for which there are new markets and increased consumer demand. Plans centred on AAFC's science and innovation strategy including the engagement of Nappan as an organic experimental farm are being developed. In these plans, Nappan could become a facility resourced with technical personnel and a farm crew supporting on-site experiments. The existing research infrastructure at the Nappan experimental farm could be well suited to this unique role.

Question No. 24—Mr. Lloyd St. Amand:

With regard to tobacco farmers: (a) is the government working on a tobacco exit strategy for tobacco farmers in Ontario and, if so, what policy options are being considered; (b) when will the government provide a buyout package to tobacco farmers with a concrete timeline for the implementation and distribution of a package; and (c) what additional plans does the government have to support tobacco farmers in Ontario who have been affected by the decline of the tobacco industry in recent years?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows:

a) The government understands the serious circumstances that Ontario's tobacco growers are forced to deal with. It is in light of these circumstances that our government continues to examine policy options to facilitate transition within the Ontario tobacco sector.

As we continue to evaluate and identify possible solutions for the sector, it will be paramount to ensure that any possible solutions take into account the broader needs of the entire agricultural sector.

b) It should be understood that the means to facilitate transition within the tobacco sector have not yet been determined. However, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is committed to continued examination of transition options for the sector.

As policy options are tabled and evaluated, it will be essential to develop solutions in collaboration with federal partners, industry and the Government of Ontario.

c) Previously, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada assisted the repositioning of the tobacco industry through the tobacco adjustment assistance program. This program allocated \$67M to facilitate the exit of 279 flue-cured tobacco growers.

Currently Ontario tobacco producers have access to the same programming as other commodity groups through our business risk

management programs such as: the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program, production insurance, spring credit advance program and the advance payments program. In addition, Ontario's tobacco farmers may also take advantage of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada renewal programming that offers farm business planning, debt mediation and advisory services.

The future growing forward agricultural policy framework will continue to help producers seize opportunities and respond to market demands in a manner that promotes innovation and profitability. Any programming available through growing forward will be available to the entire sector, including tobacco growers.

Question No. 41—Mr. Nathan Cullen:

With respect to the impact, costs, benefits, consultations and studies on climate change as they relate to environmental legislation before Parliament: (a) what studies have been commissioned with respect to the economic costs of implementing Bill C-30, An Act to amend the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999, the Energy Efficiency Act and the Motor Vehicle Fuel Consumption Standards Act (Canada's Clean Air Act), as amended by the Legislative Committee on Bill C-30, including the list of titles, authors, dates of publication and brief synopsis of each; (b) how would meeting the targets set out in the amended version of Bill C-30 help mitigate the costs of climate change to the Canadian economy; (c) what would the economic benefits to the Canadian economy be if the measures outlined in the amended version of Bill C-30 were implemented; (d) were external consultations on the costs of Bill C-288, An Act to ensure Canada meets its global climate change obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, undertaken with organizations or individuals other than for the report released by the Minister of the Environment entitled "The Cost of Bill C-288 to Canadian Families and Business" and for the environmental regulatory plan entitled "Turning the Corner", and (i) if so, what organizations or individuals were consulted and why were they not included in the report on Bill C-288, (ii) if not, why did the government not seek the input of other stakeholders, in particular leading Canadian environmental organizations; and (e) applying the same economic methodologies used for both of the documents mentioned in (d), what would be the approximate health savings of the amended version of Bill C-30?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada did not commission nor undertake analysis assessing the economic costs of implementing Bill C-30, as amended by the Legislative Committee on Bill C-30. However, C-30 as amended did incorporate an obligation by Canada to fully meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets under the Kyoto protocol, which the Government has examined in the context of its review of the former C-288, now the Kyoto Protocol Implementation Act. In that analysis, it was concluded that full compliance with Canada's Kyoto targets, after years of inaction, would result in more than 275,000 jobs lost and a reduction in personal disposal income of about \$4,000 for a Canadian family of four in 2009. Energy prices would go up considerably: more than double for natural gas, 50% for electricity, and gasoline, which is today about one dollar a litre would, on average, cost \$1.60 a litre over the 2008-2009 period.

Routine Proceedings

This would plunge the country into a deep recession in 2008. Canada's GDP would decline by over 6.5 percent from expected levels in 2008. GDP in 2008 would fall to 4.2 percent below that of 2007. By comparison, the deepest recession since World War II was in 1981-82, when the GDP fell by 4.9 percent. In actual dollars, the predicted recession would result in a decline in national economic activity in 2008 in the range of \$51 billion below 2007 levels.

These results were supported by the leading Canadian experts in the field of macroeconomic modeling and macroeconomic analysis of Canada's GHG mitigation options. These individuals were identified in the report entitled: *The cost of Bill C-288 to Canadian families and business*, released on April 19, 2007.

Environment Canada also assessed the potential economic impacts of introducing regulatory limits on industrial emissions of greenhouse gases and air pollutants, as described in the regulatory framework for air emissions, as published by the Government of Canada on April 26, 2007. Its conclusions were that, by adopting an approach that respects Canada's national circumstances and provides business and citizens with the time to adjust to a carbon-constrained world, the regulatory framework will achieve significant reductions in Canada's greenhouse gas emissions with minimal impact on energy prices, personal income and employment, and the economy overall.

In assessing the economic impact of both the former C-288 and the government's industrial regulatory package, Environment Canada used its in-house economic modeling framework—E3MC.

Question No. 45—Ms. Tina Keeper:

With respect to the government's funding to the provinces and territories to support the launch of a \$300 million national program for the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine announced in the budget tabled in March 2007: (a) how much of this funding has been distributed to the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada to be further distributed to provide the vaccine to First Nations women and girls living on reserve; (b) what steps has the government taken to promote the vaccine to rural, northern and urban First Nations women and girls, living both on and off reserve; (c) what steps are being taken to ensure better screening, prevention and treatment of HPV for First Nations women and girls, particularly in rural and northern communities; and (d) how much funding has been provided to implement an HPV awareness campaign, including the augmentation of information, distribution of materials, and other related research for the Aboriginal population?

Hon. Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows:

a) Federal budget 2007 included a \$300 million contribution to provinces and territories to support the introduction of publicly-funded HPV vaccination programs over the next three years. The funding will be allocated on a per capita basis, including Inuit and First Nations. The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, FNIHB, has ensured that the wording of the trust fund agreement and HPV operating principles reflect the inclusion of First Nations and Inuits as provincial or territorial residents.

b) FNIHB is collaborating with the Assembly of First Nations, AFN, to increase the cultural relevancy of HPV vaccination program implementation and related educational materials, aimed at both the public and health professionals. The AFN has been engaged to provide feedback on the anticipated impact of the introduction of HPV programs on First Nations, and is working with First Nations

communities to understand the knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of First Nations with respect to the HPV vaccine.

c) Statistics reported in the First Nations longitudinal regional health survey 2002/03, the Manitoba cervical cancer screening program 2002 statistical report and the Northern Saskatchewan health indicators report 2004 suggest that pap uptake by First Nations women mirrors that of the general population, including in rural and isolated regional health authority areas. Statistics gathering and review continues, and will inform FNIHB/Public Health Agency of Canada consultations on HPV surveillance research, as well as, information sharing within FNIHB and with the national aboriginal organizations.

d) The FNIHB is working with the Assembly of First Nations to better understand the unique educational and cultural needs of First Nations with respect to HPV vaccine awareness. Once this work is complete, First Nations and Inuit Health Branch will be able to assess the resource requirements to meet the identified need in the on-reserve population.

Question No. 56—Mr. Alex Atamanenko:

How much federal funding, from all sources, has the government spent on research, development and promotion of Genetic Use Restriction Technology (GURTS) since 1993?

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food and Minister for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Genetic use restriction technology, GURT, means a technology-imposed restriction on the use of genetic material. Although GURT has been referred to as "terminator technology", it must be noted that terminator technology should not be equated with all types of GURT. There are many GURTs that allow the production of viable seeds and therefore would not be considered to be terminator technology.

There are basically two kinds of GURT:

1. Trait-GURTs, T-GURTs, regulate the expression of a specific transgenic trait in plants while enabling plants to remain fertile and set viable seeds.
2. Varietal-GURTs, V-GURTs, impede transgene* movement, either by rendering the plant unable to develop properly, or to produce functional pollen or seed, or by preventing the transmission of the transgene, such that the occurrence or frequency of the transgene is significantly reduced in the subsequent generation.

From 1993 to present, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, AAFC, has not conducted research, development and promotion on T-GURTs or V-GURTs, thus funding is nil.

Routine Proceedings

The only related research that has been conducted at AAFC is described as non-GURT. The research conducted at AAFC does not prevent the re-seeding of transgenic material; it only prevents the mixing of transgenes with unwanted varieties or with wild plants. The main purpose of this research was to discover ways to prevent gene flow, which is the escape of the transgene, to other plants that do not carry the same transgene. This technology is at the proof of concept stage and re-seeding material equipped with this technology is not restricted and thus produces viable seeds. The AAFC research and development funding from 1993 to the present for this work is \$2 million and no resources were spent on its promotion.

* A transgene is a gene, the fundamental unit of heredity, that is taken from the genome, the total set of an organism's genes, of one organism and introduced by artificial techniques into the genome of another organism.

Question No. 79—Mr. Paul Zed:

What funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government through its various departments and agencies issued in the constituencies of Saint John, Fundy Royal, New Brunswick Southwest, and Tobique—Mactaquac, respectively, for the period of January 24, 2006 to September 30, 2007 inclusive, and in each case where applicable: (a) the program under which the payment was made; (b) the names of the recipients; (c) the monetary value of the payment made; and (d) the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Government information on funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees issued by departments and agencies is based on parliamentary authorities for departmental or agency programs and activities. This information is listed by department and government organization in the public accounts and disclosed on the web sites of government organizations. However, government organizations do not compile or analyze expenditure information by electoral district. Consequently, at present, it would not be possible to provide the information in the form requested.

Over the course of the 39th Parliament, a number of Government organizations have undertaken efforts to identify federal expenditures by postal codes which could then be summarized by electoral districts using a tool developed by Statistics Canada. While there is some promise in this approach, there remains a significant potential for error since many postal codes straddle two or more electoral districts. Moreover, the Government would have significant concerns about the quality of the financial data derived by this approach because there is no way to track the geographic area in which federal funding is actually spent. For example, federal funding could be provided to the head office of a firm situated in one electoral district, while the funding was actually spent by a subsidiary located in another electoral district. This may also be the case for payments to individuals, organizations or foundations. For these reasons, and the fact that fewer than half of Government organizations have acquired the Statistics Canada tool, it is not possible to produce an accurate and comprehensive answer to this question at the present time.

That said, Statistics Canada has initiated a process to enhance the accuracy of the tool that provides the link between postal codes and electoral districts. The process will allow departments which use the tool to better approximate by electoral district data gathered on a

postal code basis. The improved tool is expected to be available at the end of January 2008, and training for Government organizations on the use of this tool is planned for February—March 2008.

Question No. 84—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With respect to the use of nuclear power and the Alberta oil sands: (a) what is the government's position on the use of nuclear power to extract oil; (b) what studies and evaluations have been prepared, requested or commissioned by the government; (c) what individuals, department or organization undertook these studies; (d) what is the cost of these studies; (e) what are the findings and recommendations of these studies; (f) what recommendations does the government agree with; (g) what are the dates of publication or submission, and titles of each of these studies; (h) what environmental assessments have been undertaken with respect to the use of nuclear power in the oil sands and what are the findings and recommendations of these studies; (i) what studies have been undertaken concerning the disposal and containment of nuclear waste arising from power plants that are expected to be constructed in the future; (j) what marketing strategies related to the construction of nuclear power plants have been received by the government from oil and gas companies, including but not limited to Royal Dutch Shell PLC and Energy Alberta Corp; (k) what is the earliest date construction of a nuclear power plant could start; (l) what locations are being considered for construction; and (m) what is the estimated cost of construction for any power plants under consideration?

Hon. Gary Lunn (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the response is as follows:

a) While the federal government has important responsibilities relating to nuclear energy, electricity and the ownership and management of natural resources are under provincial jurisdiction. As such, provinces and utilities, acting under provincial laws, are responsible for determining the generation mix. As well, the provincial jurisdiction over resource management includes the technology by which extraction is performed, including the method of steam production for a steam-based process. Thus, it will be industry, working within the framework of provincial laws and regulations, that will determine whether nuclear energy is used to extract oil from the oil sands.

The Government of Canada regulates all aspects of the nuclear fuel cycle including activities, materials and facilities. To this end, the Government has established one of the most stringent regulatory regimes in the world, administered by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, CNSC. Any proposal to build new nuclear power stations in Canada would have to meet all requirements of the Nuclear Safety and Control Act and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act in addition to relevant provincial laws, regulations and policies.

The response to b), c), d), e), f), and g) is as follows: Natural Resources Canada has joined with the province of Alberta and oil sands companies to sponsor an independent study to assess the technical, practical and economic application of nuclear technologies in the oil sands. It is anticipated that the first phase of the study will be completed late this year. The cost of the study is \$384,000 with the federal government contributing \$96,000 towards the total. The study is part of the "Alternative Energy Solutions to Replace Natural Gas for Oil Sands Development" study. This study on nuclear does not have a title of its own at this time.

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h) No Environmental Assessments, EA, have yet been initiated with respect to the use of nuclear power in the oil sands. However, on August 27, 2007, Energy Alberta Corporation, EAC, filed an application with the CNSC to prepare a site for the potential construction of new reactors near Peace River, Alberta. The CNSC will be able to initiate the EA process when EAC's Project Description is filed with the CNSC. The CNSC has extensive experience with EAs, the first step of this regulatory process, and works closely with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and other federal and provincial agencies to ensure an effective and efficient EA process that follows the requirements of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. The EA must be completed before the commission can issue a site licence, the first licence in a series for any new nuclear power plant.

i) In 2002, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act came into force and required nuclear energy corporations to establish the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, NWMO, to manage all of Canada's used nuclear fuel waste— that exists now and that will be produced in the future.

On June 14, 2007, the Government announced its decision to select the adaptive phased management, APM, plan that was recommended by the NWMO for the long-term management of nuclear fuel waste in Canada. The APM plan was primarily designed to handle nuclear fuel waste coming from Canada's existing reactors. The approach was tested against many future nuclear fuel waste scenarios and it was found to be technically capable of dealing with additional quantities of nuclear fuel waste. The NWMO will continue research and testing to ensure that its plans and programs address new circumstances and remain robust.

j) Energy Alberta Corporation has made presentations to the federal government as well as the House Standing Committee on Natural Resources regarding the company's plans to bring CANDU technology to Alberta. The government has also received copies of an AREVA presentation, which outlines the potential they see for nuclear in the oil sands. The Government has not received any presentations from oil and gas companies.

k) The applications received for site licences for new nuclear power plants from Energy Alberta Corporation, in Alberta, and Bruce Power and Ontario Power Generation, in Ontario, are the first ones to be considered under the Nuclear Safety and Control Act. Given the fact that it has been over 30 years since such an application has been submitted for review it is difficult to predict the time that will be needed for regulatory review for these. In the time since the last application was submitted, the technology has changed, the understanding has changed and the requirements and expectations have changed. The review period is also very dependent on the details of the EA and the completeness of the applications for the two subsequent licences, construction and operating, assuming the site licences are granted.

l) According to its application, EAC is planning to build its proposed nuclear power plant on land adjacent to Lac Cardinal, near the town of Peace River, Alberta.

m) The cost of building a reactor in the oil sands will be determined through negotiations between the vendor and proponent;

and accordingly, any estimate of construction cost by the Government would be speculative.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 6, 14, 28, 30, 37, 47 and 69 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

[Text]

Question No. 6—Mrs. Irene Mathysen:

With regard to the pay equity cases brought before the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) in which the government is a defendant: (a) in how many cases has the government, a government agency or a government-funded organization appeared before the CHRT as the respondent in an action involving section 11 of the Canadian Human Rights Act (CHRA) and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case was begun, and if closed, date closed; (b) in how many cases has the government, a government agency or a government-funded organization appeared before the CHRT as the respondent in an action involving section 10 of the CHRA and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case was begun, and if closed, date closed; (c) in how many cases has the government or a government agency appeared before the CHRT as the respondent in an action involving the Employment Equity Act and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case was begun, and if closed, date closed; (d) how many such cases are still pending final resolution; and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case was begun; (e) how many pay equity cases in which the government, a government agency or government funded organization is the respondent are still pending before the CHRT and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case was begun; (f) how many appeals of a Tribunal order or ruling has the government made to Federal Court or the Federal Court of Appeals and what was the name of each appeal, the name of the government institution involved and the appeal the case was begun; (g) how much has been spent by the government, in total and per year (i) in attorney's fees defending cases before the CHRT, (ii) in attorney's fees bringing or defending appeals of Tribunal orders or rulings in Federal Court or the Federal Court of Appeals, (iii) in court costs defending cases before the CHRT, (iv) in court costs when bringing or defending appeals of Tribunal orders or rulings in Federal Court or the Federal Court of Appeals, (v) in attempts to resolve such pay equity cases by methods of alternative dispute resolution (for example the services of a mediator), (vi) in legal fees on pay equity disputes settled outside the CHRT, and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case began, and if closed, date closed, enumerated by year; (h) how much has been spent by the government in total legal fees in litigating *Public Service Alliance of Canada v. Treasury Board (Hospital Services Compliant)* since the complaint was first filed by the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) on September 9, 1981; (i) why has a hospital services classification standard which is free of systemic gender bias not yet been adopted as required by the Tribunal's order issued April 29, 1991; (j) what is the cost to the government of *Public Service Alliance of Canada v. Canada Post Corporation* (i) from the time the complaint was first filed in 1983 until the Tribunal rendered its decision on October 7, 2005, (ii) of the upcoming appeal in Federal Court, scheduled for November 5, 2007 (estimated cost); (k) how much has been spent by the government in legal fees (i) in litigating *Public Service Alliance of Canada v. Treasury Board (Clerical and Regulatory Complaint)* since the complaint was first filed by PSAC in December 1984, (ii) in defending this case until the Tribunal rendered its decision on February 15, 1996, (iii) in litigating the government's application for judicial review of the CHRT's decision regarding the section 11 portion of the complaint, which was dismissed by the Federal Court on October 19, 1999, (iv) in defending the appeal brought by PSAC challenging the Tribunal's decision as to the sections of the complaint regarding sections 7 and 10 of the CHRA, (v) since the Federal Court referred the portions of the complaint regarding sections 7 and 10 back to the CHRC; (l) how much has been spent by the government in legal fees (i) in litigating *Public Service Alliance of Canada v. Canadian Museum of Civilization* since the complaint was first filed in March 2000, (ii) in presenting the government's preliminary motion to dismiss the complaint insofar as it alleges a breach of section 11 of the CHRA, which was dismissed by the Tribunal on March 21, 2005, (iii) in presenting the government's motion to dismiss the complaint without a hearing, which was dismissed by the Tribunal on January 13, 2006, (iv) in presenting the government's applications for judicial review of the two above mentioned decisions by the CHRT, both of which were denied by the Federal Court on June 6, 2006, (v) what is the estimated cost of the mediation between the parties which is scheduled for December 2007; (m) how much has been spent by the government thus far in litigating the law suit filed by PSAC in Federal Court in November 2000 regarding pay equity adjustments for seven P.S.S.R.A. Part II separate employers (C.I.H.R., C.S.I.S., C.S.E., O.A.G., O.S.F.I., S.S.H.R.C., and S.S.O.); (n) how much has been spent by the government for the mediation of the unresolved pay equity dispute between PSAC and Correctional Services Canada, which was filed in December 2003; (o) how much is expected to be spent by the government on the dispute between the Treasury Board and PSAC regarding the Program and Administrative Services Group Classification, the complaint having

been filed in December 2004, which has currently been referred to mediation by the CHRC; (p) how much is expected to be spent by the government on the dispute between the Treasury Board and PSAC regarding the Education and Library Science Group classification, which has currently been referred to mediation by the CHRC; (q) has private outside counsel ever been retained and, if so, how much has been spent in attorney's fees paid to private outside counsel, and what was the name of each case, the name of the government institution involved and the date the case began, and if closed, date closed; and (r) what is the government's projection for the total amount of legal fees to be spent litigating pay equity cases in 2007-08 and 2008-09, and what are the names of the parties anticipated to be involved?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 14—Mr. Dennis Bevington:

With regard to the Northern residents tax deduction: (a) what is Canada's total annual lost revenue for each of the previous five years, broken down by province and territory, through the use of this deduction; (b) what would be the estimated lost tax revenue to the government if the residency portion of the deduction was increased by 50 per cent; and (c) what is the rationale for not ensuring that this deduction remains current with inflation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 28—Mr. Peter Julian:

With respect to the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP): (a) when did unofficial negotiations on the SPP agenda begin prior to March 2005 and which Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and government departments were involved; (b) which Ministers, Deputy Ministers, and branches of which departments are tasked with developing and implementing strategies to advance the SPP agenda; (c) how often do meetings transpire between Ministers or Deputy Ministers and members of the North American Competitiveness Council (NACC), what were the dates and locations of these meetings, who was present at each one of these meetings and what were the topics of discussion at each meeting; (d) what financial resources are estimated to be required to adequately fulfill the SPP on an annual basis; (e) how much money has the government committed to the SPP in the last five years; (f) were these funding announcements made public, and, if so, on what dates were these funding announcements made; (g) of these funds, what amount has actually been disbursed annually, and from which government department budget were these funds disbursed; (h) how many person-hours in government departments are dedicated to advancing the agenda of the SPP, working groups included; (i) has an intranet system been established to facilitate day-to-day communications between participating countries and the NACC; (j) what is the relationship between NAFTA and the SPP; (k) is the SPP considered an extension of NAFTA; (l) have NAFTA committees been folded into the SPP groups and, if so, why and how; (m) what is the most up-to-date impact assessment of SPP negotiations on Canadian regulations and standards in (i) health, (ii) food, food products and food safety, (iii) transport safety, (iv) privacy, (v) energy, (vi) water, (vii) natural resources, (viii) chemical products, including pesticides and herbicides, (ix) financial services and monetary policy, (x) border security, (xi) outsourcing and jobs, (xii) the environment, (xiii) electronic trade, (xiv) the process of building up and maintaining Canada's no-fly list; (n) what is the status of these negotiations, have some been suspended, and if some have been completed, what regulations were changed as a result; (o) how would those negotiations affect Canada's public policy space; (p) are any mutual recognition agreements being negotiated under the SPP; (q) what are all the SPP working groups, their focus, the members of these working groups (including members of the government and civil service), and the minutes of their meetings; (r) is it the position of the government that the SPP is beneficial to Canadian sovereignty; (s) what plans does the government have to conduct a public debate of the SPP process, including public consultations with civil society groups, a full legislative review, and a vote in Parliament; and (t) what plans does the government have to brief Parliamentarians on the SPP, if not, why not, and, if so, how regular will such briefings be?

(Return tabled)

*Privilege***Question No. 30—Mr. Peter Julian:**

With respect to the Specified Persons List (SPL): (a) what is the process of establishing the SPL; (b) on whose authority was the SPL created; (c) in regard to the software utilized to manage the SPL, (i) from what corporation or organization did the federal government purchase this software, and (ii) what is the total cost of this software; (d) to what extent is the SPL modelled after the American program Secure Flight; (e) how many names are currently on the SPL and how many names are projected to be on the SPL in (i) one year, (ii) five years, and (iii) ten years; (f) what government department is responsible for reviewing and reassessing the names on the SPL; (g) how often are the names on the SPL reviewed and reassessed; (h) is there a process for compensating (financially or otherwise) people inadvertently included on the SPL and, if so, what is it; (i) will the names of people on the SPL be shared with (i) the United States government, and (ii) other foreign governments; (j) considering that all airlines will lose their landing rights in the United States if they do not use the American “no-fly list,” what benefits does the federal government see in creating a Canadian SPL when airlines will continue to use the U.S. list, as well; (k) how will the federal government ensure the protection of personal information when it is provided to airlines through the Passenger Protect Program; (l) when people are informed that they have been placed on the SPL, will the Office of Reconsideration disclose the reasons why they have been placed on the SPL and, if not, who will; (m) what was the total cost of creating the SPL; (n) what is the total annual cost of maintaining the SPL; (o) is there any empirical evidence that “no-fly lists”, such as the SPL, improve safety and security; (p) if the persons on the SPL are dangerous enough not to be permitted to fly, then why are they not currently incarcerated; (q) has there been an impact assessment of potential racial and religious profiling due to the SPL; (r) what guarantees are in place to ensure that the SPL does not violate the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; and (s) will there be a full parliamentary debate on the SPL and, if so, when?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 37—Ms. Chris Charlton:

With respect to the Investment Canada Act and foreign corporate takeovers of Canadian companies: (a) how many takeovers were approved and rejected on an annual basis from 1993 to 2007; (b) for each takeover, what was the value of each acquisition and the name of the foreign owner; (c) in which year since 1993 did the most foreign takeovers of Canadian companies occur; (d) in terms of the value of the acquisitions sold, which years since 1993 saw the biggest volume of sales; (e) what are the top ten economic sectors to face foreign takeovers since 1993 and how many takeovers have occurred in each of the respective sectors; (f) what is the current position of the government on foreign takeovers; (g) has the Investment Canada Act mandate changed since it was created and, if so, when and how; and (h) in regard to takeovers approved between 1993 and 2007, are there any statistics on the number of jobs affected by these takeovers and, if so, what are they and are unionized positions affected differently than non-unionized positions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 47—Hon. Anita Neville:

With regard to spending by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs: (a) how much spending is allocated per capita for health care (i) proportionally for aboriginal Canadians on reserve compared to non aboriginal Canadians, (ii) proportionally for aboriginal Canadians off reserve compared to non aboriginal Canadians; and (b) how much spending is allocated per capita for education (i) proportionally for aboriginal Canadians on reserve compared to non aboriginal Canadians, (ii) proportionally for aboriginal Canadians off reserve compared to non aboriginal Canadians?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 69—Ms. Libby Davies:

With respect to Insite, the Safe Injection Site (SIS): (a) what studies and evaluations about safe injection sites have been undertaken, requested or commissioned by Health Canada; (b) what individuals, what department or what organization undertook these studies; (c) what is the cost of these studies; (d) what are the findings and recommendations of these studies; (e) what recommendations does the government agree with; (f) what studies and evaluations have been requested or commissioned by Health Canada to be undertaken before December 31, 2007; (g) what Health Canada studies, reports and recommendations have already been presented to the government prior to September 2006; and (h) what amount of funding has the government provided directly, or indirectly, to SIS?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

ALLEGED ABUSE OF PARLIAMENTARY RESOURCES

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a question of privilege.

On Tuesday, November 20, 2007, my office received a call from a researcher at the Library of Parliament who asked “whether Mr. Boshcoff is travelling this week?”.

The researcher would not provide additional information regarding his request which led my assistant to call the Library of Parliament inquiries department.

An assistant at the inquiries desk explained to my assistant that the researcher was performing his duties in response to a request by a parliamentarian for the following information: one, is there a registry of member of Parliament activities such as committee travel or parliamentarian travel; and two, specifically, is Mr. Boshcoff travelling this week?”.

Mr. Speaker, I must protest this deliberate misuse of parliamentary privileges by the parliamentarian in this issue.

The Library of Parliament's resources should not be misused by any parliamentarian in such a way as to cloak such blatant partisan spying under the cover of parliamentary business.

Please know for the record, I am not faulting the staff of the Library of Parliament. I am very concerned about the effect of this request on my ability to perform my duties as a member of Parliament.

I interpret this action as a form of intimidation; a tactic that takes away my freedom to act in the best interests of my constituents; and a tactic that makes me believe I am under some form of surveillance. Clearly, any member of Parliament would find it very difficult to perform his or her duties under such duress.

In our parliamentary system there are publicly accountable reporting procedures and I completely agree and support these, but this is clearly something that no MP should have to face.

I therefore ask, Mr. Speaker, that this subject matter be referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to determine which parliamentarian is so blatantly abusing the resources of Parliament in an attempt to intimidate me and to ensure that suitable action is taken to address this grievous action.

Should you rule, Mr. Speaker, that this is a prima facie case of privilege, I would be prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: The Chair will examine the material submitted by the hon. member and get back to the House in due course.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

•(1015)

[English]

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

The House resumed from November 21 consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: When the matter was last before the House the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga had the floor. There are 17 minutes remaining in the time allotted for his remarks, therefore, I call upon the hon. member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the privilege to conclude my remarks on this very important and timely bill.

As I indicated yesterday in my opening remarks, the overwhelming majority of our youth contribute very positively to their communities and to our country. Unfortunately, a very tiny minority continues to leave a black mark that is a terrible blight on our society. My involvement and interest in bringing this much needed change to the Youth Criminal Justice Act is rooted in a desire to protect youth.

This very small minority of youth who currently do encounter conflict and eventually end up with criminal charges against them need earlier intervention. If this propensity toward criminal activity is intercepted at an earlier time with meaningful direction to custody and treatment options, I believe that many of Canada's youth will be spared from spiraling into deeper criminal activity.

Of course we need to provide meaningful options for recreation for youth to form positive relationships and other opportunities to develop life and work skills which will reduce the risk of becoming involved in crime. There are many worthy projects which provide good prevention and rehabilitation options.

One such group locally in the Waterloo region is Ray of Hope. Ray of Hope has 40 years of experience operating juvenile detention centres. Hope Harbour and Hope Manor are an open custody and a closed custody centre in the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Oasis is a city core, safe drop-in centre providing a safe place with meals, showers, laundry facilities, indoor recreational space, food hampers, clothing, training, and personal support through volunteer and friendships.

Ray of Hope also operates two retail coffee shops called Morning Glory Cafés. These cafés provide training opportunities to assist youth in preparation for gainful employment and fiscal independence.

Ray of Hope goes on to state in its mission that it is reaching out to people of all ages and faiths who are marginalized in society, rendering guidance and assistance to people facing personal challenges, as those caused by but not limited to such things as

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criminal behaviour, addictive behaviour, social ineptness, abuse, poverty, loneliness and mental illness, through establishing and maintaining safe places such as drop-in centres, incarceration facilities for youth in conflict with the law, treatment and training centres, vocational programs, and counselling support for reintegration with family and society.

The track record of Ray of Hope is a strong one and it is programs like these that offer hope to youth who find themselves in conflict with the law or vulnerable to addictive behaviour.

Programs like this need our continued support and investment, and our government is delivering. Pro-active, prevention action will spare the unneeded waste of many valuable lives in criminal activity and in fact, may also spare grief to families who have been victimized by crime.

After being elected to represent the people of Kitchener—Conestoga, one of the early constituent calls I received was from a family member of a young man from Kitchener. He told me about 14 year old Dustin who was known among his friends and family as a comedian and an entertainer. He loved the outdoors and was gifted at drawing and athletics. Dustin possessed all the dreams, hopes and ambitions of a boy his age.

On March 13, 2006 those dreams, hopes and ambitions ended suddenly, tragically, and irrevocably when he was murdered by a young offender. The young offender was charged and later sentenced. He will be out on the street before his nineteenth birthday, a birthday Dustin will never see.

Many young offenders realize the current Youth Criminal Justice Act has very little to do with justice. They continue their criminal activities fully aware that they will also continue to enjoy their freedom.

In fact, I remember all too well the day that a young man sat in my office and told me that it was a well accepted fact among his peers that older youth took advantage of the leniency of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and actually farmed out the dangerous drug deals and the like to youth who fell under the jurisdiction of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Canadians deserve better than this. Those of us in this chamber who have been elected to represent the citizens of Canada owe it to the countless victims of crime to ensure that young offenders who commit serious crimes are held accountable to their communities and to their victims.

Meaningful consequences will hold young offenders accountable for serious crimes. We must work to instill in our youth a sense of responsibility for their delinquent actions and criminal behaviour. Along with this we need to give them better opportunity for rehabilitation so they do not reoffend.

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●(1020)

When Dustin's relative called me, he was not looking for revenge. He was not angry. He just desperately wanted to know how we could keep what happened to Dustin from happening to others. His hope and mine is that we can protect our citizens from becoming victims of youth crime and prevent other young people from perpetrating violent crimes.

Just yesterday, I received an email from Dustin's mother. His family has already raised over \$10,000 to help local programs in the Waterloo region. Clearly, their hope is that other youth can be helped through early intervention.

The government has begun that process of intervention by providing over \$20 million for communities to help prevent youth crime, with a focus on gangs, guns, drugs and youth at risk. Not only has this commitment been made in our budget, but many communities in Canada have already benefited from specific investments in groups that are working on the ground in prevention and rehabilitation initiatives.

There is one key element that is missing from our current approach to youth crime and that is the matter of deterrence. We need to denounce this behaviour in order to deter these and other youths from entering a life of crime.

When youth of today understand that there are no meaningful consequences to negative actions, they continue blindly down a path of self-destructive behaviour until far too often it is too late. When one or two youths turn to violence, too often the youths around them are intimidated and have no alternative but to also turn to weapons for protection.

A firm message needs to be delivered, indicating that society will not accept this violent behaviour. If violence is denounced as quickly as it occurs and meaningful sentences are given, there will be a resultant deterrent effect.

There are two key principles in this bill. One is to change the pretrial detention provision and the other is to allow judges to impose sentences with the objective of deterring and denouncing serious offences.

Deterrence as a principle of sentencing involves a sanction with the objective of discouraging the offender and others from engaging in criminal conduct.

Denunciation refers to society's condemnation of the offence in sending a firm message that this criminal behaviour is unacceptable.

There is a tremendous need to instill a sense of responsibility in young offenders for their behaviour and to give young people better opportunities for rehabilitation.

Dustin's family created an online petition on the subject of the current Youth Criminal Justice Act and the need for reform. That petition currently has almost 12,000 signatures on it. The message is clear. The current legislation needs to be fixed.

I would like to quote from just a few of the comments from the thousands received, comments from youth workers, from law and criminal justice majors, and from teens just like Dustin.

The first comment reads:

I am fourteen myself, and I think that anyone my age is responsible for what they do. Murderers are murderers, whether they are fourteen or forty. They know what they did, they knew it was wrong, and they chose to do it anyways. They need to be punished for what they did.

Another comment reads:

The Law today teaches youth to live life without consequences. It is an absolute insult to victims and their families.

A further comment reads:

Enough is enough. We're not a simple society anymore and these kids know right from wrong. Is there any deterrent where there is either no punishment or just a slap on the wrist? Please, law makers, it's time to give the law abiding youths their rights and stop protecting criminals.

A parent wrote:

My son is currently a victim of a young offender, and it seems as though the offender has more rights than the victim. Something has to change!

Another comment reads:

As a teen I see too many violent offences like this that are not taken seriously enough! Acts of violence are becoming too common! I want laws like this one to be changed so I can finally feel safe in my school and community.

The final comment I would like to share this morning is this one:

I am a Criminal Justice major at Nipissing University in North Bay. I have also graduated from the Correctional Worker Program at Canadore College. I have studied the YCJA at great lengths and heard both sides of why it's good to have things the way they are and why it is bad. As a parent of 4 kids I understand the need to strengthen the accountability that young persons face after committing a violent criminal act. It's my opinion that in these cases of violent offences, and in this case a fatal offence, regardless of the age of the parties responsible...they need to be held accountable for what they did. Dustin's family and society need justice for this crime. We also need to give trained professionals...the opportunity to intervene at this point in the offenders' lives. Currently, the punishment for the crimes doesn't match the act. It isn't acting as the deterrent it should, nor is it providing the justice to the families of the victims or to society as a whole. My condolences to Dustin's family.

●(1025)

From these comments, it can be seen that ordinary Canadians are speaking out. Youths themselves are speaking out. Victims are speaking out. These Canadians are asking us to wake up and take the necessary steps to correct a system that is failing them.

Not too long ago, I spoke with a mother in Kitchener—Conestoga who was actually hoping the judge could send her son to jail for a theft charge. Her hope was that there he would get the help he needed to overcome his serious drug addictions and he would be kept from more serious crimes. She feared his addictions would ruin his life or, worse yet, he would end up dead. But the judge said the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which focuses on finding alternatives to jail for youth, would not allow it. His crime was not serious enough and he did not have a long enough criminal record.

Did members hear that last statement? He did not have a long enough criminal record.

When he appeared again in court several months later, he was restrained in a straitjacket due to drug-induced psychosis. At that point, finally, his record was long enough to merit addiction treatment.

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What are we thinking when we wait and wait and watch someone spiral into a pattern of violence until finally he has gotten in so deeply that only then do we take action? Something is desperately wrong with this picture.

As I have said, my commitment to changing the Youth Criminal Justice Act is rooted in a desire to protect youth. I am going to read for members a few quotes from an email I received from a constituent. She states:

I am writing to you again on the topic of youth violence. Two weeks ago my 16 year old son...was beaten by six guys carrying a machete and two baseball bats. He was a target, with the beating ordered by his ex-girlfriend. She had warned him that if he 'broke up with her' she would have him beaten up. He was walking with a friend and soon realized what was about to happen. He and his friend ran in different directions. My son was unarmed, had no one there to help him, no one to call for help. They terrorized him with the machete, then proceeded to hit him with the bat, kick him and punch him several times. He ended in the Emergency Ward with a fractured elbow, injured jaw, black eye, concussion and several contusions and scrapes. I urged him to talk to the police but he was told that if he contacted anyone, they would beat on his brother twice as bad. So, he fears for his brother and remains silent.

In addition to this, my other son encountered an attack just a week earlier. He was walking the path behind a local mall, heading to a friend's house while listening to his iPod. Four guys from another school jumped on him to steal his iPod. They pounded on his head repeatedly and laughed at him. He fears more violence if police are involved. (Two years earlier, my other son was beaten up for his cellphone and endured a fractured jaw). My son is a good kid. He plays on the Rugby and Football teams and participates in Track and Field. He is clean cut, respectful to his peers and teachers at school, has never smoked, done drugs etc. He likes being a healthy athlete and is often ridiculed for his ethics. Regardless, he is a good kid that didn't deserve to experience this. It robbed him of something that can't be put back and I'm not referring to the iPod.

This parent continues:

Something has to be done to urge these kids to speak out. More and more teens are turning to weapons as they can't help but feel the need to protect themselves. There are more weapons than the school cares to admit/realize.

As a parent, envisioning the beatings that took place, it causes me a great deal of pain, hurt and anger. My kids are not gang members yet my younger son feels a slight draw to join a gang. He stated that if he'd been a gang member, 'it would have all been taken care of'. Violence leading to more violence....

She continues:

I share this with you because I know you have a voice. I know you can share these stories with others that have the power to make changes.

The members of the House all have the power to make changes and it is our responsibility to do so. This power has been entrusted to us by the citizens we represent and it is a responsibility I take very seriously as the lives of our youth hang in the balance.

I would encourage each of us to consider that trust and to do everything within our power to protect Canada's youth. I would appeal to my colleagues on both sides of the House to support this important legislation for the youth at risk, for the families of the victims, and for Dustin.

• (1030)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech. There is no question that there is a nub of youth criminals who are a constant source of terror and are certainly an aggravation to the police forces, and they have to be dealt with in much sterner terms.

However, the legislation that the government is putting forth in this bill is going to have wide ranging implications and in fact is going to make our streets less safe.

I want to ask the member a couple of questions.

First, in regard to putting low level drug dealers in prison, those low level dealers are in fact users themselves and their addictions are driving their dealing. We should be putting a lot more emphasis on the organized crime gangs that are parasitizing off people's addictions.

Second, does the member know that 60% of the people in jail have fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects? The average IQ of somebody with FAS and FAE is 78. These people have enormous difficulties in learning. These kids fall through the cracks. Teachers are unable to handle them. Many of them go into a life of crime.

Lastly, I want to ask the member why his government killed the early learning program when the headstart program reduces youth crime by 60% and is the most effective preventative tool in reducing youth crime.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I have not been in this House very long, but in the time I have been here I have heard the opposition member refer to this 60% reduction through early start programs. I can only assume that he is referring to the Ypsilanti study, which showed that dramatic drop in crime, but if we look at all the facts surrounding the study, it becomes very clear that it would be totally impossible for us to replicate the conditions within that study.

I am sure he is aware, as a former medical practitioner, that many of the research studies done have a certain control over the methodology within those studies. It has been shown that it would be impossible for us to replicate the kinds of small class sizes that were indicated in that study. Also, the study has not followed those kids for the long term, so to quote the 60% I think is somewhat misleading.

To go back to his point about the fact that we are just dealing with one part of criminal activity here, that we are not dealing with the guns, the gangs and the drug dealers, I want to point out that this act, Bill C-25, does not stand in isolation, nor is this part of what we are doing to the Youth Criminal Justice Act the whole package of what our government intends to do.

The minister has promised that in 2008 there would be a total comprehensive review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I am looking forward to those improvements. In addition to that, just recently all of us here in this House have seen the committee pass the bill to tackle violent crime. Canadians have been asking for this for some time.

Certainly in my community I have heard from hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents who are applauding these measures to get on with the protection of our youth especially, but of all Canadian citizens, and I urge our opposition colleagues to let us get on with this and do what Canadians have been asking for, for a long time.

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Mr. Mario Silva (Davenport, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the legislation, as my colleague was outlining, is basically to have young people held accountable, with meaningful consequences for their actions, and the legislation adds the issues of deterrence and denunciation to the sentencing principle that the courts must consider when determining the sentence for someone under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I should also mention that certainly in my city of Toronto there have been a lot of issues in dealing with youth and youth violence. At the same time, we know as a society that this act is only one small part of the equation. There are many other issues at play. Certainly my other hon. colleagues in this House have talked about the issues of marginalized youth, racism, and youths who have lost all hope in our society, yet there are no programs or assistance there for them.

It is an incomplete package when we cannot, as a society and as legislators, deal with these very complex issues in a meaningful way. Just acting tough on crime will not reduce crime, as we have seen in many ways in the United States, for example.

• (1035)

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, my colleague referred to the fact that this was not a complete package. Maybe he slipped into the chamber while I was part way through my speech but I was very clear in the early part of my comments that restorative justice, rehabilitation programs and prevention programs are a big part of the equation. However, even the people who work in those treatment facilities and so on will admit to us that these restorative programs and rehabilitation programs are not universally successful.

I am not suggesting nor is our government suggesting that all we do are these two measures. These are part of what we are already doing. I mentioned a number of announcements that we have made and the \$22 million that we invested in prevention and rehabilitation programs.

It is very important that we do not polarize this issue and suggest that all we are doing is being tough on crime. We are not suggesting locking people up and throwing away the key. We are saying that we need to get these people intercepted at an earlier point, when the indicators are there that these people will enter further levels of crime. We need to intercept them and avoid that further step in crime.

I hope that every member in this House is committed to protecting the youth of Canada.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think there is a member in the House whose constituents have not raised a concern about this. I know justice is the area of most concern to my constituents and, within that, youth criminal justice is the most important part.

Before I get to my colleague from Kitchener—Conestoga, I want to point out to my colleague from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca that every low level drug dealer dreams of becoming a high level drug dealer.

I want to highlight two cases in my own riding. On Sunday, I will be officiating at a soccer game in memory of a young man named Evan who was cut down on his birthday by youth criminals. There was also a premeditated case in Sherwood Park. Youth obtained

weapons, went to a young man's home, called him outside and beat him to death. The three young offenders received a one year suspended sentence, which means a curfew.

I would like my hon. friend's comment on that as a form of deterrence, treatment or anything else.

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I would challenge every member of this House to answer the question as to whether they have heard from numerous constituents in their ridings begging us to take meaningful steps to strengthen this act.

On the matter of house arrest or conditional sentences, I am not sure of all the legal technical jargon, but when people in my riding recognize that someone who has committed a violent act receives a sentence that does not fit the level of pain that he or she has inflicted on the victim, they cannot believe it.

I want to point out again that we are not talking about revenge. There is nothing that will bring a murdered child, a young person or an adult back. That is not the point. What we are trying to do here, as has been stated a number of times, is intercept in the lives of youth who have the markers that they are on this trajectory of criminal behaviour before they take the steps that will get them into such deep criminal activity.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of corrections for my colleague. The Ypsilanti program ran for 25 years, a very large sample size.

I have a couple of questions for the member. The low level dealer generally does have an addiction problem. If we throw that person in jail, what will happen? It will turn out to be a law of unintended consequences. The problem will be tougher at the end of it.

At the end of the day we need to get tough on those who are committing violent crimes. We need to strengthen the laws to help the courts to apply laws against organized crime.

Again, on the head start program, the police asked for an early learning head start program. Will the member's government support a national head start program for children which will reduce youth crime?

Mr. Harold Albrecht: Mr. Speaker, I would like to stay on the topic that we are discussing today, which is deterring youth criminal activity.

We have heard from many members of this House that deterrents do not work. We know that deterrents work. They are part of everyday life. They deter us from potential negative consequences.

Every parent and grandparent in this room knows that deterrents work. My seven year old grandson knows that deterrents work. In fact, I remember very well—

• (1040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): The hon. member for Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Brian Murphy (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to say a few words about the justice system.

Government Orders

As a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I am familiar with a number of bills introduced by this government and I have noticed that it is resubmitting the same bills, given the Prime Minister's decision to prorogue the previous session of this Parliament. It occurred to me that we are examining many of the same bills a second time. There are also some new bills and we always have the same comments.

This government is introducing bills that are drawing a great deal of media attention. However, as these bills are examined in committee, in this House and, eventually, in the Senate, it becomes clear that little work has been put into them.

As the father of three young girls enrolled in a French immersion program in New Brunswick, the only officially bilingual province in the country, and as a resident of Moncton, the first officially bilingual city, I know how much homework my children do every evening. The fact remains, however, that these three beautiful little girls are children and I expect certain things from them.

We expect more in the way of homework from the government than from school girls in Moncton. Yet it appears that the government has done its homework much less diligently and with much less attention to detail than my three little girls do in Moncton.

[*English*]

All of the bills that we in the permanent justice committee have had occasion to look at seem to be lacking in homework and in scope.

When we talk about the criminal justice system, it is an organic system or an organic process. It is a sculpting of new facts and new facets of our evolving society to the Criminal Code and its ancillary acts, in this case, the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

I want to start from the point that all of the acts are lacking in an overall or universal vision about criminal justice, from prevention to detention, so to speak, the whole scope, and this bill is no exception.

However, we must tell the Canadian public and members of the House that there is a Youth Criminal Justice Act. Before that there was the Young Offenders Act and prior to that the Juvenile Delinquents Act. For some time now, I believe 50 years, the Parliament of Canada and the courts interpreting Parliament's intention have recognized that there ought to be a different system for youth offenders.

It troubles me when I hear speaker after speaker, headline after headline, news release after news release and the two minute sound bites of *Mike Duffy Live* talk about youth criminal justice with the same language and in the same terms as adult justice.

That is not to suggest that we are sitting here as a party and as parliamentarians not concerned with public safety, not concerned with turning our youth into productive members of society. It is to say that as a statement of first principle, and I wish I had heard it from the Minister of Justice yesterday or any of the speakers who I listened to from the government side, I wish I had heard that there was a separate regime for the youth of this country for the different considerations because that is the fact.

I am concerned when I hear what members like the member for Kitchener—Conestoga said. I will get back to my student metaphor. I never taught anything but I have written a number of tests. One cannot simply write the first page of a test, the first paragraph or the first 10 questions and do well. One has to go to the finish line and get the B or B+ that all parliamentarians probably got in school or as good as one can get.

It seems, however, that the government and its members strive for the peaks of mediocrity and try to get a C or C-. However, they do start off good sometimes. The member for Kitchener—Conestoga started off talking about a head start program and prevention. If I had ever been a teacher, I would have thought that this was starting off well and that it would be a good result for that parliamentarian.

However, we then delved into crime, payback and teaching those punks something. As we know, there were two parts to the speech, the two did not go together and the member succeeded in getting a C-.

The bill does the same. Bill C-25 starts out very well. It starts out doing one thing that is very important. We give a lot of credence to the Nunn Commission report, which was commissioned as a result of a very tragic incident involving Theresa McEvoy, which happened not that far from where I live. It was not a Maritime thing. It was a national thing. The recommendations from the Nunn Commission and eminent jurist, Merlin Nunn, should be the starting point for our thoughts about what we are going to do with this separate regime for youth criminals in the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

However, we need to start with the recognition, which should be the first principle, that there is a different regime and importing holus-bolus the whole adult regime to the youth regime means that we may as well get rid of the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I will get to that when I talk about the second part of the bill.

I commend the Minister of Justice and the speakers who spoke in favour of the first part of Bill C-25, clauses 2 and 3 in particular. I will not belabour it, but perhaps we should have a happy moment and say that most parties are in agreement with this bill. We have a happy moment where one of the many recommendations of the Nunn report was followed by the government.

● (1045)

It is a complaint of prosecutors across this country. It is a complaint from parents. It is a complaint from victims. We stand on all fours in accepting that the revolving door that is in effect for young offenders who offend while on an order to return to the court for trial or sentencing is unacceptable. It is one of the major flaws in the Youth Criminal Justice Act as promulgated, and this is progress.

Government Orders

As we can see, there is in the act a presumption that detention is not necessary for a young offender accused of an offence and he shall remain free. Essentially, that was the presumption. Judges across this country applied that presumption, unless they could find other reasons, such as protection of the public, the overarching principle to keep the young offender as accused in detention. This bill recognizes that if a young person is charged with a violent offence that endangered the public by creating a substantial likelihood of a recurrence, that presumption is rebutted, yet the judge still takes into account the normal principles of detention pending trial.

The second principle, and this is really the most egregious part of the Youth Criminal Justice Act without the gap, is that while a young person who is out waiting to come back to court is found guilty of failing to comply with non-custodial sentences, or this is in fact after the imposition of a plea, that person should be considered as having given up that presumption against detention. It makes perfect sense.

The other provision in the bill is that if a young person is charged with an indictable offence for which an adult would be liable to imprisonment for a term of more than two years and the young person has a history that indicates a pattern of findings of guilt, then that person should lose that presumption.

That is a long way from going to adult principles for sentencing, which the second part of the act imports. The second part of the bill imports straight Criminal Code principles of sentencing with respect to denunciations and deterrence. The Minister of Justice and many speakers say that these needed to be imported because they are not there, but I beg to differ, if we look at the Youth Criminal Justice Act as it is.

Certainly in an effort to bind all parliamentarians together with a common view, there can be no one in this House who can seriously stand up and say that each parliamentarian is not in favour of more public safety, of having safe communities and of ridding our communities of crime. This has to be a common goal of every parliamentarian. What is happening is that we have a different point of view on how to get there.

All of us want the acts before Parliament, in this case the Criminal Code of Canada and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, to be effective. The question really is whether these amendments will be effective. I have already said that the first one will. It will keep the communities of Canada safer. I am going on to argue that the second part of this bill will not necessarily keep communities safer.

I will also elicit many of the other recommendations from the Nunn commission report which were not seized upon by the government when they were there for the taking. Somebody has already done the work. Somebody has already reacted to an outlandish shocking of the public example of how small changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act could be efficacious to make society safer. That was the Nunn commission. He made many recommendations, yet only one of those recommendations was seized upon by the government.

It is not that there was not enough ink and paper. This is a very short bill. It is designed, I submit, to have newscasts and media

stories say that we are tough on crime and that we are importing concepts of unlawful conduct and deterrence and we will get tough.

Really, the first part of the bill will do so much more to make communities safer than the second part. There are so many other recommendations in the Nunn commission report that would have made our communities immediately safer and would not have had any opposition from this side, yet the government chose not to seize upon them.

• (1050)

It is remarkable. It is either a hurried attempt to get another headline, or it is a deliberate attempt to draw out in a piecemeal fashion the Conservatives' law and order agenda with multiple bills, each bill a new headline, each bill one little step forward in their view toward making our communities safer. I might suggest that is almost wilful conduct preventing the distribution of the tools that the justice enforcement people need, prosecutors in particular, or it might just be sheer negligence in not knowing what they were doing.

I have to comment on some of the remarks that were made by a person whom I consider to be a dean on the issue of public safety. I virtually never agree with this dean with respect to how to get there, but I have no doubt that this dean, the member for Wild Rose, wants to get there and has made a parliamentary career out of wanting to get there. He talks incessantly against lawyers. We all have thick skins and we can take that, as the small legal community in the House of Commons knows every day it is not popular to be a lawyer. But I want to tell everyone in this House it is not always popular to be a politician too, so there we go. Being both makes me sort of a victim in a way.

Seriously, the member for Wild Rose talks about lawyers, that they talk legalese. Unfortunately, we are making laws here. If we were making pizzas, I would talk about dough, but we are making laws, so I have to talk legalese. That is the way it goes with all due respect to the member for Wild Rose.

The second point that he brings up is that there is no mention of victims. I hear that a lot from the other side. We hear it at committee. Frankly, victims are what we as parliamentarians are all about. This year is the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. We respect individual rights and liberties. We respect the legal rights against false detention and the right to have counsel and all those legal rights for people accused. Those are foundation elements, but people should realize that the overall arching concern of the Charter of Rights in section 1 is to protect the public.

The funny thing is, if we look at every act of Parliament, we find that the public safety aspect is primordial, and the Youth Criminal Justice Act is no exception. It says:

WHEREAS communities, families, parents and others concerned with the development of young persons should through multi-disciplinary approaches take reasonable steps to prevent youth crime by addressing underlying causes to respond to the needs of young persons and to provide guidance, this act should be enacted.

It also says:

AND WHEREAS Canadian society should have a youth criminal justice system that commands respect, takes into account the interests of victims, fosters responsibility and ensures accountability [in our youth]—

Government Orders

These sentiments are already in the Youth Criminal Justice Act. Judges read this act and they take from the preamble and the declaration of principles in section 3 what the act means.

In fact, it states in section 3(c), “within the limits of fair and proportionate accountability, the measures taken”—that is, the sentences or the detention aspects or the immediate ultimate measures meted out by a court—“against young persons who commit offences should (i) reinforce respect for societal values, (ii) encourage the repair of harm done to victims and the community”.

Later in section 3(d) it says, “victims should be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect for their dignity and privacy”, and “victims should be provided with information about the proceedings and given an opportunity to participate and be heard”.

It strikes me that without putting the exact words of denunciation and deterrence in this act, we have as guiding principles for justices the protection of the public and at least a code for victims' rights when it comes to aspects of youth criminal justice.

The Nunn commission report puts out a few very easy recommendations that the government could have adopted without opposition from this side. Principally it is very important because we hear about public safety and the protection of the public and consideration for victims.

• (1055)

Justice Nunn, in his considerations, felt it was a bit shortsighted for the act to talk about the long term protection of the public as set out in these principles in section 3. By inference a judge would say that that does not involve the short term protection of the public.

Some of these rebuttable presumptions on detention, which will be tempered by the first part of this act, speak to that. More specifically and to be clear, so that there is no misread between the principles in section 3 and the first part of the act as amended, we will be curious to see if it would be within the scope of the bill on amendment at committee to add a new phrase in section 3, the principles. It would add to section 3 a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act, which is from the Nunn report on the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

It certainly should just say protection of the public. Perhaps for greater certainty it should say long term and short term, but if we say protection of the public, I presume that means all the time. Protection of the public is one of the principles of the act.

I believe, as the member for Windsor—Tecumseh said yesterday, and he is a person who has been around these issues a lot longer than I have, the evidence he has gathered, which no doubt we will go through at committee, would lead to the conclusion that in fact the changes in the first part of Bill C-25 have in fact been put into place by judges across the country.

Therefore, all we are doing is putting into law what is actually happening in practice, or codifying the practice. That may be a good thing, but it does make me wonder whether the government read all of the Nunn commission report. Maybe in a cooperative effort when we take this matter to committee, if the scope of this bill is to make society safer, the government will be open to amendments, including

that recommendation and many others from the Nunn commission to make this a better law.

I want to close by saying that although we agree with the first part of the bill, the second part of the bill might make it seem that we are importing holus-bolus the Criminal Code of Canada. If that is the case, the Minister of Justice should know that the Criminal Code already provides, in certain circumstances, for youths to be tried as adults.

If those provisions are known of, if that transition is known of, and they are importing holus-bolus these concepts, why have a Youth Criminal Justice Act at all? Let us all live under the Criminal Code. Is that where the government is going?

• (1100)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Jean-Pierre Blackburn (Minister of Labour and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my hon. colleague's statements, and I would like to remind the members of the two primary goals of this bill.

First, we do not want a young person who has committed a violent crime to be allowed back into the community while awaiting trial. This kind of thing has happened before. I am thinking of the case in Nova Scotia that someone mentioned where young people who had committed violent acts were allowed back into the community, where they committed more violent crimes. Innocent bystanders were killed or seriously injured by these youths, who were not detained while awaiting trial. That is what we are addressing. We want to make sure that judges have the power to order pretrial detention.

Second, we want judges to take two things into account when sentencing young people who have committed violent crimes.

The first is deterrence. We want to ensure that the youth understands what is going on and that other youths who might be considering committing similar acts—crimes of violence against the person—will be discouraged from doing so. We want judges to take this into account when determining a sentence.

The second is denunciation. We want the sentence to show that society disapproves of the acts committed.

We want judges to use both elements of this framework when handing down sentences in order to protect our seniors and society in general.

I am thinking of those news reports about youths committing violent acts on buses against people who were just minding their own business.

That is what we hope to accomplish with our bill.

Mr. Brian Murphy: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his comments.

I completely approve the first part of what he said. Clearly, detention pending sentencing poses a problem. We are in favour of detention if a young offender commits a new offence after serving a sentence.

Government Orders

We also agree with the second part of what he said: protecting the public is crucial.

Why do the Minister of Justice and the whole Conservative team not take into account the recommendations made by Judge Nunn and amend section 3 with a view to simply protecting the public?

[English]

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think most members of the House would agree that appropriate enforcement and punishment is very necessary, but we also know that significant work has been done which shows punishment is not enough.

The MacGuigan subcommittee stated:

Society has spent millions of dollars over the years to create and maintain the proven failure of prisons. Incarceration has failed in its two essential purposes—correcting the offender and providing permanent protection to society. The recidivist rate of up to 80 percent is evidence of both.

Could the member comment on the fact that the Conservative government has not seen fit to invest in youth, in terms of looking at closing the poverty gap, adequate housing, education programs and drug treatment centres?

• (1105)

Mr. Brian Murphy: Mr. Speaker, clearly we heard today from the member for Kitchener—Conestoga that all is well, that a huge announcement has been made, that he will support the objectives of families and youth, that it will be full of intervention and that there will be a head start on every corner. I guess all our problems are solved.

Lest people did not get my thin wedge of sarcasm, the problem with the government is it does not invest the money it announces. We are still waiting for police officers. A thousand RCMP officers were promised, but we know the RCMP is a thousand people behind in its recruiting.

I agree with the member when she talks about other concepts like restorative justice, which is about ensuring a community is not divided. To reduce crime to make communities safer, a community must be willing to do the work required to solve the problem together.

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite has made reference frequently to the Nunn Commission, I will ask him specifically on a matter that he skirted around, when asked by my colleague just moments ago.

As the member opposite knows, in December 2006 the Nova Scotia Nunn Commission of Inquiry expressed concern that pre-trial detention provisions under the Youth Criminal Justice Act were too restrictive, making it very difficult to detain young persons who pose a risk to public safety.

As the member also knows, the changes before us today, the proposed amendments to the YCJA in the area of pre-trial detention, will make it easier to detain before trial a broader range of young persons who pose a risk to public safety. This would include those who have committed an offence that creates a danger of causing serious bodily harm or who have breached previous conditions of release.

Could the member respond to that? Does he not at least agree that this then follows through with respect to the Nunn Commission and that we have now a serious amendment to take into account the suggestion from the commission with respect to detaining young persons who pose a risk to public safety?

Mr. Brian Murphy: I want to apologize, Mr. Speaker, to the member, to the House and to the viewing public. Perhaps I was not clear when I said, three times, that we agree to the first part of the bill. The recommendations regarding detention and ensuring that the presumption against detention should be removed in three very serious cases, as outlined in the first part of Bill C-25 and as recommended by the Nunn Commission. We feel very good about those amendments and will work to ensure they pass through the committee.

However, it does not explain why the government imported all the concepts of the Criminal Code with respect to the sentencing principles. The minister seemed unsure yesterday about whether proportionality, which is the key pillar of sentencing in section 718.1 of the Criminal Code, is still a key pillar in section 38(2) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

We will see where the government goes on this. I am worried that we are turning youth criminal justice into Criminal Code governance. If that is the case, the government should be clear on it.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thought the speech of the hon. member was excellent.

I want to ask him a very technical question about the section we agree with; that is the first part of the bill about detention. There is a presumption against detention unless it is a violent offence or failing to comply with non-custodial sentences.

The third part of the bill is about findings of guilt. In other words:

—the young person is charged with an indictable offence for which an adult would be liable to imprisonment for a term of more than two years and has a history that indicates a pattern of findings of guilt under this Act or the Young Offenders Act...

Yet Justice Nunn talks about not just a necessary pattern of findings of guilt, but a pattern of offences.

Could the hon. member comment on that? It seems that Justice Nunn is asking for a more rigorous standard. In effect he is saying if an individual has a whole string of offences, not necessarily findings of guilt, that should be taken into consideration.

I am interested in the hon. member's comments on whether there is some significant difference between those two concepts. If so, should that be subject to potential amendment?

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•(1110)

Mr. Brian Murphy: Mr. Speaker, that is the hardest question. We do not often expect the most difficult question to come from our own side, but it was an excellent question nonetheless.

Justice Nunn made it very clear that patterns of findings of guilt might catch young offenders on a rapid crime spree and better wording might be a pattern of offences, or similar wording. However, I think this is something that can be fixed at committee. It is wholly within the scope of the bill.

We will take the member's comments to committee and work on them there.

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to start, I would like to recognize some families from the Edmonton area that banded together on this important area of youth justice: the families of Dylan McGillis, Shane Rolston, Nina Courtepatte and Josh Hunt, all of whom lost their lives as a result of the actions of other youth in the last couple of years.

These families are part of a club of which none of us would ever want to be a part. Yet because of the way they have chosen to respond, it is the most important club of which they could ever be a part.

We cannot listen to the stories of parents without feeling compelled to act. Because of the tireless efforts they have made, and the efforts of other parents across the country, Canadians are paying much more attention to the issue of youth justice.

We cannot also listen to these parents without feeling compelled to ensure we say an extra “I love you” to our own kids before they go to bed at night. To these families, and on behalf of all Canadian parents, I thank them for not hiding their pain. I thank them for stepping out of their comfort zones and for using their grief, not as a weapon but as a motivation to ensure that other parents do not have to go through what they have gone through.

For almost 100 years, Canada has provided separate laws and procedures applicable to youth who commit crimes. The crimes themselves range from ill-conceived pranks to acts of incomprehensible violence. The alleged offender can be the child next door or a nearly adult gun-carrying gang member with a significant criminal record. The law must provide a wide range of responses to adequately hold them all appropriately accountable for the offences they commit. The sentences must be consistent with their degree of responsibility and, more important, in a manner that protects the public.

Since the Youth Criminal Justice Act came into force almost five years ago, there has been a steady decline in the number of young people charged with offences and winding up in custody. Some argue that the de-incarceration of youth has gone too far. Some believe that youth who pose a threat to the public have not ended up behind bars when they should and therefore more must be done to ensure that violent young offenders receive custodial sentences.

The government is committed to protecting communities and tackling crime committed by adolescents. In the October 16 Speech from the Throne, “Strong Leadership. A Better Canada”, our government vowed to strengthen the Youth Criminal Justice Act to

ensure that young offenders who committed serious crimes were held accountable.

Bill C-25 begins the promised strengthening of our youth justice laws. The bill focuses on deterrence, denunciation and detention. Those familiar with sentencing principles for adults know that denunciation and deterrence are sentencing principles contained in the Criminal Code. It is important that society's degree of abhorrence for an offence be reflected in the severity of the penalty so the offender's conduct is denounced. Moreover, we want the penalty to send a message of deterrence to the offender and to others.

The quantum of the sentence should signal to the offender that he or she ought not commit further offences. This is known as specific deterrence. The penalty should also signal to others that they ought not to commit such offences. This is known as general deterrence.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act in its present form does not include deterrence or denunciation among its sentencing principles. The Supreme Court of Canada recently confirmed that those principles should not be read into the act, and this was an express choice made by parliamentarians.

Our government is now asking Parliament to reconsider and to make these important sentencing principles apply to youth as well as adults. The Minister of Justice has confirmed today in the House that attorneys general from across the country support these amendments. I believe these sentencing provisions will encourage the public to have greater confidence in the youth justice system, by allowing judges to apply fair and proportionate sentences that reflect these principles. This has been a part of the government's agenda for some time and we are pleased to support these proposed reforms to the sentencing principles.

Another area of the Youth Criminal Justice Act requiring immediate amendment are provisions relating to pre-trial detention of those youth who pose a danger to the public. The Nunn Commission and others have raised concerns about the adequacy of the existing provisions to deal with potentially dangerous youth who may not have a serious record but are “spinning out of control” and may well cause harm to someone prior to their trials.

The Minister of Justice spoke earlier today about the tragic death of Theresa McEvoy in Nova Scotia, a death that has sparked the Nova Scotia government to do something about out of control and dangerous youth. As the justice minister mentioned, Nova Scotia has been working hard to implement changes in its youth justice system based on the recommendations of the Nunn Commission. Some of those recommendations include lobbying the federal government for changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act in relation to pre-trial detention provisions.

Government Orders

•(1115)

Bill C-25 is evidence that the justice minister has listened to the people of Nova Scotia and Manitoba as well. In late September the justice minister met with a delegation from Manitoba, including Manitoba justice minister Dave Chomiak, and various Manitoba police and community representatives.

The delegation brought to the minister's attention five justice issues of critical importance to the people of Manitoba. Topping the list was the issue of auto theft as Manitoba has been experiencing an explosion in joyriding and car theft by troubled and out of control teens.

The list also included toughening penalties for youth involved in serious crimes, especially motor vehicle theft. The justice minister has been listening to concerns expressed all across this country and has responded to them.

The amendments proposed today are only the beginning of a larger process of reform in this area that will hopefully do justice to the thoughtful advice received from important stakeholders in the youth justice system over the summer and fall. The longer term reform process will further strengthen and clarify the youth justice system.

I believe there is a shared imperative in all parts of this country to detain youth who pose a danger prior to their trials. The proposals in Bill C-25 are measured responses, which empower the courts to detain dangerous youth regardless of their alleged offence or criminal history.

Courts can look at all relevant factors when assessing that detention is needed, including outstanding charges that might indicate a youth is spinning out of control and posing a danger. These proposals address the concerns raised through Nova Scotia's Nunn commission and will lead to safer communities.

[*Translation*]

Canadians know all too well that people at risk can adopt a criminal lifestyle and engage in the violence and drug use that go along with that lifestyle more often than not. They want young people who commit violent crimes and threaten communities to be given sentences that reflect the seriousness of their crimes.

These communities want us to do something to prevent young people from committing these violent crimes.

[*English*]

It is more than evident from this government's crime agenda that we on this side of the House take the safety of Canadians extremely seriously. We fully recognize that it is important to be vigilant in safeguarding the fairness and effectiveness of our justice system, but it is equally important, if not more important, to ensure that the fundamental principle of our justice system is the protection of society.

I applaud the justice minister's announcement that this government will launch a comprehensive review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2008. I understand that the review is specifically being done to address concerns and criticisms regarding various provisions and principles of the Youth Criminal Justice Act and to ensure that

our youth criminal justice system fairly and effectively holds young offenders accountable for criminal conduct.

I urge my fellow parliamentarians to support Bill C-25, which proposes amendments to the pre-trial detention provisions and adds deterrence and denunciation as sentencing principles under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

In my opinion, these amendments will strengthen our youth justice system, allay public concerns that dangerous youth are not being dealt with appropriately, and result in safer communities.

•(1120)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the hon. member was quoting favourably from the Nunn commission report, but he seems to want to pick and choose. This is a fairly innocuous bill, the first section of which is generally agreed on by pretty well everyone and the second of which will have a little more controversy.

What I want to know from the hon. member is why his government, which prides itself on getting it done, does not actually take the comprehensive approach by Justice Nunn and incorporate the recommendations into a bill.

Recommendation 20 states:

—amend the “Declaration of Principle” in section 3 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to add a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act.

Why does this bill not have that in it?

Recommendation 21 states:

—amend the definition of “violent offence” in section 39(1)(a) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to include conduct that endangers or is likely to endanger the life or safety of another person.

Why is that not here? It was suggested that there be a change from “patterns of findings of guilt” to “patterns of offences”. Again, why is that not here for the issue of appropriateness of pre-trial detention?

There were other recommendations with respect to responsible persons and all that sort of stuff.

Why not simply take Justice Nunn's recommendations, incorporate them into the bill, and put them before the House instead of this cheesy exercise of dropping one little section at a time? One has to start to think that there is some sort of public relations exercise going on, which is far more important in the eyes of the government than actually doing the job properly.

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows and as I mentioned in my speech, the justice minister has indicated that there will be a further review of the Youth Criminal Justice Act in 2008.

In response to the comments of the previous speaker who talked about the fact that he liked the stuff at the beginning of the bill, but that he did not like the second part of the bill, I would speak to the fact that this bill is referring to young offenders who have committed serious and violent crimes. They are dangerous to society.

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I find his comments unacceptable. He talks about cheesy. I would say what is cheesy is the Liberal attempt, since the election of 2006, to consistently delay and obstruct virtually every piece of crime legislation that comes before the House.

Mr. Brian Pallister (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade and to the Minister of International Cooperation, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the member for Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont for his speech and for his efforts in the French language as well. He deserves our encouragement.

I must take exception, while I have the chance, to the reference made by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and using the phrase “doing the job properly”. The previous government had 13 years to do the job properly. It stood quietly by while circumstances got worse in respect of juvenile violent crime.

Do the members of this House assume that this is an urban problem exclusively? I represent chiefly a rural riding. My largest community has about 13,000 people. A couple of weeks ago I concluded a 50 town tour of my riding where we gathered and listened to the concerns of constituents across the length and breadth of the riding.

The reality is that the number one issue that concerned the people of that rural part of the country was crime. It is almost unbelievable the degree to which crime has changed the fabric of rural communities, not only in my riding but from talking with other members representing rural ridings in their ridings as well.

People really felt that the number one attribute of their riding was safety and who rarely locked their doors do now. They are buying security systems and many of them are telling me that they are living in fear.

We had events this past summer, including a couple of murders. One was gang related and was one not. We had the case of a 13-year-old female driver who with a couple of friends stole a vehicle and drove into the centre of Portage la Prairie on a Sunday morning. The driver lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a family going to church. There were four people seriously injured, of course in the non-offending vehicle. These are the kinds of things that are happening. These are serious crimes and they should have serious consequences.

I want the member to address the issue of deterrents. I am curious as to why this was removed from the sentencing provisions years ago under the Liberals. Would the member address that particular issue as to how important he sees the restating of a judge's parameters on sentencing?

• (1125)

Mr. Mike Lake: Mr. Speaker, I concur with the hon. member who spoke about talking with the people in his riding. Crime is the number one issue in my riding when we knock on doors. Crime is the number one issue that people talk about.

In my correspondence the number one issue brought forward is related to justice issues of many different kinds. Youth crime is specifically singled out on a regular basis.

I want to speak about deterrents for a second. One thing I do want to point out is that the vast majority of our youth are fantastic kids who are not committing crimes. We are talking about a small proportion of the youth who are causing problems. I would point out that the majority of the victims of these youths are kids themselves. They are our own kids and our own families.

In terms of deterrents and in terms of consequences, I would say it is vitally important that we start to take the term consequences seriously. The connotation does not necessarily need to be a negative one. Kids quickly learn as they are growing up that without consequences they have no boundaries or boundaries mean nothing. Without the boundaries they do not have order. Quite honestly, it leads to chaos in the lives of some of these kids.

We have talked a little bit about preventative measures and some questions have come up. I think one of the most important preventative measures that we can undertake is to establish a culture of responsibility among our youth, that violent crime of any kind is absolutely unacceptable. Solid criminal justice policy in this area is crucial in fostering that culture.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I come from Quebec, and I took a special interest in youth justice when I was a minister and also in my law practice. I am not an expert in this area, and I do not claim to be.

Nevertheless, I would like to explain what has been done in Quebec and why we take such a different attitude from the rest of Canada. I would also like to explain why the architects of our youth justice system do not understand why the rest of Canada has never taken note of the success we have achieved and used Quebec as a model when drafting new legislation on young offenders, instead of looking to American models. Ours are based more on European models, but also on models suggested in the United States by people who study criminology and psychology.

In 1998, I attended a meeting of ministers of justice in the midst of an election campaign. I went to talk to the ministers of justice in the middle of an election campaign because I had something to tell them before they changed the legislation. At the time they were discussing a bill introduced by Ms. McLellan.

Canada had a juvenile crime rate at the time that was 50% greater than the rate in Quebec. That was not purely by chance. The political parties of all stripes in power in Quebec over the previous 30 years had always taken very seriously this primary concern with the rehabilitation of young offenders. An entire profession was created to deal with it called psychoeducation.

Rather than spending our money to build institutions, we put most of it into the training and treatment given to young offenders and the training provided to judges. I can recall the chief justice of the youth court in Quebec summarizing in a few choice words the attitude of the Quebec courts: the right measure at the right time.

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This is a very subjective process, of course, but it is objectively justified. When dealing with adolescents, we are dealing with people who will soon be adults. They have to be induced to act not out of a fear of punishment—because this fear cannot be maintained very long—but out of a genuine acceptance of society's rules, an understanding of them, and a responsible attitude.

I am sure we can all recall our own adolescence and some of the friends we had. We know very well that adolescence is quite a difficult time when we emerge from the body of a child to become an adult. It is also a time when we like to test limits, and not everyone does this in the same way. I remember some of the young people I knew, when I was young myself, who did some really foolish things. Now they are very respectable people who are very respectful of the law and extremely responsible. I am sure that nearly everyone here knew some young people like that—or maybe not. In any case, I think it is a generally accepted fact that some very responsible adults today went through some pretty turbulent times in their youth.

If we are concerned about a safe society, it is important when dealing with adolescents to do all we can to ensure that they eventually become responsible adults who do not always have to be frightened into controlling themselves, especially as I do not think that fear is a very effective way to deter them from committing crimes.

• (1130)

Something rather significant has happened in Quebec in the past few years: we have placed so much importance on prevention and rehabilitation that we are achieving good results.

Earlier I was talking about the results I saw in 1998, but I will read some more statistics from *Juristat*: “With the exception of Quebec, which saw a 4% decrease, all the provinces reported increases in the youth crime rate”.

Quebec has created something else that will achieve long-term results and will probably start to have an impact. I am talking about early childhood centres. We no longer talk about daycares in Quebec—except for maybe when we are out of breath. From an institutional point of view, there are no daycares in Quebec, but we have the best system of early childhood centres, where working parents can leave their children at a very early age.

These early childhood centres employ professionals. They are not babysitters; they are professionals trained in early childhood education. There are no hard and fast rules, but often early childhood professionals can recognize the signs of a young offender when the child is very young.

We have professionals who know. They know how to recognize it and intervene early on. Let me say, they do not put these children in prison; the children might be given a time out from time to time and given individual attention so as not to have problems in the future.

That was how Quebec saw things. That is what Quebec has done and people should know about the results we have achieved.

We did not much like Mrs. McLellan's bill. Nonetheless, I am sure that many people who adopted Mrs. McLellan's bill at the time are surprised at its results, namely a lower youth incarceration rate.

There is a reason we criticized it at the time. I know it was drafted by people familiar with Quebec's experience. They drafted it the way they did because they felt there was too much reliance on incarceration. They developed an extremely objective system, but when it comes to handling young offenders, many things should be left open to interpretation.

I will give some examples that I have often used. I will look at two extreme cases. A youth has just shoplifted a popular singer's CD and is arrested. He arrives at the police station and does not want his parents to be called because he is embarrassed. His parents come to get him anyway. He is ashamed, and so forth.

An hon. member: Oh, oh.

Mr. Serge Ménard: Excuse me, I was distracted.

I have to speak to you, I prefer to speak to you. I need human contact, especially to talk about these things. Right? You can see that there is no need to intervene with this youth or to take him before a court.

Let us take another example. A youth steals some jewellery, tools or something else that he will probably sell. Even if it is the first time, we must know how to intervene. If you have a tiered system, where you speak of a first offence and then a second offence, that is not the right system.

A youth commits a crime: you have to know how to interpret this sign. In the first case, you would let him go. In the second case, even if it was a first offence, I believe that you would have to intervene.

Let us go to the other extreme and look at murder, which is much more serious. A youth, together with two or three others, steals from some seniors and beats them to death.

• (1135)

We will definitely take a very tough stand with these youths.

In another case, a young person has an alcoholic father who beats his wife, does not look after the children and even beats them. The youth ends up killing his father. This is serious and it will be taken seriously, but the approach will be completely different. It is the same crime, but each requires a different solution because the youth's circumstances will be taken into consideration as well as the fact that one day this youth will be an adult and he will have to function in society.

I remember that, at the time, of the 35 young people who had committed murders in Quebec, none had become repeat offenders. Only one committed other crimes later. Good results were obtained thanks to the competence of the judges, the training and the system in place.

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However, what I am hearing from the minister worries me a great deal, and it will be even worse for the future. The word “prevention” is missing from his remarks. He makes no reference at all to the principles of psychology or of criminology, and I know why. It is because he believes that the principle of criminology is to put them all away, right? It is not that at all. It is a matter of knowing how to take the right measure at the right time. To that end, it is necessary to allow a great deal of discretion to the judges who try these cases and who must be able to direct these young people to various institutions.

I also hear a great many remarks that demonstrate to me that the purpose of this legislation is not to ensure that young people, when they become adults, will no longer be a danger to our society. Rather, it is legislation that responds to perceptions, because people perceive that there is an increase in criminal activity.

As politicians, what should we do if we know that those perceptions are wrong? I know that other people in my riding also think that criminal activity is on the increase. Yet it has been decreasing on a regular basis for the past 25 years. Criminal activity decreased until last year, especially among young offenders.

Those perceptions are rather normal, given that the statistics are not emphasized. Regardless, in general, since 1990 criminal activity among young offenders has decreased in Canada. It would be hard to persuade the majority of that, they will not believe it. Why? Because the statistics are published in the newspapers, once a year, beside the obituary notices. In contrast, whenever a serious crime is committed by a young person, unfailingly, it makes the headlines.

Public perception in relation to crime is based on the headlines that we read every day. Thus, it is consistent. People always believe that crime is increasing, even when it is decreasing.

However, I want to respond to the challenge issued by the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, who thinks he can challenge anyone in this House. I would ask him to confirm for me whether he is not almost harassed by his constituents who tell him that young offenders should be more severely punished.

For my part, I am not harassed by my voters. It must be said that the worst of the United States also rubs off on Quebec. Sometimes, people say to me that a certain punishment is terrible, and so forth. I answer them calmly and explain to them a little of what I explained earlier. I tell them that we still get good results and, above all, that we must not follow the American example.

This shows me something. I am a sovereignist. But I was not born a sovereignist, I did not grow up in a sovereignist environment and there were not many sovereignists around when I was a teen.

● (1140)

I supported the Rassemblement pour l'indépendance nationale, but really, my ideas fit in with the Mouvement souveraineté-association. Because of our history, the country I love the most, besides Quebec, is still by far Canada, because we have things in common. Yet I still remember my ideal as a teenager, which was to live in a great country in which there were two important nations, with the contribution of the aboriginals and others. I thought that since we came from two great European countries that had made so many contributions to science, the arts and so forth, this would be a good combination and we could enrich each other.

However, once again, I can see that most people are unable to see something good when it is right in front of them. One thing we should at least do with Quebec is to go back to the old way of dealing with young offenders, which was very successful. This just proves to me that we would truly be better off to live separately—we would remain neighbours—and to enjoy sovereignty.

That is why the Mouvement souveraineté-association appealed to me the most. Even so, back when I joined the movement, I thought that there were some things we should definitely have in common, such as criminal law. We do agree on that. People in Quebec are not very keen on the French criminal law system. We prefer the basic principles of the adversarial system and so on.

Nevertheless, what I have been hearing from the other side is giving me more and more reason to doubt. I am becoming, astonishingly, more of a separatist than a sovereignist. This is a good example of why. Why is it that westerners are always trying to copy the United States? Why not look for a solution right here at home?

In a way, I understand. I was looking at the crime statistics, which are a little scary. Take crime rates, for example. In Quebec, that rate is 5,909 per 100,000 people, but out west, in Manitoba, it is 11,678; in Saskatchewan, it is 13,711; in Alberta, it is 9,000; and in British Columbia, it is 11,000. I can see that members on the other side of the House have the perception of problems. Still, perhaps they should look eastward for better solutions. After all, Quebec's homicide rate is a lot lower than Canada's.

The last thing that I do not understand is this: some members of the government are from Quebec. Are they aware that our way of dealing with young offenders is a good model? I am not saying it is a success, because success would imply that there is no juvenile delinquency, which will never be the case. However, if we compare Quebec's success rate to those of Canada and the United States, it is a model. Why can those members not persuade their government to consider the Quebec model?

Once again, this shows how limited Quebecers are in federal government. Our party's founder himself discovered those limits. Just like me and many others, he proposed full sovereignty for Quebec with close ties and strong friendship between our two nations.

● (1145)

Ms. Meili Faille (Vaudreuil-Soulanges, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague for presenting the Bloc Québécois position so well. I wish to ask him a question.

Recently, in Quebec, in my riding, a young driver killed little Bianca, whose family lives in Île-Perrot. Citizens of the area mobilized to demand that the youth was incarcerated until the case was heard. However, as a youth, he had undertaken to appear in court.

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I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about this case. I would like to know how the Bloc's position would help this youth. His companions, his friends, the people around him could also support him. Can the member tell us why it would be detrimental for his future for the government to make an example of this youth?

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, this is not a case where the young person would be affected by the bill. In the cases presented here, the individual must be accused of a violent crime. In your example, if I am not mistaken, it is the youth's first offence. Thus, he is not a repeat offender and is not subject to any conditions. It appears very likely that he will observe the conditions. I think that the law, as it is currently applied, would be no different in his case.

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to ask my colleague a fairly technical question with respect to proposed paragraph 29(2)(c) of the bill, which states:

the young person is charged with an indictable offence for which an adult would be liable to imprisonment for a term of more than two years and has a history that indicates a pattern of findings of guilt under this Act...

When Mr. Justice Nunn did a comprehensive review of young offenders' bills generally, he made a suggestion that instead of a pattern of findings of guilt there be a pattern of findings of "offences". I wonder whether this would be appropriate for review by the committee and whether the hon. member has an initial reaction to changing a pattern of findings of guilt to a pattern of findings of offences.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, first of all, if it involves one of the circumstances proposed in paragraph 29(2)(c), generally, the judges I know would keep that young offender in custody. Once again, this does not change things much.

An important point that I wanted to emphasize and I will continue to emphasize is that young offenders must be sentenced and dealt with on a case-by-case basis. I understand that, in this instance, it is before he or she is convicted, that it is a question of bail, but all decisions must be on a case-by-case basis. It also depends on the young offender's family situation and the family support involved, the circumstances in which the crime was committed, and so on. The major flaw in Ms. McLellan's reform was that the legislation is too objective.

I had prepared an argument, but I did not have the time to discuss it. I remember one judge I know well, a classmate of mine, telling me about a young offender who appeared before her for trafficking in a small amount of drugs. He already had a previous conviction for something else and he had complied with his conditions. He wore designer clothes; he had an apartment, a car, a cell phone, and she knew very well that, in all likelihood, if he was trafficking in small quantities, he was distributing it for others or he was in contact with other dealers. He was seventeen and a half and she therefore had only six months to do something with this young man. Under the McLellan legislation, since he had complied with the conditions that had been imposed and since it was a small quantity of drugs, she was forced to release him, although she would have liked to send him elsewhere.

It must be understood that, when referring to a good system, it is not a question of whether the system is slack or tough, severe or lenient. The system must be appropriate, with the right measure at the right time.

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first allow me to congratulate my colleague on his speech concerning this bill.

He made reference to sovereignty and sovereignty-association. I remember how in recent months, and even in recent years, there have often been discussions in which people found us a little laughable when we talked about the Quebec model.

I have the impression that in this case it is actually essential to demonstrate that there is a Quebec model, on which the government and the people in this House could base a policy that would be much better for youth and for young people who have committed petty thefts—some of them more serious than others. Under such a policy, young people would have an opportunity to be rehabilitated. We must not try to do things that will place young people in either a too permissive or a too restrictive situation.

We know that some people want to improve society. If they want the social system to perform like an Olympic athlete, they have to become acquainted with the best models. It would therefore ask my colleague why the government would not now want to adopt a model like the one in Quebec, which would mean that our young people would be better protected in future.

• (1155)

Mr. Serge Ménard: Mr. Speaker, I can answer in one word: ignorance.

Obviously they are ignorant of Quebec's success, and what it results from. I suggest that the member read the answer the minister gave me when I put the question to him. I laid out the figures we had in front of him. I have been unable to determine whether it was still the case, because it is the McLellan legislation that applies. In 1998, however, before it came into force, the juvenile crime rate in Canada was 50% higher than in Quebec. He did not dare to contradict me then, and I certainly felt that it was because he did not know this.

The rest of his answer obviously showed that he did not know how we had done this. He did not know the institutions we have developed, the professionals we have hired, or the training they are given.

It is ignorance, and that is what makes me say, because we are such very distinct societies, that we should lead our own lives, separately.

This is one more argument for sovereignty. Because we speak a different language from the rest of America—obviously, we are aware that we are influenced by it—we therefore have a tendency to look toward Europe and elsewhere to solve our problems. Essentially, that is how we developed our system, in Quebec, while in the rest of Canada there is a tendency to be always looking toward the United States.

[*English*]

Mr. Derek Lee (Scarborough—Rouge River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise you that I intend to split my time with the member for Halifax West.

Government Orders

What we have here is a new initiative, which is really not that new, in evergreening and updating the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It is not the first time we have seen an amendment to the Youth Criminal Justice Act and it probably will not be the last.

There will be amendments made to the Criminal Code and criminal justice legislation many times as we work our way into the future. This is because society changes, society's values change the way we deal with social issues, and problems change.

Some have asked why we have a Youth Criminal Justice Act anyway. Why do we not just treat all offenders the same? Some people say that if the government is into setting up mandatory minimum penalties all over the place, so many that we can hardly keep track of them, why do we not just make the sentence for every crime five years or ten years? Then everyone would understand.

Most Canadians realize that this would be crazy. It would not work. We would fill the prisons and we would not accomplish anything.

Why do we have a separate Youth Criminal Justice Act? The answer probably is because it makes a whole lot of sense and this is how we have always done things as Canadians.

Before I was born, which is quite a while ago, there existed the Juvenile Delinquents Act. Then it became the Young Offenders Act. Now it is called the Youth Criminal Justice Act. We have always in this country had a separate youth criminal justice system because society has believed and continues to believe that youth need to be treated differently than adult offenders. The current statute does that and does it quite well.

In case Canadians think there is something radically wrong with the statute, we can refer them to the recent report of Mr. Justice Nunn in the province of Nova Scotia, who did quite a thorough reworking and studying of the act. He found in his report, which is publicly available, that the act actually works quite well overall. He did mention one or two small areas that could be modified. One of those areas is contained in the bill.

The bill does two things. I know that this has been mentioned on the record earlier, but the bill will broaden the scope of circumstances in which pretrial detention of a youth may be considered, including instances where a violent offence has occurred. This is the part that reflects the report of Justice Nunn in Nova Scotia following his commission of inquiry.

The other thing this statute does is add into the principles of sentencing in the Youth Criminal Justice Act the principles or objectives of deterrence and denunciation. There may be a place for that. That is what we are considering here.

I, for one, recognize that these principles were not put into the original Youth Criminal Justice Act because there did not seem to be a need. In other words, the objectives of dealing with youth under the YCJA did not require advertence or reference to principles of deterrence or denunciation because there was a whole constellation of principles that seemed to fill the need.

I would say for those who want to fix this, if they think something is broken—and of course there is an adjustment needed in the statute—and if they think we can fix things by shouting louder or

complaining longer or praying harder so that we just keep changing laws by increasing sentences, it does not work. It never has. It never will. What we have to do is be rational in how we are doing this.

● (1200)

The myth out there, and this probably is not just my own view but the view of many, is that by tweaking sentences and changing sentencing we somehow reduce crime.

We have heard the phrases “getting tough on crime” or “getting harder on crime” around here so often it is getting boring. The offences have already been written. The code already exists. We are not, generally speaking, around here in the last while making new criminal codes, new sentences. All we are doing is changing the sentencing.

I am pretty sure that if I went out on Wellington Street or out on Shepard Avenue in my riding of Scarborough—Rouge River, I would not find anyone who would actually know how we have adjusted the sentences up or down. If I were to ask them what the penalty was for stealing a magazine from a convenience store, I do not think they would have any idea whether it was a mandatory sentence, a jail sentence or a fine.

The reason I say that is because the whole criminal justice system has recognized that the real deterrence for those who would commit a crime is not the actual sentence they might get, because before they commit the crime they do not know what they are going to get. They do not even think about it. The deterrence almost always lies in the prospect of getting caught and having to deal with it. It is getting caught that is the deterrent component in the criminal justice system. Whether or not they go to jail, whether or not they pay a fine, whether or not they are embarrassed or whether or not they lose their job, getting caught is the most important part, which is why police enforcement and resourcing our police is so important. They must be able to keep up a reasonable effort at catching those who do criminal acts.

I just wanted to debunk the myth that by ratcheting up sentences and changing the way we sentence we will reduce crime.

I will ask the question one more time. If we were to increase the sentence for a bank robbery by three years, does anyone really believe that there would be fewer bank robberies in this country? I do not think so because the guys committing the robbery do not think they will get caught. If they do think about getting caught, they know they will do time. However, when they are planning to do whatever they are going to do to break the law, they do not get out a calculator and do the sentencing math. Almost all of these people are not actually very intelligent. I am sorry to treat them as a class of people, but they actually are not smart enough to go through that exercise. They are into a lifestyle that reflects, perhaps, an absence of thought, an absence of consideration.

I want to now deal with the sentencing principles that are contained in this bill. First, I want to refer to the sentencing principles that are contained in the Criminal Code, generally. As I said earlier, they do not actually apply directly to the Youth Criminal Justice Act but they are contained in the Criminal Code. This House legislated them in the year 1995. That was a first for Canada because it was the courts that generated the principles.

Government Orders

At committee we will consider the sentencing principles of deterrence and denunciation being added in the bill. Those principles exist in adult sentencing. However, I want to point out that there may be a conflict between those principles being inserted into the statute and sections 38(2)(c) and 38(2)(b) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act, which say that proportionality and similarity of sentencing between different youths committing similar crimes need to be there.

• (1205)

If we begin inserting denunciation and deterrence in a particular case, judges may have some difficulty making that fit with the other sentencing principles that already exist within the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

If this bill gets through second reading, I look forward to reviewing it at committee.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is almost nothing in my hon. colleague's speech with which I disagree. His analysis is right on.

What is troubling about this particular piece of legislation, as is the myriad of pieces of legislation that seem to flow through this House, is that it is like a bits and pieces approach. It is an emphasis on trees rather than the forest.

I would be interested in my hon. colleague's comments on Mr. Justice Nunn's report, which is actually a comprehensive report, a road map on the changes that do need to be made to the Youth Criminal Justice Act. I invite his comments on why, in heaven's name, we are dealing with picayune pieces of the justice's report rather than dealing with the forest, so to speak, of changes that need to be changed in that act.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, the inquiry by Mr. Justice Nunn took place following, what so often happens, a tragic series of incidents, in this particular case involving a young offender. The part that Justice Nunn reflected on here is that if the youth court can see a pattern of violence, if violence has occurred and there is some prospect of it continuing if the youth is released, the judge involved should have some statutory ability to maybe flip the thing over a little bit, move the goal posts in a way that is more likely to protect society.

That is like having twenty-twenty hindsight in advance. The judge does not have it. No one has it. However, in cases where the judge sees a pattern of violent behaviour and has a sense that it might continue if the youth is not restrained in custody, then the judge would have an ability to do that.

According to Justice Nunn, that was a conspicuous piece of the YCJA that was missing. All the procedures in the act that were intended to help deal with youth were working quite well except for that one small piece. It is a one-off and I think Mr. Justice Nunn appreciated that it was kind of a one-off, filling in a little gap in the current statute, and it was given in that spirit.

• (1210)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is a very knowledgeable member of both the justice committee and the legislative committee so he has a lot of experience in the justice program.

I wonder if he would comment on the program in general starting with the basis for this bill and the fact that crime is going down, which everyone knows, but there are quotes of some serious offences, which no one disagrees occurs, but the problem is that we have had legislation that does not address that and programs that do not address that in general.

Going down the road, the reason we are in so much trouble and it has been such a mess and so much change had to be made or the bill stopped was that no one had the answer for reducing crime. In fact, as many experts said before committee, some of the changes would have actually lead to more crimes and a less safe society.

Could the member go below the surface a bit, below the gut reactions and get to the science and the evidence of people and the victims who are really on the ground, and tell us what would really help and whether this bill is part of that solution?

Mr. Derek Lee: Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, as a society, we know the causes of crime. We have itemized them and studied them. A parliamentary committee published a report that itemized the causes of crime.

This particular piece of legislation, and some of the others before the House, actually does not address any of those causes. It only attempts to deal with sentencing. I mentioned the myth that tweaking the sentencing will reduce the causes of crime but it will not. This pattern of activity, the increasing of sentences, does not help solve crime. It is a massive employment program for prison constructors and correction officials.

The myth of public protection is attached to it but it is actually a massive federal-provincial download because most of these mandatory minimum sentences we are talking about now will need to be dealt with by the provincial reformatories, not the federal prisons.

We are mandatorially sending all these people into provincial correction institutions and the provinces need to pick up the tab. That is a federal-provincial downloading exercise, one of the biggest ones I have seen.

All of this debating and tweaking of sentencing will not reduce crime because it does not address the real causes.

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague's comments were very thoughtful. I know he is very knowledgeable on issues related to justice, including youth justice, and I certainly enjoyed listening to his views and comments, as well as those of the members who asked questions and added their thoughts to his.

The issue of youth justice and of the Youth Criminal Justice Act is one of concern in Nova Scotia, particularly after the very sad and tragic death of Theresa McEvoy, a teacher who was killed by a young offender out joyriding.

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My hon. colleagues referred to the Nunn commission which followed that event. Justice Merlin Nunn of Nova Scotia was asked by the provincial government to look at the whole situation, the administration of youth justice, the act itself, and the services provided for youth in a variety of manners, particularly youth at risk or youth who may be involved with the justice system, and recommend a series of changes.

Justice Nunn, as we have heard, made a lot of recommendations relating to the programs that should be available for rehabilitation, dealing with the issues of poverty and other matters of that sort. He also said that the Youth Criminal Justice Act works very well. He praised it and said that in the vast majority of cases, in relation to the great number of young people who come in contact with the law, the act works extremely well. However, in cases of repeat offenders, particularly with serious crimes, there is a need for changes.

Unfortunately, while the government addresses a little of that, it does not address most of the recommendations that Justice Nunn brought, not just in relation to the whole range of issues but in relation to amendments to the act.

He had a series of recommendations for changes to the act, and I will get to those in a few minutes, which the government has completely ignored. I hope that when this goes to committee as I think it will, members will consider amending it to provide for the kinds of changes that Justice Nunn has very wisely recommended.

This became an issue following the McEvoy case and other occurrences that have happened in Nova Scotia, particularly in the Halifax area. I, like other members, have received emails and phone calls related to issues concerning crime. In fact, in my fall householder, the mail-out to people who live in my riding, I placed a short survey so that I could hear from my constituents about their concerns on this issue.

There was a really significant response from the community. People were very eager to share their thoughts and feelings on what should be done by the Government of Canada to help to mitigate crime in our country. The overwhelming response was to change the Youth Criminal Justice Act, but also to fight poverty and get at the underlying social problems that, as Justice Nunn said, are so often the root causes of crime.

When I hosted my 78th "Let's talk" meeting, a series of local meetings that I hold in my riding, at the beginning of this month I had guests from a variety of areas of the criminal justice system, including the Halifax regional municipality's chief of police. I was very pleased that he could attend. There were defence lawyers, a retired police officer, probation officers, members of families of victims of crime, including, very sadly, three families who have had loved ones murdered.

It was very powerful to hear their words and concerns. It was interesting to note they were not just saying that we should lock up young criminals and throw away the key. They were certainly concerned that the system should function well, that there be good investigation and prosecution of crimes, and proper systems of punishment, deterrence and rehabilitation.

However, these same people were also concerned that we address the causes of crime, such as poverty and other kinds of social

problems in our country, whether it be fetal alcohol syndrome, as an example, that are other causes of crime.

I remember that the parents of Jonathan Reader, who tragically was found murdered on the corner of Lacewood Drive and Dunbrack Street in my riding, were present and argued that the first thing we have to do is to be good neighbours, to be aware of what is going on in our neighbourhoods, to keep an eye on things, to know who our neighbours are and be in touch with them. We must be more aware of what is going on, so that we have more of a texture and fabric of a society that will be strong, will prevent these kinds of things from arising, and prevent people from going in the wrong direction as much as possible.

•(1215)

We also heard at this meeting that the role of the federal government, in their view, was to integrate the expertise and research that has been done on so many of these areas, and to get different levels of government working together in a much better way.

People are certainly impressed with the knowledge and research that has been done in relation to crime and youth crime. I saw that they were clearly frustrated with the weak cooperation they found between the different levels of government, between the administration of justice, the police, the crown prosecutors and the people who make the laws, the Department of Justice, the drafters of the laws in Ottawa, that do not always respond to the reality on the ground or on the street, so to speak. That was clearly a concern. Also, the need to support the kinds of community groups that provide programming for youth that is so important in getting kids off the streets and keeping them active and worthwhile, and in meaningful activities where they are growing and learning and developing in a positive way.

There is no question that I also heard that youth need to be held accountable for their actions through meaningful consequences, through rehabilitative change, and through rehabilitative programs. I do not disagree at all that there needs to be changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act as Justice Nunn has recommended, particularly to deal with those youths who are repeat violent offenders, the more serious offenders.

One of the problems I see with this bill is it does not address an absolutely key recommendation of Justice Nunn's commission and his report, which said that we have to amend the definition of violent offender. At the moment the act treats violent offenders differently than other offenders, and with good reason. The majority of youth are not involved in serious violent crimes and should not be treated as if they are.

Where they are it is a different matter and should be treated seriously. The problem in the case of Theresa McEvoy was that the young joyrider had stolen a car and was driving the car. That was not treated as a violent offence, but clearly what happened to her was violent and reckless. It should be treated in a very serious manner.

I think Justice Nunn had a very good point in relation to how that should be changed. We do not see any sign of that in this bill and that is very disappointing.

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Also, enhancing measures for pre-trial detention. It is important that those be paired with the enormous increases in the resources available to the courts to deal with these young people. Currently, they can wait for up to a year and longer for sentencing.

If they are on remand and being held waiting for a trial and they have not even been found guilty yet, that is a problem. That is why judges want to have them left with a responsible person, such as their parent for example. What the government has again failed to do is deal with recommendations that Justice Nunn made in terms of what happens, for example, when a responsible person such as a parent says, "Look, I agreed back in court a few weeks ago to be responsible for this person and I made an undertaking to look after this and make sure he or she does not get into trouble, but now I've got a problem. I can't control him or her and I want to give up. I want to be released from my undertaking". There is not a good system now for when that happens.

The judge recommended that system be put in the act but the government has failed to do so. Again, another failure of the government to respond to the recommendations by Justice Nunn.

I do not see why the government could not understand what was being recommended and see that those were good recommendations, reasonable, sensible changes to this act which would have made a real difference and helped to prevent another death such as Theresa McEvoy's.

One of the things we heard from a retired police officer at the meeting I had was that "young people involved in crime are victims of their lives". It is the nature of their lives. This is about poverty which I mentioned earlier.

In fact, one of his main concerns, and he is a retired police officer who has worked with people and crime all his life, was that the underlying issue of poverty remains unresolved. Although there was a good understanding that people living in poverty are not the only people involved in crime, they are a big proportion of the people who are involved. That is why I am so pleased that our leader, the Liberal leader, has come out with a whole series of recommendations and a platform proposal in relation to dealing with poverty.

I am sure many members in this House will agree that we have to address this problem in our country. We can do better in this regard. I think the plan that our leader has put forward is a good measure in that regard. I also think that we need to make changes to this bill to improve it along the lines of what Justice Nunn has recommended.

If we do that and combine it with real efforts to fight poverty, we can make real progress.

●(1220)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the comments just made by my colleague. I certainly would agree that one of the biggest and best predictors of success for children is linked to poverty rates.

We all know there is a need for a solid foundation, whether it comes from education programs or skills development programs through recreation. There also needs to be support for parents because we know that children are not poor, that it is their parents who are poor. So by examining things like living wage programs,

programs for affordable housing, and making sure that jobs are available to those parents, we can really make a difference in the lives of children.

Yet, I note with interest also that the member from that party sat down when we had the debate on the budget and, more importantly, the vote on the budget, where we gave away \$190 billion of fiscal capacity to address the very issues that the member spoke about with respect to the need for addressing poverty.

I wonder whether the member could explain to us why his party chose to sit that out to allow the corporate giveaways to go to the oil and gas industry instead of going where they should have gone, which is to help children in our communities.

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate parts of the hon. member's question which I thought were important to hear and I appreciate the comments she had.

However, when people watch the House of Commons, one of the things that frustrates them so much is that they look to us to be deliberative in the nature of our discussions. Unfortunately, we are all guilty from time to time of being political, when we should be deliberative.

We all know that question period is the time when the government is to be held to account. We also know that the only way to get it held to account effectively is to put pressure on government members by being effective and strong in our questions and getting media coverage so the public will be concerned and put pressure on the government as well. We recognize that and it is not surprising that question period will be a time when we have that kind of heightened atmosphere.

I do not think it is reasonable, unfortunately, to expect a deliberative process to take place during question period, but I would think that more and more we should look for it in debate here in the House on bills, for example. We should try to be more deliberative.

To get into the question about why we voted or did not vote on the question of the mini budget, for example, I think we know the answer to that. That is clearly trying to be political. It is making a political attack, a partisan attack, and my hon. colleague knows full well that in the past there have been times when the NDP has not voted to avoid an election.

We also know, we have seen the polls, that the likely result, if the polls are accurate lately, would mean a very similar House. We would have \$300 million spent at taxpayers' expense to have an election to have basically the same result.

I would not be all that surprised if Canadians said that they have all kinds of reasons to be unhappy with the government, and being reminded of that in an election, they might make a change, but the chances were at that time that we would have the same results.

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My hon. colleague is being unreasonable and being a little bit partisan and political when it is an appropriate moment for us to look at the bill, to look at how it can be improved, and focus on this very important issue of youth justice and how we can work at it. That is the key here, not being partisan.

• (1225)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, returning now to the bill as opposed to the previous question.

I would be interested in the hon. member's comments with respect to the report of Mr. Justice Nunn. There are about 34 recommendations that were made, 19 of which were of an administrative nature, but six, which were actually substantive, were specific suggestions to the amendment of the legislation.

I am looking in the bill, and I might be able to find one, but I am pretty sure I will not. We have six recommendations from the justice, none of which appear to be incorporated in the bill, one of which appears to have some general support in the House and the others seem to be off in some la la land as to what needs to be done here.

I would like to ask the hon. member, why in heaven's name does the government choose to approach this particularly important area of legislation in such a piecemeal fashion?

Hon. Geoff Regan: Mr. Speaker, I think my hon. colleague has a very good point. I did mention a couple of the recommendations of Justice Nunn that were ignored by the government, and I would like to talk about some more.

I hope the government will actually reconsider this. I am disappointed, partly because when the Justice Minister went to Halifax and met with Nova Scotia's minister of justice, he seemed to be saying that he had listened and heard the recommendations of Justice Nunn and recognized the concern about this in Nova Scotia and he would bring forward changes to the act.

I must say that my assumption was that those changes would reflect, at least in large measure, the recommendations of Justice Nunn. That is why I am so disappointed because they do not.

Let me speak about some of the other recommendations that Justice Nunn made. For example, recommendation 11, "That the federal government amend section 42—

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry, but the hon. member does not have time to do that. Time has expired.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Trinity—Spadina.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the overall crime rate in Canada has been falling since it peaked in 1991. Police reported about 2.6 million offences in 2004, resulting in a crime rate that was 12% lower than a decade earlier. However, youth perception of safety is declining.

Between 1998 and 2002, fewer young people, aged 16 to 24, considered their neighbourhoods to be a very safe place in which to live. In 2002, 72% felt their neighbourhoods were very safe from violent crime, a decrease from 1998, which was at that time 78%. By and large, the majority of young people still feel very safe, but there seems to be a small decrease.

We have seen another statistic from the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, which shows an increase of about 13% in the violent crime rate among young people from 1993 to 2003.

Of those young people who feel unsafe, roughly 25% of them are boys and girls who are home alone by grade seven. Eighty per cent of mothers of school-age children are in the workforce, according to the Canadian Council on Social Development, and they worry about their kids. In fact, the average child spends 67 hours of discretionary time each week at home, more hours than they spend in school. That is the time, especially after school, when they are worried about their own safety. Young people are most likely to be bullied during this time and likely to engage in unsupervised Internet use.

In terms of adolescents being victimized or running afoul of the law, research shows this happens between the hours of 3 p.m. and 7 p.m. When we talk about youth crime and youth safety, that is the time when young people sometimes get in trouble. It is between the end of the school day and when parents return home from work.

Research has also shown that this unsupervised time is the risk factor for substance abuse, gang behaviour and other problematic behaviour. Therefore, we know the time that we need to deal with, yet the bill does almost nothing. It does not talk about how we deal with prevention.

There are solutions such as dealing with anger management and bullying. The best programs that can be put in place are after school activities. Again, if young people can attend good after school activities, not only will they be safe, but their self-esteem will be enhanced and their educational success and their positive mental and physical health will be improved. Those are all the things we want for our young people.

Organizations like the Boys and Girls Club transform their after school hours from unsupervised time, where they feel unsafe, to a productive time where they can learn with structured activities.

When we talk about youth crime and safety, in the summer the New Democrats called for the extension of the Canada youth employment program to make it year round permanent program. Right now it only applies to the summer. We know this would have an impact on reducing the youth crime rate.

We have seen it over and over again. For example, the city of Toronto has an after school recreation and care program. This initiative hires young people in their own neighbourhoods. They become role models and mentors. They go to elementary and high schools to teach young people. Sometimes it is an arts program, basketball, physical programs or homework. Some of these young people could have been in trouble with the law, but they decided to turn their lives around.

• (1230)

These kinds of programs have a dramatic effect on safety in a community. Some may remember the summer of youth crime a few years ago. There were a lot of shootings in the city of Toronto. With different strategies, one of which is the youth employment program, the gun crimes for young people dropped 40% within one year. We know this kind of program works.

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This kind of program not only provides good jobs, it provides excellent training and new opportunities to benefit the entire neighbourhood. If we look at youth crime, it is not just young people. Sometimes it is the neighbourhood or the families. The program provides young leaders with the tools and resources to reach out and support families and youth to break out of the cycle of violence, alienation and despair, which can often plague the at risk communities.

Research by Geena Brown shows that if we have these kinds of programs, fewer mothers would use emergency services, child welfare, food bank services and prescription drugs.

I want to point out how much money we could save if we could have a youth crime prevention program attached to the bill.

The latest survey I have seen shows that to keep young people in jail, even without the counselling and support that they may need while in jail, it costs society and taxpayers a bare minimum of \$65,000 per year. If we add the counselling and sometimes the substance abuse help they may need, we are looking at \$100,000 to \$120,000 a year of taxpayer money. If we do the deterrence, the prevention kind of support we have for young people, it is much better use of funding because we know it works.

We recently looked at the figures. The justice department reported that crimes cost our society almost \$50 billion a year. If we can enable groups like the Boys and Girls Club of Canada, YouCan, which teaches young people how to deal with violent situations by de-escalating and learning the skills of conflict mediation, they can take a very explosive situation, de-escalate it and young people end up supporting each other rather than resorting to violence.

We know that a lot of the young people resort to violent crimes because they feel it is the only method in which they know to express themselves. It is not an excuse. They have to take responsibility, but we also have to give them the tools to learn how to de-escalate things, whether it is a bully situation or very at risk behaviour.

YouCan has had a lot of successful initiatives and many other organizations in the community have had some very good initiatives.

The Youth Criminal Justice Act contains the whole notion that when a young person commits a crime, rather than going to jail, we should find some way to give them alternative sentencing, such as working in the communities so they can reform themselves. Unfortunately, the funding has not followed that principle. A lot of neighbourhoods, organizations and municipalities said that it was a good principle, but when judges told young people, who were facing court time, that they had to take some kind of alternative programming, no programs were available in the communities. The community agencies do not have the funding to provide the alternative programs to train these young people.

• (1235)

Therefore, while we have had good principles in the past, we have not had the kind of funding we need to provide the community support, which is critically important.

The National Crime Prevention Centre, a major body for national crime prevention, funds pilot projects, sometimes for one year, sometimes for three years, but it does not provide permanent

funding. Many of the organizations that are doing a lot of work with young people to prevent them from committing crime or after sentencing ensuring they learn the skills so they will not reoffend are saying that they need permanent funding. They know what works. The centre has seen the program work and yet after two or three years the funding dries up and a lot of young people and the communities themselves end up being in trouble.

Other areas that would really help to reduce youth crime are in supporting local initiatives. We have to assist municipalities to build, expand and support drop-in centres, whether it is social infrastructure like basketball courts, community centres or libraries. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has told us there is a social infrastructure deficit.

For example, the city of Toronto is looking at closing swimming pools because there is not enough funding to support them. Again, more and more young people, after school or even during school hours, will be unable to learn skills. Unfortunately, some of these young people will end up getting into the wrong crowd or joining a gang. Then they get into trouble, and that is unfortunate.

We know young people sometimes get in trouble. Why? Because the rate of depression and anxiety among young people in Canada is growing. The rate of suicide is 15% among 15 to 20 year olds, which is the third worst record among OECD countries. When we look at young people, whether they are in jail or not, or in their community and whether they are young offenders or not, we see a clear link because we do not invest in communities. These young people are feeling more and more depressed. We also see obesity and even suicide.

With Canada being a rich country, how could we possibly have the third worst record of young people committing suicide? They must feel dramatically hopeless to do that.

I know I have talked about deterrence, but the bill does not go into the whole notion of how we deal with youth crime prevention. At the end of the day, that is what will work.

Another aspect the bill does not deal with, which is a key one, is witness protection. Some young people would like to tell authorities what is happening in their circle. They would like to tell them that they may know who is doing what in a community in terms of crime. However, some of them feel tremendously unprotected. If we do not beef up witness protection program, many young people will continue to feel they will be targeted or will be at risk and therefore not speak out. A strong witness protection program is very much needed.

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• (1240)

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police recently told the Standing Committee on Public Safety that while witness protection programs are extremely important for law enforcement, they are often too expensive for the local police force. They are unaffordable for the local police departments.

We need a comprehensive youth crime prevention plan that would include youth employment, after school activities, investing in local communities, investing in witness protection programs. Then we could really talk about deterrence and prevention. The bill that is in front of us sets out these sentencing principles. It is fine to have these principles, but there is no community infrastructure or capacity to support these principles such as deterrence.

We know that jailing young people is not a deterrent. While in jail they learn to become hardened criminals. Who is in jail with them? Criminals who have been around for a long time. It is a form of university, I guess, post-secondary education. The youth go to jail and while there, learn how to become hardened criminals. Putting them in jail alone does not work. Not only is it expensive, but it sometimes is counterproductive.

Unfortunately, the key element of prevention is missing in this bill. I know of a lot of young people who started out their lives wrong, in that they made a mistake, got to know the wrong people and got in trouble. Because they are young, energetic and enthusiastic many of them are still hopeful. They have not given up hope. If we reach out to them at the right time and actually believe in them, then they can turn their lives around.

This weekend I was at an organization called Sketch. It teaches homeless youth how to express themselves through the arts, visual arts, painting, sculpture, music, theatre. Some of those young people, because they live on the streets, have had quite a bit of contact with police. Some of them have been in trouble before. This is the 10th anniversary of Sketch. Many of those young people come from broken families. They suffered abuse, sometimes physical, other times sexual. They ran away. That is why they are out on the streets. When they live on the streets they get into some crimes that sometimes they regret.

Organizations such as Sketch deal with those young people holistically to get them to express themselves through the arts and in that way, they heal themselves. They come together and form a very strong community. They support each other. They talk to each other about why they should not continue that cycle of violence, how they can get back to school, find housing and turn their lives around.

There is much we can do for young people. Unfortunately, this bill does not necessarily address all we can do to invest in young people.

• (1245)

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I like the last example the member gave. Last weekend I visited a very similar project in my riding. People were doing excellent carvings, spectacular art, showing that if their skills are harnessed, it can go toward very productive and positive work. I think it was run by an organization called Sundog.

The bill is very small, as the member probably mentioned. It only has two items. One is to increase the opportunities for the crown to get a bit more detention in pretrial, and the other adds some adult principles of sentencing to apply to children.

I wonder if the member agrees with those two changes. I also wonder if she agrees with all the other recommendations in the Nunn report, probably 30 plus, that were not incorporated in the bill.

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, when young people can express themselves creatively, they tell me that their souls get touched and they turn their lives around. Often, that is what is missing in a lot of our programs.

The part of the bill I have a great deal of difficulty with is the sentencing principle, the second part. The first part, pretrial custody, I will put aside. The second part of the bill is the sentencing principle.

I used to be a City of Toronto children and youth advocate. I have certainly looked at a lot of research and there is no evidence whatsoever from all the research I have done to suggest that adult principles of deterrence and denunciation would have any positive outcome for the public safety. If we are talking about passing a law, one would think we would look at some scientific evidence. I have not seen any.

Furthermore, with respect to the difference between adults and youth, sometimes the courts and society do not necessarily sanction that. On this concept of protection of society, the best protection is to invest in the programs that my hon. colleagues are talking about, Sundog, Sketch, the Boys and Girls Club of Canada, YOU CAN, Leave Out Violence, or the YMCA. That is the best protection we could possibly have for our young people.

I have seen communities transform themselves when we invest in the communities. The key element is that the best allies to fight youth crime are the young people themselves, if we can get the young people to turn around their lives, go back into their communities and say, "Hey, that is not a good thing to do. Look at me. I have done it. It is terrible. Follow the right path". They are the best allies, and that is the component that is missing here. That is the best deterrent.

Having the principle of deterrence and denunciation, the second part of the bill, I do not think works.

• (1250)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Paul Crête (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with interest and, most of all, a certain sense of satisfaction.

Bill C-25 is clearly based on the Conservative ideology that it is absolutely essential to punish offenders and the belief that this is the way to solve problems, without putting the necessary effort into rehabilitation. I was afraid that this might have become a common view all across Canada, but luckily that does not seem to be the case. In Quebec, we dealt with this issue a long time ago. We passed legislation that gives people a chance and allows for rehabilitation, which helps reduce crime. This is shown quite clearly by the statistics.

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This bill sets out to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act by adding deterrence and denunciation to the principles considered in determining a sentence. The hon. member just explained very well how far removed this is from reality. The summary also states that the presumption against the pre-trial detention of a young person is rebuttable. In addition, the bill specifies the circumstances in which this presumption does not apply.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. It has never been shown in Quebec that this Conservative approach will have positive results, especially in view of the fact that the virtually identical model developed in the United States to fight crime has not had the desired effect. In addition, young people are at a time in life when we could be trying to ensure that they do not become repeat offenders. Therefore, an entirely different approach is needed.

I would like my colleague to answer a question. Does this Conservative approach really have a future in the area she represents? Would we not do better simply to study this issue again in depth to determine which real efforts should be approved? For example, we could put more emphasis on prevention, on fighting poverty, or on studying the situations in which young people find themselves, rather than taking a purely punitive approach.

I was reading an article this morning which said that, for the first time in ten years, the number of incarcerated people is on the rise. We would therefore be investing a lot of money in a punitive approach that would not necessarily be very effective. I agree with the hon. member that, in doing this, we risk helping to develop a school for crime. Does my colleague share this view?

[English]

Ms. Olivia Chow: Mr. Speaker, millions of people in the U.S. have been in jail. There has been a dramatic increase, but the streets are not safer.

If we are looking for a model, it is right in front us, in Quebec. I have seen the way the Quebec court system works. It gives young people a second chance. It does not just talk about principles. It actually invests in young people. It has programs. It believes in young people, that because they are young, they are still learning and there is a chance for them to turn their lives around.

The majority of young people can do that. Yes, there is a very small percentage of hardened criminals, but I am not talking about them. I am talking about the majority of young people.

If we look at the rate in Quebec of those who reoffend, the ones who have gone to jail or who have committed crimes and received alternative sentences, very few of them reoffend. The percentage of young people who reoffend is actually much lower than the percentage outside Quebec. Why? It is because Quebec fundamentally believes that young people have the capacity to reform themselves.

When we talk about principles and sentencing, we have to be very clear. The first principle is that we have to believe young people have the capacity to change. If not, then we throw the key away. They are young people. For how many years are we going to put them in jail? It is not going to work. We have to find the best solutions. In Quebec quite a lot of programs work very well, and of course, there are other models outside Quebec.

On the principle of simply locking them up and putting more and more people in jail, we have seen the example in the U.S. and it has not worked.

• (1255)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have certainly read a lot in the media lately, particularly with respect to gun related crimes and gang related incidents, so I understand why we are seized with this matter today. I also understand why the governing party would like to be perceived as the law and order party.

However, there are people in my community who are concerned about crime and they are also parents who have children of their own. Above all, they are concerned about prevention. They do not want to see crimes happening in the first place. One of the things that concerns me is that while we have debated crime bill after crime bill after crime bill in this House, we have not had any debate about the much more fundamental pieces that need to be in place for today's youth to succeed.

I had the privilege of working for the national office of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada. As part of that organization, I worked with many of the organizations that my colleague talked about, like YOUCAN and the Boys and Girls Club, which are doing some really progressive work with children and youth to ensure that they do not ever end up in a life of crime.

As my colleague is also the children's advocate and because the House has not been seized with these matters, perhaps her committee has been, or maybe she has been involved with other bodies that are part of Parliament but not necessarily in the television limelight. Maybe she could tell us whether there are other opportunities where important work is being done to ensure that children are safe in our communities.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. I think the House will have to take that as a comment rather than a question, because the time for questions and comments has long expired.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood, resuming debate.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the member for Richmond.

There is a pattern here. I do not know whether you have noticed it, Mr. Speaker, and I know you have been sitting as Chair for this entire Parliament, but there is a pattern here.

Step one of the pattern is to fan the flames of fear, usually on the basis of some egregious event that happened in public and has caught the public's attention. Step two is to step up to the microphones, to great fanfare, and announce once again that the government is very tough on crime.

Step three, also to great fanfare, is to do immediate interviews and television appearances, et cetera, and announce that the government has the solution. Step four is to table a bill.

Step five is to repeat steps one, two and three for as long as the media pay any attention, for as long as the public pays any attention, or for as long as the government needs to keep the channel on the channel that is currently on.

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Mr. Speaker, I know that you are an experienced parliamentarian, but you may be surprised, or you may not be, to learn that this pattern was used 16 times in the first session of this Parliament. Sixteen out of the 64 bills presented to Parliament were crime related legislation, which means that about 25% of the legislation on the floor of the House is crime related legislation.

That is a lot of criminal legislation, but it is a great pattern. It appears to generate, how shall we say it, publicity more than it actually deals with the issues. However, because it is dealt with in such a piecemeal, hodge-podge fashion with the repetition of this pattern, it gives Canadians watching the debate a very small glimpse of a very large picture, whether it is a large picture of criminality or a large picture with respect to amendments to the Criminal Code or the youth justice legislation.

By dealing with it in this way, the government in effect gets 16 photo ops, 16 press conferences and 16 TV appearances, all to great effect for the propaganda machine of the Conservative Party, but not much actually gets accomplished. When the government went to prorogation, which killed all of the activity we had in the first session, it got to do it all over again.

In this session, six out of the 29 bills that are on the floor of the House are crime and crime-related bills, so again the pattern is repeated to great effect. The Conservative Party has six more photo ops, six more press conferences and, it hopes, at least six TV appearances. It gives the appearance of actually doing something about crime when in fact nothing is getting done about crime.

Instead of a comprehensive approach, which is what Mr. Justice Nunn suggested with respect to youth in this country, we have all these little series of one-offs.

I thought it would be particularly informative for those who are listening to know that Mr. Justice Nunn had 34 recommendations. Of those 34 recommendations, about 19 were of an administrative nature and are not the prerogative of this chamber. They are largely on how the youth justice system is administered. It is administered by the province.

However, six were specific suggestions on amendments to the legislation, none of which are incorporated in Bill C-25, or if they are, it is in a very tangential way. Here we have an individual who is well respected in the field issuing a report that has 34 recommendations, six of which are of a legislative nature and none of which appear in Bill C-25. That seems to be an awfully strange way to go about being, apparently, tough on crime.

Mr. Justice Nunn has suggested that:

The Province should advocate that the federal government amend the "Declaration of Principle" in section 3 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to add a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act.

• (1300)

I do not know whether that is a good recommendation or not, but it does on the face of it make a lot of sense to me. Why would Bill C-25 not contain a declaration of principle that "protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act"?

That does seem a bit sensible to me. It also seems to be something that would be easily incorporated into a piece of legislation such as

this. It would not, however, be useful to the pattern that has been established, and which I suggested at the beginning of my speech, in that it does not give any publicity hit if this kind of thing is put into the bill.

Recommendation 21 states:

—that the federal government amend the definition of "violent offence" in section 39(1)(a) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to include conduct that endangers or is likely to endanger the life or safety of another person.

Again, why not amend the definition of a violent offence while we are at it? Why can Bill C-25 not incorporate that suggestion? It seems perfectly sensible to me.

Recommendation 22 states:

—that the federal government amend section 39(1)(c) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act so that the requirement for a demonstrated "pattern of findings of guilt" is changed to "a pattern of offences", or similar wording....

That is an interesting one, because there is some parallel in proposed subclause 29(2) in clause 1 of this amendment. The government seems to have chosen to stick with the concept of a "pattern of findings of guilt" rather than a "pattern of offences".

I do not sit on the justice committee, but this would seem to me to be a particularly important question to ask. It would speak to those kinds of situations when a youth who has done a series of particularly egregious offences that may not have actually generated convictions still looks like a pretty bad apple. So if in fact incarceration or detention is being considered as a way to keep this particular individual off the streets, apparently in the government's bill there must be actual findings of guilt even though this particular individual may have had a whole string of offences for which guilt has not necessarily yet been found.

I am curious as to why the government, which apparently wants to be tough on crime, is not incorporating that. There may be good reasons. I do not know. Again, this looks like a missed opportunity.

Another recommendation deals with the concept of the "responsible person" and how that responsible person should continue his or her responsibility if the person is outside of detention. There are other recommendations with respect to bail.

None of these appear in Bill C-25. It is difficult to know why these kinds of sensible recommendations do not get incorporated. They are recommendations by a respected justice on an area of law that we all agree always needs some continuous amendment and review.

Then we have some of the things that the government does put in. I want to pick up on the comment of my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River, who said that sentencing does not reduce criminality.

In another life, I used to be a lawyer. Actually I still am a lawyer, but I do not practise. I did a very little bit of criminal law. Occasionally one would go into the prisons to interview one's client. I did make a couple of observations on the very few clients that I did actually represent.

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One was that they were not the sharpest knives in the drawer. Generally speaking, people who are in the criminal business are not that sharp. Second, they frequently had some pretty horrific backgrounds, possibly due to drugs, either drugs they were taking or drugs that had resulted in fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effect or things of that nature, which diminished their capacity to interact in society.

• (1305)

Frequently their educational achievements were not very high. Frequently they had dependencies of some kind, whether it was drugs or alcohol or something of that nature.

Therefore, it is a population that is not, so to speak, the most outstanding. A consistent pattern was that in each and every case they never thought they were going to get caught in the first place. Therefore, amending legislation so that you can denounce them and deter them, whether it is the Criminal Code or this particular legislation, is utterly meaningless to the population we are trying to affect.

First, none of them had any idea they were going to get caught. They all thought they were going to get away with what they were doing. Second, if they were caught, they had absolutely no idea what the sentence might be for conviction on the particular offence with which they were charged. This was consistent both with adults and with juveniles.

I just want to point out that sentencing, whether it is minimum mandatories and all the rest of the stuff that seems to go on here to great effect, does not seem to make a great deal of difference with respect to the actual criminal population that it is supposed to affect, but for some of us, it really makes us feel a lot better.

Let me pick up on a comment by Martha Mackinnon of Justice for Children and Youth. A news report states that she says:

—the Conservatives are addressing a perception that has been exacerbated by politicians and the media. She also criticized the government's move to bring back "general deterrence" for youths, saying "there's no evidence that deterrence works for young people."

I agree with Ms. Mackinnon. I do not know who she is, but she—

• (1310)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member. I have been trying to get his attention to let him know that his time has expired, but he has been absorbed. Perhaps he could take a sentence or two to wind up.

Hon. John McKay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for not recognizing your signals.

In summary, this is a bill that could have done a lot, appears to have done very little, and frankly misses the mark, but does feed the Conservative propaganda machine.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's remarks. I must point out one thing. He talks about penalties not being a deterrent, but when there are no penalties, clearly there is no deterrent. That is what youth are approaching the justice system with right now. They do not care because they know they are not going to be punished.

The member talks about the Nunn report and says we are not including the principle of "protection of the public". The whole thing is about protection of the public. He said that a person has to be found guilty, not just charged. I do not think he has read the bill. It states:

—unless

(a) the young person is charged with a violent offence or an offence that otherwise endangered the public....

So clearly it is about public safety. Further on, the bill states:

(c) the young person is charged with an indictable offence....

That means not necessarily convicted. Further, the bill states:

—including any pending charges against the young person, that the young person will, if released from custody, commit a violent offence or an offence that otherwise endangers the public by creating a substantial likelihood of serious bodily harm to another person.

It is all about protection of the public. It is not about only when a young person is found guilty. It is about when he is charged and when he has a record and so on. It is clear. I am not sure why the member says it is not.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, first of all, with respect to the statement that there are no penalties, there are penalties. Of course there are penalties. The member may not be happy with the application of the penalties, but there are penalties. The member may not be happy with the timeliness of the application of penalties, but there are penalties.

With respect to the member's concerns about protection of the public, why not simply adopt Justice Nunn's recommendation? It states:

—the federal government amend the "Declaration of Principle" in section 3 to add a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act.

These are the kinds of things that judges refer to continuously when considering sentences. The member may think that these are simply superfluous words, but these are significant words that Justice Nunn, on studying patterns of criminality and studying how judges deal with these things, says are important to incorporate.

Why is it not there?

Mr. Laurie Hawn: It is there.

Hon. John McKay: It is not.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Further questions and comments, the hon. member for Marc-Aurèle-Fortin.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Serge Ménard (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech makes more sense than what I have heard from the members sitting opposite him, with the exception of the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, who spoke this morning.

I would like to honour the member by asking him the same question I asked the minister. Is the member aware of the difference between the crime rates in Quebec and in the rest of Canada? Did he know before today that there is a difference? Did he understand why there is a difference?

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[English]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, yes, in terms of comparing Criminal Code offences under the youth justice system in Quebec to the others, there is a significance difference and they are significantly lower in Quebec.

There is, however, a caveat to that particular response. The caveat is that the Quebec government, for better or for worse, chooses to deal with similar offences under civil code legislation, under welfare legislation. I could be corrected on whether I am choosing the correct word. Therefore, it is not an exact comparison between Canada and Quebec.

The other provinces choose to deal with an equivalent kind of behaviour under this legislation, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, where Quebec, on a similar fact situation, will either deal with it under this or deal with it under more welfare directed legislation.

The behaviour itself I do not think is greatly different between Quebec and the rest of Canada. The way in which Quebec deals with it, however, is somewhat different and, arguably I think, somewhat better.

● (1315)

Hon. Raymond Chan (Richmond, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government has played politics for far too long, shamelessly exploiting criminal justice issues for political gain.

The Conservatives have spent years trying to mislead Canadians saying that the Liberal Party approach on crime does not and did not work. However, Statistics Canada reported earlier this year that Canada's crime rate hit a 25 year low in 2006, completely contradicting the government's misrepresentations and fearmongering. In fact, in every province and territory, crimes rates have been reduced.

We Liberals believe that crime continues to be a very important concern that we need to tackle. However, the report proves that our approach to fighting crime was effective and has made Canadian communities safer. Our effort to fight crime was focused on a three-pronged approach: crime prevention, tough sentencing and an increase in enforcement.

The government has exploited crime statistics and incidences and tabled legislation that is focused on heavy punishment to generate headlines instead of dealing with the real issues and coming up with solutions. The Conservative government would rather scare Canadians instead of offering well thought out legislation.

Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act, is a prime example of this. Instead of working with opposition parties to create meaningful changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act, the Conservative government is once again trying to force through legislation so it can slap a headline sticker on it and call it done.

The fact is that this bill is flawed. It is flawed because it only partially addresses the recommendations made by the Hon. Merlin Nunn, retired justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and the commissioner of the Nunn Commission of inquiry.

The commission recommended that improvements be made in three core areas: youth justice administration and accountability, youth crime legislation and prevention of youth crime. The

Conservative bill only talks about adding deterrence and denunciation to the sentencing principles that a court must consider when determining a sentence for a conviction under the Youth Criminal Justice Act and using pretrial detention in cases where it might be warranted.

The bill fails to add a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act. It fails to amend the definition of a violent offence in section 39(1)(a) of the act to include conduct that endangers or is likely to endanger the life or safety of another person.

It fails to amend section 31(5)(a) of the act so that if the designated responsible person is relieved of his or her obligations under a responsible person undertaking, the young person's undertaking, under section 31(3)(b), nevertheless, remains in full force and effect, particularly any requirement to keep the peace and be of good behaviour, and other conditions imposed by a youth court judge.

It also fails to address the gaps in the legislation with respect to repeat violent youth offenders.

Those are very important amendments that were recommended by Justice Nunn and the Liberal Party.

We should send this bill to committee for further review to see to it that the right amendments are made to the bill and to ensure that any changes to the Youth Criminal Justice Act reflect the necessary tightening of the bill.

● (1320)

The Youth Criminal Justice Act works for the majority of young offenders but we must amend the act to get tough on the group of young people whose activities pose a serious risk to society.

As Justice Nunn stated:

...I must make it absolutely clear and not open to question that all the witnesses I heard—police, prosecutors, defence counsel, and experts—agree with and support the aims and intent of the act. They accept it as a vast improvement over the previous legislation. All are convinced it is working well for the vast majority of young offenders, though it needs to be fine-tuned to provide effective means to handle the smaller, but regular number of repeat young offenders.

A full review of this bill and the implementation of Judge Nunn's recommendations would fulfill the legislative requirements, but our communities need more. We need a comprehensive criminal justice plan to be effective in fighting crime. We not only need tough legislation, we also need community-based policing, preventive measures and investments in increasing the strength in our police forces and prosecutors to ensure timely processing of cases.

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Tony Cannavino, president of the Canadian Police Association, has stated that there is a massive shortage of uniformed officers and that across Canada there is not a police service that has near the number of staff it should have.

The Tory government made a promise almost two years ago to deliver 1,000 more RCMP officers and 2,500 more police officers on the streets but it has failed to deliver this to our communities. The Tory government made a promise almost two years ago and yet it has not delivered.

The Conservatives did not stop failing Canadians with just their broken promises. They have failed Canadians because they simply are not listening to those who serve and protect us. Canada's own association of police has stated that the fight against criminals will not be won with just more police and bigger jails. It takes social programs that prevent criminal behaviour. This means developing social programs that address the root problems in a holistic and collaborative manner.

I agree with Justice Nunn who stated:

To meet the need for collaboration in the provision of services, I recommend that a new and more effective strategy be developed to coordinate the various services to youth of the Departments of Community Services, Justice, Health, Health Promotion and Protection, and Education and other departments and their partner agencies (including police and community organizations) to enable greater collaboration in the provision of services to youth, better and more accessible services for at-risk children and youth and their families, and more efficient use of public services.

We also need more prosecutorial services to address the demand of paperwork and to process evidence. We need to support the provincial governments to increase the resources of the prosecutors and the court system such that criminals do not plea bargain and get away with their deserved sentencing. This is to ensure that the tough legislation we put in place is in fact effective.

The Conservatives, however, are more interested in slogan smearing and fearmongering rather than fulfilling their duty to Canadians.

Today, the Government of Canada is awash with surpluses but, after two federal budgets and a mini budget, the Conservatives have not allocated any new money to hire the promised officers. Pretending to be tough on crime is not the same as doing it. Promising funds and not actually allocating money in the budget is not the same as doing it.

● (1325)

Our law enforcement agencies want the necessary tools and funding for an increase in the workforce to make our communities safer. When will the government deliver on its promises?

Today I stand with the growing list of legislators who are calling the government's bluff and demanding that it fulfill its promises. In B.C. the attorney general and the Vancouver city mayor have publicly criticized the Conservative government's failure to deliver on promises of federal money to hire more officers.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Sorry, but the hon. member's time expired a little while ago. Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again I listened with interest

and I agree with a lot of things that the member said about things that need to be done. That is why in fact we are doing many of those things. I want to challenge him on a couple of things though and then I will ask a question.

He talked about StatsCanada saying the reported crime rate in Canada is down. At the same time violent crime is up and youth crime is up. That is why we are talking about Bill C-25, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, to address that situation.

We talked about adding 1,000 RCMP officers and 2,500 other officers and so on. That is great and we are doing that. We are recruiting and training very hard in the RCMP.

Does the hon. member think that there is an RCMP officer store where we can just go and buy a thousand RCMP officers off the shelf? That is not the way it works. They are highly trained. It takes at least a year to train an officer once he has been recruited. It does not happen overnight. A thousand is quite a large number. We are recruiting hard. We are training hard. We cannot just snap our fingers and produce these folks out of thin air, or does he think we can do that?

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly the issue. Yes, we know it takes money to train police officers and so on but we have not seen any money. It is all empty talk in thin air.

The Conservatives promised that in their 2006 election campaign platform. There have been two budgets, the 2006 and 2007 budgets, and the mini-budget which was delivered a few weeks ago, and no money at all was allocated.

The Conservatives can say that they are doing it, but if there is no money, how can they start? That is the big frustration we all have. It is not only me. The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has made that public in the newspapers. The attorney general of B.C., the hon. Mr. Oppal, as well as the mayor of Vancouver, Mr. Sullivan, went public to demand that the government fulfill its promise.

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I notice the member did not finish the things he wanted to say so I would like to give him an opportunity to finish the things he did not get to say within his time.

The principle of the bill is deterrence. Increasing sentences has been proven by all the experts who came to committee not to be a deterrent but the likelihood of getting caught is a big deterrent. Of course that requires more police and investment in that area.

I would like the member to say what he did not get to say and then comment on that.

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The Deputy Speaker: Order. I must say that the purpose of the question and comment time is not for people to give speakers the opportunity to finish what they have to say, but I know that this can happen in a less transparent way. The member for Yukon might want to try to not be quite so transparent the next time he tries that.

Hon. Raymond Chan: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's giving me this opportunity. What I was trying to say to wrap up my presentation is that the government has pretended for far too long that fighting crime is a priority when in fact the only priority for the government is to make hollow headlines.

It has missed an opportunity by failing to adequately address the gaps in the Youth Criminal Justice Act, by failing to listen to the call by legislators. Finally, the government has failed to address Canada's justice issues because it has not allocated a penny of new money, even though the government is awash with surpluses. Over the past three consecutive budgets, it has not allocated any new money to crime prevention, the hiring of new police officers or helping the provincial governments add more resources to the court system or hire more prosecutors.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr (Jeanne-Le Ber, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to this issue today in this House. I should begin by making the following comment. Even though this is my first term in this House as the member for Jeanne-Le Ber, I have the feeling that history is repeating itself. Whether the Liberals or the Conservatives are in power, the government continually takes this same wrong-headed approach to preventing crime, especially youth crime.

Even though all the studies and all the statistics tend to show that this approach does not work, the government is continuing to go in this direction. It is true that these American-style measures, inspired by George Bush, are popular with a certain segment of the population, especially in the rest of Canada. The government wants to be tougher on criminals, tougher on crime, and it believes these measures will solve every problem.

That was particularly true, in the experience of the Bloc Québécois, when it came time to adopt the amendments to the Young Offenders Act. At that time, the bill had been introduced by the Liberal government and was clearly contrary to the wishes of Quebec. A unanimous motion had been adopted in the Quebec National Assembly and all stakeholders from Quebec demanded that no one disturb their model, based on prevention of crime, that the legislation not be changed, or, at the very least, that the law should provide for exceptions so that Quebecers could maintain a system focused on prevention rather than on repression.

In spite of all that good will and that unanimity in Quebec, the Liberal government of the day went ahead with that bill. Some provisions were challenged in the courts. However, it is clear that in no way was the problem solved.

Today, we find ourselves again facing a government that adopts this George Bush-style philosophy and takes great pleasure in repeating its famous maxim that we must get tough on crime and tough on criminals. This government presents us with another, similar bill, which will do a great deal more harm than good.

In the course of my remarks, I would like to explain why this bill is bad. It is bad because it is founded on a series of false premises. In their reasoning, the Conservatives often refer to common sense as their argument. It is obvious, they will say, that if we introduce minimum sentences there will be less crime.

In my view, we must go beyond this facile argument of the alleged evidence and common sense. I would point out that for thousands of years people thought the earth was flat. It was a matter of common sense: look straight ahead and everything is flat. However, that was not the case. When one went a little further, one could see that the earth is round. It is somewhat the same thing in this situation. Even though, at first glance, it seems comforting and easy to say that we have only to increase penalties and crime will decrease; when we go a little further and dig deeper, we find that is not the case. When we compare the approaches used in different countries around the world, and even in Quebec, we recognize that is definitely not what is happening.

In the end, those countries where legislation is based on prevention will have the lowest rates of criminal activity while those that emphasize repression will have higher rates of crime.

To begin, what exactly is criminal activity? This is one of the Conservative government's false premises and the Conservatives know that very well.

• (1335)

When they say that crime is going up in Canada, that our cities are less safe and that we are living in a more violent world, they know that is not true. The figures from Statistics Canada show that this is not so. The Conservatives are absolutely misleading the public. Instead of doing their job and explaining why we should take measures focused on prevention, they go ahead with that tack.

Since the early 1990s, the crime rate has generally been going down practically across the board for all types of offences. Obviously, when we look at the figures provided by Statistics Canada, there are variations from one year to another. That is true for any statistic. For different years, there are different results, but the general trend since the early 1990s is a drop in crime.

In the meantime, the media give too much attention to certain crimes, let us say the most sensational. Some scandals are so despicable they truly shock us. The 24-hour news media reports these stories more frequently. The way this is handled by the media might leave us under the impression that crime is going up, but that is just an impression. We can say with confidence that our world is much safer now than it was 30 or 40 years ago.

I meet with people in my riding who say, "Thierry, I saw this crime or that murder in the news. It is just awful. Things are bad". That person might be from the Saint-Henri area, for example. Today in Saint-Henri, a woman can walk alone, cross through a park and never have any problem. She does not have to be afraid of going for a walk. With all due respect, that may not have been the case 30 or 40 years ago.

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Our communities everywhere are becoming safer. Is that any reason to be complacent? Of course not. The Bloc Québécois has some proposals for things we should work on.

However, the fact is that the prevention-based system produces results. We can see this even in Canada, where the crime rate has gone down since the 1990s, as I mentioned earlier. The trend is there. Last year, the crime rate went up slightly in every province except Quebec, where the legislation focuses the most on prevention, especially where young offenders are concerned. We see the same thing when we compare ourselves to the United States or any other country. This correlation is very strong.

The second big myth that will have to be dispelled is that tougher laws are effective. This is completely false, as we can see if we take the simple example of homicides. In a number of U.S. states, homicides carry the death penalty. I respectfully submit to the House that I cannot see how, in a modern society, there could be a more serious penalty than death. According to the theory of punishment, there is no greater deterrent than the death penalty. Yet the results do not bear this out.

The crime rates, for murder or homicide, in the United States are three times the rates in Canada, which has lighter sentences. In Quebec, the rates are four times lower than in the United States. We can debate and discuss that and try to find a lot of psychological reasons to explain it, but it is a fact. Stiffer sentences have not been successful in the United States or anywhere in the world where they have been brought in.

One of the fundamental reasons for this is that people who intend to commit crimes will not be deterred by the potential length of the sentence or the fact of a minimum sentence, but by the fear of being caught.

● (1340)

In any event, regarding the minimum sentences we are talking about, a subject dear to Conservative hearts, who in this House knows what minimum sentences apply to various crimes? For example, is there a minimum sentence that applies to theft of a vehicle over \$5,000? Who in this House knows the answer? No one knows. We could do this for most sentences in this House. I see some doubting looks: people are asking themselves where I am going with this.

I am convinced that in this House, even we, as legislators, do not know by heart what sentence applies to a particular crime, what crimes call for a minimum sentence, and what that minimum sentence is. We do not know. Now imagine the young offenders on our streets. They have no idea about what the minimum sentences are. Do we really think that before they commit a crime they are going to go and consult the Criminal Code, and say to themselves that because there is a minimum sentence of seven years for a particular crime, they will not commit it, and instead they will choose to commit a crime with a minimum sentence of three years? Come on! It is absurd to think that. In reality, what truly deters criminals is the fear of getting caught.

There are people who commit crimes, for example murders, homicides. There are people who commit crimes of passion, because the sparks fly, as they say. In a moment of madness and agitation,

they get into a fight and they kill someone. There is not much that can be done. They are not even thinking about the consequences of their actions. There are people who premeditate a crime and plan it so they will not get caught. It is of no importance whether the crime they are preparing to commit is punishable by 5 years or 10 years or 15 years in prison, because they are convinced they will not get caught.

And that is why, instead of devoting resources to longer and longer prison terms, we should be allocating that money to our public safety systems, police services, the RCMP and the entire crime prevention apparatus and trying to spot potential criminals, to try to catch criminals before they commit crimes.

The Conservatives often talk to us about families that are victims of criminals. They ask us what we are doing for them. Personally, I want to work to ensure that there are fewer and fewer families who are victims of crime. For a family that has seen one of its members killed, the fact that the minimum sentence is 7 or 10 or 15 or 20 or 30 or 200 years does not change anything. We must work from the perspective of prevention, and the best way to do that is to provide the resources to catch criminals.

There is something else we have to work on. That is parole. The Bloc Québécois has some proposals to make on that subject. Parole must be granted on merit. There should be no automatic release on parole. Each case has to be studied, and when it is appropriate, when there are good reasons to believe that a person is rehabilitated, then he or she will be released on parole. If the person is not rehabilitated, then he or she should remain incarcerated.

The bill before us now, like a number of the government's bills, includes measures to impose automatic sentencing. The government is telling judges that a certain crime calls for a certain minimum sentence and that they have to presume guilt. The government wants to make judges' decisions for them. Yet when it comes to parole, the government is leaving existing automatic measures in place and is ignoring this much bigger issue. After a criminal has been convicted and sentenced and has served time, the system should take into account whether that person is really ready for release. That is what really matters here. Telling someone that he or she will be sentenced to 10 or 15 years in prison regardless of the circumstances is not the best thing for our society.

● (1345)

I have talked a lot about crime prevention and the justice system in general, but when it comes to the youth criminal justice bill before us now, we must not forget that prison is crime school, and that is the truth. Send a juvenile delinquent—a kid who has done a few bad things or who has criminal or slightly anti-social tendencies—to prison, and he will come out a hardened criminal. Had other, more appropriate options been available, that young person might have had a chance at rehabilitation and might have become the kind of person who contributes to society and respects the law.

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What happens when judges are told to apply a given rule automatically and hand down a set sentence? What happens when judges are given no room to manoeuvre so they can hand down an appropriate sentence? They are forced to send youths to prison even though it is not really necessary. The bill under consideration would reverse the onus for pretrial, presentencing detention for youth.

Imagine. This is an attack on the principle of presumption of innocence. The judges are told that unless the young person is able to prove he is not in danger of committing certain crimes, they must automatically send him to prison. It will be up to him to prove that he is not dangerous. The presumption of innocence will be reversed, even if we do not know whether or not he is guilty. But people are sometimes acquitted at trial. With this measure, young people could very well be imprisoned and end up being found not guilty. They would have been imprisoned for nothing.

Imagine the damage that could do to a vulnerable young person who may already be experiencing difficulties. He will be jailed in a school of crime, and he is subjected to that when he may not even be guilty of a crime. I must stress that this could be much more harmful than helpful.

Members may have noticed that I did not go into detail about this bill. A number of people in this House will do so. There has been much talk about it in the Bloc Québécois. Nevertheless, I would like to talk about the downside of this American-style approach. This is essentially a George W. Bush policy we are seeing today. It is a tough-on-crime policy, and that is how we will treat criminals.

At the same time, it is completely hypocritical, because they refuse to review the parole system or give our police services the money they need to catch criminals. Above all, they refuse to build a more just society where there is more emphasis on helping others. Since a good number of crimes are born out of poverty and human suffering, we would have a much greater chance of lowering crime if we tried to do something about that suffering.

To top it all off, the ultimate hypocrisy of the Conservatives, in trying to get tough on crime, is that they want to put more guns in circulation and they want to make life easier for those who wish to obtain and use firearms by dismantling the gun registry, even though everyone is telling them that it is the wrong thing to do. The police, lawyers and social workers are telling them that but, in spite of everything, they want to go ahead. Their policy in general is to simplify life for those who want to obtain firearms and to impose minimum sentences on those who commit crimes in the hope that they will not act up.

It is not the right thing to do. This government's crime prevention policy is bad. In fact, it does not have a crime prevention policy. It has a crime punishment policy that kicks in when the crime comes to light. This is not the way to go for Canada or for Quebec.

• (1350)

[English]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague and again I would challenge him on a couple of things.

He talked about the Statistics Canada statistics for crime saying that crime was down. That is true if we talk about all crime,

including petty crime. The fact is that petty crime is not reported anymore because nothing is done about it.

The fact is that violent crime and youth crime are up, and we are talking about Bill C-25, the amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

He talked about deterrence and prevention. I agree that if someone has already been sentenced that will not deter the person because it is too late. However, it might deter somebody else who looks at somebody actually being caught and actually being held to account for what he or she has done.

If we want to talk statistics, statistically an habitual offender, if he is in jail, will not commit the 15 crimes in the next year that he would have committed had he been on the street. Therefore, we are talking about deterrence, not necessarily of that person but of somebody else. We are talking about the prevention of crimes and, while that person is in jail, whether it is a youth or an adult offender is immaterial, the person will not be committing crimes.

Why does my hon. colleague ignore some statistics and selectively picks others.

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, indeed, I was referring to Canadian statistics indicating that youth crime is down. In this regard, I would like to say that there is no such thing as petty crime because, when these petty crimes are not taken into account and nothing is done to rehabilitate young offenders, one day they will become hardened criminals and commit more serious crimes.

I agree that incarcerating an individual has a preventive aspect. What I am saying is that judges are in the best position to establish, on a case-by-case basis, the most appropriate sentence for a youth. A judge could decide to incarcerate a truly dangerous individual for a longer period of time in order to protect society. It is not up to us, the legislators, to automatically impose a predetermined sentence without taking the circumstances into account.

We have often heard the Conservatives criticize judges for political activism or for getting involved in politics, but the Conservatives want to do the opposite. As legislators, they want to get involved in judicial matters. In my opinion, as legislators, we must pass laws and then guide judges by indicating the maximum sentence for each crime. However, after that, we must let the judges decide what is most appropriate.

In the bill before us here today, it is especially hypocritical that the government talks about punishment as a means of preventing crime, yet it wants to amend the Young Offenders Act to include punishment as a deterrent. The government must make up its mind.

Is this meant to prevent people from committing other offences by putting them behind bars, or is it meant to deter other people from committing crimes? It is logically incoherent.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to what the hon. member had to say and part of what I do not think he understands is that our government does not disagree with the fundamental point that he is making, which is that there needs to be a focus on prevention. We agree with that.

In fact, we have worked very hard to support families and to support communities. We believe assisting families and communities is fundamental. Stronger families mean safer communities in my opinion.

What I do not understand and what I can never comprehend, when I hear these arguments from members of the opposition, is that they do not believe there should be an adequate punishment for crime. In my riding, people are very often outraged with what they see as lenient sentences that, quite frankly, do not fit the crime at all.

Our government is saying that sentencing is a deterrent. It is an important deterrent and Parliament should be giving direction to the courts in sentencing that we feel is fitting for the crime, in particular violent crimes, but more than that, because we made a serious commitment to Canadians for safer streets and communities.

Does the member believe that in order to have a justice system we must have just sentences, or does he believe that sentences should be completely immaterial to the crime and that we should just focus on prevention, keep the blinders on and pretend that crime is not out there, even though our communities tell us otherwise? Is that the approach he would like to take?

Would he prefer justice or would he prefer pretending it is not out there, putting the blinders on, talking kindly to people and maybe they will not do bad things anymore?

• (1355)

[Translation]

Mr. Thierry St-Cyr: Mr. Speaker, indeed, we believe that the punishment must fit the crime and it must be suited to the context of the crime. The only person who can decide this is a judge. Only the judge, while considering the guidelines set out by the legislators who establish maximum sentences, can determine the most appropriate punishment for the crime, the context and the individual in question.

Now, we, as parliamentarians, are all being asked to determine the minimum sentences for crimes *x*, *y* and *z*, full stop. And this is how to determine the appropriate punishment? Come on! We will end up with even worse disparities. For instance, two people in completely different situations will be slapped with the same minimum sentence, because the judge will not have had the latitude to gauge the most appropriate sentence for each individual. Thus, by taking away a judge's capacity to determine the best punishment, we are inviting the exact opposite: punishment that does not fit the crime.

The second thing I would like to point out is this hypocrisy. We hear talk about making our streets safer and protecting our communities, yet in the meantime, the gun registry is being dismantled. Is this not the most abysmal hypocrisy we have seen from the Conservatives? This will facilitate the circulation of firearms in our communities, yet we just heard that it is the opposition that is hindering the safety of our communities. The

government must ensure that the gun registry is maintained as it is. Only then can we talk about the safety of our streets.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure the hon. member would like to carry on the debate, but we have reached the time for statements by members.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]***INFRASTRUCTURE**

Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, municipalities in my riding are looking forward to the roll out of the building Canada fund.

Unfortunately, most municipalities in my riding of Perth—Wellington did not benefit from COMRIF, created by the previous Liberal government. Most municipalities applied to all three rounds and received nothing. In the meantime, important projects have been put on hold.

Funding from our new building Canada fund along with significant investments in the gas tax fund will help our municipalities upgrade and renew their infrastructure. Our \$33 billion of infrastructure funding over the next seven years is the largest single federal commitment to public infrastructure in 50 years.

I look forward to working with the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and his team in support of our municipalities.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. John Maloney (Welland, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the federal government plays a critical role in the health of Canadians across the country. Recognizing such and to commemorate our country's Centennial in 1967, a previous Liberal government established a program to assist municipalities, large and small, to build recreational facilities such as community pools, libraries, seniors centres, ice rinks and baseball diamonds, just to name a few.

After 40 years of intensive and enjoyable use by children and adults alike, our country's deteriorating recreational infrastructure is in need of immediate attention. We must ensure that quality recreational facilities will continue to be available for our citizens of all ages to contribute to a positive lifestyle and, more important, their health.

Our towns and cities are in fiscal crisis and need financial federal assistance to address the compelling need. I urge the government, in partnership with the provincial and local governments, to immediately create a new infrastructure program dedicated to replacing our crumbling recreational facilities.

I say this to the Prime Minister. Yes, our municipalities are important.

• (1400)

[Translation]

WORLD PEACE WEEK

Mrs. Vivian Barbot (Papineau, BQ): Mr. Speaker, from November 17 to 24, YMCA World Peace Week will focus attention on the commitment of individuals and groups who work for peace. It is an opportunity for us to think about peace and especially our own ability to resolve conflicts around the world.

Since 2006, the situation in Darfur has steadily worsened; thousands have died, and people have been displaced, raped, starved and subjected to daily violence.

To restore peace in Darfur, the Bloc Québécois urges the federal government to increase humanitarian aid, continue to support the International Criminal Court and provide greater financial and logistical assistance to the African Union and the UN, in addition to engaging in diplomatic efforts.

Peace is not just the absence of war. It is also the creation of an environment conducive to the well-being and development of all human beings.

* * *

[English]

END EXCLUSION 2007

Ms. Judy Wasylycia-Leis (Winnipeg North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, End Exclusion 2007 is an extraordinary gathering taking place in Ottawa today.

More than 300 delegates, representing over 90 organizations from across Canada, seeking meaningful equality for persons with disabilities are here working out a plan of action to convert their vision of an inclusive and accessible Canada into a new and vibrant reality.

They have a message for all of us: enough with the studies, enough with the promises, it is time for action now, time for the federal government to build a Canada where all people living with disabilities have the supports necessary to fully access and benefit from all that Canada has to offer, where we work together to remove barriers and ensure that active citizenship and full inclusion of Canadians with disabilities is a reality.

We have reached a turning point. It is time for the federal government to show leadership and improve the daily lives of the 12% or more of Canadians living with disabilities. It is time to get to work building a Canada where all citizens can enjoy full citizenship and where we base our values on equality, self-determination and accessibility. It is time for us to act so all generations will look on this moment with pride.

* * *

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past summer there was outpouring support from my constituents, who signed a nine metre long banner for our troops in Afghanistan.

This was one part of a major effort led by Vernon, B.C. based HevyD's Old Fashioned Kettle Korn. HevyD's has also dispatched

Statements by Members

2,600 commemorative bags of fresh kettle korn to the troops in Afghanistan, bearing messages from school children and cadets.

Copies of “We Salute Our Heroes” CD and DVD packages will also be sent. The goal is to raise \$100,000 for “We Salute Our Heroes Foundation”. This is an effort to support injured troops and their families.

Actions such as these reassure our troops of our support and that they are always in our hearts.

I salute HevyD's Old Fashioned Kettle Korn and all the volunteers for their efforts to support our troops.

* * *

EID UL-FITR

Hon. Dan McTeague (Pickering—Scarborough East, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a major festival in Islam is Eid ul-Fitr, which is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, the month where Muslims fast from sunrise to sundown.

Fasting during Ramadan is one of the five pillars of Islam. The month is also marked by prayer and charity. It is also an opportunity for Muslims in countries around the world to interact and develop a better understanding of each other's heritage.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the organizations involved, I extend an invitation to you and to all colleagues in the House and in the other place to attend the 13th annual Eid ul-Fitr celebration on Parliament Hill tonight, in Room 200 of the West Block, from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Once again, this event promises to be an evening of celebration of all faiths and recognizing the important contribution the Muslim community makes to Canada.

On behalf of this House, I wish all Canadian Muslims a Happy Eid Mubarak.

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WINNIPEG BLUE BOMBERS

Mr. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am speaking today to recognize the pride of Manitoba, my hometown team, the Winnipeg Blue Bombers. With a rich history of 25 Grey Cup appearances and 10 Grey Cup wins dating all the way back to 1935, the blue and gold are truly one of the CFL's finest.

I would like all Manitobans and Blue Bomber fans from coast to coast to echo these rousing words when they take on and crush the not so rough Roughriders. Like the Blue Bomber victory march says:

We'll shout as you go charging by,
We'll send up our cheers to the sky,
Behind you we'll stand,
You're best in the land.
And we'll shout out our praise on high.
Fight! Fight!

Statements by Members

●(1405)

[Translation]

QUEBEC'S ECONOMY

Ms. Paule Brunelle (Trois-Rivières, BQ): Mr. Speaker, since the beginning of this session, the Bloc Québécois has been trying to get the Conservative government to listen to reason and understand the need to take immediate action in the forestry and manufacturing crisis. The Minister of Finance and the Minister of Industry have said in this House that everything is just fine. The economic reality is not fine: an oil boom in Alberta, based on developing the tar sands, and a major crisis in the forestry and manufacturing sectors in Quebec.

The Forest Products Association of Canada, the Quebec manufacturers and exporters association and the Réseau des ingénieurs du Québec have recently thanked the Bloc Québécois for their position on the forestry and manufacturing economy. My colleagues and I share their concern for their future.

The Conservative government is having trouble recognizing the catastrophic situation Quebec's economy is in right now. The Bloc Québécois has solutions to propose. The urgency of the situation demands that the government take action.

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[English]

HOBBERMA CADETS

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today marks the second anniversary of the Hobbema Community Cadet Corps.

With over 970 participants, this remarkable cadet corps is the largest native cadet program in Alberta and perhaps the world.

Under the direction of RCMP Constable Richard Huculiak and Sergeant Mark Linnell, the program emphasizes native culture, sports, a healthy lifestyle and requires cadets to stay in school. It has proven to be such an effective crime prevention initiative that in two short years school attendance is up and there are fewer bullying issues, fights or other complaints.

So amazing are these cadets, that they received a standing ovation at the 2007 "Models of Excellence for Youth" Provincial Congress in Toronto, following the screening of the documentary *Shades of Blue* that tracked their remarkable progress.

The Hobbema cadets are discovering that there is an alternative to gangs, drugs and violence. With new found confidence, they are on the road to becoming responsible, future leaders who will ensure the traditions and values of their heritage are upheld in a safe and vibrant community.

I encourage the four Hobbema bands and the community to invest in their young people by continuing to support this most worthwhile initiative.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Karen Redman (Kitchener Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the untimely death of Ashley Smith, an 18-year-old inmate at the Grand Valley Institution for Women, has everyone talking about the care

provided to inmates with mental health issues, everyone, that is, except the government.

Ashley Smith began her six year sentence as a young offender and it ended tragically four years later when she suffocated herself just weeks before she was to be released. This mentally unstable teenager had spent most of her sentence in segregation.

Canada's correctional investigator has been telling us for several years that Canada's penitentiaries are becoming warehouses for the mentally ill. Yet our prisons remain ill-equipped to treat those who suffer with mental health issues. Segregation should not be confused with treatment.

I call on the government to make it a priority to implement the mental health strategy that has been languishing since 2004, to ensure that no future inmate will end up sadly as Ashley Smith has.

* * *

[Translation]

AFGHANISTAN

Mr. Daniel Petit (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to reaffirm my unwavering support for our troops deployed in Afghanistan.

In addition, I offer my condolences to the families of Corporal Nicolas Raymond Beauchamp and Private Michel Lévesque, who were both stationed at Valcartier and who died in Afghanistan last week. I also offer my condolences to the family of Private Frédéric Couture, who died last week as well.

I pay tribute to the lives of these brave soldiers, who did not die in vain. They went to Afghanistan in an effort to restore hope to a people facing terrible difficulties and turmoil. They were there to support rebuilding efforts at the request of the government of Afghanistan, as part of a UN-sanctioned mission led by NATO. They believed in that mission. They were following their dream. Like their comrades, they did everything they could to protect the values we hold dear as Canadians.

I thank these soldiers for their courage. They have done us proud.

* * *

●(1410)

[English]

FORESTRY INDUSTRY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, well, it will be a bitter Christmas for the 400 laid off workers at Norboard and Tembec in Cochrane. It is the same story across northern Ontario. Tembec and Timmins are down. Grant is down. Wawa is down. Dryden is down. Kenora is down.

We had a motion in the House to help the forestry sector and the manufacturing sector at a time of crisis, and what happened? The Liberals allowed that motion to be killed. They sat on their hands.

Statements by Members

Now that people back home are finding out, the Liberals are scrambling to come up with excuses. Get this: They claim that if they stood up for the forestry families in northern Ontario, there could have been an election and they would have lost seats. What a pitiful response. They chose saving their own political skins over fighting for the hard-working families in northern Ontario.

If the Liberals are going to take a dive every time there is a vote in the House, they should go home, stop collecting their pay and leave the work of opposing the government to us.

* * *

VANCOUVER AIRPORT TASER DEATH

Mr. Don Bell (North Vancouver, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, like many North Vancouver residents who have contacted me, I was shocked and appalled last week by news and television accounts of the treatment and taser death of Polish immigrant Robert Dziekanski.

How could Mr. Dziekanski have been ignored, left alone and confused in a secure area of the airport for over 10 hours?

How could his mother, who had travelled all the way from Kamloops to greet her son, apparently be offered no assistance or compassion when Robert did not emerge as anticipated, even hours after his plane was known to have arrived?

Why was a sincere effort not made to confirm her son's location before she was allowed to return to Kamloops without her son, who in fact had arrived and was only a few hundred feet away, frustrated and confused?

Also, why did the RCMP who responded at the airport make what appears on video to be an almost immediate and unnecessary use of a taser, without visible consideration of any other procedures or methods of responding to Mr. Dziekanski's behaviour?

Airport, immigration and border services staff and the RCMP must provide answers.

* * *

[Translation]

PAUL VALLÉE SAWMILL

Ms. France Bonsant (Compton—Stanstead, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on the very day that the government rejected the Bloc Québécois motion to help the manufacturing and forestry sectors, news arrived of another mill closing down because of Conservative negligence.

The Paul Vallée sawmill in my riding announced that it would be closing its doors temporarily because of problems related to softwood lumber and the rising dollar. The Bloc Québécois introduced its motion precisely to address these problems.

This sawmill is a major employer in the small municipality of Saint-Isidore-de-Clifton. A whole community will be affected by the Conservatives' refusal to act.

The Conservative government has the means to help the manufacturing industry, but it opposed the Bloc's motion on November 14. This is further proof that the Bloc Québécois is the only party that is willing to stand up for the interests of Quebecers.

[English]

FAMILY PHYSICIANS

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week is Family Medicine Week and parliamentarians are honoured to have members of the College of Family Physicians of Canada visiting with us here in Ottawa.

[Translation]

The College strives to improve the health of Canadians by promoting high standards of medical education and care in family practice, by contributing to public understanding of healthful living, by supporting ready access to services, and by encouraging research and disseminating knowledge about family medicine.

[English]

The college has two goals: first, for 95% of Canadians to have a family doctor by the year 2012; and second, that every Canadian should have access to a personal family physician, a registered nurse and/or nurse practitioner.

Today, 4.5 million Canadians do not have a family doctor. I believe they are the real have nots in our health care system.

I am asking the government what it is doing to ensure that every Canadian has a family doctor to call his or her own.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REPRESENTATION

Mr. James Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the last election we promised to give British Columbia more seats, its fair share of seats, in the House of Commons. We have kept our promise and tabled legislation to give B.C. seven more seats in Parliament.

Equal representation is good for Canada. Premier Campbell said it best, "This is a non-partisan measure that strengthens our democracy. This legislation recognizes B.C.'s growing population and the increasingly important role of the west in the federation's future".

The Liberals are opposing this bill. This is not surprising. The Liberals voted against the gateway funding. They voted against B.C.'s forest industry by opposing the softwood lumber agreement. They voted against dredging on the Fraser River and a number of other B.C. issues.

By opposing British Columbia's fair share of seats in Parliament, the Liberal MPs from British Columbia are ignoring their responsibility to defend the province's future and its equal say in Canada's future.

Shame on them for ignoring their constituents. Shame on them for turning their backs on the future of British Columbia.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTIONS**

● (1415)

*[English]***JUSTICE**

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada abolished the death penalty 31 years ago. Previous governments have constantly upheld this principle for Canadians abroad. That is why I have written to the governor of Montana today asking that he commute the death sentence against a Canadian there.

Will the government do the same and demand that the state of Montana not use the death penalty against a Canadian citizen?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very clear on what its position is with respect to this matter, but I have to note the new-found enthusiasm of the Leader of the Opposition on justice issues.

I can only tell you, Mr. Speaker, I wish there had been some of that enthusiasm last spring when we had bills that were going to protect law-abiding Canadians. I wish he could have written to some of his friends in the Senate last spring. He could have been helpful back then.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are against the death penalty because it violates fundamental principles of justice. The government cannot pretend to oppose the death penalty here while allowing such sentences to be carried out elsewhere. That is unjustifiable. The government should oppose the death penalty wherever it is still in use. No half measures.

In the name of justice and humanity, I urge the government to officially oppose the use of the death penalty on this Canadian citizen.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Certainly, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is a newcomer to this issue. When he was asked by one of the Toronto newspapers to put together a pseudo speech from the throne, there was not one single word that talked about the protection of law-abiding Canadians, not one single word on the justice issue.

The member can do as he pleases, but I would like to get his support for the criminal law legislation that we have introduced in this Parliament.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Leader of the Opposition, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the government truly believed the death penalty was ethically and morally wrong, as Canadians do, it would intervene in Montana, but it is silent. Despite the laws of the land, despite the Charter of Rights, despite the Supreme Court of Canada, the government is silent and its silence speaks volumes.

I ask again, will the government demand that the state of Montana not use the death penalty against a Canadian citizen?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Again, Mr. Speaker, we did not get

any help whatsoever when we were trying to bring in mandatory prison terms for people who commit serious offences with guns.

One of the things that disappointed me the most that did not get done last spring was when there was a bill to better protect 14 and 15 year olds from sexual predators. That bill died in the Senate. I wish he could have written to his friends there and given us a hand on that one.

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, every international human rights organization, Amnesty, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Council of Europe, has denounced the Conservative government policy on the death penalty. Canada is not back; it has walked off the stage.

Why is the government hell-bent on sacrificing an international reputation on human rights that was won by Liberals like Pierre Trudeau and Conservatives like Joe Clark?

● (1420)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the deputy leader has certainly written some interesting things about the death penalty in the past, but I can tell you there are no plans to change the laws of this country and we will continue to seek assurances on extradition matters.

We have indicated that individuals who commit multiple murders or mass murders abroad in a democratic country that adheres to the rule of law cannot necessarily count on the Canadian government to claim clemency and patriation back to this country.

[Translation]

Mr. Michael Ignatieff (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for over 30 years, Canada has been a leader in the international campaign against the death penalty. Now Canada is refusing to ask for clemency for a Canadian citizen condemned to death in Montana. Canada is no longer sponsoring UN motions against capital punishment.

Why is the Conservative government destroying our international reputation as a defender of human rights?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has done everything to enhance the international reputation of this country in all areas.

What we have indicated, though, and I will repeat this for the hon. member, is that multiple murderers and mass murderers who are convicted in a democracy that adheres to the rule of law cannot necessarily count on a plea for clemency from the Canadian government and patriation back to this country. That message should be very clear.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the International Conference on Climate Change will take place in Bali in December. The Minister of the Environment will attend, but he is refusing to include opposition members in the delegation, which goes against parliamentary tradition.

The majority of Quebeckers do not share this government's vision on climate change, yet no representative of the Bloc Québécois will be in Bali to make their voices heard.

Does the Prime Minister realize that by refusing to allow opposition members to attend an international conference where the second phase of the Kyoto protocol will be negotiated, he is acting completely undemocratically, which is shameful?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will have a great deal of important work to do in Indonesia at the United Nations meeting. Canada will be represented by a delegation made up of the Government of Canada, representatives of some groups that can help us and Line Beauchamp, the Minister of the Environment of Quebec.

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, his colleague, the Minister of Justice, is currently taking aim at identity theft. The justice minister should be aware that the most serious identity theft in Canada has been committed by the Minister of the Environment, who is trying to pass himself off as the Minister of the Environment, when he is really the minister of pollution and the minister of oil companies.

He does not want opposition members in Bali because he does not want his true identity to be revealed. He has nothing to do with the environment; he is the oil companies' man.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House support open federalism. We are very proud to have representatives of the provinces. I am very proud that Line Beauchamp, the Minister of the Environment of Quebec, has accepted our invitation to join the Canadian delegation to work toward a new agreement to combat climate change.

For 17 years, the Bloc Québécois has never done anything in this House. The time has come to take action.

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is the minister who has killed the Kyoto protocol in the past few years. That is the reality.

Environmental groups in the Climate Action Network Canada are denouncing the absence of opposition MPs within the delegation, as the majority of the population—which voted for these parties—must be heard in Bali.

Does the Minister of the Environment realize that by refusing to allow the opposition to be part of this delegation, he is being anti-democratic and muzzling millions of Quebeckers and Canadians who want real action to fight climate change?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not want to have a partisan debate at this international forum. It is absolutely essential that we work very hard and constructively with our counterparts at the conference in order to

achieve real results. It is very important that the Government of Canada work hard with a view to establishing a new protocol.

I am very proud that Line Beauchamp, Quebec's environment minister, will be representing her province.

We are getting things done.

● (1425)

Mr. Bernard Bigras (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, at the conference in Nairobi, environmental groups were excluded from the Canadian delegation. Now the government is excluding the opposition parties.

I would not be surprised to hear the minister announce today that he is bringing presidents of oil companies with him. This government has a one-track mind.

Will the minister listen to reason and include the opposition parties in the Canadian delegation?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether representatives of Alberta's oil companies will be in Bali. That is not our intention. It is very important to have a new protocol in order to achieve real results in the fight against climate change. We absolutely want to reduce greenhouse gases by 20%. We will work on achieving that goal at this international conference.

The Liberal Party and the Bloc Québécois have never done anything on this.

This team is taking action.

* * *

SOCIAL HOUSING

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million Canadians are saying that the housing they need is too expensive. This is particularly problematic for young families and seniors. When it comes to housing for aboriginal peoples and their families, the conditions are pitiful and unacceptable.

I know, just as everyone knows, that the previous Liberal government rebuffed any policy having to do with constructing social housing, but why is this government following the same pitiful course?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am shocked that the leader of the NDP is not aware that the government moved immediately upon coming to office to put \$1.4 billion into a housing trust, on top of \$1 billion to the affordable housing initiative, \$1.8 billion a year on social housing, \$270 million a year on the homelessness partnering strategy, \$256 million on the residential rehabilitation program, and \$300 million for a market housing plan on reserve. That is more money than any government in history.

Oral Questions

Hon. Jack Layton (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always interesting to hear the minister rhyme off the NDP's budget bill and the moneys that we put into housing because the Liberals wanted to put it into corporate tax cuts.

The fact is that there is no new money for co-op housing and no new money for the women in desperate need of housing across the country. There is no new money for transition housing or for hostels or shelters.

The government is failing just like the previous government did. It is national housing day and we should be treating this issue seriously, not with that kind of flippant remark and flippant presentation from the minister, who is not even telling the whole truth.

The Speaker: It is not clear to me that there was a question. If the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Social Development wants to respond, then he may.

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will overlook that terrible insult.

The fact is that if this were an NDP list we would be running a deficit of \$10 billion. The fact is that under this government more people are working than have ever worked in the history of the country, precisely because the finance minister has created an environment where people around the country are at work, wages are rising, more people can afford homes, and poverty is going down.

We are doing things for the people of this country, thanks to the leadership of the finance minister and the Prime Minister.

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THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 15 years, the Minister of the Environment has told industry associations, environmental NGOs, labour groups and opposition critics that they have been kicked off the official Canadian delegation 10 days before the start of United Nations climate change meetings in Indonesia.

Is this because six independent research groups have concluded that the government's climate change plan and targets are a farce and that nobody believes them? Or is it because the minister has no plan for Bali, has now isolated Canada in these negotiations and is desperately trying to hide these facts from everyday Canadians?

• (1430)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we see the member for Ottawa South, the official spokesman for the Liberal Party on the environment.

Do we know how many days it has been since he stood up and asked a question of me as Minister of the Environment? It has been 160 days.

And what is his question? Why can I not come on that nice trip?

[Translation]

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government's tradition for the past 15 years has been to reach out to industry and non-governmental stakeholders, inviting them to take

part in Canadian delegations to the UN. Canada has always favoured cooperation and mutual aid. However, this government is now suppressing all opposing views.

Given that the next Australian government will ratify the Kyoto protocol, what secret agreement does the government intend to negotiate with the Republicans in the United States, the only partner it has left?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member for Ottawa South and members of the Liberal Party had their chance to stand up for the environment, but when the House of Commons voted on the throne speech that gave the government a mandate to govern and a mandate on an environmental policy, the Liberals and that member were nowhere to be seen. They abstained.

Decisions in this country are taken by people who show up and vote.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for weeks the government has been nearly silent on the crisis in Pakistan, yet the biggest problem in Afghanistan is Pakistan. However, while the status of Pakistan in the Commonwealth is being debated, the government sends only a junior minister.

Pakistan is critical to the future of our mission in Afghanistan, yet the foreign affairs minister is not there and is not showing leadership to our allies, to our troops and to Canadians. Why?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to see that the Liberal Party does not like the Francophonie. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is attending the Francophonie because it is very important.

However, let me also say that the Prime Minister of Canada is at the Commonwealth. He has issued instructions for Canada to take a very strong step in asking for the suspension of Pakistan.

Hon. Bryon Wilfert (Richmond Hill, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, making policy at 35,000 feet, as the Prime Minister is doing, is not leadership. Why is the government sending the message to the international community that Canada believes the situation in Pakistan warrants only minimal attention?

Oral Questions

Does the government not understand that the future of Pakistan has enormous implications on the future of our mission in Afghanistan? Is it truly serious about Afghanistan? Or are photo ops for the Prime Minister the guiding principle behind this government's dismal foreign policy record?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the only thing I will agree with him on is that yes, the future of Pakistan is very important, and for that reason we want Pakistan to return to democracy.

As I have said, the Prime Minister has taken the lead on this issue and in Kampala he has issued instructions asking for the suspension of Pakistan until Pakistan reverts to democracy.

* * *

[Translation]

GUARANTEED INCOME SUPPLEMENT

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw the attention of the House to the following statement: "Bill C-301—would have also repealed the restrictions concerning retroactive monthly payments of income supplements and benefits, thus allowing for retroactive payment in full." Anyone who disagrees with this is being called a hypocrite when it comes to seniors.

Will the minister pay back seniors the money that is owing to them, by ensuring full retroactivity for the guaranteed income supplement?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is fulfilling its campaign commitments on this matter. We promised to strengthen the guaranteed income supplement, old age security and the Canada pension plan, which is exactly what we are doing.

In fact, the government moved, in Bill C-36, to strengthen Canada pension plan disability benefits and in that same bill made it possible for people who have filed for the GIS to never have to reapply again because it will automatically occur when they file income tax.

We are getting the job done for Canadian seniors around this country.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in fact, the quotation I just cited is posted on the Conservative Party website regarding the Liberal member for Oakville.

Have the Conservatives just realized that they have reneged on their own commitments and promises? Do they recognize the inconsistencies in their comments? For the Conservatives, what worked while they were in opposition no longer works now that they are in power. Once again, they have reached a new level of hypocrisy.

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is completely disingenuous.

The government has moved to make sure that seniors get more support than they have ever received.

We have put in place a secretary of state for seniors, who has done an outstanding job of touring this country hearing from seniors and representing their point of view at the cabinet table. We have a national panel on seniors' issues. We have moved to put in place additional funding to combat elder abuse. We have lowered taxes so that 385,000 low income Canadians, many of them seniors, no longer have to pay federal income tax.

We are standing up for seniors, while all the Bloc can do is talk.

* * *

[Translation]

PAY EQUITY

Mrs. Carole Lavallée (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, today is Pay Equity Day. Unlike female workers in Quebec, which has passed a proactive law to protect women against arbitrary employment decisions, female workers subject to federal laws are still waiting for similar legislation from the Conservative government.

Why does the Minister of Labour not use this day to tell women that he is planning to introduce a bill in the coming weeks?

[English]

Hon. Vic Toews (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Treasury Board, as the employer of the core public administration, is committed to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in accordance with the Canadian Human Rights Act, and we will proceed in that direction.

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[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, women also face inequalities when it comes to employment insurance.

A study from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives showed that two out of three women who contribute to EI do not receive benefits when they lose their job. This study recommended that the number of hours needed to qualify for benefits be changed to 360 hours in the last 52 weeks.

Will the minister listen to this suggestion and show that she truly cares about the best interests of women?

[English]

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member should be careful about believing everything she reads. The fact is that 82% of women in the workforce today working full time can claim EI benefits, 97% can claim special benefits and 65% who are working part time can claim benefits, a far bigger number than for men.

The good news for men and women is that more of them are working today than at any point in our history. That is tremendous news.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in his October 9 report, the Commissioner of Official Languages concluded that abolishing the court challenges program is not in keeping with the commitment made by the Government of Canada in 2005 in Part VII of the Official Languages Act. The Conservatives supported these amendments when they were in opposition.

Does the government intend to correct its mistake and restore in full the court challenges program?

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, we are committed to promoting the linguistic duality of Canada. In the Speech from the Throne, we clearly stated that the action plan for Official Languages will have a second phase.

For his part, my colleague has chosen to do nothing on this issue. [English]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question was on the court challenges program. It is not the first time the Conservatives have attempted to cancel it. They did so in the early nineties under Brian Mulroney.

Now, however, because the law has been strengthened, which they supported, we face the extraordinary situation of an officer of Parliament feeling compelled to seek intervenor status against the government.

Why will the Conservatives not listen to the advice of an officer of Parliament they nominated and who got unanimous support from Parliament?

• (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Josée Verner (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I repeat that our government is committed to the country's linguistic duality. The 2007 budget set aside an additional \$430 million to help minority language communities.

As the member knows full well, the matter is before the courts. I will not comment any further.

* * *

[English]

AFGHANISTAN

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not understand why the Conservative government is making false statements about the violation of the Geneva Convention. Even the Prime Minister had the gall this week to contradict his own government's report on torture and juvenile detainees.

When children use denial as a substitute for shirking their responsibility, it might be forgivable but when a government uses denial to shirk its obligation to our country and our troops, it is indefensible.

When will the government simply come clean and tell us why we transferred juvenile detainees to torturers and how many?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first let me say that the Canadian military, in fact all Canadians in Afghanistan are certainly meeting all their international obligations.

There has not been one single, solitary proven allegation of abuse of detainees, let alone juvenile detainees in Afghanistan.

The member likes to extrapolate on evidence. He has not been able to produce one solitary example. Rather than producing hogwash and hornswoggle, maybe he can bring some cold, hard facts instead of this torqued rhetoric.

Hon. Denis Coderre (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Senator McCarthy over there should get a grip. He is embarrassing Elmer and Karlheinz.

[Translation]

We are not talking about the detention conditions at the Kandahar base but about the conditions after detainees are transferred. We are not blaming the soldiers; we are blaming the government. The Conservative ministers are duty bound to respect international conventions. Their own officials are saying that there is torture, that there are child molesters and pedophiles in the prisons to which the detainees are transferred.

The minister's responsibility and duty is to explain why—

The Speaker: The Minister of National Defence.

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, more wild-eyed speculation and allegations without any factual basis whatsoever.

Canada has undertaken a very rigorous process of following up and monitoring as a result of this enhanced agreement, building on the flawed agreement that was left in place by the hon. member's government.

The hon. member continues to make these allegations without any evidence whatsoever, extrapolating that somehow Canadian soldiers might be complicit in war crimes against the Geneva Convention. That is disgusting.

The member should apologize and, while he is at it, he should apologize to the captain of team Canada.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, organized crime and rapidly evolving technologies are making identity theft easier than ever.

Yesterday, the Minister of Justice introduced legislation aimed at addressing this growing problem. Bill C-27 is the third in a series of new tackling community crime bills tabled by the justice minister in just three short days.

Could the minister explain how this bill would help combat identity theft, one of the fastest growing crime problems in Canada.

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a problem that affects thousands of Canadians and has grown into a \$2 billion a year problem.

Right now, those individuals who obtain, possess and traffic in other people's personal identification are not covered by the Criminal Code. This is something that should have been addressed by the previous government years ago. It did not get the job done. We are getting it done.

* * *

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the manufacturing sector is in crisis. Plants have closed in London and Ingersoll, leaving many with no choice but to dip into their EI benefits. Sadly, many, especially women, will be shocked to find out that they do not even qualify. The minister is mistaken. The truth is that two out of every three women who pay into EI will not receive a penny in benefits if they lose their jobs.

Will the minister protect Canadian jobs so that people do not have to rely on our unfair EI system?

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has moved to reduce premiums and improve benefits.

However, I must tell the member that her facts are simply wrong. Eighty-two per cent of women today working full time are eligible to qualify for employment insurance benefits, 97% for special benefits and 65% for part time benefits.

The member is simply wrong, but she should rejoice in the very good news that Canadians today are working at a level that they have never worked at in the history of this country. That is tremendous news.

• (1445)

Mrs. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not in my constituency because we have lost manufacturing jobs and the government has not fixed the EI system.

The CCPA report found that the current system excludes all but the most advantaged of women. The Conservatives have left the poor out in the cold again.

We need a fair system for EI that all working families can access, not just a fortunate few.

Will the minister make the changes, the real changes that we need in order to end this lack of fairness in EI?

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hate to provide facts that completely contradict what the member says but I will do it. Eighty-two per cent of women who are working full time today are eligible for benefits.

This government takes a completely different view than the NDP, and everyone should be glad for that. We think that the best pathway forward for people to get out of poverty is a good job. That is

Oral Questions

happening in increasing numbers because this government has invested in training like no other government in the history of this country. That is great news.

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FEDERAL-PROVINCIAL RELATIONS

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is one more broken election promise from the Conservatives.

Their platform said that they would restore representation by population for Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta but their bill does exactly the opposite. It ensures that every province has representation by population except Ontario.

Why are the people of Ontario the only ones who do not deserve representation by population?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the law on the books right now means that fast growing provinces like Ontario, British Columbia and Alberta are short-changed in their representation in the House of Commons.

That member was a member of a Liberal government that twice introduced bills addressing representation in the House of Commons but never once suggested increasing the representation for Ontario. I do not recall her ever saying one word before today on the issue.

The fact is that this government is taking action to increase the representation for Ontario and deliver fairness for Ontario, Alberta and B.C., and move to restore the principle of representation by population, which is not the case under the law today.

Ms. Bonnie Brown (Oakville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians believe in fairness and that means having real representation by population, but they also believe in respect. The approach that the minister has used in dealing with the Premier of Ontario is a disgrace.

The minister simply cannot explain the fundamental unfairness of his bill so he has resorted to insults.

Is this what the government meant by the end of federal-provincial bickering?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fundamental unfairness is the law that is on the books today.

The fairness is our effort to restore it. The small act of a small-minded person, the small man of Confederation, is to say "when I'm getting more seats for my province, when I'm getting more fairness for my province I'm going to complain and I don't care about the consequences for national unity and the rest of the country".

Oral Questions

They know it is tough and that is why the Liberals never did anything for Ontario, Alberta and B.C. on representation. We are doing it after they never did.

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ATLANTIC ACCORD

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the tabling of legislation yesterday affirmed what Nova Scotians knew eight months ago, that the government gutted the Atlantic accord. No matter how much the government denied it, it gutted the accords.

This new political salvation scheme it is on now is, at best, marginally better but it does not deliver what it promises.

Will the minister scrap the side deal and reinstate the accord?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am trying to figure out the logic of the hon. member from Cape Breton. He said that it was marginally better but that it was gutted.

The reality is that we have actually improved upon the Atlantic accord. We made it whole. We have added an addition of the crown share valuation. We have given Nova Scotia an option to benefit from the national equalization program, as well as be the beneficiary of the Atlantic accord.

It is whole, it is intact and it is better. The hon. member just does not like good news.

• (1450)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am sure Nova Scotians will understand if I do not run to the bank with the minister's word.

The officials say that the October 10 arrangements are conditional, that Nova Scotians are held permanently into the new equalization formula.

Today, in the Halifax *Herald*, the minister himself says that the Atlantic accord has flexibility and that Nova Scotia can opt in or opt out, whatever it wants to do.

We want the Atlantic accord reinstated for the benefit of Nova Scotians.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence and Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if I were to send the member to the bank I would check the deposit slip.

The reality is that this Atlantic accord arrangement is better. This Atlantic accord allows Nova Scotia flexibility. It allows Nova Scotia to be a beneficiary of the national equalization formula, which it has opted for to the benefit of Nova Scotians, of over \$157 million in the last two years. Plus, under this accord, which runs until 2020, Nova Scotia has the ability to opt in or return to a more beneficial arrangement if the financial qualities are there.

[Translation]

CANADA REVENUE AGENCY

Mr. Yvon Lévesque (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Canada Revenue Agency has audited many restaurants in Quebec and sent out notices of assessment based on an average tipping rate of 16% of the bill. That rate was set arbitrarily on the basis of incomplete information.

How can the minister let the agency take such inaccurate shortcuts when setting assessment rates, knowing full well that such methods produce imaginary rates that are completely out of touch with these workers' reality?

[English]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me assure the House that each tax case is assessed against the particular conditions that apply to it.

However, I cannot talk about a particular tax case in the House because of the Income Tax Act.

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[Translation]

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

Mr. Jean-Yves Laforest (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, BQ): Mr. Speaker, manufacturing businesses and the forestry industry in Mauricie are going through very tough times. Three pulp and paper mills in Shawinigan, Grand-Mère and La Tuque are in jeopardy, and their 1,600 workers are suffering because of the Conservatives' inertia.

Will the Conservative government decide to support the Bloc Québécois' proposals to help Quebec's manufacturing industries before desperate workers take desperate measures?

Hon. Jim Prentice (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question, but we do not agree with the Bloc. Our role is to create an economic climate that supports business development. We have responded positively to the 22 recommendations from the Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology.

Here is what the vice-president of the Quebec association of manufacturers and exporters said: "The government has heeded our call. Focusing on investment is the right strategy."

* * *

[English]

AIRBUS

Hon. Anita Neville (Winnipeg South Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Brian Mulroney's cronies have high level positions throughout the government, yet we are supposed to believe that there was no cover-up to protect Mr. Mulroney.

We know Mr. Schreiber has sent the Prime Minister many letters since June 2006, yet the government claims that no one above the rank of plumber has noticed.

Oral Questions

Will the government produce documentation now to prove its pathetic excuses or will it have to wait until it is forced to do so by a parliamentary committee?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there was a sworn allegation in an affidavit and it came to the attention of the government. The Prime Minister took the reasonable step of appointing a distinguished Canadian in the person of Dr. Johnston and Dr. Johnston has a mandate to set the parameters for a public inquiry.

Members will recall that this is exactly what the opposition wanted a couple of weeks ago and I think we should let Dr. Johnston do his work.

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AIRLINE SECURITY

Mr. Mervin Tweed (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the American secure flight program proposes that airlines flying over U. S. territory provide American authorities with passenger lists. As part of the consultation process, the Government of Canada's deadline to submit its official comments to the U.S. was yesterday.

Can the Minister of Transport tell the House what his response was to the U.S. government?

• (1455)

Hon. Lawrence Cannon (Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada did respond to the United States and we urged the U.S. to exempt all Canadian overflights.

In our official comments to the U.S. government we stressed the need to measure threat and risk, recognize existing security initiatives such as passenger protection, and we have stressed the value of privacy and individual rights.

There are excellent security grounds for the proposed security flight program to exempt all flights to and from and within Canada that overfly the United States. In fact, the U.S. already exempts more than 75% of domestic flights from Canada that overfly the United States.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is developing a habit of visiting the offices of Barrick Gold when he travels abroad. First in Chile and now tomorrow in Tanzania the Prime Minister will lend credibility and promote the business interests of Barrick.

This Canadian company is operating in a most un-Canadian way: firing unionized workers, union busting, totally disregarding the environment, failing to protect workers' safety, and alleged tax evasion.

Why is the Prime Minister promoting the un-Canadian practices of Barrick Gold?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in

Tanzania because we have a great relationship with that country and we wish to promote Canadian businesses working in Tanzania.

As far as we are concerned, there is a round table conference on social corporate responsibility and the government will be giving its response pretty soon. We are very proud of Canadian businesses that comply with the regulations that are in Canada.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): A coincidence, I think not, Mr. Speaker, that he is going to Barrick Gold. In the *Tanzania Daily News* a local man writes:

Barrick Gold Tanzania Limited...have tried to explain the hastiness of the deal they did with energy and minerals minister...I call it a suspected rip off...how come the legislature did not get to look at the deal? You cannot let one man sell a chunk of land, gold filled underneath for that matter, for the rest of us. Not in my name!

Well, not in Canadians' name either. Will the minister explain why the Prime Minister insists on visiting a company that brings controversy and crisis wherever it does business? Why?

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is always promoting Canadian businesses. We expect all Canadian businesses to follow Canadian practices, Canadian laws and Canadian regulations. We expect that company to do the same thing. That is why that company participated in the corporate social responsibility round table. We are positive that all Canadian companies will follow the rules that have been laid down in Canada.

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AIRBUS

Hon. Robert Thibault (West Nova, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, now that the parliamentary committee has requested that Mr. Schreiber appear before it, will the justice minister cooperate and make the necessarily political decision to ensure that Mr. Schreiber can testify before the committee?

The committee wants to hear from him next week. Will the minister ensure that Mr. Schreiber is at the committee?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, inasmuch as the individual in question has a matter before the court, it would be inappropriate to comment.

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HUMAN RESOURCES AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Mike Lake (Edmonton—Mill Woods—Beaumont, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill hundreds of people with disabilities and their families have gathered to raise awareness of the issues faced by Canadians who live with a disability. I know the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development spoke to the group this morning, reiterating his commitment to addressing disability issues.

Can the minister tell the House what he is doing to ensure an accessible and inclusive Canada?

Hon. Monte Solberg (Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has improved the Canada pension plan and veterans' disability plans.

Business of the House

Thanks to the leadership of the finance minister, we have also brought in a registered disability savings plan. We have moved forward with an enabling accessibility fund and today I announced an extension of the labour market agreement for persons with disabilities in the amount of \$223 million.

We will soon bring forward a Canadians with disabilities act, all directed toward knocking down barriers, so that disabled Canadians can fully participate in the mainstream of Canadian life.

* * *

• (1500)

MANUFACTURING AND FORESTRY INDUSTRIES

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, everyone except the government understands that if the dollar stays where it is, there is a looming crisis of layoffs in manufacturing and forestry. The premiers get it, economists get it, and the witnesses in front of the finance committee this week get it. Layoffs to date are just the tip of the iceberg if the loonie stays high.

Why, for once, can the minister not do the right thing and put together a plan today in order to avoid mass layoffs tomorrow?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear from my hon. friend. It has been a while and I am glad he is well.

Now off we go on the dollar. Today he says the dollar is too high and he is looking to blame the government. Here is what he said before: "The main problem is a very weak U.S. dollar and there is not much we in Canada can do about that. The government does not control the dollar or interest rates". That was said by the member for Markham—Unionville.

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[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Caroline St-Hilaire (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, BQ): Mr. Speaker, a Saudi woman who was in a taxi with four men was the victim of gang rape. The court condemned the victim rather than the perpetrators because she was not related to the men. She was sentenced to 200 lashes.

In view of this denial of justice, does the Minister of Foreign Affairs intend to intervene with the Saudi authorities and advise them of Canada's strong objection to such treatment?

[English]

Mr. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have expressed concern on this issue. We will be talking with the government of Saudi Arabia expressing Canada's deep concern about the sentencing that was issued in this particular case.

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PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of three distinguished guests: the Honourable Tom Rideout, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador;

the Honourable Ronald Ouellette, Minister of Agriculture and Aquaculture for New Brunswick; and the Honourable Allan Campbell, Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture for Prince Edward Island.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Perhaps I could, while I am on my feet and before the Thursday question, deal with a matter that arose following question period yesterday.

A number of members raised a point of order concerning the reference by the Minister of the Environment to the presence of certain persons in the gallery and offered advice to the Speaker on ways that I might deal with this problem.

[Translation]

I very much appreciate the suggestions of certain hon. members, particularly the hon. member for York West.

[English]

In any event, I do recall that when members were suspended for 30 days from asking questions, if they showed proper repentance, they were allowed back on the list if they indicated they realized their error in having made these references to people in the gallery.

I have looked at cases where members did make this kind of statement in the House.

Yesterday, the Minister of the Environment was truly repentant following his error. He stood up and said he was sorry, and claimed that the reason for his failure to comply completely with the rules was because of the fact that he was a new member. I know he was first elected to this House in 2006, having spent 13 long years watching the proceedings of this place from another spot.

I also have to say that I received various offers of assistance. Even the Minister of Justice offered to take the punishment for the Minister of the Environment and not answer questions in the House for 30 days.

Notwithstanding these generous offers and the suggestions that hon. members have made to me, I feel that the Minister of the Environment has indicated that he will not repeat this performance, and I therefore consider the matter closed.

It being Thursday, the hon. opposition House leader has a question.

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BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government House leader has recently departed from the practice of giving the House leaders at least two weeks notice in terms of the government's business. He is now restricting that notice to just one week.

I wonder if the government House leader could be just a little bit more forthcoming, not with his gratuitous embellishment of the content of legislation but simply and plainly indicating to the House what he intends to call in what order over the next two weeks.

• (1505)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is very early in the session, so it is difficult to anticipate the legislative debate agenda.

In fact, were I to have said two weeks ago what we would be debating today, I would not have been able to anticipate what we are debating today. I certainly would not want to mislead the House, so I have restricted my comments to those of which I can have some certainty.

This week, the government has continued its efforts to tackle crime and strengthen the security of Canadians. We sent our bill to improve the security certificates process to committee. That bill is, of course, an important part of our plan to protect Canadians against threats to their safety and security.

This week, we have also introduced three important new pieces of legislation to make our streets and communities safe and secure. The first, Bill C-25, strengthens the Youth Criminal Justice Act. We started debate on this bill yesterday. We hoped it would have passed by now, but apparently the opposition has returned to its old tactics of delaying and obstructing our tough on crime agenda, and are in filibuster mode now. As a result, we will continue to debate this young offenders bill today.

[Translation]

The second bill, Bill C-26, imposes mandatory prison sentences for producers and traffickers of illegal drugs, particularly for those who sell drugs to children. We hope to start debating this bill very soon.

Finally, we introduced Bill C-27 to deal with the serious and complex problems resulting from identity theft.

These three bills are important elements of our action plan to make our communities safer and to fight crime.

[English]

Tomorrow we will begin report stage debate of the tackling of the violent crime act. The proposed bill will better protect youth from sexual predators and society from dangerous offenders. It gets serious with drug impaired drivers and toughens sentencing and bail for those who commit gun crimes. The bill has passed committee and we hope it will continue to swiftly move through the legislative process.

Next week's theme builds on what we have been doing this week. The theme will be getting the job done on justice and tax cuts.

[Translation]

We plan on completing debate on the violent crime act, at report and third reading stage, next week.

Once this bill has been passed by the House, we will continue with debate of Bill C-26 to provide for concrete measures to deal with drug traffickers.

[English]

To continue to provide the effective economic leadership that Canadians have come to expect from our government, we will begin

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debate on the budget implementation bill. The budget implements parts of budget 2007 and the fall fiscal and economic update. Among the tax relief items included, are the cut to the GST, reductions in personal income taxes and business taxes. We hope to call that at the earliest possible opportunity, with the consent of the other parties.

If time permits, we will call for debate this week on Bill S-2, the Canada-United States Sales Tax Convention Act, 1984. Next week, if time permits, we will call for debate on our bill to crack down on identity theft.

Next week the government will demonstrate that we are getting the job done on justice and tax cuts for Canadians. We are moving forward with important legislation that will make all communities safer and we are giving all Canadians tax cuts that will contribute to the long term prosperity of the country.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

YOUTH CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Before oral question period, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber had the floor to respond to questions and comments. There are two minutes remaining.

Since there are no questions, we will resume debate. The hon. member for Yukon.

[English]

Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to speak to Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

The House leader was complaining that the bill was being held up, so I hope he can get his message to his troops. Just before question period, the Conservatives were using the time up and stalling his bill.

A report prepared by Justice Nunn dealt with youth criminal justice, and it was very timely. The Conservatives wanted to improve the act, so we had this very detailed, well thought out study. The minister subsequently announced, with the justice minister of Nova Scotia, that he would improve the act. In his speech, the minister said, "Nova Scotia's request for change is in large part based on the recommendations of the Nunn Commission report".

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This is the good news, but from that point on Conservatives should become very upset. Very few recommendations from the Nunn report actually ended up in the bill. The minister has a prescription to fix the act. A number of Conservatives members have said that they want to fix the act and make improvements. They have the outline to do it and then it is not followed.

The Nunn Commission had 34 recommendations on how to improve youth criminal justice, in particular six specifically are referenced to this act. At the most, the minister only deals with three of those, as a member said earlier today, tangentially. One of the three only moves the words from a couple of clauses into one clause, clause 29. Therefore, it is only a wording change. It does not change anything substantive. That leaves two changes in the bill.

One of those two changes is about 20 words, which makes some increased opportunity for the crown to increase detention in pre-trial. The exact wording of that very minor change is outlined very carefully in opposition justice critic's speech, if anyone wants to see the details of that change.

That leaves one other change and it did not come from the Nunn report. It is the use of denunciation and deterrence as reasons during the sentencing.

Therefore, we have a bill that is not even a full page long, if we were to put it all on one page. It has one major concept from the Nunn report and it avoids all these things for which Conservatives have asked, and that is increased safety. They received the recommendations in the Nunn report and everyone applauded it. I think the people who wanted those changes would be very astonished.

I forgot to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am splitting my time with the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, my esteemed colleague, who I know has some very important thoughts in this area as well.

What is more astonishing is what is missing. The Nunn Commission recommended to amend section 3, the declaration of principle, to add a clause indicating the protection of the public as one of the primary goals of the act. I cannot believe why the minister would be against the protection of the public. The Nunn report suggested that we put it into the principles of the act, and it is not there. What could the government possibly have against that?

In fact, I do not think the minister is against it. He said in his speech, when he introduced the bill, that the proposals before the House “provide new measures to protect communities from young offenders who pose a significant risk to public safety”. The government wants to protect communities from risks to public safety and then it does not put the recommendation into bill. Why not simply follow that most obvious suggestion from the Nunn Commission?

Some of the comments on the bill show the difference between the government and the other parties in finding solutions to lower crime in the country.

• (1510)

The first response from a member of the government, in questions on this bill, was the suggestion that safe integration was not the primary objective of the Conservatives. On punishment, is it longer

sentences? I do not know, but I am sure that for all other members of the House, safe integration is a primary objective. What the people of Canada want first and foremost is to be safe again. I do not know why the Conservatives are speaking against that.

The second Conservative member who spoke suggested that we should not deal with poverty. I do not think there is a member of the knowledgeable community in our modern country who does not know that poverty can lead to circumstances that make crime more prevalent. Not all crimes are done for this reason. Wealthy people create crimes as well, but I think the vast majority of people know it is a determinant. It is astonishing that it would not be part of the solution.

The next thing a Conservative member said on the bill, before we broke for question period, was that sentencing was an important deterrent for the Conservatives. Yet, the changes in sentencing have been proved over and over again, by witnesses to committee, that it is not a deterrent. It has no significant statistical effect on the incidence of crime. What does have an effect, and my colleague from British Columbia spoke at length on this earlier, is the fact that a criminals will be caught with an increase, for instance, of police, et cetera. That does act as a deterrent, but not what has been added to the bill.

The fourth comment from the Conservatives was about the people who had lost faith in the justice system. This is a pattern and if I had my 20 minute slot, I would have gone through the whole pattern. It is a pattern of adding the wrong solution in bill after bill, a solution that does not work. They add something that is not a deterrent or they add more of the same.

People are upset. The system does not work and, in fact, it has not worked for 1,000 years. We put people in jail, they get out and reoffend. Most crimes are reoffending crimes. Why this has been so problematic is the agenda has had so many amendments with many rejected because it is not the answer. It is not what witnesses, people who work with victims, or people who work with criminals have found to be the answer.

Finally, we have some new answers that are working in the restorative justice. I have to compliment the people of Ottawa because this is Restorative Justice Week in the city of Ottawa. I went to a wonderful session on Tuesday night this week. The Ottawa Chief of Police said, “We would challenge anyone to show me a system that fails as much as our mainstream justice system”, which these bills are trying to promote.

The crown prosecutor, who was also there, said, “never seen a victim or offender happy with the existing system”. We are concerned about victims and we want to have systems like the restorative justice system and the collaborative alternate diversion family group conferencing where we finally come up with solutions that on occasion, certainly not all the time, work.

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In fact, a Conservative stood and said that even the people who worked in that field said that they did not work all the time. I have to agree. The Conservatives were right with that comment. It does not work all the time, but the statistics in Ottawa show that 38% to 45% of the time it fails. The regular justice system fails 73% of the time. If there is any member of the House who would want to make Canada safer, they would obviously choose the 38% to 45% with these alternative methods for rehabilitating criminals so they do not go out and create more victims. This would make Canada safer.

• (1515)

This has been successful around the world with aboriginal people for centuries. Therefore, let us not continue to put in solutions that do not work. Now that there has been all this attention on justice, at least the good thing is we have heard from witnesses about things that will work. Let us start promoting those and really changing the system. Although the crime rate is going down, let us make it go down even more.

• (1520)

Mr. Bradley Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thought I would just help the hon. member with some of his remarks.

He kept mentioning the Nunn commission and that only one of the recommendations has been included in Bill C-25.

For the member's information, the Nova Scotia justice minister is very supportive of our bill. Nova Scotia justice minister Cecil Clarke has called on members of this House to support Bill C-25. Our justice minister has worked closely with his provincial counterparts on provisions of this bill. I think the hon. member should keep that in mind when he talks about the Nunn commission and other commissions.

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what I was trying to say at the beginning. Perhaps I did not say it clearly, but both the Nova Scotia justice minister and the federal Minister of Justice talked about the suggestions coming from the Nunn commission, so why did they only use one substantive idea?

I actually said there would be maybe three of the six suggestions related to the act itself that tangentially were dealt with, but certainly the major one is the principles of the safety of the public, which is important. I cannot believe there is any Conservative who would disagree with this, because the Conservatives are always talking about it, but when the judge considered the sentence, now he would have to look at public safety as well. That would make eminent logical sense. That was an important recommendation from the Nunn commission. I am sure that the justice ministers who were looking at that would certainly think it was very important to have public safety as a goal of sentencing.

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Yukon, who does an excellent job for his constituents in his riding. In the north, particularly in aboriginal communities, violence and youth violence are terrible parts of the social structure of too many of those communities. Drug abuse, violence and sexual abuse prey upon the children in those communities and can have broad ranging, deleterious and damaging effects in the development of those children throughout their early lives and on to adulthood.

I want to ask my colleague, who comes from Yukon, if he sees these tragedies in an upfront and personal way in the communities that he serves. What solutions does he think the government ought to be doing to deal with the plague of youth crime that is affecting too many aboriginal communities in our country?

What solutions does he think this government should adopt that could prevent these problems and enable aboriginal communities to have the social and economic assets they require on the ground to change the terrible tide that occurs to too many people in too many communities?

Hon. Larry Bagnell: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question. To a large extent aboriginal people will be as successful as everyone else, if they have the same opportunities to succeed. I found that there are the same problems with all criminals.

In fact, when the minister introduced this bill, I asked him what the government was doing. One of the major problems in the system is the overrepresentation of aboriginal people and in particular people with FAS. The government did not have a comprehensive plan.

Fortunately, the minister did say that he bowed to the constant pressure that we had put on the government to reinstate the aboriginal justice strategy only a few weeks before it was to expire. I am delighted he did that. We pushed him to do that. That strategy has been a very big success.

There have been some wonderful success stories resulting from the restorative justice programs that mentioned. Many communities in Yukon now have circles and there are wonderful success stories coming out of them. If people had not gone through this process, the statistics show that there would have been a greater chance of recidivism and thus more victims in society. There are wonderful success stories. It would be terrible if we lost this program.

The government talks about victims. Some victims were at an event on Tuesday night in Ottawa. They talked about how thankful they were that the offender had come to the circle and talked with them. They said that it helped them. The offender actually said, "No, you have helped me more". It is a very successful system. That is the type of thing we need to do.

Aboriginal society is slightly different in the sense that it is a collective society, not simply individuals. It is very important when an offender has to actually confront the people he or she has offended in a circle, in front of the family and that social network. The elders are much more important and have more effect. It is more difficult for the offender than being incarcerated. I think the police chief said that every single person that he dealt with found it more difficult being involved with that type of restorative justice than simply being incarcerated.

• (1525)

Hon. Keith Martin (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Yukon for splitting his time with me.

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Youth violence and youth crime issues have sometimes been fraught with the lack of facts, are driven by emotion, which is more than understandable, and are certainly driven by fear. Those who have been victimized by youth criminals know full well the pain and suffering they endure and sometimes find it, understandably, very difficult when the system does not come to their aid as it should. Over the last decade or so a lot has changed for victims but more needs to be done.

The government has introduced a bill that supposedly is going to make our streets safer. At least that is supposedly the goal. What if the interventions of the government made our streets less safe? What if it was introducing interventions that would increase the level of criminality, not prevent youth crime and not deal with youth crime in a way that would improve the safety of the general public?

Dr. Laurence Steinberg, a child psychologist at Temple University, suggests that family friendly policies and programs to promote parental effectiveness, parental education and prenatal care are very important. He also argues that additional benefits to families are derived from programs addressing mental health, substance abuse recovery and the reduction of poverty. I will explain why I mention this in the introduction of my speech.

I have been a corrections officer in the past. I have worked as a physician in adult jails and youth jails. I have seen a number of communities where youth crime is prevalent. It strikes me that we have to do things to address those who have committed crimes and also to protect the general public, which is absolutely the first order of business of any government. It is also the government's responsibility to introduce policies which will make our country safer, but some of the policies the government is introducing are going to make our streets less safe.

For example, the government wants to introduce policies that will put low level drug dealers in jail. Who are those drug dealers? The low level drug dealers are addicts themselves. If we throw those individuals in jail, all we will do is harden their criminal behaviour and drive them toward worse criminal behaviour when they get out.

The low level drug dealer needs to deal with his or her underlying problem, which is addiction. That is why the government needs to work with the provinces to adopt policies that address the plague of addiction and substance abuse that affects youth and adults alike. What is needed are solutions that are based on fact and science, not based on ideology.

If we look at our policies in terms of the youth criminal population, a good percentage of those individuals suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects. That occurs when a woman drinks alcohol when she is pregnant, particularly during the first two trimesters, and it affects the development of the child's brain to such an extent that the average IQ of a child is in the seventies and behavioural problems occur. A number of those children commit crimes. Many of them fall prey to addictions and that puts them into the realm of our judicial system.

What if we were to prevent fetal alcohol syndrome and fetal alcohol effects? I am not talking about putting up posters in communities. I am talking about substantive solutions that would address the problem at its heart. Fetal alcohol syndrome is the

leading cause of brain damage in our country and it is preventable. There is a community in my riding where it is estimated that 70% of the people who live there have fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects. Imagine that.

Sixty per cent of the people in jail are determined to have fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effects. If this is such a problem, why is the government not introducing policies that will actually work to prevent that? Why is the government not working with its provincial counterparts to introduce policies that would prevent youth crime? Why is it not implementing a national head start program that works to prevent youth crime?

If I were to say that there is a program that results in a 60% reduction in youth crime, that saves the taxpayer \$7 for every \$1 invested, would people not think it was a good solution? I would think any responsible government would embrace that policy.

• (1530)

Why did the government kill the national early learning program when the facts support that an early learning program, which enables children to have at least one responsible adult in their lives and where they can have adequate parenting, proper nutrition and proper access to love and care, ensures that a child's brain develops normally, particularly in the early years?

By keeping kids in school longer, they become less dependent on social programs, have better outcomes in education and have better integration into society. All of those things reduce youth crime. Why does the government not take the initiative to work with the provinces where it has willing partners to implement those solutions, such as an early learning headstart program, for every citizen in this country? That works.

Whether it is in Ypsilanti, Michigan, where it has had a 25 year retrospective analysis, or it is in a place like Hawaii with its healthy start program that produced a 99% reduction in child abuse rates, those programs, with a minimal amount of money and by working with parents and their children, have a profound positive effect on the outcomes of those children.

The provinces have another obstacle in terms of the implementation of the justice system. The provinces, which are the managers of our justice system, have backlogs. Right now, there is a huge prison population who have been remanded in jail while awaiting their day in court. We know that justice delayed is justice denied. Why does the Minister of Justice not work with his provincial counterparts to ensure they have the resources to ensure justice is seen to be working?

The government can also work with the provinces to ensure that administration takes place. The police officers have a terrible time, as do Crown prosecutors, to ensure youth criminals are able to have their day in court and that justice occurs in a fair but expeditious fashion.

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All manner of loopholes exist that enable defence attorneys to block the ability of the justice being seen to go through from beginning to end and that is a big problem. It is frustrating for the police, for the courts and for the victims. It is frustrating for all concerned, except perhaps those who are involved in the defence and those who have committed the crime.

Intelligent solutions have been offered by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, by the Canadian Police Association and by victims groups that the government should be listening to, rather than pulling solutions out of its ear that are not based on fact and not based on experience but are rooted in ideology.

Not all of the interventions are bad. Keeping those who have committed violent offences and who have been shown to break their probation rules in jail is good because it has been proven that they committed those acts and that they flagrantly abuse the law as they see fit.

However, the government has a role. It has an obligation and a responsibility to ensure that it is implementing solutions with the provinces that work.

In my riding, in my area of Victoria, we have an enormous problem of youth crime and, in terms of homelessness, that is largely driven by drugs. The government should be doing two things.

We have good laws right now that address organized crime but they can be and should be strengthened. The government should be putting out a policy that deals with organized crime.

Right now, organized criminal activity that occurs across the border is fuelling the introduction of guns, drugs and other contraband, including contraband cigarettes, into Canada and yet the government has stuck its head in the sand and does not want to see it. It is happening all along the St. Lawrence and has become a huge problem for those communities along the St. Lawrence, including many aboriginal communities. However, no one speaks for those people who live in those communities. The government has stuck its head in the sand and those people are actually the victims of the government's neglect of their plight.

• (1535)

The other thing the government should have is an effective drug policy. It should also be supporting the Insite safe and supervised injection program in Vancouver, allowing it to be used in other communities in the country, and the NAOMI project, which is a narcotics substitution project that has been proven to get addicts out of jail, back into the system and to move on with their lives.

Mr. Ed Fast (Abbotsford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to hear my colleague begin his speech by referring to the fact that the most important role of government is to protect its citizens. I commend him for saying that but I think he went downhill from there.

He used to be on the opposition side of the House when the Liberals were in government and for years he railed against the Liberals for their inaction on crime. I had a chance to review some of his comments many years ago. And then something happened, although I do not know exactly what, but he crossed the floor and joined the governing Liberals of the day.

He spent a few years there and, over those years, violent crime got worse. In fact, Statistics Canada recently reported that not only did violent crimes in general get worse, but youth crimes went up by 3% and the number of youth accused of murder in 2006 was the highest in 40 years.

Given the fact that the Liberal policy of 13 long years failed, why will he not now give an opportunity to a new Conservative government to implement the kinds of criminal law policies that Canadians demand?

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's facts are dead wrong on a number of counts.

He is correct in the sense that last year there was a blip and an increase in violent crime, but if he would be good enough to look at the statistics that he claims he looked at, he ought to look at the fact that basically from the late 1980s there has been a steady decline in crime, including gun crime, across the country and it has been in a steady decline for more than 14 years.

He is correct about there being a blip last year, but there is also a regional blip, particularly in Toronto, which means that we need to be looking for solutions to the problems in Toronto. The community and the mayor have come up with a number of solutions.

However, I want him to look into his heart and ask himself a question. His government is going to introduce a series of policies that will incarcerate more people. Some of those people, particularly that nub of small population that are inveterate criminals and are causing a problem, should be in jail and there should be a way to ensure that the police do not have to go through this rotating door all the time.

He needs to ask himself whether his government should be implementing policies to deal with substance abuse and drug abuse, to have an early childhood education program for children, to have psych therapy for children and to have detox and treatment programs. Those are the things that work.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to this debate because I think it is very important to have these discussions.

I would like to offer my own interpretation of what we are looking at because for a number of years my wife and I worked with homeless people in downtown Toronto and we would take in people coming from the prison system to live with and to work with on rehabilitation. We found, of course, that the vast majority of criminals were not the evil ones that they are sometimes portrayed as, but are actually mostly the stupid ones. The reasons for which they get involved in crimes are so abominably stupid most of the times that it is surprising they did not get caught before they started.

However, what we found time and again with recidivism were issues of addiction and poverty and that once they fell into that system the abuse and humiliation, which is what they would talk about in prison, damaged them so much that they were coming out much worse than when they went in. It became harder and harder to help someone, especially young offenders who had been in two or three times, because of the abuse they were suffering in prison.

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Does the hon. member have any suggestions about this facet of the criminal population, the ones who are first getting in there and how we can actually keep them from ending up as worse citizens at the end of the day?

● (1540)

Hon. Keith Martin: Mr. Speaker, my friend obviously knows where he comes from with his experience in this.

There is a small subpopulation of individuals who are inveterate criminals, who are mentally competent and who are actually sociopathic or psychopathic. They need to be in jail to protect the public at large. There is no question about that. The police are very frustrated with them and there needs to be a way to get them in jail and a way that works better.

However, for the population the member talked about, we need a drug policy that works. We need a prevention solution that works, which is the head start program for kids. We need adequate detox, adequate treatment facilities, the early learning program for children and psych therapy because many of these people have dual—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laval.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill C-25. I have heard this bill being discussed all day by various colleagues who have different positions.

However, I think that there is room in the debate on this bill for the individual, the grandmother, the mother, the person looking at the situation from a different point of view than the legal experts.

It is true that if we were legal experts, we would look at this pragmatically without too much thought for the consequences of our decisions. The consequences do not affect us. They will affect the people this bill will target in the future: our young people. There are 308 members in this House, and I believe that many among us have children, grandchildren and teenagers. But the difference between our children and the children this bill would put in prison for committing serious crimes, is that we are probably in a position to offer them services to get help.

When we talk about juvenile delinquents, we are often talking about young people who come from disadvantaged, impoverished backgrounds. Unfortunately, we are also often talking about youth who come from aboriginal communities, and for good reason. When you do not have any dreams to pursue when you wake up in the morning, when you have no way to realize your ambitions, you may well rebel as an adolescent and wind up doing something to finally make a name for yourself. But sometimes, people do strange things for recognition.

I am not trying to say that I am in favour of what our young people do and the violence they often engage in. In my opinion, everyone in this House had a difficult adolescence. If we did not, it was probably because we were luckier or more privileged or because our parents were able to protect us and gave us as much affection, love and discipline as they could.

But this is not the whole reason young people rebel. Rebellion is part of adolescence, part of the transition to adulthood. When

adolescents rebel, they sometimes do reprehensible things that they are not necessarily aware of. Even though they want to become adults, adolescents are still children. Even though in their own minds they already have adult thoughts and tastes, emotionally they are often still children and need someone to guide them and help them find their way.

Often, young people step out of line because they are far more spontaneous than when they become adults. Even here, in this House, adults often step out of line because they are spontaneous and spontaneously decide to rebel against a colleague, a policy or ideologies they do not appreciate. But we are adults, and we should always behave like pragmatic adults and keep our feelings in check.

● (1545)

This, however, is not the reality. Imagine being an adolescent who is having problems, who has little in the way of resources, who has no money and wants to be like everyone else, like those who have money and wear designer clothes, those who go to the movies and to concerts, which, these days, can cost \$65, \$150 or even \$200 a ticket. Although I do not condone the actions of these adolescents, I can certainly understand why they are sometimes tempted to do something reprehensible in order to achieve their ends.

Should we immediately give them sentences that, in reality, rival adult sentences? Does anyone believe that this is what will get them back on track and make them into serious adults? I do not believe that putting children in prison will produce better citizens. I do not believe that establishing harsher sentences for our young people will produce better citizens.

I do not believe that prison, any more than prayer, can transform a person. It has long been said: “pray and you will be healed”. The same is true when it comes to prison: it just does not happen. All too often, the very opposite is what happens—and I am not referring to prayer, but to prison. Quite often, rather than making someone more socially responsible, prison teaches them the tricks that only lead them deeper into the spiral of crime.

Prisons are full of hardened criminals, such as murderers. Often, people in prison have no concept of right and wrong. Is that really what we want for our children?

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When I wake up in the morning and I hear on television that a bunch of teenagers had a fight and one of them died, or that an elderly person was assaulted and beaten, or that some teenagers stole some weapons and shot at other teenagers, that scares me. It would scare anyone. But will that fear make me want to put all children in prison? That would not make sense. It does not make sense to make a law so restrictive that it prevents us from giving these children a chance to become full members of society again.

There have been so many studies on the subject. We have a good record in Quebec. We are constantly working to give our children back a sense of fairness, of justice, of belonging to society, as well as an understanding that being part of society means having both rights and responsibilities. If we spent a little more time educating children about that, if we ourselves, as responsible adults, made a stronger commitment to teaching our children about rights and responsibilities, then perhaps fewer of our children would choose the wrong path.

Today, the government is trying to persuade us that there is no hope for our children. I refuse to accept that. I refuse to believe that our children are intrinsically bad.

• (1550)

I refuse to believe that the bad in children who are 12, 13, 14, 15 or 16 is so entrenched that they are beyond redemption. I refuse to believe that.

I wonder how many people here have thought about that. I wonder whether the Minister of Justice has children; if he has adolescents. I wonder if he always follows the rules. Does he always drive his car at 100 km an hour? Does he always make a complete stop? Does he ever have a drink before getting in his car? I wonder. We are entitled to wonder. When we legislate for children, we have to be as pure as the driven snow and I do not think that is the case for any one of us here. I am not; and I am not a murderer either.

We are talking here about changing laws for the future, for a long time. When legislation is passed, it is not just for a year or two. It does not come and go like political parties falling in and out of favour. That is not how it works. Unfortunately, when a law is entered in our books, it is there for a long time, unless we change it by eliminating parts of it. It is still very hard work. And even if we do this hard work, because we have had second thoughts, does not guarantee results with our children who are growing up right now.

Our children need parents with financial security. They need parents who are not experiencing a work shortage or a gap in employment insurance benefits if they are without work, or a lack of affordable housing.

I went to Prince Albert this summer. I met some people there from Edmonton who told me that in the middle of their city is a tent-city to shelter Edmontonians who can no longer afford rent. I have not heard anyone talk about that in this House. The Conservatives are unable to find solutions to poverty, the lack of affordable housing and other problems in Quebec or Canada that prevent our children from attending the schools of our choice or from participating in the activities of their choice because people can no longer afford it.

When people lose their jobs at 55 years of age, they very likely have children, adolescents, who are left without a lot of choice. The

Conservatives cannot do anything in that regard, but they want legislation to ensure that these children, who will never have as much as other people, will be imprisoned if they do something wrong. They want to pass a law to do that. Children are allowed to have guns in Alberta and Saskatchewan in particular. They are allowed to play with very dangerous things, and now the Conservatives want to pass a law so that they can be imprisoned after they use their guns on someone.

What lack of thought. What are we coming to? It is socially reckless. What are we doing for the generations to come?

I do not think that this is the way to solve the problems of our young people. We should put the money where it is needed. We should ensure that parents have the wherewithal to feed their children. We should ensure that they have what it takes to nourish their minds, their bodies and their interests and that they can buy books to nourish their dreams. We should do that first, and then I am sure we would have a lot fewer delinquents. I am sure that if we give our children what they need to grow up proudly, there will be no need for these prisons.

• (1555)

We know that some children are sexually assaulted. This also helps to create habitual criminals. What are we doing, though, to protect our children from sexual assault? What are we doing to protect the children who are out on the streets right now? What are we doing to provide them with homes? There are very few places where they can go when they lose their way or run away from home. What are we doing for them? Rather than sending them to prison, why not try to work with them? Why not try to give them a chance? That is what we are doing in Quebec, and it is having real results.

In the United States, on the other hand, they are just creating habitual criminals. The earlier a child goes to prison, the greater the chance that he will become a habitual criminal. We know that in Quebec. Why can people not understand that in the rest of Canada? Why? What is the problem? Is it between the ears? Why can they not understand that children have a right to be free? Children need to be taught, though, that freedom entails both rights and responsibilities. We should teach them that instead of putting them in prison.

All day long, I have heard our friends—I do not even want to use that word any more—our Conservative opponents, let me say, talking about the importance of putting children in prison. Usually, I would qualify the Conservatives as adversaries, but they are not even adversaries; they are simply bad guys.

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Among the Conservatives you will find people who are against abortion. They want the babies of women who have been raped to come into the world so they can become children without dreams, criminals that we put in prison. Is that the kind of future we want to give them? Is that the justice, the policy we want to introduce? The kind of policies that we need are the ones that will eliminate poverty, that will allow for the enrichment and empowerment of our children, policies that will enable everyone to profit from the fruits of this money that is constantly collected. It is in the order of \$14 billion, \$11 billion and \$27 billion.

We send money to Saudi Arabia and we send them recommendations. That is what they told us, at noon today, concerning a woman who had received a sentence of 200 lashes. What treatment will our children receive in the places where we want to imprison them? Are we going to wash our hands of them too? After all, what is important is to get rid of them, right? What is important is to close the door so that we do not see what is going on. Is that really what is important?

Unfortunately, that is what seems to be important. They are completely uninterested in the results that such a policy could produce. They could not care less. They have not given it five minutes' thought. They are populist; they do like so many others. For our part, we do not want to lower ourselves to that. The government responds to pressure rather than doing what it should. It is easier. It is easier to build prisons than to commit money to combat poverty.

Needless to say, I will be voting against this bill. I hope that my colleagues in the opposition will vote against it as well. As for the rest of my colleagues, I do not expect anything from them.

• (1600)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): I see several members rising for questions and comments. I will try to do a minute for each question and answer to accommodate more members.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence.

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I cannot resist saying that this is just right out of *Days of our Lives*. Does the hon. member really think that we are going to go down the streets rounding up children, throwing them in jail and giving them 200 lashes each because they are naughty? For crying out loud, this is absolutely outrageous.

Let me ask the member a simple question. Does she think that a curfew for a year is a just penalty for someone who gets three friends together, goes home, gets baseball bats and golf clubs and then knocks on another juvenile's door and, in a premeditated way, beats him to death? Is curfew for a year a just penalty?

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, as usual, my colleague demonstrates that he does not listen when we speak. I did not say that he should give our children 200 lashes.

On the question of imposing a curfew on children for a year, in Quebec we have proved that we can adapt the punishment to the

crime committed and that sending them right to prison is not going to straighten them out. While these children did something that is not right, we also have to see the root of the problem. It is not enough to say that a crime was committed, particularly when it is committed by children. It is not enough to say that a crime was committed when we do not know what the root of the problem is. We must absolutely ensure that we know why the crime was committed.

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to my colleague's speech. I found it very powerful because more and more now we are talking about the criminalization and the demonization of our young people. It is, I think, a profound change in our society.

I was a school trustee. I saw schools putting in CCTV cameras to spy on our young people because they are up to something. I have seen schools where they have taken out the meeting places where young people spend time together because if those young people are spending time together they are causing trouble. There is a sense that young people are a threat to be watched all the time.

Where is the question about how these young people are our citizens? These are the people we adults should be working with instead of just always blaming them, stopping them on the streets and making sure they have no place to hang out. This is what we are seeing and not just with the Conservative Party. That party is a manifestation of a much larger problem.

When Sun Media has a story about a little old lady mugged by a punk, we will notice that there are members in the House who have a spring in their step and a whistle as they sing. It seems to make their day that they can come here and say that they have another example of evil youth. I would like to ask the member what she thinks about this continual demonization of young people.

• (1605)

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

What is happening is in fact very unhealthy and it makes me very afraid. It makes me very afraid because we are seeing a very intense right-wing wave that has got hold of some people's minds.

And yet we know that Dr. Lipsey has done meta-analyses over several years on the subject of rehabilitating offenders. He tells us that for adolescents, rehabilitation is much more effective than imprisonment. This is someone who is recognized worldwide. Why not put our faith in people who have done studies for years rather than putting our faith in what we feel, as an individual or a minister or an MP? Why not put our faith in what has been done by qualified people who do nothing but this, rather than wanting to imprison our children for a few votes in a few provinces?

Mr. Raymond Gravel (Repentigny, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to hear the speech by my colleague from Laval. She is a woman with heart who speaks from her heart and I found it very interesting. I have two little questions to ask her, but I do not know whether she will be able to answer them both.

Government Orders

First, she drew a parallel between prayer and prison. I would like her to expand on what she meant. Second, I would also like to know the statistics. We are told that the crime rate is falling, but at the same time we are toughening up the laws. I do not know what the statistics are in this regard. Is there a difference between Quebec and the rest of Canada? I think that the rehabilitation rate is much higher in Quebec than elsewhere and that the policy is perhaps different. I would like her to expand on this.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I want thank my colleague for his question.

I made reference to prayer because I know our colleagues truly believe in it. In fact, I think they believe in prison as much as they do in prayer. I believe in the power of prayer. They say, pray and you shall be healed, but that is not what I believe. Pray, do something and then you will heal. We do not heal automatically. This is not a time of miracles, especially not since this government came to power. In talking about prayer, reference is often made to the Conservatives, who are very right leaning and often use prayer to resolve their problems.

However, as far as rehabilitating our offenders is concerned, we have such a high success rate in Quebec because we use the right tools and we believe in these young people and we believe that by working with them we can help them do something good.

[*English*]

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I quite often listen to members like this one and the member from the NDP, who seems to think that everybody is demonizing young people these days. I keep hearing the message from that member's party that if we cleaned up poverty, we would clean up crime. Do rich kids in Quebec not commit crimes?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had bothered to listen to my entire speech he would have understood when I said that, fortunately, some parts of society are able to provide services to their children when they slip up.

However, people who are poor do not have the capacity to provide these services. How many rich children go to rehabilitation or detoxification centres that cost thousands of dollars? How many poor children go? None, and they will die injecting heroine in their arms because they were unable to get help.

That is the difference. It is not that rich children do not commit crime, it is that they have lawyers to defend them other than crown attorneys. Rich children might have parents who do their part. Even still, not all rich children have that.

All children must be treated equally, with respect, justice and fairness. We will not achieve that by incarcerating them.

• (1610)

Hon. Joseph Volpe (Eglinton—Lawrence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I tried to follow the remarks of the honourable member. I think I understood that she would like reasonable and fair training for every individual, whether they are young people or adults. The role of training and educating individuals in our society falls under provincial jurisdiction.

Second, she would like to see a sharing of social and community values with all citizens, particularly with young people. In the past, training in those values was in the hands of the church. Today, we no longer accept the role of the church in the training of the community.

Finally, the member says that we must eradicate or eliminate poverty. The causes are economic and I know that there are political programs with economic aspects that are aimed at eliminating poverty.

However, I would like to ask her what alternatives the Bloc is offering to the bill introduced by the government that she and her Bloc colleagues supported against the Liberals.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): There are only 30 seconds remaining for the hon. member for Laval.

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I will not dignify that with an answer.

My remarks were very direct in calling for the things we need. When I talk about being able to eliminate poverty, my colleague knows very well that I never wanted a centralizing government and that I still want the money to be given to the provinces so that we can deliver our programs, as we are doing in Quebec.

What we have proposed is making a difference. What we have always done, are still doing and will continue to do is to offer simple alternative solutions that have been tried elsewhere and have been successful, such as what we are doing in Quebec; for example, our day care program, our health care system and our system of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

[*English*]

Mr. Michael Savage (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill C-25, which I think responds to a very significant need in the country and certainly responds to a demand for action from many people in my own constituency of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I can indicate certainly my support in principle for the bill. I think there are some significant things in the bill that need to be changed or added to, specifically in terms of how Justice Merlin Nunn's recommendations were used or not used. I think there is enough good in the bill that we need to send it to committee for further discussion.

Crime is a huge issue for Canadians. Probably there are not that many places in the country where it is more of an issue than it is in my own community of Halifax, more specifically Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I have had the opportunity to meet with very many constituents of mine who have come to see me specifically about the incidence of crime. Quite often it is youth crime, but not always, and perhaps it is even exaggerated a little. Nonetheless, it is a big issue with a lot of people who live in my area, just as it is for people across Canada.

Government Orders

I met not too long ago with the Smythe family, whose son was bullied and then beaten up very badly. They do not feel they have the protection they need as a family to deal with the circumstances that their son, through no fault of his own, found himself in. He was beaten up and is now back in school walking the same halls as the perpetrators of that crime.

I think there is a moral responsibility upon governments at all levels, federal, provincial and municipal, to make sure that people feel safe in their communities. Right now many people do not feel safe, whether the crime rate is up or down. Over the years it has come down. Nonetheless, we have a responsibility to make sure that all citizens feel safe in their communities, on their streets and particularly in their schools.

Jason McCullough is a person whose name has become well known in my community. He was murdered some years ago in the north end of Dartmouth. His murder has never been solved. The case is still open. Every year in October, there is a candlelight vigil and community members get together to remember Jason and to walk through the streets that he used to walk through as a student. They do it to remember Jason and to put on the pressure so that he is not forgotten and his case continues to get attention.

My own brother is the vice-principal of Dartmouth High School. He loves the kids. He is a great teacher and now he is a great administrator. I have talked to him and other administrators and teachers who tell me that we need to do something to make sure that repeat and violent young offenders in particular are dealt with. Nobody in these schools wants to abandon these kids for life, and they are kids, but they also think it is an absolutely unacceptable circumstance that people who continually violate are put back into a circumstance with the people whom they have already violated and may violate in the future.

The week before Parliament resumed in October, I had the occasion to call an open meeting. I have a series of community round tables in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, usually on a specific topic. I ask people to come in. We have held them on health, education, development and a number of other things. This latter one was entitled, “What are your priorities for this Parliament?” I just asked the people in my community to come to this open forum and tell their member of Parliament what they wanted to see done in Parliament and what were their priorities. This was before the Speech from the Throne.

We talked about a number of things. Poverty came up continually. Poverty was a big issue. So was the issue of Afghanistan: what is the right thing to be doing in Afghanistan? Child care came up.

The issue that resonated most at that meeting was the issue of crime, because again, we had families come to that meeting and stand up and say that their family life has changed because they do not feel safe in the streets. Their son or daughter or someone close to them has been the victim of a crime and they feel helpless. They feel powerless.

In a lot of cases, people said that they do not exactly know the details of all the legislation in Canada, but they just have a sense that it is not working for them and they feel we have to do something

about it. Specifically, people talked about the Youth Criminal Justice Act and what we can do to tighten it up.

● (1615)

The history of what is now the Youth Criminal Justice Act goes back to the Juvenile Delinquents Act of 1908 or something like that. The Young Offenders Act was a dramatic improvement. There is still a lot of confusion. I heard the Minister of Justice last night on CBC refer to changes he was making to the Young Offenders Act, so he misspoke, but a lot of people still think the Young Offenders Act is in force. The Youth Criminal Justice Act is the source of an awful lot of confusion.

In Justice Merlin Nunn's report, on which much of this legislation relies in the form of his recommendations, on pages 166 and 167, actually says the Youth Criminal Justice Act is a very sound piece of legislation.

In fact, it is one of the best pieces of youth justice in the world, but there are holes in it. There are gaps and those gaps relate to the issue of repeat and violent offenders. We do not need to blow up the Youth Criminal Justice Act, but it is appropriate to look at it and make sure we approach it in a reasoned way.

We also need to make sure, when we deal with the issues of youth justice, that we are getting out in front of the problem as well as just dealing with it when it happens. We also need to believe, as I do, in rehabilitation.

I met with a member of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, FCM, from Saskatchewan this afternoon who was telling me about a politician, who I had not heard of but other members will have in Saskatchewan, who had a criminal past and was reformed, rehabilitated and elected in the Saskatchewan Party and is part of the government today.

People can be rehabilitated. We should never suggest that people cannot be rehabilitated. That would be an absolute failure and an admission of our inability to deal with circumstance. It is not that way.

While we look at these changes, some of which I support quite strongly, we have to get out in front of the problem. We need to look at things like child care for Canadians. I have made no secret of that.

I have spoken in the House about how strongly I felt about the plan that the former government had for child care. We may disagree on the best way to deliver it, whether it is through the universal child care benefit that the government has come forward with or the plan that I believe in, but we have to accept that not all children are born with an equal opportunity for success or even an equal opportunity for a good life.

Quite often, it is those kids who fall through the holes in society and end up dealing with the criminal justice system on a repeat basis. That has to be changed.

We could invest not only in child care but in things like the Boys & Girls Club. We could build jails, but the best thing we could do for kids is to build the infrastructure they need.

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My community has the Dartmouth North Boys & Girls Club, the Cole Harbour Boys & Girls Club and near where I live there is the East Dartmouth Community Centre. Here the federal, provincial and municipal governments got together and decided to put money toward it because there were a lot of kids who did not have an equal opportunity for success and a good life.

The Boys & Girls Club of East Dartmouth is led by people like John Burton and Dave who run the programs and are friends to the kids. They are both mentors to the children and provide the kind of support that gives a lot of kids, who otherwise might not have it, a chance to succeed and access to opportunity.

With regard to the infrastructure that the FCM was talking about today, again to go to my community, there are less hockey rinks in Dartmouth now than when I was growing up. A couple have closed over the last 10 years. We do not have the infrastructure we need.

Anybody here would agree that if kids have a chance to play hockey, which is prohibitively expensive, basketball or soccer and feel like they are part of a group through recreation, they have a better chance to succeed, to feel valued, to live a dignified life, and to avoid coming in contact with the criminal justice system.

I suggest investing in schools, both public schools, pre-kindergarten to grade 12, and universities. We need to invest in schools. Nova Scotia has a woeful record of investing in public schools over the past number of years. It is very low in the per capita rankings. Municipally, provincially, and federally we need to get together and decide that there is nothing more important than the children of the next generation of Canadians. We must invest in schools and give all kids an opportunity to succeed.

• (1620)

There are other things. I had a chance to meet, as I often do, with RCMP officers and police officers who are assigned to high schools in my community. I met with an RCMP officer recently who works in the Cole Harbour high school. He told me that one of the things that works the best with kids, and people may think he is crazy, was restorative justice.

We have a champion of restorative justice in Nova Scotia in Danny Graham who was the former leader of the Liberal Party in Nova Scotia.

When kids have the opportunity to understand what they have done and a chance to make compensation, it has a big impact on them. Quite often it has a big impact on the families of victims as well, who are very integral to the process of restorative justice.

We have this legislation today. It was alleged to have been inspired by the Nunn commission, the hon. Merlin Nunn, retired justice of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia. His report came about as a result of the tragic incident of Theresa McEvoy, who was killed by a young offender in a car crash on October 14, 2004. Two days before his criminal act caused her death, he was released from custody, although he was facing numerous charges. That is on the front page of the Nunn commission report.

Justice Nunn talks about specific problems within the Youth Criminal Justice Act. He talks about the gaps that exist. He also talks about, as I mentioned before, some of the very good parts of the

legislation that today form the Youth Criminal Justice Act. He does not want to throw it all out. He wants to refine it to adjust to those circumstances.

I think we should look at the Nunn report. I have most of it here. It is quite a significant document. I suspect that most members of the House have had a chance to look at it. He says on page 169 in his summary of approach to recommendations:

It would be foolhardy to suggest that we can prevent all youth crime. However, we can prevent a great deal by reducing the causes, and we can control others by instituting programs and systems to cut down on further criminal activity by those already in the system.

I think that paragraph summarizes what Justice Nunn was about. When this report came back I think last December, it was highly acclaimed. It was significantly thought out. It brought in a whole variety of viewpoints. It talked about some very specific Nova Scotia problems in criminal justice, even down to fax machines that were not working, that things such as that can actually have an impact on criminal justice. The report talks about some of the improvements that can be made.

I recall the Minister of Justice being in Halifax I think before Parliament came back. He credited Justice Nunn with having put forward a good report and indicated he was going to move on that. The Minister of Justice is a person I take at his word and I think his intentions are entirely appropriate.

I do think that we are missing out a little bit on the front end. I also think we are missing out on the rehabilitation side. The summary of the bill, as members will know, is that it makes two specific amendments to the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

It adds deterrents and denunciation to the sentencing principles that a court must consider when determining a sentence for someone convicted under the Youth Criminal Justice Act. It facilitates the use of pre-trial detention in cases where a youth has committed a violent crime, has breached their current conditions of release, or has been charged with an indictable offence for which an adult would be liable to imprisonment for a term of more than two years, and has a history that indicates a pattern of findings of guilt.

We believe that using the Nunn report as an inspiration for federal legislation makes perfect sense. We also think that the report of Justice Nunn brought in a good balance. We think some of that balance is missing. We think perhaps we can do some work on it at committee. I certainly want to support in principle the legislation. I would also want to point out some of the recommendations in this rather lengthy Nunn commission report that were not followed.

Recommendation 11:

—that the federal government amend section 42(2)(m) of the federal Youth Criminal Justice Act to remove the time limits on the sentencing option for a court to require a young person to attend a non-residential community program—

• (1625)

Recommendation 20:

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—that the federal government amend the “Declaration of Principle” in section 3 of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to add a clause indicating that protection of the public is one of the primary goals of the act.

Recommendation 21:

—that the federal government amend the definition of “violent offence”...of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to include conduct that endangers or is likely to endanger the life or safety of another person.

Recommendation 23:

—that the federal government amend and simplify the statutory provisions relating to the pre-trial detention of young persons so that section 29 will stand on its own without interaction with other statutes or other provisions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Recommendation 24:

—that the federal government amend section 31(5)(a) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act so that if the designated “responsible person” is relieved of his or her obligations under a “responsible person undertaking” the young person’s undertaking made under section 31(3)(b)—

Recommendation 25:

—that the federal government amend section 31(6) of the Youth Criminal Justice Act to remove the requirement of a new bail hearing for the young person before being placed in pre-trial custody—

There have been varying opinions of the Youth Criminal Justice Act changes as in Bill C-25. There are some people who do not like it and I understand some of their concerns.

From Nova Scotia, Cecil Clarke, the minister of justice, who today is dealing with another circumstance which is the very sad death by taser in Nova Scotia yesterday, he has endorsed the legislation. Most provincial and territorial ministers of justice express support, certainly in principle, in some cases absolutely for the legislation.

We think that there is a lot of merit in Bill C-25. My concern is that this is a lengthy report and there is a lot of very important stuff in this that could be caught. I am not suggesting that the legislation needs to look quite like this, but the principle of the bill is not something that I think can be picked or chosen over. It has to be looked at, if we support this bill then I think we support it entirely. We do not have to have every single provision but there are very significant provisions that are not reflected in the legislation.

In closing, we need to act, as members of Parliament, on the concerns of our constituents. I fully and completely believe that there are aspects of the Youth Criminal Justice Act that are not currently providing security to families and individuals who live in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

I feel, as a member of Parliament, that it is my duty to do what I can to make sure that the Youth Criminal Justice Act is tightened up, so that it does not lose the very good intention of the act which is obviously that children need to be dealt with separately. But the children in our schools and in our streets who are doing everything that they can under the law of the land and with the best intention, it is simply not right to allow them to continue to be offended against by young offenders who have a history of offending.

I will support the bill going to committee. I hope that at committee strong members of the justice committee, certainly our strong members from the Liberal side, will be able to effect some change which will make the bill better when it comes back to the House for

final consideration. But I will support this and I will vote for this to go to committee.

• (1630)

Mr. Myron Thompson (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member’s speech and on a big majority of it, I would agree with him totally.

The Nunn report, for example, was one of the best reports we have received in this place for a long time. The only comment he made that I might question was his last comment about the capable members in the justice committee, but I will not go there.

I also spent 18 years in a junior high school as an administrator and I can relate to his brother who did the same thing. What his relative would say would agree with a lot that I have seen in changes over the years in how we deal with youth.

I also know that if I held a number of town hall meetings in communities or with people from my riding, I would hear very much the same things about which he has talked. Crime is a very important matter in the minds of many people.

I also agree, when we are talking about young offenders, we are probably talking about 5% or maybe less of the entire youth. The majority of our youth in this nation are great kids, and I experienced that over the many years that I was in the school.

At the same time, one thing disappeared out of the schools over a period of time and it disappeared shortly after the Young Offenders Act and the Charter of Rights came into being. Discipline became less and less of an important factor in our schools. I think lack of discipline in the homes and in the schools is something that could lead to further problems with young people. They must know the meaning of discipline. When I was young, I sure as the devil needed discipline and I am glad I got it, and sometimes in a pretty strong way.

Would the hon. member agree that discipline is not allowed any more under the rights? We cannot do certain things in schools that once upon a time we could do. I am not going back to the draconian age. I am talking about recent years, probably the years the member was growing up, where discipline was a pretty important factor. Does he not agree that the failure of those of us in positions of authority to discipline when necessary has led to some of our problems?

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, it is not that often, quite honestly, that the member for Wild Rose and I probably agree on a lot of things in the House. When I say I agree with the legislation, I agree to send it to committee because I think there are significant holes in it.

I am not sure what he meant by discipline. I remember being educated by the nuns. The nuns used to have a strap and I got to know it in grade 2. I do not want to see anything like that back in the schools, not that the member was necessarily recommending it. If that is the discipline, then no, I do not think we need that.

Government Orders

I have talked to teachers and principals who are frustrated and who feel they do not have a lot of control over the classroom. I do not honestly know how to control that, but I definitely do not want to go back to the days when fear ran schools. I want to go forward to the days when curiosity, innovation and creative thinking is encouraged.

I go into a lot of classroom of all levels all the time in my community. The kids get to know me after a while. The kids are good. As the hon. member said, most of the kids are very good. I do not believe that kids learn out of fear. I think they learn out of curiosity and intent.

•(1635)

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened intently to my hon. colleague's remarks. I also listened to the member for Laval who spoke earlier.

In my previous job as a vice-president of my union, one of the things I had the privilege of doing was going to visit the different work sites of our members. Some of those work sites are provincial prisons. One of the prisons I went to was the youth centre in Willingdon, in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

Some of the things I saw still haunt me to this day. I saw young people who were incarcerated there for crimes they had committed at a very young age, as young as 14 years old. I wondered why the kids were there. How did they get to this point? What was missing in their lives and how could we have avoided having them in that place?

My children were about the same age, and I thought, "There but for the grace of God go my kids". They may have one little fight in a schoolyard and they could be in there.

Regarding his comments about the restorative justice system, could we envision, in the House, what it would look like for these kids to have some support and a system that respected who they were and—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): Order, please. I am having difficulty hearing the question. The hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour.

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, my colleague raises a very good point, which I raised in my speech.

I believe one of the roles of government is to equalize opportunity and access, whether it is post-secondary education, or child care or access to the many services that kids need. That is why I think the Boys and Girls Clubs and community infrastructures are as important to reducing youth crime as are the punitive measures. However, I believe the punitive measures need to be realistic, balanced and in line with the crime that has been committed, particularly if it is repetitive.

My children are eight and eleven and they go to a French immersion school where I live. Because of that, they do not go to the community school. They are bused, and there are kids from all over the city. It is a great thing because they get to meet kids from all different backgrounds. However, some of the kids who go to school with my kids cannot go to hockey because it costs \$350 to join, \$500 to get the gear and it costs money to travel.

Is hockey that important? No, but the principle is to have an opportunity to be involved in things that keep them active, inquisitive, curious, healthy, physically fit, all those things.

Regarding access to breakfast, we can go into most of the elementary schools in my riding and they have breakfast programs. A lot of kids go to school with a bag of chips and bottle of pop because it is cheaper than an apple and milk. The federal government, and I proposed this in the last Parliament, should be involved in a healthy eating program, particularly for kids from low income backgrounds.

In short, kids do not all have the same opportunities. Particularly for kids who grow up in families that do not have a lot of access to that opportunity, they are much more likely to have interactions with the criminal justice system.

We have to recognize this and we have to accept that governments at all levels have a responsibility to equalize out that opportunity.

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the majority of inmates in our Canadian institutions are populated by aboriginal people. I think part of the reason is because of some of the situations in which they live, about which my colleague talked.

One of the initiatives we did under our Liberal government was crime prevention. We truly felt that a lot of those people, whether they were in young offenders' facilities who later probably went to a penitentiary, did not come from homes where they had the proper support.

I truly believe that instead of punishing people for having a bad start in life, we need to look at better ways of circumventing that route. Could our colleague expand on some of the preventative things that we should do in our country so our prison populations are not overly populated by aboriginal people?

•(1640)

Mr. Michael Savage: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague who has done a lot of work in this area.

When we talk about crime prevention, we cannot prevent a crime that has already occurred. However, we can prevent a crime that has not occurred. This could be done by dealing with somebody who has committed a crime once and who may be likely to commit it again. In most cases, if we give people an opportunity, if we give them an equal start, if we invest in programs like the Kelowna accord or in PSSSP for universities, this would help.

As we all know, aboriginal Canadians are the victim of a lack of funding and opportunity. We have to do everything we can to ensure they have at least some kind of a chance to be what they want to be. We cannot afford to waste the opportunity as a nation either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Andrew Scheer): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Canada Elections Act; the hon. member for Laval, Status of Women.

The first portion of debate on the bill is now over. We now move to the period where speeches are ten minutes and the period for questions or comments is five minutes.

Government Orders

Mr. Rick Casson (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to address this issue today.

We have listened to the debate go on and on. I want to point out that as late as yesterday, the justice critic for the official opposition had agreed, in discussing with the government side of the House, that the bill would be allowed to pass through the House today. Now it seems, for some reason, the official opposition has decided to start filibustering. Therefore, I move:

That this question be now put.

• (1645)

Mr. Bill Siksay (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have the opportunity to continue this discussion on Bill C-25, An Act to amend the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

This bill, rather surprisingly, only amends two parts of the legislation. In particular, it adds deterrence and denunciation to the principles that a court must consider when determining a youth sentence, but it also clarifies the presumption against the pretrial detention of a young person and specifies the circumstances in which the presumption does not apply.

In a sense, it is very surprising that after all the bluster and the controversy that we have heard for years from the government and the government party, the Conservative Party, about youth crime and the Youth Criminal Justice Act, this is the kind of legislation that it brings forward. It is such an incredibly limited piece of legislation. It is very surprising, given all the chest thumping and the controversy that has been created over the years, to see this proposal when it finally comes forward being so very limited in scope.

Generally, the principle that young people should be treated differently in our criminal justice system is one that has a very long history in our legal system. It is something that has been established for at least 150 years. It has gone on for that length of time without any serious challenge. I think it is something that we have to maintain in this day and age as well. I do not see any reason that we should turn our backs on that important principle. Certainly it has been part of the legislation in Canada that deals with young offenders over the years. It was a feature of the Juvenile Delinquents Act, it was a feature of the Young Offenders Act and it is certainly a feature now of the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

We have adopted wholeheartedly in this country that youth should be treated differently in our criminal justice system. I believe that has served us well. We have had success in changing the lives of young people who have been in trouble with the law. That is something we should continue to work at and not abandon. The whole question of rehabilitation of young people is one that merits emphasis in our criminal justice system and through the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

There are people who would suggest, and often they sit on the Conservative benches, young people should be treated like adults in our criminal justice system, even with some specific crimes.

If we are going to move in that direction, it would seem to me that we have to give those young people similar responsibilities in other areas of their lives, not just the onerous responsibility of facing the full adult penalties of the criminal justice system, but the responsibilities of full citizenship in other areas like, for instance, lowering the voting age. We should make sure that voting and

criminal responsibility are at the same level. I do not know that there are many people in the Conservative corner who would consider that kind of proposal. So, I think it is very important that we maintain the principle that youth should be treated differently in our criminal justice system.

That being said, there are issues related to youth crime that we need to address. Overall, in the last 20 years youth crime has declined and continues to decline. We have seen it decline at least 12% to 15% over the last 20 years. I think that is the result of good legislation in this area. The Youth Criminal Justice Act is a good piece of legislation.

There is concern at the moment about serious violent crime involving the use of guns and other weapons. That is something we are all concerned about. However, the reality is that overall, youth crime is going down, and it shows the effectiveness of the current legislation.

We do not know why there has been a spike in violent crime at this moment in time. Often there are those kinds of fluctuations in crime rates in specific crime areas, so it does merit our attention, but to overthrow the whole youth criminal justice system I do not think would be appropriate in that case. The Youth Criminal Justice Act has had the effect of lowering the crime rate among our youth since it came into effect.

There are other things we could be doing to address the whole issue of crime in our society. Certainly, policing and enforcement is one of the aspects that we should always look at when we are considering trying to reduce crime in our society. Unfortunately that is one area where the government has not kept its promise. More police officers have been promised and yet there has been no follow through on that promise yet.

• (1650)

We know that the opportunity for police to build relationships with young people is a very effective way of reducing youth crime and reducing crime generally in our communities. Certainly the work of police officers that are attached to schools in community policing demonstrates that very clearly.

There are other things that we should be pursuing. Certainly a restorative justice system would also go some way to ending recidivism in our criminal justice system. We know that whenever we incarcerate young people we are basically sending them to a school where they get more training in how to be offenders. We see that all through our criminal justice system but I think it is particularly true of young people. Anything we could do that helps young people understand their responsibility for the crimes that they have committed but keeps them in the community and builds relationships and restores relationships in the community is an important step to take.

Restorative justice programs have been shown to reduce recidivism by almost half. That is a very important example of how we should be moving and the kind of programs that we should be putting in place.

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I have had the opportunity to participate in a restorative justice program after an act of vandalism at my house, albeit a very minor criminal infraction. I was very impressed with the way that worked to restore the relationships that had been altered by that and how elders from the aboriginal community, my partner, our neighbours and I all worked to see those relationships restored and responsibility taken for the actions of the young person involved. It was a very moving process, I have to say.

When we went in, we hoped that at the end of the process we would be able to see the young person as another one of our neighbours and greet that person on the street because a relationship had been restored despite his actions on my property. I think that we actually accomplished that.

I think there is something very positive to be said. Certainly the evidence from Quebec, which has spent a lot of time on restorative justice programs, has been very dramatic in terms of the positive outcomes of those programs. They are ones that we could emulate across the country.

Sadly, in my riding of Burnaby—Douglas, there are people who would like to establish a youth restorative justice program, but there just is not money available to do that, either from the provincial government or from the federal government. This is certainly one place where we could stand to have a significant increase in funding, given the success of these programs for our communities in reducing crime and re-establishing relationships.

We know that incarceration does not do young people many favours. Canada does have a very high youth incarceration rate, one of the highest in the western world.

Just to wrap up, I want to say that I do not see the bill as changing very much. It does not change judicial discretion around pretrial release and in fact it only enshrines in law the current practices of the criminal justice system. We also know that deterrence and denunciation are not particularly effective when it comes to reducing crime overall and certainly that should be the goal of our criminal justice system.

I am not sure what the big deal is about this bill. Perhaps it merits more discussion at committee, but I would not want to see us fiddle in a very significant way with our youth criminal justice system because I think it is serving us well. That is not to mean that there could not be improvements made, but I think we are being well served.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great fascination to my colleague's dissertation. He talked about the whole notion of treating young people separately, the historic jurisprudence behind it and how the Conservatives are saying no, they will treat the 12 year olds the same as they treat the 25 year olds.

There is one area where the Conservatives are very clear about treating one group of people very differently and that is the first nations people. I invite any of the get tough on crime people from the Conservatives to come to the James Bay coast or to the Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory where the police are woefully understaffed, where they are in situations that are just plain dangerous. Not a

single officer in any of the non-native forces would ever put himself or herself in the situation the NAPS officers are in on a daily basis.

For example, in the community of Attawapiskat there are 2,000 people with only two police officers on duty. If one officer has to take someone out, that leaves one officer in a community of 2,000. In other communities like Moose Factory, the police station has to shut down at a certain point during the night because the officers are not getting paid for overtime.

The Conservatives believe that these people can be treated differently, that their crimes can be treated differently, that their police officers can be left with no support, no help and that for the victims of real crime, who are mostly our impoverished first nations, it is too bad, so sad. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are running around telling us that we are going to get tough on every little punk who is walking the streets in Ottawa or Toronto.

I would like to ask the member why he thinks that the government shows such casual disregard for the first people of our country and refuses to support the police in those communities with the adequate resources not only to ensure the health and safety of police officers but to ensure that the first nations communities are being kept with the same measure of safety that other Canadians take for granted.

• (1655)

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, I wish I could answer that question. We would have much more success around this place if we could understand what is in the mind of the government when it comes to these sorts of things. One would think it is a no-brainer when it comes to the Conservatives' concerns about our criminal justice system, but sadly, it is one of the places where they are failing us.

There is no doubt that we need more police on the beat. That kind of policing serves all of our communities well, whether they are on the James Bay coast or in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. We know that when police officers have the ability to build those kinds of relationships with the people they serve, including young people, aboriginal people, minorities and middle class neighbours in many of our communities, we are all the better for having that kind of relationship. However, if the resources are not being dedicated toward it and we do not have the people on the street doing that kind of work, then we do not have the benefits of those kinds of programs. Those programs are very crucial to what we should be about.

Policing is only one aspect of what we need to be doing in our criminal justice system, but we cannot ignore that piece. We also need to be talking about punishment in our criminal justice system and what works and does not work in terms of having people take responsibility for the crimes that they have committed. We also need to look at prevention. We have heard many suggestions this afternoon.

We have been speaking with people from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, who have said there is a declining recreational infrastructure in our country. When they talk about a \$123 billion infrastructure deficit, fully \$40 billion of that is in recreation. If we had the best possible recreation centres and addressed that infrastructure deficit, we know it would have positive effects across the country, including positive effects in dealing with the youth crime rate.

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I do not understand why we do not move in those areas and ensure that those kinds of possibilities exist for young people across Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I also listened to the remarks of my colleague with a great deal of attention. He made reference to many very important matters.

I wonder if my colleague can indicate to us how concerned he is to see the direction that the Conservative government is taking, when we see this justice bill, when we see the bill another member introduced yesterday concerning abortion, when we see other bills that members are introducing, concerning very right-wing ideas, when we see the refusal of the government to ask that a death sentence against a Canadian be commuted to life in prison.

What does this make him think of? Is he afraid that we would have a totally different country if this government had a majority?

[*English*]

Mr. Bill Siksay: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is right when she says that the government is pursuing the wrong direction in so many places.

I think that going down the route of establishing stronger criminal penalties without addressing the other key issues for dealing with crime in our society, without dealing with prevention and without dealing with policing is absolutely the wrong way to go.

I think limiting a woman's choice in reproductive technologies or in abortion is absolutely the wrong way to go. I think limiting young people's choice in the expression of their sexuality is also absolutely the wrong way to go.

There are many places in dealing with the kinds of criminal justice legislation that we have had where I am very troubled by the direction of the government, where I think it is going in absolutely the wrong direction and directions that I think would have serious consequences for our society.

● (1700)

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to add to the debate on this very serious piece of legislation.

As always, I tend to speak about what I am familiar with, and those are the communities in my riding of Nunavut.

I have serious concerns about some of the elements of the legislation, in that I do not believe some of the harsh handling of young people fits the crime in most cases.

I am not against justice. I am not against the real sentence for very violent crimes, but putting everyone in the same category and assuming that they are all dangerous criminals is very scary to me, especially when I know that many of these young people in my riding of Nunavut commit these acts of crime because they are hungry or because they have difficulties at home. They see violence in their homes that I feel can be prevented through other measures.

Unfortunately, they may have FAE or FAS and do not realize the consequences of their actions. We put them into a system with which they are totally not familiar. We sometimes do not have enough

preventive programs. I, for one, am a very strong advocate for prevention.

It is truly a sad moment when some of our kids end up in the criminal system and stay there when we have the opportunity to take them to that fork in the road and turn them one way or the other. We hope that in most cases they choose the road to good living. They have the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and apologize for their actions and then go on to lead a meaningful life in our society.

What I want for all of the kids in this country is to have a meaningful, healthy, happy life. It is not any different for us in our aboriginal communities and, in my case, Inuit communities in Nunavut. We have many opportunities for our young people but, due to many different circumstances, sometimes they do not always take advantage of that opportunity.

Some of my colleagues already talked about many of the preventive measures we could take, whether it be sports, arts or programs as simple as breakfast at the school. As I said, many of our kids who enter the young offenders system do it because they are hungry. They break in and steal food from homes or steal things that they can sell for money.

In a country as prosperous as Canada, it is truly a sad state of affairs when we have young people committing petty crime in order to feed themselves or for warmer things to wear in my part of the country. The more that we do in prevention, the more I think we can keep some of these kids out of the system.

The other problem for these kids is that some of them are being taken away from their homes. They end up in foster homes. We could do all kinds of things on the social side. We could have programs to keep more kids at home and to have better home situations so they do not need to turn to petty crime in order to survive.

I truly believe that with programs for crime prevention, we would be able to help communities come up with their own programs that could help kids at home before they ever enter into a life of crime.

● (1705)

Some detention centres are trained to run on the land programs. However, a lot of these kids, unfortunately, come from single mother homes with no fatherly influence and, therefore, are not able to participate in some of the livelihood that we still have in our communities. We still have many people in our Nunavut communities who participate on the land, whether it be for subsistence hunting or for other activities. Even though we are now very much in the workforce like everyone else, we still maintain a very close connection to the land.

What we have seen in some of the successful communities are programs to try and work with the young people either through the school or, for kids who are not always in school, through other programs. This is proving to be very beneficial, not just to the students and young people involved, but to the whole family and to the community as a whole.

We are still in some way trying to come to grips with the new way of doing things in our communities. We have people who are caught in between our traditional way of life and the new way that is among us today. However, we have been very successful as a people to blend the two worlds together and to give an opportunity to young people to learn to appreciate the land and what is around us again.

As I mentioned before, many of these young people are in a one parent home and that is becoming the reality with a lot of families in this country. We need to do more to support that because some of them live on a very low income and the parent, usually a mother, cannot provide other activities for her children as much as she would like.

The community and the social fabric of this country needs to take up that void where kids do not have the same opportunity as other kids in being able to have different activities that can take up idle time, which, in a lot of cases, ends up with bored kids looking for something to do.

I really want to see programs where the community has an opportunity to help with the upbringing of children because not every young family is able to do that on their own anymore, not with the high cost of living that we have in our part of the country. Even programs that help people to feed a healthy diet to their family is another angle that we can look at.

We do have food mail for many parts of the north, but even being able to provide a healthy diet for a young family is getting to be very difficult. As I said earlier, some of these kids are just looking for something to eat. When we take it down to that type of basic cause of why some of these kids commit crime, then having very serious consequences for these young people does not meet the crime.

We need more programs that help some of these young mothers, and some single dads too, or even young couples who need parenting skills, not having had the opportunity because they started a family very young. Those are the types of programs that we would definitely support in our communities.

Again, in speaking about the people in my riding, the real key for our communities is to be able to give everyone a proper start in life, and that includes having the support of community programs.

• (1710)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I very much appreciate what she said, because she knows what she is talking about. She lives with the people of the far north, she comes from there and she knows all about the situation of the people she represents.

Yesterday, I was reading in a report that a woman in the far north, where women's economic security is extremely fragile, chose to call a women's shelter and say that she had been beaten, because she had no place to live. This happens frequently, because there is no affordable housing in the far north, where she comes from.

I wonder whether what is happening in the far north right now could be called a crime. The federal government has responsibility for the Innu, but it is not doing its part. It is not meeting the needs of

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the people in the community and is not addressing the extreme poverty that exists there.

Should we put all the Conservative members in prison because they are committing a crime of omission?

[*English*]

Ms. Nancy Karetak-Lindell: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I would go that far, but certainly we need to bring attention to the real causes of crime. In many cases, yes, it is because there are so many people living in one home. We cannot afford to have homeless people. I was just up in my riding, where it was -30° on the weekend. We cannot have people living on the streets in that kind of temperature.

One of the initiatives we could do as a government and as a country is make sure that basic needs are met. In my riding of Nunavut, one of the biggest needs right now relates to the shortage of housing and the fact that there are so many social consequences of people not having a basic home. People are ending up in shelters, yes, and some people are going from community to community, home to home and house to house, which I think creates a lot of situations where crime can happen.

One of the things we need to address is the lack of social housing and affordable housing for people in my riding and other parts of the country, because that seems to be the problem that is at the root of a lot of our difficulties.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Monique Guay (Rivière-du-Nord, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and speak today, because I have a personal interest in this bill. You have been in this House for a long time, longer than I have, and you will remember the pitched battle we fought against the Young Offenders Act. Once again, the government is treating us like children by introducing a bill that will require judges to enforce this legislation.

I would like to talk a little about young people. I have two children, and one of them went through a more difficult adolescence than the other, because I was raising them alone. My son had many more problems during adolescence than my daughter. We have to remember that during adolescence, young people change dramatically. A young person is no longer a child, but is not yet an adult, even though he or she is becoming an adult. Often, because of the extreme hormonal changes adolescents are going through, they want to be loved by everyone, they seek attention and they want to have a lot of friends. As a result, they may fall in with the wrong crowd and find themselves in situations they would not have chosen.

That does not make them dangerous offenders. We should not be deprived, therefore, of our parental role. Even if we are deprived of our role as responsible parents, and even if it is a single-parent family, that does not prevent us from being very close to our children.

In Quebec in particular, we have a lot of resources for our young people. That is what I wanted to tell the House about. In my view, we should make use of all these resources before deeming a young person incorrigible. I have rarely seen young people who are really incorrigible.

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I have often been asked to go to schools and meet with young people. In Quebec we have centres for young people 13 to 17 years of age. They go to these centres in groups and are supervised there by adults who show them the right path. These adults arrange presentations and tell the young people about the various services available to them. They also arrange group activities, discussions and exchanges. This is very important for young people. They make friends here. There are a lot of youth centres in Quebec. We do what we can to help these youth centres survive.

My children went to youth centres as adolescents and it was very good for them. It is best, though, to start very early. We must not necessarily think that it starts in adolescence.

Poverty exists, and we need to deal with it. It is often the reason why young people do not eat breakfast, why there is no food in the home, why they are poorly housed and do not have clothing. They are laughed at in school because they are not stylishly dressed like the other students. These are all reasons why young people may get involved in criminal behaviour.

In Quebec we have the breakfast club for children in primary school. All the children in the class are given breakfast without exception so as not to discriminate. This enables children who did not get breakfast at home to have one like everybody else but not be identified as unusual. It is very important to include them rather than exclude them. It is when children are excluded that problems start.

Sending young people who are 14 to 17 years of age to prison means sending them to a school for crime. Studies have shown it. These young people try to make friends in prison, but they do not have the maturity and knowledge to handle an environment with which they are not familiar. So they are dropped right into a criminal milieu. It is totally unacceptable. These young people are deprived of their lives. They are deprived of a chance to become functioning adults some day. Rather than trying to rehabilitate them, we are putting them in prison where they have to get by on their own. They get no help or support.

• (1715)

As well, young people are often the ones who are abused in prison. Because they are young and have little knowledge, they are treated horrifically. When they get out of prison, then we can say they are real criminals, because that is what they have become. No one has looked after them and no one has tried to rehabilitate them instead of sending them to prison.

There are a lot of services in Quebec and that may be why we are so different from the rest of Canada. One of the things I want to talk about is the services in my riding. There is a centre called La Parenthèse. It is a youth centre. Young people go there voluntarily. When a problem arises at home, if a young person is using drugs or alcohol and wants to stop, a discussion is held between the parents and the young person, who can leave and live elsewhere, at this place, which is called La Parenthèse.

There are specialists at the centre who work with the young person to get him or her back on the right path and rehabilitate him or her. These young people also have chores to do in the house. They each have their own responsibilities. So they are required to take responsibility and an effort is made to help them break their abusive

patterns. This is on a voluntary basis. It is excellent and it has a high success rate. Young people can rehabilitate themselves.

In my riding there is a huge secondary school. In the police services, we have trained police specialists to work with adolescents, with the problems of adolescents. They are not treated like criminals from day one for a first offence or a stupid mistake. We try to guide the young person. The parents are informed. The police sit down with the family and try to find solutions to rehabilitate the young person. This is extremely important.

There is also the entire question of where our parental authority comes into it. As I said earlier, this is extremely important. Personally, no one can take away my right to act as a parent with my child. No two children are identical. There are some children who are more difficult than others. There are children who are not necessarily living in poverty but who will have other kinds of problems.

I had problems with my own son, who is now 20 years old and on the right track. When he was a teenager, however, everything fell apart. Why? I could not say. He lost his father at a very young age and it was only in adolescence that it all came out. He began to stray off track, but we managed to get him back on the right path. I worked very hard with him. Our parental rights must be maintained. We must use the tools available to us in Quebec society to help us rehabilitate them. It can be done. Help can be found at CLSCs and other organizations.

There is an arts centre in my riding that brings young people in off the streets and helps them get by through art. The name of the organization is ICI par les Arts. This may seem quite simple to us, but I can assure this House that these young people do some extraordinary things. They create things with all sorts of materials. They produce art, which directs them away from their negative thoughts and misconduct.

In Quebec, there are also street outreach workers. They are not there for nothing. There are young homeless people and we must be able to help them. These street outreach workers work directly with young people to guide them, talk to them and help them find a place to sleep, if they are found on the street at night. It gets very cold in the winter and we do not want to leave our young people on the street. All these services exist. There are other services, but I cannot name them all.

I am being signalled that my time is running out. It is extremely important to think about rehabilitation and not criminalization. I care deeply about this. All Bloc Québécois members, including myself, oppose this bill, because it will simply increase crime rates among young people, not reduce them.

• (1720)

Mr. Réal Ménard (Hochelaga, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Rivière-du-Nord for her very sincere and genuine speech. On the one hand, it gets us thinking about this terribly inappropriate bill. She has every reason to remind us of the fight our parliamentary team led in 1999, when we submitted 2,700 amendments in parliamentary committee. This led the Chair to make a ruling—a debatable one, I might add—limiting the possibility of amending a bill in committee at report stage.

Private Members' Business

On the other hand, the member for Rivière-du-Nord reminded us about finding the balance between work and family. I applaud her for remaining a committed and active mother. I have known her since 1993. Although we would be hard-pressed to find any signs of aging, since the member for Rivière-du-Nord has remained dazzlingly beautiful, it is true that I have known her since 1993. I know that she has always been very involved in the life of the Bloc Québécois as a party. Despite everything, she has managed to balance her political activities with her obligations as a mother. She has also experienced personal hardships, such as the loss of her husband. She should be thanked for continuing on in public life.

Perhaps my colleague could remind us how important it is to trust in the family. Perhaps she could remind us that when it comes to preventive detention, the subject of this bill, it would be a mistake to at times remove young people from a meaningful community or family setting. Her words must make the Conservatives think twice.

• (1725)

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for Hochelaga. I too have liked him since meeting in 1993.

It certainly is not easy to reconcile family and work, particularly with the work we do here and the schedule we keep, but it can be done. Had I lost my parental rights because my son had problems, I would have fought with all my might. I sought out the assistance needed to help him get out of the slump he was in and to leave behind his bad thoughts and bad ideas. I succeeded and he succeeded. Today, he is happy. He is a wonderful 20-year-old man who has a good job and functions well in society. That was made possible by rehabilitation and the agencies that helped me. They worked with Patrick, and also with me, because we worked together. I did not always do everything right. There is no such thing as a perfect parent. We targeted shortcomings on both sides and we tried, with help, to fix things.

That is very important. It is much more important than this bill, which treats us like children. I detest the fact that we are treated like children. It is another useless bill. It would be better, with our billions of dollars in surpluses, to invest in our existing agencies and to create new ones if need be.

I am certain that the Conservatives have similar problems in their ridings. They may not say so, but obviously problems do not exist in just our ridings. They are everywhere. However, I believe that the percentage in our ridings is lower than in theirs because we have agencies, we invest in our youth and we love them. Extraordinary work is being done in our society and everyone is working together. That is very important.

Rather than criminalizing a young person, let us try to help them turn the corner. We have to try to see how, as parents, we can help our young people grow up and become adults, fine adults who will function well in society.

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member and I appreciate what she had to say about her own personal situation and her family, but one of the things that I am challenged with is this: what about the victims?

I must say that one of the saddest things I have done as a member of Parliament is attend an anniversary service with the mother of an 18 year old son who was murdered by another 18 year old known to police. Her son was shot. The perpetrator was a young person who continually found himself in trouble with the police. He was in trouble over and over again.

We are not talking about little offences in this bill. We are trying to look at serious offences and what we are going to do to protect our citizens. That is the role of government. We are talking about proposed amendments that make sense for somebody in the situation in which that mother found herself. The person who shot her son was in trouble over and over again. There was no deterrence. That guy felt that that what he was doing was okay. He never got a slap on the wrist. He never got anything from the system.

Deterrence means—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. member for Oshawa, but we have about one minute and we will give the hon. member a moment to respond.

[Translation]

Ms. Monique Guay: Mr. Speaker, we cannot lump all young people together. Instances such as the one my colleague mentioned are extremely rare. They are so rare that we do not need a bill like this one. The police can do their job. If they did not, that is another story.

Most young people will not offend to that extreme. There may be one out of who knows how many thousands or millions. But we must not lump them all together and penalize the others. On the contrary, we must help them rehabilitate, as I said earlier.

We have been very successful in Quebec, and we will continue to be.

• (1730)

The Deputy Speaker: It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT

The House resumed from October 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting) and another Act in consequence, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Private Members' Business

[*Translation*]

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Deputy Speaker: I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised by the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform concerning the requirement for a royal recommendation for Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting) and another Act in consequence, standing in the name of the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

I would like to thank the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform for having raised this issue as well as the hon. Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his comments.

[*English*]

In his presentation, the hon. parliamentary secretary argued that clause 2 of the bill would create an employment insurance account that is outside the consolidated revenue fund, thus transferring money out of the consolidated revenue fund into the employment insurance account where money would no longer be available for any appropriations Parliament may make. He further argued that Bill C-357 would change the duties of the Employment Insurance Commission by allowing it to deposit assets for the financial institution and to invest assets to achieve a maximum rate of return. Finally, he expressed concern that clause 5 would increase the number of commissioners on the Employment Insurance Commission from its current four to seventeen.

The hon. parliamentary secretary claimed that these arguments were supported by a ruling delivered by the Speaker on June 13, 2005, concerning Bill C-280, also entitled An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (Employment Insurance Account and premium rate setting) and another Act in consequence, and nearly identical to Bill C-357.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine countered that there is no basis for the claim that this bill would bring about “additional” or “new” expenditures and that the transfer of revenue to an independent fund would not change the circumstances, manner and purposes by which Canada's Employment Insurance Commission will set the premiums and manage its revenue. Although he acknowledged that a royal recommendation would be necessary if the bill were seeking to withdraw revenue from the government's consolidated revenue fund to be used for purposes other than those described in the act, he claimed that this was not the case since the purpose of the bill would not alter anything in the current legislation.

He further argued that having Canada's Employment Insurance Commission invest assets to achieve a maximum rate of return did not constitute a new purpose for the fund since the federal government was “investing” these public monies to pay down the Canadian debt.

He concluded by saying that adding 13 new commissioners will be financed by a small increase in expenses, which will no longer

appear as an expenditure from the consolidated revenue fund given that the employment insurance fund will no longer be a part of the consolidated revenue fund.

[*English*]

After examining Bill C-357, the Chair was struck, as was the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, by its similarity to Bill C-280. Indeed, the proposed amendments to sections 71 and 72 of the Employment Insurance Act included in Bill C-357 are in many respects virtually identical to those in Bill C-280.

For instance, like in Bill C-280, the proposed section 72 in Bill C-357 would credit moneys from the consolidated revenue fund to the commission, which would then place it into a new and separate account, one that would be outside the consolidated revenue fund.

Today, moneys in the consolidated revenue fund are available for eventual expenditure for purposes of claims under the Employment Insurance Act. With the passage of Bill C-357, these funds would no longer be available because, in effect, they have been spent, that is, transferred out of the consolidated revenue fund to a separate and independent account outside the consolidated revenue fund.

• (1735)

[*Translation*]

When the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities sought clarification regarding the provisions of Bill C-280 as it related to the royal recommendation, the Chair ruled, on June 13, 2005, that:

Such a transfer, in my view, constitutes an appropriation within the meaning of section 54 of the Constitution Act, 1867 and for this reason a royal recommendation is required in respect of clause 2 of the Bill.

The Chair sees no reason to reach a different conclusion on this provision of Bill C-357 than the one that was reached at that time on Bill C-280.

[*English*]

In relation to the argument that the proposed change to subsection 72(6) of the Employment Insurance Act found in Bill C-357 creates new duties for the commission in terms of managing and investing amounts paid into the employment insurance account, the Chair does not accept the argument put forward by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine that the federal government's use of moneys in the consolidated revenue fund to pay down the Canadian debt constitutes an authority to spend funds for a new purpose.

In addition, the Chair is of the view that the bill's proposed alteration of the duties of the EI Commission to enable the spending of public funds by the commission, namely, the investment of public funds to achieve a maximum rate of return, is a new purpose and requires a royal recommendation.

Private Members' Business

Finally, the increase in the number of commissioners on the Employment Insurance Commission from its current four to seventeen also clearly requires a royal recommendation. Although the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine contended that these expenses would not come from the consolidated revenue fund but rather from the newly created employment insurance fund, clause 5 of the bill clearly calls on the governor in council to appoint these new commissioners. Given that the current commissioners are remunerated, it follows that the proposed new commissioners would also be paid. As such, the addition of these new commissioners would involve an additional appropriation of a part of the public revenue.

[*Translation*]

Consequently, I will decline to put the question on third reading of this bill in its present form unless a royal recommendation is received.

However, the debate is currently on the motion for second reading, and this motion shall be put to a vote at the close of the second reading debate.

[*English*]

Mr. Laurie Hawn (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to join in the debate on Bill C-357, presented by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine. This bill proposes significant changes to the financing and governance of the employment insurance program.

Allow me to begin with a brief overview of Canada's current employment situation.

As the House has heard on many occasions recently, the Canadian labour market is continuing to perform exceptionally well. In fact, according to Statistics Canada data, the unemployment rate reached the lowest level in 33 years in October, hitting the 5.8% mark.

During the first quarter of 2007, employment grew by an estimated 158,000 and the good news is that these jobs are paying more than ever. The hourly wage rose by 6% between August 2006 and August 2007.

The economy is booming. The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have created winning conditions so that more jobs, better wages and a brighter future can be enjoyed by all Canadians, and we are beginning to see the results.

Even given our strong current labour market, Canada's EI program continues to help Canadian workers adjust to labour market changes, and balance work and family responsibilities. I can assure the House that this government is committed to ensuring that the EI program continues to serve Canadians in an effective and efficient manner.

We have clear evidence to this effect from the Employment Insurance Commission's 2006 EI monitoring and assessment report tabled in the House last April. That report demonstrated and confirmed that EI income support and employment assistance is there for Canadians who experience periods of temporary unemployment. It also demonstrated that the EI program is effective in meeting most claimants' needs in terms of both the amount and duration of benefits.

We recognize that the best solution to unemployment is economic growth, a priority that this government is dedicated to pursuing through our economic plan, "Advantage Canada".

That said, our government has not hesitated to take action on issues specific to the EI program by doing several things: further reducing the EI premium rate in this fall's economic update; expanding eligibility for compassionate care benefits; launching a pilot project to examine the effects of providing additional weeks of benefits to those in high unemployment regions; and extending EI transitional measures for two regions in New Brunswick and Quebec until the conclusion of the national review of EI boundaries.

The 2007 EI tracking survey, which asked Canadians across the country for their views on the EI program, indicates the majority of Canadians agree that the EI program is working well, which shows that Canadians support this government's approach to managing the EI program.

In addition to EI income support, our government continues to invest over \$2 billion per year in active employment measures funded under part II of the Employment Insurance Act, and in partnership with provinces and territories to support the transition to skills training and new jobs for Canadian workers experiencing unemployment. What I have just highlighted is the overview of a program that is without doubt serving Canadians extremely well and responding to new and pressing issues as needed.

Bill C-357's proposals would result in a fundamental shift in how the EI program is managed. For example, the bill proposes significant modifications to the size, composition and mandate of the Employment Insurance Commission.

Under Bill C-357 the commission would increase from four members to 17. The expanded roles and responsibilities of these members, as proposed by the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, would not only become costly and unwieldy, they would also hinder the government's ability to manage and maintain the EI program and make the kinds of improvements that I listed a moment ago.

Moreover, Bill C-357 would result in a broad change to the balance of responsibilities for setting direction on changes to the EI program. Essentially, the bill would place decisions regarding a critical support program for Canadians in the hands of individuals outside government.

If the balance of decision making authority were in the hands of independently appointed commission members, the government's ability to make timely changes to the EI program as needed would be greatly reduced. This shift in the balance of decision making authority could have important consequences for a program that all evidence indicates serves Canadians quite well and, of course, matters would be made more complex given the difficulty of achieving consensus among as many as 17 individuals.

Private Members' Business

Allow me to remind the House that the current four member commission is composed of two senior public officials, along with one member representing employers and another who represents employees. I should add that only one of the two senior public officials gets a vote. This mechanism provides balanced representation among the EI Commission's members.

The two commissioners for employers and workers also establish and maintain consultations and working relationships with a variety of private sector organizations and individuals who are clients of, or affected by, HRSDC programs and services, particularly in regard to EI.

• (1740)

These relationships fulfill the representational responsibilities of the commissioners and enable them to reflect the concerns and positions of workers and employers regarding the administration, as well as program implementation and delivery.

Bill C-357 also proposes changes to how the EI premium rate is set. In essence, the hon. member's proposals would return the rate setting mechanism to a former process judged by a wide variety of stakeholders to be vague, unsustainable, and the cause of the EI surplus in the first place.

The current rate setting mechanism gives the commission full authority to set the rate and it incorporates a consultation process with employers and labour.

One of the main objectives of this government, when it called for the implementation of the new rate setting mechanism, was to ensure that revenues and expenditures are closely matched. I believe that it is important to give this new rate setting mechanism some time to see if it is working.

I want to emphasize that the EI commission has set the 2007 rate at \$1.80, which will save employers and employees \$420 million when combined with the increase in the maximum insurable earnings. This is the lowest rate in more than 14 years, while benefits have been maintained and even expanded in many areas.

In determining the rate under the new measure, the EI commission takes into account three factors: the principle that the premium rate should generate just enough premium revenue during the year to cover the payments expected to be made during the year; the chief actuary's report; and, any public input, including results of the consultation session with representatives of business and labour.

Any change to EI financing would of course need to take into account the impacts on employees and employers, beneficiaries, the economy and the EI program itself. These are obviously major considerations on which the health of our economy and our society depends.

That is why our government is committed to ensuring that all EI program changes are founded on sound analysis of evidence, with careful consideration of potential labour market impacts and the cost to individuals.

As I have demonstrated, the changes proposed by Bill C-357 could have very important consequences for our economy and the

well-being of Canadians who expect the EI program to serve them in a timely and effective manner when they need it.

For all these reasons, the Government of Canada cannot support Bill C-357 at this time, but we look forward to meaningful study of this bill at the committee stage. Perhaps there are aspects of this bill that can be implemented when this government continues its improvements to the EI program that were committed to in the Speech from the Throne.

• (1745)

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-357. This is a subject matter that I think was part of the first bills I recall back in 1993 when I became a member of Parliament. The debate has always been around what was already referred to as the notional EI account. It is something that probably most members are not aware of or did not exactly understand.

Many Canadians would believe that the EI program is operated similar to the Canada pension plan, where it is a separate account with money, that it is managed by a separate group of people, and it is there to earn a return on its investments and be able to pay over the term of its obligations all the benefits which have been earned by Canadians. That is not the case with regard to the so-called EI fund or the notional EI account.

Back in the years of—

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. The Chair is informed, unless hon. member insists to the contrary, that the hon. member spoke in the first hour of debate on this bill. Therefore, he is not eligible to speak.

Mr. Paul Szabo: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: At this point I recognize the hon. member for Vancouver Island North

Ms. Catherine Bell (Vancouver Island North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak to this bill. Also, let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your award that you received last night as parliamentarian of the year. It is nice to see award-winning politicians in this House.

There is roughly \$54 billion in our employment insurance fund that is surplus. One might ask how we got so much money in there. It is obvious we need to have this money in a separate account. As the previous speaker said, it is not in an account that cannot be withdrawn from by this government. This bill proposes to name a commission in section 71 of the bill. It proposes a separate account and sets out how the fund would be directed, and how the government could borrow from it.

This surplus seems to be growing. I started to think about that aspect of it and why we needed to protect that money. I realized that this EI system that was created over 70 years ago has gone through many changes. This is just one more change to the act and to the fund that would work in the interests of workers.

Private Members' Business

This program was set up basically to provide financial support for the unemployed. As workers we pay our EI premiums and our employers pay premiums as well into this fund. If we find ourselves unemployed, as did thousands of manufacturing workers this year, the many forestry workers in my riding, fishermen, seasonal workers, that fund is there. That is how it is supposed to work.

Among some of the changes that have taken place over the years, 1971 saw the biggest positive changes when benefits were extended to those whose earnings were interrupted because of sickness or pregnancy. Of course, that benefited many women who were in the workforce. Otherwise, they went off to have their child and basically did not get anything. Even though they had worked, it was not considered a reason for leaving work. It was not insurable.

Unfortunately, since 1971 and those positive additions there have been many cuts to the EI program. In 1990, for instance, around 74% of the people who applied were eligible to receive unemployment insurance. By 2004 that number had dropped to 36% for men, and the number is even lower for women with only 32% of women eligible for EI.

The impact is threefold on women who make lower wages, or who are seasonal or part time workers. The impacts are much greater on them. That, to me, is a real hardship for women.

Qualifications for quitting for just cause was another impact on workers. Originally, if spouses were relocated or had to move for their job, such as military personnel or anyone who may be posted around the country; if they quit for discrimination or sexual harassment and, of course, primarily women were leaving work for those reasons; or if they had obligations to care for a child or a direct family member, they were entitled to unemployment insurance, but no longer. They do not qualify anymore.

● (1750)

People also used to qualify in numbers of weeks. I think it was around 15 weeks, which is approximately 300 hours worked. Now they can only qualify by hours worked and the number is 700, more than double. That needs to also be reduced so people can access employment insurance.

This is one of the biggest barriers to women who work fewer hours, who work seasonal or part time work. It takes a long time to get that many hours. This disqualifies many women from accessing EI. No wonder we see \$54 billion in surplus when people cannot access EI. We are down to less than half of the people who think they are eligible, 36% and 32% for men and women respectively. No wonder we have this huge surplus. It is sad.

One the other hand, when people do qualify, they have to wait, in some cases 45 days, to know whether they qualify. This makes it very difficult on families and people who find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own most of the time. This causes real hardship in our communities. That money needs to be protected for those workers.

We would like to see an increase in the amounts that people are paid over time. The cost of living is going up all the time as are housing costs. People need to feed themselves when they find themselves unemployed.

Sadly, the EI system is not working for everyone in the country. Many people have told me their stories and they face hardships when the system does not work for them. They find themselves having to struggle to make ends meet. We should not put people in that position.

The other thing is the government seems to think people are using employment insurance as their sole source of income, working a little here, a little there then getting EI. If people are doing that, they are very few and far between. Most people who find themselves on EI are there because they have lost their jobs through no fault of their own in most cases and are looking for another job. They need EI, which is there to provide financial support for them, as something to fill in the gaps while they look for their next job.

The least we can do, especially when, like any other insurance plan, we pay into it over years and years. Then all of a sudden when we find ourselves out of work, it is not there for us, and that is a shame.

A lot of the money in the fund could also be used for training. There used to be training programs. People need to be retrained if they are in an industry that is no longer viable or that is disappearing. We have seen a lot of places where people need to be retrained and EI could provide some of the funds for those training programs. It would help them get back into the workplace quicker. Those would be things that all members of the House could support.

However, I think the biggest fear of ordinary Canadians is that their EI premiums will be decreased and we will see a big decrease in the fund because of easy access to it. When people pay premiums into it, they know there is a program that is supposed to be there to support them and protect them in times of unemployment. They are happy to pay those premiums if that fund is there.

I encourage hon. members to support this and ensure that the EI fund is there for the future. Even though the economy is good right now, there are changes all the time and people could find themselves in a situation where they will need—

● (1755)

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Chambly—Borduas.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yves Lessard (Chambly—Borduas, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my hon. colleague from Vancouver Island North for the quality of her speech and the soundness of her remarks. Bill C-357 aims to amend the Employment Insurance Act regarding the employment insurance account and premium rate setting. The bill's provisions aim to correct not merely a mistake, but what is practically a serious misappropriation.

Private Members' Business

People who should be protected by the government regarding the management of their employment insurance fund are not being protected. Not only are they not being protected, but they are the victims of what I would call reprehensible management of their own assets. Indeed, it is workers and employers who pay into the employment insurance fund. This should not be considered a hidden tax. The employment insurance fund should be used exclusively for its intended purpose, that is, to ensure benefits, and therefore an income, for people who have the misfortune of losing their jobs.

There are four parts to this bill. As for the employment insurance account itself, it should no longer form part of the accounts of the Canadian government. It should be withdrawn and should become a specific account to be used for that purpose, managed and administered by those who pay into it, that is, employers and workers.

Most members of the commission should come from these two groups that pay into it, along with the participation of the Canadian government, of course. The bill recommends the following ratio: seven representatives of employees, seven representatives of employers and three representatives of the federal government. These administrators would be appointed based on recommendations from the groups involved, and the recommendations would be submitted to the minister.

It also deals with premium rate setting. At present, under the auspices of the government, three administrators who are advised by a chief actuary set the contribution rate, which has been steadily reduced. Nevertheless, surpluses continue to be recorded. Why? For the reasons indicated earlier by my colleague from Vancouver Island North: because access to employment insurance is limited to the utmost and as many unemployed as possible are excluded from coverage. In fact, more than 60% of the unemployed are excluded. That is very serious. They pay premiums to ensure they will have some income if they are unfortunate and lose their jobs. As my colleague pointed out, women and youth are even worse off. Only 32% of women and 17% of youth have any hope of receiving employment insurance benefits. This is quite tragic and things must change.

I am surprised to see that very few parliamentarians, other than Bloc and NDP members, are concerned enough to oppose this situation. If this is how any other program in support of individuals were managed—whether a home insurance policy or any other group program—the administrators would be quickly condemned, because it is literally tantamount to a misappropriation of funds.

My colleague touched on the misappropriation of funds. In the last 12 years, \$54 million has been withdrawn from the employment insurance fund, resulting in significant cuts to the EI program.

• (1800)

This deprives families, workers and communities. For the provinces concerned, such as Quebec, it is a huge loss for the regional economy, families and so on.

The fourth measure in this bill is therefore to gradually restore all the amounts that have been misappropriated, at the rate of \$1.5 billion a year. Who set this amount? It was set on the advice of an assistant deputy minister. The Standing Committee on Human

Resources, Social Development and the Status of Disabled Persons asked to see all the studies. It determined that, without compromising Canada's budget, the misappropriated amounts could be restored to the fund at the rate of \$1.5 billion a year, as a loan that had been made to the Canadian government over 32 years.

Not only am I calling for this, but the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Social Development and the Status of Disabled Persons unanimously recommended it on December 5, 2004. On February 15, 2005, the committee again called for the money to be restored. The first eight of the 28 recommendations in the committee's report focused on the need to create an independent fund. This was a unanimous decision by the committee members, including Conservatives and Liberals, who had also literally stuck their hands in the fund for money they could use for other purposes. The members unanimously acknowledged that a grave injustice had been done to the unemployed and their families. The money must therefore be restored at this rate.

When the committee made this recommendation in 2004, \$46 billion had been taken out of the fund. Today, the total has risen to \$54 billion. The government is continuing to pump money from the fund while it deprives people of income in the form of benefits if they are unfortunate enough to lose their jobs.

Poverty does not come out of nowhere. It is often the result of bad economic policies and bad social safety nets. We have a secure social safety net but it may be the result of the government's misleading practices. It is bad to have to say that here, but I am saying it. It is a misleading practice because the purpose of this fund is not to reduce the deficits of the Canadian government or anything other than to meet the needs of employment insurance.

There is a problem now. The Speaker has ruled on the matter of a royal recommendation for this bill. It is a technical matter, but a highly important one. Legislation provides that when the bill has an impact on the Canadian budget, approval by cabinet, called the royal recommendation, must be given. Naturally, cabinet refuses to provide this recommendation.

With all due respect Mr. Speaker, we differ in opinion as far as the ruling is concerned. This fund should not be recognized as a source of revenue for the Canadian government. It must be set aside to be used to manage an employment insurance fund. The Speaker made his ruling and we will comply because we have no choice.

Nonetheless, I invite all our parliamentary colleagues to strongly encourage the Conservative government to provide this royal recommendation. It is the least we can do for the people we represent in every one of our ridings who are suffering because they are not receiving the income they are entitled to when they lose their employment. It is bad enough for them to lose their employment without being denied their own benefits, to which they have contributed their entire lives through their employment insurance contributions.

Private Members' Business

•(1805)

[English]

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the people of the riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I am pleased to speak today to this private member's bill, Bill C-357, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act.

The bill calls for the creation of a separate EI account, an expanded EI Commission and changes to the rate setting mechanism.

I want to state from the outset that this government supports the principle of a separate EI account that has been put forward in the bill. The people in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke have much in common with the people of the Gaspé, which is the area represented by the separatist member who has proposed Bill C-357.

I can tell the member that many of the challenges facing the forestry industry and the workers who rely on the working forest for a livelihood in his riding are the same challenges facing the workers in my riding. This is particularly true in the seasonal nature of this type of employment. The same can be said for the tourism industry.

Those facts alone make me very attentive any time I hear of possible changes to employment insurance and how this program is administered. Our challenge as a national government is to bring forward programs that will benefit all Canadians, that take into consideration all differences and to administer such programs in a way that all Canadians are treated equally, regardless of where they live.

I know members of my party, for example, have raised the issue of older workers, an issue that is not confined to one province but to many regions of the country, including the province of Ontario. I am pleased to confirm that, in response to our concern for older workers, the new Conservative government responded by announcing a targeted initiative for older workers, a national program intended to benefit all Canadians.

I mention the targeted initiative for older workers as this \$70 million program is directed to individuals who are either not eligible or have exhausted employment benefits or other support measures that would be available through EI. It is targeted to smaller communities like Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean and my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, if it were available.

For reasons that I have not been made aware, the province of Ontario, unlike nearly every other province in Canada, including Quebec, has refused to commit that it will participate. This leaves constituents in my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who would benefit from this initiative, to assume that Ontario does not care.

This two year program was announced last October. It is a year later and still no action. The Liberals in Toronto are indifferent to the plight of older workers. To date, 40 projects have been approved, including 13 in Nova Scotia and 20 in Quebec, projects that are expected to assist over 1,400 unemployed workers. The benefit of

programs developed by the federal government is that they are national in scope. This benefit is lost when sometimes other agendas are put forward ahead of the Canadian workers.

Canada's current employment situation is relevant to any discussion of the EI program. So far in 2007, employment grew by more than 200,000 jobs. In addition, the average hourly wage rose by 2.4% in the first quarter of this year alone and the unemployment rate has dropped to the lowest point in 33 years at 5.8%.

We have a labour market where more Canadians are working than ever before and the demand for labour is strong. Opportunities for work are abundant, especially among the skilled trades which are currently experiencing labour shortages across the country. The economy is booming.

This government and the Minister of Finance have created the winning conditions so that more jobs, better wages and a brighter future can be delivered to all Canadians.

•(1810)

[Translation]

Mrs. Claude DeBellefeuille (Beauharnois—Salaberry, BQ):

Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to take part in the debate on this important bill. I would remind the House that I am the member for Beauharnois—Salaberry, a riding in which 80% of the land is agricultural and the other 20% is made up of industrial zones where towns such as Huntingdon have been classified as one-industry towns because of the textile factories. I am in a good position to discuss unemployment, because, since 2004, my riding has lost more than 2,500 jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Clearly, as an elected representative, along with my provincial and municipal colleagues, we are working hard to recreate a dynamic economy, seeking employment opportunities and trying to create new jobs. This is not easy, given that our community was built around large factories that employed many people. However, since globalization has changed the rules of the game, factories are closing their doors, like the Goodyear factory in Valleyfield, which closed a few months ago, actually nearly a year ago, resulting in the loss of 1,000 jobs. In addition to that, Quebec's only steer slaughterhouse lost 250 modestly paid jobs —at about \$15 an hour. At this time, there are good workers in Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague who are unemployed.

Those in government—the Conservative members—should not think that the Bloc Québécois wants people to be unemployed. Quite the contrary, it is obvious that the Bloc Québécois wants everyone to have a job. Unfortunately, the situation is such at present that some individuals have to avail themselves of the employment insurance program and apply for benefits. They do not always do so lightheartedly. Having assisted a number of people who are having to negotiate with the federal bureaucracy to get their benefits, I can assure the House that these people are not jumping for joy.

Private Members' Business

I mentioned earlier that my riding is an agricultural one. This means that we have many seasonal employees working in orchards and fields. Unfortunately, by the end of the summer, these employees have not accumulated enough hours of work to qualify for EI benefits which could help support them with an income and eventually find another job during the course of the year.

It is not their fault. Seasonal workers, even those doing a good job, will normally experience a gap, and have trouble finding work until the season begins and then continues from spring or the summer into the fall.

This reminds me that, a few weeks ago, my colleague from Chambly—Borduas visited my riding to discuss with workers and union members all the measures the Bloc Québécois has put forward over the years, including legislation to improve the employment insurance system and all the representations we have made to press the government to deliver on its promise and establish a real program to help older workers.

An old idea which has been in the Bloc Québécois platform for years, namely an independent EI account, is now being put forward. The 20 or so union members and representatives in the group were not overly surprised to hear how much resistance and opposition to such legislation there has been on the part of the Conservative government.

We have to ask ourselves this: why would a country with profits and excess revenue not use some of that money to help those workers who need guidance and support while going through a transition period during their working life?

We are running out of arguments to give when people ask us why the government is reluctant to get behind the bill before us today and give it royal assent, since the money in the EI account does not belong to it.

• (1815)

We know that the fund is made up of worker and employer contributions. What gives the government the right to take workers' and employers' money out of the fund surplus and spend it elsewhere, probably to pay down the debt?

I look good in this political debate, because everyone agrees with me. People do not understand this resistance. If the country was broke, on the brink of bankruptcy, then it might make sense, but the reverse is true. We are headed for quite an unacceptable surplus, and people are astounded.

I cannot wait to cross swords with my adversaries and ask them to explain to the unemployed people in Beauharnois—Salaberry why they voted against the bill designed to improve employment insurance, against an older worker adjustment program and, today, against creating an independent employment insurance fund.

In closing, I want to repeat what we have been saying for the past hour. Since 1994, the unemployment insurance fund surplus has fluctuated constantly, reaching a truly unacceptable high of \$51 billion in total in February 2007. This is no small amount. We are talking about \$51 billion.

When the Conservatives were in the opposition, they decried this situation and demanded that the Liberals, who were in power at the time, cease pillaging the fund. When the Conservatives came to power—which turned out to be more of the same, really—they kept on using surpluses from the employment insurance fund, a fund that workers and employers contribute to. They are still using these funds for purposes other than those for which workers and employers contribute.

In 2006, 44% of unemployed people collected benefits. Despite surpluses in the fund, despite the country's relatively good economic health thanks to these impressive surpluses, the government is refusing to improve or change the employment insurance program. That is hard to accept. It is infuriating.

When I meet workers who have lost their jobs, they ask me why they are not eligible for employment insurance. They have contributed for much of the year, but they are a few hours short. They wonder why the government refuses to support them through hard times or to help them find another job. It makes me very sad to have to tell them that their government has no interest in supporting or helping workers who have fallen on hard times, even though it could if it wanted to.

If the government members listened to what members of this House had to say, they would be aware of the issue and they would realize that they have to change their minds and agree to this bill so that we can pass it and debate it again. This is a comprehensive bill that will work for workers. Our country and its government are in a position to make this happen.

• (1820)

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, November 28, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

CANADA ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Ken Boshcoff (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, I was one of the several Liberal MPs who brought to the government's attention a glaring error in Bill C-18. It was the basic fact that the minority government had left one million voters off the voters lists. Imagine, with all the Prime Minister's drum pounding, if he had forced an unnecessary election, what one million eligible voters would have done if they had found themselves disenfranchised. In my great riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, a minimum of 5,000 voters would not have been able to exercise their democratic right.

Although all parties had missed the fine print, it shows us what can happen when bills are rushed through.

The standing committee was advised in May and after much deliberation, still the government ignored the public service's advice. Even after the Quebec byelections, the government should have leapt to the alert and proactively resolved the problem. Instead, an effective opposition was once again compelled to expose the government's haste and clean up yet another mistake.

It is unfortunate the government tried to avoid facing up to the problem. The straightforward solution is relatively simple. If the address contained in the identification provided does not prove the elector's residence specific to a domicile, but does reflect the most precise residential address typically available, then it should be deemed in compliance.

I am hopeful that after the events of the past few weeks the amendments will succeed in addressing the issues outstanding and that we can resolve this matter.

• (1825)

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons and Minister for Democratic Reform, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to stand and respond to the question by my hon. colleague from Rainy River.

First, let us set the record straight. Bill C-31, which is the genesis of Bill C-18, was debated at the procedure and House affairs committee and ultimately ratified by the entire committee.

I am the first one to admit, since I am a member of that committee, that we all share responsibility in missing the one element of that bill, which, in turn, disenfranchised or potentially disenfranchised a million rural voters because of the term "residential address"

The point I am making is that every one of us on that committee missed it. We all share that responsibility. In fact, the Chief Electoral Officer of Canada, who appeared twice before that committee to discuss Bill C-31, did not notice in the legislation itself that there would be anything that had the potential to disenfranchise rural voters because they did not have a residential address.

When it was first discovered, which was about two weeks after the recent Quebec byelections that were held in September of this year, the Chief Electoral Officer, in examining how the ramifications of Bill C-31 affected that byelection process, noticed for the first time that there was an element that could potentially cause the disenfranchisement of voters in rural Canada.

We took immediate steps to correct the situation and introduced Bill C-18 to rectify the situation. We are hoping for speedy passage in committee and by members of the House to take care of that situation.

However, even if there were an election call before that bill became law, the Chief Electoral Officer has assured us that he would use his powers of adaptation to ensure not one rural Canadian would be disenfranchised if we had to go to a vote, whether it be a general election or a byelection.

However, I want to concentrate my remarks for the last few moments that I have to point out the absolute hypocrisy of the Liberal Party of Canada. Not only has the member from Rainy River suggested that this was a problem created by our government, but other members of his party have done the same. The member for Wascana has done several interviews in which he has suggested that this was a government problem, that this was something that was created by the government, that it missed it and that it was sloppy legislation.

The entire Liberal caucus voted in favour of Bill C-31. The sheer hypocrisy of their statement suggesting that it was only the government's problem because it made the mistake is staggering. Everyone shares some culpability. We all share the responsibility. We are willing to admit it. Members of his own party who were on the procedure and House affairs committee said nothing about the possibility of disenfranchisement of voters because they missed it as well.

While I am here to say that we will take immediate action and, hopefully, we will have some compliance with members opposite when the bill gets to committee so we can deal with this quickly and expeditiously, it is just so irritating to stand here and listen to members with the sanctimony and the hypocrisy to suggest that it was someone else's problem and that it was not part of their own doing.

For the record, we all share responsibility. I wish the member from Rainy River would stand up and admit that.

• (1830)

Mr. Ken Boshcoff: Mr. Speaker, the riding is Thunder Bay—Rainy River, as I would, in all fairness, recognize Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre.

In my experience, the greatest proof of incompetence or irresponsibility is when someone, in this case the government, tries to put the blame on someone else. The government made a big mistake. We showed the government solutions but it continues to try to find fault with others, as if it is perfect or infallible.

I would just simply offer that the government admit it, fix it, stop blaming of others and recognize that haste makes mistakes.

Adjournment Proceedings

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, first let me apologize for not getting the member's riding correct. I apologize to the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River.

However, let us listen to what he just said. Obviously, like most Liberals, he does not listen to any answers. We saw that example graphically earlier on when we had a question from the Leader of the Opposition calling for a public inquiry. It took about half way through question period before the Liberals finally realized that the answer from the Prime Minister was that he had already called one or at least had put the wheels in motion to call one.

What I am saying, as I said in the body of my initial address, is that this is a shared responsibility. I am not, nor is anyone from the government, trying to shift the blame to anyone else. I am saying that it was a shared responsibility. What I am attempting to do is prove the hypocrisy of members of that party by saying that it was only the government that was at fault. We were all at fault.

I wish the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River would be man enough to stand up in this assembly and announce that but clearly he will not.

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Ms. Nicole Demers (Laval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, on November 15, I asked the minister a question. A study by the World Economic Forum suggests that the gender gap has an impact on the competitiveness and economy of countries. I asked the minister whether she intended to act and take tangible action for women, by adopting proactive pay equity legislation.

We know that pay equity is a right. It has been recognized in the Charter of Rights and Freedom since 1982, 1983. However, to exercise this right, one must file a complaint. Proceedings take a very long time. For example, at Canada Post, women filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission because pay equity was not being properly applied. This case has been in court for 21 years now—21 years and this matter still has not been settled.

As you can see, the legislation as it currently exists absolutely needs to be changed to ensure that all women have the right to pay equity and can benefit from it.

For this to be done properly, I hope the minister will do what it takes and that she will advocate pay equity legislation that will allow all women in Quebec and Canada, under federal jurisdiction, to benefit from it properly.

[English]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has not lost ground on gender equality. In fact, the figures in the 2007 Global Gender Gap Report actually show that Canada either held steady or marginally narrowed the gap between women and men in all areas considered. In fact, the report states that Canada continues to rank well on economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, and is performing above average on political empowerment and health and survival.

I am sure everyone would agree that mores needs to be done to improve the situation for women in Canada and around the world.

We have achieved a great deal in recent years, but our work is far from over. Over the past 18 months the Government of Canada has undertaken numerous initiatives to advance equality for women in all of the areas covered in the report.

The member said that she wanted to see tangible action. Well, this is tangible. The initiatives we have taken include such things as introducing the universal child care benefit. That benefits every child under the age of six. We cannot help but think that the Liberal Party would take it away.

We are putting more money into the hands of older women by increasing the pension income credit and modernizing the guaranteed income supplement to make it more accessible. We are improving living standards among older Canadians. We are improving employment opportunities for vulnerable groups of women, including older women, women living in abusive relationships, women with intellectual disabilities and aboriginal women living on and off reserve.

Yes, those are initiatives to advance equality for women.

We are supporting women's work and family choices through a variety of measures, including creating the working income tax benefit. We are modernizing the federal labour standards and expanding business opportunities for women. We are creating special initiatives for women entrepreneurs. We are providing affordable housing and helping to reduce incidences of low income.

We are supporting Canadians in the lowest income bracket, the majority of whom are women, aboriginal women, senior women and female lone parents, by introducing a .5% reduction in the lowest personal income tax rate. We are increasing the basic amount an individual can earn before taxes apply.

We are increasing crime prevention, justice and security measures to protect children from exploitation.

The minister spoke about some of the projects that she would like the members of the House to know were created, such as projects for official languages and for minority women's organizations. We are providing almost \$24,000 to promote women's entrepreneurship; almost \$50,000 to support Prince George New Hope Society, to help women start new lives; \$110,000 to the Second Story Women's Centre for training workshops in Nova Scotia; \$165,000 for art projects aimed at improving the lives of at risk women and girls; \$85,000 to the Single Women in Motherhood Training Program Inc.; \$200,000 to the Saint John chapter of the Urban Core Support Network; almost \$60,000 to the Arising Women Place for the independent women project; over \$185,000 to the West Central Women's Resource Centre for its multi-year women's economic security and housing project; and \$300,000 to the Canadian Women's Community Economic Development Council—

• (1835)

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. member for Laval.

Adjournment Proceedings

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nicole Demers: Mr. Speaker, I am surprised. My question was for the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Status of Women and Official Languages. I would have preferred that she rise and answer the question. It was directed to the Minister for the Status of Women.

At the same time, I am not surprised. It does not surprise me that she does not rise and answer in this House. I am not surprised because it is exactly in keeping with what she can do in cabinet and before the members of her government. She cannot even influence this government's decisions with regard to women's issues. Therefore I am not surprised that she was not the one who rose.

The fact remains that the women of Quebec and Canada will remember the promises made and those that were broken one after the other.

Pay equity and money will make it possible for women to leave poverty behind. That is what we are talking about.

[*English*]

Mrs. Lynne Yelich: Mr. Speaker, Canada does continue to make significant progress in achieving equality for women in all areas, as covered in the World Economic Forum's "Global Gender Gap Report 2007", which is what I understood the question was about. We continue to distinguish ourselves on the international stage.

Nonetheless, women in Canada still earn an average of 71¢ to every dollar earned by men. Women still experience high rates of domestic abuse and violence, and the gender gap persists. Therefore, I ask my colleagues to renew their commitment to bringing about women's full participation in Canadian society. Let us close the gap once and for all.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:40 p.m.)

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