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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, April 12, 2000

Speaker: The Honourable Gilbert Parent

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, April 12, 2000

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1400)

The Speaker: As is our practice on Wednesday we will now sing O Canada, and we will be led by the hon. member for St. John's East.

[Editor's Note: Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

CANADIAN ALLIANCE

Mr. Steve Mahoney (Mississauga West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I have an ode to the Canadian Alliance and the former Reform Party:

C.A. so it seems
 Are still living in dreams
 As they continue to strive
 To merely survive.
 Changing their name
 Still makes them the same
 Changing their leader
 Won't help them much either.
 With Klees backing out, & Long jumping in
 The battle within is about to begin.
 So it's east versus west
 To determine their best.
 And so we must wonder
 When we'll see their next blunder
 'Cause as sure as the sun
 More errors will come.
 So it's back to the west
 With pretensions of zest
 After leaving in their wake
 A political mistake.
 Reform or C.A.
 "What's the difference", you say
 As Canadians all know,
 They're the "same ole", "same ole".

GUN REGISTRATION

Mr. Cliff Breitzkreuz (Yellowhead, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal plan to register firearms is shot full of holes.

In 1995 the Prime Minister vowed registration would cost taxpayers \$85 million. Now documents reveal that the justice minister overshot that target, spending a cool \$81 million in the last four months and the finance minister recently tried to plug another hole by pouring in \$46 million. To date, gun registration has cost a staggering \$330 million.

Only 13% of law-abiding owners have licensed their firearms. To meet the deadline, the CFC must process 2,630,000 applications and that does not include all the criminals the minister is convinced will line up to register.

Go figure. Liberal math at its finest. Why does the minister not put a gun to their useless legislation and just blow it away?

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[Translation]

ARMENIAN PEOPLE

Ms. Eleni Bakopanos (Ahuntsic, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw hon. member's attention to an atrocity committed against the Armenian people on April 24, 1915.

A total of 1.5 million Armenians lost their lives at the hands of the Ottoman Empire. This year marks the 85th anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

The Hellenic Republic was the first NATO member to denounce this crime against humanity, followed by Belgium, which passed a resolution acknowledging the Armenian genocide in 1998. A number of other nations have followed their lead and I trust that my government will soon do the same.

[English]

This coming Saturday in Montreal I will have the honour to represent the Prime Minister at a ceremony organized by the Armenian National Committee commemorating the victims of 1915.

Whether we choose to name it a tragedy, a massacre, an ethnic cleansing or a crime against humanity, it remains an historical

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event that today would be described by the United Nations as genocide.

I invite all my colleagues to join Canadians of Armenian origin in remembering the victims of the first genocide of the 20th century.

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KATYN FOREST

Ms. Sarmite Bulte (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, April 9 I attended ceremonies in Toronto to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the Katyn massacre.

For many the name Katyn has little meaning. However, to the Polish community the name is associated with a crime without parallel.

On September 17, 1939 forces of the Soviet Union crossed the eastern border of Poland on the pretence that they would protect the Polish people. More than 15,000 Polish officers were sent to three Soviet secret police prison camps. On April 13, 1943 authorities discovered the mass graves of approximately 14,500 Polish officers in the Katyn forest, a short distance from Smolensk, Russia.

It took the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 to create an atmosphere where the truth would finally be revealed.

To honour the memory of the Katyn victims, memorials have been built and wreaths will be laid on April 13 because these are crimes so odious that even the lapse of time cannot lessen their impact. Katyn is not only a Polish issue but one that affects the conscience of the entire world.

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WINDSOR—ST. CLAIR

Mr. Hec Clouthier (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, one year ago today the voters of Windsor—St. Clair faced a dilemma: go to the opening game of the Detroit Tigers or stay at home and vote for a new member of parliament. Wisely, they stayed at home and hit a home run when they elected a personable rookie to the House of Commons.

There was some concern that the fourth party might squeak through because the late, great Shaughnessy Cohen was a tough act to follow. But our candidate did not strike out, and he powered past the token NDP opposition. I am positive that our colleague from Windsor—St. Clair has inherited some of the true grit from Shaughnessy whose spirit and tenacity is very evident in her successor.

The constituents of Windsor—St. Clair can rest assured that their member of parliament has more than lived up to their expectations by going to bat on their behalf time and time again. He is upholding the Liberal values of a caring, compassionate commitment to all Canadians.

Congratulations to our colleague on his first anniversary.

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THE LATE TERRY FOX

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, 20 years ago today Terry Fox started a courageous journey that touched the hearts of all Canadians. I remember seeing his own handwritten notes around our communities in Port Coquitlam and Coquitlam promoting his upcoming venture.

Terry started out as a regular active teenager and ended up as a Canadian and international hero. What made Terry a hero? He had a vision and he pursued that vision with passion and persistence. After losing his leg to cancer, he was determined to raise funds and awareness to find a cure. As a result, millions of dollars have gone to cancer research.

Terry once said “I want to set an example that will not be forgotten”.

● (1405)

His example has encouraged others to pursue other goals and accomplish great things. Terry did not just talk about his dream, he took action to make it happen. Although Terry is now gone his vision lives on through the actions of others.

Thank you Terry for daring to dream and daring to do.

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4-H COUNCIL

Mr. Larry McCormick (Hastings—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today in our gallery we have a very special select group of young Canadians from across Canada who are attending their 2000 National 4-H Citizenship Seminar to increase their understanding of the function and structure of the Canadian political system.

The theme of this year’s conference is “Canada: One Nation, One Heart, One Future” which features a comprehensive orientation of Canada’s political system and culminates with a group presentation on the topic of “What I Want For Canada In The New Millennium”.

The 4-H Council is hosting a conference entitled “Celebrating Our Differences, Recognizing our Similarities” which includes rural and urban youth from Manitoba, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

At the many summer and fall fairs in my riding and across Canada, 4-H members celebrate the heritage of rural Canada with their very successful projects and displays.

I invite all members of the House to join me in welcoming the 4-H Council to this Chamber.

[Translation]

DAVID LAFLAMME

Mr. Serge Cardin (Sherbrooke, BQ): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, the Quebec finals of the Bell Super Science Fair were held in Chicoutimi. Top honours were carried off by a 12th grader from Sherbrooke's École Montcalm.

David Laflamme won first prize for his life sciences experiment on the "art of neuromodulating". In it he studied the process by which neurotransmitters release acetylcholine, low levels of which may cause Alzheimer's disease.

This win at the Super Science Fair takes him on to the Canada-Wide Science Fair in May, and then on to the international event, to be held in Grenoble in 2001.

This is not David Laflamme's first such success. He presented his research on the ageing process of the brain at the last congress of the Association des médecins de langue française du Canada.

I wish to convey to David heartiest congratulations from the people in the riding of Sherbrooke. There is no doubt that his passion—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

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[English]

JOYCEVILLE INSTITUTION

Mr. Darrel Stinson (Okanagan—Shuswap, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, on April 1, one inmate at Joyceville Institution in Ontario was found carrying a concealed knife.

Rumours had been circulating for days among the 170 Joyceville guards that cyanide had been smuggled inside with the deadly potential for use in terrorism. However, prison management refused to conduct a thorough search on, guess what, grounds of violating prisoners' rights.

A minor riot erupted that Saturday night, so the warden finally decided to lock inmates in their cells while he sent two teams of eight guards to search the entire place, including possessions of the 475 inmates.

It is no wonder that guards feared for their safety and that of the prisoners when one realizes that the search uncovered needles for illegal drugs, escape equipment, contraband used to brew alcoholic beverages and more than 60 weapons, including over 20 homemade knives.

Today's lesson for the solicitor general is that the safety rights of guards and well-behaved prisoners should get a higher priority than those who continue breaking the law even while they are in prison.

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[Translation]

BLOC QUEBECOIS

Mr. Denis Paradis (Brome—Missisquoi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday we were treated to another example of Bloc Quebecois incoherence and twisted logic. The leader of the Bloc is concerned about Canada's international reputation. From the leader of the party mandated to break up Canada, this takes a lot of gall.

Before he starts giving lessons, the leader of the Bloc Quebecois should think back to the comments made by his own boss, Lucien Bouchard, who, last week while still in France, attacked Canada on the quality of its democratic life. This is the same Lucien Bouchard, who has said in the past that Canada is not a country, but a prison.

Let's get serious. On the subject of Canada's international reputation, the Bloc has nothing to offer but crocodile tears.

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[English]

NUNAVUT

Mrs. Nancy Karetak-Lindell (Nunavut, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Mr. Peter Irniq on being appointed as the second commissioner of Nunavut effective April 1, 2000.

Peter has long served the people of Nunavut and this appointment will give him the opportunity to advance the Inuit culture and language which is his great interest.

● (1410)

This is a crucial and challenging period for Nunavut and I know my colleagues in the House will want to join with me in wishing Commissioner Peter Irniq all the best in his new role.

I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the first commissioner of Nunavut, Helen Maksagak, for having been such a gracious ambassador for the people of Nunavut as she carried out her duties.

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NATIONAL POETRY MONTH

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in recognition of national poetry month, I would like to read this untitled work by Winnipeg poet Patrick O'Connell.

it's the thing you held most dear to you,
 what you called an emptiness or a genuflection,
 having made your bargain with the oval night
 with the shuttle in the darkness of your loom. . .
 and the way you were startled by the brittle air
 when it call came back to you,
 what you called a song from a room
 while you did a perfect pirouette before a mirror,

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when a whole new language
 when another way of reckoning appeared
 deep inside the crevice of your knowing...
 O turn turn and turn again
 were the words, you wrote, on the sky

This is published by Patrick O'Connell in a book entitled *The Joy that Cracked the Mountain*.

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[Translation]

GREENHOUSE GASES

Ms. Jocelyne Girard-Bujold (Jonquière, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment keeps saying that a reduction in greenhouse gases is one of his government's priorities. However, oddly enough, at the meeting of environment ministers in Otsu, Japan, Canada remained on its own, dissociating itself from Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, Japan and Russia by refusing to set 2002 as the deadline for the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol.

Canada is certainly not in the lead pack. It had made a commitment to cut our greenhouse gas emissions by 6% of their 1990 level by 2010. But the federal government is doing nothing. If it continues to do nothing, the figure Canada will achieve by 2010 is a 35% increase, contrary to its international commitments.

Instead of limiting itself to awareness programs and voluntary action, Canada must specify its reduction objectives. Really, the Liberals' will is nil.

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[English]

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canada's Middle East relationship is important. We have a long record of contributing to the peace process and we are now forging closer ties to the region by developing new dynamic trade and economic relations.

To reinforce these links, the Prime Minister is presently engaged in an intensive program in the area, meeting with business and political leaders, providing frank exchanges of views with his hosts, signing important bilateral accords and visiting our Canadian peacekeepers in the region, of whom we are all so very proud.

The opposition is challenging what we are trying to achieve in the region and is criticizing the Prime Minister's straightforward approach and direct style, the very features which have earned him popularity among Canadians and the widespread respect of other world leaders.

Canada is a trading and peace-loving nation. The Prime Minister is representing these central facets of our society to the business

and political leaders of the Middle East. I salute him for his leadership in the area and suggest that his critics abandon their partisan hyperbole in favour of supporting Canada in its important endeavours in this region which has great potential for our country.

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[Translation]

ROAD SYSTEM

Mr. André Harvey (Chicoutimi, PC): Mr. Speaker, the Quebec government announced a \$4 billion investment to improve the greater Montreal area's road system. It welcomed the participation of the federal government and the private sector.

The Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region and the greater Quebec City area are still waiting for a modern and safe road system to link them to the major North American trade corridors. The region's economic health and development are at stake.

I realize that the greater Montreal area is experiencing major problems, but this is no reason to neglect the regions. If public and private consortia, with federal government's participation, are acceptable in the Montreal area, they are just as acceptable in the Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean region and in the greater Quebec City area.

* * *

[English]

MIDDLE EAST

Mr. Gurmant Grewal (Surrey Central, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has visited only two places on his seven state trip to the Middle East and now he has both feet in his mouth. His failure rate is 100%, like an HRDC audit report.

First he upset Palestinians by refusing to meet them in East Jerusalem and joking about it. Then he upset Israelis by telling Arafat to use UDI as a bargaining chip in the negotiations.

Yesterday he stepped on a landmine between Israel and Syria, and in reference to the Sea of Galilee he said "It is better for the Israelis to keep this body of water". He is not taking the high road of diplomacy and fairness.

● (1415)

Canadians enjoy a reputation of peacekeeping and peacemaking won from our decades of efforts to alleviate conflict.

The Prime Minister is writing Canada's foreign policy on the bus between luncheons. He should have listened to Canadians, done his homework and delivered Canada's message.

Bring him home. He is not fit to lead. He is damaging the peace process rather than making progress in the region.

*Oral Questions***ORAL QUESTION PERIOD***[English]***RCMP**

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, leave it to this government to run one of Canada's greatest national symbols right into the ground.

The auditor general has revealed widespread organizational and financial problems in the RCMP. These problems leave Canadians, first, vulnerable to criminal activity and, second, they threaten the security of our country, all because of mismanagement by this government.

Why is the solicitor general not following up on these serious concerns of the auditor general?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated yesterday, we have and always will take the auditor general's suggestions very seriously, and we have in this case too. For example, the RCMP has appointed a deputy commissioner to ensure that the recommendations made by the auditor general will be followed.

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Perhaps with another six point plan, Mr. Speaker.

The auditor general has made many of these same complaints year after year. Canadians rely on the RCMP for a lot more than just photo ops with tourists. Millions of Canadians count on them as their only local police force. CPIC, which is the nationwide tracking program for criminals, is run by the RCMP and police forces right across the country depend on it. Law-abiding citizens are threatened because of this government's management and the lack of it.

I ask the solicitor general again, why is he and his government more concerned about pork-barrelling than policing?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. member that the RCMP have far more competency than just posing for photo ops. They are a very competent, well recognized police force in this country and around the world.

This government is committed to the RCMP. That is why last year, before the auditor general's report, we committed \$115 million to ensure that CPIC was upgraded. This government will ensure that all of the recommendations made by the auditor general will be followed.

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let me say too that under the circum-

stances I think our RCMP are as competent as they can be, which is in spite of this government, certainly not because of it.

It is a matter of priorities. This government could protect public safety, but instead it buys fountains for Shawinigan, a high priority I am sure. We would think the government would do everything it could to protect the taxpayers who fund its very grant giveaways. It is sort of like being smart enough to guard the goose that lays the golden egg.

The auditor general, time after time, has listed serious concerns about the RCMP's ability to protect Canadians. Why is it that boondoggles are more important to this whole government than the safety of Canadian citizens?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only place I hear boondoggle talk is from the Reform Party, and it is not about the RCMP.

The RCMP is a competent police force, which is well respected in Canada and around the world and will continue to be so. That is why this government gave \$810 million in new money to ensure that the RCMP has the resources to ensure the safety of the people of Canada.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, while the Prime Minister continues to muddle in the Middle East, the auditor general released a damning indictment of his government here in Ottawa. We would think the guy who had an armed intruder in his own home would place a higher priority on the RCMP. Yet the auditor general now confirms that the RCMP's criminal tracking abilities are seriously hampered and that its computer system is in desperate need of an upgrade.

This government's financial commitment in its latest budget, while welcome, is totally inadequate. Does the solicitor general intend to get his grant from the HRDC minister for the computers?

• (1420)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what this government is committed to is public safety. As I indicated previously, this government showed how committed it is to public safety by putting \$115 million in place to ensure that the CPIC computer system is there for the RCMP and all other police forces across the country.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the \$115 million in the budget for the RCMP will not even meet its existing needs, let alone its projected increases.

The auditor general said:

There are delays of more than two months in entering records of new criminals and new crimes of old criminals into the system, and some files have taken over five months.

Oral Questions

The reason for the backlog is a lack of available funds to hire staff.

Why is it this government finds billions of dollars for so-called job creation through HRDC, but will not create the necessary jobs in the RCMP?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague does not understand that the \$115 million was put in place to modernize CPIC, the computer system that is used by the RCMP and other police forces across the country. As he indicated, the backlog of criminal records has been cut by 40% and we expect that it will be eliminated by the end of the year.

We are making progress and we will continue to address the problems that the auditor general has identified.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, we have finally found out what happened to the Placeteco grant.

Claude Gauthier, the owner, says that \$1,060,000 went to the National Bank, \$50,000 to Globax, and \$80,000 to Placeteco's working capital. That is how it shapes up.

Is the minister still going to claim that she has invoices proving that jobs were created at Placeteco when the owner himself says that the grant money went somewhere else?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the facts of our relationship with this company have not changed. There is no basis for an overpayment. We have invoices that support the investment that we have made and 170 people continue to be employed.

[Translation]

Mr. Gilles Duceppe (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, BQ): Mr. Speaker, first of all, there are 78 jobs at Placeteco; the owner himself said so. We are talking about Placeteco, a grant that went to Placeteco and not to Globax.

What is going on here is troubling. The owner says that the money went to Globax, the National Bank and the working capital, and the minister tells us that she has invoices showing that jobs were created. There is a contradiction.

The only way to straighten this out and hang on to the small bit of credibility she still has left is to table the invoices showing that jobs were created at Placeteco—not at Techni-Paint, not at Globax. And despite what the owner himself says—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Resources Development.

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, indeed some of the jobs we talk about are in a company in the riding of the hon. leader's own member. I think that member supports the jobs at Techni-Paint and the jobs at Placeteco. We are talking about 170 people who otherwise would not be employed. We think that is the right thing to do.

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, it is a real shame. The admission by Claude Gauthier, of Placeteco, in a televised report, that the \$1.2 million grant went to pay off a loan to the National Bank and bolster his company's working capital proves that the minister does not have the invoices proving jobs were created.

With Claude Gauthier's statement, will the minister now admit that she does not have the invoices proving jobs were created, because, quite simply, no jobs were created?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me say again, there is no reason or basis for an overpayment. We have the invoices. We have people working. It would seem that the Bloc suggests that it was not appropriate for us to stick with these two companies to ensure that the people who are now working would have the opportunity to work. I think we have chosen the right approach. I think the Bloc's approach is wrong.

• (1425)

[Translation]

Mr. Paul Crête (Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup—Témiscouata—Les Basques, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the problem for the minister is that the Prime Minister himself said in this House that all grants not used to create jobs were to be repaid. This is exactly what the Vidéotron group did.

Now that it is clear that the \$1.2 million grant to Placeteco was used for purposes other than creating jobs, will the minister demand the immediate repayment of the grant?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let me repeat that there is no basis for an overpayment.

We have investigated this file thoroughly. The invoices are there to support the investment, and men and women are working.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a legal opinion released earlier today by the Canadian Health Coalition, trade lawyer Barry Appleton described Alberta as going down a one-way street toward health care privatization.

Here is what he said: “Under NAFTA, a province cannot experiment with for-profit health care because the process will be irreversible”.

In last week’s letter to Alberta, the health minister acknowledged that Bill 11 may have implications which will be felt in provinces and territories across the country.

In view of that, what is the government’s response to the NAFTA threat?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we made our position very clear last week when I wrote to the Alberta minister of health.

We identified four respects in which we thought there were difficulties with Bill 11. In particular, we asked that the bill be amended to prohibit the sale of enhanced medical services along with insured services in a private for profit facility.

We contend that that combination imperils the principle of accessibility, which is fundamental to the Canada Health Act.

Ms. Alexa McDonough (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we can continue to try to ignore Mr. Appleton’s opinion, but the last time Mr. Appleton weighed in on an important trade issue was in the case of the gasoline additive MMT. Mr. Appleton was right, the Government of Canada was wrong, and it cost us \$20 million. If we get it wrong this time it will cost us our health care system.

Will the government address the NAFTA implications, or will it risk losing Canada’s health care system?

Hon. Allan Rock (Minister of Health, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is a little behind the times. Why should this issue be any different?

If the member would look at the record, she would see that in my correspondence with Minister Jonson in November of last year, I squarely raised the NAFTA issue and identified the risk which that issue presents to the health care system of Canada.

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FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, in 24 hours the Prime Minister has succeeded in shocking Palestinian people on the issue of East Jerusalem.

Then, to get back on their good side, he said he would recognize a new declaration of independence of Palestine, making the Israeli people angry.

Yesterday, to try to fix his mistake, the PM made a comment about one of the most explosive subjects in the peace process in the Middle East, the ownership of the Sea of Galilee.

Once again, our message has to be heard. Will the cabinet bring the PM home before the next mistake du jour in the Middle East?

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think Canadians should be proud of the fact that the Prime Minister is carrying out the first bilateral visit to this region by any Canadian Prime Minister.

I understand our Prime Minister has been warmly welcomed by the leaders he has met and all have been pleased with Canada’s participation in the region. No negative comments have been raised during these private talks, or indeed in the media in that area.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand (Richmond—Arthabaska, PC): Mr. Speaker, that makes three strikes in three days. If it were baseball, the Prime Minister would be out.

Some hon. members: Out.

Mr. André Bachand: What I can say is that the Prime Minister is busy rewriting Canadian foreign policy all by himself. Officially, Canada’s foreign policy does not recognize Israeli control over the territories occupied in 1967, including the Golan heights.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: Order, please.

• (1430)

Mr. André Bachand: Mr. Speaker, I have never seen so many spin doctors at work at the same time.

What I can say is that the Prime Minister is contradicting Canada’s foreign policy, which can be found on its Internet site.

Is it not true that the Prime Minister is screwing up Canada’s current foreign policy?

[English]

Hon. Herb Gray (Deputy Prime Minister, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, an important, non-partisan observer in the region, Professor Menachem Magidor, president of the Hebrew University, said:

We admire Canada. . .because of its commitment towards peace and prosperity. And we are all aware that it is due to your personal leadership and courage, Mr. Prime Minister, that Canada is a major player—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

Oral Questions

The Speaker: Order, please. We will hear the answer of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister.

Hon. Herb Gray: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that there is more sense and more weight in the words of the president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, who is there on the scene and said these words to our Prime Minister just the other day, than the nonsense spoken by the Conservative Party, especially in light of the experience of their current leader, Joe Clark, when he was Prime Minister of Canada for a few months, something he will not be again after the mess he made of his year as prime minister, especially with respect to the Middle East.

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AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general says that the government has mismanaged criminal information. The Canadian Police Information Centre, CPIC, is down 880 hours a year. It is handling 10 times the volume it was designed for.

As a result, 20,000 law enforcement officers across Canada have been precluded from making three million inquiries. What a gift for the criminals. What is with this solicitor general?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated a number of times, the government showed where its commitment was when it allocated \$810 million of new money to the office of the solicitor general and \$584 million of that to the RCMP.

Before that, \$115 million were allocated to the very system that my hon. colleague speaks about, the CPIC system. We are well aware it needed to be updated and put in shape. We allocated last year \$115 million so the RCMP and other police forces across the country would have the necessary tools to do the job.

• (1435)

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about that \$115 million. The auditor general says:

Because the replacement project has been delayed for more than 10 years, there is uncertainty about whether the existing system will be able to function until the new system is ready.

Why does the solicitor general have such an easy time finding money for the drug research centre in his own riding but cannot find money for the RCMP?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, why I am interested in drug research is that 50% of people who commit a federal offence are intoxicated when they do so.

It would certainly make common sense to me that we address the major problem, but beyond that we also addressed the CPIC

problem when we put \$115 million in place to make sure that the computer system was in place for all police forces across the country.

We indicated that we would give police the tools to do the job, and we did just that.

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[Translation]

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, Placeteco's owner, Claude Gauthier, compared the HRDC grant to his wife giving him some money to buy himself some fishing gear. Incredible.

Do these rather astonishing statements made by the individual at Placeteco who found himself the recipient of a \$1.2 million grant not say a lot about the attitude of those involved in this affair, where the main person involved looks on the grant money as an extremely nice gift from his friend the Prime Minister?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, again let me say that the facts of the relationship we have with the companies have not changed. There is no basis for an overpayment to be established. The invoices are there to support the investments we have made and 170 people are working.

[Translation]

Mr. Michel Gauthier (Roberval, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not know how the minister can actually tell us there was no overpayment when we know very well that a large part of the grant was for the creation of jobs and not a single one was created. If no jobs were created, is not every cent an overpayment?

[English]

Hon. Jane Stewart (Minister of Human Resources Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if we were to follow the advice of the hon. member, 170 men and women would not be employed in areas of high unemployment.

Again I say that we believe we have done the right thing and we believe their approach is wrong.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Indian affairs. Yesterday the minister admitted that he is failing aboriginal children.

His department mismanages the expenditure of a billion dollars a year. It is supposed to be for aboriginal education. As a result,

aboriginal children are 20 years behind the rest of the country. The minister has had 24 hours to do his homework. What is his defence today?

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government to government relationship we have with the first nations is working very well. In the last two years we have done significant remodelling of the relationship with first nations.

The education dollars available to first nations are all accounted for in those budgets, and they are continuing to work on that.

Mr. Mike Scott (Skeena, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general emphatically disagrees with the minister. The minister talks about the studies that have been done and about Gathering Strength as a response to the auditor general's report.

The auditor general says there have been over 22 studies done over 20 years and there has been no improvement. The auditor general says that Gathering Strength cannot demonstrate that it will result in any improvement for aboriginal children.

Why should anybody believe the minister? Why should aboriginal children believe him when he says that will be the answer to their problem, and why should they have to pay for the minister's mismanagement?

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the member stands and makes those kinds of comments, he might keep in mind that the government transfers those funds to first nations and it is under their control.

What he is doing basically is accusing the first nations and the teachers who are working with those kids of mismanaging the funds, and in fact they are not.

* * *

• (1440)

[Translation]

GROWING OF CANNABIS

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a few days, criminals will resume their illegal production of cannabis in the fields of the greater Saint-Hyacinthe region.

These criminals will confiscate land and again terrorize thousands of farm families. Nothing will have changed, despite the government's promises.

How does the solicitor general explain that his government has increased the RCMP's overall budget by \$200 million this year but that the number of full time RCMP officer positions at the Saint-Hyacinthe detachment in one of the largest cannabis-growing regions in Quebec will be cut in half?

Oral Questions

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague is well aware, these investigations are led by the SQ and supported by the RCMP. We will continue to do so.

If a member shifted from one detachment to another, it would be for internal reasons within the RCMP.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvan Loubier (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to speak about my case in particular, but does the solicitor general realize that, because he is not assuming his responsibilities, the Saint-Hyacinthe region RCMP will not devote any resources this year to the fight against drug traffickers, and that these gangs of criminals will be allowed to continue to terrorize thousands of farm families—men, women and children?

[English]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's concern. I can assure him that the RCMP takes this matter very seriously.

However, as I indicated previously, the investigation is led by the SQ and then supported by the RCMP. The RCMP will continue to support the SQ and other police forces across the country in situations like this one.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general's report states that many of the required assessments are missing and that there is inadequate monitoring of aboriginal education programs by the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development.

The auditor general could not figure out where the money went. Maybe the minister would like to tell us, if he can and if he will.

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is well known that money as it relates to education is being transferred through agreements to the first nations school boards and education systems on reserve and off reserve.

The hon. member should keep in mind that a vast majority of the young people who belong to first nations go to school in provincial schools, working with provincial administrators and provincial educators. Those funds are all based on a per capita basis for education purposes.

Mr. Derrek Konrad (Prince Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, the auditor general speaks of sloppy administration,

Oral Questions

inadequate monitoring and lack of accountability in the minister's own department.

The minister says he has a plan to fix it, but here is the issue. The lives of aboriginal children and \$1 billion worth of taxpayer dollars are at stake. That minister is responsible. Who will the minister blame for the shambles in aboriginal education? Will it be the provinces and the bands?

Hon. Robert D. Nault (Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the member opposite and his party do not have a clue what they are talking about.

If they knew what they were talking about, they would realize that in the last 20 years alone we went from no students in post-secondary education to 27,000 aboriginal students in post-secondary education, a significant improvement.

That is not to suggest that we do not have a long way to go, but the reason we are successful is that we are transferring the control of those children to their families and to their first nations.

* * *

• (1445)

[Translation]

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture claims that GMO exports are not threatened.

Yet, farmers have experienced difficulties in selling certain GMO crops, because European and Asian consumers do not want them and support mandatory labelling.

Does the minister not realize that farmers are directly affected by his reluctance to take action on this issue?

[English]

Hon. Lyle Vanclief (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have explained a number of times, I think almost daily, to the hon. member, the House and all Canadians, what we are doing in order to provide the information. The industry is working toward that. We do not have any major trade problems at the present time. Some countries are saying that they are moving toward a different set of labelling. However, none of them have been able to indicate or prove that at this time because they do not have credible, meaningful and enforceable legislation in place.

* * *

WATERWAYS

Ms. Susan Whelan (Essex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Great Lakes and Lake St. Clair water levels are at historical lows. A caution warning has been issued to mariners throughout the entire system.

As well, internationally designated safe harbours are not accessible. Immediate dredging assistance is needed to assist the commercial and recreational industries that operate on these waterways. How will the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans assist all boaters on our lakes this spring?

Hon. Harbance Singh Dhaliwal (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. member for Essex. She has articulated to me, as have many members, the difficulties private marinas are facing because of the low water levels. I will certainly consider her representation and see what options exist.

I think she knows that the DFO mandate requires us not to provide dredging in the private marinas. I will consider the representation and look at what options are available for this difficult problem.

* * *

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, Steve Hindle, the president of the union that represents Revenue Canada auditors said, "When head office officials overrule assessments by Revenue Canada auditors and doubles a tax credit by tens of millions of dollars, it reeks of political interference".

My question is for the Minister of National Revenue. Why is it that every time auditors look into the government's management of programs, they turn up political interference?

[Translation]

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if Canadian Alliance members were well informed about the research and development tax credit program, they would know that this is an administrative program managed by the public service and based on the expenses incurred by all the companies asking to participate in it.

Obviously, there cannot be any political interference in such a process. That is very clear.

[English]

Mr. John Williams (St. Albert, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I think political interference is everywhere. HRDC employees are advertising and taking out radio ads complaining about political interference. The RCMP is investigating in the Prime Minister's riding. Now the president of the union for Revenue Canada auditors is saying that there is political interference.

Let me ask the minister again, why is it that every time there is an audit, it turns up the smell of political interference?

Oral Questions

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, obviously that member of the Reform Party must be dreaming. There is no political interference into the question of the management of the SR&ED tax credit. As I said in French, it is quite obvious that it is an administrative process based on claims by corporations. We look at expenses and then they are given the credits. It is as simple as that. It is impossible to be politically involved in such a process.

* * *

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government tabled species at risk legislation yesterday and already it is being described as an environmental embarrassment.

When it comes to protecting animals or plants at risk, the government is putting politics ahead of protection. The minister could have and should have left it to scientists to decide which species would be protected. Instead, he left this life and death decision in the hands of the Liberal cabinet.

Will the minister commit to amending the bill so that scientists and not Liberal politicians will have the final word on species to be protected?

• (1450)

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member is correct at least to the extent that the bill was tabled yesterday. The bill will be sent to committee and he will find there is ample opportunity for examination and any suggestions he may wish to make for change.

I would suggest to him that the proposals he has made here would deny a right that people have had since the Magna Carta. In other words, when one's livelihood or land is affected by government action, one has a right to be heard. The socialists over there do not seem to think that right is valuable; they do not seem to think it is useful. We on this side of the House think it is important.

Mr. Dennis Gruending (Saskatoon—Rosetown—Biggar, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians want to see endangered species protected from extinction and they do not want to entrust that task to Liberal cabinet ministers.

For example, if the beluga whale is in danger of extinction because an aluminum company is polluting its habitat, the beluga whale should be protected, period. This bill leaves the door wide open for that company to lobby Liberal politicians not to protect the beluga whale and its habitat. This is wrong and the Liberal chair of the environment committee, that famous socialist, says it is wrong.

Will the minister, despite his comments, admit the error of his ways and allow scientists, and not politicians, to decide which species are to be protected?

Hon. David Anderson (Minister of the Environment, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we now have these apologists for socialism explaining their position. They are saying that no matter what the social or economic impact on any scientific listing, nobody will listen to the people, the industries or the communities affected. It will all be done by scientists and the scientists will not even take that into account either. They are only considering the one question of whether the animal is endangered.

* * *

CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, here we go again with the Liberal government's slash and burn policies.

The CBC is looking at closing down English language TV studios in Montreal. Therefore local Quebec programming will be live and direct from downtown Toronto. Does that not have a nice Quebec flavour. Is this the new policy to better serve the anglophone community of Quebec?

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I guess the member must be clairvoyant because I have not heard any news of any closures.

Mr. David Price (Compton—Stanstead, PC): Mr. Speaker, if it is not proposed policy, why are they even talking about it? We know they have already considered shutting down CBC Radio in Quebec City but have backed off on that now.

My question is simple. What is the future of local CBC English media in the province of Quebec? I emphasize the word local.

Hon. Sheila Copps (Minister of Canadian Heritage, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the member has information on this issue I would be happy to have him bring it forward. At the moment, my understanding is that the CBC is looking at a number of options. Not only have no options been made, but we have certainly discussed nothing about it.

* * *

LIEUTENANT GENERAL ROMÉO DALLAIRE

Mr. David Pratt (Nepean—Carleton, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians feel a sense of loss today with the news that one of Canada's most dedicated and respected military leaders is retiring. Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire has served Canada and the cause of peacekeeping with integrity and great personal courage, especially as the UN commander in Rwanda in 1993-94.

Oral Questions

Can the Minister of National Defence share with the House his comments on the retirement of General Dallaire and what we have learned from his horrible experiences in Rwanda?

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton (Minister of National Defence, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire is taking early retirement for health reasons. He has left an enduring mark of dedication and duty to this country and to the Canadian forces.

Rwanda has left a mark on him and on his life. He witnessed the horrors of Rwanda. He witnessed the butchery of Rwanda.

• (1455)

Let us learn the lesson and honour him by saying that we should never allow that kind of thing to happen again.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of National Defence may continue.

Hon. Arthur C. Eggleton: Mr. Speaker, I think the House has demonstrated its support for what I have just said. I know all members of the House would join me in paying tribute to Lieutenant General Roméo Dallaire, to extend our best wishes and our thanks to him. He has been a great soldier, a great patriot and a great humanitarian.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear.

* * *

REVENUE CANADA

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, according to the union president for Revenue Canada's auditors, yesterday's auditor general's report confirmed that there is, and I want the minister to listen to this, "political interference at Revenue Canada in the settling of tax credits". Head office regularly interferes and approves tens of millions of dollars in credits that its auditors cannot justify.

Why is the head office of Revenue Canada, the revenue agency, approving these tax credits that its own auditors cannot justify?

[Translation]

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have already answered that question. This is an administrative process involving the whole department, and it is based on expenses.

I think that the report tabled yesterday by the auditor general is an important and interesting document, which was prepared in co-operation with the agency. It includes suggestions on how to improve the program's operation.

I have a question for the opposition. Today, they are using that report to score cheap political points. Where were they when it was time to do something to improve the credit? Where were they when it was time to work together with—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: I remind members that they must always address the Chair.

* * *

CINAR

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Verchères—Les-Patriotes, BQ): Mr. Speaker, in a newspaper interview, an RCMP spokesperson is quoted as saying that Revenue Canada had not co-operated in the RCMP investigation into CINAR, contrary to what the Minister of National Revenue said on Monday.

Can the Minister of National Revenue tell us whether he is prepared to enter into an agreement with the RCMP, as he has in other cases, in order to allow the RCMP access to the data required for evidence?

Hon. Martin Cauchon (Minister of National Revenue and Secretary of State (Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec), Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said on several occasions, there is one fundamental principle underlying the Canadian taxation system, and that is the confidentiality of all files.

That said, I can assure the House that we have co-operated in the past, are co-operating at present, and will continue to co-operate in future with the RCMP in all cases, while keeping in mind, of course, the principle of confidentiality so dear to all the people of Canada.

* * *

[English]

TAXATION

Mr. Nelson Riis (Kamloops, Thompson and Highland Valleys, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance who I am sure is as concerned as anyone about inefficient and ineffective tax expenditures. We note that the auditor general has pointed out that for \$2 billion in R and D tax credit expenditures or losses in revenue, only between \$20 million and \$50 million of new additional R and D has actually occurred.

Does the Minister of Finance not agree that it is time to assess the R and D tax credit program on a cost benefit basis to ensure that the taxpayers of Canada are getting the appropriate bang for their buck?

• (1500)

Hon. Paul Martin (Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what the finance department study showed was that there is a net

benefit to the R and D tax credit substantially over and above the amount of tax revenue that is lost. It is a very positive program, as indeed is the entire support for research and development in the country.

When we first took office we substantially tightened up the program. However, the hon. member's question is nonetheless valid to the point that what it says is that there is a balance which has to be determined, and we will continue to make sure we monitor that very closely.

* * *

ENERGY

Mr. Norman Doyle (St. John's East, PC): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for energy.

The governments of Newfoundland and Quebec are currently negotiating a lower Churchill project. These negotiations will not involve the power line to the island of Newfoundland unless the federal government is willing to assist financially in its construction.

Is the Government of Canada willing to assist financially in building that line?

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have undertaken, with the Government of Newfoundland, to participate in an economic analysis of that particular proposal, together with other possible options with respect to the future energy requirements of Newfoundland. That work is ongoing. I would expect that the outcome of that work could be released in the next short while. In the meantime, I would make the point that no financial commitment has been made.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

TABLING OF A DOCUMENT

Mr. Grant McNally (Dewdney—Alouette, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, in response to a question from the fifth party, I believe the Deputy Prime Minister read directly from a document during question period today. Would he be able to table that document for the House?

Hon. Don Boudria (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister was quoting from the Jerusalem *Post* newspaper online. This document is not translated. It is rather unusual to translate newspapers, although I am quite prepared to have the text translated and tabled. Actually I would be prepared to table a copy of the Toronto *Star* as well, if the hon. member would like one of those every now and then.

Routine Proceedings

• (1505)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Dewdney—Alouette has asked that a document be tabled, as it was quoted. The hon. House leader has said he has the document. I am sure that if he has the document translated he will bring it to the House and table it.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Bob Kilger (Stormont—Dundas—Charlottenburgh, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, discussions have taken place among all parties and the member for Prince George—Peace River concerning the taking of the division on Bill C-223, scheduled at the conclusion of Private Members' Business today, and I believe you would find consent for the following. I move:

That at the conclusion of today's debate on Bill C-223, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion for second reading of this bill be deemed put, a recorded division deemed requested and deferred until Tuesday, May 2, 2000, at the expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

The Speaker: Is there agreement to proceed in such a fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

TREATIES RATIFIED IN 1998

Mr. Denis Paradis (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I am pleased to table in the House, in both official languages, 47 treaties that came into force in 1998, a list of which is also tabled.

[English]

As we have done previously, I am also providing to the Library of Parliament CD-ROMs which contain electronic versions of these treaties in order to provide wide accessibility to the text and reduce the paper burden.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. David Iftody (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 1999 annual report of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, the 1996-97 and 1997-98 annual reviews of the implementation of the Yukon land claims agreement, and the 1998-99 annual report for the implementation committee on the Sahtu Dene and Metis comprehensive land claims agreements.

*Routine Proceedings***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 89 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Bill Graham (Toronto Centre—Rosedale, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

[English]

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the committee held a number of hearings on the subject of Iraq, meeting with NGOs and other Canadian experts, and we have put forward our submissions in this written report.

No one seeks to rewrite history to absolve Saddam Hussein of blame for the events in the gulf war, but the international community was rightly united on the need to find and destroy Iraq's capacity to produce weapons of mass destruction. Yet the fact is that the international regime designed to maintain pressure on the Iraqi regime, including both sanctions and the separate enforcement of no-fly zones in Iraq, had a terrible humanitarian impact on the people of that country.

[Translation]

The committee feels, therefore, that it is possible to remedy the human tragedy in Iraq with all due expediency while satisfying the imperatives of security. It has therefore adopted this report in the form of a resolution in order to make these recommendations available to the Government of Canada without delay.

[English]

Canada has already played an important role in this issue in the year since it joined the security council, and can still do more. As president of the security council this month, Canada is pursuing the reform of sanctions and we urge them to do more.

● (1510)

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), your committee recommends that it be granted leave to travel from May 28 to June 8, 2000 to

Quebec, New Brunswick, Maine, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, Labrador and P.E.I. to continue its comprehensive study of aquaculture, its statutory review of the Oceans Act and of fisheries issues, and that the committee be composed of two Canadian Alliance members, one Bloc member, one NDP member, one PC member and five Liberals, and that the necessary staff do accompany the committee.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, in both official languages, regarding the associate membership of some standing committees.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in this 26th report later this day.

* * *

[Translation]

FUEL PRICE POSTING ACT

Mr. Guy St-Julien (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-476, an act respecting the posting of fuel prices by retailers.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the objective of this bill is that, when a fuel retailer causes a poster, label or sign to be posted indicating the selling price for a fuel, the price must be indicated without regard to any taxes imposed on the consumer under an act of Parliament or an act of the legislature of a province.

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

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[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 26th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House earlier this day, be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Miss Deborah Grey (Leader of the Opposition, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to see you in the chair.

There are some people in the country who are not thrilled about the fact that the British Columbia Court of Appeal did, on June 30, 1999, dismiss the appeal to reinstate subsection 4 of section 163.1 of the criminal code, making possession of child pornography illegal in British Columbia.

Possession of child pornography in B.C. is now legal because of this decision, and because the well-being and safety of children are put in jeopardy, pursuant to Standing Order 36, the petitioners are asking that parliament be recalled at the earliest possible opportunity—in fact we could probably do it today—to invoke section 33 of the charter of rights and freedoms, the notwithstanding clause, to override the B.C. court of appeal decision and reinstate subsection 4 of section 163.1 of the criminal code, making possession of child pornography illegal.

OLD AGE SECURITY

Mr. Bernard Patry (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to submit a petition signed by residents of my riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard.

As the white paper issued by the government on March 6, 1996 admitted the fact that the law has been unfair to some individuals in granting them old age security, the petitioners are asking the Canadian parliament to grant old age security to all seniors over the age of 65, irrespective of their country of origin.

[Translation]

PETROLEUM PRODUCT PRICING

Mr. Maurice Dumas (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, BQ): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am pleased to present a petition bearing 3,600 signatures.

This petition has to do with petroleum product price increases. The petitioners call upon parliament to take all necessary steps to identify and recommend, as quickly as possible, concrete means for dealing with the excessive price hikes for petroleum products, and for permanently regularizing pricing.

• (1515)

[English]

GASOLINE ADDITIVES

Mrs. Rose-Marie Ur (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I am honoured to present a petition signed by residents of the Whitby, Dundas and Grand Bend areas.

The petitioners urge the government to continue studying the adverse health and environmental effects of the fuel additive MMT, with a mind to banning the substance as most other nations have done.

Routine Proceedings

RURAL ROUTE COURIERS

Ms. Wendy Lill (Dartmouth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition on behalf of about 50 people in rural Nova Scotia who are very concerned about rural route couriers.

The petitioners believe that the couriers earn less than the minimum wage in many instances, that they are not able to bargain collectively to improve their wages, and that because they are private sector workers delivering mail they are not part of the bargaining rights given to public sector workers who deliver mail for Canada Post.

The petitioners are very much in support of the removal of section 13(5) of the Canada Post Corporation Act prohibiting rural route couriers from having collective bargaining rights.

PERTH—MIDDLESEX

Mr. John Richardson (Perth—Middlesex, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have the honour to submit petitions signed by residents in my riding of Perth—Middlesex.

BILL C-23

Mr. Lee Morrison (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I have yet another petition from residents of Swift Current with respect to Bill C-23. Unfortunately it is after the fact due to the indecent haste of the government to bulldoze the bill through parliament.

The petitioners give several reasons for their opinions. The final one is that it would be an inappropriate intrusion and discriminatory for the federal government to extend benefits based on a person's private sexual activity.

Although it is too late, they have petitioned parliament to withdraw Bill C-23 and that the opposite sex definition of marriage be affirmed in legislation so that marriage is recognized as a unique institution.

MAMMOGRAPHY

Mr. John Finlay (Oxford, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from 84 people. The petitioners call upon parliament to enact legislation to establish an independent governing body to develop, implement and enforce uniform and mandatory mammography quality assurance and quality control standards in Canada.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. Charles Hubbard (Miramichi, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36, I would like to present a petition. The petitioners are concerned with the high incidence of breast cancer in Canada.

They call upon parliament and the Canadian nation to develop programs that would assist women who are afflicted with or may have this terrible disease.

Routine Proceedings

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today of depositing three very brief petitions with the House.

The first petition deals with section 43 amendments to the criminal code. The petitioners ask parliament to not change those particular provisions of the code and argue and put forward to the House that the best interests of children are served, not by the state but by parents.

CHILD PORNOGRAPHY

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition says that whereas Canadians are horrified by pornography which depicts children and are astounded by legal determinations that possession of such pornography is not criminal, they petition the House to protect those children.

HEALTH

Mr. David Iftody (Provencher, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present the last petition which argues that every Canadian has the inherent constitutional right to freely decide what medical procedures are performed on his or her body, whereas many safety concerns regarding the anthrax vaccine have now come forward in the United States.

The petitioners pray and ask the House of Commons that those constitutional inherent rights will be respected.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is on the subject of breast cancer.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that Canada has the second highest rate of breast cancer in the world and, among other things, Canada has no legislation for mandatory mammography quality assurance standards. They point out that one in nine Canadian women will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, and also that early detection remains the only known weapon in the battle against this disease.

• (1520)

The petitioners, therefore, call upon Parliament to enact legislation to establish an independent governing body to develop, implement and enforce uniform and mandatory mammography quality assurance and quality control centres in Canada.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, signed by a number of Canadians, including those in my own riding of Mississauga South, is on the subject of child poverty.

The petitioners draw to the attention of the House that one in five children in Canada live in poverty. They also note that the House of Commons on November 24, 1989 passed a resolution to seek to achieve the elimination of child poverty by the year 2000.

Therefore, the petitioners call upon Parliament to use the federal budget 2000 to introduce a multi-year plan to improve the well-being Canada's children, and it appears that the government has done just that.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Question No. Q-80 will be answered today.

[Text]

Question No. 80—**Mr. Peter MacKay:**

From the year of 1993 up to and including the present day, could the government provide a detailed breakdown of the cost of the chase vehicles, including the modifications and the gas mileage, used in the transportation of the Prime Minister?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Solicitor General of Canada, Lib.): For security reasons, details regarding the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, RCMP, protective operations for the Prime Minister cannot be revealed. The RCMP is unable to provide modification costs, gas mileage and the specific number of vehicles utilized. However, the RCMP can state that the total operation package, which incorporates the yearly average fuel consumption and the maintenance program, costs approximately \$17,722.50. This amount also incorporates the fuel and maintenance of the Prime Minister's limousine. Therefore, the total fuel and maintenance program for the past seven years is approximately (7 x \$17,722.50) \$124,057.00. The average purchase price of RCMP escort vehicles is approximately \$25,000.00 and these vehicles are replaced on a rotational basis every four years.

[English]

Mr. Derek Lee: I ask, Mr. Speaker, that the remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

Mr. Rahim Jaffer (Edmonton—Strathcona, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I wonder if the parliamentary secretary would be so kind as to tell the people of Hamilton and Wentworth area when they would be able to receive the documents pertaining to a Notice of Motion for the Production of Papers that was applied for on November 19, 1999 regarding the Red Hill Creek Expressway.

Government Orders

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member knows that government staff work assiduously to provide answers to questions and documents requested by members in the House where they can be appropriately disclosed.

I would be pleased to provide a specific answer on that particular motion forthwith and hopefully the matter can be disposed of in the House shortly.

If the hon. member would like to call that item today, it could be transferred for debate.

Mr. Rahim Jaffer: Mr. Speaker, I would like Motion No. P-17 to be called.

Motion No. P-17

That a humble Address be presented to Her Excellency praying that she will cause to be laid before this House copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence and briefings since 1983 with respect to the Red Hill Creek Expressway, and since 1994 with respect to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the Red Hill Creek Expressway.

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, according to the rules of the House, as a minister of the crown, I would ask that this Motion for the Production of Papers No. P-17 be transferred for debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, would you be so kind as to call Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers No. P-10.

Motion No. P-10

That an Order of the House do issue for copies of all documents, reports, minutes of meetings, notes, memos, correspondence and invoices relating to Canada's second report to the United Nations on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, insofar as the Departments of Health and Justice are concerned, the second report of the United Nations on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child is presently in draft form and is therefore not yet available in both official languages. All other documentation and correspondence, which is not exempt from production, such as internal departmental memoranda, is of a voluminous nature and would require an inordinate cost or length of time to produce. I would therefore would ask the hon. member to withdraw his motion.

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale: Mr. Speaker, again in accordance with Rule 97(1), as a minister of the crown I would ask that this matter be transferred for debate.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion is transferred for debate.

• (1525)

Mr. Derek Lee: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the remaining Notices of Motions for the Production of Papers be allowed to stand.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2000

Hon. Ralph E. Goodale (for the Minister of Finance) moved that Bill C-32, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 28, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Roy Cullen (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today at second reading of Bill C-32, the budget 2000 implementation omnibus bill.

[Translation]

Budget 2000 is an historic budget. As the Minister of Finance stated in his budget speech, not only is the deficit a matter of history, but the government is now projecting its third, fourth and fifth balanced budgets in a row, something that has not been done in nearly half a century.

[English]

However, there are other tangible reasons why budget 2000 represents a dramatic advance for Canada and Canadians. Budget 2000 addresses the fundamental challenges we face as a nation, challenges we identified in last October's fall update.

First, as the minister said, the government will continue to provide sound fiscal management. He said that the days of deficits are gone and they are not coming back.

Second, the government will lower taxes to promote economic growth and to leave more money in the pockets of Canadians.

Third, in order to ensure equality of opportunity, the government will make investments to provide Canadians with the skills and knowledge they need to get the jobs they want.

Fourth, the minister said that together we will build an economy based on innovation.

Government Orders

All Canadians can be proud of the government's record. However, as the minister also stated, it is not a record on which we are prepared to rest. Canadians do not want to dwell on the past; they want to focus on the future. Indeed, that is the message of this budget.

Again, to paraphrase the minister, the government's challenge now is to build on this newfound strength. The government is sticking to its plan of sound fiscal management, lower taxes and investing in skills, knowledge and innovation. Through this plan, the quality of life for Canadians and their children will be enhanced.

Quality of life runs the gamut, from access to quality health care and post-secondary education, to healthy children, secure families and vibrant communities. It also includes sharing the benefits of economic prosperity with those who need support the most. That is what we are doing through this budget omnibus bill, implementing the budget's proposals to strengthen post-secondary education and health care, and to help children get the best possible start in life.

The bill we are debating today contains 10 measures that were announced in the 2000 budget. Three of these measures are of particular importance to the nation's well-being, starting with our health care and education systems, continuing through better assistance to families with children, and finally, financial assistance to students. To provide these benefits on time, these measures must be passed before the House adjourns this summer.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

First, this bill amends the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act to authorize payment of the \$2.5 billion increase to the Canada health and social transfer for health care and post-secondary education to a trust in support of health and post-secondary education.

[*English*]

Second, the Income Tax Act is amended to increase child tax benefits and to provide indexed GST benefits as of July 2000.

Third, the bill amends the Canada Student Assistance Act to ensure uninterrupted delivery of student loans after the current agreement with financial institutions expires on July 31, 2000.

Again let me emphasize the timing for the passage of these three measures is crucial. If we delay, it is Canadians who will suffer.

The remaining seven components of the bill may not face the same deadline. They are, however, just as important for millions of Canadians and for the effective and efficient operation of government.

These measures would amend the Employment Insurance Act and the Canada Labour Code to double maternity and parental

leave to one year. They would increase the foreign property content limit in RRSPs and other deferred income plans. They would amend the Canada pension plan to allow provinces to redeem securities given to the CPP investment fund. They would amend the Special Import Measures Act to bring Canadian countervailing duty laws into line with recent changes to the World Trade Organization agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures. They would enable certain first nations to levy a 7% tax on sales of fuel, alcohol and tobacco products on reserve. They would amend the Excise Tax Act to preserve the GST-HST base and avoid tax evasion.

I would now like to discuss each of these 10 measures in some detail. I will begin with the \$2.5 billion increase to the CHST.

[*Translation*]

The minister summed up the reasons for this measure in his budget speech when he said:

The success that we have achieved as a nation has come not only from strong growth but from an abiding commitment to strong values: caring, compassion and insistence that there be an equitable sharing of the benefits of economic growth.

[*English*]

For this reason the first announcement in the first budget of the 21st century was that we would increase funding for post-secondary education and health care. These are the highest priorities of Canadians and they are ours.

Bill C-32 legislates a \$2.5 billion increase in the Canada health and social transfer. These funds will be distributed to provinces and territories on a per capita basis and paid into a trust from which they can draw down over four years, beginning as soon as the bill is passed.

As hon. members know, the federal government transfers approximately \$40 billion a year to the provinces and territories through three major programs to help them provide vital services to Canadians. The first program is the CHST which supports health care, post-secondary education, social assistance and social services in the form of cash and tax transfers. It is also the largest federal transfer. The second is equalization which enables less prosperous provinces to offer comparable public services to those in other areas of the country. The final one is the territorial formula financing for public services in the north.

The federal government has already acted three times before now in the 1996, 1998 and 1999 budgets to strengthen the CHST. Combined with the value of tax transfers, total CHST in 1999-2000 was \$29.4 billion higher than in 1993-94. With this new supplement it will be close to \$31 billion for 2000-01. That also incorporates the \$11.5 billion added to the CHST in the 1999 budget.

Government Orders

• (1535)

This additional support will provide an additional \$1 billion in fiscal year 2000-01 and \$500 million a year in each of the following three years for post-secondary education and health care.

As I said, combined with the 1999 budget \$11.5 billion investment this means that the cash component of the CHST will reach \$15.5 billion in each of the next four years, an increase of almost 25% from the 1998-99 level. If Canadians compare that with the rhetoric of the opposition parties, they will understand the government's huge commitment and priority attached to health care and education.

As I indicated, this supplement will be paid into a third party trust and the provinces and the territories will have the flexibility to draw on it as they see fit.

The bill should be passed quickly in order to get much needed money into the health care system to deal with the pressing needs of Canadians. Some Canadians might wonder, if there is money on deposit sitting there that is not being implemented by the health care system in certain provinces, why the government would do that.

We are responding to the very urgent needs of Canadians in the health care system. Whether that is in emergency rooms, waiting lists for surgery or whatever the case may be, the provinces have the flexibility to draw on it as they need it.

[*Translation*]

Another key measure in this bill concerns child tax benefits. As the minister emphasized in the budget, "assisting families is not only the smart thing to do, it is the right thing to do".

Let there be no doubt, he went on to say, that one of the best things we can do is to leave parents with more money at the end of each month to invest in their children's well-being.

[*English*]

Budget 2000 does exactly that. To fully protect taxpayers against inflation the budget restores full indexation of the personal income tax system effective January 1, 2000.

This is the most important change to the Canadian tax system in more than a decade. Indexation has applied to personal income taxation for inflation but only when it reached over 3%. It has been that way since 1986. Indexation will particularly benefit middle and low income Canadians because of bracket creep and the fact that these taxpayers generally receive the benefits under the child tax credit and the GST credit.

As hon. members are aware, the Canada child tax benefit is a key element of federal assistance to families. It has two components: the Canada child tax base benefit for low and middle income

families and the national child benefit supplement for low income families.

To further help families with the added expense of raising children, the bill also increases Canada child tax benefits by \$2.5 billion annually by the year 2004. The government's goal is to increase the maximum Canada child tax benefit for the first child to \$2,400 by then through fully indexing the Canada child tax benefit, increasing both the base benefit and the national child benefit supplement beyond indexation, increasing the income thresholds at which the base benefit begins to be reduced and the national child benefit supplement is fully phased out, and lowering the reduction rate for the base benefit.

These changes will bring the maximum Canada child tax benefit for the first child to \$2,056 in July 2000 and to \$2,265 in July 2001, well on the way to the five year goal of \$2,400 which I just mentioned.

For the second child the goal is to raise the maximum Canada child tax benefit to \$2,200 in 2004.

• (1540)

This means that benefits to middle income families will be substantially increased. For example, a family with two children with an income of \$60,000 will see its Canada child tax benefit more than doubled from its pre-2000 budget level of \$733 to \$1,541 by 2004.

Overall these increases by the end of five years will bring the Canada child tax benefit to more than \$9 billion annually, of which \$6 billion will go to low income families and \$3 billion to modest and middle income families.

The fact that low and middle income Canadian families are depending on the Canada child tax benefit increases and indexed GST benefits this coming July is another reason to pass the legislation without delay.

[*Translation*]

The federal government is taking the necessary steps to ensure that students who need student loans when they go back to school in September will receive them in time. This bill ensures that money will be available to students in need.

By way of background, the Canada Student Loans Program has played an important role in expanding access to post-secondary education since 1964.

Through loans and other financial assistance totalling over \$15 billion, approximately 2.7 million students have been helped since then. Annually, the program helps over 350,000 needy Canadian students access post-secondary education.

*Government Orders**[English]*

Until now Canada student loans have been administered and delivered on behalf of the federal government by financial institutions, an arrangement that will expire on January 31, 2000. Bill C-32 ensures that the Canada student loans program will continue to serve students after July 31 of this year. Money will be available for student borrowers and there will be no interruption in service.

The role of the Government of Canada is to provide the finances necessary to support the Canada student loans program. Loans will be administered by service providers on behalf of the federal government. Service providers, which many financial institutions currently use to administer their own loan portfolios, are private companies that have the capacity to administer loan portfolios including student loans.

Service providers would sign an agreement with the government to establish loan accounts, maintain contact with the borrowers and administer the loan once the borrower begins repayment. I want to assure students that there will be no significant changes to the program. Students who have already consolidated their loans and are repaying them will not be affected at all.

Before hon. members ask about students who have difficulty meeting their repayments, may I remind them that the federal and provincial governments have greatly increased the assistance available to borrowers having difficulties repaying their loans. One thing is for certain. This new program will be in place for those students who need financial assistance next fall. I am sure hon. colleagues will support this measure.

The 2000 budget also does a lot for parents of newborn and newly adopted children. It extends parental leave under the employment insurance program and makes benefits more flexible and accessible. At present, including the standard two week waiting period for benefits, the EI program provides up to six months of maternity and parental leave benefits for new parents. That is 15 weeks of maternity benefits for recovery from child birth and 10 weeks of parental leave available for both adoptive and biological parents.

The maximum amount of child related leave will now be doubled to one year. This will be done by increasing parental leave to 35 weeks, which can be claimed by either parent or divided between them. Combined with 15 weeks of maternity leave and the standard two week waiting period, the amount of child related leave will be one full year.

• (1545)

In addition, maternity and parental benefits will be made more accessible by lowering from 700 to 600 the number of insurable hours that must be worked to be eligible. Parents will be eligible for benefits with as little as 12 hours of work a week over the course of a year.

In addition, parents will have greater flexibility in choosing whether one or both of them spend time at home with a new child. Only one waiting period will apply rather than two as is currently the case.

[Translation]

Finally, parents will be allowed to work part time while receiving parental benefits in the same way as regular EI claimants. This will help mothers, if they and their employers choose, to gradually return to the workplace following their maternity leave, and also enable parents to maintain their skills and work contacts while taking parental leave.

[English]

Further, income earned while receiving parental benefits will be treated the same as for regular EI benefits. Parents can earn up to 25% of their weekly benefit or \$50, whichever is higher, without affecting their EI benefits.

All of these parental leave benefits changes will positively impact some 150,000 families each year at an estimated annual cost of \$900 million.

In addition, the Canada Labour Code is being amended so that employees in federally regulated workplaces will have their jobs protected during the extended parental leave period.

I would like to move along now and discuss some of the other measures in the bill.

For example, there is one measure that affects registered retirement savings plans, RRSPs, and registered pension plans, RPPs, which are the primary source of retirement income for middle income Canadians. Several entities, including the House of Commons finance committee, the Senate banking committee and the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, have asked the government to reconsider the current level for the limit on foreign property investments in registered pension plans and RRSPs. As a result, to provide better opportunities for Canadians to diversify their personal retirement savings investments through RPPs and RRSPs, the foreign content limit on those investments will be raised from 20% to 25% for 2000 and to 30% for 2001. These increases will also apply to the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board.

Speaking of the CPP, there is an amendment in the bill that directly affects the plan. Let me explain the background to this change.

Following extensive public consultations, federal and provincial governments agreed in 1997 on major changes to the Canada pension plan which were enacted by parliament in 1997 and brought into effect in 1998. The changes are expected to sustain the Canada pension plan throughout the aging of the population and the retirement of the baby boom generation.

Government Orders

Contribution rates are increasing in a phased manner. This will create a sound, adequately funded plan whose earnings can help pay for future benefits. The Canada pension plan provides a basic level of earnings replacement on which tax assisted private pension plans and RRSPs can build.

One of the important changes in 1997 supported by all Canadians, perhaps with the exception of the Canadian Alliance party, was to enhance the returns to plan members by investing in the market funds not needed immediately to pay for benefits. A fully independent investment board operating at arm's length from government manages these market investments in the best interests of CPP plan members.

• (1550)

The CPP legislation allows all provinces to borrow from the CPP for terms of up to 20 years. The proposed amendment before the House is to allow the provinces to prepay their obligations to the Canada pension plan in advance of maturity and at no cost to the Canada pension plan.

The provinces asked for this change and federal and provincial finance ministers agreed to it at their meeting last December. This will provide more flexibility for provinces that are enjoying fiscal surpluses as the economy booms and they are looking for ways to reduce their debts. It also means that more funds will be transferred to the CPP investment board and invested in the market at higher expected returns.

Turning now to the Special Import Measures Act, SIMA, these amendments will bring Canadian countervailing duty laws into line with recent changes to the World Trade Organization agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures. The WTO subsidies agreement contains provisions that rendered certain foreign subsidies that satisfied very specific criteria immune from countervailing duty action. These non-actionable subsidy provisions lapsed on December 31, 1999 as a result of the failure of WTO countries to agree to their extension.

The amendments in Bill C-32 allow for the suspension of provisions in SIMA that implement these non-actionable subsidy provisions into Canadian law. In addition to bringing Canadian countervailing duty law into line with these recent changes to the WTO subsidies agreement, these amendments will ensure that we are not treating our trading partners more favourably than they are treating us in countervailing duty investigations.

Bill C-32 also addresses first nations taxation. This year's budget marked the fourth time that government has indicated its willingness to enter into taxation arrangements with interested first nations. As a result, the Cowichan tribes, the Westbank first nation, the Kamloops Indian band and Sliammon first nation all levy a tax on the sales of certain products on their reserves. Personal income tax collection and sharing agreements with the seven self-governing Yukon first nations are also now in effect.

[*Translation*]

This legislation will enable 13 first nations, all listed in the schedule that accompanies this bill, to levy a direct 7% GST-style sales tax on fuel, alcohol and tobacco products sold on their reserves.

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency will collect the first nation sales taxes and the federal government will vacate the GST room where the first nation tax applies.

[*English*]

In the future, interested first nations could be added to the schedule through an order in council without the need for a legislative amendment.

The Excise Tax Act is also amended in the bill. Among GST and harmonized sales tax registrants there is generally a high degree of voluntary compliance when it comes to reporting or remitting tax. However, instances can arise where allowing a registrant the usual remittance period can put these tax revenues at risk.

Where the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency has reason to suspect tax evasion in these circumstances, it has been powerless to proceed with assessment and collection action. The bill provides the Minister of National Revenue with the authority to take immediate collection action to protect revenues in these circumstances. The minister can now apply ex parte without notice for judicial authorization to assess the registrant before the normal due date and to take the necessary collection actions to recover the money. The registrant will have the right to apply for a judicial review of the court's decision.

I would like to point out that the Income Tax Act contains a similar provision relating to the collection of income tax.

• (1555)

In conclusion, I am confident that hon. members can be counted on to pass this legislation with haste. Canadians across the country are awaiting the benefits. We all know why this bill has to be passed quickly.

[*Translation*]

First, the CHST increase must be enacted to get much needed money into the health care system to deal with the pressing needs of Canadians.

Second, in order for the child tax benefits and indexed GST benefits to come into force on July 1, this legislation has to be passed before the end of June.

And third, the bill must be passed in time for the student loan program to be available for students entering school in September.

*Government Orders**[English]*

I believe that one telling fact about the 2000 budget was the respect it was accorded from hon. members opposite and from Canadians in general. In fact, question period in this Chamber the day following the Minister of Finance's speech was revealing by how few questions were asked about the budget. Hon. members opposite along with Canadians across the country knew that the 2000 budget delivered what the Minister of Finance promised: help for low and modest income families with children, help for the health care and post-secondary education systems, and help for students who want to pursue higher education.

[Translation]

All are measures that build on the new-found strength the minister talked about in the budget and which are designed to improve the quality of life of Canadians.

This is a new budget signalling a new beginning for a new century. Canada greeted the 21st century with a new fiscal record and a renewed hope for improving the quality of life for Canadians.

[English]

This is a government that cares and this is a government that has a social conscience. The 2000 budget measures in this bill reflect this. I urge my hon. colleagues to accord speedy passage to this legislation.

Mr. Monte Solberg (Medicine Hat, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise and debate Bill C-32, an act to implement budget 2000.

I say to my friend across the way who has just spoken that if he has a conscience, not just a social conscience, he must feel a little twinge after what he said. He said some things that really need to be responded to. I shall respond to them first and then I shall deliver the body of my speech.

My friend across the way suggested that the official opposition, the Canadian Alliance, did not ask questions about the budget the day following its introduction in the House by the finance minister. That is very telling; in fact, it speaks volumes about the government, because during that question period the day after the budget was introduced, every single question we asked was about waste in government and about the scandal in human resources development. Somehow my friend across the way thinks that is not part of the budget, that the money which is allocated, \$15 billion a year toward grants and contributions, somehow is not part of the budget. I guess the Liberals assume it is part of Liberal play money.

Canadians pay a lot of taxes to fund the \$15 billion which the government uses so unwisely. I would suggest to my friend that he may want to consider his definition of what constitutes questions

on the budget, because I would argue very strongly that Canadians who have to pay those taxes, I can guarantee, feel that it is part of the budget.

I want to comment in an organized way on budget 2000, on Bill C-32, and I am about to do that. My friend across the way said that we should pass this piece of legislation with haste. I would argue that if we did that, we would be passing it with waste. As I mentioned a minute ago, there is a lot of waste in what the government does, and I am going to elaborate on that in a moment.

I am going to argue that to support the government on Bill C-32 would simply be to entrench the terrible habits the government has: the habit of underachieving, the habit of not addressing huge problems which stand in front of it every day. Instead the government tries to paper them over and throws some money at them. It spends all kinds of money on reports and studies to give people the impression of action, when that is not the case at all.

• (1600)

Let me remind my friend across the way of the huge problems that face Canada today. We have a crisis in health care. Canadians across the country are required to line up, queue up to get basic services. This is ridiculous.

We are a country that spends a lot of money on health care already. However, do we hear the government talking about making some basic reforms so that we can ensure the money gets down to the patients, that we have patient centred health care? Absolutely not. Do we see a government that is willing to be upfront and honest about how much money it actually delivers to the provinces for health care? No.

In fact my friend just spent a long time talking about what they have as done for health care. The simple fact is that in 1995 the cash transfers for health care were \$18.8 billion. In the next several years it will rise to \$15.5 billion. In the interim they cut it down as low as \$12.2 billion. They cut the heart out of it.

Mr. Roy Cullen: What about tax points?

Mr. Monte Solberg: I hear my hon. friend. In 1977 the federal government agreed with the provinces to give back their tax points. Tax points are tax revenue earned in the provinces which goes to the federal government and is yielded back to the provinces. That agreement was made 23 years ago. There were no strings attached. No one said they had to go to a particular set of services.

At what point does that money belong to the provinces? It is not part of the cash transfer which the federal government originally agreed to give to the provinces to ensure that things like health care and higher education were funded. Absolutely not.

If the government were honest for a moment, it would acknowledge that cash transfers have dropped dramatically for health care.

Government Orders

Even with the money it put back in, it is nowhere near where it was. The government has come nowhere near addressing the problems in health care. All it can do today is pick fights with the provinces.

Witness the problems with Ontario. Witness the problems with Alberta right now. Its solution is to go to the level of government that provides the services the moment it tries to do anything different. The provinces are trying to find some way to ensure that important health care services actually deal with the needs of their own people. The federal government at every opportunity dumps all over them and threatens to withhold transfers. The only level of government which is showing any kind of innovation is the provinces. The federal government's answer is to hit them with the big hammer every time.

I do not think that is dealing with the problem. I would argue it is trying to shift the blame to the provinces. I would argue it is an abdication of its responsibility as the senior level of government in Canada. It has completely abdicated its responsibility.

There is an example of where budget 2000 and Bill C-32 fall short of addressing a fundamental need of Canadians, which is good and timely health care. It is not happening and Bill C-32 did not address it.

What are other examples of huge problems which the government did not address? If we go through the entire budget, we find piles of documents which are probably eight inches thick. Do we ever see a mention of problems in human resources development, of the mismanagement of funds?

If chief financial officers for a private sector company produced an annual report which neglected to mention the type of mismanagement the government is involved in human resources development, in Indian affairs, in EDC, and in the scientific research and experimental development tax credits, which the auditor general reported on yesterday, and did not report on those things, they would be fired so fast it would make their heads spin. They would probably be in big trouble with securities regulators for producing a report that was so misleading.

• (1605)

Does the government even feel a twinge of conscience about producing a budget that does not mention these things? Not at all. There was not a mention in my friend's speech across the way of the problems in human resources development and the other problems that have plagued the government over the last several months. When people are not told the whole story it is the same as telling a lie. I would argue that the government is not telling Canadians the whole story.

What are some of the other problems that are not addressed in the budget? Let us consider the fact that in Canada we have seen disposable income virtually sit stagnant for 10 years. It has finally

risen about 5% over the last 10 years. Does the budget deal with that problem?

My friend across the way will say that they brought in \$58 billion in tax relief, but when we break it down is it really \$58 billion? Let us go through the numbers. My friend talked about the child tax benefit. Anybody who pays attention at all would argue that it is not a tax break, that it is a social program.

What is the definition of a tax break? It is when the money is left in people's pockets in the first place. It is not taken out and redistributed so that some people get it back and some do not. That is not a tax break. That is a social program. That is what we do with the guaranteed income supplement and old age security. Those are social programs. They are not tax cuts. We cannot call that a tax cut. It is a social program of about \$7.5 billion.

What about bracket creep? My friend mentioned that they eliminated bracket creep and reindexed the tax system for a tax break of \$13 billion. Is that really a tax break? All that does is cancel future tax increases.

We are happy the government has done it. It picked the pockets of Canadians for a long time and milked the cow dry. That does not mean all of a sudden when it quits doing it that the government should be credited for cutting taxes. It simply is not the case. It is a cancellation of future tax increases of \$13 billion.

The third trick it used was to suggest that if it cut taxes with one hand and raised them with other somehow people would be better off. That is exactly what it does. Let us consider that over the next few years \$29.5 billion will come out of the pockets of taxpayers to pay for higher payroll taxes, Canada pension plan taxes in particular. That largely erases any benefit from income tax cuts that the government would bring in.

What is the net effect? Out of that \$58 billion in tax relief emblazoned in headlines the day after the budget Canadians will get \$8 billion. That is the real tax relief. When we break that down per taxpayer, it means \$100 in his or her pocket a year. It should not be spent all in one place, that \$2 a week. We could go to Starbucks and it would be spent in a week. That is not very much tax relief.

I remind my friend across the way that it is not simply a case of ensuring we put more disposable income in people's pockets, as vital as that is. It is also a situation where we have to remain competitive with our neighbours to the south and other competitors from around the world. I will get into that in more detail in a moment.

We have talked about the government's failure to deal with the problems in health care. It has failed to deal with the mess in human resource development and the general mismanagement of government. It has failed to deal with ensuring that people have more disposal income.

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Let us talk for a moment about Canada's competitive position. Does it really deal with some of the problems that plague Canada when it comes to our competitiveness? I would argue that it does not. While this debate is occurring to some degree in academic circles, and certainly the business community is vitally interested and has taken the government to task a number of times over this issue in the last little while, I would argue that it is not happening in public often enough.

• (1610)

It is time for it to start to happen. I also think many Canadians are starting to see the connection between high taxes, high corporate taxes, lots of regulation, obtrusive governments, lack of competitiveness and back sliding against our international competitors. It truly is a concern.

Let me talk about our situation when it comes to competitiveness, especially in relation to the United States, our biggest trading partner and certainly the country we are in most competition with. Taxes in Canada, even after all the government's changes or its alleged tax relief, are still going to be far higher than they are in the United States. Why is that a problem?

It is a problem for a number of reasons. First, if our taxes are higher, those who are trying to run businesses charge more for their products and services. They need to charge higher prices in order to pay the taxes they have to deliver to government. That makes them uncompetitive. It also means that shareholders start to say there is a point at which it may make more sense for them to move to some place which rewards initiative. In many cases, unfortunately, that means moving to the United States.

One of the great ironies involves a company called Clearly Canadian that manufactures a soft drink. It had to move out of British Columbia to Seattle. Clearly Canadian is now clearly not Canadian. It was driven out by the tax policies of the government. It is essentially a tax refugee and we see thousands of them.

We also see all kinds of young people who were educated at taxpayer expense at Canada's wonderful universities and colleges being lured south to greener pastures by American firms, typically, but also by other firms from around the world.

Why is that? In some cases people take a look at their tax position in Canada and at the tax position in the United States and say they would be better off in the United States. I am not suggesting that is the only reason, but it is a reason for a few people.

Because we have much higher taxes than those in the United States, we do not have the economic activity which breeds the type of economy that produces jobs like the economy in the United States. Right across the border in the United States there has been

much faster growth over the last several years. As a result it produces far more jobs.

Unemployment in Canada is at 6.8%, the lowest unemployment rate in 18 years. Historically we are doing okay, but internationally we are so far behind that it is unbelievable. Our rate is 70% higher than it is the United States. It is also about 70% higher than our average until about the mid-1970s.

With unemployment levels at that rate and when people can go across the border and find jobs very easily, they tend to go where the jobs are. When they go to the United States not only are there more jobs but the jobs pay better because businesses are desperate to find people and offer more money. When people are hired there they find they have more money left over because taxes are lower. Of course they end up being paid in American dollars which are worth more than Canadian dollars. When people go south of the border they win economically in four different ways. There is a huge attraction to the United States.

The answer is not to criticize people for being disloyal like the Prime Minister would do. It is not to bury our heads in the sand and say the brain drain does not exist. The answer is to learn from the mistakes of the past, learn from other countries around the world, heed the advice of people affected by it and start to make some changes which ensure that the economy grows not as fast as the economy of the United States but much faster. It is to ensure that we remain competitive and get ahead of other countries so we can attract back some of this talent and investment.

• (1615)

We want to become a magnet for talent and we want to become a magnet for investment. Bill C-32 simply does not do that. It is like saying "We will grudgingly make some changes", but it does not catapult us into the lead, and we are critical of the government because it does not recognize the problem.

Consider that between 1988 and 1998 Canada's output per capita, which is a reflection of the standard of living, grew by 5% over a 10 year period. In France it grew three times faster. In the United States and Australia it grew four times faster, in Norway six times faster, and in Ireland eighteen times faster. The government should be ashamed of that.

That should be a wake up call. When it is punishing the people because of inaction and the inability to make the connection between public policy decisions and good outcomes for the people, it should be ashamed if it cannot make that connection. Too often this government uses the tools of government to make decisions that not only do not benefit its people, but which ultimately benefit the Liberal Party of Canada. There are so many examples of that, I could stand here all day and talk about them. That is a shameful legacy which this government is leaving behind and there is much human wreckage in the wake.

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What do we do when we are confronted by this sort of situation in this great country, Canada, with its huge and bountiful natural resources and wonderful human capital? We have an educated nation. We have a nation of immigrants, people who have brought their experience from around the world to Canada. We have a history of being innovative. We are entrepreneurs. These are our great natural advantages. What do we do to enhance those advantages, to ensure that we get the most from what we already have? What are the public policy decisions that we put in place so that we can really mine our great resources, both natural and human? I would argue that the very first thing we should do is to stand out of the way of those people.

One of the first decisions any government should ever make is to understand its own limitations. It should put limits on itself, because governments cannot do everything. They do some things well. They keep the peace well. They can be very helpful if they remove the barriers to trade. They can be very helpful even in redistributing income. I will concede that. However, once governments go beyond that they get into very dangerous territory.

The record of this government is littered with examples of that, whether it be human resources development or the scandals that go on in departments like Indian affairs, or even industry, or the revenue agency's handling of the scientific research and experimental development tax credits, which is absolutely shameful. When governments go beyond that and try to pick winners in the economy we have problems. As the finance minister said—and I am sure he wishes he had never said this—“Government cannot pick winners, but losers sure can pick government”. Truer words were never spoken. I just wish that he would listen to his own advice because this government intrudes into the economy far too much and the result is that Canadians are worse off.

When the government takes a dollar from the hands of the taxpayer and puts it into the hands of a bureaucrat or a politician, we end up with the taxpayer, an entrepreneur, a business person, a homemaker, a student, being \$1 worse off and somebody else, someone who is a friend of the government, doing much better. That is a lousy trade-off. It stinks. Many times I would argue it is nothing but pork barrelling and patronage, and it must come to an end.

What do we do now, once we have decided to limit government, to put some clear restrictions on what government should do? We start to take the resources that are freed up as a result of that and put them into things which people care about. What are those things?

• (1620)

If we suddenly reallocated money from all of those grant-giving agencies, what would we do with it? We would put it into higher education. Absolutely. That is something which people value. They want an educated populace in the country. They understand that one of the things we can do to help make our country more productive

and allow people to live more enriched lives is to ensure that they have an education. We support that. That makes more sense than giving it to the human resources minister to hand out to cronies and friends, which is crazy.

We could put it into health care. We have argued that we have to do a lot more than put money into health care, but when it comes down to making choices about how money should be spent by government, I think most Canadians would concede that money is better spent ensuring that we get medical services when we need them instead of pouring it into a fountain in the Prime Minister's riding, which is some of the crazy stuff that goes on through human resources development and other agencies.

Let us make those kinds of fundamental choices. Let us reallocate. We believe that there is \$5 billion to \$10 billion in the existing envelope of spending in government today that should be reallocated from things that are counterproductive and low priority, and sometimes outright pork barrelling and patronage, and put into things that people care about. I have named a couple of them, higher education and health care, to name just two. That is the first thing we do.

Second, once we have established that, we would ask what we would do with the approximately \$150 billion which will accumulate in the next five year period over and above the amount we spend this year.

I remind my friend across the way that in the November fiscal and economic update the finance minister laid out a projection of what the surplus will be that will accumulate to the government over the next five years. When we get through all the gobbledegook, it amounts to roughly \$150 billion. What would we do with that \$150 billion?

We believe that after we have reallocated the waste that already exists in government into things that people care about, like health care and higher education, we should take the great bulk of it and start to give it back to the people who earned it in the first place. It is their money.

Do you realize how hard Canadians work today to look after their families? It is incredible. People work very hard. All they want is to be able to keep the money they earn.

I find it unbelievable that if a person is making \$10,000 in Canada today as a single person, that person has to pay federal income tax. All these people want is the dignity that goes with knowing they can support themselves and their families, if they have a half-decent job and are working a reasonable amount of time. That is all they ask. They are not asking a lot. They just want to keep the money they earn. They are willing to pay their share of taxes, but they are not willing to pay taxes to all kinds of things that most people regard as wasteful and corrupt. That is what happens too often today in Canada.

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How do we do this? The Canadian Alliance has a solution. We call it solution 17. It is a program of major tax relief and important, if not sweeping, tax reform. It has three major elements. The first element is that we would raise the basic and married exemptions, both, to \$10,000. Those people who are making \$10,000 in income would no longer have to pay any tax. A two income family, each making \$10,000, would still not have to pay any income tax because they would have a basic exemption of \$20,000.

The second thing we would do is extend a deduction of \$3,000 per child to every family in Canada with children. A single income family of four would not pay any tax on the first \$26,000 of income. A single parent with one child would pay no tax on the first \$23,000. If there were two children, there would be no tax on the first \$26,000. This would help people at the low end.

• (1625)

According to the Library of Parliament when it ran our proposal through its modem, it found that 1.9 million low income Canadians would no longer have to pay any tax to the federal government, which is an outstanding social benefit of solution 17. It is not the only one. I will say more about some of the other social benefits of solution 17 a bit later on.

The third point is that if we got rid of the 5% surtax, got rid of the 29% rate and the 26% rate, we would be left with one rate of 17%. What would that mean to people if they had the big hike in exemptions, the deduction for children, for every family in Canada with children, and the dropping of the rates to 17%? Obviously it would mean a huge tax cut for every Canadian. There would be 1.9 million low income Canadians lifted right off the tax rolls.

My friends have asked if there would be a tax cut for people at the high end. Absolutely. Would there be a tax cut for people in the middle? Absolutely. In fact, if someone was making \$50,000 a year, in a single income family of four, the tax bill would drop by \$5,000 in the fifth year of our program.

My friends have asked about somebody earning \$200,000. That person would also do very well. We want to reward people who work hard and have in many cases the skills and the options to leave this country, as many of them have already done. We want to keep them here.

The top 1% of income earners in Canada produce 17% of all the tax revenue in Canada. We want to keep those people here. The top 10% produce around 50%. The top 10% are people who earn more than \$50,000 a year. Do we want to alienate those people and drive them out? I do not think so. Those people bring in a lot of revenue for government, so let us provide incentives for them to stay in this country. Those people are the entrepreneurs, the innovators, the people who form the new economy.

I want to point this out because it is a pretty important point when we are talking about the new economy. In 1999 on the NASDAQ, the new technology stock market exchange in the United States, there were 165 initial public offerings for new Internet companies. On the TSE over the same period in Canada, one year, 1999, there were four. There were 40 times more in the United States. Why is that? Because the United States does not punish people for being entrepreneurial. It encourages an environment where there is capital accumulation.

Venture capital is extraordinarily important in ensuring that new companies get off the ground. In 1995 there was 12 times more venture capital in the United States than in Canada. By 1999 the gap had grown to 18 times more venture capital in the United States than in Canada. Obviously there are incentives for people in the United States to save and pool their capital. In Canada it gets taken by the taxman. We have such high taxes in Canada that people cannot save money to invest in new ventures, as an example. That is why the size of Canada's new economy, on the biotechnology side, is so tiny compared to that of the United States, even on a per capita basis. It is not a 10th, it is like a 50th of the size. The reason for that is, we do not have the proper incentives in place to grow the economy.

The government had a chance with Bill C-32 and the budget to address this fundamental problem, but it completely ignored it. Solution 17 recognizes that we are in global competition. We understand that. We would address these things by rewarding people for taking a risk and not punishing them for the crime of making a good living. There is nothing wrong with that.

• (1630)

I do not believe in the politics of envy. I do not think we should say because they have done well, we will now punish them. That is crazy. People should pay their fair share. Under solution 17, people at the high end would pay more than their fair share. Let me give an example of what I mean by that.

Under solution 17, a single income mom earning \$24,000 would pay about \$170 in taxes. Compare that to someone who makes \$1 million, an income which is 40 times more than that of the single income mom. That person's tax bill would be 1,000 times more, and would pay about \$170,000 in taxes.

I do not know how anyone could say that that system still is not progressive. Obviously it is. Does it punish people at the high end? No it does not. It drops the rate at which they have to pay and encourages them to stay. In fact it will draw people back. I believe that solution 17 would help Canada become a magnet for talent and capital, just like Ireland has become.

I mentioned Ireland a few minutes ago. Ireland is an amazing success story. Between 1988 and 1998, the output per capita grew 18 times faster than it did in Canada. How did it do that? What did it do? It did a number of things.

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Ireland put more money into education. We acknowledge that and we are arguing we should do that as well. We probably should go with some reforms because we do not believe just throwing money at things is the right way. We think it is appropriate to put some money into the transfers to the provinces for health care and education.

Another thing Ireland did was it bought some labour peace. It had had problems with squabbling between the private sector unions and employers. It bought some labour peace and that is a good thing, but that is not nearly the problem in Canada that it is in Ireland.

The thing Ireland did which had the biggest impact was it dropped taxes. It dropped corporate taxes dramatically. It dropped personal income taxes and capital gains taxes. What was the impact? As I mentioned, its standard of living has jumped through the roof.

Ireland is a country that for 150 years lost population. Its biggest export was people. Canada was one of the great beneficiaries of that problem. In fact, my own ancestry can be traced back to Ireland. Ireland was such a poor country for so darn long but it finally figured it out. It understood there was a correlation between smart public policy and prosperity, something our government cannot seem to get through its head.

When Ireland figured that out, what happened? Now its population is growing for the first time in 150 years. The situation is that Ireland with 1% of the population in Europe now gets 20% of all the new investment in Europe. So much money is pouring in that it now provides its citizens with free university education. It has a growth rate which is through the roof.

That could be Canada in North America. We could be what Ireland is to Europe. We could be the place where all the money flows to. The United States does not have to be seen just as a big competitor. It can be seen as a big market, as an opportunity. Why do we not mine it by making proper public policy decisions?

The government is so mired in the past. It seems so unwilling to change even when problems are so obvious and confront the government every day. It boggles the mind. It is still caught up in a 1970s time warp where it thinks it can intervene in the economy, and pick winners and losers. Ultimately it picks losers and the result is we are all impoverished for it. That is so wrong.

I remind my friends across the way that Canada has a long heritage and history of having a standard of living which was higher than that of the United States. As the industry minister would point out, that is no longer the case.

John McCallum of the Royal Bank pointed out in a recent paper that Canada's standard of living which was once the same as that of the United States is now down to two-thirds. He said that if we

keep going the way we are going, in another five years we will be down to 50%. Well, thanks very little. I am not interested in that.

• (1635)

We have to recognize the problem and make the public policy decisions that will get us out of it, not to make us equal with the United States but to move us beyond the United States. Why can Canada with the resources it has not be the most prosperous country in the world? We would be helping not only Canada and our citizens if we did that but we would be helping the world because that prosperity goes everywhere. Those are the types of public policy decisions we should make. Solution 17 is part of that. I have talked a bit about solution 17. I want to talk about some of the other changes that we would make.

Another part of our overall fiscal plan is to take the entire contingency reserve and the entire prudence adjustment the government itself suggests we need over the next five years and use it to pay down debt.

The government has taken a very tepid approach to debt repayment. When it first came to power the debt was \$480 billion which became a debt of \$583 billion and now it is down to \$577 billion. We should pay down that debt more aggressively. Some revenues are starting to come in. Let us make hay while the sun shines. Our plan would pay down \$34 billion over the next five years compared to the government's \$15 billion, a big difference.

Finally, we would also put another \$15 billion into spending, \$1 billion a year over the next five years. This would ensure that there is money for things that people care about: health care, education, defence, the RCMP, infrastructure. Those are important things, a lot more important than some of the wasteful things the government spends its money on.

I know my time is coming to a close and I regret that. I could say a lot more, but I will be very satisfied with the 40 minutes I have been allotted.

Mr. Eric Lowther: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. When the member for Medicine Hat speaks about solution 17 and taking the working poor off the tax rolls, it bursts hope in the hearts of Canadians from coast to coast. I ask for the unanimous consent of the House to extend his time so he can elaborate more on that part of solution 17.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): It is hardly a point of order. It might have been a point of order if the hon. member for Calgary Centre was asking him to expand on his Irish heritage. Nevertheless we will put the question to the House. The hon. member for Calgary Centre has asked for the unanimous consent of the House to provide another 15 minutes for the member for Medicine Hat to expound on his thesis. Is there unanimous consent?

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Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Monte Solberg: I appreciate my friend's intervention, Mr. Speaker. I will simply conclude by saying that the Canadian Alliance believes that solution 17 and the larger policies that we propose could propel Canada to be a world leader, a place where people from all over the world will come because they will be so attracted by the prosperity and the incredible standard of living that we have. I would urge my friends across the way to be mindful of this the next time they think about preparing a budget. Let us hope that they do not get a chance to. Let us hope we have an election before then.

I simply say in closing that as the Canadian Alliance is feeling a new birth here, I encourage people across the way who are very interested in solution 17 and to what we have talked about to find out more about it by accessing our website Canadian Alliance.ca. Of course we would love to hear from the public if they are interested in this proposal.

I thank the House and my friend across the way for his indulgence over the last 40 minutes.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): 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 Halifax West, Veterans Affairs and the hon. member for Mississauga South, Health.

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this afternoon to address Bill C-32, the Budget Implementation Act, 2000, at second reading.

• (1640)

The public did not know what to think of a government that has budget surpluses. We heard many things, because budget surpluses give ideas to people.

Some wondered "How will the government strike a balance? Will there be tax reductions? Will the debt be lowered? Will social transfers finally be increased?" Unfortunately, people did not realize that the government is secretive and that the Minister of Finance stashes money away like a squirrel. The sharper ones would have expected this budget to contain a number of somewhat misleading elements.

We discovered quite a while ago that the government had much bigger surpluses than anticipated, surpluses estimated at \$137 billion. This is not to mention the waste that we keep hearing more

and more about when we take a closer look at what is going on in the government's administration.

The Minister of Finance once again misled the public with truncated budget forecasts. Indeed, most observers agree that the surpluses will be between \$115 billion and \$150 billion.

The Bloc Québécois did a conservative estimate of the surpluses and came up with the amount of \$137 billion over a five year period. This is a huge amount. It is clear to us that the Minister of Finance could have done a lot more, particularly in terms of tax reductions and transfers to the provinces for health, education and post-secondary education.

I would like to address the matter of transfers for health care and education, because there is nothing or almost nothing for it in this budget. The minister is releasing \$2.5 billion for transfers to the provinces. This amount is both inadequate and a one time measure. In other words, the amounts allocated for health care and education are pitiful, when in fact these areas have been shown clearly to be priorities for taxpayers.

And yet the federal government has plenty of money to invest where it feels like. We need only think of recent events, which are ongoing in the House, in connection with the use of the grants made by the Department of Human Resources Development.

For example, it has enough money for various foundations and other organizations parliament has no control over, such as \$6.8 billion this year in order to waste money in the Department of Human Resources Development—\$1.3 billion annually—and to distribute \$1.4 billion in contracts without tender. Despite all, the government still refuses to invest where it cut, namely in health care and education.

To summarize the 2000 budget in terms of transfers to the provinces, \$240 million is being made available for health care in Quebec, enough money to run the health care system for two days. And yet the government has the means to do a lot better with the accumulated surpluses. The \$2.5 billion announced for the provinces is far from enough. Quebec's share will be \$240 million for 2000-01 and \$120 million for 2001-02.

Does it know that hospitals cost, for Quebec alone, \$3.7 billion a year, or \$100 million a day. Clearly, the amounts proposed by the federal government will not enable the provinces to address the problems in their respective health care networks.

We learn as well, in budget 2000, that the \$2.5 billion will be charged to 1999-2000. The budget for 2000-01 is charged to 1999-2000. This is a ridiculous level of social transfer, frozen over four years.

As we can see, the minister is continuing his old practices of transparent management. There has been a lot of talk of clarity this spring.

• (1645)

Here again this is a matter of playing with figures in order to convince us that Ottawa cannot afford to give back to the provinces and to Quebec what the Liberals have taken from them in recent years. Quebec comes out a major loser in this entire political masquerade. It has, in fact, borne the brunt of over 50% of total cuts to the Canada social transfer since 1994.

Finally, including the tax points under the CST, the Minister of Finance tells us that, between 1999 and 2004, the total transfer will be \$156 billion. This increase is, however, solely the result of the value of the tax points which, for the same period, go from \$14.9 billion to \$17.2 billion. It must be understood, however, that these tax points are not transfers; they are revenues belonging to the provinces and to Quebec.

Now, moving on the social housing, there is a considerable difference between \$54 million and \$1.7 billion. The Bloc Québécois called upon the federal government to inject \$3 billion into an infrastructure program, \$1.7 billion of which was for social housing.

These demands were the outcome of a broad public consultation, yet once again the demands of Quebecers have been ignored. This government is so arrogant as to totally ignore the unemployed, although they contribute more than \$5 billion yearly to the minister's surplus.

Although his colleague, the Minister of Labour, promised a concrete action plan for the homeless, the plan she unveiled with much fanfare in December 1999 contains no tangible measure for improving the situation. Yet the need is there, the public can see it clearly, and social housing can also be improved in various ways according to need.

So the government's inaction was immediately met with a wave of protest. In all this, it appears that the pressures from the Toronto area for short term assistance for the homeless won out over the real needs of the homeless and those with inadequate housing.

Since the early 1990s, those with inadequate housing have lost out to budget cuts and the freeze on budget increases for social housing. Since 1994, the government has been withdrawing from housing completely. In fact, no longer do we hear anything about new social housing. The federal government no longer talks about helping those whose housing is inadequate. All it does is maintain existing commitments.

In the very early 1990s, it was estimated that budget cuts would generate savings on the order of \$620 million between 1991 and 1996. Taking the exponential effects of these cuts into account, that is close to \$3.5 billion over nine years that has not been spent on this sector. Anyone visiting our ridings or taking a look as they

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travel through this or other provinces can clearly see that there are urgent needs in the area of social housing.

There is no way \$268 million over five years—or \$54 million annually—will do the trick. This is ridiculous. For Quebec, this comes to less than \$20 million a year. These budgets will not even be allocated to social housing as such but, rather, to renovation projects. I understand that, after years of not investing, the immediate priority is to renovate, because housing units have fallen into disrepair.

One per cent of the budgets, or \$1.6 to \$1.7 billion more per year, would have been a reasonable investment to provide adequate social housing. While these amounts would not have met all existing needs, they would have allowed us to help the social housing program to adjust to today's realities and to the realities in the ridings and municipalities that have a real need for such housing units.

• (1650)

When he delivered his budget speech, the Minister of Finance referred to "Secure social programs that recognize that real progress is made by reaching for the top, not racing to the bottom".

Is this to say that, for his government, social housing and those who live in inadequate housing are at the bottom?

During this overview of the 2000 budget, I also want to discuss the indexing of tax tables.

In that regard, we say finally, because the Bloc Québécois has been asking for that measure since 1993. Since 1994, the federal government has taken \$17 billion out of taxpayers' pockets, through non-indexation. It is important to note that non-indexation is not at all the same as tax reductions. It only means that Quebecers will not pay more taxes because of inflation.

We must remind the minister that non-indexation is not a tax reduction. In the 2000 budget, the government follows up on the representations made by the Bloc Québécois and by groups of citizens to put a stop to hidden tax increases resulting from non-indexation. However, that measure comes a little late. Indeed, between 1993 and 2000, non-indexation will have generated between \$12 billion and \$17 billion for the Liberal government.

As for tax reductions, they will only come later. We will have to wait. Yet, the federal government has more than enough leeway to redouble its effort to reduce the tax burden, as early as this year.

Let us make no mistake, indexing is not a real tax cut. In fact, with indexing, a taxpayer pays no more or less tax.

The 2000 budget informs us that the annual tax saving in 2004-05 will total \$10.9 billion, including \$6.2 for indexing. If we

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subtract the tax savings for business from this amount, indexation represents 60% of the alleged tax cuts. For the year 2000 alone, the estimate is that the real tax cuts will represent only about 20% of the cuts of \$3.3 billion the Minister of Finance announced.

Now, I would like to address another matter, which has become a daily matter of interest and that is the management of public finances, a black hole of \$10.4 billion.

It is important to address this in the context of a budget, since the savings made could have been applied to such important items as the social transfer, health care and education.

Since 1994, the Liberal government has created no less than 80 agencies that are not accountable to parliament. These agencies spend \$6.8 billion annually, without any control. If we add to this figure the contracts given out without tender and the fiasco at the Department of Human Resources Development, we end up with \$10.4 billion spent annually with no control.

When the government gives out money and delegates powers to agencies, they have to be accountable. We have to know where the responsibility lies. In order for us to know this, it is natural to insist on control.

The government has come up with this formula of creating agencies. It is no trifling matter. The 80 agencies created since 1994 manage to escape these controls, because they are headed by directors answering to a minister, who answers to another minister, and when we look for ultimate control, we find none. A black hole of \$10.4 billion is no trifling matter.

Last November, the auditor general pointed out that over 77 new agencies spending over \$5 billion annually were not under the control of parliament and were not accountable. It is almost incredible.

• (1655)

That means \$5 billion that are outside the control of the public as a whole. Three new organizations have been added in the latest budget, as well as \$1.7 billion. In 2001-02, then, this makes \$6.8 billion in public funds outside the control of Parliament and of the public.

On the other hand, there is the black hole of Human Resources Development Canada, which, on its own, represents \$1.3 billion. HRDC transfers to businesses and to individuals are absolutely unmonitored. Where has the money gone? Were jobs created? If so, where? Was there political patronage? These are questions without answers, and this budget will not change a thing.

The Minister of Human Resources Development has been asked the same questions over and over again for weeks, always with the

same responses; in other words, we have had no response questions like the ones I have just asked, namely: Where has the money gone? Were jobs created? Was there political patronage?

No answers. There were tons of documents, but each time we looked into one in greater detail, we found that what the departmental employees were giving as answers differed from what was in the document we had been given. This is worrisome enough when just one department is involved. Perhaps if we keep on investigating further, more worthwhile discoveries will be made.

In this connection, I would like to bring to hon. members' attention what the auditor general says in the highlights of his report. The auditor general's report is our guide as parliamentarians, whether we are in the opposition or the government, in determining whether public funds have been properly managed.

I will give a few highlights of the auditor general's report, which came out this week. The following comments are from the report:

The federal government must introduce strong control mechanisms in order to eliminate potential fraud in the immigration system.

I will come back to immigration in greater detail.

Education services for aboriginals must be improved in order to clearly define what the federal government's role should be and control spending.

Spending is still a concern. The auditor general has found that there is a complete lack of control over spending. He is sounding an alarm. The report also reads as follows:

The rules for the treatment of scientific research tax credits, estimated at several billions of dollars, should be tightened.

What does tightening the rules mean? It means that somewhere there were abuses, that things were not done according to procedure. The report goes on:

The RCMP's outdated computer system is a cause of concern for authorities, and the turnaround times for crime laboratory analyses are a threat to public safety.

Bills were adopted in this House giving the RCMP increased authority to conduct DNA tests for evidence purposes in rather horrible cases. If the results take forever, there is a problem. It is not a case of spending too much money, but not enough.

The Department of Human Resources Development is getting EI cheques out faster, but the odds of inaccurate payments have increased. Things are just fine: more haste, less care.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency inspectors need more information in order to better assess the risks posed by travellers entering the country. If all manner of people can enter the country as they wish, questions are in order. If this is what is going on, it is probably because of a lack of staff and money. Those areas with

real, identifiable needs are perhaps where the government should be throwing its money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I am sorry to interrupt the member. The hon. government House leader.

• (1700)

Hon. Don Boudria: Mr. Speaker, I apologize to the hon. member who is making a speech.

[English]

At the request of an opposition member earlier today I committed to table an article from the *Jerusalem Post* which spoke glowingly, as most people do of course, of Canada's very fine Prime Minister. I am now pleased to table this article in both official languages.

I am still prepared to table several copies of the *Toronto Star* whenever the House wishes me to do so.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

NATIONAL DEFENCE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Derek Lee (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I also thank the hon. member for Louis-Hébert for her indulgence.

There have been consultations among all parties in the House and if there is unanimous consent I would move:

That, in relation to their study on the Revolution in Military Affairs and the Quality of Life in the Canadian Forces, the members of the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs be authorized to travel to Kosovo, Yugoslavia and London, England from May 19 to May 26, 2000 and that the necessary staff accompany the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Does the hon. parliamentary secretary have unanimous consent of the House to move the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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[Translation]

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2000

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-32, an act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 28, 2000, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Hélène Alarie (Louis-Hébert, BQ): Mr. Speaker, I will now discuss immigration.

The auditor general's report contains some rather startling information concerning immigration, such as the fact that it can take up to three years to process an immigration application. One paper noted the following:

Crushed under the paperburden and the lack of resources, Canadian offices abroad sometimes take over three years to process immigration applications from entrepreneurs or skilled workers.

I continue with another quote on immigration:

It is no surprise, notes Mr. Desautels, that Canada has not been achieving its immigration objectives over the past few years.

While good candidates have to wait for long months, others get ahead by using false statements—a phenomenon that is more and more frequent, according to the auditor general, which is worrisome—or with the complicity of unscrupulous agents.

For 1998 alone, the department's Office of Professional Conduct admitted that some 500 visas had been either lost or stolen. Moreover, there is no reliable computer system—

This is almost unbelievable in the year 2000.

—to track down all the moneys collected by foreign offices for visas.

I continue to quote the article published in *La Presse* by journalist Vincent Marissal:

Another risk for Canadians is the uselessness of the medical tests imposed on newcomers.

In addition to being overworked, Immigration Canada doctors have been using the same tests for 40 years, namely tests for tuberculosis and syphilis. It is time, says the auditor general, to review the list and, perhaps, to add . . . new communicable diseases . . . such as HIV or hepatitis B and C.

Anyone who has travelled abroad extensively is well aware of the risk, in certain countries, of picking up diseases such as hepatitis B and C. I am not talking about AIDS, because I think there is public awareness about this issue.

• (1705)

We welcome these people here and do not have them undergo any of these tests, because we cannot afford them, because we do not have enough doctors and because we are buried under paperwork. I cannot get over it. I am talking about Bill C-32 and

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defending the interest of Quebecers in connection with a budget containing excessive spending and very substantial surpluses, but, daily, we see absolutely incredible problems.

In my riding, I have the honour to have many immigrants. There are two universities in my riding. I often have occasion to speak with these immigrants. I knew of the complexity of many problems, but I had no idea the inconsistencies of the immigration system were so chronic, so persistent and of such magnitude.

I had a look at what this budget reveals. As members know, my interests lie in agriculture and biotechnologies. I would like to indicate what I found in the budget pertaining these two favourite subjects of mine.

The sum of \$90 billion is to be allocated over three years to the federal departments and agencies regulating the processes and products of biotechnology. There is nothing to rejoice about here. As the ministers of finance, health and agriculture seem to live in a bubble, it is a good idea to remind them where things stand in the new biological technologies approval process.

On September 30, 1999, 200 federal experts on food quality and safety wrote to the Minister of Health, Allan Rock, to tell him of significant gaps in research on GMOs, for example, because of the shortage of personnel at the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Their letter reads in part:

Risk assessment has and continues to be compromised by a significant lack of scientists.

The letter goes on to say:

The Agency is in a conflict of interest situation because it must, on the one hand, ensure that foods are harmless, while on the other hand encouraging food production and export.

It also states that the system's administration and deregulation strip those involved of responsibility as far as meeting their obligations is concerned.

This is not the first reference made to stripping of responsibility and to impunity.

It was not an easy decision for two hundred federal government scientists to abandon their usual reserve and sign their names to such a letter, thus endangering their jobs. They were so concerned that they felt they had to speak out. These are career scientists; they know what they are talking about. Quoting again from the letter:

We do not test these products ourselves. No Health Canada researcher is assigned to transgenic foods, because there is no funding for such research.

What planet is the Minister of Finance from, if he believes that these \$30 million yearly are going to make it possible to solve all problems, including ethical ones?

What is of concern in connection with the new technologies and the GMOs is that, when approving transgenic products, the federal government depends on research that has been carried out by the companies, limiting itself to reviewing or approving them. It does not carry out any systematic counter-expertise on all plants and all food items headed for market, because it lacks the experts to do so. dm

The government uses the concept of "substantially equivalent", by virtue of which genetically modified plants or foods resembling traditional ones and with similar-appearing composition are not subjected to more detailed examination.

According to the federal deputy minister of health himself, speaking before a Senate committee in the spring of 1999, the government did not, at that time, have any expertise whatsoever in genetics. As he put it, "its labs are not really up to it".

• (1710)

While the approval of new drugs may take years of in depth studies, the approval of transgenic foods takes only a few weeks. How can the government guarantee the safety of these foods without adequate expertise and independent scientific studies?

In May 1999, this same Deputy Minister of Health said, regarding Health Canada's capacity to evaluate GMOs, that the department was not as ready as it should be to face the enormous changes that would occur over the next ten years—yes, ten years—in the area of human, animal and plant health.

In fact, public resources in the area of genetically modified foods are sorely lacking, as this same Deputy Minister of Health—when you think of it, he is my favourite—said in May 1999 before the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry:

We must strengthen our capacity in the genetics area. . . We do not, at the moment, have the capacity on board. . . Some of our labs, in particular in the environmental health area, are not in good shape.

The changes that we will see over the next decade in the field of human health, as well as animal and plant health, will be enormous. You asked whether we are prepared. My answer: Not as well as we should be by any stretch of the imagination, but we are engaged in trying to become better prepared by building up a genetic capacity within the department. . . ensure that consumers know what they are eating.

I have been advocating this for a long time. I have been asking for the mandatory labelling of transgenic foods for a long time.

Thirty million dollars per year is very little when we have to start from scratch, when we need laboratories, geneticists and experts, and when we need to inform the public.

One thing scared me when I looked at the budget for the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. I noted that projected expenditures for the year 2000 are \$266 million. In 2002, the figure is down to \$261 million; in 2002-2003, it sinks again to \$259 million.

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Earlier, I mentioned a ten-year time line; what is clear from the figures is that every year spending forecasts for the agency responsible for the food safety of Canadians drop further, although we live in a world undergoing huge changes—this is a rapidly evolving field right now. There is cause for concern.

As the agriculture critic, I must say that the Agriculture Income Disaster Program is aptly named. It was a disaster to administer, first for westerners, who were the first to turn to it, and things went from bad to worse when it came the turn of easterners.

The difficulty of using this program discourages a good number of farmers and, at the end of the road, the resources they obtain are a far cry from what the program promised.

I also wanted to talk briefly about agricultural subsidies. Right now, while Canadian farmers receive \$140 a head, American farmers are getting \$340; in the European Economic Community, it is \$380. We share our entire east-west border with the United States; a Canadian farmer raising the same crops as his American counterpart driving his tractor on the other side of the fence receives \$200 less a year.

I can understand that the ideal would be to change world trade policies, but when one is competing on a daily basis, this is very tough.

I had also prepared a brief speech on small farms. According to a study done in the United States, they are the lifeblood of agriculture. The same is true here. Here, they have not even been defined. What are we to make of this? How can there be a policy to help them if they have not even been defined?

• (1715)

I urge the government to include in its coming budgets, to adopt policies that take into account the whole agricultural sector, as well as disparities and the competition we face abroad.

I could go on and on, because agriculture was overlooked in this budget. There are no programs for it. The department's budget is also getting smaller. When we subtract the money for agriculture income disaster programs and income security for our farmers, there is not much left in this budget for the agricultural sector to get excited about.

As a citizen, I have no reason to be happy with this budget. The Liberal government is not controlling its spending. If I were to do the same thing in my family, I would be in big trouble.

It is spending a little here and there to get votes and is doing nothing to resolve the problems it created in the health care and education systems in all provinces, not just in Quebec. We are all demanding a return to the social transfers of 1994.

As the agriculture critic, I am equally disappointed. This budget reveals how little vision this government has in the farm income crisis. Although this is not the subject of my speech, we need only think of the ad hoc injection of public money for western farmers through transportation subsidies.

These are ad hoc measures. They are not long term measures. Farmers in all the provinces are calling for long term policies to ensure their survival, and they have been exemplary in what they have been doing to ensure the sustainability of agriculture.

I am also concerned about the positions this government has taken in the matter of the GMOs, where its head in the sand policy calls into question the system monitoring the safety of our food and our exports.

I have tried to paint a clear picture. As my colleague before me said, we could spend a day talking about the budget. I would like the government to remember the important points. As far as I am concerned, the accountability of those responsible is vital. If the government drags in all sorts of red herrings and establishes all sorts of agencies so no one is responsible, that bothers me. Wastage bothers me just as much. As for the \$10 billion hole, we wonder where the money went. The government could bring it back for transfer to the provinces in the areas of health, education and agriculture, which is my greatest interest.

[English]

Hon. Lorne Nystrom (Regina—Qu'Appelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words in the debate on the budget implementation bill before the House. We have had a budget before the House for quite some time. When we deal with the implementation bill, we have to ask ourselves what kind of a society we want and what the goals and objectives should be in terms of the budgeting process for the Government of Canada.

For the first time in a long while we have a surplus with which to work. The minister said in his budget update in November that he thought there would be a surplus of around \$100 billion over five years. It will probably be more than that. It may be \$110 million or \$120 billion or perhaps even more, because in general the economy is doing pretty well.

If we look at the growth rate in this country compared to that in the United States, it is actually quite high. Revenues to the government are increasing. When the growth rate is high fewer people are unemployed and fewer people draw unemployment insurance and welfare. There are fewer costs in the social services system and therefore the coffers of the government continue to expand and expand.

We have no idea for how long this economic expansion will last. We have no idea how long the expansion of government revenue will last. In many ways it is very difficult to project into the future. We have to work with the numbers we have. For the first time in

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many years we have a budget surplus that will go on for quite some time. This is different from the last part of the 1980s or throughout the 1990s when we had to talk about how we deal with debts and deficits and how we deal with valid programs that could not go ahead because of the fiscal crunch.

• (1720)

We now have choices before us and we have to decide what kind of an agenda we want. When I think of the agenda of the future I think what should motivate us is doing the most we can for the common good of the Canadian people in terms of creating a society in which there is more equality of condition and more equality of services. People should be empowered through a better democratic system. We should build a society on co-operation and play an international role in terms of development in the third world and the promotion of world peace. Those should be the goals and the objectives.

If we are to fulfil a goal that speaks to doing the best for the common good, it seems to me we should start now by reinvesting in programs that were cut back by the government a few years ago in the fight against the debt and the deficit, namely our social programs.

If we look at the last number of years and take health care as an example, a tremendous sacrifice was made by the health care sector to fight the deficit. About \$30 billion have been taken out of the health care system. That is an awful lot of money, and we have problems in health care today.

We all know that the only problem is not money. The big problem is that \$30 billion are missing. Another way of putting it is that when the Minister of Finance decided to radically cut back on health care and social programs in his budget of 1994-95 the payments made at that time compared to the payments now show a deficit of about \$4.2 billion a year. To get back to 1994-95 levels it would mean an increase in spending on health care of around \$4.2 billion a year. That extra money would go a long way in terms of making sure that we address our health care problems.

Another thing about health care is that even in its most recent budget the government decided that health care and social programs were not priorities. Indeed the priority for the Minister of Finance was a tax cut of some \$58 billion over four years. In other words, for every dollar in tax cuts the government will put two cents into health care. That is not the right priority.

The right priority should be to reinvest once again in our social programs, in particular health care, to build a strong health care sector and make sure that we serve people so that they can go to hospital or to a doctor and obtain equal service regardless of income or background. That is not the case.

Because of this some provinces like Alberta are introducing a bill like its bill 11 to set up a partially privatized health care

system. I disagree with bill 11. I disagree with that direction. Under the NAFTA if Alberta does that and allows a privatization of health care or a two tier system in health care, it will have to go right across the country because the corporations in private health care have the right to do it not just in one province but across the country. Therefore that is a dangerous precedent to set.

One reason that is happening is the big cutbacks in health care to Alberta, to every province in the country. In my province of Saskatchewan about 13 cents on the dollar come from Ottawa and 87 cents on the dollar are paid by the province of cash injection into health care. In Ontario about 89 cents are put up by the Ontario taxpayer and about 11 cents are put up by the federal government in terms of health care.

At one time the federal government paid 50 cents on the dollar in terms of funding health care when medicare was founded back in the 1960s. After the seventies it started to pull back, to withdraw. Now that we have a fiscal surplus, a fiscal dividend, a major part of it should go into health care to make sure we have a public health care system for each and every Canadian citizen. If we do not do that and the provinces start to privatize, we will lose health care and end up with a two tier American system that is unfair, unequal and very expensive.

A greater percentage of the GDP in the United States is spent on health care than in Canada. We have a public health care system in this country. In that country there is a mixed system. Some 48 million Americans do not have any health care. Those who do not have health care are mainly the poor people, particularly the black people in the United States because of the socioeconomic condition that they find themselves in.

• (1725)

It is extremely unfair to have a health care system that is built on the size of a person's pocket book or bank account and not on treating people as equals. That is the way we are going unless we convince the Minister of Finance and the government across the way that the time has come to put cash on the table and make sure that we build once again toward Ottawa paying up to 50% of the cost of health care in Canada. That should be our number one priority.

In addition, we have the whole question of education and the federal government withdrawing money for post-secondary education. There is a need to reinvest in young people for post-secondary education, for skills, for training and for research and development. If we are to build a strong society and a strong economy in the years that lie ahead, knowledge becomes extremely important. Knowledge is extremely important in terms of building a strong economy. We need a strongly motivated, highly knowledgeable and highly educated workforce. It is the obligation of the federal government to put up more money to make sure we have a workforce that is highly trained and highly skilled.

Those should be the major priorities of the government across the way, but it seems to me that the government has been intimidated by what we used to call the Reform Party. I am sure the Chair would agree that the Reform Party has had a great impact on the agenda of Canada which calls for smaller government, cutbacks in health care, cutbacks in education, cutbacks in the powers of the Canadian Wheat Board, and cutbacks in anything that has to do with the common good or the sense of community. It wants to cut back, cut back, cut back and reduce the role of government, to the point now where the size of government spending is 11.6% of the GDP, the lowest level since the second world war.

I do not know why the Liberal government is afraid of the Reform Party in terms of setting the agenda. The government across the way is the real Conservative Party. We have a more Conservative government now than we had with Brian Mulroney in 1984 and 1988 till 1993.

That has been the agenda, but that is not where the people of the country want to go. In poll after poll after poll they are saying that health care is number one. We need a public system of health care. It should not be privatized. We do not want a two tier American style medicine. That is what the Canadian people are saying. For that we need more federal money going into health care.

My Liberal friends across the way should not be intimidated by this reborn Reform Party, the Canadian Conservative Reform Alliance Party of Canada. The last time I looked at the Gallup poll it is still sitting at 9%, so why be afraid of it? Why have an agenda that is going to the right and is more conservative than the Conservatives?

We need real progressive change. We need some social democracy. That is where the Canadian people are at and that is what the Canadian people want.

Mr. Ken Epp (Elk Island, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, most of what this member said is ridiculous. He somehow seems to think that unless we promote socialism we are not doing the country a service.

The fact of the matter is that the more freedom we give to individuals and the more we promote free enterprise and competition, the better off we will all be. I would like to simply ask—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): I will have to interrupt the hon. member because I have to give the right to a 30 second reply to the hon. member.

Hon. Lorne Nystrom: Mr. Speaker, the member wants more free enterprise, more competition and more private sector activity. I assume he was referring to health care. My answer is no, that is not what Canadian people want.

Private Members' Business

They have told us time and time again that they want a public health care system adequately funded by the federal government and the provinces to serve the people. That is the age of the dinosaur and that is not the way we are going.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): 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

• (1730)

[English]

WITNESS PROTECTION PROGRAM ACT

The House resumed from March 15 consideration of the motion that Bill C-223, an act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act and to make a related and consequential amendment to another act (protection of spouses whose life is in danger), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank all parties in the House for agreeing to defer the vote, which would normally have taken place at the end of the 45 minutes of debate this evening, to May 2. I appreciate that.

I would also seek the consent of the House to have five minutes at the end of the debate tonight to wrap up or have the right of reply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. McClelland): Does the hon. member have unanimous consent of the House?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. Jim Abbott (Kootenay—Columbia, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, as the solicitor general critic for the Canadian Alliance, I will speak in favour of Bill C-223, particularly from the perspective of what we can learn from the existing RCMP source and witness protection program, which has been in effect since 1984.

I note from a news release by the former solicitor general dated March 23, 1995 that they wanted to upgrade and strengthen the existing program by the following criteria: clearly defining admission criteria for witnesses; ensuring that cases are dealt with in a consistent manner across the country; setting out the responsibili-

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ties and obligations of both the administrators of the program and individuals entering the program; clarifying the management structure within the RCMP for the day to day operation of the program, thereby increasing accountability; and finally, providing for a complaints procedure and requiring the commissioner of the RCMP to submit to the solicitor general an annual report on the operation of the program.

I am sure these were good intentions on the part of the solicitor general of the day back in 1995, but I have to report that it unfortunately has not been completely successful. I have had interviews with people who have been under the witness protection program and I am aware that there are some distinct problems with the program.

In another document from the former solicitor general, we have the criteria for the admission to the RCMP witness protection program: the potential contribution the witness source can make toward a particular police investigation; the nature of the offence under investigation; the nature of the risk to the individual; alternative methods of protection that are available; danger to the community if the individual is admitted to the program; potential effects on any family relationships; the likelihood of an individual being able to adjust to the program; the cost of maintaining the individual in the program; and, any other fact that the commissioner of the RCMP may deem relevant.

These are all worthy goals and objectives. After talking to some of the people who are currently in the program, I know that the issue of the nature of risk to the individual is one which unfortunately is highly suspect.

Relative to the existing program, not to the proposed program, let us be clear that at the time the people become involved in the witness protection program, probably the majority of them, they are not people at that stage in their lives who we would be happy to invite home for a cup of coffee. These are people who, typically at that time in their lives, either have been compromised by a given situation they have been involved in with the other people involved in criminal activity, or are perhaps tied up with drugs, alcohol or other problems of that type.

However, these people perform an exceptionally valuable service to the law enforcement agencies in Canada. What typically is happening, in my judgment, is that they are being left hanging out to dry by those same law enforcement agencies. Some do become involved in the program but, more frequently, they actually end up signing agreements with the enforcement authority under duress, to the point where an officer may say "If you do not get on side with me, I will blow your cover. I will reveal your identity".

• (1735)

A very important case for jurisprudence recently took place in the case of Mr. Francis. After he had made an agreement in good

faith with the law enforcement people he was spirited quickly out of Vancouver to a motel in Chilliwack along with his family who were absolutely petrified. He was told "I am sorry, it really did not work out. We will have to get something else organized". The judge rightfully came down like a tonne of bricks on the enforcement authorities.

The final thing I would say on this particular case is that there is further confusion. The justice department then goes to these people, who are trying to get their day in the sun in a court of law, and says "You must reveal evidence", which is evidence that if revealed would not only compromise themselves but would also compromise the RCMP investigations or the police investigations.

The reason I am in favour of this bill being voted on and going to committee is so that we can look at the entire picture. We can look at spousal protection and at the whole witness protection program because it is in a sad state of disrepair and desperately needs work. Above all, this is not only for the protection of society but also so those people who have been drawn into the program can receive proper protection for themselves, for their loved ones and for their families.

Mrs. Marlene Jennings (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak to Bill C-223, an act to amend the Witness Protection Program Act.

I want to thank the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River for introducing the bill. This matter involves the issue of improving safety and security for spouses whose lives are in danger. It is obvious to me that improving safety and security for victims of spousal violence has or should have the support of the members of the House. It definitely has my support.

When the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River introduced the bill he noted that this was a non-partisan matter. I agree, it is a non-partisan matter. I want to provide my input to this debate in a way that respects its non-partisan matter.

I do not think that there is any real debate that measures ought to be in place to protect victims of life-threatening relationships. I believe that the only questions are what form these measures should take and how we can improve upon what is currently in place. These are important questions that deserve careful review by experts who work in the field of family violence.

In Canada we already have numerous measures against family violence in place. Let us look at some of them. First, we have laws that prohibit and punish the physical violence that is frequently a tragic part of abusive relationships. As we are all aware, however, these laws have not always worked. In the past our society has been far too accepting of family violence. Law enforcement and justice officials themselves have not always been sensitive, and still today are not necessarily as sensitive as they should be to the issue when it was, in the past, brought to them and when, still today, it is brought to them.

Private Members' Business

However, we have recently made some progress in this area. Through education and prosecution guidelines, we have sought to ensure that the appropriate criminal charges are brought against persons who commit these acts. We have also had success in this regard, although I must agree, as many in the House would state, there is room for improvement. While such measures are not the whole answer, they obviously play an important role in deterrence and in providing sanctions against perpetrators of family violence.

• (1740)

In addition to the standard criminal justice measures against violence, we also have measures which are more specifically relevant to spousal violence situations. An important measure of this type is the prohibition against criminal harassment found at section 264 of the criminal code.

We must remember that criminal harassment, such as stalking, is frequently a prelude to spousal violence. Further, beyond the direct physical violence that it can lead to, stalking can also cause significant harm in and of itself as the constant fear of violence takes its toll on that victim.

The Minister of Justice recently announced that she would recommend that parliament lengthen the maximum penalty for criminal harassment from five to ten years. In appropriate cases, those who carry out criminal harassment would then be subject to dangerous offender provisions, allowing for the imposition of indefinite sentences. That is a move forward.

Criminal code measures providing deterrents and sanctions must work in conjunction with other measures. Shelters and transition houses have played an important part in addressing safety and other needs of family violence victims.

I am sure a lot of members, if not all members in the House, have shelters within their own riding. I have one in my riding and it performs a real service to victims of family violence and to the children of the spouses who are victims of family violence.

I also wish to acknowledge, as was pointed out earlier in the debate, that there was a tragic incident in a Montreal shelter where this safety, which this bill wishes to address, was breached and a woman was killed by her spouse. Such an incident, however tragic, should not take away from the important and positive role played by shelters and the dedicated people who staff them.

The responses to family violence that I have mentioned are not sufficient in and of themselves. Broader prevention initiatives are vital to making a long term difference.

Historically, family violence has been hidden in silence and denial. We have already done much to bring it out into the open but more has to be done. Notably, governments at all levels, the federal, the provincial, the territorial and the municipal, have

supported counselling and education to help encourage recognition and reporting of the problem.

In addition, victims receive counselling for immediate trauma and long term psychological harm. It is important to remember, as well, that counselling is not restricted to the victims alone. Prevention can be and has successfully been addressed to those who engage in abusive behaviour. In fact, I have been told that there are over 100 treatment programs in Canada for perpetrators of spousal abuse.

As I have said, such counselling and treatment programs, both for victims and abusers, are supported by governments at all levels. Non-governmental organizations often play a key role in delivering the services.

At the federal level our support is provided through such means as the Family Violence Prevention Initiative and the National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention. These initiatives, and those I mentioned earlier, have made Canada a leader in efforts to put a halt to family violence. Nevertheless, we must still recognize that even these initiatives are not always enough.

This brings me back to Bill C-223. The bill identifies an additional type of assistance that can sometimes be offered. It involves such measures as the relocation of the victims and the continuation of their lives under new identities, away and safe from their abusers. It is a form of assistance similar to that currently offered under a process called New Identities For Victims of Life-Threatening Relationships. Human Resources Development Canada co-ordinates this joint federal, provincial and territorial ad hoc initiative.

As was recognized by members from both sides of the House earlier in the debate on this bill, providing a new identity to victims of spousal violence is a measure of last resort.

• (1745)

The reasons for this are clear. Restarting lives in such a manner can involve considerable challenges and hardship. Therefore, it must be a measure of last resort. We must be careful that the use of such processes does not place additional burdens on persons who are already victims.

This brings me back to the issue of Bill C-223. The witness protection program offers protection to persons who assist law enforcement. It is very much a program with a specific law enforcement purpose. It is typically used in matters of organized crime.

I have been informed that the issue of spousal protection under the witness protection program is one of the options the current new identities working group which the government has set up will be examining. However it is only one among a number of options.

Private Members' Business

In fact, preliminary consultations with victims groups and those who work in the field indicate it might not be the best option. Other options, such as a separate more fully developed new identities initiative, are also being considered.

It is for this reason I ask the House today in a non-partisan manner not to support Bill C-223. During the time that this matter is being examined by a federal, provincial and territorial working group in consultation with victims representatives, we should not go forward with a bill that predetermines and imposes a single option. We should allow for the possibility of a multitude of options. This is especially the case if preliminary consultations have indicated that the option provided under this private member's bill is not necessarily the best option. Instead, we should let those involved in the working group devote their energies to considering the best way to build upon that which we already have in place.

Spousal abuse is a serious issue. Governments at all levels are addressing this issue and are looking for the best options to provide protection to those spouses.

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise today on behalf of my NDP colleagues to indicate that we support the referral of Bill C-223 to a committee. I commend the hon. member for Prince George—Peace River for bringing forth a bill on a very important and vital subject for the well-being of our communities.

Domestic violence and spousal abuse is a very serious problem. My wife and I have taken in a number of foster children. I can recall a situation involving one young girl we were looking after. She was around 15 years old at that time. I recall her talking about when she was younger that her parents would engage in domestic violence. Her father had an alcohol problem. He would come home and beat his wife and sometimes the children if they were around. She talked about having to gather together her siblings and flee into the woods in the darkness of the night to keep them safe while her father raged with violence against her mother. It was a very sad situation.

We know that the whole issue of domestic violence affects not only the spouses but also the family members. We see children often being forced to take on adult responsibilities and share a kind of guilt which they should not have to in their young lives.

• (1750)

I would like to provide some background with respect to the bill. This bill was introduced during the first session of the 36th parliament as Bill C-494 and died on the order paper as a result of prorogation in the fall of 1999. The bill was subsequently reintroduced as Bill C-223.

This enactment would amend the Witness Protection Program Act to extend the scope of the witness protection program to

include persons whose lives are in danger because of acts committed by their spouse, former spouse, common law spouse or former common law spouse.

The Witness Protection Program Act was passed by parliament in 1996. Under the current act, spouses are only addressed in their role as witnesses against criminals. There are no references to the possible need to protect persons who are victims of the violent actions of their own spouse or former spouse. They are not covered under the definition of witness in the current act.

The Witness Protection Program Act provided a legislative base and a structure for decision making for the RCMP witness protection program. Although it had been in existence since 1984 as an administrative program, it did not have clear criteria or rules or an accountability structure. Accountability is very important.

The act introduced a list of factors to be considered in deciding whether a person should be admitted to the program. It defined protection as including relocation, accommodation and change of identity, as well as counselling and financial support. It provided for protection agreements to be entered into and specified their requirements. The act established a criteria and process for terminating protection. It also provided for agreements to be entered into with provinces and municipalities for which the RCMP provides policing so they could be a part of the national program.

Although they are not covered by the RCMP program, spouses who are in such danger that they must flee their surroundings and change their identities are not completely unprotected at the present time. Two federal government departments, Human Resources Development Canada and Revenue Canada, administer a little known ad hoc process called new identities.

With the help of information from police, women's shelters and victims groups, the program helps desperate women in life threatening situations gain a new identity and relocate by providing them with a new social insurance number and ensuring continuity of federal social benefits. The program has no specific mandate and no separate funding so the assistance it can provide is not comprehensive. Bill C-223 would improve upon that situation.

While there have been some concerns raised that more resources should be committed to women's shelters and front line policing rather than the type of initiative under Bill C-223, the NDP strongly believes that both are needed. It is not one or the other. We feel that both are needed and that every effort must be made to ensure the safety and security of the vulnerable in our communities. As I indicated earlier, families are very vulnerable when it comes to domestic violence.

We in the NDP support strengthening provisions of the Witness Protection Program Act to allow for greater protection of spouses. We in the NDP support this legislation but at the same time we must make it clear that this is only a measure of last resort and that a substantial increase in resources for women's shelters and

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protective measures for victims and their families must remain the priority.

Mrs. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to register my support for the private member's bill that has been introduced by my colleague from Prince George—Peace River. I commend him on his care for Canadian society in bringing forward this important piece of legislation.

The legislation would allow protection under the same sort of provisions as those in the witness protection program for people whose lives or whose children's lives are threatened by a spouse or former spouse. This is a very important piece of legislation because we know there are an increasing number of individuals in our society who have nowhere to turn for protection from the violence of a former spouse or intimate partner. This is a sad commentary on our society but it would be an even sadder commentary if we as legislators turned a blind eye to the distress of these individuals, most of whom are women.

• (1755)

It is important that we as a society offer real and meaningful protection, protection with teeth, to people in these very difficult circumstances. This bill would do that. It sets out a common sense framework without a lot of red tape but with some clear criteria and some clear resources that would offer real and meaningful protection to Canadians in this kind of distress.

Sadly all of us in our circle of acquaintances through business or by being members of parliament have had people come to us or have talked to people who are in absolute terror and distress because they do not know how to protect themselves from a violent former partner. There is nothing more tragic than that kind of distress and situation where people literally are vulnerable and have nowhere to turn.

I do not want to take up too much time in order to allow two other individuals to speak in support of the bill. I did want the opportunity to put on record my own strong support for the bill. It will be administered partly through Human Resources Development Canada and will build on the new identities program in that department. This is a very positive step for Canadian society. I urge all members of the House to support the bill.

Mr. Peter MacKay (Pictou—Antigonish—Guysborough, PC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to follow the lead of previous members who have spoken to this very practical and useful piece of legislation that is before the House.

Bill C-223 in essence broadens the mandate of the witness protection program to include abused spouses. This is a very worthy and worthwhile endeavour. The sad thing is that it would not be necessary if the government were approaching this in a proper way with respect to some of the existing programs and

legislation. Increased spending on policing, for example, to better protect spouses from domestic abuse coupled with tougher sanctions that might be handed down by judges would also accomplish much of what the hon. member is attempting to achieve.

There is certainly a need for greater funding and greater resources with respect to counselling programs for the abusive spouse as well as the victim. There are programs such as New Leaf in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, where individuals like Bob Whitman and Ron Kelly work extremely closely to address the actual problems of individuals who have involved themselves in this violent behaviour. That type of proactive intervention is what is needed and what the government and all governments should be encouraged to do.

The Liberal government however has not made a concrete commitment to allocate money to deal with and protect society from violent predators. Although it has proudly stated its record with respect to the \$810 million for policing and protection which sounds like a great deal of money, the reality is that money will be spread over three years. Sixty-two per cent of those dollars allocated will not be available until 2001-02. Therefore the bulk of the money is committed outside the government's current mandate. This is a very arrogant and I would suggest deceptive tactic that breeds further cynicism.

Under a responsible government, Bill C-223 would not be needed. Yet the government's sketchy record of protecting the public especially those most vulnerable in society has made legislation like this necessary. The slow reaction time of the Department of Justice unfortunately is legendary. The minister herself once described her department as the world's worst law firm. That is a damning condemnation of her own department which she administers.

Currently abused spouses, most often women, endure a living hell as they try to protect themselves and their children from the wrath of an abusive spouse. There are many safe houses set up across the country. Bryony House in Halifax and Tearmann House in New Glasgow perform an incredible service on shoestring budgets.

Victims who move to these shelters do so to escape a very dangerous and volatile situation and relationship. The problem is they cannot remain anonymous and eventually they may be found by their abusive spouse and face violence or even death. The government has not addressed this and I would suggest that Bill C-223 is very much a necessary and laudable piece of legislation.

• (1800)

The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada supports the family and the protection afforded by this type of bill. It is consistent with our support of law and order and the protection of society and of victim's rights.

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I was speaking with the hon. member for Cumberland—Colchester about another very worthwhile program that is alive and well in the country, Crime Stoppers. Once again it is something that fosters greater participation between members of the community and police in an effort to address a very volatile society at this time.

We feel that the amendments brought forth by this type of legislation to the witness protection program are very worthy. We agree that the hon. member has brought forward the legislation in a timely fashion. It would broaden the mandate.

We also agree that Canada's anti-stalking laws can further be expanded as well. I know that Senator Oliver in the other place continues to do extraordinary work to strengthen the laws related to stalking, section 264 of the criminal code, which is a very serious situation as well. Other members have alluded to it.

Still stronger laws to protect people and bring about a way to protect their individuality and identity when they are fleeing an abusive situation can be further buttressed by a commitment of resources from the government. We must be wary of those who might attempt to use this program in an unlawful manner, for example to change identity to escape creditors.

Bill C-223 protects us against this as well because it has a very detailed list of criteria and factors that the witness protection program would have to consider before admitting a person into its umbrella of protection. They have to display the need, that life is in danger, that there is danger of a psychological or physical injury, and that the situation is such that it would warrant the protection afforded.

A current example is the new identities for humanitarian reasons type of legislation, an unofficial program that began in 1992 and works under the HRDC department. Revenue Canada will not reveal the names of persons who conduct the program, but it ensures that their income tax history, child tax benefits of the victim, et cetera, follow them into their new lives without linking them to their past names.

There are programs that promote this type of protection. The problem is that the criminal code cannot force an individual to testify against a spouse and eliminates potentially very incriminating and damning information that police and prosecutors need to obtain a conviction of a spousal abuser. There is often a great deal of intimidation and threatening behaviour that follows. A new and improved witness protection program could be mandated to protect crown witnesses and help with the furtherance of justice in this regard.

I commend the member for Prince George—Peace River for bringing forward the bill. It very much furthers the interests of justice. Forwarding the bill to the committee is a very worthwhile

venture. I applaud the efforts that he has made and those of members who have spoken in favour of it. It is a very sound, common sense initiative. It furthers the protection of victims in most severe cases of spousal abuse.

It is necessary. At the very least this debate has brought government attention to the lack of funding that has been afforded this problem and at best will bring about further debate that will address the problem. The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada wholeheartedly supports this initiative.

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Price George—Peace River for bringing forward the bill. He brought forward not simply the initiative he has proposed to the House through his bill but generally the issue of domestic violence, which I am sure is of concern to all Canadians.

I did write a monograph on the subject of domestic violence called "The Tragic Tolerance of Domestic Violence". I want to share with the House a couple of the facts I found in my research in doing that.

First, members will know that the cycle of violence includes three phases: the tension building phase, the explosive incident and the honeymoon phase. Without getting into too much detail there is a cycle. It starts when things begin to deteriorate and then there is an incident, a battering or some other incident, qualifying as domestic assault. Then there is the denial and then there is the make-up. Then we have a cooling off period. Then it comes around.

● (1805)

In my research I found that the experts agree that the cycle of violence continues, a week later, a month later, a year later. It will continue to the point where its velocity increases. The intensity increases. In fact, the certainty of serious bodily harm and maybe even death becomes a reality.

There are other consequences of domestic violence which I think are worth noting. About 40% to 80% of children witness domestic violence, which is a very significant number of our children. In 52% of violent relationships in which children witness the violence, women feared for their lives, and in 61% of abusive relationships where a child is a witness, the violence was serious enough to result in the woman being injured.

Children witnessing violence against their mothers experience similar emotional, health and behavioural problems as children who themselves are directly abused, which basically says that witnessing abuse is as bad as being abused. It amplifies the fact again that it is not only the partners who are affected, it affects entire families, and it affects children.

In a Canada-wide study of abused women, women reported that their partners had abused their children physically 26% of the time,

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psychologically 48% of the time and sexually 7% of the time. An estimated 30% to 40% of children who witness violence against their mother by a partner are also abused directly by the partner, whether or not he is the father. Children who witness the violence are at risk of further violence, either as a perpetrator or as a victim.

Violence in the home is experienced by children, and in adulthood those children are more likely to become perpetrators of violence. That is even more reason for us to take very seriously the need for attention to this important issue.

Members might ask what the experts say about the reasons a woman might not leave an abusive relationship. Here are some of the more common responses. They hope that the relationship will get better. They do not want to break up the family. Her partner's abuse isolates her from her family and friends. She fears for her own and her children's safety. She depends on her partner's income. She has lost her self-esteem because of her partner's abuse. She has nowhere to go. Her partner has threatened to harm her if she leaves.

These are some of the more common reasons someone would give for not wanting to leave a domestic situation of violence.

In my research I found that only 5% to 15% of cases of domestic violence are actually reported. That is very significant. If violence starts small and grows over time, the earlier it is dealt with the better. I concluded that the most important thing would be to encourage the reporting of cases of domestic violence, because the people themselves, the partners, cannot solve the problem. Both of them need help.

The thought of laying a charge against an intimate partner is a very serious step, with potentially enormous consequences. It could end the relationship or it could lead to more serious violence. The evidence shows that the intensity of domestic violence increases after the breakup, not before. That is when all is lost. It is over. That is when people really lose it.

I wanted to raise these points simply to say that I think this is an issue that should be talked about much more by the House. This is one opportunity. I hope it inspires other members to raise initiatives which will bring to this House a matter which affects not only men and women, but children and society as a whole. We are all affected by this and we should all be part of the solution.

The tragedy of violence against spouses is a complex problem which has no simple solution. It will take a comprehensive strategy of both preventive and remedial approaches, and it needs the active support of all concerned, both men and women.

I thank the member for bringing forward the bill. I believe he has some support. I am sure we can work out how to do this. Again, I thank all members for their support.

• (1810)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to advise the House that if the hon member for Prince George—Peace River speaks now he will close the debate.

Mr. Jay Hill (Prince George—Peace River, Canadian Alliance): Mr. Speaker, at the outset of my closing remarks I thank colleagues from all the parties that participated in the debate throughout the three hours which began on November 26, 1999. This is the last 45 minutes of debate.

I especially appreciate the comments made by my colleagues from the other opposition parties who indicated their support. They will be encouraging colleagues within their parties to support Bill C-223, recognizing that Private Members' Business votes are free votes.

I am deeply saddened that government members who have spoken, with the exception of the hon. member for Mississauga South, have indicated that they will not be supporting this private member's bill. The hon. member for Mississauga South said it all just a minute ago, in the sense that this is an incredibly complex and horrendous issue. To only suggest to Canadians that it warrants some two hours and 45 minutes of debate in the Chamber is appalling.

I would have hoped that all members in a very non-partisan and constructive way would have seen fit, when it comes to the vote on May 2, to support the legislation and send it to the justice committee. Then we could hear directly from experts, victims and people who have worked in the industry of protecting people from domestic violence and spousal abuse and come up with a concrete plan of action on how to address the issue.

I am not suggesting for a minute that Bill C-223 is the be-all and end-all. It is far from it. When I designed this piece of legislation it was with the understanding that if it were sent to committee it could be amended. It could be improved upon by members of that committee following suggestions from witnesses. It was with the recognition that this is only one tool.

Some of my colleagues from other parties and from my own party, the Canadian Alliance, spoke about the need for increased resources for law enforcement, the need for increased counselling and rehabilitation efforts, and the need for tougher deterrents for those who would ignore restraining orders and continue to stalk their former spouses.

Although the Liberal member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine spoke in support of the general thrust of the bill, she concluded her remarks by saying that she would not be supporting the legislation because of the existing ad hoc program that we have all recognized in our comments and that they are pursuing a multitude of options. Somehow she thought that by supporting Bill C-223 it would limit the options.

Adjournment Debate

I would suggest just the opposite. By sending this bill to committee we could open up a whole range of options. Therefore, in the final minute of debate, I am calling on all members of the House over the course of the two week Easter break, an appropriate time of year, to go back to their ridings, consult with their supporters, and come back in a non-partisan way and consider supporting the legislation on May 2.

I am sure that tragically they will find, as I have found in my own riding, there are dozens and perhaps hundreds of people living in fear for their lives. It does not just affect spouses. It does not just affect adults. It affects children of all ages who live every day in fear for their lives.

What a tragedy it would be if members just turned their backs and said that we had to study it more and let the bureaucrats do what they could, without the support of members of parliament working together in a non-partisan way to help these people.

• (1815)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please. It being 6.15 p.m., the time provided for debate has expired.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to order made earlier today, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion are deemed to have been put and a recorded division deemed demanded and deferred until Tuesday, May 2, 2000, at expiry of the time provided for Government Orders.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Gordon Earle (Halifax West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pursue the issue of Canadian soldiers wrongfully sent to Buchenwald concentration camp during the second world war. In my question to the minister just before Christmas I asked that the minister:

—ensure that those brave Canadian soldiers wrongfully sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp will finally receive a just settlement beyond the insulting pittance given a year ago. Will the minister and his cabinet bring joy at Christmastime to the Buchenwald survivors?

I was very concerned that the minister chose to ignore that part of my question. Perhaps I should not have been surprised. This Liberal government has gone out of its way to ignore these brave Canadians.

In response to a letter I wrote on this topic, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that in other countries compensation was paid for civilians, such as people working for the Red Cross and other similar wartime efforts I assume, who were sent to concentration camps.

The issue remains on the table. The Canadian troops who suffered the horrors of living in Buchenwald deserve compensation and it is up to the Liberal government to ensure that compensation is delivered.

It is appalling that the Liberal government tried to buy the silence of these veterans for about \$1,000 each. One of these veterans, a constituent of mine, William Gibson, made it clear that this so-called compensation was offensive. This constituent who survived the horrors of the Buchenwald concentration camp sent the cheque back to the Liberal government with the word “refused” across the insulting payoff of \$1,098.

These veterans were interned in the Nazi Buchenwald concentration camp instead of a prisoner of war camp where they should have been sent under the Geneva convention. Other governments have had the ability to convince the German government to provide appropriate reparation. Our government has failed itself and failed these brave Canadians miserably.

I do not understand the inability of the government to secure a just settlement for these Canadians. Is it a matter of incompetence or is it simply that the government cares little for the plight of a small handful of 26 veterans?

Perhaps even more insulting than the cheque to these Canadians were the words of the Minister of Veterans Affairs in his accompanying letter. He said, “I am delighted to be able to close the chapter on this longstanding issue”. Delighted indeed. It is now over eight years since the plight of these veterans was discussed in the January 1991 report of the subcommittee on veterans affairs entitled “It’s Almost Too Late”. Over eight years later I should say it is almost too late.

This issue was raised again in committee in 1994 and in letters to the veterans affairs, defence and foreign affairs ministers in 1997. I have raised this issue time and time again for over a year now and the government still admits defeat where other governments have succeeded.

A letter from the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to my office admits failure with these words, “Canada has embarked on several démarches requesting prisoner of war compensation from Germany, but we have had no success”.

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I will close with a comment my constituent made when addressing the Nova Scotia government committee on veterans affairs in February of this year:

We have been fighting for German compensation since 1945, but we haven't got it yet and I don't know if we will ever get it because I don't think there is anybody in Ottawa who has the intestinal fortitude to go after it.

I ask the Liberal government to respond now to this issue. I sincerely hope we will not be subject to a litany of what the Liberal government claims to have done about other issues. Let us talk about this issue.

These Canadian veterans deserve a government that will stand up for them and ensure they receive the compensation they are due from the German government. Anything less is unacceptable.

Mr. Bob Wood (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member for Halifax West actually raised two issues in his original question last December: the compensation issue for the merchant navy and the question of compensation by Germany for Canadian airmen imprisoned at Buchenwald. Although the member has chosen to focus his remarks tonight on the Buchenwald question, I would like to address both of his issues since I know he has a deep personal interest and a commitment to both matters.

I am pleased to report on the progress that has been made in recognizing the heroic contribution of the merchant navy to Canada's war effort.

• (1820)

On February 1, 2000, the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced a tax free package for Canada's merchant navy veterans and their surviving spouses. This package is compensation for post-war demobilization benefits provided by the armed forces but not the merchant navy veterans.

The Department of Veterans Affairs has received more than 10,000 applications for the merchant navy special benefit. Today, close to 1,000 cheques have been issued to eligible merchant navy veterans or their surviving spouses. These payments will be paid out in up to two disbursements, depending on length of service.

Thanks to the tremendous effort and leadership of veterans organizations, they agreed upon compensation of \$20,000 for service of more than 24 months, \$10,000 for service between 6 and 24 months, and \$5,000 for service between 1 and 6 months or for less than 1 month if captured, killed or disabled. An additional 20% will be paid to any veterans receiving these benefits who spent time as a prisoner of war.

As expected, when processing the applications the department is finding that a percentage of these applications do not fall within the guidelines agreed upon with merchant navy and national veterans

organizations. For instance, some individuals served with the armed forces and so have already received benefits. Some were on vessels in coastal waters but do not meet the qualifications for war related services.

I reassure all merchant navy veterans and their families that the Government of Canada recognizes their valiant efforts on behalf of their country and that Veterans Affairs Canada is giving the merchant navy the special benefit and priority that it deserves.

I now want to address the issues of compensating Canadian airmen who were—

The Deputy Speaker: I am afraid the hon. member has run out of time.

HEALTH

Mr. Paul Szabo (Mississauga South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently I had the opportunity to pose a question during question period with regard to the issue of sudden infant death syndrome. It is a terminology and maybe a condition which mesmerizes people because we do not hear very much about it. However we do hear about it from time to time in communities.

During much of the work I have done with regard to the healthy outcomes of children, one of the phrases that sticks in my mind about its impact was from the psychiatrist in chief at the sick kids hospital in Toronto. She said that a secure, consistent attachment to an engaged, committed adult was one of the most significant indicators or preconditions for a healthy outcome of a child.

While doing some research on healthy outcomes of kids I came across a report by Dr. Christopher Ruhm from the University of North Carolina, produced in April 1998. The paper was entitled "Parental Leave and Child Health". He studied 25 years of population data from nine European countries and found a 29% reduction in infant mortality where parental leave of at least 50 weeks was taken. I found this really fascinating.

In the study he went on to highlight the significant benefits of breast feeding as result of the longer parental leave which the government has now introduced in its budget. In fact my Bill C-204 proposes to extend parental leave benefits to a full year. The report also talked about breast feeding and about the lower incidence of sudden infant death syndrome. That is one of the reasons I wanted to raise the question again.

There appears to be a pattern. There appear to be linkages. I am hoping by asking the question that maybe we could find out a bit more about what Health Canada is doing to investigate the trends and linkages between the healthy raising and nurturing of children in those vital formative years and the incidence of sudden infant death syndrome.

Adjournment Debate

I am here tonight again to ask if the parliamentary secretary could please advise Canadians and the House about other things Health Canada is doing to examine sudden infant death syndrome.

Mr. Bob Wood (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Veterans Affairs, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, sudden infant death syndrome or SIDS, also known as crib death, refers to the sudden and unexpected death of an apparently healthy infant, usually less than one year of age, which remains unexplained even after a full investigation.

Although the specific cause of SIDS remains unknown, several risk factors have been identified through scientific research, including the tummy and side sleeping positions and exposure to tobacco smoke before and after birth.

• (1825)

SIDS is the leading cause of death in Canada for infants between one month and one year of age, touching the lives of three families in this country each week.

Health Canada, through the Canadian Perinatal Surveillance System, collects and analyses infant mortality information. Since 1980 the overall rate of SIDS deaths in Canada has steadily declined. This decline in SIDS rates coincides with the identification of risk factors and public education regarding these factors.

In 1993 Health Canada co-sponsored a consensus conference on SIDS with the Canadian Paediatric Society, the Canadian Institute of Child Health and the Canadian Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths. This resulted in the development of a joint consensus statement and public awareness strategy to reduce the incidence of SIDS in Canada. The key messages are: positioning infants on their back to sleep; avoiding exposure to environmental tobacco smoke during pregnancy; protecting infants from exposure to environmental tobacco smoke; avoiding too many clothes and covers on babies; and the promotion of breast feeding.

In March 1999 Health Canada and its three partners launched "Back to Sleep", a national public education campaign to raise awareness and provide information on how to reduce the risk of SIDS. The campaign includes a joint consensus statement, a brochure, a poster and a TV public service announcement.

It is through research, education and promotion that the incidence of SIDS in Canada can be further reduced.

The Deputy Speaker: The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6.26 p.m.)

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